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A heuristic look at “Sense of Place” for planning

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Abstract

Despite considerable progress in conceptualization of sense of place through multiple disciplines, there is still room for further clarification in light of its utility for planning research and practice. This discussion paper posits that sense of place can be conceptualized for planning based on two factors: 1) the type of function for using the concept (evaluative, leveraging and enhancing); and 2) the unit at which a sense occurs, or place of sense (individual-, place-level, or an interaction of individual, place, and other people). Through some illustrated examples, we demonstrate how the conceptual framework we propose can be used to better identify specific sense of place attributes and associated planning actions. While doing so, we also attempt to relate sense of place discourses with the roles of planning in environmental stewardship and promotion of health and well-being, which have previously been less articulated.

Keywords: sense of place; place of sense; environmental stewardship, health and well-being

Résumé

Malgré les progrès considérables de la conceptualisation du « sens des lieux » à travers de multiple discipline, il reste encore de la place pour une clarification supplémentaire à la lumière de son utilité dans une gamme de recherches et de pratiques en matière de planification. Cet article postule que le « sens des lieux » peut être conceptualisé pour la planification en fonction de deux facteurs : 1) le type de fonction d'utilisation du concept (évaluation, effet de levier et amélioration); 2) l'unité à laquelle un sens se produit, ou le « sens du lieu » (au niveau de l'individu, du lieu et où une interaction d'un individu, d'un lieu et avec d'autres personnes). À travers quelques exemples, nous démontrons comment le cadre conceptuel que nous proposons peut-être utiliser pour mieux identifier les attributs spécifiques du « sens des lieux » et les actions de planification associées. Ce faisant, nous tentons également d'intégrer les discours sur le sentiment d'appartenance pour les rôles qui sont moins articulés dans la planification – la gérance de l'environnement et la promotion de la santé et du bien-être.

Mots-clés : « sens des lieux »; lieu de sens; gérance de l'environnement ; santé et du bien-être

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Introduction

Sense of place has been a subject of inquiry for over four decades of multidisciplinary scholarship (Williams 2014). In recent years, sense of place and its many related terms have appeared in planning literature and discourse, sometimes being used as buzzwords for neighbourhood development and urban design (Cross 2001). A substantial volume of place-people research, spanning across geography, sociology, environmental sciences, and planning (Lewicka 2011), generally concludes that the presence of sense of place contributes to the success of communities.

However, definitions of sense of place have been just as fluid as definitions of ‘place’, for which scholars have struggled to “construct paradigms from an ever-expanding list of meaning and definitions” (Wilkie 2003, 29). The purpose of understanding sense of place also varies between disciplines, resulting in disparate conceptualizations in research and practice.

For planners, sense of place may play a key role in defining community identities and helping communities to flourish socially and economically. Community planners may find it particularly useful for identifying what future changes would be embraced or resisted among community members, by better understanding community members’ emotional bonds and special meanings for a place. Another buzzword, *placemaking* refers to community development activities through which planners and citizens intentionally create destinations—by exhibiting street art in a public space, naming a place (landmark, street) of cultural and historic significance, or carrying out public events (concerts, sports events and festivals)—to attract community participation (Schupback 2015). These activities can instill meaning and deeper attachment in community members and visitors alike (Manzo and Perkins 2006).

However, a cynical tone expressed by Jackson (1995) still remains today, describing sense of place as “a much-used expression, chiefly by architects but taken over by urban planners and interior decorators and the promoters of condominiums, so that now it means very little” (24). In particular, planners are still largely mystified with the concept and how it can be effectively and meaningfully applied to their practice in this era of globalizing culture, economy, and ‘environmental concerns’ (Brehm, Eisenhauer, and Stedman 2013).

This paper re-examines the empirical use of the sense of place concept in planning-related fields and proposes a conceptual framework that adds to the conceptualization of sense of place suitable for different planning aims, which could help planners and planning researchers operationalize and measure different types of sense of place in a meaningful way. We conceptualize our framework based on two factors: 1) the function of the concept in planning; and 2) the unit at which a sense occurs. The latter—we call *place of sense*—builds on the framework by Beidler and Morrison (2016), which treats the environment as having an intrinsic ‘sense’ as opposed to individuals having a collective sense for the place. Understanding that some senses of place occur at supra-individual level is beneficial to broadening the applicability of the sense of place concept in a wider planning practice context. In addition, our paper attempts to further the conceptualization of sense of place in light of health and well-being, for which practical applications have not yet been fully discussed. In this paper, the term ‘sense of place’ (singular) refers to the general construct, while ‘senses of place’ (plural) may be used to refer to some specific sense of place attributes.

