MAKING SENSE OF PLACE ATTACHMENT: TOWARDS A HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLE-PLACE RELATIONSHIPS AND EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT: The article is an attempt to make sense of the different interdisciplinary perspectives associated with people's attachment to places with a view to construct a holistic template for understanding people-place relationships and experiences. The author took note of the theoretical contributions of Jorgensen & Stedman (2001), Scannell & Gifford (2010), and Seamon (2012, 2014) to construct an integrative framework for understanding emotional links to places and people's perception and experience of places. This was done with the intention of illuminating the meaning of place and the different "places" people get attached to. The paper concludes by incorporating different place frameworks with the intention of establishing a holistic model for understanding the various attributes and perceptions of people-place relationships and experiences.

Introduction

Attachment behaviors are rooted in the active internal working models developed during parent-child relationship interactions, which actively remain open to self-regulation and are reflected in our social relationships with people and objects around us (cf. Bowlby 1988; Low & Altman, 1992; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993; Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett 2000; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Giuliani, 2003). Since attachment

systems shape the attachment-related needs of an individual from 'cradle to the grave', environmental psychologist Morgan (2010) reasons that an attachment bond to a place could be linked to attachment behaviors and internal working models that originate from early bonding experiences with parental attachment figures or caregivers. Hence, the parent-child interaction in the early developmental stages of attachment may have the capacity to shape an individual's physiological needs for survival and emotional security in a social environment (Morgan, 2010), in a way that draws the individual closer to a "significant place"[1] and to attachment structures/symbols in a place that has phenotypic resemblances to their parental attachment experiences. The nature of this attachment is determined by the needs the individual has that can be met by such places.

Ultimately, children are biologically pre-programmed to form attachments with their caregivers or parental attachment figures because of the need to survive in a social environment (Bowlby, 1988). This need for survival compels a maintenance of proximity with an attachment figure that acts as a secure base for exploring the world. An infant-caregiver relationship therefore acts as a prototype for all future social relationships and reflects the effect and meaning of maintaining a stable relationship with a familiar context with similar attachment advantage as that of the parent or caregiver, which might include but not remain limited to significant aspects of relationships with places (Kobak and Sceery, 1988). Therefore, making sense of a place as an affective world related to our past or present experience in relation to the place-roles, life-goals and affective needs we would love to explore could be an ideal way of looking at the meaning of place, as a way of exploring how our humanity is realized "in a world that is filled with significant places" (Relph 1976, 1).

We will be looking at the different interdisciplinary approaches coming from psychology, anthropology, sociology, human geography, and humanities, among others to explore the variety of significant places and the function such places fulfil in the lives of people. An overview of the literature on place attachment is provided in this article whilst aiming at an integrated model and establishing attachment to significant 'places' as unique experiences, under ideal circumstances, that give meaning to life and provide security and support for self-continuity in an environment (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Marcus, 1992). This objective will

help us to better understand the dynamics of people-place relationships and experiences. Hence, with the increasing rate of development in the field of environmental psychology and human geography on the study of place attachment over the past few decades, there is an urgent need to construct an integrative framework for understanding the different constellation of people-place relationships and experiences as an affective experience. To accomplish this task however, an overview of the different available place attachment arguments common across many disciplines is provided, with the aim of identifying and reshuffling the various perspectives of place attachment as we develop a theoretical convergence for our conceptualization of people-place relationships and experiences.

Place attachment and people-place relationship experiences

The concept of "place" generally suggests an "environmental locus in and through which the actions, experiences, intentions, and meanings" of an individual or community are drawn together spatially (Seamon 2014, 11; cf. Casey, 2009). Similarly, place attachment theorists like Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001), Williams & Vaske (2003), Giuliani (2003) and others (cf. Morgan, 2010; Seamon, 2012, 2014; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Scannell & Gifford, 2010) describe "place" as a space that qualifies people's emotional resonance with their natural environments, individual and collective activities in a place, and emotional meanings in a spatial setting. Emotional bonding to such meaningful settings is called "place attachment."

