

# Understanding the Sense of Place in the axis between Alaeddin Hill and Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi Museum

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## Abstract

*The aim of this study is to provide “sense of place” in the city by means of following the changes in a case study – a main axis between Alaeddin Hill to Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi tomb and museum in an historical city. The case study is in Konya, Turkey, in the middle of the Anatolia. The two landmarks are Alaeddin Hill, which had great military and political importance when Konya was the capital of Anatolian Seljuks, and the Mevlana Celaleddin Tomb, which is the symbol of the city.*

*To create a pedestrian road between two major landmarks has been planned since this axis has a sense of place with historical public buildings belongs to different periods as well as traditional residential buildings. However, urban changes and urban design process has caused annihilation in that axis. If urban design decisions are taken ignoring the historical value of residential buildings, cultural inputs and meaning of the space based on memories and experiences, the sense of place disappears like in this example that has the potential of producing creating general results.*

## Keywords

Sense of Place, Konya



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## **1. Introductory Remark**

In this article, the relationship between the environment and development is viewed through the lens of “sense of place”. “Sense of place” is a much used expression, initially by architects but taken over by urban planners. Sense of place differs from place attachment by considering the social and geographical context of place bonds and the actual sense of place, such as aesthetics and a feeling of dwelling. Nevertheless, city plans most of the time do not reflect this concept in a proper way. The axis between Alaeddin Hill to Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi Tomb and museum is selected as a tool for discussing surroundings the sense of place since this selected field is unique not only for Konya and Turkey but also the world regarding cultural and spatial heritage. This case study demonstrates how two dimensional plan decisions are ineffective without collection of past events and experiences.

## **2. Method**

This study focuses on spatial characteristics of the axis starting from Alaeddin Hill to ending with Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi over the last 25 years. On the basis of previous studies, existing literature has been used along with the personal observation on the studied field. The main methods of gathering information and material for the study is observing, conducting interviews, taking photographs and collecting post cards. Additionally, obtaining from the city 1/1000 scale development plans of Konya, related reports and a field survey from the Municipality is the other way of collecting material. Five old aged Konya citizens with an excess of 30 years residence were asked about the axis between Aladdin Hill and Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi Tomb and Museum to build a comprehensive story belonging to the studied area. Some very significant stories regarding memories dealing with the axis has provided details of how the social values changed as well as the space itself. After detailing the collection of stories, memories and visual documentation giving the “sense of place” are the effects of the Development Plan.

## **3. Conceptual base of the study**

Place is a concept traceable to the work of Aristotle and of importance to environmental psychology, architecture, geography and sociology (Devine-Wright 2009). In the English speaking society the use of the term place is rather loose, meaning a location, designating someone’s feelings for a space such as a room, a street or home town itself. A commonly agreed principle is that ‘place’ differs from related concepts such as ‘space’ or ‘environment’ in describing physical aspects of a specific location as well as the variety of meanings and emotions associated with that location by individuals or groups (Gieryn, 2000), (Tuan, 1977). Regardless of discipline, it is a distinctive way of thinking about social research that stresses ‘emplacement’, in which physical and spatial contexts are more than mere backdrops to social and psychological phenomena (Bonaiuto, Carrus, Martorella and Bonnes, 2002), (Cresswell, 2003), (Gieryn, 2000). However, the literature on place has been described as incoherent (Stedman, 2003), arising from the diversity of approaches adopted by researchers (Patterson and Williams, 2005), including phenomenology (Norberg Schulz, 1980), symbolic interaction (Milligan, 2003), discourse analysis (Dixon and Durrheim, 2004) and social

cognition (Stedman, 2003). Although some psychologists have conceived place holistically (Canter, 1997), (Gustafson, 2001), (Massey 1991), many have adopted a more analytic focus, the most notable of which are literatures on place attachment (Altman and Low, 1992) and place identity (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff, 1983).

