

Memory Association in Place Making: Understanding an Urban Space

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Abstract: We relate to place physically and mentally; both of these relations are important in our understanding of place. However for the purposes of this paper only the mental association between place and memory will be considered. This will be examined by looking at the role of event, history and monument in our remembrance of place and how that enables us to perceive place through memory association. In the first section the notion of memory will be considered, in order to establish a background on which to develop the ideas of place memory and remembrance. Then the connection between memory, event and the history of place would be identified and how they relate to engender a sense of place examined. This will be considered by looking at the notion of public history and its representation both in the collective memory and in public space; looking specifically at the city of Dhaka and the ways in which it has sought to remember and forget its public history. The study will then move on to question the validity and necessity of designed, built space in order to construct and invent the notion of place in a way that gives the imagined realm authenticity. Finally the study seeks to test the hypothesis that we are in danger of becoming a people without a sense of place by not associating our memory in place making.

Keywords: Memory, Place, Space, Urban, Manifestation

Introduction

Dictionary meaning of memory is the process of recalling facts or experience. Memory association is very important in creating a sense of place. We experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects, and hence with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present. Area between and within an object is space which becomes place when occupied by some person, thing or any other attribute. The remembrance of an event or events is a valuable identifier of space. Our personal histories and identities are interwoven with space and places. We attribute to places a personal memory-tagging which marks them in our mind. In this way we might say that we need to remember in order to have an identity and sense of place. Why do we need a sense of place? Why is much of our security bound up with place and our place in the world?

I am with my friend. He has never been to the place where I grew up and so I show him the field where I used to play with my sister and the orange garden from where we use to pick oranges. It doesn't matter that the hut we used to, hide behind is no longer there because I still see it in my mind's eye. I still see the

garden and the hut; fragmented by the images and the sights and the sounds of the many different times I came here in my childhood I have not been here for years. But he doesn't see it as I see it. For him; it will be the place that I used to play in. He will remember the place differently to me although I have often described it. He came with an image of what the space was like and has left with an imprint of the place.

Have we lost our sense of place, a communion with the land? To be displaced is to be without a sense of place, to be without the boundaries set in place. When does space become place (Mowla, 2003)? Carter, James & Judith (1993) put forward the idea that a sense of place is engendered when space has been named and rendered in architectural form and embodies the symbolic and imaginary investments of the population. A further hypothesis put forward by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (in Casey, 1993) is *What begins as undifferentiated space ends as a single object - situation or place ... When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place.* A sense of place comes from physical, sensual and emotional responses to a site. Space becomes place through the interactive association with the site itself,

events that occur there, and with people in that space (Zeldin, 1995). To be disorientated is to be lost in space. In cities there are landmarks, buildings, spaces that act as signifiers of space (Mowla, 2002). In Dhaka city some of the examples acting as signifiers are Shaheed Minar, Baitul Mukarram, Stadium, Farm-Gate, Gulistan or Sangshad Bhaban and so on. The sight of a building or space tells us that we have gone the wrong way and that we are no longer where we want to be. This is orientation by default. If we understand that there is a sense of place then we must consider that one can have a sense of non-place. Memory is a subtle signifier of place, it could be individual or community based. It becomes a very personal identification with a place. Our memory-image is unique and individual. The images giving a sense of place are related to our physical senses. But this merely physical memory-experience of place is limited. For example, *the smell of humus will always remind me of my time in Lahore when I was a kid running through the orange trees and the sense of freedom and joy I had during my time there.* For me the smell is a memory signifier of place in my mind. It instantly triggers a whole catalogue of memories and experiences stemming from that initial sensory reference.

I want to conceptualize memory as a layering of ideas, remembrances and images that affect how we perceive and remember things, sedimentation of image and memory, the intimate layering of memory over memory. It is our fingerprint of a place; it is our unique memory and individual conception. It is our baby born out of remembrance of place. Inasmuch as we fill the physical outline of a person with what we know of them, we fill space with the memories of our experiences there. Places become filled with the residue of reminiscences (Proust, 1981 in Connerton, 1989). It is extremely important that our experience of space is both personal and relevant. What is interesting to me is the experience of space as opposed to the mere sitting of the physical in space and how that experience continues to affect us – to make it a place. The study is an attempt to show the role of memory in place making. The laboratory is Dhaka.

