

## Reading Society's Stories from the Urban Space as a Text: Corroboration and Continuation of Sense of Place\*

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### ABSTRACT

During the recent years, despite the suffusion of the globalization discussions and expansion of the relationships in the virtual world, the place and sense of place are still in the focal point of the attention in many of the theoretical and empirical studies. The importance of integrating the objective and subjective approaches into these concepts underlines the balance and equilibrium in concomitantly dealing with the physical properties of the places and the social and cultural values of the society. In this regard, narrating the society's stories, including memories, beliefs, values and myths in the urban space, would be effective in the strengthening of the bond with them. This is while the majority of the prior stories and events are neglected in dealing with urban spaces and places. Thus, it is necessary to deal with the society's narrations in the text of urban space as the factor connecting the individuals to their living environments. The present article investigates the role of the society's stories and their narrations in respect to the fortification of the sense of place. The main question is that how the sense of place can be reinforced and continued by the assistance of the narrations and readings of the society's stories in the urban spaces? To do so, use has been made of a descriptive-analytical method to firstly review the texts and theories related to this issue and explore the experts' concepts and notions; then, the primary concepts' interrelationships are explicated and analyzed. Based on the positive and corroborating effect of the narrations of the place stories on the sense of place and within the format of the layered semiotic approach, the urban space will be introduced as a text and its stories are consequently considered as the textual layers. In order to preserve the coherence of the place's text in whole, the role and value of the various layers of the place's text- activities, form and imaginations- should be aligned with and strengthening the value and role of the textual layer of the place's stories. To display the stories, it has to be specified within a context that which stories are of greater importance to society. Then, the physical and non-physical methods and elements showcasing them should be determined.

**Keywords:** Sense of Place, Story, Memory, Urban Space, Layered Semiotics, Text.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As it is emphasized by Montgomery, successful cities will be in need of balance and equilibrium between traditionalism and modernism, sense of place and image, economic dynamicity and quality of life during the upcoming fifty years in the course of a long leap in economic and cultural development (Montgomery, 2008, p. 231). Based thereon, it can be stated that the integration and collinearity of the objective properties of the urban environment and sociocultural values of the communities are of great importance as the subjective attributes. Sense of place or the subtle bond between the individuals and places is amongst the important concepts that were the focal points of the theoretical and empirical researches on the cities and their spaces for years. Sense of place is formed with experiencing an environment and based on a symbolic meaning attributed to an environment (Spartz & Shaw, 2011, p. 345). These meanings, as well, are formed based on the properties of the environment, individuals' experiences and society's values.

Urban spaces and their elements and features bring testimony to what has happened and display the values, beliefs and opinions of the society. Thus, it can be stated that the individuals are consciously or unconsciously faced with and recall signs of the cultural-social events, people and places of different kinds upon encountering the city's landscape. This is while the negligence of the previous values and narrations of the places and citizens causes the elimination of the memorial spaces and superficiality of the individuals' relationships with these spaces.

As it is opined by Scannell and Gifford (2010), individuals get connected to a place through their shared historical experiences, values and symbols (Scannell & Gifford, 2010a, p. 2). This way, the elements of place and experiences and common values of the society together lead to the corroboration and connection of the individuals with the places. The signs of these common experiences and values of the society can be traced everywhere in the city and its spaces. It can be stated that the cities have images of the past like lines on the palm of a hand; this is a past that has been manifested in every corner of the streets and in every part of the various sections of the space (Calvino, 2009). So, place can be realized as a media and instrument narrating the past within the format of the society's stories. Such a bond between the place and society's stories can be considered as a sort of social capital and named the city's and its spaces' narrative texture that would be per se enumerated as a vital and essential part of sense of belonging and attachment to the places (Chris, 2008, p. 176). Efforts have been made in the present article to investigate the role of the city's and society's stories narration in the corroboration of sense of place and the quality of dealing with them in the urban spaces. Reminding of the city and society's incidents, events and stories

enables the enrichment of the book of the city's stories and corroboration and continuation of the individuals' bonds with places.

