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# Home Making in Low-Cost Housing Area

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**Abstract**

Studies assessing the conditions of low cost housings have mostly focused on satisfaction levels and subjective perception of quality particularly with regard to the dwelling units or the larger neighbourhood characteristics. However, residents usually react upon their immediate environment to achieve satisfaction and make the surrounding area as their home. This paper relates appropriation, attachment and identity as home making mechanisms through which residents strive to achieve those satisfactions. Literatures are reviewed to identify the specific behavioural components of home making. A range of informative cues is found in forms of human activities and physical traces observable in low-cost housing.

*Keywords*: Low-cost housing; home making; social interaction; appropriation; residential outdoor space.

## 1. Introduction

The relationships between the physical environment and social life of urban low cost housing have been assessed in a number of different perspectives. Among others, residential preference and satisfaction, housing design features, residential crowding and attachment, have been used to explain the relationships of physical design and social aspects of housing (Mohit, Ibrahim, & Rashid, 2009; Paim &

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Yahaya, 2004; A. Salleh & Yusof, 2006; A. G. Salleh, 2008; Tan, 1979; Tan & Sendut, 1983; Yahaya, 1998). These studies pointed out the importance that housing design and planning are more sensitive to the social conditions of living in low cost housings. The presumption is that the standardization of design and the economic constraint of such development somehow neglected the social significance of housing.

However, most of these assessments dealt with perceptions, preferences, and subjective values, which were disconnected from the environmental contexts, and neglected the adaptability of human in their environment. Perception and subjective interpretation of satisfaction elicited through interviews are also susceptible to misinterpretations. People often indicate higher satisfaction level of living in a place and show acceptance to the current residential conditions despite being moderately contented. For example, Leong (1979, p. 130) found that residents generally do not like to make negative remarks and avoid discussing sensitive issues such as privacy. The positive responses made often conceal tolerance and adaptation made towards inadequacies (Fried, 2000, p. 199). High adaptability in humans also enables people to acclimatize themselves to appear satisfied with the deprived housing conditions when their options are limited. Despite being an efficient way to uncover thoughts, preferences, and intentions, interview findings exclusively may also be too reactive and unrealistic particularly for application in certain specific socio-physical conditions (Nasar & Yurdakul, 1990, p. 72). For application purposes, the close approximation of socio-physical conditions between the researched and applied environments is important. Questionnaire approach is also found to be vulnerable to self motivated "systematic distortion" and failure to recall certain specific conditions in question (Nezlek, Wheeler, & Reis, 1983).

On the other hand, observable data involving naturalistic settings brings a number of advantages (Laraia, et al., 2006). First of all, it provides important contextual features existing in the setting such as facilities, environmental quality, and nature of social conditions pertinent to the variable being studied. It also takes into account the temporal dynamics involving continuous changes occurring in studied setting. Finally, it could also provide attribute and aspects indicating pathways of how the surrounding neighbourhood influence the dependent variables studied. Most significantly, observable behaviours are most directly related to the physical environment that works together in conditioning them. Understanding and observing the patterns of these behaviours within specific physical context, such as outdoor housing spaces or near home spaces, could explain the social life of the housing neighbourhood in relation to the built environment. Most importantly it reveals how people actually adapt, modify, change, and use the settings, or even vandalize the place, move out or isolate themselves from the settings, to deal with incongruence and dissatisfactions.

Thus, this paper proposes an assessment of the social life of a low cost housing environment through observations of these overt behaviours that are related to place making framework and theories associated to the social functioning of housing environment. It argues that these overt behaviours, in the forms of social interaction, territorial markings, surveillance, personalization, care and civilities, are the place making constructs people engage in that manifest the meaning of home place. The outdoor housing area becomes the main medium that holds abundant evidences of this home making venture. A study of people's transactions with the environment could possibly reveal a certain pattern of the residential life experience including attachment, satisfaction, communal life and other social measures important in housing research and certainly provides an alternative to viewing environment as given. The influences that people exert on the environment deserve as much research attention as the influence the environment exerts on people's perception and feeling of satisfaction, and consequently would better explain the relationships between the designed environment and residents' behaviours.

