

Non place sense of the city cultural studies essay



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Abstract In his modern world, most of the cities have their own public spaces. Square, fields, and gardens are few of the examples of public spaces. These spaces triggered an interaction between social behaviour of the human and the robustness of the city. To create that interaction, the public spaces require several senses that form the spaces, for example, material, climate, sound etc. These senses are essential in order to generate a public space for public to socialize. However, not all of the public spaces are considered as a good place to hang around with friends while enjoying the life in a metropolitan city. According to the Marc Augé, he defined a place as one concerned with relation, identity and history. To relate back to the public space as a place that defined by Augé, the senses of the city need to be explained and compared to the theory that have been made by Augé. In this dissertation, I attempt to understand how the relationship between the senses of the city based on material and tangibility with Augé's theory of place and non-place. Using Keywords Place, non-place, sense of the city, public space, public square

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Public space is a common place for the local dwellers to linger and mingle with other. Throughout the history, this space had become a landmark from a medieval city to a contemporary city. In Manchester alone, there are several public spaces that serve a different purpose such as Albert's Square and Piccadilly Gardens. It is exciting to see whether this space is much likely alive or just a typical empty space. Marc Augé has defined the meaning of place and how we can classify it by observing the similar pattern of history and significant of a place. Public spaces are basic components of a town. Lynch (1960) confirmed that a clear image through a coherent and clear spatial relation of structures and other objects enables one to move about easily and quickly. Perhaps, it may serve

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as a broad frame of reference, an organizer of activity or belief or knowledge to achieve a great civilization. Place and Non-place: concept of place. During this period, the concept of place maybe transform at different period and changing the context of social, cultural and political. The definition of a place was first defined by French anthropologist, Marc Augé. He presented his ideology in a situation of supermodernity after he presented his definition during modernity which has been elaborated by Michel de Certeau. In Certeau's definition, he stated that the place as the contrary of space and as a "frequented place"(Augé, 1995). He also indicated that the place can be seen as an empty geographical landmark such as streets, alleyways etc which is yet to be filled with life. Meanwhile, Augé stated that the place contains the sense of "anthropological place" and can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity. Yet his concept is more towards in the present of emotion and memory. Then, he introduced the concept of a non-place which cannot be defined as relational, historical or concerned with identity. (Augé, 1995). Augé also opposes Certeau's views of modernity as the interweaving of old and new. However, he introduced this concept as a shift from modernity to supermodernity. Supermodernity, in his term, does not include elements of the old and new, meaning that a place will change around its old components, leave them unique and not endeavour to change then and fit them into its new shape. Augé also justified that the supermodernity creates non-places. As supermodernity constructs places anew without incorporating former identity. He also proclaims that these places become non-place which the social interaction and emotional attachment fail and give way to individualism. According to Emer O'Beirne (2006) , Augé look on the concept of the non-place in

response to a contemporary crisis in social relations and consequently in the construction of individual identities through such relation. Other than that, Martin Albrow (1997) accordingly stated that, due to the effect of globalization, local communities in cities wiped out more and more and were replaced by overlying "sociospheres" of citizens. The element was their networks with correspondents within the district, the town, the country and even worldwide. The sociospheres of the citizens existed one next to another without much interference; everybody lived in his own individual sphere, making a local community and local places obsolete as a source of identification.

Definition of Public Space. To clarify the concept of public spaces, it is defined as all types of space between buildings in towns and other localities (Krier, 1979). In his book, *Urban Space*, Krier also defined the space is geometrically bounded by a variety of elevations. It is only the vibrant legibility of its geometrical characteristics and aesthetic qualities which allows us intentionally to perceive external space as urban space. This clear definition by Krier defines most of the public space that have been used until now. He also stated that: "...external space is seen as open, unobstructed space for movement in the open air, with public, semi public and private zones." Rob Krier, 1979 (page 15)

The explanation above stated that the characteristic of a public space in an urban city that have been closely related to the movement and the usage of the space. We look at the example such as Trafalgar Square in London. The square is significant to the city because it is located at the centre of the city. Furthermore, it is also have a busier traffic network of all over London and layers of public, semi public and private buildings surrounding the square. These characteristics show that the urban spaces such as public squares play an important role for

