

Special Places as Instigators of Community Identity in Urban Neighborhoods

Berlin

San Francisco

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Research Questions

- How do special places affect urban neighborhood identity?
- How important is neighborhood identity to the creation and successful maintenance of urban neighborhoods?

What is a special place?

- Any place (public, public-private) where social interaction occurs.
 - Parks
 - Main Street
 - Cafés
 - Bars
 - Book shops
 - Restaurants

What is the importance?

- Place attachment → Neighborhood involvement
- Building block of cohesive neighborhood units
- Appropriate mix of uses for specific neighborhoods

The Cities

- Dense urban environments with definitive neighborhoods
- San Francisco → Established, well defined neighborhoods
Demographically similar
- Berlin → Neighborhood oriented (Kiez)
Established and forming

Theoretical Background

- Sense of Community (SOC) Index
 - Membership
 - Influence
 - Reinforcement of Needs
 - Shared Emotional Connection
 - *Sense of Place*
- Participation, Social Capital, Community Development, Social Stability, Maintenance, Safety

Sense of Place

- Directly facilitates
 - Community involvement in aesthetic maintenance and improvement
 - Emotional connections to physical environment and community that supports it – i.e. Place Attachment
- Motivators of Place Attachment
 - Design Elements
 - Activities
 - Social Interactions

- Current body of research focuses on
 - The implications of SOC
 - Economic and Social programs that can enhance SOC
 - The types of social interactions that lead to SOC
 - The impacts of design on Sense of Place

There is little research that seeks to examine the effects that particular places and their uses have on Sense of Community or Place

Goals

- Determine the specific types of uses and other qualities of built environment that engender emotional place attachment
- Determine levels of place attachment that may exist for residents of specific urban neighborhoods due to specific use types
- Determine the role that these uses play in creating or enhancing a cohesive neighborhood identity

The Procedure

- Online Questionnaire
 - Locational and Basic Demographic Data
 - Open ended questions:
 - Likes / Dislikes of neighborhood
 - Places (eg. Park, local café, main street...) that are unique to neighborhood and enjoyed by local residents
 - Qualities of places that exist or should exist that make neighborhood memorable
 - Levels of participation or identification with community

Relevant Data

- Significant number of respondents naming same specific places in same neighborhoods
- Data for each specific place
 - Location
 - Design
 - Physical layout
 - Specific Uses / Activities
 - Neighborhood demographics

Foreseeable Difficulties

- Online questionnaire precludes those who do not know how to use internet
- Age bias
- Number of respondents – too few/many?
- Language
- Methods of advertisement