## 2. Methodology

Literatures from various contributing fields are brought together to identify the behavioural components of the sense of place attributes in order to develop a conceptual framework that will allow us to describe the objective home making behaviours in low cost housing area. The selected literature reviewed are mainly sourced from the four main group of intellectual discourses namely 1) Environmental and Psychological Behaviours, 2) Landscape, Geography & Phenomenology, 3) Sociology and Gerontology, and 4) Urban, Planning and Built Environment. The studies selected are limited to those pertaining to the meaning of home and sense of place. The studies are mostly electronically published journals such as Environment Behaviour, Science Direct, Proquest and Ebsco Host. Themes of the sense of place and sense of home area extracted from the studies that are found related and descriptive of the objectives behaviours concerned. The purpose of the analysis is to find the common recurring themes within various fields of research found to describe the sense of home place.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1. The Functional Significance of Outdoor Housing Area for home making

In most developing countries, urgent issue of housing the poor centres on aspects of land, shelter, infrastructure and poverty which overshadow the concern for home place. However, it is argued here that creation of home place is as important to the urban poor as to other more fortunate citizens. There are two aspects to be stated at the outset in order to understand the significance of home making in the low cost housing environment. Firstly, home making is more critical in low cost housing environment for the sheer lack of space and the constraints caused by the standardization of design. Due to this lack of space, the outdoor near-home space of low cost housing area plays significant roles in complementing the dwelling and supporting the home making endeavour. It is often considered an extension of home to residents and thus encourages use and appropriation, and promotes attachment, care and investment (Brunson, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2001; Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008; Mee, 2007). Secondly, such processes, in turn, constitutes an important component that generates of the vitality and social life of the otherwise dreary housing environment.

Low cost housing merely satisfies the most bottom and fundamental human needs for shelter and neglects other needs that people aspire of a home including psychological, social, and aesthetic needs and ultimately, the need for self actualization (Israel, 2003). These needs are obviously influenced by people's personal, cultural and social background, values and lifestyles. Together they determine the goals people set for their picture of ideal homes (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950; Israel, 2003; Priemus, 1986). However, due to lack of resources and provision of minimal space, people in low cost environment strive harder to achieve these goals and struggle to distinguish their self presentation and deflect negative stigma of living in the depressing conditions (Klaufus, 2000, p. 344). For example, despite the low standard of living, they gain a certain degree of self-respect through spatial appropriation and façade adaptation. Paint, borders, and motifs are used to lift the aesthetic value of their houses. Mass housing outdoor space should afford such use and appropriations. Lack of those affordances will cause additional strain and continued dissatisfaction or isolation (Dayaratne & Kellett, 2008).

Besides physical context, the residents of a low cost mass housing also need to confront the social contexts in order to create their home place. The high density condition of such housing compels residents to engage in or regulate interactions with the people living close by. Social interaction plays a substantial part in defining how an individual regards the housing environment and experiences the home (Mee, 2007). While individual freedom could be practiced inside the home, certain collective norms and tolerant

behaviour needs to be taken into account while outside. Social context also provides potential social support and social network particularly important in low income community. However, excessive social interaction would also become a source of nuisance. Control of interaction in the form of personalization and territorial marking of near-home area serve as important forms of home making behaviours. In addition, personalization of home also provides means for identification of self others as well as signifies religious or ethnic affiliations thus making social interaction easily controlled. In sum, the ability to regard outdoor residential in low cost mass housing area as home, through involvements and care, not only benefits in the formation of community and the care of space (Marcus, 2002; Mee, 2009), but also exhibit the social life of the housing area. Consequently, housing area holds pool of life experiences that inform us on the place making process that people undertake and indicates a sense of place.

## 3.2. Transactional Process of Making A Home Place

Housing comprises both social and physical contexts and settings supplying both sources of potentials and problems. People not only perceive these contacts but react to satisfy their picture of home environment.

"…the place we call home is a combination of physical and social environment, the interplay of which may create either a stimulating, satisfying background for people or a dull and frustrating one. It is the quality of physical aspects of 'place' and the opportunities for social life and activity offered which will largely determine how good a home we provide." (Spyer, 1971, p. 121)

The activities of making a home place explain the transactional relationship people have with their physical and social settings (Irwin Altman, 1992; Stokols, 1978; Werner, Altman, & Oxley, 1985). Following the argument, sense of place would be most closely related to the residents' views regarding the potentials and challenges of their neighbourhood social and physical environments. Their behaviours would describe their actual perception of and reactions to the settings. Analysing the sense of place in a residential setting should allow us to understand the neighbourhood processes. It shall provide a framework through which social, psychological, political-economic and environmental circumstances could be addressed in appreciating human-environment interactions particularly in housing researches (Easthope, 2004, p. 137).