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a city to act as an urban catalyst for the dwellers to have a social interaction. Krier also stated that the public space is based on two basic elements; the street and the square. He also stated that the aesthetic quality of each element of public space is characterised by the structural interrelation of detail. The square is one of the elements that forms a public space is produced by series of buildings around an open space (Krier, 1979). This arrangement created a higher control of the inner space as well as providing a barrier against the external elements by minimising the external element to go through the inner space. Through the time, we can see some example of public spaces that uses this symbolic value of religious primacy and have been constructed in many religious buildings such mosque's courtyard, cloister etc. there are two main methods of categorizing squares - by function and by form. (Moughtin and Mertens, 2003)The function of the square started from the idea of the courtyard house. Krier stated that the courtyard house is the oldest type of townhouse and now become discredited. This led to the development of square in a public scale; Market places, parade grounds, square in front of town halls and churches. These places had change the function of the courtyard and changed it into something significant to the city, for example, Albert's Square in Manchester. The square is use for public events such as Manchester Christmas Market and New Year Celebration. Krier also suggested that the function of the square should be as commercial activities such market place and he thought that cultural activities should be at the top on the list. The surrounding buildings around the square are mostly a public administrative building, community halls. Youth centres, libraries, theatres and concert halls. The square also should be able to generate activity twenty-four hours a day and

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residential use should not be excluded in any of these cases. (Krier, 1979, Moughtin and Mertens, 2003). Meanwhile, the street provides a structure for the dispersal of land and gives access of individual plots. It is also categorised as a functional element than the square. The streets have different purposes to suit the condition and the programme of the city. During the Middle Ages, they were planned to suit to the scale of the human being, the horse and carriage (Krier, 1979). For example in Baroque period, especially during the development of three famous streets in Rome; The Corso and on the either side of it the Via del Babuino and the Via di Ripetta, these streets are connected by a public square, which is now called the Piazza del Popolo. Between the streets are two churches of unequal size but with twin facades, S. Maria di Monte Santo and S. Maria de' Miracoli (Rosenau, 1983). These developments show the important of the street to compliment the public space in order to enhance the function of the square as a public space as well as a landmark. He also stated that there are two type of streets; Commercial Street and residential street. The commercial streets are more open to public meanwhile the residential streets are more cloistered and not disposed to to the heavy vehicles. However, there are always some problems regarding the street as a connector to public spaces and the pedestrians especially the residential streets. As Krier state:".. The separation of pedestrians and traffic carries with it the danger of the isolation of the pedestrian zone. Solutions must be carefully worked out which will keep the irritation of traffic noise and exhaust fumes away from the pedestrian, with completely distancing one zone from the other." Rob Krier, 1979

The statement above shows the relationship between pedestrian and the street users such as cars in the city in relation to the public square

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but there is also a problem that will be stay much the same even when the well-known technical limitations and admitted design failings of the street cars have been smoothed out. For example, if the number of the car increases, the safety and the condition of the pedestrian will be affected greatly. With the noise and the fumes from the cars, the urban dwellers will be not enjoying the moment in public spaces in the residential area. Furthermore, this problem unintentionally affected the condition of the buildings surrounding the square and decaying the material's quality of the buildings plus the social involvement in a community. Characteristic of Square Most of the public square that have been built are derived from the local condition of the place and typography of the site. The typology of urban space, spatial forms and their end product may be divided into three main groups, according to the geometrical pattern of the ground plan; these groups derive from the square, the circle or the triangle (Krier, 1979). When we look in term of typography, the term was mentioned in during medieval era as well. Typography is essential in order to design an open public space. For example, the typography was mentioned in a number of contexts in medieval Arabic texts. We look at the example of Islamic city such as Cordoba specifically Alhambra, the design of the courtyard inside the building become one of the features of Islamic architecture (Lehrman, 1980). The courtyard is designed with water feature to accompany the visitor. The water feature acts as a mediator to the visitors and creates the sense of peace and tranquillity inside the courtyard. It is interesting to see how these forms were created in different scales. From the scale of a courtyard, it becomes to be a massive scale of a public square. However, the scale of an urban space is also related to its geometrical qualities. The typography plays