The variety of interpretations given to people-place relationships and experiences in the past decades, in other disciplines, has given an interdisciplinary meaning to the place attachment discourse. Sociologists Greider & Garkovich (1994) demonstrate how the different symbolic meanings of places influence the social reality of human interactions. Anthropologists on the other hand, seek to understand the cultural significance and complexity of places across cultures in human history (cf. Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). Human geographers and environmentalists have done extensive research on people-place experiences in relation to attachment to the natural environment and resource dependent communities (cf. Relph 1976, 1997; Tuan 1977, 1980; Buttimer & Seamon, 1980; McCool &

Martin, 1994; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001). A place attachment experience generally suggests some kind of connection and emotional bonding between individuals and places that assure attachment security and emotional or goal and career support (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993; Eisenhauer et al., 2000). Such physical, psychical or conceptual characteristics of a setting not only define a place but also contribute to creating meanings for such place (Canter, 1977; Relph, 1976; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Stedman, 2002; Smaldone, Harris & Sanyal, 2005). These meanings often represent the perceptual and experiential understanding of places, as perceived by the people there. According to Gustafson (2001), such meanings are constructed based on the experiences of the self with others and the environment. Najafi, Kamal, and Shariff believe that these meanings are often "implied by physical settings combined with what a person could bring to it" (2014, 285). In other words, personal experiences play a huge role in people-place experiences. Places could therefore add to the human experience (Gustafson, 2001), as we develop and maintain self and group identities in a given spatial setting (Davenport & Anderson, 2005).

Given the huge impact of place attachment in human experiences, there has been a great deal of interest in exploring people-place relations and experiences over the years (Low & Altman, 1992). These studies have focused on the question of why people develop emotional bonds to places since such relationships exist due to the function of place as some kind of affect regulation object with attachment qualities. The most common are considered to be those of survival and security (cf. Shumaker & Taylor, 1983; Fullilove, 1996; Fried, 2000; Giuliani, 2003; Chatterjee, 2005), goal support (cf. Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983; Kyle, Mowen & Tarrent, 2004), a sense of belonging (Giuliani, 2003), self-continuity, enhancing identity and self-esteem (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).

However, due to the lack of agreement regarding the methodological approach to studying place attachment, the theory has received much criticism. Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) noted that there is no harmony regarding the terms to use. At one point, we find similar terms such as "community attachment" (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974), "sense

of community" (Sarason, 1974), "place attachment" (Gerson, Stueve & Fischer, 1977), "place identity" (Proshansky, 1978), "identification with place" (Burdge & Ludtke, 1972), "place dependence" (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981), and "sense of place" (Hummon, 1992), among others. In some cases each of the terms are used as a generic idea that embraces others. For instance, in Lalli's (1992) description of urban-related identity, he describes place attachment as an aspect of place identity. A similar abuse of terminology is seen in Brown & Werner's (1985) discourse on attachment and identity, where we see the authors discussing both concepts without recognizing what makes them different.

Another important area of criticism on place attachment is its lack of developmental theory. This is partly because no robust approach or explanation has been provided for understanding the complex relationships between place affect, behavior, and cognition (Morgan, 2010). Morgan suggested the lack of interaction and "dialogue between developmental psychology and environmental psychology's place theory" (2010, 13) as the cause of this theoretical gap. Few attempts have been made to resolve this disharmony (cf. Chawla, 1992; Hart, 1979; Moore, 1986; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Morgan, 2010; Seamon, 2014) although no conclusion has been unanimously reached on what conceptual approach is most reliable so far. Yet, the confusion related to terminologies and concepts used in describing place attachment has seriously blocked the chances of advancement within this field, as Giuliani & Feldman (1993) and many others (cf. Lalli, 1992; Unger & Wandersman, 1985) have pointed out. Helpful in developing a robust and systematic account of a developmental theory of place attachment could be, intellectual investments in both empirical research and theoretical efforts that dialogue between the different models available in attachment research. Counted & Zock (2016c in press) for example, have proposed an attachment model for understanding the development of people-place experiences in relation to spirituality.