Background: An overview of sense of place research

The origin of *sense of place* is commonly associated with the Latin phrase *genius loci*, found in ancient Greco-Roman tradition (Stedman 2003; Beidler and Morrison 2016). Translated, this phrase refers to the spirit of place, or, more specifically, the guardian spirit of a place which gives that landscape its identity and meaning akin to divinity (Jackson 1995; Frumkin 2003). According to Beidler and Morrison (2016), the modern use of sense of place first appeared through human or “humanist” geography in the 1960s. Research on sense of place surged from the mid-1970s and early 1980s, leading to realms of inquiry such as *topophilia* (Tuan 1974) and *placemaking* (Raymond, Kytta, and Stedman 2017). The concept of topophilia, often called the love of place, was introduced by Yi-Fu Tuan in the 1970s as the affective relationship between a landscape and the response it elicits in a person (Cross 2001). Placemaking refers to the ways in which public spaces are shaped to evoke the identity of a particular place and promote its assets or potential as well as the well-being of the local community (Relph 1976).

In more recent scholarship, sense of place has been studied as the product of, or related to, several similar concepts, such as *place identity*, *place attachment*, *place dependence*, and *place meaning*. Place identity (Proshansky 1978) is a type of sense of place that refers to how one’s self-meaning, understanding, or expression is influenced by his or her relationship to a place. Similarly, place attachment is thought to be an emotional or affective bond with a place

(Low and Altman 1992; Gurney et al. 2017). Sometimes considered a component of place attachment (Cundill et al. 2017), place dependence usually refers to the relationship occurring between an individual and place due to the ways in which the individual's needs are served by that place (Stokols and Shumaker 1981; White et al. 2008). Finally, place meaning has appeared in the literature alongside place attachment and represents the beliefs formed about a place by an individual due to the personal or social significance that place holds for them (Kyle et al. 2004; McGunn and Gifford 2018). Definitions of sense of place and related concepts like those above have “proliferated in recent years” (Brehm, Eisenhauer, and Stedman 2013), and papers do not always agree on their definitions.

In addition to defining these concepts, many studies have attempted to tease out the roles and potential effects of these concepts in relationship to ‘place’. Qualitative methods seen in the literature often involve interviews and surveys, where respondents express their felt connection to place. For example, Hay (1998) asked respondents to reflect on their feelings of attachment, belonging, the importance of ancestry, and their reason for choosing to reside in a place. Such lines of inquiry have often led to numerous typologies and terminologies, such as Cross's (2001) relationships to place (i.e., biographical, spiritual, ideological, narrative, commodified, and dependent), that attempt to generalize different kinds of person-place relationships (Lewicka 2011; Cross 2001). Pictorial analyses have also been used where participants respond to imagery or discuss personal associations to certain stimuli—such as photographs of landscapes or activities (Stedman et al. 2004; Beckley et al. 2007).

Positivist thinking prominent in studies from the 1960s led researchers to seek ways to objectively measure sense of place (Beidler and Morrison 2016). Examples of senses that have been quantified are length of residence, quality of housing, or percentage of property ownership in communities as proxy for residents' attachment to place (Lewicka 2011). Studies have also used Likert-type scale analyses (Gallina and Williams 2015; Kitchen, Williams, and Chowhan 2012). Stedman (2003), for instance, asked residents to rate their level of satisfaction (from “extremely satisfied” to “extremely dissatisfied”) with elements of their lake community, such as the scenery, water quality, wildlife population, and recreation activities. Inventories of landscape elements and place meanings are sometimes described spatially. For instance, Fang et al. (2016) used GIS mapping to show locations of sensory elements identified as significant to sense of place by participants—such as traffic noise, bird songs, or scents of flowers. Some recent sense of place research has attempted to quantify their value, such as in the case of ecosystem service benefits in natural landscapes (Poe, Donatuto, and Satterfield 2016; Wynveen, Schneider, and Arnberger 2018). Brehm and colleagues (Brehm, Eisenhauer, and Stedman 2013) demonstrated differential effects of place attachment (emotional bond) and place meaning (qualitative account of what the place means) on how individuals weigh ‘environmental concerns’ such as preservation of the natural environment from local to a global scale through regression models.

For planners, sense of place is an important concept to understand as their practices shape the spaces in which people live and work, build social relationships, and develop shared meanings. Seminal works positing the importance of sense of place in planning—such as Manzo and Perkins (2006) which articulated the roles of place attachment—have primarily conceptualized sense of place as an element by which planners can better anticipate how community members respond to proposed change via planning processes. Most any changes—even if the changes may be desirable for the whole of a community—can be threatening to its members, especially when it involves uncertainties as to whether a place of special meaning or attachment for some community members will be preserved (Beckley 2003). Therefore, it is important for community planners to be aware of such places and communicate clearly how the changes proposed will impact the existing meaning of the place.