Memory

Our memory-images of space are formed by the remembrances of our personal experience of spaces. We remember spaces by having walked around them, by having been in them. This feeling of familiarity with a space creates a sense of place. However, if our experience of space does not meet our pre-conceived ideas or expectations then it feels like we have not

been in 'place'. When I visited the Mahasthangarh it was several minutes before I realized that I was standing in front of this historic site that I had previously only seen in reproduced images. In fact, because the image was so engraved upon my memory, I could not see beyond the image to the site itself because I had already seen it hundreds of times before in other medias. As John Berger (1993) remarks, the image frequently outlasts its representation and this illustrates why the construction of memory is an entirely retrospective act. An image is a sight that has been recreated or reproduced. *Every image embodies a way of seeing* (Berger, 1993). However it was the experience of being there, watching the sun set over Mahasthangarh and being able to create my own memory-images that was fascinating. The actual physicality of being there and the sensory pleasure that experience afforded can never be reproduced by merely having 'seen' the building.

The unseen, the imagined experience, creates a sense of place in our mind of what it might be like. The reality, however, gives an, immediate sense of place, which might be very different from that which we have imagined. People's preconception of a space relates to their culture and their individual memory of place. Over time there is a layering of images and sensations, which are 'stored' in our memory based upon both the imagined experience of place and the reality. It is the stabilizing persistence of place as container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability. An alert and active memory connects spontaneously with place, finding in it features that favour and parallel its own activities. *We might even say that memory is naturally place-orientated or at least place supported* (Casey, 1987).

Spatial Memory

The spatiality of memory is intriguing. The most potent images we can store are those in our mind's eye, those images that are unique and personal to our experience and us. It is very often through place by place association that we do remember. Association, through the imagery of places that we know and are familiar to us, we remember sights, sounds, smells, people, conversations, events. These place-images are memory triggers. Sensory recollections take place in remembered places. In the introduction I told the story of my childhood where memory association with Lahore was activated by the very noticeable smell of humus. This memory does not remind me of humus but rather I remember the place that is associated with it. If we are honest very few of our

memories are placeless (Forster, 1990). They have a context and place form. *Place serves to situate one's memorial life, to give it 'name and a local habitation'* (Forster, 1990).

Situational Memory

Some people remember by assigning physical structure to memory. I use the construct of an imagined file card in order to remember details about people. The physicality of this remembering system allows him to locate memories and recall very quickly. The use of physicality and place in terms of *aide de memoir* has been well documented by Yates (1966) and others. Situational memory is interesting because it is place itself that aids memory. As has been discovered by memory theorists there are many things in place to which one can attach memory. Place can be re-entered and explored mentally. Place is a *container of memories* (Casey, 1987).

Collective Memory

Having considered the idea of a personal memory response to space and its inherent memorability, I want to look at the idea of collective memory of place and how this relates to a public historical understanding of space. Public memory is seen by Young (1993) as the viewers' response to their own world in light of a memorialised past - the consequences of memory. In general the history of a place is its collective memory. It could be collective as well as individual but with the passage of time collective memory out lasts individual memory in the urban place making. Rajarbagh Badhabhumi, Surrender of Pakistan Army at Race Course (Surhwardi Uddayan) are examples. Which collective memory will persist will depend on many intricate socio-cultural or political catalysts. Instead of a 'collective' memory Young (1993) advocates a 'collected' memory of *many discrete memories that are gathered into common memorial spaces and assigned common meaning*. Public memory is an aggregate collection of its members' many memories. People share forms of memory, even the memories generated from them, but not the same memory.

Ordinary citizens have a unique understanding of their neighbourhood's landmarks, signs, sounds, and organisations. Using the urban fabric they attempt to illustrate history by encompassing shared time in the form of shared territory (Hayden, 1995). They recognize that the cultural context of our history and memory is important; understanding and remembering our history forms part of our identity.

Identity is intimately tied to memory: both our personal memories (where we have come from and where we have dwelt) and the collective and social memories interconnected with the history of our families, neighbours, fellow workers and ethnic communities (Hayden, 1995). In this way memorials should always aim to educate following generations and to engender a sense of shared experiences and destiny (such as represented by Bahadur Shah Park, Central Shaheed Minar, Savar Sriti Shawdha etc). *By themselves, monuments are of little value ... But as part of a nation's rites or the objects of a people's national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory* (Young, 1993).