## 2. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO PLACE

Since 1970s, the important difference between space as a geographical position and a container of the human activities from the place as the meaningful phenomenon was paid attention by the experts of the human geography (Tuan, 1974, 1975, 1977; Relph, 1976). This way, the place was given an important role in the researches on the place identity (Proshansky, 1978), place attachment (Taylor, Gottfredson, & Brower, 1985) and sense of place (Steele, 1981). But, according to the increase in the displacements, globalization and its effects, the daily increasing homogenization of the spaces and their subsequent loss of their unique personalities and cultural distinctions (Lewicka, 2011, p. 209) as well as the expansion in the individuals' communications in the virtual environments during the digital era (Misra & Stokols, 2012, p. 311) seem to have caused the diminishment of the importance of the places to the individuals as well as the reduction in the people's meaningful relationships with them (like sense of place, place attachment and so forth). However, as pointed out by Lewicka (2011), it is observed in spite of the foresaid expectation that the increase in the number of the non-places not only has not caused the places to lose their importance and position but it is also made clear in an investigation of the results obtained from hundreds of the theoretical and empirical studies that the place is still recounted as a subject and goal for the individuals' relationships, especially affective ones. The numerosity and extensiveness of the researches that have recently dealt with this subject testify to this claim<sup>1</sup> (Lewicka, 2011, p. 207).

During the past years, two main streams can be identified in regard of what constructs the quality of the places. The first one includes such experts as Cullen and his followers who emphasize the physical aspects- designing methods, decorations and combination of the features and elements, quality of expanding the buildings towards the external spaces, gates, views and landscapes, landmarks and so on. Such an approach adopts a classic, objective and rational look at the urban designing and the place's qualities, in general. In the second stream, experts like Alexander<sup>2</sup> underline the psychological aspects of the place as the internal guides to the urban places in such a way that the individuals' mentalities are trusted for the identification of the safe, comfortable, lively, calm or threatening places. This approach is a subjective and romantic look at the urban designing and conceptualization of place (Montgomery, 2008, p. 268). In between, despite the existence of many studies and researches, it seems that the gap between the objective and subjective approaches to the place has not been bridged in such a way that the majority of the

theories on place have become inclined towards one of these two approaches whereas an intermediate position should be taken that equally pays attention to both of them and organizes the numerous spatial-objective and subjective elements that support one another in an integrated whole. As stated by Montgomery (2008), if we wish to blend these approaches with one another, we would see that the quality of the urban places should be taken into consideration within the format of more extensive and more macro-level concepts of the physical properties like buildings, spaces and streets' patterns and it has to be noted that the concept of quality is associated with cultural, psychological and social dimensions (Ibid, pp. 268-269).

As it has also been posited previously by Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977), as well, places incorporate the physical environment as well as the human experiences and interpretations. In this case, the place can be realized as a geographical domain distinguished from the other places by means of the special cultural and social qualities and values like names, stories and common memories that are related to them as well as the intensity and diversity of the meanings the people attributed to them or receive from them. The thing that becomes important here is the convergence of the physical and social attributes of the place in such a way that the place's physical elements and properties should be in a manner that their readings by the individuals are aligned and stretched along the same line with the unique cultural and social values of that place hence corroborating them. Meanwhile being a thing and a background of things, elements and events, past and present (Assche, Duineveld, Jong, & Zoest, 2012, p. 238), a place is the flourish and embodiment of the unique cultural and social values within the format of the people's memories and stories of them hence effective in perceiving the distinction from the other places and corroboration of the bond between the individuals and the places.

### 3. SENSE OF PLACE AND ITS DIMENSIONS

Many believe that sense of place can be realized as the best concept defining the relationship and the bond between the individuals and places. This concept has been investigated from various perspectives and underlined from various aspects since the time it was posited in the human geography studies till now (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974, 1975, 1977). In between, there are two primary and dominant approaches identifiable. As the first approach, phenomenology realizes it difficult and complicate to offer a precise definition of the aforementioned concept and finds its perception like any other phenomenon as being dependent on the individuals' direct experience in such a way that, from this approach, sense of place is the bond and relationship with place that is formed through perceiving of the meanings, symbols and daily activities by direct experience (Relph, 1976,

P. 4; Shamai, 1991, P. 347; Falahat, 2006, pp. 58-59; Carmona, Heath, & Tiesdell, 2003, p. 96). In the simplest definition, sense of place has been introduced as the ability of recognizing and perceiving the various properties of the places and establishing relationship with it in proportion with the comprehension of this difference. Relph (2007), as well, offers such a definition for sense of place and considers it as the basis of the distinction between sense of place and spirit of place (Relph, 2007, p. 19). Along with the phenomenological approach, the amalgamation of the various indicators and/or study and evaluation parameters has been introduced; for example, the seven levels posited by Relph regarding experiencing the presence in a place<sup>3</sup> and/or the seven-level scale suggested by Shamai (1991) for the assessment of the levels of sense of place can be pointed out (Shamai, 1991, p. 349).