De Certeau (2005) draws the distinction between “place” (lieu) and space (espace). Certeau inverts their usual relationship to such an extent that space becomes a contextualization of place. Space is for Certeau (2005) a place made meaningful-awakened-by practices that orient it, situate it, temporarise it and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictive programs or contractual proximities on this view, in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in a proximity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as an act of a present, or of a time and modified by the transformations caused by successive context. According to Jackson (1995) the terminology of “sense of place” is an awkward and ambiguous modern translation of the Latin term “genius loci” also it is the guardian divinity of that space. The recent development of place as a field of study brings much more breadth to an understanding of our relationships with place, beyond the humanistic geographers such as Tuan (1974, 1976), Replh (1976) and Seamon (1979). In a geographical sense, a person can become bonded to a restricted geographical locate; the “place” includes the area where that person routinely travels or is aware of in a detailed way (Tuan, 1975), (Hay 1986). Jackson (1985) also claims that if there is a sense of place, not only the inhabitants but also the visitor may get benign presence. Sense of place is a type of guardianship to supernatural spirit. In some texts “sense of place” is described as the atmosphere to a place or the quality of its environment. Nevertheless, it is recognizable that certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well-being and which we want to return to time and again. Having sense of place is cherished because it is embedded in the everyday world around us and easily accessible, but at the same time is detached from that world.

To discuss sense of place in an urban context, a main axis is selected in an historical city due to the properties of that axis. It is a good tool to follow how the properties of the axis have changed within time and lost the sense of place. The building and the context was so impressive that someone who does not experience and who does not know the city can follow how the sense of place disappeared even by looking at figures, images and post cards, by listening the citizen’s story about the axis. Thus the property of this axis seems to be worth discussing and following the sense of place.

### **3.1. The Properties of This Axis; From Alaeddin Hill to Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi**

The axis between Alaeddin Hill to Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi Tomb and museum is important since it has historical values, cultural inputs and meaning based on memories and experiences. Konya is well-known in international milieu with a Çatalhöyük settlement dating back before 7000 BC. Sille is where different civilizations converged and Kilistra was the place of first Christians and Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi who thought that everything rotates in the universe, invited mankind to the devotion of God, hope, love and peace by whirling himself around (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The Sema ceremony and Mevlana Tomb and Museum.

The Alaeddin Hill, as a peak at the centre of a flat site, gave sense, scale and value to the city of yesterday, and maintains that same pivotal role in the spatial understanding of Konya today. Importantly, going back to approximately 1000 BC, Alaeddin Hill was the first settlement in Konya (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Alaeddin Hill and Alaeddin Mosque with the remains of the citadel on Alaeddin Hill.

In the city centre, the roads and the streets that cross each other perpendicularly were opened in Konya starting around 1800. One of the most important roads was the axis between Alaeddin Hill to Mevlana Celalaeddin Rumi Tomb and Museum (Figure 3).

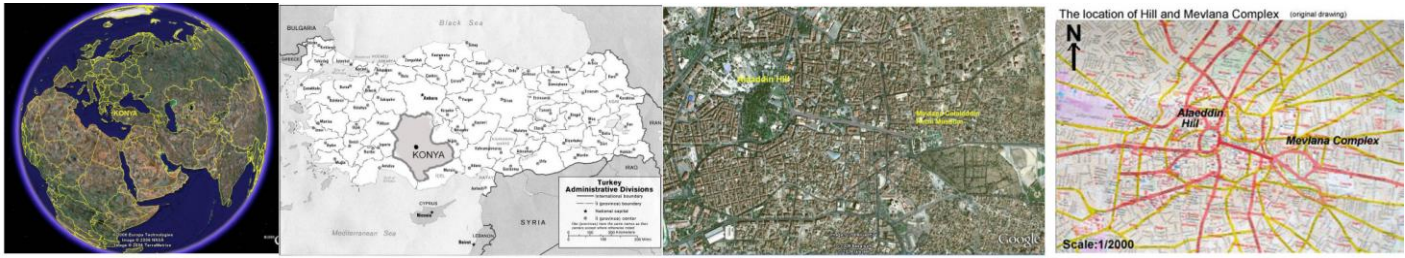
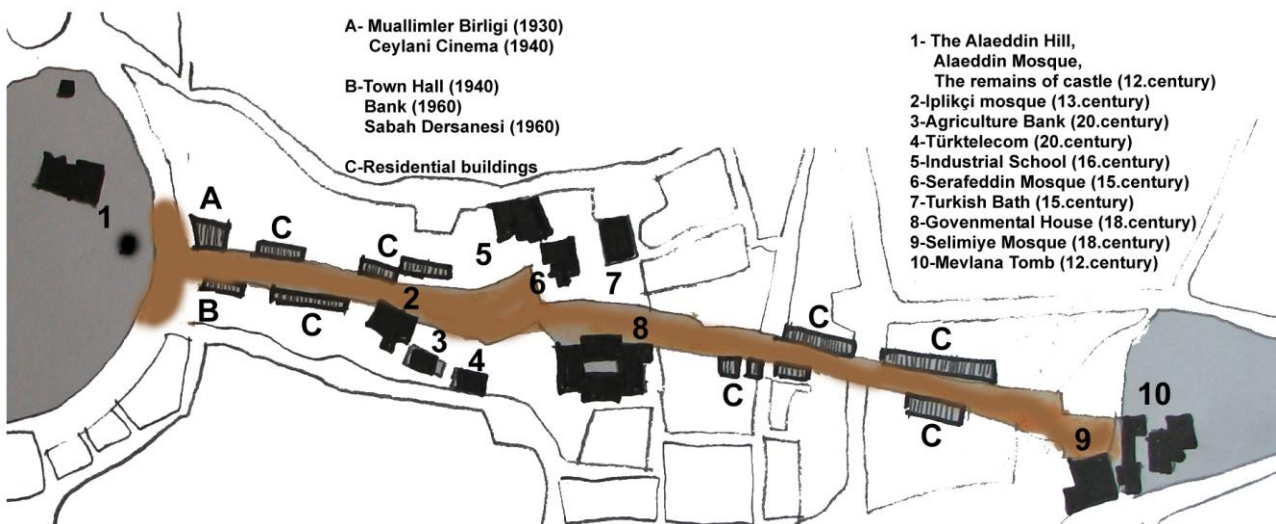