The transactional concept explaining the relationship between man and its surrounding environment originates in the phenomenological sense of place (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1979; Tuan, 1975). Sense of place is a form of tie that connects man to his environment and serves as a means to understand the surroundings (Relph, 1997, p. 208). Seamon (1979) has identified five themes of at-homeness as the result of the place making process which includes: 1) rootedness as a source and expression of one's self and identity that root one spatially, 2) appropriation as control of space such as for ownership and privacy, 3) regeneration denotes the restorative powers of the physical home, 4) at-easeness as sourced from familiarity and routine, and 5) warmth as provided for by the atmosphere of friendliness, concern and support through establish relationships (Seamon, 1979, p. 78). However, such phenomenological convention has produce little empirical basis desired in quantitative method (Stedman, 2002). In housing research application, a more positivistic approach supporting an empirical framework is much needed. Steeles (1981) has provided a framework of sense of place which simplifies the relationship of both the social and physical settings and the personal aspects a person brings into it. Within this framework, sense of place is defined as the reactions which includes outcomes such as feelings, perceptions and behaviours as a person comes into contact with a setting (Steele, 1981, p. 12).

A similar framework contributed by the research of sense of home place in the study the elderly living environment details the cognitive domains involved (Oswald & Wahl, 2005). Together with physical, social, cognitive, and emotional, the behavioural domain, such as everyday activities in place and

environmental manipulation, constitutes the construction a home place in this framework.  In a similar context, Rowles and Watkins have applied the framework that further define the sense of place as results from three major behavioural processes namely the habitual use of space (physical aspects), social interaction (social aspects) and meanings and events attached to the place (personal aspects) (G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003). Rowles and Watkins identify two distinct components characterizing home namely the subjective components and the objective behaviours. The subjective component encompasses a range of subjective experiences including a sense of belonging manifested in residential satisfaction, place attachment and meaning. The objective component comprises a range of objective behaviours observable in the functional use of the environment. The latter views the phenomenon of human habitation of dwellings from a positivistic analytical perspective which parallels the argument of this paper.
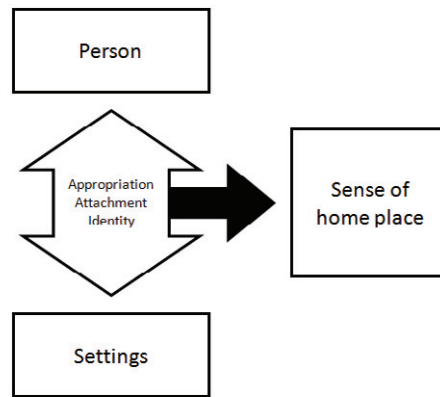
Fig. 1. Transactional process of making a home place

   Such heuristic framework, however, has been used mostly to explain the cognitive feeling of home in the elderly residences. Nonetheless, the environmental fit and congruence model that is utilized in characterizing the home making process in the elderly residents bare similarity with the discussion in the previous section on the limitations effects of the low cost housing environment. The dwelling context of the former affords possible basis for a more specific framework relating low cost housing. To do that a more specific attributes related to and characterizing low cost housing situations must be supplied such that objective behavioural components of such home making processed could be viably described and analysed. Werner, Altman, & Oxley (1985) offer a more comprehensive framework in describing home feeling. They argue that people invest places with meaning and significance and act in ways that reflect their bondage and linkage with place by ways of appropriation, attachment and identity (Werner, et al., 1985).  Thus, place making in a residential environment is an interactive processes between the dwellers the environment and the surrounding social contents of the housing area. Figure 3 summarizes the previous discussion and the framework for studying the transactional process of generating a sense of home place in a low cost housing environment constituting the three behavioural attributes. The process through which this sense of home place is achieved constitutes some of the most meaningful aspects of life experiences and interactions (Fried & Gleicher, 1976). However, the specific behavioural components of the three attributes still need to be identified.

