

MEMORY OF SPACE VERSUS MEMORY OF PLACE

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ABSTRACT

There are studies claim that an architectural space become memorable when it became a place, however a visual representation of architectural spaces on magazines, TV, social media and websites can leave traces in audience memories and become memorable too. Constantly it is observed that people refer to spaces they have never visited and only seen visually somewhere. Remembering spaces by human without visiting and shaping any direct interaction with the environment of those spaces, somehow shows the power of visualizing a design in making an architectural space memorable. Ability to keeping a space in mind only by visual representation without visiting and being in touch with the physical environment of a space arouse this question, does human memorize a space he/she never visited by shaping imaginary moments and experiences in that space or because of the identical design characteristics of that space? This study aims to learn if the design characteristics of an architectural space become dominant in defining a memory of a visually perceived space or that person visualize imaginary experiences in that space and transforming it to an imaginary place. To establish this research structured interview is adopted as research methodology and 100 interviewees were participated. Age of participants were defined as 30-40 and they were carefully selected out of people who were not designers and does not deal with design at any point of their profession. Participants were asked to describe an architectural space they have never visited but that space has remained in their memory. The review led through a pre-defined questions in order to find out the reasons interviewees keep the space they have mentioned in their memory. The results of the study provide findings that showed it was mainly the design of spaces that attracts participants to a specific space on the media, and major of participants build a memory about that space by shaping imaginary experiences and interactions. The results claims that an architectural space does not necessarily need to be a place in order to be memorable.

Keywords: Visual Perception, Memory, Architectural Space, Place, Imaginary Experiences

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been discussed that an architectural space with the lack of human interaction and experiences remains as a space and does not turn into a place (Hillier and Hanson. 1984, Holt. 1999, Gieryn. 2000, Yiran. 2009). In line with this discussion, studies also claim that

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connection of human and space leads to shaping a sense of place and by extension of this sense, an architectural space become a memorable place (Casey. 2004, Sternberg and Wilson. 2006, Lyndon. 2009, Pallasmaa. 2009, Malpas. 2013).

In the world that popularity of visual and social media is increasing day by day, it may be possible for people to build memory of architectural spaces they have never visited only have seen them on TV, internet or social medias. This possibility arouses the question that in today's world, where increase in interaction with virtual world reduces people's interaction with physical world, the definition of memory of architectural spaces need to be redefined and so it is necessary to discuss different dimensions of building a memory about a visually perceived architectural spaces.

Current study aims to investigate if people remember a space they have only seen on media and never had any physical interaction with that space. This purpose is followed by couple of research questions:

- Did participants build a memory about a space they only see on media?
- Did participants remember those spaces because they were interested in design characteristics of that space or because they have shaped imaginary experiences?
- Which media was most influential in making a space memorable for participants?
- How bold was the role of design in making a visually perceived space memorable for participants?

A short theoretical introduction on meaning of space and place in architecture will lead to an understanding about the dynamics of visually perceived spaces and discuss and distinguish the relations and differences between a 'memory of a visually perceived space' and 'memory of a place'.

2. SPACE VERSUS PLACE

Place and space are two concepts that have been considered in studies that discuss human memory of architecture. Both space and place tend to be complex yet important concepts in architecture and therefore many studies and researches have devoted to discuss and distinguish their definition.

Distinction of space from place is a modern concern. Most of the distinctions between the space and place leads to discussing the existence or lack of human interaction and experiences. de Certeau (1988), argues that space earns it meaning through meaningful socialization and it is then that a space turns into a place. Giddens (2006) discusses distinction between space and place with a modern perspective and define space independent from place and believes that space is an abstract definition of a place and does not have a link to any location.

The necessity for defining a distinction between space and place is gaining importance especially in discussions related with human memory of architecture. Malpas (2013) sees memory and place as two interrelated concepts and claims that there is no memory without place and no place without memory.