The second approach is a behavioral approach to sense of place. In this approach that looks at the sense of place through environmental psychology lens, emphasis is made on the affective, cognitive and behavioral meanings that are attributed to a given place and their effects on the relationships and bonds with place. Many of the experts and researchers consider sense of place as a multidimensional concept including knowledge, beliefs and opinions, affections and emotions and behaviors as well as interventions in relation to a certain geographical area (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 5; Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003, p. 276). Therefore, sense of place is considered as the set of bonds between the individual and the place that includes the affective (emotional), cognitive and behavioral aspects (Nielsen-Pincus, Hall, Force, & Wulforth, 2010, p. 443). Place is also understood as a unit of environmental experience in the form of the convergence between cognition, emotion and behaviors of the people experiencing it (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003, p. 273). Adopting such a perspective, researchers consider sense of place as a multidimensional concept and have used various combinations of its constituent dimensions in their assessments and measurements.

Some of the researches have defined a sense of place based on the environmental psychology approach as a mixture of two primary and supplementary concepts including place attachment and meaning of place. Place attachment points to the bond between the individual and the place and the value given by the individual to a place. In other words, it is enumerated amongst the indices used for assessing the extent to which a place is important to a person. The meaning of place, as well, is a symbolic meaning attributed by the individuals to a place.

These meanings are rooted in the physical environment and the activities being performed therein and they are simultaneously dependent on the cultural backgrounds, social and political and economic interactions and the aesthetical perspectives of the individuals. In

sum, it can be stated that the sense of place is the format within which the place attachment reflects the intensity with which the individuals are attracted to a place whereas the meaning of place specifies the reason for such an attraction (Kudryavtsev, Stedman, & Krasny, 2012, pp. 230-233; Williams, 2014, p. 78). Some of the other researchers know dimensions of sense of place as including place attachment, sense of belonging to the community and place dependence. In this regard, sense of belonging to the community is associated with the social properties of the place and induces the individual with the feeling that s/he belonged to an available, supportive and reliable system. But, in place attachment, the feelings and affective bond are not solely related to the social environment rather they also encompass the physical properties of the environment, as well. In the end, the place dependence, as well, embraces the individual's purposive behavioral aspect (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003, pp. 273-275). Stedman (2003), as well, concomitantly emphasizes on the physical aspects and, in the meantime, empirical and interpretational aspect of the individual's understanding of a place to find it in a definition of sense of place as being comprised of meaning, attachment and satisfaction. In this regard, place attachment has been considered as a positive emotional bond between the people and the environment. Place satisfaction, as well, has been introduced as a brief evaluation of the quality perceived of the environment and it is analytically different from the place attachment (Stedman, 2003, p. 672). In the end, there is another model of sense of place defining

it as a multidimensional concept that includes all three emotional, cognitive and behavioral aspects. Many of the researches, as well, have used the model consisted of the three psychological concepts of attachment, dependence and identity as measurable constructs for organizing the bond between the people and the place. Therefore, sense of place is introduced as a complex psychological-social concept organizing the affective, cognitive and conative bonds of the individuals with the place (Nielsen-Pincus, Hall, Force, & Wulfhorst, 2010, p. 443; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001, pp. 233-238; Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003, p. 275). Place attachment is a positive bond established between the groups or individuals with the environment. The emotional and affective aspect of this bond has been clearly highlighted in such a way that it is stated that the individuals' affective relationship with the environment is beyond the recognition, preference or judgement (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001, p. 234). The place identity is expressive of the individual's identity in respect to environment. In this regard, there is a complicated pattern of individuals' beliefs, preferences, emotions, values, goals and skills that influences the establishment of such a relationship in proportion to the intended environment in a conscious or unconscious manner (Proshansky, 1978, p. 155). Place dependency, as well, is indicative of the idea that to what extent a place as compared to the other similar places sets the auspicious grounds for individuals' achievement of their goals and getting their interesting activities done (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006, p. 318).