Table 1. Summary of studies home making attributes

| Domains | Attributes | Environmental Psychology & Planning | Urban Planning & Built Environment | Landscape, Geography & Phenomenology | Sociology & Gerontology | Subtotal | Total mentions | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appropriation (physical setting) | use of space and habitual/mundane activities | 6 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 17 | 52 | 29.5 |
| | space and territorial manipulation, and control for privacy and security | 7 | 15 | 3 | 10 | 35 | | |
| Appropriation (social setting | social interaction & encounters | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 3.4 |
| | social network/contacts | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | | |
| Attachment (physical setting) | care, maintenance and commitment to space | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 12 | 47 | 26.7 |
| | positive and negative experiences and perception of place (rest/pleasure/comfort) | 16 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 35 | | |
| Attachment (social setting) | social relationship | 6 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 18 | 10.2 |
| | social support, care and participation | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | | |
| Identity (physical setting) | rootedness, belonging, ownership and possession | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 14 | 40 | 22.7 |
| | familiarity, place of reference and identity presentation | 10 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 26 | | |
| Identity (social setting) | common symbols/meanings | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 13 | 7.4 |
| | common experience/affiliation | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | | |

## 4. Results And Discussion

In human-environment transactional perspective, people invest places with meaning and significance and act in ways that reflect their bondage and linkage with the place by ways of appropriation, attachment and identity (Werner, et al., 1985). These definitions provide a clear and all-encompassing framework through which place making behaviours could be categorized and analyzed. The three domains are used to categorize the themes found in the literature. Table 1 summarizes the findings.

### 4.1. Appropriation

Appropriation of space is the exercise of control over specific physical environment for the purposes of occupancy, defence and attachment (Brower, 1980, p. 180). Review indicates that, the most mentioned attribute sense of place related to appropriation are use of space and habitual activities in the place. Daily activities and uses of space are sources of vibrancy and vitality in a place (Holland, Clark, Katz, & Peace, 2007). Trivial and mundane activities, such as walking to work or sitting outside the houses, could inform improvements to be done for the environment. People also feel more at home with a familiar environment and people. Such familiarity and the mundane predictable activities distinguished the environment from its surroundings (Despres, 1991; Feldman, 1990). They are particularly important in taking possession and establish familiarity with the new setting (G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003). Such

routine activities and familiarity gradually become taken for granted and shift one's acts from the realm of conscious decision-making to implicit and often unconscious routine (G. D. Rowles, 2006). As residents habitually use the housing area, they become familiar in the environment and their feeling of home reaches out beyond the house and their sense of belonging increases and allows them to connect to the wider community (Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008). The significance of these routine encounters and shared experiences informs the life of a place (Dupuis & Thorns, 2002; Gehl, 1987; Oswald & Wahl, 2005).

Territoriality is another recurring form of appropriation found in numerous literature. It is characterized by attempts to control the appearance and feeling of possessiveness of the space (Brower, 1980, p. 180). It functions as the expression of individual and group identity, in addition to regulation of social interaction through physical and symbolic demarcation of residential properties (including fences, hedges, decorations and signs). Spaces are appropriated to display territorial domain critical in exerting control and providing sense of ownership to the surrounding area. Territoriality in the near home environment also helps establish secondary territory facilitating mutual familiarity and the sense of control, which in turn, encourage neighbour involvement or feeling of responsibility for outdoor housing space (Harris & Brown, 1996). Ability to appropriate and control immediate home space is also vital to avoid infringement or even loss of privacy (Seamon, 1979, p. 81). Territoriality and personalization of immediate housing area were found to be particularly important in poor living condition to enhance self esteem and reaffirm a sense of ownership (Klaufus, 2000). This sense of territoriality and control is achieved not only through personalization and physical markers but also through surveillance facilitated by permeability of the boundary between the dwelling unit and the immediate environment where the sense of human presence brings a sense of comfort (Fried & Gleicher, 1976, p. 559).

The housing area was also found to be appropriated for social interaction and encounters which in turn contribute to the sense of home place. A sense of home place is also achieved when the occupants feel at ease to conduct everyday mundane activities, and engage in interactions with their neighbours. One of the most frequently mentioned reason for feeling at home is interpersonal attachment inclusive of meeting people and knowing neighbours (Cuba & Hummon, 1993a). Social interaction is significant as the process of making a home which includes establishing, nurturing and managing social relationships (Dayaratne & Kellett, 2008). Housing area where social interactions take place enhances the sense of housing area as a social unit (Coolen & Ozaki, 2004; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003). A home place is where opportunities for development of social ties and casual interaction are available and the housing area is appropriated as a source of social familiarity not attached to the dwelling (G. Hayward, 1982). Even frequent passive and brief contacts between people are important forms of social interaction. If frequent enough such contacts could develop into acquaintanceship gesture, which open an avenue for verbal exchange and further into friendship (Cattell, Dines, Gesler, & Curtis, 2008; Gehl, 1987). In addition, such contact is also important to strengthen weak ties and maintain existing friendship in a (Cattell, et al., 2008; Stafford, et al., 2003). The way one personalize the near home space also relates the sort of interactions one is trying make to the surroundings. The personalized space acts as interface between the occupants and neighbours that regulate semi private territory as well as allow the expression of identity and openness towards interaction. Isolation and excessive public engagement is also balanced through regulation of the desired interaction or privacy by being able to control and manage the near home semi-private space (I. Altman, 1975). Hence, there are reciprocities between people and place, and between the house and its surroundings. The nature and the extent of social interaction and relationships established in a setting develop a sense of home place through the richness of its social life.