At present, one of the connecting thread that binds place attachment theorists together is agreement on the definition of place attachment as an "affective bond or link between people and specific places" (Hidalgo

& Hernandez 2001, 274). Another common denominator would be the recognition of *place identity* and *place dependence* as the psychological effects of place attachment. These theoretical underpinnings have contributed to the development of psychometric measures for assessing place attachment behaviors. Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck & Watson (1992) 12-item Place Attachment Inventory (PAI) for example, has been designed specifically for this purpose—measuring only the *place identity* and *place dependence* variables (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck & Watson, 1992). Alternatively, with the addition of "place-attachment" as a Place Attachment variable, Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) believe that the place variables of *identity*, *attachment*, and *dependence* should be looked at separately, since they arise differently through cognitive, affective, and behavioral (or conative) means when an individual relates to a spatially demarcated object. As a result, Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) developed a three-factor model instrument for measuring place attachment from an attitude-based framework of place in relation to three place attitudes: affect, cognition, and behavior. This attitude-based framework was further described by Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) as a response to an external event, object, or stimulus in a place that has the potential to arouse an attachment experience. In their exegesis, Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) reasoned that affect, cognition, and behavior are three distinguishable constructs of response to an exogenous object like 'place'. The Sense of Place (SOP) instrument by Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) was developed to measure the three dimensions of an attitude-based place attachment experience, namely: *place identity*, *place attachment*, and *place dependence*.

Jorgensen and Stedman describe "place identity" as an individual or group's "cognitions, beliefs, perceptions or thoughts that the self is invested in a particular spatial setting" (2001, 238). Place identity is of symbolic importance in the place discourse since it shows how a place can function as a repository for emotions and relationships that give meaning and purpose to life in a particular place (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993; Williams & Vaske, 2003). Due to the nature of place identity, researchers like Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff (1983) have described it as an aspect of self-identity, which develops over a period of time in a spatial setting and thus enhances self-esteem (Korpela, 1989), and increases the sense of belonging in a particular place (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1980). Moore & Graefe

(1994) have argued that a history of repeated visitation to and dependence on a particular place, due to how such place supports our life and spiritual goals and desired activities, may eventually lead to place identity. However, place identity is not necessarily the direct effect of place-dependence, as Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff (1983) have pointed out in their study. As a variable of place attachment, "place-dependence" behavior is generally a functional process embodied in the value of a place providing features and conditions that support specific desired goals, needs, and activities, which might also influence place-identity (Schreyer, Jacob & White, 1981). A good example is the Christian pilgrimage to Israel, where we see millions of Christians from all over the world visiting Israel as a commitment to their faith. Repeated visitation to the holy city may soon lead to a place-dependence attachment behavior towards the holy city. If such visitation to the holy city is repeated on regular basis it may eventually cause the pilgrim to adopt certain Jewish characters or place-identities like speaking the Jewish language, dressing like a Jew (e.g., putting on the prayer shawl even when they are back home), and picking up interest in the Jewish culture, history, religion and etc. In the light of this, place-dependence can then be considered as the "perceived behavioral advantage" of a place in relation to other places (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001, 238). This thus suggests place dependence as an ongoing relationship with a special place that supports our life goals and activities. Meanwhile, the "place-attachment" variable in Jorgensen and Stedman's (2001) paper is described as an individual or group's affective link to a spatial setting. This dimension of people-place relationship is seen as an attachment to human-made and non-human-made material elements and environmental qualities of a particular place. The SOP instrument by Jorgensen and Stedman's (2001) appears to be more robust for measuring the place attachment experience on a quantitative level. But more so, owing to its emphasis on attitude-based epistemology, Jorgensen and Stedman's (2001) conceptualization of place attachment in their SOP thesis does correspond to Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck & Watson (1992) and Moore and Graefe's (1994) theoretical emphases which prove the multidimensionality of people-place relationships and thus demonstrate how the different place attachment variables (identity, dependence, and attachment) interrelate.

However, there are still some 'place' researchers like Raymonda, Brown, and Weber (2010) who do not recognize *place-identity*, *place-dependence*, and *place-attachment* as sufficient variables/concepts for understanding people-place relationships and, instead, they have suggested concepts such as *nature bonding* and *social bonding* as significant topics to consider when studying place attachment. Raymonda, Brown, and Weber (2010) associate *place identity* and *place dependence* with personal contexts, while *social bonding* and *nature bonding* were salient in the community and natural environmental contexts respectively. Hay (1998) equally decided to include not just the "attachment" dimension but the "insider feelings," "ancestry," and "motivation" in a place as substantial reasons to measure the intensity of place attachment. With the intention of measuring the concept of "rootedness" as an affective interpretation of attachment to place, McAndrew (1998) developed a scale that assessed the positive (i.e. the *desire for change* 6-item subscale) and negative (i.e. the *family/home satisfaction* 4-item subscale) experiences of place attachment. These subscales (i.e. *desire for change* and *home/family satisfaction*), according to McAndrew, "are consistent with the overall concept of rootedness, in that high satisfaction with the current state of one's home and family and a strong desire for change would seem to represent the positive and negative ends of the rootedness dimension" (1998, 413). In other words, rootedness results from long habitation in a place which may, in its extreme lead to an unreflective state of incuriosity toward the world at large. McAndrew (1998) sees this lack of curiosity towards other places as the negative aspect of rootedness whereas a desire to experience other places was conceived as the positive aspect of rootedness. However, these two dimensions of rootedness (i.e. *home satisfaction* and *desire for change*) did not correlate to each other in McAndrew's (1998) principal component analysis.

