



The Level of Place Attachment in Selected Areas in Malate District Based on Elements of City Image.

Leiron Mark S. De Guzman*

** Faculty, Architect – Environmental Planner, College of Architecture, National University-Philippines, lmsdeguzman@national-u.edu.ph*

Malate is one of the oldest geographical districts of the City of Manila, it has been an enclave of rich Spanish Meztizos, Americans and Filipinos alike from its early settlement as an expansion of residential – resort seaside living outside Intramuros during the Spanish Era. It grew in a bustling prime residential estate before the war began where it created the ideal community rich with socio-cultural experience, commerce, and trade, a place for educational excellence, and ecclesiastical centers during the American Colonial Era.

Nowadays, the district has lost its sense of place and lack of vibrancy. This study is an attempt to solicit the personal experiences of residents in Malate about the Sense of Place in the area, how the district thrives as an urban community with a deep historical root as an agricultural barrio that gradually develops into elite housing of the town socialites and at the end of the turn of the century is now a mixed cultural and diverse community. This study also wants to know how residents can have a meaningful stay in the area where they can certain level of Place Attachment.

The study also wants to know residents' perception of Urban Design and how it affects every life, applying a qualitative research method to understand deeper their experience and story. The study aims to address the respondent's opinions and experiences to improve urban design in their community, and further improve the communities cultural heritage

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Urban Design, Place Attachment, Sense of Place, Heritage Zone

Introduction

Maalat (salty or derived from salt-making people) as it was first coined, Malate is among the very first village towns outside Intramuros. The swampland and rice paddies south of Intramuros started to settle as a community when Augustinian missionaries established a parish in the area under the patronage of Our Lady of Remedios, which later became the present Malate Church, a fusion of Spanish Baroque and Moorish detail during its conceptualization in the 15th century. Having the parish present in the locality, the Pueblo system and the Laws of the Indies started to pave the urban landscape of the area. In the advent of the early 16th century, more people shifted location from the crowded and all-Spanish quarters of Intramuros to nearby towns of Paco, Ermita, and Malate.

Late 17th century in the event of the Seven-Year War between France and Great Britain in 1754, this conflict eventually affected here in Asia, in 1762 The British were in Manila-occupied Malate, and the British forces were in the country for almost two years exploring parts of Luzon and surveying economic interest in the new territory but was cut short when the Seven Year War end through the Treaty of Paris and handing back Manila to the Spanish.

From the end of Spanish rule in 1890 rich Binondo families started seaside villas near the bay along Calle Real, now M.H. Del Pilar St., and with the subsequent American occupation after it interfered in the Spanish-Filipino war, Malate has improved from a swamp land to a highly acclaimed residential enclave and Manila's high society started to settle in and became a summer resort town during until 1930's.

19th-century Malate has transformed further as it became the premier subdivision suburb in the capital city. The turn of the century gave an idea to enterprising American – Henry E. Jones to invest and land bank on swamp lands that would later be lot cut and sold to individual parcels of land they could use for residence, thus paving the first subdivision plans in the country. After World War II broke out, most of the prominent Manilenos were already in the area, particularly in Vito Cruz streets, apartment buildings and some commercial buildings also started to a mass in the community. Its Red Light district notion came into existence during this time in the later part of the century as it was prevalent due to strong foreign tourist presence and the American Servicemen still stationed in the country as part of their R&R – rest and recreation, thus drinking bars, discotheque, night clubs, and other gentlemen club has been the talk of the town and the place to be after office hours, the area started to dominate negative influence as well in a gambling joint.

Today, Malate is a melting pot of different nationalities. It has evolved from the old residential reserve into a modern multi-faceted, highly dense housing area at night but highly commercial activity in the daytime. From its



old beach resort town, the district is now a hub for tourists to see part of Old Manila, the progress it has shaped in the last four (4) centuries, threats on climate change give challenges to locals on how to survive and revive the rich identity of Malate.

Its built heritage is associated with something old, vintage, and of minimal use in the context of the built environment and architecture. The sense of place and some heritage building has almost been forgotten in the modern world.

The way of life we live has something to do with what our ancestors practiced in early times. Heritage speaks not only of the tangible or the seen built structures but encompasses a broad spectrum of intangibles, those that are local traditional practices and representations, expressions, knowledge, languages or dialects, skills and trades, music and related arts, and other religious practices. Our legal laws protect our rich cultural heritage, from our 1987 Constitution to its recently passed law R.A. 10066 or the “National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009”.

Ordinary people think less about culture nowadays, but there is more to heritage. True it seems that what is old and forgotten is branded as heritage. The international community through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines World Heritage as “Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our culture and nature are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.”