Table 2. Home making behaviours: Appropriation

| Behavioural attributes | Authors |
| --- | --- |
| Use of space and habitual/routine activities | (Case, 1996; Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008; Despres, 1991; Dupuis & Thorns, 2002; Fleury-Bahi, Félonneau, & Marchand, 2008; Hargreaves, 2004; Robert Hay, 1998; Holland, et al., 2007; Lawrence, 1987; Manzo, 2003; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; Relph, 1976; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003) |
| Spatial control (ability to appropriate and act upon the space, to exert territoriality, care, ownership, visual and physical security) | (Bendiner-Viani & Saegert, 2007; Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008; Coolen, 2006; Despres, 1991; Dupuis & Thorns, 2002; Easthope, 2004; R Hay, 1988; D. Hayward, 1975; G. Hayward, 1982; Lawrence, 1987; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003; G. D. Rowles, 2006; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1991; Somerville, 1992; Taylor, 1988) |
| Social interaction and social encounters | (Coolen, 2006; Fleury-Bahi, et al., 2008; Hargreaves, 2004; G. Hayward, 1982; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003) |
| Social control (ability to control one's privacy, interaction, freedom and psychological security) | (Burchfield, 2009; Dayaratne & Kellett, 2008; Despres, 1991; Dupuis & Thorns, 2002; G. Hayward, 1982; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; G. D. Rowles, 2003; Seamon, 1979; Somerville, 1992) |

## 4.2. Attachment

Attachment to place describes the bonds people have to physical and social settings that support their identity and provide them with other psychological benefits (B. Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003; Giuliani, 1991). It is experienced in various ways, forms, degrees, and with varying awareness (Giulliani, 2003, p. 137). In relation to place making behaviours, attachment refers to the ability to relate to the people, as well as the physical places (Fried, 2000; Giulliani, 2003). Review of the literature shows that attachment is the most widely studied attributes of sense of home place among the three categories. Care, maintenance and commitment to place, experiences and perception of place, together with social relationship, support and participation are among the salient forms of behaviours indicating attachment to place. In the context of housing area, home place is experienced through residents' appropriations involving ornamentation, maintenance and housework as well as other physical, financial and psychic investment (Despres, 1991, p. 102; Klaufus, 2000; Teo & Huang, 1996). This places housing area or the near home context as a vital space where the feeling of home is attached to in complementing the dwelling units.

An environment invokes a significant sense of place and attachment due to the experiences, memories, history and the intimate relationship it offers (Despres, 1991; G. Hayward, 1982; Manzo, 2005; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003). Shared social events and activities within the neighbourhood are among the experiences that could bind people together. Formation of group initiatives towards certain objectives or reactions towards certain tragedies could also serve the similar function. Giuliani (2003) identified some behaviours that constitute manifestation of this attachment to a place which include territorial behaviour, establishment of local ties and unwillingness to leave the current residence. Care and investment people put in towards the social setting (such as neighbouring and social support) and the physical environment (such as modification, beautification) also indicate such attachment people have to the place (Mee, 2009; Teo & Huang, 1996). Rootedness and identity attached to a place and affiliation to the neighbourhood, also promote a positive evaluation of the home place atmosphere (Fleury-Bahi, et al., 2008, p. 678).