Lalli (1992) developed an Urban Identity Scale for measuring place experience. The measurement is comprised of subscales such as "Evaluation," "Familiarity," "Attachment," "Continuity," and "Commitment." The first subscale "Evaluation" compares the uniqueness of a place in relation to other places. "Familiarity" on the other hand speaks of the cognitive orientation of an individual about a place grounded in daily experience. The "Attachment" subscale describes the general sense of

belonging to a place. The "Continuity" subscale describes how past experiences in one place is equally synonymous with the emotional history of a new place, whereas "commitment" measures how an individual is interested in building present and future relationships in a place. All of Lalli's (1992) subscales strongly correlate with each other.

Alternatively, Seamon (2012, 2014) took a different approach entirely to elaborate on place attachment from a phenomenological angle. Seamon proposes a triadic interpretation of place attachment, based on Bennett's (1970, 1993) philosophy on systematics. Seamon (2012) argues that place can also be discussed from three dimensional angles: *geographic ensemble* (natural and human made elements of a place), *people-in-place* (individual and group actions, interactions, and meanings in a place), and *genius loci* (the nature of the spirit of place). Seamon's approach to place attachment is ideal for qualitative research, since it is phenomenologically and anthropologically constructed.

Interestingly, the three-factor models of Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) and Seamon (2012, 2014) for understanding the phenomenon of people-place relationships seem to share similar conceptual features and might help us to understand place attachment more holistically. As we turn to the next section, the place attachment propositions of Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) and Seamon's (2012, 2014) will be conceptualised with the aim of elaborating on a broader/integrated framework that sufficiently explains the nature of people-place relationships and experiences.

Place attachment dimensions: A people-place relationship triad

An important concern on place attachment which has not yet received much needed attention among researchers is the distinction between the kinds of 'places' attachment is developed. An attempt will be made to conceptualize Jorgensen and Stedman's (2001) three-factor model and Seamon's (2012, 2013) three dimensional approach to place attachment in this section as a guide for future empirical research.

Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) sampled a total of 743 households living in eight lakes in Vilas County in the Northern Highlands Lake District of North Central Wisconsin to ascertain the "environmental quality,

environmental values and behaviours" of the lakes "with respect to riparian forest and woody debris distribution, recreational behaviours, perceptions of lakeshore development, attitudes toward the lakes and properties" (p.240). In their paper "Sense of Place as an Attitude", Jorgensen and Stedman argued that people-place attachment may be developed due to certain socio-psychological attitudes (such as affect, behaviour, and cognition) that are significantly expressed in the process of attachment. In this understanding, place attachment then becomes a complex psychosocial phenomenon that catalogues identifiable feelings, interactions, and thoughts between the self and a place. When place attachment is amplified in this way, it is consistent with the general understanding of attitude in social psychology. The understanding of attitude can suggest a theoretical ambit for (re)organizing components that describe people-place relationships. Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) list such components as cognition, affect, and behaviour, which function as psychological attitudes that influence place variables of identity, attachment, and dependence. Hence, "place identity" is described as a cognitive attitude of place attachment, whereby association with place inspires a cognitive identification of a sense of self. In the same vein, Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) argue that "place-attachment" (as a variable of place attachment) is represented as an affective component of place attitude since it is amplified by the emotional reaction one has towards a place. The underlying argument in favour of "place dependence" is that it portrays the behavioural (conative) domain of place attitude in which individuals express dependence on a place, depending on their performed actions in such settings. This multidimensionality is framed from the notion of attitude in social psychology.