The City

The city is possibly the most exciting and accessible of all history's textbooks. It is constantly changing (Mowla, 1997 & 2003a). Names of areas and places with memory signifiers, gives a place a natural identity e.g. Moulana Bhashani Road and Elephant Road clarifies the difference. *Story telling with the shapes of time uses the forms of a city ... to connect the residents with urban landscape history and foster a stronger sense of belonging* (Hayden, 1995). The places of everyday urban life are, by their nature, mundane, ordinary and constantly reused, and their social and political meanings are often not obvious.

Our images of past and future are constantly changing because of a continuous re-creation of present images, an overlaying and reworking of history and its memory. The idea of using the city to remember is not new to the urban designers with commemorative structures as artefacts. Walking along the architectural promenades would not only link areas of a city but would be a memory walk stimulated by the historic monuments which represented city's past power and importance. *Europeans tiptoe through their cities as museums because they are museums* (Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993).

The Familiar

In contrast with the idea of city as museum Kevin Lynch (1972) advocates a remembrance of history based upon people and events rather than upon special places, claiming that people have little desire in retaining old physical things, unless they are personal to them. It is the familiarity that people want to remember. If there is no personal association, over time the memorials become less and less important and their potency diminishes.

We are likely to be able to remember the houses that our father and our grandfather lived in but the locations of the houses of important historical figures are probably uninteresting and unknown to us. Preservation of history is of short-lived significance if the present no longer has any connection with the past. Ahsan Manzil may be considered a point explaining the case, it was in ruins until it was made a period museum.

The Fluidity of Time

We need to be aware of the fluidity of time. An attempt to preserve the memory of a particular point in time can result in our consideration of the past as vitrified and stale. *A sense of a stream of time is more valuable and more poignant and engaging than a formal knowledge of remote periods* (Lynch, 1972). A monument (or historical structure) should enable us to remember but instead it fixes memory and it becomes static and petrified. By embodying memory we displace it; its material form is stronger than society's memory work. By giving memory a form we divest ourselves of the need to remember because we become so used to the form that we allow it to do our remembering for us (Young, 1993).

In this way there is an important difference between an object built as a memorial and one that now serves as a memorial. The latter continues to remind and helps us to remember. For example, the renovated and reconstructed Ahsan Manzil in Old Dhaka, where the Dhaka's Nawabs once lived and historic events took place, or the Bardhaman House which was torched during mass uprising, can be regarded as space created in order to remember the past.

Dhaka's Collective Memory

If in considering collective memory we neglect the plurality of voices that now make up a city we will ignore immigrant peoples, women, religious groups and others. These groups have little or no representation in the public spaces of our cities, leaving instead well designed, gentrified 'nodes' which have no reference to the majority of the city and its peoples. In our country the landmarks, official history and biographies favour a small minority of elites, in prominent leadership and political roles, which may not appeal the commoners (Mowla, 1995). Collective memory of a more civic past can be recaptured by a proper appeal to traditional symbols.

Dhaka's Public Histor

In this way Dhaka is an interesting case study.

Seemingly little of its metropolitan history has been physically remembered in the city fabric – to foreign tourists a walk along river *Bouri Ganga* from Sadar Ghat to Swari Ghat or Chandni Ghat is more enthralling as in there they can feel the pulse of Dhaka as well as recall the origin of these ghats and the city. Official heritage walks are not so fascinating as they merely connect old buildings without memory association. Dhaka's *Kutti* or perhaps *Shankhari* community or near by Panam village is its greatest asset. The result of more than five centuries of infiltration, of people washing in and out of the city, means that Dhaka has acquired a gene pool that rivals any cosmopolitan city for resilience, colour and energy. However I question the idea of mummification of *Kuttis* or *Shankharis* of Old Dhaka to enable people to understand the rich heritage Dhaka people have brought to the oldest part of the town. It is possible to have urban historic public places with personal resonance for large numbers of people. But we opt out and buy the hundred taka ticket to 'heritage' in Dhaka, agreeing with Charles Moore (in Hayden, 1995) that *'You have to pay for public life'*. A visit to Dhaka's Old Town river front or historic Sonargaon is for the tourist and could be exotic enough to fool us into believing that it is a little taste of Dhaka or Bangladesh.