Figure 3: The location of case field

The significant points like the Alaeddin Hill and the historical monuments strung one by one along the axis, represent complete the memory of the city. Not only the local people but also the voyagers like Evliya Çelebi (1986), İbn-i Batuta (1917), Sarre (1998) emphasized that. Önder (1948) also mentioned other voyagers as Pegolotti, Jean Otter, Oliver, W.M Leake, Mareşal Fon Moltke, Clement Huart, Charles Texier, Colmar Freiher, Regis Delbeuf who has emphasized the value of the axis. This artery, stemming from such a significant point of the city such as the Alaeddin Hill, possesses historical monuments belonging to different periods and terminates at the Mevlana Complex. The artery starts with Alaeddin Hill and ends with Mevlana Celaeddin Rumi Tomb and museum with a sense of place based on historical public and residential buildings as well (Figure 4).



- 1- **Alaeddin Hill, Alaeddin Mosque and remains of castle**
- 2- **The İplikçi Mosque;** A great stone bulk that stands in the center of Konya between the Alaeddin Hill and the Mevlana Museum. It is said that this was the resting place of Mevlana. Scholars as one of the oldest Seljuk Mosques accept this building, built in 1201. It has three domes, one of which is situated over the mihrab, with the other two situated in front of and behind.
- 3- **The Agriculture Bank:** This two-storey building has characteristics of the First and Second [Turkish] National Architecture Styles in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4- **Turk Telekom Building:** This was built in 1926 and has been accepted among the examples of the First [Turkish] National Architecture Style.
- 5- **The Industrial School (Konya Provincial Council):** previously located on this same site was a covered bazaar (bedesten), built in 1538 during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. After this was demolished, the Industrial School was built between 1898 and 1901. It is still used today.

- 6- **The Şerafeddin Mosque:** is a classical Ottoman mosque built in place of another one from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, having a similar plan to the Selimiye Mosque.
- 7- **The Public Court Baths:** This building is situated in the north of the Şerafeedin Mosque. It was built by the Principality of Karamanoğulları between 1426 and 1462.
- 8- **Governmental House:** The building was begun in 1885, and was completed as an official building with 3 stories, 30 rooms and a courtyard. Today it still continues to be used as government offices.
- 9- **The Selimiye Mosque.** This building is in the Mevlana Complex, situated in its western section. It was begun to build in the period of Prince Sultan Selim and was completed between 1558 and 1566. The mosque has been accepted as one of the most beautiful monuments of Classical Ottoman Architecture.
- 10- **Mevlana Celeleddin Rumi Tomb and Museum**

Figure 4. The studied axis and buildings located in that axis (Konya 1998), (Odabaşı 1998), (Alkan 1985), (Baykara 1985), (Bala ve Çağlar 2004).

To assist the research of this study winning Development Plan of 1966 competition has been obtained; this plan proposed the creation of a pedestrian road for that axis. What creates sense of place in an urban field is not only the conserved historical public buildings but also the traditional residential buildings, existing trees, existing habitats, local activities, historical events based on memories and experiences. However, in the 1966 Development Plan, only the historical buildings 1-10 mentioned in Figure 4 were to be conserved, which totally ignored the context. This axis was unique with all its interrelated parts including the conserved historical public buildings, the relation of the buildings to each other, the landscape, the memories and the spatial traces of memories. This artery from Alaeddin Hill to Mevlana Tomb and Museum with traditional residential buildings and historical public buildings belongs to different period provides a walkable way having sense of place (Figure 5).