Along similar lines, Seamon's (2012) phenomenological approach to place attachment enables us to concentrate on the study of people-place experiences as structures of consciousness in "any environmental locus that gathers individual or group meanings, intentions, and actions spatially" (Seamon 2012, 3). The underlying argument in favor of Seamon's phenomenological position is that people-place relationships, as part of an integral structure of human life, can be explored in terms of three dimensions: *geographic ensemble* (GE), *people-in-place* (PP), and *genius loci* (GL). Seamon's (2012) views are grounded in the assumption that "geographic ensemble" is the "material and environmental qualities of

place, including topography, geology, weather, flora, fauna, and natural landscape as well as any human-made elements, including constructions and their spatial configurations—for example, buildings, street furniture, pathway layout, and placement of land uses" (Seamon 2012, 10). The "people-in-place" (PP) experience "relates to the human worlds unfolding in the geographical ensemble." Seamon refers to PP as "the lifeworlds and natural attitudes of the place, including actions, routines, events, and understandings, whether unself-conscious or conscious, in which individuals and groups involve themselves in relation to their place" (2012, 11). The "genius loci" experience of a place on the other hand "refers to the unique ambience, atmosphere, and character of the place—for example, the 'London-ness' of London or the 'Santa Fe-ness' of Santa Fe" (Seamon 2012, 11). Seamon (2012) noted that both the GE and PP experiences contribute to the GL experience—although GL might have its own unique reality and originality, since human beings are prone to know and engage instinctively (cf. Durrell, 1969; Lane, 2000; Relph, 2008, 2009; Seamon, 2012).

After juxtaposing different models of people-place attachment experiences from the studies of Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) and Seamon (2012), as seen above, we will herewith integrate both frameworks simultaneously to formulate what is called a *people-place relationship triad* (see Figure 1). This procedure is believed to help us (re)organize an integrated model for explaining place attachment or people-place relationship experiences.

Following the above procedure, place attachment is thus given a threefold dimensionality using Scannell and Gifford's (2010) tripartite organizing terminology for understanding place attachment in relation to the theoretical propositions of Seamon (2012) and Jorgensen and Stedman (2001). Scannell and Gifford (2010) seem to have done a good job of introducing a three-dimensional approach for understanding place attachment experiences using terminologies such as *place dimension* (i.e. the inward and outward attachment to place); *process dimension* (i.e. the psychological attachment to place); and *person dimension* (i.e. the individual and collective attachment to place). From here, we will explore and compare how the different contributions to place attachment experiences fall within the frame of the people-place triad that is proposed in this paper.

Place dimension: inward and outward attachment to place

The place dimension will be conceptualised based on Seamon's (2012) "geographic ensemble" and Jorgensen and Stedman's (2001) explanation of the "place-attachment" variable. On these conceptual grounds, it is proposed that the *place dimension* is an attachment bond to the material, physical, and social elements of a place. This view is grounded on the assumption that "geographic ensemble" entails the environmental qualities of a place which often make one place different from another - ranging from topography, geology, weather, flora, fauna, natural landscape, buildings, street furniture, pathway layout, and placement of land uses (cf. Seamon, 2012). Similarly, Jorgenson & Stedman's (2001) understanding of "place-attachment" as an attribute of place experience that is rooted in the affective connection to spatial settings equally supports our definition of the *place dimension* in people-place relationships. A spatial setting in this context of people-place attachment is described by its physical, social, or material elements (cf. Graziano & Atkinson, 2014; Ghosh, Ungureanu, Sudderth, & Blei, 2011). In other words, it describes the natural image segmentation of a place which can often be experienced as a social or physical affect. The *place dimension* is therefore the affective *attitude* in a place attachment experience.