While planners tend to focus on urban, suburban or human-inhabited rural areas, planners have an important role to play in the sustainability of natural environments (Theobald et al. 2005). Environmental sciences have been more advanced in their understanding of the role of sense of place for purposes of natural environmental conservation (Brehm, Eisenhauer, and Stedman 2013, for example). In recent decades, however, planners have started exploring the role of sense of place in ecosystem and heritage conservation (Jive'n and Larkham 2003; Walker and Ryan 2008).

A heuristic look at sense of place and planning—adding to current conceptual frameworks

We conceptualize our framework in a way that helps planning to delineate the utility of sense of place with consideration for two factors: 1) the function of the concept in planning; and 2) the unit at which a sense occurs (place of sense). The first factor is about what planning use a given sense of space for, and the second factor pertains to where the sense originates. We first illustrate the two factors in detail.

The functions of sense of place in planning

We consider the functions of sense of place in planning in three categories: 1) evaluative, 2) leveraging, and 3) enhancing. The diagram below (Figure 1) summarizes the conceptual framework focusing on the types of uses.

Function type #1. As an indicator of place quality or characteristics (evaluative). The first function of sense of place for planning is evaluative, meaning that sense of place attributes are typically measured to understand the quality or characteristics of the place—such as desirability, attractiveness, or more generally, ‘success’ of a place (community, town, city, etc.). Successfulness or perceived value of a place (community, neighbourhood, for instance) may be measured by certain quality or characteristics of the place as their indicators. For example, friendliness, aesthetics, and busyness of a community may be considered an attractive (or unattractive) quality (Ghoomi et al. 2015). In this context, the sense of place is a kind of abstract feeling shared by the community members and repeat visitors akin to sense of belonging and collective identity. Fostering such sense of place could potentially contribute to the stability and sustainability of a community—what Manzo and Perkins (2006, 343) call “well-functioning communities”. This function does not try to achieve them as an end goal, but rather use the indicators as means to an end. For example, the attractiveness of the place will enhance the place to entice residents, businesses and visitors to come, leading to economic and social vibrancy, where economic and social vibrancy is the intended aim.

Some planning research may ask a more theoretical question such as why some communities flourish while others decline. A place may lack deeper place identity despite its economic prosperity. The notion of *placelessness* (Relph 1976) urged a paradigm shift in planning practice in the recent past—i.e. of proliferating suburbia with box shopping malls, chain stores divided by highways, and no space for organic social interactions. Placelessness, a term coined by Relph (1976), describes the failure of a landscape to conjure sense of place or evoke meaning. Therefore, assessing the presence of sense of place in a community can help planners gauge the performance of the community and identify what action is necessary to increase the desired quality.

Function type #2. As a tool to achieve specific planning aims (leveraging). The second function considers a given sense of place as a tool to achieve different planning aims by leveraging the existing state of sense of place or by newly cultivating types of sense of place. For instance, because of the stewardship and personal connection that sense of

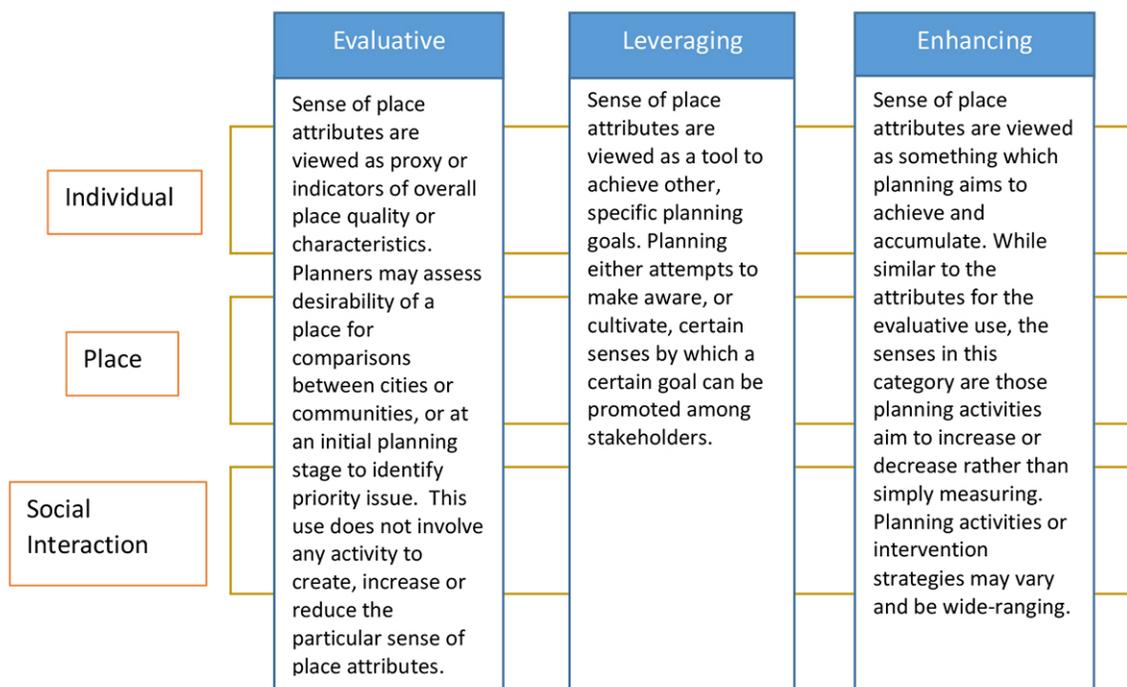


Figure 1
Conceptual framework of sense of place for planning focusing on the functions