Donlyn Lyndon (2009) defines place as a space to hold in mind and that can be remembered and in line with his definition philosopher Edward Casey (2004) defines place as allocation that holds memories and space as a boundary that possesses no attachment and so no memories to retrieve. So, it is possible to claim that memory take place in space but does not remain limited to space and things. Memory of architecture is built somewhere in between space, experiences and things. (Lima and Pallamin, 1998). Consistent with mentioned statements and discussions, it can be sum up that where a memory of a space is build up, place appears.

Sense of seeing is a very powerful sense and mind can be very much impressed by only seeing something and build a memory about it. Addison (1990) states that the sense of seeing is the most perfect of the senses and it gives two kinds of pleasure: firstly, those provided directly by objects as we see them and secondly, those we still enjoy when objects no longer there. Then we have the pleasure to think about them. The power of sense of seeing can also be understand by looking at the film productions. Film allows a different way of looking at spaces than architecture. It gives easier access to the set-up world of the narrative. The narrative is the story of what happens in the spaces and express what the idea of the space. Using the media of film presents a better understanding of a world through the projected images to the both designer and viewers (Sturich 2005).

So if place hold memories that remains in mind and and it is made up of environment that contains movement, happenings and environmental character (Yiran 2009), and at the same time it is possible to remember spaces only by seeing (Addison 1990), what will be the explanation for a memory of space that is never experienced physically and only seen through visual interaction? Since there is a lack of physical interaction in a visually perceived space then there is no actual socialization and no actual experience of events. Based on the definition of place, can memory of visually perceived space be defined as where a memory of architectural space is built, but a place does not appear?

In order to understand the type of space that would perceived through visual interaction it can be referred to three types of spaces established by Lefebvre (cited in Fokdal 2008). According to Lefebvre's definition of spaces, space that is seen with no physical interaction, is either a perceived space or imaginary space. If the memory is the result of perceived space, since it will be the representation of the space with all its signs and significations, it implies differences with the definition of place. If the memory is the result of shaping an imaginary space with imaginary experiences, since mind envisions certain meaning, features and imaginary experiences it implies both differences and relations with definition of place.

So in order to decide if a memory of visually perceived space should be distinguished from a memory of place or if it should be considered in connection with a memory of space, it is necessary to determine if a memory remains as a perceived space or it remains as an imaginary space. For this determination, the type of memory in human mind needs to be identified and based on this identification (figure 1) relations and differences between a 'memory of a visually perceived space' and 'memory of a physical place'.

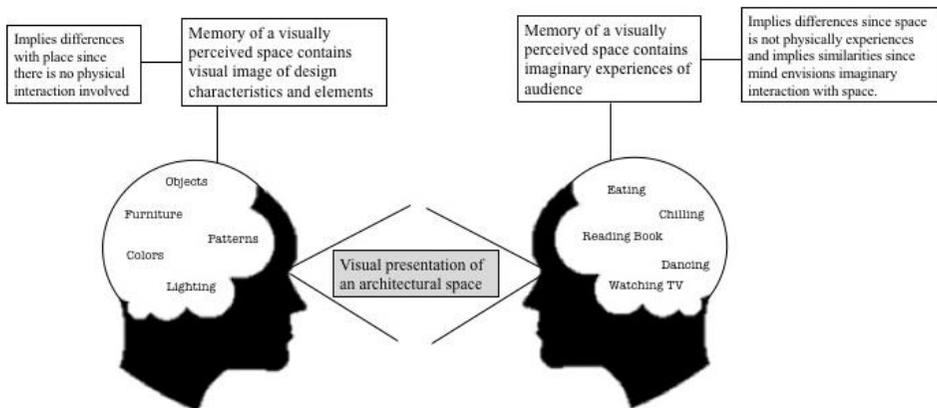


Figure 1. Relations and differences between a 'memory of a visually perceived space' and 'memory of a physical place'

3. METHOD

This research adopted a quantitative research method and the data is collected by using structured interview.

3.1. Sampling

The data was collected from 100 participants. The range of participants were between 30 to 40 of age. The reason for this category including people who have lived and experienced the time that internet and media, especially social media was not very popular as it is today. 54 of participants were male and 44 were female. Participants were selected carefully from people who were not designers or did not deal with design at any point of their life. This selection was due to reducing the possibility that person might keep certain spaces and the design characteristics of those spaces in his/her memory based on his/her educational background and career.