Scannell and Gifford's (2010) conceptualization of place attachment sees the "place dimension" having two aspects: social and physical (cf. Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Mesch & Manor, 1998). Thus the social aspects of place dimension articulate the experiences with a social arena or physical symbol of a place, while the physical aspect identifies with the natural environment and man-made elements in a place. Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001) assessed the social and physical aspects of the *place dimension* at three different spatial settings (neighborhood, city, and home). They noted that both the physical and social constructs of the place dimension should be considered when explaining place attachment. However, Uzzel, Pol and Badenas (2002) and Mazumdar & Mazumdar (2004) saw the place dimension as the emotional bonding with tangible assets in a place that give rise to some sort of proximity seeking-behaviors with such place. The place dimension is called the physical-social nature of a place because it focuses on the social affect (like the density or amenities) and

physical elements (like infrastructure or natural elements) of a place that people are "attached to . . . that facilitate social relationships and group identity" (cf. Scannell & Gifford 2010, 4). Hence, certain social qualities such as density, proximity, and amenities influence interactions at the social level of the place dimension (cf. Fried, 2000), which often inspire a socially based people-place relationship. This is equally the position of urban sociologists like Gans (1962) and Hunter (1978) who see place attachment as a social phenomenon propelled by social interactions that a place affords to people who reside there.

On the contrary, the place dimension is also experienced as a physical *affect* (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck & Watson, 1992) since individuals identify with nature as part of their self-concept (cf. Clayton, 2003). Clayton (2003) stressed in his study an alignment to parts of the natural world with how individuals define themselves. Similarly, Stedman (2003) argues that individuals attach themselves to the architectural meanings and physical features of a place. The architectural features and symbols of a place, e.g. mountains, historical buildings, modern architectures, transport system, wild life, climate, etcetera, can reinforce one's sense of being and even activate certain personal, social, or religious experiences. Hence, as the individual consistently bonds to a place and depends on the physical and social features, such place proximity could trigger other dimensions of place attachment experiences (e.g. the process dimension or the person dimension) as the individual begins to develop new identities in a spatial setting.

Process dimension: psychological attachment to place

The second dimension is the "process dimension" (cf. Scannell & Gifford, 2010), which is a behavioral attitude developed towards a place based on the definitions of "place dependence" and "people-in-place" - as constructs that shape attachment to place at the process dimension. Jorgenson & Stedman's (2001) "place dependence" was seen as the behavioral function of a place in supporting our life goals, or simply put: the opportunities a place afford for our valued goals and physical activity needs (cf. Stokols & Schumaker, 1981; Harmon, Zinn, & Gleason,

2006). Seamon (2012) on the other hand defines "people-in-place" as how the human world unfolds in the *geographical ensemble* (social and physical levels) to contribute to the psychological awareness of self. Scannell and Gifford also reason that it "concerns the way individuals and groups relate to a place and the nature of the psychological interactions that occur in the environments that are important to them" (2010, 3). This refers to the life-worlds of actions and events or natural attitudes or the unique culture of a place that pull individuals and groups to a place.

The process dimension conceptualizes both the *place dependence* and *people-in-place* propositions as behavioral processes and interactions that occur in a place that are of importance to individuals and groups in that place. As a rebuttal to this point, it might be argued that the process dimension has a behavioral function since it is often expressed through actions and behaviors that draw us closer to a place due to the perceived advantage of the place in providing goal-support and self-continuity (cf. Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001, 274). It is put forward that this is equally consistent with the *place-dependence* and *people-in-place* logic of place attachment.

The process dimension is the behavioral response to place attachment, grounded in the desire to remain close to a place because of certain perceived benefits or advantage of a place. For instance, when attachment to a place is a result of a military career, diplomatic corps mission, job transfer, participation with/in a religious network or gathering, and etc. This kind of place attachment experience is not necessarily influenced by the physical attraction or connection to a place (i.e. the place dimension) but is determined by the institutions or activity an individual is part of which is in a specific place. It is inevitable that such individual has to depend on the place for their life-continuity, religious participation, or career support. This dimension appears to influence the next dimension: *person dimension*. This claim is based on Twigger-Ross and Uzzel's (1996) place-related distinctiveness thesis, which supports that a strong desire to remain close to a place or depend on a place at the "process dimension" can create certain attributes of social identity or place identity that represent our embodied identity, incorporating some sort of self-definition. This will be further discussed in the next section.