place evokes, several researchers have looked at the relationship between sense of place and environmental conservation, heritage preservation, and rural development (Walker and Ryan 2008; Ramkissoon, Smith, and Weiler 2013). Larson, De Freitas, and Hicks (2013) found that greater sense of place—measured as residents' self-reported value of environmental, economic, and social well-being characteristics—leads to stronger connection to, and feelings of responsibility and stewardship for, Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Poe, Donatuto and Satterfield (2016) found similar results that strong feelings of sense of place result from higher levels of human activity in a natural area and correlate to greater support for restoration of natural features. In a similar vein, Cundill et al. (2017) argued that the long-term sustainability of a natural landscape may be hindered by policy prohibiting stewardship by surrounding communities, whereby neglecting their personal and cultural attachment to it.

Heritage conservation and rural development can also benefit from the stewardship induced by sense of place. Ouf (2001) argues for conservation that promotes sense of place by preserving local *habitus*. *Habitus* refers to the social environment of a place that individuals respond to and are socialized in, and is described by Campelo et al. (2014, 162) as “meaningful practices and particular ways of doing things”. Studies like these suggest that the strong connection individuals form through interacting with landscapes, such as urban marketplaces, historic buildings and natural landscapes, will lead to their stronger willingness to advocate for protecting them (Power and Smyth 2016).

Similar to heritage conservation, sense of place has also been considered marketable for tourism industries (Farnum et al. 2005; Ng and Feng 2020; Ramkissoon, Smith, and Weiler 2013). Campelo et al. (2014) pointed out how sense of place is useful for destination branding, where the goal is to convey and highlight the identity and culture of a destination to potential visitors. They found that, when residents are involved in the marketing process, communication material and programming reflect a more authentic representation of the destination's sense of place, resulting in greater satisfaction from tourists because their expectations are met (Campelo et al. 2014). The connection may be a manifestation of individuals' attachment or special meaning to the place. Ouf (2001) makes a distinction between cultivating ‘authentic’ sense of place and making design choices thought to mimic authenticity but that result in an “illusion (or ‘Disneyfication’, as it is known in the field of urban design)” (74). An environment can become ‘placeless’ when residents do not feel emotional connection to the manufactured sense (Goss 1993; Cross 2001).

Function type #3. As a goal of planning in itself (enhancing). The third is the enhancement of sense of place itself as a planning aim. For example, the planning practice known as *placemaking* involves activities geared toward achieving just that—to develop high degrees of sense of place primarily through “the manipulation of various activities, feelings, meaning and fabric that combine into place identity” (Strydom, Puren, and Drewes 2018, 166). While placemaking is a concept that has been around for four decades, the term has become more popular in recent years and increasingly understood as a marketing tool to promote a place and compete for visitors (Fair 2018; Uiang, Kozlowski, and Maulan 2018). Conceptualization of placemaking has also been evolving to include activities related to citizen empowerment and environmental management in other disciplines (Strydom, Puren, and Drewes 2018). In general, placemaking in planning has focused on revitalization of a community via installation of creative spaces—such as cultural hubs, events, and arts districts (Schupbach 2015).

Creation of “third places” also has a direct aim to promote sociability and social cohesion, while reducing social isolation, and strengthening feelings of belongingness and security in community members (Kitchen, Williams, and Chowhan 2012; Thompson, and Kent 2013). Such third places can be considered as ‘soft infrastructure’ (Rose and Thompson 2012), which also increases an attachment to place and help develop special meaning for participating individuals. Both placemaking and creation of third places are activities for the purpose of strengthening the stock of these senses as community assets.

Promotion of health and well-being of community members is one of the major purposes of planning. Health is a multifaceted concept, and can be considered as a broader physical and mental state beyond absence of diseases (WHO 2006). Well-being is also an ambiguous term, but we borrow a dictionary definition to define it simply as the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy (Cambridge Dictionary 2018). It is well-known that natural elements in our environment (such as green spaces, water features, and various flora and fauna) are beneficial for health of the human inhabitants as they have restorative effects from stress, cleans air, and provides leisure (Frumkin 2003; Poe, Donatuto, and Satterfield 2016; White, Virden, and van Riper 2008) particularly in urban settings. Feelings evoked from such therapeutic properties of a place may be considered as types of sense of place. For example, happiness, satisfaction, and sense of calm and tranquility one obtains from a place are in themselves measures of health and well-being. A popularized ‘science of happiness’, such as Montgomery's (2013), also articulates the link between, for

example, mode of transportation and psychological well-being of citizens. Conversely, lack of these senses may reduce individuals’ ability to deal with stress from daily lives, which can lead to depression and anxiety (Gattino et al. 2013; Kitchen et al. 2012; Agyekum, and Newbold 2016), and increase the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and immune-related illnesses (Corburn and Cohen 2012).