3.2. Data Collection

The interview was done in a friendly environment with each participant and same predetermined questions were asked with the same order to all participants. Interview consist of 5 questions. The questions and the intention of the questions is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Questions asked in interview and the intention behind each question

Questions asked in interview	The intention for asking question
How do you rate your daily interaction with media? (high – more than 6 hour), moderate between 2 to 6 hours, low less than 2 hours)	Find out the relationship between the amount of interaction of participants with media and the results of the interview.
Is there any space(s) that you have kept in your memory but you have never visited that space? (If participant would mention more than one space he/she was going to choose one space he/she liked the most)	Main objective of the research (If people can remember any visually perceived space)
Where did you see that space?	Which media had the highest percentage according to participants respond.
Can you describe that space?	How deep participant has built a memory about a space he/she never visited.
What made this space so special that you keep it in your memory?	How bold is the role of design in making the visually perceived space memorable in participants mind.
Did you imagine yourself in that space? If yes, how?	Is the participants' memory of space is shaped by design characteristics of that space (perceived space) or by shaping imaginary experiences (imaginary space)

3.3. Data Analysis

After interviewing 100 participants all the answered were categorized, analyzed and finalized. The data were classified based on each question and intention, and afterward at some points percentages were defined and the answer of questions were discussed and interpreted in related to one another.

4. RESULTS

Collected data has been classified and categorized based on the objectives that was defined at the beginning stage of the research. Results for each objective is described in following sections.

4.1. Participants Remembered Spaces They Only Have Seen on Media

91% of the participants have replied yes when they were asked if they keep any space they have seen on the media in their mind. Among these 91%, 62% have rate their interaction with media as high and 38% have rated their interaction as moderate. Only 9% participants say no to this question and 6% of these 9% have rate their interaction with media and internet as low, while the other 4% rate their interaction as moderate. These results show that most of the participants have a considerable amount of interaction with the media and those who have low interaction were actually among 9% that have answered this question with no. Gender seemed to not be variable in remembering or not remembering a visually perceived space.

4.2. Most of Participants Has Built a Memory about a Space They Only See On Media

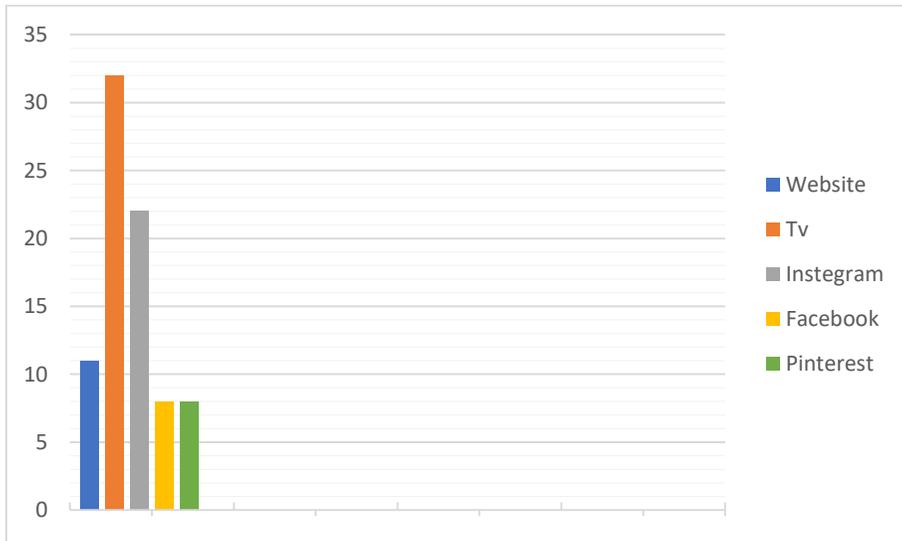
Almost all the participants were describing the space they have seen on media in detail and their precise descriptions showed that they have actually built a memory about a space they have never visited. Participants were describing the spaces without long pauses and in a very smooth way.