Table 3. Home making behaviours: Attachment

| Behavioural attributes | Authors |
|---|---|
| Care, maintenance and commitment to space | (Coolen, 2006; Cuba & Hummon, 1993b; Easthope, 2004; P. Gustafson, 2001; Robert Hay, 1998; Mee, 2009; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; Relph, 1976, 1997; Smaldone, Harris, & Sanyal, 2005) |
| Experiences and perception of place, memories and history (important life events, childhood, pain, tragedy) and comfort (stimulation, warmth, peace, tranquility) | (Canter, 1977; Case, 1996; Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008; Cuba & Hummon, 1993b; Dayaratne & Kellett, 2008; Despres, 1991; Farbstein & Kantrowitz, 1978; Fleury-Bahi, et al., 2008; P. E. R. Gustafson, 2001; Robert Hay, 1998; G. Hayward, 1982; Lawrence, 1987; Manzo, 2003, 2005; Mazanti & Ploger, 2003; Moore, 2000; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; Relph, 1976, 1997; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003; G. D. Rowles, 2006; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1991; Somerville, 1992; Stedman, 2002) |
| Social ties, relationships (network of neighbours, friends, families) | (Bendiner-Viani & Saegert, 2007; Coolen, 2006; Cuba & Hummon, 1993b; Dayaratne & Kellett, 2008; Despres, 1991; Dupuis & Thorns, 2002; Easthope, 2004; Fleury-Bahi, et al., 2008; Fried, 2000; P. E. R. Gustafson, 2001; Robert Hay, 1998; D. Hayward, 1975; G. Hayward, 1982; Hill, 1984; Lawrence, 1987; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; Seamon, 1979; Somerville, 1992) |
| Social support (affection, warmth, instrumental support) | (Cuba & Hummon, 1993b; Dupuis & Thorns, 2002; D. Hayward, 1975; Mee, 2009; Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1979; Somerville, 1992) |

Meaning of home also constitutes attachment to others. A home place offers senses of belonging and being cared for by family members as well as by friends and neighbours (G. Hayward, 1982; Mee, 2009). Thus, attachment, in residential context, also refers to the feeling of being deeply related not only to the dwelling unit but also to the local social surroundings (Feldman, 1990). To be attached to a certain environment is also an active interactional process generated through interactions within households and neighbours, for example, by giving and receiving care (Mee, 2009). A sense of home place in a neighbourhood is felt when one is surrounded by people one can depend on in times of needs. Studies also found that people cultivate sense of belonging in a local community through active engagement in community life (Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008; Fried & Gleicher, 1976; Mee, 2007). Affective structure of social network and relationship among neighbours solidify group identity, which expands the sense of home and family outside the dwelling. This communal bond, in turns, links people to the physical places (Fried, 2000). Thus, the sense of place can be observed through the extant of social relationships generated in a place. Social relations interaction has repeatedly been identified as particularly important source of attachment in numerous studies (Burchfield, 2009; Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008; Fried & Gleicher, 1976; Mee, 2009). Relationship with others offers infinite source of knowledge in the dwelling process that people take up both towards self satisfaction and that of the housing environment. The established relationship grounds a person with the roots of existence known as attachment. Lack of these roots causes one to find the ground elsewhere or, when mobility is constrained, leads to strain in the local environment caused by sense of isolation.

## 4.3. Identity

Construction of identity is another form of home making apparent in the reviewed literature. Identity makes us unique (personal identity) and also similar to other people (social identity) (Hauge, 2007). In making a home place, we need both capabilities to establish our own distinctive and existence in the world (G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003). A house affords the reference point or locational core where identity is attached and where the surrounding social and spatial relationships is organized (Tuan, 1977). While dwellings and neighbourhoods were found to provide such information defining personality and taste,

interests, life phase, social status and relationships (Hauge, 2007), such process of home making is particularly critical as well as problematic in standardized mass low cost housing.

Table 4. Categories in experiences of home place: Identity

| Behavioural attributes | Authors |
|---|---|
| Rootedness, belonging, ownership and possession (place to identify with) | (Easthope, 2004; Fleury-Bahi, et al., 2008; Fried, 2000; Giuliani, 1991; P. E. R. Gustafson, 2001; Robert Hay, 1998; Moore, 2000; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003; Seamon, 1979; Smaldone, et al., 2005; Stedman, 2002; Werner, et al., 1985) |
| Base of reference, familiarity and core of identity expression (Personalization, identification, lifestyle, status) | (Canter, 1977; Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008; Dayaratne & Kellett, 2008; Despres, 1991; Dupuis & Thorns, 2002; Fried, 2000; Hargreaves, 2004; D. Hayward, 1975; G. Hayward, 1982; Klaufus, 2000; Lawrence, 1987; Manzo, 2003; Marcus, 1999; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003; G. D. Rowles, 2006; Seamon, 1979; Smaldone, et al., 2005; Somerville, 1992; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Werner, et al., 1985) |
| Common symbols and meanings (group affiliation) | (Coolen, 2006; P. E. R. Gustafson, 2001; Lawrence, 1987; Mazanti & Ploger, 2003; Moore, 2000; Relph, 1976; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1991; Stedman, 2002) |
| Common experiences | (Mazanti & Ploger, 2003; Relph, 1976; G. Rowles & Watkins, 2003) |