Person dimension: individual and collective attachment to place

The person dimension incorporates Jorgenson & Stedman's (2001) "place identity" and Seamon's (2012) "genius loci" as the cognitive attitude of place attachment. Place identity was defined by Jorgenson & Stedman (2001) as the beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions invested in a particular place to create a sense of belonging. Similarly, Seamon (2012, 2014) refers to this experience as "genius loci". This is how the unique ambience, atmosphere, or character of a place is absorbed by an individual in order to identify with the sacredness and character of that place (cf. Loukaki,1997; Rigby, 2003). By showing the significance of individual perceptions of place, the findings of DeMiglio and Williams (2008) lend support to the claim that the person dimension as the conceptualization of "place identity" (cf. Jorgenson & Stedman, 2001) and "genius loci" (cf. Seamon, 2012, 2014) is generated by subjective human experiences. At the person dimension, people-place experiences are usually self-regulated and self-determined by individuals and groups that experience it.

At both the "place" and "process" dimensions, a people-place relationship experience can become a personal journey that shapes and informs the "person dimension" and as a result, place is no longer located in a spatial setting, "but in the head" (Rigby 2003, 110). From here, an individual might have a personal experience in a particular place (or perceive place in a certain unique way) in a way that alters and changes his or her belief system, worldview, or identity - depending on the available place-like effects, variables, and features in such setting (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983).

In its cognitive function, the *person dimension* of place attachment occurs at both individual and collective levels, whether as a community or individual (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). At the individual level, the person dimension is predictable with places that evoke certain symbolic and personal memories or experiences that activate the internal working models (IWMs) of attachment, as the individual goes on a personal journey of self-discovery in a place (cf. Manzo, 2005; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). This self-discovery journey allows the individual to change their perspective of a place from the inside-out based on their personal experiences in that place. This may also include but is not limited to having

certain religious and socio-cultural experiences in a place. The individual might at this point adopt certain cultural attributes and unique characteristics of a place such as speaking the language of a place, developing the accent of a place, and generally seeing their identity as similar to that of the natives. Hence, individual and group experiences in a place that is a target for proximity-seeking behaviors give meaning to the place attachment experience in the construction of place identity at the person dimension (cf. Manzo, 2005). Place attachment is therefore based on how a personal or shared symbolic meaning of a place is understood amongst different cultural and religious cliques (Low, 1992). Sociologists discuss place attachment from this perspective as a "community process in which groups may become attached to certain areas wherein they may practice, and thus preserve their cultures [or religion]" (cf. Scannell & Gifford 2010, 2; cf. Gans, 1962; Michelson, 1976). Through shared cultural or religious links, groups can be attached to a particular symbolic place that is tied to their belief systems—just as Jerusalem is to Christians and Mecca is to Muslims.

Diehl and Konig (2013) in their study noted that individual and group - shared hostility, marginalization, racism, discrimination, exclusion, and other place *negatives* experienced by non-natives and minoritie can also trigger the *person dimension* of place attachment. Disruptive experiences experienced by non-natives in a place are more likely to make them develop new relationships with symbolic figures or objects in a place to regain their sense of worth and dignity (Connor 2010, 381-382). Equally, developing self-worth in a place also works through transnational networks - as "individuals and communities maintain networks of relationships (religious and otherwise) that keep them connected to their country/culture[or religion] of origin and to kindred communities around the world" (Frederiks 2015, 188).

More than a personal experience, religious and cultural communities play an important role in the *person dimension* as transnational networks. Through different networks of interactions within religious and cultural communities, place is often seen performing the function of a "home away from home" for many non-natives and migrants (Warner 1993, 1059-1063). This corresponds to Frederiks' (2015) claim that migration to a new place impacts the religious experience and beliefs of migrants

and non-natives, in a way that assists their process of settling (cf. Adog-ame, 2012; Frederiks, 2015).

Therefore, within the *process* and *person* contexts of people-place rela-tionships, it is argued that religious, corporate, and cultural communities may be experienced as attachment structures and symbols that serve as some kind of safe haven for security, secure spaces for building business/social relationships, and *places* of spiritual and emotional support. Per-sonal experiences within these networks of communities shape the *person dimension* of people-place relationship. Place in this context is depicted as a response to group- or person-felt identification, marginalization, and discrimination in a place of attachment (cf. Warner 1993, 1059-1063; Frederiks 2015, 184-195). Furthermore, when individual and collective groups grapple with the challenging experience of separation, disorienta-tion, and marginalization, they may construe meaning in their conflict by relating to an available attachment figure or object that acts as some kind of affect regulation tool (cf. Counted, 2015, 2016b, 2016c in press; Kirkpatrick, 1998). The attachment roles and advantage of religious and cultural communities as sources/symbols of spiritual and mental well-being in a place can also contribute to the *process* and *person* dimensions of place attachment as individual and collective groups become more attached and dependent to a place. This is what Levitt (2004, 2) calls the "transnational religious [and cultural] practices" and "memberships in spiritual arenas." Given that recent research on place attachment does not provide substantial narratives that explain the people-place relation-ship development and process, it would be interesting to examine people-place experience as a socio-cultural and religious phenomena, taking into account the operationalization of the *person dimension*.