4.3. Most of Participants Have Shaped an Imaginary Experiences in Spaces They Have Seen in Media

81% of participants who have kept a memory of a space they have seen on media said they have shaped an imaginary meanings and experience in that space. Participants were referring to experiences such as, sleeping, reading, dining, relaxing, dancing and etc., as experiences they have imagined doing in their mentioned space and even some of the participants were referring to sharing their experiences with other people like their friends and family members while describing their imaginations.

4.4. TV Was Most Influential in Making a Space Memorable for Participants

According to the answers of participants, TV was the most powerful media in visualizing memorable space and all of the participants who choose TV have mentioned they have seen this space in either a movie or an advertisement. Instagram was the second most powerful media in visualizing a memorable space for participants (Graph 1).



Graph 1. Participants respond on the media that visualize they space they have kept in their mind

4.5. Design Play a Key Role in Making a Space in Media Memorable for Participants but Was Not the Only Item

66 % of the participants referred to the design characteristics of space as the reasons they have kept the space in their memory. Power of design in making a visually perceived space memorable for participants were also clear in their descriptions of the space. 34% of those who did not directly refer to the design characteristics of the spaces were all from the category that said they have seen that memorable space on TV. These group referred to characteristics such as coziness, safety, fancy and chic, bright and positive, comfortable, happy and smart as reasons that make them like that space and keep it in their memory.

5. DISCUSSIONS

Interestingly when results were analyzed, it was clear that most of the participants remembered not only one space, but many spaces they have seen on a media and when they were asked to choose one of those spaces most of them paused to choose one. According to the explanation of the participants the memory of space for most of them was a memory of an imaginary space. This is due to their positive respond about imagining themselves in the space they have seen on media. According to this result it can be discussed that building a memory of space might imply relations with building a memory of place and human's mind sometimes start to shape imaginary experiences and interaction with a visually perceived space and in this way indirectly turn that space into an imaginary place.

Another interesting point was that most of the participants said TV turns out to be the most influential media for representing a memorable space for them. Since TV represents architectural spaces through scenes of experiences and events, result of this question once again indicated the importance of shaping certain meaning and interaction with spaces, even virtually or imaginary, for building a memory of a visually perceived space.

However, design characteristics of the spaces tend to be a very important items in order to make visually perceived spaces memorable in participants' mind, results showed that design alone was not a factor for building a memory about visually perceived spaces. Responds of

participants showed that it was mainly the design of space that make them feel attracted to specific space on the media, but it looks like many of them start to build a memory about that space through some imaginary physical interactions.

6. CONCLUSION

Previous studies indicate that concept of place play an important role in shaping a memory about architecture in human mind and a space in order to be a place, physical interaction of human is necessary. However, places have variety level of interaction, lack of interaction means lack of place. Addison (1990) has discussed the importance of sense of seeing and how seeing something can shape a memory about it. In line with Addison discussion, contemporary role of visual media in people's life and increased in people's interaction with virtual world increased the influence of visual interaction in building a memory of spaces in human mind. This study has discussed that memory of a visually perceived space implies relations with the memory of a place, if the memory is shaped by imaginary experiences. But it is also discussed that if a memory of a visually perceived space is shaped only by design characteristics of that space, this memory implies differences with the memory of place, since no experience and interaction are involved.

Results from a sample study in current research showed that the majority of participants build their memory about a visually perceived space by shaping imaginary experiences and this result is in line with the discussions in literature on the importance of shaping a place for building a memory about architectural space. However, majority of participants referred to imaginary experiences, the role of design was very lively and bold in most of participants' description about spaces and their explanation on why they keep that space in their memory. The present study did not give information about how long does these spaces stay in memory of the participants and did not compare the participants' memory of perceived spaces with the memory of the places they have physically visited. As a further study it will be useful to include more criteria in interviews in order to find answers for evaluating the stability of memory of a perceived space and its differences with a memory of place.

Likewise, this study did not compare the dimensions of the memory that is built by watching TV and YouTube with the memories built by social media and websites. Since TV and YouTube present narratives and stories, evaluating the dimensions of memory of architectural space they build in human mind can shape new topics for discussion.

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