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an important role to classify the function and types of public square. Both Cliff Moughtin and Miquel Mertens (2003), stated that there are several types of form of public square; Enclosed square, dominated square, and linked square. We take a look at the enclosed square which in this matter is the purest expression of a sense of place. It also is created out of the hustle of the busy cities. The key to enclosure in the square is the treatment of its corner. As said before, Krier manipulated the angle of the square to see the potential of square and the possibility that can happen based on the form of the square. The sense of enclosure is achieved by a complete building up of the corner (Moughtin and Mertens, 2003) as sketches by Rob Krier in defining on how the four-sided square. Besides, Paul Zucker's theory about square which determined the sky as the ceiling of the enclosed square. He believes that the height of the sky above the closed square is: '...imagined as three or four times the height of the tallest building on the square' (Moughtin and Mertens, 2003). The absolute size of the urban space also has a bearing on its resulting degree of enclosure. Many of the delightful intimate squares in the older parts of our towns and cities may be small as 15-21 m, which is now barely wide enough for a road reserve through a housing area. There is no doubt that, cities like York or Stamford are a safe haven where people can stop, relax, and escape from the mad bustle of modern urban life. The height of the building also plays an important role to create the sense of enclosure. According to Hegemann and Peets, they conclude that seeing the detail of a building is best achieved at a distance equal to the largest dimension of the building. The minimum width of a piazza is therefore determined by an angle of 45° from the eaves. The building, however, is seen best as a whole, at a distance of about twice its height or at an angle of 27°. Rob Krier also did a

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several sketches of building's section to support the idea of building which is significant to the building height. His sketches also show different type of building form that influences the enclosed space and height of the building surrounding the square. His diagram below shows the sections of the building surrounding the square and the shadow casting of the building affecting the quality of the space. Next is the dominated square, according to Zucker the dominated square is characterized by one individual structure or a group of building toward which the open space is directed and to which all other surrounding structures are related. Yet, he also stated that the dominated square is a plaza which is deep or wide usually becomes apparent when the observer stands opposite the major building that dominates the whole layout. (Moughtin and Mertens, 2003). We look into Krier's thought on the dominated square which is more relevant to the dominated square. The square is actually based on an open space with another buildings are introduced. The sketches by Krier below show how the building is highlighted by inside the square and dominated the square. Both Krier and Zucker thought that the square is usually significant to the town of city. The square is also typically surrounded by public buildings, churches etc. For example, Albert Square in Manchester, which the Town Hall of Manchester is located in front of the square. The town hall is very significant to the square as well as the city. The ideal distance for viewing one dominant building at the end of a plaza lies somewhere between equalling the height of the building and twice the dimension. (Moughtin and Mertens, 2003). The sketch below shows how the ideal distance to see the focal building in a dominated square. Sketch" Last but not least, there is also a square called a linked square. The linked square is consisting of two or more overlapping or

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interpenetrating spaces. The linked square also may be physically connected by streets or alleyways as well as two major public buildings. We take a look at the example of linked square such as Piazza Della Signoria, Florence, Italy. The piazza remained as the civic centre of Florence for over six centuries. The square is also essentially medieval in shape with streets entering informally at different angle. From the diagram below, we can see how the series of squares linked with each other to form a bigger square. We also can see that from the plan, there is no clear view toward the square and therefore, the square still keeps the sense of enclosure. (Moughtin and Mertens, 2003)SketchSense of the city - visual, material and climate. In this research, I tend to look at the sense of the city based on visual, material and also climate. These elements are essential to look upon in relation to the public space as a place or non-place. We also can see how those elements influence the condition of the public space. In Sense of the City: An Alternate Approach to Urbanism by Mirko Zardini said that the city is influenced by several types of elements such as light, surface, weather and also sound. These elements are seam together to form senses to the city for the dwellers to feel and enjoy their favourite city. By encountering all these elements especially signs, sounds, smells, materialities, people, and movements, we can see how the interaction of these elements weave each other to form a sense of a place. Then, those elements also form an identity to the place or perhaps it might be reproduced or modified the existent of a place. According to Lars Frers and Meier , the representation of the place are everywhere - in maps, photos, novels, advertising, talks, metaphors or souvenirs. Firstly we take a look at the visual aspect of the city, which influence the sense of the city itself. If we talk about the visual, we usually