Dhaka's Marketable History

The corporate sell-out of our history has become increasingly prevalent over the last few decades. The contemporary arts of city building are derived from the perspective of middleclass architectural and planning professionals. The professionals worry in a depoliticized fashion about a city's competitive location in the global restructuring of capital, and thus the old town, of course, are what brings many visitors to Dhaka, and the city caters for them well. There is an area / park of Dhaka dedicated to the Commander-in-Chief of our liberation movement. Is the subject properly depicted or this part of the *whole liberation related industry or even the man Usmani* as described in the city's promotional literature? But not all Dhaka's past is built upon the success and achievements of the Sultanat or the Mughals or the British or even contemporary men.

Dhaka's Infamous History

Other than the tawdry tourist history, seemingly little of Dhaka's public history is displayed in the form of monuments or other recognized historic structure. However, street names or *mahallas* become vehicles for remembering its history. For example, an area named *Palassy* commemorates our defeat and

betrayal in the hand of the English. Victoria Memorial in Bahadur Shah Park reminds us of our betrayal in favour of the English. Rayerbazar *Baddabhumii* or *Budhijibi Sritiswadha* represents the heinous crime committed by the fellow Bengalis under the patronage of Pakistanis. Noor Hossain or Milan Chattar reminds us of our own dictatorial rule. There is a need to remember its infamous past. *To neglect history, to neglect memory, that which is owed to our ancestors is then to deny ourselves, it is to begin suicide* (Daly, 1862 in Boyer, 1994). It would be a pity if the fights, riots, and other things (Jinnah/Liakat/Ayub), which do not reflect the 'glory days', are forgotten. These things need to be remembered so that their importance is not diminished.

Sk. Mujib's house in road number 32, where he was killed along with his family in 1975, was donated by his family to the public. Bangabandhu Museum housed there, for many in Dhaka, now stands as a befitting memorial to the killing. Bardhaman House, which was partially burnt/destroyed during political agitations, was reconstructed at the government initiatives. Ironically, its renovated building was an attempt by the government to erase the damage, and therefore the agitation, from the collective memory. Ayub Gate renamed as Asad Gate is a befitting memorial of a movement against a dictator Ayub and the victim Asad but recently there were attempts to erase this collective and the collected memory. Is it possible for people to remember and accept accountability for their part in atrocities committed against other peoples? At present there is scarcely any mention of the plight of the Muslim weavers or the Indigo cultivators in the hands of the British era (However, there is a place after Indigo plantation named *Neel Khet* in Dhaka).

An understanding of a city's full history can only be successful if there is dialogue and understanding as to why the inglorious past should be remembered. There needs to be some consideration of an appropriate form of memorial, *no public art can succeed in enhancing the social meaning of place without a solid base of historical research and community support* (Hayden, 1995). Recovering the past and remembering it, neither refurbishing it, nor making it acceptable and 'nice', can revive cities. It helps generate an understanding of the relationship between people and their cities and their histories. It restores for some, and generates for others, memory-association, over time, with the city's remembered places.

Event

I may now want to look at the idea of event in space and how it aids our understanding of place. I am interested in how it can affect our consciousness of space through time and its importance in our place-world. Bernard Tschumi (1994) considers that there is no architecture without action or without program, and that architecture's importance resides in its ability to accelerate society's transformation through a careful agencing of spaces and events. He seeks to emphasize the experience over the physical.

By event I refer to those situations or circumstances, which become so associated with a site in our mind that they become part of the memory of that space. Even if the event is no longer there it becomes linked by memory to that site; not so much linked to a time but to a place e.g. Hatir pool, Chankhanr pool or Lohar pool or even Pheel Khana or Paltan or Dholai Khal etc. *What is remembered is well grounded if it is remembered as being in a particular place - a place that may well take precedence over the time of its occurrence* (Casey, 1987) without event is meaningless but architecture or the built realm is not the event. I wish to concentrate on two aspects of event: that of the permanent event, such as a memorial, which seeks to have a direct place association and that of the temporary event, such as a festival (example: Amor Ekoshe). Both of these events have potency and strength, the permanent by its physical association and also by its memorial association with a previous event, and the temporary by its repetition. It is the time and frequency of the event that is important and builds a strong memory connection.

Festivals and Fair:

Numerous fairs are held annually in Bangladesh. A fair has the ability to totally transform a space and completely change the way a meaningless site is seen. It alters dramatically the perception of a site so that it is not merely seen as space but as a place of fascination. This type of event has the ability to transform a landscape quickly and immediately. Calendar based repetition means that each day can have two interpretations; the day on which the event takes place and something happens, and the day on which a celebration is held to the memory of the event. Many fairs now have a heritage value due to their frequency and longevity, but authorities see fairs as having an historical value as well as bringing 'life and colour' to a city or town.

