

Enhancing the Sense of Attachment

Nor Azlina Abu Bakar & Wan Srihani Wan Mohamed

(Students: Mohd Yazid Ahmad Badaruddin, Zaim Akmal Abd. Rahman
& Mohammad Firdaus Ahmad)



Introduction

Peter Calthorpe (1989, 1993), William H. Whyte (1988), Dolores Hayden (1984), Leon Krier (1984), and Peter Katz (1994) (as cited in Talen, 2000, pp. 345), are among urban theorists in design tradition whose writings have influenced the theoretical development about the role of public life in encouraging the sense of community through the design of public spaces. These urban theorists alongside with the New Urbanism movement emerged in response to the view that designing or creating public space would encourage people's interaction and place attachment (Talen, 2000). According to the New Urbanism movement, additional two social objectives could be accomplished in two ways: 1) integrating resident's private spaces with surrounding public spaces and; 2) carefully designing the public spaces and their location. This article focuses on the latter, on how design can influence place attachment.

According to Prohansky et.al. (1983), and Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) (as cited in Ujang, 2012, pp. 157), place attachment is defined as the development of affective bond or link between people or individuals and specific places expressed through the interplay of affects and emotions, knowledge and beliefs, and behavior and actions. Ujang (2012) continues to demonstrate that place attachment is also influenced by the functional bonding between people and places. The bonding is created when people or users felt a particular place is important for them because of its ability to provide functional needs and emphasize their behavioral objectives. The growing interest in place attachment studies agreed that places

to which people are attached vary in scale, specificity, and tangibility, ranging from the very small scale (e.g. an object) to the specific place (e.g. a country) or to the tangible thing (e.g. the air of rainforest). Therefore, a project was conducted for a second year architectural students to design a gateway to the Faculty of Design and Architecture (FRSB), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) that espoused place attachment concept as discussed earlier.

Background of the project

A gateway, or in other words, a means of access or entry to a place, plays an important role in giving impression and psychological effect of sense of place. A gateway also reflects a welcoming ambiance not only for visitors but also for residents of a place where it should encourage an affective bond or emotional connection with the place (King, 2008). For instances, at a macro level scale, an international airport is the main gateway of a country and it plays a significant role to welcome and greet people, and demonstrates distinguished characteristics than other international airports. Often, those characteristics could be identified through the conceptual design of the airport e.g. Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) concept of "Airport in the Forest" and "The Forest in the Airport", reflecting Malaysia as a country rich in bio-diversity and tropical rainforest (King, 2008). Meanwhile at a micro level scale, entrances to neighbourhood areas or educational institutions should also demonstrate the significant connection between the people and the place.

For this particular project, the gateway acts as an attractive entrance and focal

point to FRSB giving visitors a warm and welcoming ambiance. This is in line with the efforts to promote FRSB to surrounding community and outside visitors. On top of that, the gateway should also encourage sense of place among FRSB community that eventually create place attachment, affective bond especially between FRSB students and the faculty. FRSB consists of three departments: the Department of Architecture, the Department of Landscape Architecture, and the Department of Industrial Design.

There are a few issues with the existing site or entrance to the faculty. These include the location of the faculty itself, which is secluded and hidden from the main traffic, unsafe, and unfriendly pedestrian path to and from the existing bus stop, problematic bus circulation, improper bus stop and guardhouse, dull entrance, and lack of public spaces to promote encounters especially among students from different courses. While solving these issues, the design of the gateway must incorporate public gathering space for students from all three courses, as well as safe and walkable streetscapes. To encourage that, the proposed gateway pays special attention to architectural design, streetscape, and landscaping. The design must utilize a variety of building forms, architectural styles, public infrastructure, street furniture, pedestrian walkway, students meeting spaces and appropriate lighting. These attributes are considered as the public space design elements that promote a sense of community-place-attachment (Talen, 2000; Foster et. al, 2010; Wood et. al, 2010).