Place of sense: The unit where a sense occurs

The second factor in our conceptual framework pertains to the unit of sense of place occurrence. We call it place of sense. The place of sense can be grouped into three types: 1) individual, 2) place, and 3) the intersection of people and place. While research has started disentangling the complex meaning of sense of place, what has often been less explicit is where the sense occurs, or what possesses the sense. Much of the sense of place research discusses sense as a psychological response to a place by individuals when they receive sensory or cognitive information through interaction with a place (Jorgensen and Stedman 2011; Raymond, Kytta, and Stedman 2017). The sense these studies are referring to occurs within individuals—whether it is attachment, admiration, nostalgia or sense of belonging with the place. What some of the research defines as ‘place-based’ sense of place is emotional or psychological attributes (be it attachment, identity, meaning, dependency, etc.) shared by a collection of individuals (Manzo and Perkins 2006; Trentelman 2009). It is not an attribute that a place intrinsically possesses. In other words, the ‘ownership’ of the senses is still by individual persons. Since the individuals and groups filter their experiences (exposure to surrounding environment) through their own lenses, and construct the meaning of the experiences uniquely to themselves, the senses that they formulate also tend to vary for the same physical space (White, Virden, and van Riper 2008; Williams and Kitchen 2012).

In fact, some senses of place do ‘occur’ at the supra-individual level. Examples may be holiness, sense of grandeur, serenity, and liveliness that are attributed to the place itself or what happens in the place rather than what is manifested in an individuals’ mind (Arler 2000; Williams 2007). While these senses are often understood by a certain level of consensus by a group of individuals associated with the place and events in the place, they are not possessed by every individual who was exposed to the place. Regardless of interpretation by individuals, the place has a consistent quality that represents a certain sense. Figure 2 (next page) summarizes the ‘place of sense’ aspect of the conceptual framework.

The concept of place of sense is closely related to three of what Beidler and Morrison (2016) called four dimensions of sense of place: the self, the environment, and social interaction, with time as the fourth dimension. According to Beidler and Morrison, place identity, place dependence, and place attachment are example sense of place constructs in the self-dimension, as they are manifested within the cognition of individuals—thus, they ‘occur’ within individuals. What they called the environment-dimension is seen in studies that focus more on physical characteristics, or ‘aesthetics’, of a setting or locale (Beckley 2003; Lewis 1979). Examples include natural features (e.g. parks, oceanfront, hiking trails), landmarks (e.g. monuments, temples and churches), and the layout of streets and buildings. Other physical characteristics such as climate, geology, and the locationality of certain activities and amenities in a place (e.g. town centre) are also considered as within the environment-dimension. The ‘sense’ in this dimension, therefore, occurs at a place-level.

Some senses of place can occur at the intersection of place and people. Social interaction itself does not possess a sense, but a certain atmosphere is created from events where people have memorable interactions with others, facilitated in a physical setting. Street vibrancy, for example, may be a product of the physical element of the place like colourfulness and diversity of built structures, but not without the participation of people. It is the activities, noise, and energy of people interacting with a place and with each other that make a place vibrant.

Time influences the occurrence of senses in the other three dimensions. For instance, place attachment may occur instantly when a visitor sees a landscape with beautiful physical features such as a forest, ocean, or architecture of a building, while place dependence may be a product of accumulated experience over time (Hay 1998; Kyle and Chick 2007; Larson, De Freitas, and Hicks 2013). Time does not only mean length, but also could be about a stage in life, frequency of exposure, and seasonality (Stedman 2003). Sometimes, the meaning of a place such as nostalgia and love for a place that individuals feel may be a product of experience during their childhood, which is carried through their life-course. Accumulation of senses for older adults living in the same neighbourhood would make the sense of the place—e.g., attachment, belonging, meaning—all the more significant and complex. Meaning of a place created through some events such as religious rituals—e.g., holiness or serenity—may be a product of cumulative experiences over generations through history (Kyle and Chick 2007). Further, people may have different psychological responses