**Table 1. Various Dimensions of Sense of Place-Environmental Psychology Approach**

Various Dimensions of Sense of Place	Experts and Researchers
Place attachment	Kudryavtsev, Stedman, & Krasny (2012); Williams (2014)
Meaning of place	
Place attachment	Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston (2003)
Sense of belonging to community	
Place dependence	
Meaning of place	Stedman (2003)
Attachment	
Satisfaction	
Affective	
Cognitive	Nielsen-Pincus, Hall, Force, & Wulfhorst (2010); Jorgensen & Stedman (2001)
Behavioral	

In the present study, sense of place is considered as a multidimensional concept expressing the affective bond with the environment and, in the meantime, including the values, signs and cultural meanings ascribed to a place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001, 2006, 2011; Stedman, 2003). Based thereon, sense of place incorporates three aspects: a) affective aspect or place attachment which is the positive emotional bond between the individuals and environment; b)

cognitive aspect that is the recognition and belief of the individuals in relation to the environment and c) behavioral aspect that is somehow expressive of the individual's unique behavior in a place in contrast to the other places and an individual's selection of a place as a suitable ground for the achievement of goals and performing of his or her interesting activities.

The formation and corroboration of sense of place occur for the individuals internally and with the



experiencing of the space. At first, the importance of the place is perceived for the individual in relation and association therewith. Then, the interpretation of the experiencing of the place gives rise to the formation and feeling of sense of place as a meaningful experience (Stokowski, 2008). Relph (2007) is of the belief that sense of place can be perceived and formed by precise observation and giving value to the differences existent between the places. Therefore, it can be considered as a type of ability that is shared in the society and showcased within the format of a mixture of pride and commitment to enhancement place by means of a shared feeling of the local history and geography (Relph, 2007, p. 19). In other words, sense of place is formed and corroborated by direct experiencing of the places and indirect learning about them (Kudryavtsev, Stedman, & Krasny, 2012, p. 239). Therefore, proper paving of the way for experiencing and learning the local historical and geographical values and their differences from the other ones would be effective in the strengthening of the sense of place in the individuals. On the other hand, it can be claimed that such a feeling is also a social sense the same way that the feeling of continuity, belonging and security formed inside the individuals in sacred spaces as well as the social processes of attending these spaces and narrating of their stories are enumerated amongst the prominent examples of the collectivity of the sense of place and its various aspects (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010, p. 32). Based on this approach, such a role as reminding and exhibiting the society and the city's memories and stories that are per se unique properties and dimensions of the places can be investigated in respect to the continuation of the sense of place.

#### **4. NARRATING THE STORIES OF PLACE: CORROBORATION AND CONTINUATION OF SENSE OF PLACE**

Narrations and stories are considered as forces linking the individuals, times and various places. The society's narrations set the ground for displaying the society's continuation and distinction. Thus, they influence the bonds between the society members with one another and with their living environment. It is stated in a definition of sense of place that it is a collection of individual and collective narrations and stories that co-occur with the place (Falihat, 2006, p. 58). In this regard, Johnston (1990), as well, claims that our sense of place and our society are rooted in the narration (Kudryavtsev, Stedman, & Krasny, 2012, p. 238). The collective stories and narrations originate from the society members' collective memories. The formation of memory, as well, is always based on the incident/event. In other words, events change the ordinary course of life and make memories. The memory formation process, as well, can be considered as the occurrence of an event and formation of memory as well as the objects, places and names for reminding

and inducing of the memory (Mirmoghtada'ei, 2009, p. 7). In this regard, the remembering and inducing of the collective memories in the form of the society's stories and narrations within the urban places as the texts and activities have positive and fortifying effects on the relationship and bond between an individual and the place. In addition, Lewicka (2008) has come to the conclusion in research on two European cities that the collective memory is the strong basis and essence for the people's relationship with their cities (Lewicka, 2008, p. 226). According to the fact that the place's memories are predominantly enumerated amongst the social phenomena, it can be stated that they are more dependent on the collective and social factors than on the individuals' psychological differences hence effective in the strengthening of the sense of place in the society's vast level.

Designing the city and its landscape has rarely been indifferent to the history and the past. Signs of past has been even traceable in the designing of the spaces during the peak of modernism (Assche, Duineveld, Jong, & Zoest, 2012, p. 233). However, paying attention to the past and reminding the individuals of it during the contemporary era is envisaged necessary more than before. As underlined by Summerson (2012), individuals need to feel the past as much as or even more than they need to know about the past in the present time. Therefore, the physical relationship and the sensory experiencing of signs of the past have drawn a lot of attention as methods effective for provoking and eliciting sensory responses in the individuals to the past (Summerson, 2012, p. 192).