Project Objective

The objective of the project is to enhance students' creativity when designing a public space for a small-scale project. Students were encouraged to analyze and synthesize

their designs based on findings from precedent studies, their own experiences, and contextual constraints of the site. Below are the three selected design solutions for this project.

Design Solutions

Mohd Yazid Ahmad Badaruddin

With the concept of "Exploration", Mohd Yazid explores the idea of combining the characteristics of architecture, landscape and industrial design in his gateway design (Figure 1). The purpose of this idea is to create a functional landmark for the faculty. His design consists of the Voronoi Structure (a branch-shaped structure) to represent the Department of Landscape Architecture, the state-of-the-art construction technology to represent the Department of Industrial Design, and a well-integrated guardhouse structure with better traffic circulation to represent the Department of Architecture. Pedestrian movement is improved by providing a covered walkway that links the existing bus stop and clearly separated from the vehicular traffic path.



Figure 1: Yazid's perspective drawing

Zaim Akmal Abd. Rahman

Zaim's ideas could be observed through his design statement that is to focus on the concept of "Protection" i.e. to protect the identity of FRSB as well as the environmental values offered by the surrounding natural features (Figures 2 and 3). The strength of his work is in the significant attention given to the circulation, visual aesthetic and the physical layout and orientation of the gateway structure. The structure integrates with the existing guardhouse and provides a comfortable waiting area to function as students meeting space.



Figure 2: Zaim's conceptual diagrams

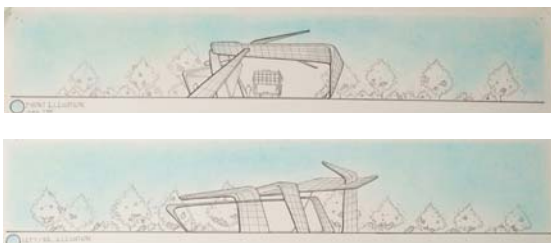


Figure 3: Elevation drawings by Zaim.

Mohammad Firdaus Ahmad

One of the main aspects of Firdaus's design is to establish strong metaphor that portrays the faculty's vision and mission (Figure 4). The bold and sharp-edged design represents the dynamic and energetic characters of design students from the three departments. The enormity of the design would define the gateway as a landmark of the faculty

that sticks in people's mind. Based on the concept of "Innovative Creation", Firdaus also gave a particular attention to the material specifications i.e. lightweight steel framing structure and metal cladding.



Figure 4: Firdaus's perspective drawing

Discussion and conclusions

It is observed that some students have demonstrated their ability to design a multi-purpose gateway according to the brief requirements. However, one major drawback is the lack of ability to understand the broad yet similar concept of sense of place, sense of community and place attachment by designing a multi-purpose gateway that focused on architectural, streetscape, and landscape design. This is evident when students are unable to combine elements or attributes that could promote place attachment. For instance, some designs are creative in providing public gathering area but lack of consideration on pedestrian movement, whereas some other designs considered streetscapes, landscape elements but lack of study on the background nature of the place i.e. FRSB. Therefore, it is highly recommended for future project brief to highlight the importance of related theoretical framework for a particular project so that the understanding of related theories could assist students in their design process and the development of final outcomes.

References

Foster, S., Giles-Corti, B., Knuiiman, M. (2010). Creating safe walkable streetscapes: Does house design and upkeep discourage incivilities in suburban neighbourhoods? *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 31, 79-88.

King, R. (2008). *Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya: Negotiating urban space in Malaysia*. NUS Press: Singapore.

Talen, E. (2000). Measuring the public realm: a preliminary assessment of the link between public space and sense of community. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 17:4, 344-360.

Ujang, N. (2012). Place Attachment and Continuity of Urban Place Identity. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 49, 156-167.

Wood, L., Frank, L. D., Giles-Corti, B. (2010). Sense of community and its relationship with walking and neighborhood design. *Social Science & Medicine*, 70, 1381-1390.