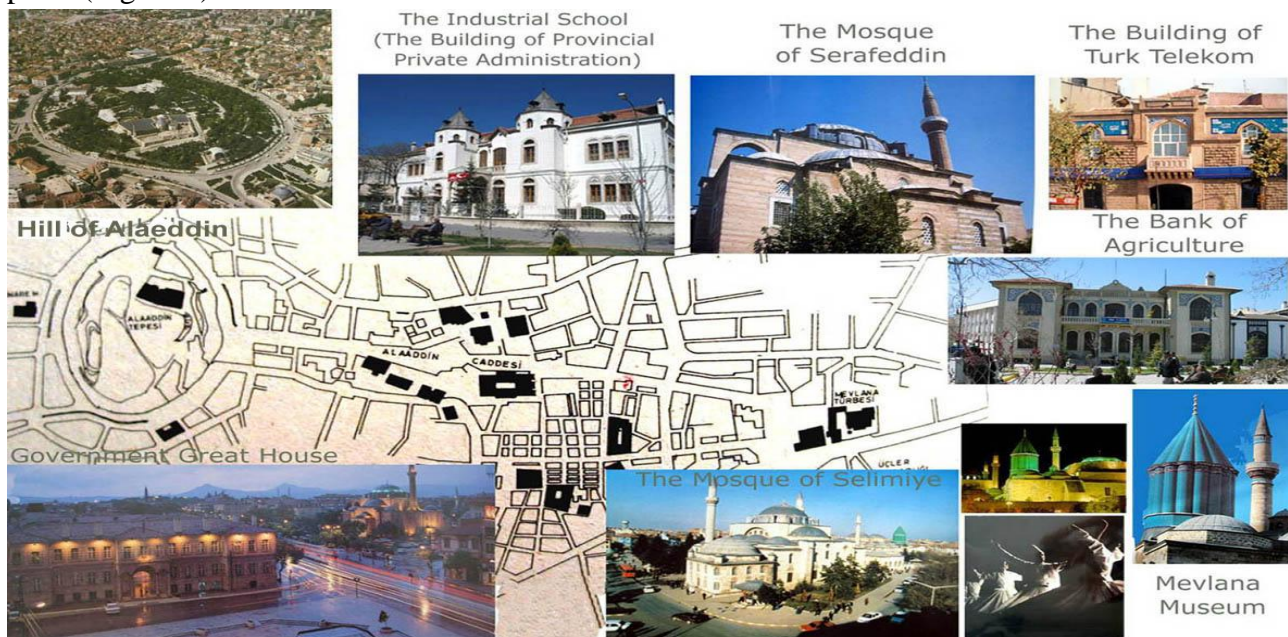
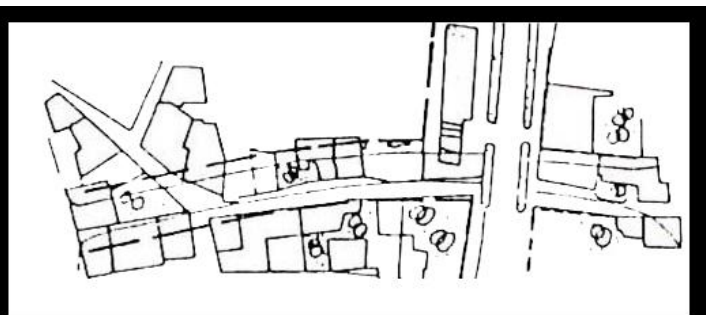
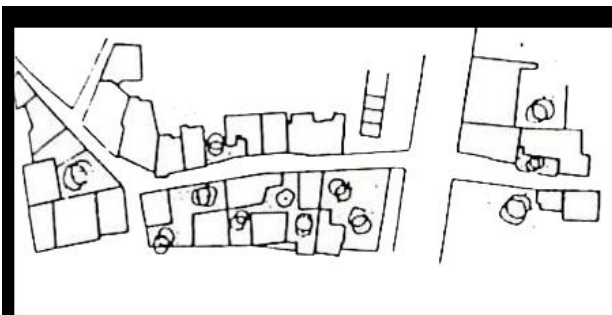