Dhaka has a long history of street fairs and festivals. Dhaka's Ekoshe Boi Mela in Bangla Academy Complex, virtually transforms the city for about a month, likewise Pahela Baisakh or Pahela Falgun, the two indigenous cultural events, provide colour to the city. The idea for the fair, I believe, comes from Italo Calvino's (1974) argument that *Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fear ... everything conceals something else ...* In the above referred book Marco Polo discusses with Kublai Khan the cities he has visited. After a time Khan realises that Polo has been describing the same city in eleven different ways and Polo said: *'Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice'* (Calvino, 1974).

It is this notion of being able to describe the same city in very different ways, which is at the heart of these fairs hidden manifesto. Since the trade fair or computer fair festival or Baisakhi mela was based in Shere Banglanagar or Ramna or Bangla Academy obvious references were made to Dhaka's glorious past as a major trading post, but also to its involvement in the capital (Mowla, 1999). The river is probably the heart and soul of Dhaka and the source of its wealth, diverse population and importance within Bangladesh and the world. *The public is then invited to explore for themselves what has been made in a very short time, to discover secrets about their own city and to see a familiar place through new eyes* (Brouhaha, 1996). Festivals and fairs show that event and the arts can alter how people perceive their city. It is hoped that the people who saw the event or were involved in it will never again see the site merely as site; but as a place of memory and associate it with the events that took place. The things seen, heard, and smelt during the festival are now synonymous with that place and the festival will always influence their association with the place.

Festivals and parades also help to define cultural identity in spatial terms by staking out routes in the urban cultural landscape. *Although their presence is temporary they can be highly effective in claiming the symbolic importance of places. They intermix vernacular arts traditions with spatial history* (Hayden, 1995). Festivals and street parades (processions) have always been recognised as being important to the control and influence of society's memories. If there is such a thing as social memory ... *we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; not commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as that are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automations*

(Connerton,1989).

Ritual and Memory

There are two means of bringing the past into present consciousness: by acting out and by remembering (Connerton,1989). The former is realised in commemorative events (Eid-ul-Azha) and the latter in memory (Victory Day parade). These two actions are interdependent because in order to act out we need to remember. By acting out we seek to remember and to remind ourselves. These events or ceremonies are often more than a one-off enactment; they become a fixed performative ritual. *We would underestimate the commemorative hold of the rite, we would minimise its mnemonic power if we were to say that it reminded the participants of mythic events ... the sacred event ... was re-presented; the participants in the rite gave it ceremonially embodied form. The transfigured reality of the myth was again and again re-presented when those who took part in the cult became so to speak contemporaries with the mythic event* (Connerton,1989).

It is often considered that ritual formalises and stylises events so that they have a tendency to occur at special times and in special places. It is because the ritual occurs in place that the space becomes special. An event 'takes place'. Often the ritual will have a connection with the site where it occurs because of a previous event but after time it is the ritual that is remembered and associated with the site, not the event. Viswo Istema or International Mother Language Day / 21st February or Bat Tala, Bakul Tala etc may be a case in point. *For all rituals, no matter how venerable the ancestry claimed for them, have to be invented at some point, and over the historical span in which they remain in existence that are susceptible to a change in their meaning* (Connerton,1989).

Ritual is the embodiment of memory. As Lukes (1975) proposed, ritual is rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significances. It does not merely imply continuity with the past but explicitly claims it. By its conspicuous regularity an event becomes a ritual or a rite. These commemorative ceremonies, like Tazia or Miladun-nabi procession or even boat race in the Bouriganga play a significant role in the shaping of communal memory. A community is reminded of its identity as represented by and told in narrative. Yet it is more than a story told and reflected upon. It is a ritual re-enacted. In recent centuries there have been many new semi-

ritual practices invented: the Olympic Games; Ekoshe pilgrimage; Baisakhi Mela; Ananda Michils or Muharram procession etc during different occasions. *Such occasions, it is true, no longer make imaginatively available to us that strong sense of imitation as mythical identification ... but they do still produce and provide shape for a communal desire - a wish to repeat the past consciously, to find significance in celebrated recurrence* (Connerton, 1989).