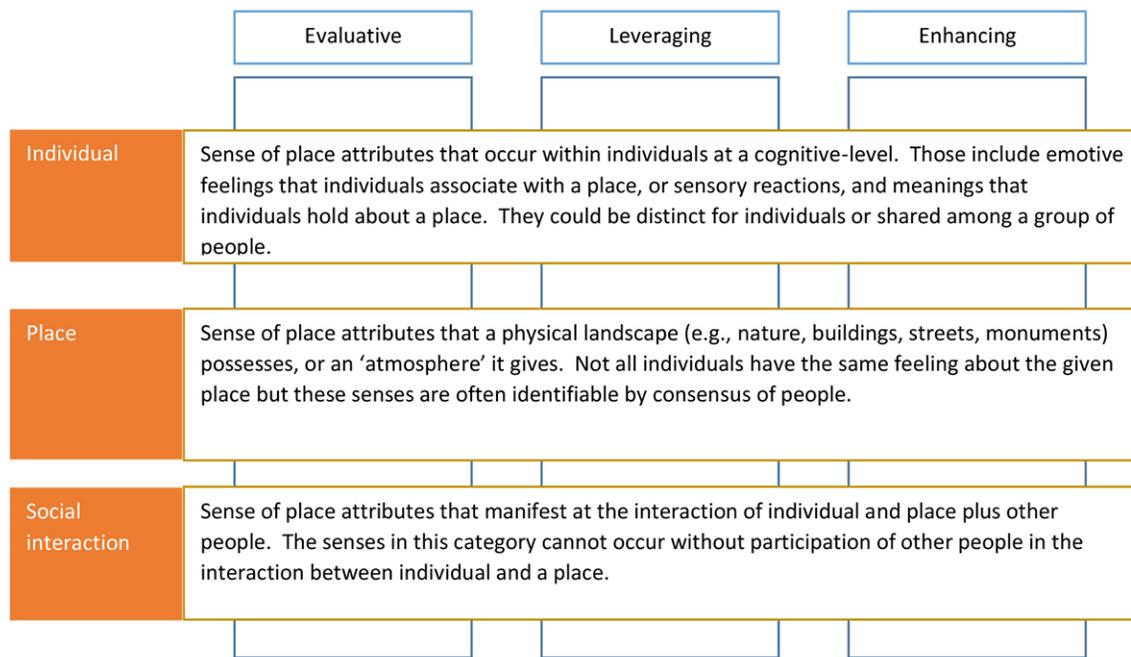


Figure 2
Conceptual framework of sense of place for planning focusing on place of sense

to a place specific to season (beaches in summer, a white Christmas) or time of day (sense of safety in the nighttime).

The question of *where* different senses of place occur has an important implication in planning because the types of intervention associated with sense of place may look very different depending on who or what it intends to target. Further, planners often value (and prioritize) senses of place that are attached to human usages. However, certain senses in places might be important for reasons beyond serving human activities. Considering places of sense can help prevent planners from losing sight of the idea that our environments do not exist solely for servicing human needs (Brehm, Eisenhauer, and Stedman 2013). Moreover, some senses of place may occur at multiple units, and may be relevant for multiple purposes (evaluative, leveraging, or enhancing). Clearly articulating the purpose of using a particular sense of place, and where it occurs, will help better target people or place for a more effective intervention.

Using the conceptual framework: Some examples

The following section describes how our conceptual framework may be used with some illustrative examples of sense of place attributes and relevant planning aims and activities—classified by the planning function type and place of sense occurrence. Wherever applicable, we also mention the influence of time. We highlight two aspects that have been less clearly addressed...in previous planning scholarship using the framework: 1) senses of place that 'places' possess; and 2) senses of place that are manifestations of health and well-being. The attributes and planning activity examples described here simply offer a few examples to demonstrate the use of the conceptual framework rather than forming an exhaustive list. We also note here that there are no attributes and planning activities listed for place-based sense of place in the 'enhancing' function, because the senses originate from a place itself by our definition and exist without human influence. Conservation of an environment requires human understanding of the sense but enhancing the sense is not a planning goal. Therefore, the related cells in the table are greyed out.

Sense of place as an indicator of place quality or characteristics (evaluative)

There are a wide variety of sense of place attributes that may be used to evaluate different qualities a place possesses (e.g., successfulness, attractiveness, desirability), and the relevant sense of place can occur at individual- or place-level, or at the intersection of the two. The examples may be place attachment, place meanings (individual), holiness, grandeur and tranquility (place), conviviality and vibrancy (intersection of people and place), as shown in Table 1. The influence of time can vary depending on the attributes, where a visitor may instantly take a liking to a place due to its