Figure 5: Historical buildings on this artery

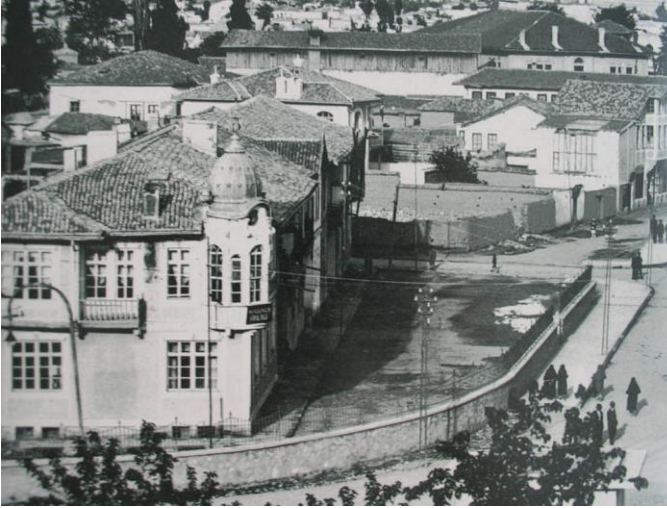
In order to widen the road a significant number of traditional residential buildings have been pulled down (labeled as C in Figure 4). There is not any specific documentation about those residential buildings individually but Figure 6 shows what type of changes occurred. Old citizen who lived for more than 30 years in Konya remember how this axis has lost its value as mentioned in the interviews quoted in Figures 6 – 9.



An interview with an 82 years old lady (-who didn't want to mention her name) “We were in peace with non-Muslims neighborhoods in our childhood. Non-Muslim houses were different to Muslim's with decoration and usage. Down the street non-Muslim and Muslims residents were arranged side by side, creating lively street silhouettes especially in that road. Most of the houses collapsed. The surviving ones seem to me so lonely”.

Figure 6: The residential buildings around the Alaeddin Hill as a trace of urban pattern

For example in 1930, at the beginning of artery (A in Figure 4) was the very authentic Muallimler Birliđi building- . This building has been pulled down and the characterless replacement building can be seen in Figure 7. The interview with a 90 year old man who has been living in Konya since he was born has given some vivid clues about the sense of place.



Musa Ortakara (90 years old); “At the beginning of the Alaeddin Hill there was a building that is Chamber of teachers (Muallimler Birliđi) in 1930, this building disappeared and instead The new Cinema (Ceylani Sineması) was built up in 1940. When I was 20 years old, to go to that cinema with a great secret was our only social activity. My family and all other Muslim families forbid their children to go that building that belongs to non-Muslims. They were believing that we will lose our value if we watch that movies. Hayat Apartment the first apartment building in Konya was constructed in the same row. Beside Hayat Apartment there was a printing shop (Babalık Matbası) in 1940’s. Now, instead of this building Selçuk Hotel exist.

Figure 7. Changes at the beginning of axis mentioned as in Figure 4.

The Town Hall building (B in Figure 4) which was at the beginning of the artery in 1940 was another example of authentic buildings being destroyed and the replacement building adding to the loss of sense of place (Figure 8). This is backed up by the 91 year olds opinion about the negative changes in the interview.



Abdullah Çömez (91years old); I never ever forget it was before the official declaration of Republic, Atatürk would come to Konya with deputies and his wife as well on 20th March 1923. Although I was 5 years old, I remember that that like today. After 1940 we celebrated the Republic in the ceremonies in square of Town Hall. I was very fond of that building that is two stories and having balcony. The important decisions and announcement had been done from that articulated balcony by municipality. We cried together, we laugh together in front of that building. Then the roads widened and that lovely building cleared out and 6 storey building is constructed. I this new one is a thief that stole my memories and hopes...

Figure 8. The Town Hall was pulled down and modern building is constructed instead.

Figure 9 shows in greater detail the changes with regard to sense of place as previously identified as “5” in Figure 4.



The view of Bedesten in 1538  
(Karpuz 1996, pp.79)



The view of Sanayi Nefise in 1900  
(Karpuz 1996, pp.80)



Todays view of Sanayi Nefise (personal archive)



Dudu Hakkı (70 years old); My house is so close to İl Genel Meclisi (Konya Provincial Council) I can see the building from my window. I remember an old picture of Sanayi nefise building previously located on this same site was a covered (bedesten), built in 1538 during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. After this was demolished, the Industrial School was built between 1898 and 1901. It is still used today as Konya Provincial Council. Nowadays the function of this building will change since Konya Provincial Council will move another building. I hope this building will not disappear like the others since it is my neighborhood during 27 years.