In this regard, narrating of the past events and memories can be an appropriate instrument for sharing them with others as an outcome and/or process in such a way that they can be reconstructed and resultantly a common conception can be gained about them (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004, p. 259). It can be stated that collective storytelling plays an essential role in the corroboration of the sense of place in the individuals in such a way that these narrations occasionally play an important role in comparison to the environment's physical changes for the variegation of the meaning of place (Kudryavtsev, Stedman, & Krasny, 2012, p. 238).

Narrating the past incidents and memories in the urban spaces play a considerable role in the formation and diversity of the meaning of place in various levels as well as the various dimensions of sense of place (identity, attachment and dependence). On the one hand, the knowledge acquired by the individuals in the important places inside the city and their living places gives importance to them personally (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 3) in such a way that these values help individuals find themselves socially and/or symbolically associated with certain places. The narrative relationship, including the narration of the stories of the place or its name, is amongst the instruments playing a considerable role in forming

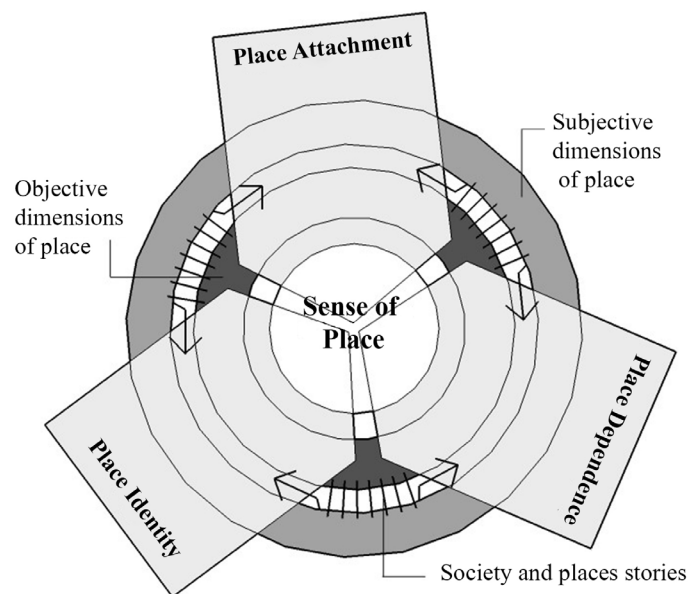
the individuals' place identity in such cases as lineage relationship (hometown), economic relationship (proprietorship and workplace), feeling of distance or absence (migration or destruction of place in a catastrophe) and spiritual and religious relationships (holy places, cultural or pilgrimage spaces) (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010, p. 26) because it is expressive of the individual's attachment to a reliable and supportive social system for an individual. Embodiment and revealing of the society's narrations in their spatial domain contributes to the individuals to know in what story or stories they are playing a role or to what part of which stories they belong. In this case, they can better understand their individual and social identity (Filep, Thompson-Fawcett, & Rae, 2014, p. 298). The city's stories are narrations originated from the collective memories of the citizens that showcase the history as well as the future dreams so they are enumerated amongst the important factors for understanding and recognizing their social-cultural identity of them. As it is pointed out by Ahari, "the city's residents construct the city's story with their collective memories and give themselves a collective identity by reading and retelling these stories" (Ahari, 2011, p. 6).

On the other hand, numerous studies have concluded that place attachment is strengthened under the conditions that the place becomes the locus of the important incidents' occurrence and if the reminding and introducing of the memorable periods and events of the city and society have been taken into account therein (Twigger-Ross & Uzzel, 1996, p. 214; Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 3; Manzo, 2005, p. 78). If a city could preserve the places' memories and events, it would also conserve the belonging to them, as well,

because the remembering of the past memories forms a sort of sense of continuity and the individuals are given a sense of durability in the today's constantly changing world. Additionally, awareness of the history of the place, as well, assists the corroboration of place attachment (Hay, 1998, p. 6; Lewicka, 2008, p. 211).

In the end, the occurrence of certain events in the places causes them to have special meanings for the individuals. The pilgrimage in the sacred places or the showcasing and retelling of the stories and myths in historical sites are amongst the distinct examples in this regard (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 6). It can be stated that the past stories and narrations can set the ground for the formation of the new stories and narrations, as well, in such a way that the places are experienced as arenas for certain events and interaction with various time spans.