Table 1
Example sense of place attributes and planning activities by goal

	Indicator of place quality/characteristics (evaluative)		Tool to achieve other planning aims (leveraging)		Direct planning aim (enhancing)	
Sense occurring within individuals [the self]	Attribute examples -Place attachment -Place dependency -Love of place -Place meanings	Planning goals Gauge and compare success, attractiveness and desirability of communities	Attribute examples -Love of place -Place meaning -Place attachment	Planning goals -Promote conservation of natural environment -Heritage planning -Tourism development	Attribute examples -Contentment -Sense of safety -Danger/discomfort -Belongingness/inclusivity -Identity -Happiness -Satisfaction -Place meaning -Place dependency	Planning goals -Health and well-being of community members -Development of community resiliency -Aging in place
		<Activities> -Survey of community perceptions -Media content analysis		<Activities> -Town hall meeting -Continuing education at universities -Promotion materials through media		<Activities> -Land use designation for green spaces (parks, trails, etc.) -Update street lighting -Develop accessibility design guidelines -Neighbourhood watch -Conflict resolution
Sense a place possesses [the environment]	Attribute examples -Holiness -Grandeur -Tranquility -Aesthetic beauty	Planning goals Gauge and compare success, attractiveness and desirability of communities	Attribute examples -Splendor -Holiness -Grandeur -Solemnness -Place meaning	Planning goals -Heritage designation -Conservation of natural landscape -Conservation of agricultural land -Tourism development		
		<Activities> -Participatory community asset mapping -Site observation		<Activities> -Interpretive planning -Destination branding -Wayfinding design		
Sense a place and (other) people co-create [social interaction]	Attribute examples -Neighbourhood vibrancy -Conviviality -Placelessness	Planning goals Gauge and compare success, attractiveness and desirability of communities	Attribute examples -Place identity -Place meaning -Neighbourhood vibrancy	Planning goals -Tourism development	Attribute examples -Community cohesion -Community resiliency -Sense of empowerment -Sense of security -Place identity -Place meaning	Planning goals -Health and well-being of community members -Development of community resiliency -Aging in place
		<Activities> -Participatory community asset mapping -Site observation -Media content analysis		<Activities> -Promote cultural festivals, seasonal celebration and sporting events		<Activities> -Promotion of the ‘third places’ -Natural surveillance through neighbourhood watch -Community garden

natural beauty, while the deeper attachment and dependency to the place may typically occur from years of residency in the place. Time may influence how certain physical environments are perceived. For example, tranquility from the ocean is felt in a non-windy season, or snow coverage on a mountain may enhance its sense of holiness. Similarly, particular social interactions may take place on day-to-day basis or on special time in the year. The evaluative function is most relevant to research, which may be interested in qualitatively or quantitatively assessing the presence of sense of place attributes, using surveys across a sample of individuals or compile media materials to obtain a general idea of the quality a given place possesses.

Sense of place as a tool to achieve specific planning aims (leveraging)

This category points to senses of place utilized to achieve some specific planning aims. We use environmental stewardship, heritage conservation and tourism development as key examples for which different senses of place may be leveraged (Larson, De Freitas, and Hicks 2013; Poe, Donatuto, and Satterfield 2016; Walker and Ryan, 2008) (also see Table 1). Often, natural ecosystems as well as historic site or buildings of cultural significance may be at risk of being redeveloped, torn down or destroyed. A challenge planning faces is often not due to technical problems with conservation but instead due to low levels of support by community members, which does not help justify financial investment required for preserving these buildings and landscapes (Davenport et al. 2010; Ng and Feng 2020;). As a result, these places may be replaced by something of economically higher value for the short-run—such as high-rise commercial buildings and condominiums. Rural areas also often face development pressures and a possibility of losing agricultural landscape, which may possess a meaning to the nearby residents beyond a mere space of food production.

Three places of sense can likely be leveraged for these aims. First, planners may attempt to increase various senses in individual citizens such as love and attachment for the place, and special meanings that these citizens may develop. While all ecosystems are ultimately important for human survival, more geographically remote areas of environmental importance (wilderness far away from human settlements) may only pose abstract concerns for citizens.

Senses of place these environments possess—e.g., splendor, grandeur, and solemnness—may be just as important, but not necessarily be ingrained in human psychology, especially if they are not seen regularly (out of sight, out of mind) (Stedman 2003). Environment conservation planners and planning researchers, therefore, may make an effort to increase awareness of the site's significance. Interpretative planning (Healy et al. 2016) is an emerging area of planning aiming to preserve the stories about the historic and geographical significance behind the designated or potential heritage sites, and widely disseminate the information about the sites to locals as well as tourists. Informing the site's significance may in turn cultivate individual-level attachment and meanings associated with the sites. Planners may host an education program at a university, produce promotion materials to distribute via social media, or host an information kiosk at community events partnering with an environmental advocacy group (Ramkissoon, Smith, and Weiler 2013).

A sense of grandeur, splendor, or solemnness that visitors can only experience in a particular place is a tremendous asset for tourism (Campelo et al. 2014). These senses are received by visitors through encounters with natural landscapes such as waterfalls, bedrocks, or rare animal species, nationally and internationally known historic monuments or artwork in public space, or local festivals, food, and music. Like heritage conservation, tourism development planners may develop information materials (destination branding) to actively promote the sense of place attributes existing in tourism sites through marketing (Campelo et al. 2014; Ramkissoon, Smith, and Weiler 2013). Wayfinding design may also be implemented in order to make visitors feel welcomed by their environment, allowing them to navigate a new place with ease without becoming lost, and encouraging pleasant experiences (Forsyth 2015).