I consider that the consistent regularity of an event provides a space with such a strong identity that the event becomes associated with it and that memory - association engenders a sense of place, for example, Muharram mela in Azimpur, Viswa Istema at Tongi or Boi Mela in Bangla Academy Complex. The place of re-enactment has an importance and a profundity of its own. It becomes mythologized and venerated.

Designed event

There is now a different kind of design. This is the design of experiences, of theatrical, multi-media, multi-sensory events in which architecture is just one tool among many and in which all the scruples dear to modern architects - truth to materials, abstraction, use of natural light, careful detailing - only get in the way. *Experiences take the properties of theme parks and make them into a kind of essence that can be reconstituted almost anywhere, so that you don't need an expanse of land next to a motorway intersection to enjoy them* (Moore, 1996).

Experience-design

Having discussed the necessity of event in space, I now question the use of event as a marketing tool. The above quote refers to experience-design as promoted by a company called Imagination. The idea behind 'brand experience' is that if you want to sell something you therefore have to engage your buyers more forcibly, not only by making them look at your product, but by making them live, think, breathe, eat, hear and smell it. *You are no longer pushing a product but dimensionalising its essence* (Moore, 1996). By leaning towards experience architecture I fear we will see designs built around manipulated experiences. Increasingly we seem to be living out the truism that life follows the theme park: the aim of stimulating as many senses, as quickly and as fully as possible, through as many media as possible. We suffer from experience overload. We come away disconnected from the event, have no association with the space, and wonder what has happened.

Event-association

In event-successful spaces the architecture is built around activities inherent to the space. The water source or *hat* becomes a natural meeting point, around which village life is formed (Mowla, 2002). In event-successful schemes, the event has association with the space before the architecture and the scheme is designed so that further event naturally takes place. Event-association is wedded to the space. In many urban design proposals there seems to be an inherent desire to 'create' event and an unwillingness to realise that it needs to be engendered by a space. Labelling a space, dictating its purpose and what will happen there, leads neither to an understanding of that space nor to a sense of place. By naively designating an area on a drawing as a 'performance space' or an 'outdoor theatre' without fully considering the full potentials of that space is surely woeful indeed, and accentuates the egotistical notion that architecture is the event rather the site of event. It is disturbing that designed space is so often divorced from the reality of its use.

Bernard Tschumi (1994) claims that *Architecture [is] as much about the events that [take] place in spaces as the spaces themselves*. He calls for a replacement of the static notions of form and function by activities inside, outside and around buildings. *Attitudes are as important as buildings; individual and social relationships as important as material goods* (Landry and Bianchini, 1995) and that *what urban design is all about*. The tendency prevalent in architecture to view the physicality of design as entirely sufficient in itself and the blatant manipulation of people in space does not engender place. Architects have not remembered that people are both users and creators of place. They are neither trained nor prepared to see people as 'consumers' of space but merely consider them users of space. Thus architects and urban designers often miss the central role of people in creating place. People activate settings merely by their presence. *Their bodies, faces and movements create an energy that is almost metaphysical aesthetic, because the central core of the enacted environment is motion* (Hayden, 1995).

Events as pixie dust

In the Dhanmondi Lake Redevelopment proposal undertaken by the City Corporation of Dhaka, they claim that events, animation, sculpture, and illumination will improve the image and perception of the Lake and the Road no. 32 by reinforcing a strong sense of place and by giving a clearly defined

identity to the area (Mowla, 2003b). I question on what grounds these conclusions were made. Aside from these grandiose and elaborate proposals there seems to be no consideration of the actuality of event, other than the desired atmosphere they hope to create. It is the apparent ease by which atmosphere and event can be manufactured that concerns me. In terms of design proposals and decisions it would appear that there is little concern for the event even ecological aspects were totally ignored. Tschumi (1994) understands that *a praxis is constantly responsible to others, precisely because it has to render an account: to those who, by their use of the space, will create the event*. Richard Rogers (1991) designed the Pompidou Centre so that it would *not be a remote monument but a people's place. The competition report recommended that the Pompidou Centre be developed as a 'live centre of information covering Paris and beyond ... a cross between an information orientated computerised Times Square, Madam Tussud and the British Museum, with the stress on two-way participation between people and activities / exhibits*.

