Re-Place

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ABSTRACT

Re-place is an imaginary work of the mind that tries to constantly re-establish itself in the physical world commonly known as *Place*. The idea of association, familiarity, and acceptance constantly looks for a place to be anchored to; but what place is this? Placing oneself in a position to be part of a larger social pattern in search of a definition of self; but what is this definition of self? Is it consciousness or acquired wisdom, is it conceptual or empirical, is the idea of position then a place phenomenon? This means Place is a construct and the essay argues that it can never be constructed anew, but can only be re-placed. A construct is defined not just by the material reality of the place but also by the thought and un-thought 'Definitions and Memory' of the place. The essay tries to expand on the idea of 'Memory' to enter the concept of Re-Place. The essay uses various place constructs to understand, perceive and conceptualize the idea of Place, Place production and Place meaning.

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Introduction

Re-place is an imaginary work of the mind that tries to constantly re-establish itself in the physical world commonly known as *Place*. The idea of association, familiarity, and acceptance constantly looks for a place to be anchored to; but what place is this? Placing oneself in a position to be part of a larger social pattern in search of a definition of self; but what is this definition of self? The narrative of an individual's living experience is captured in expressions like sadness, joy, excitement, love, betrayal, and other lived moments. These notions of lived expressions form the basis of continuity between the past and the present. The images of such expressions are captured in a specific time and place, embedded in the socio-cultural setting. For example, festivals play a very important role in the continuity of time. Previous years' experiences are carried to the present through certain events or performances of acts that have struck a chord in one's mind. Though the experiences lack details, the expression is remembered. One thrives to reassure or yearns to continue these experiences by re-performing the acts. What matters here is not the details of the experience, but the remembering or recollection of the act itself. These continued expressions of individual memories sustained in a situation not just gives clues of the possible trajectory of one's life but also exposes the trajectory of the place, re-placed over time, and what more it wants to be.

The essay discusses the Place as memory, repository, process, idea, and narrative to illustrate the ever-shifting place constructs. Place then becomes interesting as it can help extract meanings from common and ordinary practices of everyday life and keeps replacing itself for sustainability of social environment. By doing so the essay also learns that the behaviors, choices, sustenance and even affordance of the experiences and memory in the place, are democratic, plural, and continued expressions of the place.

Place as Memory

It appears that the subjective individual memory is triggered when a construct allows triggering, while in an act. (Coser, 1992) In his translation of Maurice Halbwachs texts, Coser states 'yet it is in the society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories.' Maurice Halbwachs, a French philosopher and sociologist, in 1925, introduced the term "Collective Memory" to establish that the recollection of memory is triggered when a setup helps triggering. A setup may be a person, surrounding, objects, events or society. Individual memories or "personal' (Halbwachs, 1980) memories are in fact "collective memories" then. It is in this sense that there exists a "Collective memory" emerged from a social framework of individual memories. A framework that allows realization of individuals' continuity with time from present to future, that allows realization of identity by participation or erasure of a memory, and moreover a framework that does not detail the actual memory but supposes the existence of "Collective memory". There exists "collective memory" and its potential is realized. This very nature of Memory to be kinetic and evolving is the same as the city. A city affords content realizations of various events through its Places. These

places replace themselves, events and their content and people each time to form a new Memory, like a Memory.

Place as a Repository

Architecture being the witness to all the events of the past, it embodies the importance of collective memory of the place and time. Architecture serves as evidence and not conjecture, to help trace the hidden narrative of history. In contested scenarios like Ayodhya, Architecture weaves narratives like -

'Disjunction between form and content' i.e., Islamic Architecture and Hindu worship.

'Disjunction between history and memory' i.e., many histories found below the ground and many collective memories forged above the ground, including the violent ones.

Based on this, Architecture of the place will re-establish itself now to allow formation of new memories. And the verdict is then nothing but an event added to the repository of collective memory.

Place as Process

> *"I used to write every time I designed, probably with a hope that the text would describe the process of conceptualizing the work and thus explains where the design fits into my theoretical work. Thus, rather than describing what had happened, this text seeded what was about to happen."*
>
> -Rem Koolhaas, Mutations, 2000

This text from the book *Mutations* allows theorizing the transfer and transportation powers of the memory vehicle. The text acts as a memory vehicle which is said to not only record the action in the present but it is also expected to outperform its role to transfer

meanings and possibilities of the design of a place in future. The design here acknowledges the present participation of the reader and hints at the kind of engagement the observer will have with the past in future. And in the future, the text shall seem to have a clear image, a desired intention, and concept realized to reality. Memory does the same. The memory shall repeat itself to help generate urban images of the creation, also letting the transfer of meaning, passing, forwarding while in future present. Memory is a process; Mind is a Process.

Place as an Idea

Place as a process project complexity. Complexities define the capacity of a place to behold the imagination of all possible context in which the place can be appropriated. Various architects, designers, thinkers tried hinting the imagination, context, and appropriation of the idea of a Place.