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put our thought on the aesthetics of the building surrounding the square. The condition of the building surrounding influence the quality of the public square as Krier said in his book regarding the elevation of the buildings surrounding the square. As stated before, the section the building also plays an important part of the public space as well. Based on his sketch below shows the different types of elevation that people will perceived when they on the square. Sketch Pierced façade: the lowest level is more liberally glazed in each sketch, reducing the solid area to a simple load-bearing structure. This elevation is letting building to reduce the tendency of ' heaviness' of the façade's appearance. The glazed area also within the load-bearing structure can be changed according to taste as shown on the diagram below. The window type also can be changed horizontally and vertically according to taste allowing people inside the building enjoying the view of the square. Anonymous modular façade as the abstract way in which the building enclosed. The modular façade can be adapted to all variations in the shape of the building. Windowless building: windows are placed in niches etc. and the process starts again from the beginning. Exploration of different geometries; a thematic interpretation of the elevation which is mainly plays with form, materials etc. Besides visual, this research also takes a look at the materiality of the public space. The material as an object is usually things that perceptible to our sense especially when it comes to touch and sight. (Malnar and Vodvarka, 2004). We take a look at stone, concrete, brick or even asphalt, these materials are common in the city, and however each of the materials is

Chapter 2 - Research Methodology Objectives My research methodology requires gathering relevant data from the specified documents and compiling databases in order to analyze the material and arrive at a

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more complete understanding and historical site of the public space in the UK especially Manchester Piccadilly Gardens. I hope to shed light on the following questions through my research: 1) What is the relationship between public spaces with social interaction especially regarding the sense of the place? 2) How the sense of the place in term of visual, material and climate of the public square affect the idea of a place defined by Marc Augé? 3) Is Manchester Piccadilly Gardens is a place defined by Marc Augé? Like Augé's argument in his book regarding modernity which does not incorporate elements of the old into the new opposing Michel de Certeau's views of modernity as the 'interweaving of old and new'. The sense of the urban spaces help to support the argument, whether one specific urban space is 'place' or 'non-place'. The material used in an urban space to make an identity of a city is very fascinating to look at. Whether it is brick, sandstone or concrete, those materials are essential to a particular city to express their character and local heritage. In a tangible side, a city always compliment with other elements such as architecture buildings, transportation networks and people. It is great to see these components blend in and create an image of the city. Perhaps, it is better to know local people's perceptions regarding their sense of their city especially at the urban spaces as well. In my opinion, material and tangibility of the place are two essential fundamentals to explore the urban public spaces as a 'place'

<http://www.cies.org/images/blank.gif> This project will utilize both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools, but is rooted in a qualitative epistemological position that recognizes the importance of locating the research within a particular social, cultural, and historical context. It also takes seriously the social construction of these contexts and

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the identities participants construct within them. Data Collection Data collection will consist of surveys, site observations and secondary resources, as well as journal and maps from the town council. A qualitative evaluation shall be utilized for this research project leveraging subjective methods such as interviews and observations to collect substantive and relevant data. Initially, a survey instrument to measure the understanding and awareness of participant especially local public regarding their own public space, Manchester Piccadilly Garden (ideally, n= 15). Subsequently, a purposeful sample will be identified to participate in the second round of data collection. An interview protocol rooted in the literature will be developed to act as a guide for the semi-structured interviews inside the survey. The interviews are planned together with the survey to each participant in order to provide more in-depth data collection and opportunities for follow-up. The goal is to interview approximately 15 participants who embody a range of identity positions and who come from different backgrounds of ethnicity and communities. The combination between quantitative and qualitative research helps the research more understandable and precise. A structured observation protocol will be developed to aid in field note collection. I will also ask public to respond to a series of journal prompts over the course of the project that allow them to provide a more detailed and longitudinal view of their daily lives as local dwellers whom use the public square almost every day—their experiences, reactions, beliefs, and ideas about their own public space. Upon collecting the qualitative data derived from said interviews, careful analysis shall be done to prepare a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) to analyze how the sense of the city influence the public square as a place defined by Marc Augé. Data Analysis From the <https://assignbuster.com/non-place-sense-of-the-city-cultural-studies-essay/>

qualitative and quantitative data, I structured my analysis to answer the research question. From the data, I use a comparison between idea of Augé and the survey from the Manchester Piccadilly Gardens. From that data also, we can see the relationship between the data and the condition of the public space to determine idea of a place or non-place. <http://www.cies.org/images/blank.gif>

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