Figure 9. Industrial School and one of the old citizen’s perceptions about the environment.

Existing trees also affect the sense of place and is displayed in Figure 10. The importance of the trees is seen not only in the image but also felt within the words of the citizen’s reflections about his local environment.



Serafeddin Mosque and its environment in 1500



Serafeddin Mosque and its environment in 1920



Hacı Ali Daymaycı (85 years old): “When I was a child, we were playing under the trees surrounding the Şerafeddin Mosque among the birds. My father talked about they were also playing in that area with including the additional part next to mosque that disappeared in big fire in 1867. All big trees are cut while opening new roads, birds are not living in that area anymore”

Figure 10. The changes around Şerafeddin Mosque on the middle of the axis.

Development Plans should be prepared to ensure the historical texture, the value of society, the inputs of culture and the memory of both the city and its people. If achieved, the sense of place is protected and not only the local people but also visitors will share the true feeling of life in the area. Collecting and taking the photos from the same viewpoint showing the beginning of artery from Alaeddin Hill towards the Mevlana Complex identifies how the sense of place disappeared between 1930 and today (Figure 11a-11f).



Figure 11.a View from the artery in 1930's (Başgelen, 1998, p.12)



Figure 11.b View from the artery in 1940's (Karpuz, 1996, p.86)



Figure 11.c View from the artery in 1960's (postcard)



Figure 11.d View from the artery in 1980 (Konya, 1998, p.71)



Figure 11.e View from the artery in 2000 (personal archive)



Figure 11.f. View from the artery in 2004 (personal archive)

A change to the axis and the loss of context is highlighted in Figure 11. The examples of civil architecture have transformed in time and have made the conserved buildings look disconnected from the present. In other words the approach of urban planning created the annihilation. Harvey (1989) treated his idea of “time-space compression” primarily as a way to express the sped-up pace of urban life and intended it as a description of individual and societal experiences. As such it explains underlying social and individual disturbances. It signals the upheaval in our daily experiences of life, as we are increasingly unable to map the representations of space and time (Marcotullio, Rothenberg and Nakahara 2003). The changes and the concept of following sense of place may be seen all over the world in similar aspects.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

Although to follow the sense of place in the axis between Alaeddin Hill to Mevlana Celaledin Rumi Museum seems to be a specific example, this case field has the potential of getting results that may be generalized. In other words this special case study offers many essential lessons to be learned and provides a glimmer of hope for the future development of the other historical cities:-

- When sense of place is destroyed, the uniqueness of the urban context is also lost is also disappeared.
- Sense of place depends on conservation of the urban texture. To keep sense of place is not only conserving the historical buildings but also conserving residential buildings, existing landscape and collective memory as well.
- Development Planning sometimes creates annihilation of the sense of place. If places can be conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which bring them together, then it is also the case that these interactions themselves are not motionless things, frozen in time; they are processes. These arguments subsequently highlight a number of ways in which a progressive concept of place might be developed. Initially, uniqueness of place deserves to be perceived, protected and to become sustainable. Otherwise sense of place might contribute to the annihilation of space over time. It is this phenomenon which is termed “time-space compression”.
- There is no richly differentiated concept of what the city is, who lives in and comes to the city. Nor what they enjoy about it as or what they fear, the memories embodied in the places of the city and the futures that might be in the making. The well voiced vocabulary of metaphors and the resonances of meanings are locked into a professional world, rather than the worlds of the diverse citizens of the city. This approach and the impact of change sometimes by means of Development Planning has been a threat to sense of place.
- Through habitual processes of movement, by covering and recovering the same paths and routes, we come to familiarize ourselves with a territory and thereby find meaning in that territory. A Development Plan that is prepared ignoring human perception damages the city rather than making a better living environment having sense of place.
- The presence of urban life is possible only by turning geographic space into "place", thereby gaining "meaning". To perceive this transformation with only visual and physical components is not possible. The sense of place in urban context is closely related to the totality of social and cultural phenomena. The city is a structure that includes complex relationships, a process that both conflicts and supports each other while creating itself with transformations. However, transformations decrease the quality of urban spatiality and urban life standards if they can be designed and/or controlled. Development Plans will be more efficient and functional when they produce extra value to life. The decisions taken by planners may be positive but in order to evaluate whether these are correct or not, the effects of these decisions on life should be examined.

Briefly, city planning that becomes a series of two dimensional images when faced with urban changes, development and transformation is not the city itself. Development plans without grasping the perception, mood and the memories of the people could not produce the spatial values including “sense of place”.

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