The whole analysis of why certain spaces work and others do not is not for exploration here but I merely challenge the hypothesis that such interventions (prescribed event, illumination, sculpture) will create a sense of place and the atmosphere proposed by designers, planners and architects in their Technicolor plans and perspectives. A prescribed event may not work. The space then becomes un-useable if it cannot adapt to the demands of its potential public. *The expectation, or desire, that work outside and in public can have effect, that it can transform and modify the spaces and audiences with which it works, runs throughout the twentieth century* (Rogers, 1991).

Concluding Remarks

Experience oriented design becomes increasingly important in a society obsessed with the experiential and the next event. The immediate appears to be the really interesting time reference. Will physical space continue to have much relevance for us? If our understanding of our place world continues to diminish, I believe that we shall experience loss of place and experience displacement. Loss of place leads to a loss of a sense of security (Mowla, 2003b) and this may be the reason why virtual worlds seem so appealing (this may be an area of further research, which the author is undertaking separately). If we lose our sense of place we shall have lost something fundamental to our sense of self. Awareness of the physical world can be on many levels; we know this

from the way we understand complex environments like cities.

Every city is, in fact, at least three cities. *The first is the artefact: physical, indisputable, the network of streets and urban places and the buildings that surround and define them. The second city is perceptual, and it introduces the human presence to the urban conglomeration. The perceptual city is a negotiation between the artefact and the human being. It is form limited and redefined by the human senses. Here the city can be sensed as brilliant or depressing, glorious or terrifying, odoriferous or fragrant, loud or quiet - this is the realm of how it seems. Finally there is the cognitive city, the product of the brain and its experiences how the inhabitant structures his or her perceptions and links them to a physical network* (Trelb, 1993)

If our place-world is to remain relevant to us, it must be considered on these multi-levels of consciousness. The perceptual, in particular, is the level at which we try to understand space as a sensual experience. Loss of this sense will have significant implications for our relationships with people and the physical world itself. This perceptual sense is linked to a development of our memory-association with place. Our perception of what space 'means' to us engenders a sense of place. Our sense of place comes from both a pragmatic and metaphysical interpretation of space relating to our cultural background and the influence of time upon our perception of that space.

How is memory-association with place developed? The (manufactured) event can be seen as a somewhat artificial method of engendering a sense of place. Design can play an important role in the development of perceptual sense of place. However, manipulation of people's sense by event in a designed space does not necessarily engender a sense of place. For an event to be successful in this regard, memory association must be created. The event may not be significant or even successful, but it must have a relationship with place and memory. Without memory-association the event has no importance perceptually. It will not allow a place association as its image is not strong enough to engender a sense of place. An event image is generated over time both by repetition and by re-enactment.

I suggest that design schemes seriously consider the implications of trying to create meaningful space by means of event. Design should move away from treating events as gestures towards the creation of public space and humanisation (Mowla, 2004). There is too strong an interest in abstract notions of

beautification and urban 'nicety' rather than in the actual nature of the city, its history, utilities and its potential. Dynamic, meaningful design should not direct people to be engaged in designated activities such as roller blading or sipping coffee in outdoor cafes, as indicated on dazzling design perspectives. Designers should not be surprised or offended if their road beautification or amphitheatre seating, for example, are laughed at or becomes used in a less formal way. The event should not have to be extraordinary, but it must be able to captivate and motivate people.

The use of the city fabric to portray history, and not merely the state established history, is one way that spaces can take on deeper, perceptual meanings. The idea of a collective history has yet to be explored in any great sense in Dhaka, which is a shame. Dhaka suffers from absent memory and does not have a deep enough realistic understanding of its potential as a city of vitality. This is not history remembered in order to be a tourist attraction but so that its people do not forget and remain connected to the city. Dhaka must look carefully at whether now is the time to remember its history. The heavy-handed signing of projects has left us with no understanding of the city's history or its peoples (demolition of Gulistan Cinema or the Shah Bagh round-about may clarify the point).

If there is no memory-association with a place then there will be no experience of place. Without this perceptual level of experience our place-world will diminish. Through events, ritualised and repetitive, a clearer understanding of the history of the spaces around us and their meanings to us now we can have memory-association with place. Place means nothing without association, without memory – it is a dull space. Design must become increasingly aware that people can use spaces, making them meaningful for themselves. It must move away from the imposing use artificially by means of prescriptive structure whether it is an actual physical construct or bed event. It is, however, design without content or vision, and hopefully design without a future.

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