The notion of identity also relates to attachment in the sense that the place of attachment affords territory for associations with self-image or social identity (Brower, 1980, p. 192). The place one identifies with have a certain congruity with the image one wants to express or the lifestyle to which one subscribes. People construct and reconstruct identity by choosing environment deemed congruent to their self concepts, modifying the setting to enhance self represent, or moving to other places more suitable for their sense of selves (Manzo, 2003; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Places that have particular characteristics or potentials to be appropriated for such purposes become most meaningful as a home place. Otherwise, personalization serves as important means for residents to express self identification by displaying personal items and modifying the exterior in order to reveal their preference and lifestyles.

The needs for home making though the process of identity construction is also motivated by the desire to conform to popular images and conventions, to obtain social acceptance, social respect and personal dignity, and to connect to the community (Dayaratne & Kellett, 2008). Identity is also sourced from acceptance and affiliation to certain groups. Personalization and decoration of the immediate home areas signify not only the process of identity representation (Cooper, 1976), but also a way of identifying with the local group or neighbours (B. B. Brown & Werner, 1985; Greenbaum & Greenbaum, 1981). Shared meanings and organizational structure are learned and acquired through the practiced of everyday life within familiar social and environmental settings. Consequently, the construction of place could only happen through the engagement and life experience in specific social setting. A residential setting provides the stage for people to reaffirm, and adjust their self conceptions (Feldman, 1990, p. 188). Within this setting they evaluate and adapt their own self, their integration within physical place and the social group within that community. Through this, they acquire the meaning of their homes within the particular residential setting. Thus, attainment of home place depends not only on the ability to express one's identity, but also to identify with the physical and social settings.

## 5. Conclusion

It has been established that, within the context of mass housing, a home place is not only what the dwelling units offered. Recurring within the discussion of the meaning of home place is that it constitutes a continuous transactional process of establishing oneself within his physical and, most notably, social

contexts or settings. The process involved has been described as place making (Steele, 1981) and experience of place (Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2008). Housing outdoor space or near home space play important role in facilitating home making ventures and becomes favourite place for appropriation. In addition, it affords space in the development and maintenance of social contact and relationship. Having good relation not only means developing network of ties and network of support, it also means having an ability to manage such relationship and regulate interaction as one desires. Territorial behaviours and personalization are beneficial in the appropriation of near home space, for example, to create buffer or semi private spaces meant to control access visually or physically.

The outdoor space of dwelling unit represents the connection and relationship of the dwellers and the others surrounding them. This outdoor space could well function as an extension of the living unit or a place from which people would avoid. Within the architectural terms, this space includes the landscape, corridors, staircases, courtyard, parking, and other facilities or amenities supporting the building. The outdoor housing, generated by the layout and organization of dwelling units, is usually regarded as the leftover space meant only to connect the units together, and as a means of circulation. However, it is important to realize the important social functions that this space play because it is the most immediate space and the most routinely used area. It could work well to facilitate a number of important social functioning of housing. Understanding their potentials would complement other common space and public facilities that need to be provided in a housing area to foster community and neighbouring relationships. Some conclusions that could be made from the discussion would be:

- Outdoor housing space holds important information on home making process that is yet to be tapped. Extensive observational research has the potential to provide empirical evidence explaining space appropriation, attachment and identity construction in low cost housing environment.
- People engagement in social interaction and appropriation of near home space serves as means of making the housing their home place through a number of observable behaviours.
- Observable interactive behaviours are viable variables that could explain the place making phenomena in the residential environment as they are related to theories previously proposed in environment-behaviour field.
- The outdoor space near the home serves not only as a physical connection between the houses, but also as a spatial extension to the house. Thus, it affords social connections among the residents, and attachment to both the home and the community.

It is hope that development of such a framework would be able to generate hypotheses in understanding and explaining how the low income dwellers cope with living in the low cost housing, and how they are able to appropriate outdoor spaces to make the housing area their home place.

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