Therefore, it can be stated that the events and places are deeply interwoven and they cannot be imagined separate from one another (Depriest-Hricko & Prytherch, 2013, p. 147; Mirmoghtada'ei, 2009, p. 7). Boyer, as well, defines the city in his book "city, the collective memory" as a reality of the collective memory (Boyer, 1994, p. 146). Dealing with memories in the city, reading the history and people's stories occur in a present time's text. These memories are capitals and heritages that exist in a collection of the urban capitals, including the physical, natural, human, social and cultural and symbolic capitals (Sacco & Blessi, 2007, p. 4) in various parts of the city and they should be preserved and transferred to the future generations. This way, the memory of the important events of the society can be eternalized for the various generations thereby to keep on the sense of the place.



**Fig. 1. The Society's Stories as the Linkers of the Subjective and Objective Dimensions of the Place and Corroborators of the Dimensions of Sense of Place**

It was made clear up to here that the narration of the society's and place's stories has a positive effect on each of the three dimensions of sense of place. But, most of the studies related to the sense of place have been concentrated on the relationship between the psychological/social processes and human behaviors or the individuals' sociocultural properties whereas the physical environment can offer values, beliefs and social inclinations of the society and similar subjects during the time thereby to showcase unique qualities of the place and the local and cultural distinctive aspects of the society and influence the individuals' bond with the environment as well as their behaviors. However, there is a scarcity of information as to which places possess more potential for establishing interaction and/or which of the place's characteristics exert more considerable effect on the various aspects of the bond with the place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2011, p. 795; Stedman, 2003, pp. 671-682; Lewicka, 2011, pp. 223-226). What is evident in this regard is the effect of the environment's properties and elements on the sense of place. Some of the researchers like Shumaker and Taylor (1983) believe that there is a direct relationship between the elements of landscape and sense of place in such a way that the individuals become attached to the places due to the prominent physical elements in them. Some of the others like Stedman (2003) are of the belief that physical properties of the place indirectly influence the sense of place in such a way that the physical properties are recounted as a sign of the symbolic meaning and sense of place is formed based on these symbolic meanings and their interpretations (Stedman, 2003, p. 674). Following the model offered by Stedman, it can be stated that the exhibition and offering of the narrations and stories of the society in the physical environment of the place can bring about a favorable bond and solidarity between the society's social-cultural values, on the one hand, and the place's physical properties, on the other hand through associating the symbolic and valuable meanings of the society in such a way that the created synergy would be effective in the corroboration and continuation of the psychological/social processes of the sense of place. This way, the place is approached in a social structure and it can be realized as associated and correlated with memories, traditions and special values. Put it differently, a place becomes a place with its stories and memories. It is by the memories that the people create the meaning of place and become connected with it (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 3). In this case, the place's physical and narrative textures form two sides of a coin so place can become valuable based on the importance intensity and meaning vastness of the thing that takes place therein and it is by the same reason that it per se becomes also important and acquires vastness in its meaning. "Incident" gives meaning and value to its container (or the place wherein it occurs). Adopting such an approach makes it necessary to pay attention to the role of the physical properties and

elements of the place for showing the society's stories and expressing the historical and geographical values and teaching them to the individuals the same way that Childs (2008) has also emphasized applying the physical elements of the streets and squares as grounds for narrating and retelling the society's memories, fables, fights and myths (Childs, 2008, p. 175). Urban space forms a bed that renders it feasible to read the society's stories.

## 5. URBAN SPACE AS A TEXT: NARRATOR OF THE SOCIETY'S STORIES

For narrating the city's stories, the urban space can be considered as a text facilitating the reading of the stories. In other words, city can be considered as a book every corner of which reminds of the people's stories in the course of time. Comparison of the architectural and urban spaces with the structure and words in language has been the subject of various studies and taken into consideration now for years as Victor Hugo also realizes city and architecture as a writing that has recorded ideas and thoughts of the communities in pages of a large book. Roland Barthes explicitly states in the "Empire of Signs" that city is a text. Lynch and Christopher Alexander, as well, generalize the concept of text to the reality of the city in their scientific and empirical expression of the city. The thing that is notable in a comparison of a book with the city for the narrating of the society's values and history is that a book might be forgotten or ignored but the urban environment is the daily dwelling place and its elements remain persistent for a while can every day remind individuals of some important points. Therefore, city and its spaces can transfer the city and community's information to the other generations and cultures more exciting than every historical book. Furthermore, the information's accessibility by the general public and it's not being restricted to certain individuals help conserve the past values and history and corroborate the city's memory and memoir. As it has also been emphasized by Montgomery (2008), urban landscapes play an important role in forming and stabilizing the cultural values in the community (Montgomery, 2008, p. 234).