In addition, there is no agreement as to how these three dimensions of people-place relationships develop or overlap with each other. However, you would easily notice how the "place dimension" often overlaps with the "person dimension", and how the "process dimension" is equally pre-dictive of the "person dimension." Regardless, it is believed that studies that assess these correlative attributes using the SOP or any other place attachment instrument would be of great significance to the study of people-place experiences. Furthermore, a future qualitative research that pays close attention to the meaning of place using the proposed threefold

dimensions of place attachment would also be of great value. However, examining how place attachment may change over time remains a key area of research that requires our attention but more so, how such developmental dynamics may influence behavioral and religious and mental health responses at different levels. Also, with focus on the people-place framework presented here, empirical and theoretical endeavors that would examine whether one can be attached to more than one place attachment dimension at a time would be of great significance too. Hence, by conceptualizing and making sense of people-place relationships and experiences in this paper, we can now understand how experiences of place attachment are operationalized within different contexts, and with such conceptualization we can further advance research on place attachment by applying the interdisciplinary perspective provided in this paper.

Conclusion

The idea of people-place relationships and experiences was examined in this article from the perspective of attachment, with the aim of clearing the ground for further discussions on attachment bonding to places. Among the different conceptualizations of place attachment discussed in this article, the works of Seamon (2013) and Jorgensen & Stedman (2001) were spotlighted for the purpose of understanding the different attributes and experiences of people-place relationships. This allowed the author to (re)organise a people-place relationship triad, where we saw place attachment in three lights: the *place dimension*, *process dimension* and *person dimension*. This classification has helped us to deconstruct and simplify the different concepts and disharmony associated to place attachment, in a way that clarifies its affective, behavioral, and cognitive functions. This has also enabled us to create an explanatory framework for understanding the different symbolic "places" attachment are developed during people-place relationship experiences. It is believed that this conceptualization would be useful for both quantitative and qualitative researchers in advancing their studies on place attachment, in a way that is interdisciplinary and holistic in nature.
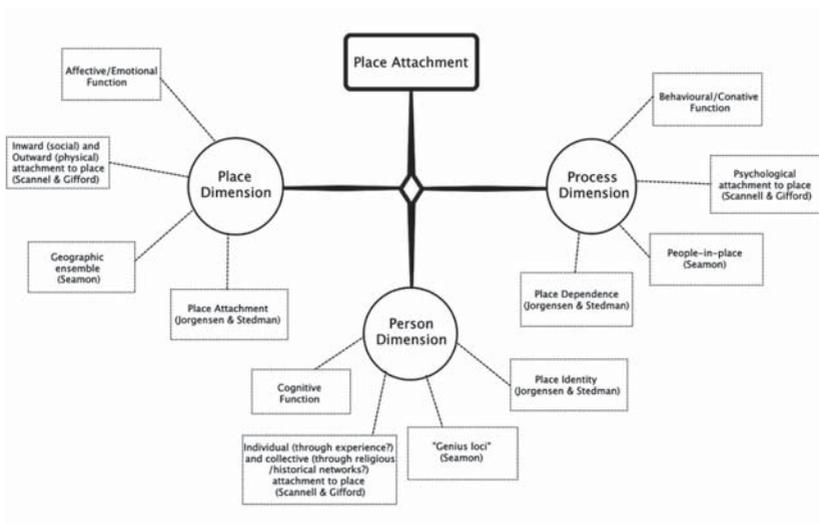
Figure 1: *Summary of the people-place relationship triad of place attachment*

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Notes

1. A "significant place" can be a residential environment (Fried, 1963), enclaves (Gans, 1962; Rivlin, 1987; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2000), compounds (Pellow, 1992), sacred places (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004), religious place (Bowen, 2002), and homes (Marcus, 1992; cf. Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1994), among others.