Considering the rapid movement and change in the conservation of heritage sites around Asia, the experts noted that the unaddressed threats from development and modernization have too often resulted in negative consequences such as the Dismemberment of heritage sites, with resultant loss of integrity; Dilapidation, and structural deterioration of the fabric of the region’s built environment to the point where it can no longer adequately support the human use for which it is intended; Replacement of original components with counterfeits and non – indigenous technologies and materials; Loss of the sense of place of the region’s heritage sites, through inappropriate reconstruction process which homogenize their unique characteristics; and Disenfranchisement of heritage from the traditions of community use. (Hoi An Protocol For Best Conservation Practice in Asia, UNESCO 2009)

Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), falls under the discipline of psychology, seeking opportunities for useful dialogue between different traditions that can contribute to discussions and debate for variable modes of inquiry for psychology (Jackson, Et. Al. 2016). This study attempts to inquire into people's perception of topics in urban design and how it affects their place, home, or community. Subject and topic familiarity and initial knowledge is the important outcome of the research, to know how people react and respond naturally. This kind of study is uncommon in the architectural field and starting it is a big challenge and undertaking.

Since the study is about phenomena, the experience of individuals and groups in the said location, the author conducted an individual survey and a focused group discussion. The individual survey aims to seek familiarity with urban design and place identity, these items are interpreted in Filipino to translate terms related to the local language. The FGD was conducted with locals in a chosen barangay and was participated by the Barangay Captain, the head of the barangay. The course of the question is on place attachment, and how each participant relays their respective experiences and story-telling about their locality. Due to time constraints and difficulty in setting an appointment with the respondents, only a few topics on place attachment and place identity were covered during the one-hour discussion. Should this line of research be further in the future, the author suggests scheduling a series of Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with the different aspects of the general topic of Sense of Place, it would solicit rich output to categories of respondents by age group, employment, students and senior citizens, even visitors or local tourists who frequented the place would be a good respondent sample.

Research Process

The research process is a straightforward description of the study, Problem Identification, and Research objectives, a series of Literature Reviews is conducted to fit into the relevance of the study, establishing Place Attachment and Urban Design topics and looking for items that can be tested in the field site for further learning. If their place belonging is more significant than that of the physical order and attraction of urban design offers. Sense of Place as the mother thought is combined with Urban Design as the working conceptual framework of this study. Data collected are then analyzed through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) on the experiences of the respondents.



Data Gathering Techniques

Survey Questions are administered in this study and let the respondents answer and comment on the sets of questions that solicit their perceptions, observations, and opinions in the study. Initially, the survey was given to random respondents residing in the district via online means, after a few days the results of the individual survey came and were initially processed as part of the Thesis 2 Defense presentation.

Qualitative Research Method

The study employed the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Survey

The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) survey is a 3-part survey with the following topics. Part 1 Sense of Place Questions, Part 2. Place Attachment Question and Part 3 Urban Design Elements. The survey is in Filipino for easy understanding and translation. This FGD interview intends to know respondents' familiarity and knowledge of the topics and how their response can help in the recommendation for further development of the community.

Quantitative Research Method

The study employed the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Survey

Results and Discussion

Survey Study, Heritage Questions:

Given the respondent's acceptable knowledge of Heritage, the majority of them gave high regard to safeguarding and preserving cultural heritage – this is only on the aspect of what they see, the built heritage, the tangible ones. There is more to it than the physical side of it, this should be pursued further to promote the intangible side of heritage, the people themselves, its customs and traditions it lives by, and the mixed cultural diversity that Malate has throughout the years. This is a sound recommendation to enhance Manila's renewed status as a leading city destination by the World Travel Awards this 2023.

Urban Elements of the City Questions

Given the respondent's acceptable knowledge of the Image of a City (by Kevin Lynch), the majority of the respondents understand the basic problems in our streetscapes and welcome improvement on it. All have high regard for streetscape improvement and enhanced urban design, Malate can have better Streets and pathways. Intersections should be improved for all, with 62% of the results of the survey, it is considered by our respondents as Nodes, Edges can be described as anything, with 80% of the respondents stating that it could be different kinds of boundaries. This can be as simple as color-coding of buildings, hanging flags and banners, special streamers, and street furniture customization similar to Binondos' dragon motif lamp post. This can promote a sense of place in the community reminding you that you are in Malate District. The District itself is diversified mixed-use in land, zones, and even with people and community. A high percentage of respondent's perceptions suggest a 74% culturally diverse zone, while 24% suggest a "special zone" amounting to 96% acceptance of district classification, the remaining 4% has no idea of this kind of development. It can be beneficial to have certain areas be designated as "heritage districts" to make their place officially marked and be promoted further with this added status, this can be viewed as like Vigan as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Landmarks play a vital role in the community, thus the respondents give high regard to them, 59% see Old structures and buildings as such, 13-14% see Parks and Streets as common landmarks, while a few 7% see the LRT Stations (Pedro Gil, Vito Cruz, and Quirino) are iconic landmarks, the rest see the majestic Manila bay and its bay walk as an important scenic landscape.