Year	Author	Understanding
1925	Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs, The Collective Memory, 1980)	"Proposed the term "collective memory" to express social contextualization of all individual memories. Space plays a role in shaping 'collective memory."
1983	Peter Eisenman (Eisenman)	"Site could also mean non-buildings - the spaces between buildings or the absence of objects configured in images which we traditionally think of as buildings."
1984	Aldo Rossi (Rossi, 1984)	"The union between the past and the future exists in the very idea of the city that it flows through in the way that a memory flows through the life of a person; and always, in order to be realized, this idea must not only shape but be shaped by reality."
1986	Eco. (ECO, 1986)	"To remember is like constructing and then travelling again through a space. We are already talking about architecture. Memories are built as a city is built."
1989	Nora (Nora, 1989)	"We are currently living in a historical society where memory functions as a mere historical trace that can exist only as a simulation of the past."
1994	Bernard Tschumi (Tschumi, 1994)	"Architecture is as much about the events that take place in spaces as the spaces themselves"
1995	Huyssen (Fang Wang, 2016)	"Places of memory as 'temporal anchoring' in a world of up-to-the minute media saturation and information overload"
1998	J.k.Olick and J.Robbins (Robbins, 1998)	"Refers distinct sets of mnemonic practices in various social sites, rather than to 'collective memory' as phenomena"

2001	Srinivas (Srinivas, 2001)	"Suggests urban memory as 'means of access' how various strata of society and different communities construct the metropolitan world."
2002	Belanger (Belanger, 2002)	"Collective memory as social process, one that surpasses the understanding of memory simply as the accumulated recollections of actual historical events."
2002	Kansteiner (Kansteiner, 2002)	"Gives temporal dimension to 'collective memory' i.e., the intellectual and cultural traditions, memory markers, memory consumers"
2004	Cynthia paces (paces, 2004)	"Empty spaces tell as many stories as ... historical monuments"
2004	Casey (Casey, 2001)	"Public places as a component of public memory, are designed to be long lasting structures that assures continued remembrance"
2005	Hebbert (Hebbert, 2005)	"Focuses on street and explains how a public space can be a locus of collective memory."
2005	Crinson & Tyrer (Crinson, 2005)	"Modernism in architecture often seems to erase memory from the city.' They chastise planners and developers for using memory 'to aestheticize and co-opt past into new forms of place making."
2006	Postalcy et al	"Major changes in Physical or social environments can cause discontinuities and urban memory loss"
2011	Dimitrios Ringas (Ringas, 2011)	"Urban memory as expression of collective memory shaped within a particular space and time, expressing relations between the past and the present of a particular place."
2011	E.M. Forster (Forster, 2011)	"Place serves to situate one's memorial life, to give it 'name and a local habitation"
2013	Sumaiyah Othman (Suimaiyah Othman, 2013)	"If there is no memory association with a place then there will not be any experience of the place"

Place as a Narrative

> *"If you write a sentence and you don't like it, but that's what you wanted to say, you say it again in another way. Once you start doing it and you find how difficult it is, you get interested. You have it, then you lose it again, and then you get it again. You have to change to stay the same."*

> -Ian McHarg, cited in James Corner, 2007.

The feeling of 'Azaadi' is a space created in the minds of the people to represent a spectacle both fragmented over time and collective. This space consists of sequence of remembrances, reconstructed meanings, disguised contexts, and phenomena. Memory here plays a very important role of weaving together struggles across old and new time as

well as physical and virtual space. It sets the stage to explore the recollections in panorama, enabling collective memory to express, articulate, agitate within, until a new way forward is realized. Hence Collective memory is said to travel, texture and map remembering and forgetting of such movements to only enhance its efficacy. Memory is a Narrative. Mind is a Narrative.

Place as a narrative allows the physical something to be looked upon by time and temporality. Events in the space allows behaviors to represent time to conceive a temporal place construct. It is this understanding of the construct that makes memory an important tool to approach the 'outside' meaning of the place. "The outside is the place one can never occupy fully or completely, for it is always other, different, at a distance from where one is." (grosz, 2001).

The outside of the space is a construct which allows looking inside, depth, the scratch, and the self (memory).

Conclusion

Can the mind be physical? Can the place be only physical? How do we then establish ourselves, beyond the known place? Decreased consciousness of the societal processes, orchestration of events, tailored everyday life, singularity in the built environment, etc. has led to a decrease in association, missing identity or misused identity and mundane and materialistic places. Imagination of the Place as construct and as replaceable, allows continuity of the meaning by untampered and unmanipulated remembering and forgetting of the history, imagination aspired present and a legible future. Place meaning and production of the meaning thus could be looked at as a framework for continuity to thrive in an urban environment by experiencing authentic expressions of the place and memory. Memory and recollections of such places thus will be able to establish long lasting associations and belongingness. Places evolve, every place replaces itself as the Memory evolves. ◼

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