This way, the context of the urban space can be employed for narrating the society's stories. Barthes, as well, believes that it is now for thousands of years that storytelling has become an inseparable part of the human beings' life not only in oral and written forms but also in such various forms as built environment (architecture and city) (Barthes, 1977, p. 79). Habibi (2012), as well, compares city with a story for the reason that both of them are the result of the reproduction of the ideals and discretions of the people who are rooted deep in the past, live the present time and have their eyes on future (Habibi, 2012, p. 1). Under such circumstances, a physical environment acts like a medium displaying the stories of a special

culture. The same way that painting, music and dance differ from the written stories, urban design and urban spaces, as well, use their own methods for narrating the society's narrations and stories (Childs, 2008, p. 173). Considering city and urban spaces as a text provides for realizing it as a system of signs like any other text (Assche, Duineveld, Jong, & Zoest, 2012, p. 236). As believed by Davarpanah (2012), these signs are sometimes rule-oriented and based on the social contracts and occasionally placed at one another's side in a not so much rule-based manner. However, this composition, whether formed based on certain programmed or randomized regulations or not, forms a text that is always exposed to "reading"; therefore, citizens are always busy reading the texts wherein they are present as a part and as an active actor. They regulate their relationship with the environment and peripheral spaces based on the interpretations and meanings they receive from these texts (Davarpanah, 2012, p. 3).

Using the semiotic systems in the context of the city, individuals learn the society's social, historical, economic and cultural values and become familiar with the historical depth of the society via exploring its messages (Golkar, 2008, pp. 95-99). As it was also mentioned before, such a familiarity and instruction plays an important role in corroborating the sense of individual and collective identity, place attachment and, in sum, the sense of place in the individuals. All the things that are defined within the format of a semiotic system (based on the social codes and contracts and/or the implicative processes of its categorization) can become the subject in the study of signs and semiotics (Dinesen, 2001. P. 8). But, these signs are never utilized in separate and in a stand-alone manner rather in communicative interaction with other semiotic systems that play a role in the process of the signs' implications and meanings' association. Based on the layered semiotic approach, we are faced not with signs but with texts that are each per se composed of numerous textual layers (Sojoodi, 2008, pp. 199-201; Sojoodi, 2009, pp. 208-212). What the great importance in the text, in general, is paying attention to the role of each of the layers and their intended values and the layer's mutual interaction parallel to the corroboration or destruction of one another as well as their values' collinearity or contradiction of one another. To read a place's text in whole, the various textual layers, including the layers of activities, form and imaginations, should corroborate one another and imply collinear values. In this combination, the narration of the stories, as well, is defined within the format of one of the textual layers that can be manifested in physical and non-physical elements. Amongst the physical elements, artworks (Childs, 2008, p. 179), conservation of the historical buildings and city's old neighborhoods and construction of monuments (Mirmoghtada'ei, 2009, pp. 12-14) and the elements and instruments remaining from the incidents/events in the space can be pointed

out. Besides the physical elements, the non-physical signs like spaces' names and holding of the various rituals and customs (Mirmoghtada'ei, 2009, pp. 12-14) and prominent figures in every event and story should be also taken into account. The names of the places can symbolically have a memoir of the place and society's stories in them and corroborate the sense of attachment and place identity of the individuals. It is evident that the naming of the spaces by numbers does not cause disorder in the cognitive maps of the city. However, in the meantime, such a procedure has not been intermixed with the residents' social experiences and values. This is why the emphasis has been made on naming the spaces according to the historical grounds and in line with winning the residents' support and backup (Yanushkevich, 2014, p. 47). It has to be noted that the names of the places are beyond the names seen on the plates or maps. Places' appellation based on the narrations and stories is not only effective in rendering the city more legible and commissioning it to a certain role but it also instigates an affective bond between the individuals and places and showcases a reflection of the individuals' memories and experiences in the place. Collective rituals and ceremonies in the places, as well, form new stories and collective experience for the individuals and simultaneously can play a role in narrating the society's stories. It is based on the same reason that the urban spaces have been underlined as the scene of a theater and a ground for the individuals' playing of their roles. However, a reduction is unfortunately seen in the collective ceremonies and rituals in the cities for the time being. In this regard, Ahari (2011) notifies that the reduction in the people's lived experience of the urban spaces has resulted in less voluminousness and more superficiality of the book of the city's story through diminishing of the collective rituals that produced collective memories and linked them to the traditions as well as by destroying of the decorated and memorable spaces (Ahari, 2011, p. 13). Besides narrating the society's stories and myths, holding of the collective ceremonies and rituals sets the auspicious grounds for influencing the bond between the individuals and the place and the society. Rota and Salone (2014) concluded in their study that the collective events facilitate the interactions between the individuals who belong to a special group and the corroboration of the social network connecting them, on the one hand, and corroboration of the local identity through creating a dynamic and fascinating image of the event and place, in the other hand, plays a considerable role in the process of place-making and sense of place (Rota & Salone, 2014, pp. 94-95). Each of the abovementioned cases can narrate part of the society's stories in urban places through its fixed and/or periodic presence and depict novel stories within the past stories through taking advantage of creative combinations. Every corner of the city can have stories to narrate and remind. The textual layer of the story and narration of the collective memories as a