Recognition and celebration of cultural heritage can cultivate a sense of membership to the larger community residing in a place. Planners can encourage social interactions through events and festivals to celebrate and share cultural narratives through rituals (e.g., Easter, Powwow, Thanksgiving), sporting events featuring local teams, summer festivals, and other types of gathering. Such celebration may also enhance a community's desire to preserve a place as an important heritage (Jive'n and Larkham 2003).

An important caveat should be mentioned for considering sense of place as a tool to promote tourist economy. Tourism is a valuable urban planning tool for strengthening economic viability of communities (Williams and Stewart 1998). However, tourism can be harmful to sense of place in areas through overcrowding or the disruption of community habitus (Williams and Stewart 1998; Farnum et al. 2005). Hay (1998) expressed similar skepticism for tourism, saying that spending a short time in any place at best provides a superficial sense of place. Palau-Sau-mell et al. (2018) found that mass tourism of diving destinations in the Medes Islands of Spain was likely to lessen divers' feelings of attachment to place as it disrupted the personal, emotional relationship felt by individuals for the environment. On the other hand, Campelo et al. (2014) posited that destination branding, if done effectively, can enhance community pride and create a "renaissance" of the local culture. Planners should be cognizant of the impact the 'success' of tourism has on existing sense of place, which the sustainability of its economic benefits ultimately depends on.

The sense that evokes individuals' desire to conserve ecosystems, a building or landscape may require longer periods of residency or association with the place than a short visit (Stedman 2003; Larson, De Freitas, and Hicks, 2013). The sense felt by the individuals with longer association with the place may be greater than that of short-term visitors. The senses that tourism planning wishes to evoke may be instantaneous or need to be sustained for repeat visits.

Sense of place as an asset (enhancing)

Planning may consider many positive senses of place that individuals or communities perceive as important assets for the community. An example is a sense of safety, which directly contributes to the health and well-being of the community members. Planning research, then, may assess the general sense of safety by surveying residents and identifying where they may feel safe or unsafe (which is also evaluative). Based on the findings, planners may determine priority areas to invest in infrastructure improvement such as lighting or regulate placement of infrastructure and amenities through bylaws and design guidelines. Sense of inclusion may be enhanced by building more accessible public bathrooms and park furniture and provide funds to communities for neighbourhood-watch programming. Securing or enhancing green spaces through land use planning and bylaws—i.e., to designate areas of urban reforestation or restrict clearing of green spaces—will contribute to creating stress-reducing or therapeutic environment in communities.

Social support, cohesion, and safety in a place can be considered as proxy for health and well-being of the community and its members. A place that provides these senses may be characterized as a ‘healthy place’ (Frumkin 2003; Gattino et al. 2013; Kitchen et al. 2012). These senses are likely products of social interactions facilitated by a place. What enhances the sense of social support and safety may be the presence of community groups and networks, and neighbourhood-events that enable interaction and enhance the social ties between members of the place. Sense of safety may also be enhanced by these factors, akin to the effect of ‘eyes’ on the street (Jacobs 1961). Planning may promote land use patterns that facilitate establishment of the ‘third places’ in walkable distances in each neighbourhood.

Recently, the creation of communities that allow residents to keep living in the place as they retire and enter into an older age—i.e., aging in place—has become a pressing issue for planning. As seen in Fang’s study (2016), older adults are likely able to maintain their health and well-being where their social support and networks are intact. The opportunity for older individuals to maintain independence will also lead to their feeling of empowerment. Social planners, therefore, are interested in fostering high levels of sense of safety and confidence through support services such as community centre programming. Again, urban design and community programming that facilitate natural surveillance of streets and neighbourhoods adds to the opportunity for aging-in-place, where neighbours can watch out for older individuals.

Conclusion

Beidler and Morrison (2016) state that “individual interpretations, environmental understandings, sociocultural encounters, and temporal experiences are ultimately intertwined in the transformation from space into place” (212). They also indicate that development of a sense of place is one of the important aims for planners and urban designers. But the reasons for understanding sense of place go beyond prevention of creating ‘placeless’ space, or minimization of opposition to change in community development processes. Rather, there are a few distinct planning aims in which senses of place are instrumental. We therefore pushed their claim further and attempted to illustrate what types of sense of place are important in some planning aims and where in the dynamics of individual, place and in-between, these senses occur. Our discussion is limited to a few example contexts, and there is a myriad of sense of place attributes that are also important but not mentioned. However, we attempted to tease out operationalization of some uses of sense of place for aims that are increasingly becoming mainstream in planning research and practice, such as enhancement of environmental stewardship, promotion of health and well-being, and land use change and social programming conducive to aging-in-place.

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