stabilizing anchor might be possibly more prominent in some of the places than the others and it might be paler in some other places but generally there is no place in a city without any story and narration. Even the new parts and the suburbs, as well, can narrate the pre-development conditions, regional stories and the myths of the society wherein they might take place and the development reasons and dreams to offer various stories to the audience (Childs, 2008, p. 177). This way, urban spaces, as a text, both narrate the past stories of the society and set the ground for the formation of the new stories of the society.

Montgomery (2008) emphasizes that the selection of the important and basic elements from the past that give meaning to the definition of the past incidents is important for us as the society members and groups (Montgomery, 2008, p. 233). In line with this, Filep et al (2014) have posited that it has to be specified parallel to the showcasing of the city's stories as to which stories are more important to a given community; then, it has to be specified which of them should be demonstrated in the urban environment; eventually, the methods of displaying these stories in the environment should be determined (Filep, Thompson-Fawcett, & Rae, 2014, p. 313). Observation of these cases causes the creative blending of the various textual layers of the urban spaces for defining a narration of the city in a collinear and corroborative composition as a result of which a deeper bond can be consequently established between the individuals and the place.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In order to deal with the places, it has to be noted that their qualities and attributes go beyond the physical traits and that they also encompass the sociocultural values of the society, as well. The demonstration and narration of the collective stories and memories of the society can be used within the format of an integrated approach as a chain connecting the objective and subjective elements and features. This way, the interlacing of the place with the social-cultural values of the society would be accompanied by the individuals' coordination with the place and corroboration and continuation of their relationships.

## END NOTE

1. 60% of the articles related to this study field have been published in specialized journals during the years from 2000 to 2011. For more information, please refer to Lewicka (2011).
2. The book named "The Timeless Way of Building".
3. Relph has offered a sevenfold hierarchy for an individual's experiencing of presence in a place: Existential outsidership, Mass identity of place, Objective outsider, Incidental outsidership, Behavioral insidership, Empathetic insidership, Existential insidership (Relph, 1976, pp. 51-54).

It is with such an approach that the city and its spaces become a text conveying the society's symbolic message and meaning to the individual and, in the meantime, the individuals create another text with their presence and behavior and give the place a new meaning. The bond and relationship with the place and/or, in more precise terms, sense of place is formed based on the symbolic meaning ascribed to the place. The various aspects of sense of place includes place attachment, place identity and place dependence through and these are strengthened via narrating of the society's stories and myths and its various parts, including individual-environment and social-psychological process enter a stronger linkage with one another. Thus, the narrating of the stories in the context of the urban spaces leads to the corroboration and continuation of sense of place. Since sense of place is fortified by the process of learning about a place and, on the other hand, the narration of such stories enters the individuals' daily life, the corroboration and continuation of sense of place is expanded on a vast spectrum of the society and its members.

The city's stories and the citizens' collective memories defined the generality of a place within the format of a textual layer along with the other textual layers. The physical elements of the space are artworks, conservation of historical buildings and old neighborhoods, preservation of the signs and symbols of the stories and memories in combination with such non-physical elements like places, holding of rituals and collective ceremonies and introducing of the important and main personalities all of which render narrating of the place's stories feasible. These are the stories followed by an increase in sense of belonging and attachment to the place and society and giving rise to the formation of a place, individual and social identity and transferring it to the future generations thereby to corroborate and prolong the sense of place. In the end, the experiencing of a place can be excluded from being realized as just a sensory feeling including such senses as vision, hearing and smelling and touching; additionally, individuals' memories, imaginations and expectations of the stories' narration can be related to a place and physical and fixed elements can be placed in a close bond with the individuals in a new and dynamic method.

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