Elements of Responsive Elements - Urban Design Questions

Given the variety of perceptive knowledge of the respondents on this topic, the majority of the respondents aspire to change and improvement in the district that is proposed through local legislation and community-led change and involvement. Responsive Environment (by Sue McGlynn, Ian Bentley, and Graham Smith) elements were tested on respondents' perception and have these results to share: Permeability – Traffic and other road/street issues are the main concerns of the respondents why they cannot maximize their movement within the district. Variety – 92% of respondents say that the district has a variety of Mixed-use land uses and zones. It is a good indication of a healthy community. Legibility - 46% of the respondents know the community as a melting pot of people, trade, and business and residents see it as an opportunity to improve lives and make a living out of it, recently Malate has now a designated “Korean town” in its jurisdiction recognized by the local government however, there is still some non-conforming establishment that needs to be address or corrected in the future. Another 28% see the district has decaying segments in its community, these are all mentioned in the survey that also need checking and improvement to achieve an ideal community with a global status. Robustness – 59% responded that due to its mixed diversity, the district can accommodate and be flexible in its functions and use. A current example is the day population uses the area as their work and school place, at the evening most of them reside elsewhere, another type of people comes in later the night to experience the nightlife the district has to offer. This degree of different shifting uses gives a vivid robust environment. Visual Appropriateness – to appreciate this, we should check first the community appearance, with 30% of responses focused on Urban Infrastructure, the respondents seem to understand that what is seen by the eyes matters. Closely 29% are Environmental issue, 21% are Social Issues, 14% are Urban Design and Planning and the remaining 6% of respondents has no idea of this element. To be visually appropriate, we should improve and enhance our physical appearance to be more enticing for our people. Richness – it's all about experience based on our basic senses, with a combined 88% of responses, respondents see the community as a rich cultural area with diverse people and traditions. The majority of them understand that there is a variety of places to spend at, the smell of greens in the park, the smell of sea on Manila Bay, the scenery it offers, the bustling urban chaos heard from vehicles, and trains, traversing its roads and the different food present in the local place that is caused by the diverse immersion of cultures present in the area. A certain good place to explore mixed cultures and traditions in the capital city. Personalization – with a combined 88% of responses, the respondents understand that the community has a rich historical and cultural aspect that people have to accept and live by. However, even having an old house doesn't mean we can't use it as a restaurant, thus adaptive reuse. It is the same that people can still be themselves in any place, they just need to find a niche for them to blossom. Malate has plenty of room for people to make their path, hound their craft, and mold it in the community.

Urban Design Elements in the Community Questions

Given acceptable knowledge of Urban design elements, the majority of the respondents understand the lack of proper urban design elements in our streetscapes, thus, improvement and adoption of more installations will greatly improve the vibrancy of the community. Accessibility – 68% says that the community needs more ramps and other accessible installation for PWDs, Senior Citizens, and children. Emergency Services – 72% say that there is a need for more evacuation sites in cases of disaster, improved hospitals for health services, and more barangay health centers. Green Open Spaces – even though we have small parks, a bay walk, and a chunk of land for a zoo, 78% still find the community lacking proper open spaces for the people. Lighting – 94% of respondents still inadequate installation of lighting posts in our streets, this is a must in any modern urban community inside the capital city. Wayfinding – 90% of respondents still want to see other wayfinding installments aside from street names or pedestrian crossings. Cultural heritage – 90% of respondents have a high perception that zoning classification can be achieved in the area. Historic Preservation – 94% responded that the need for heritage preservation is a must in the community.

Focused Group Discussion Study, Interpretation for Part 1 Sense of Place

1. Strong Unique Sense of Place

The majority of the participants expressed that their place has a very strong and unique sense of place, their response suggests a positive perception and emotional connection to the locality, indicating that residents feel a distinctive identity associated with their living environment. This positive perception can have implications for community cohesion, cultural identity, and a shared appreciation for the characteristics that make their place special.

2. High Attachment to the Case Study Area

The unanimous response indicating a high level of attachment to the case study area is a significant finding. High attachment levels suggest a strong emotional bond and connection to the community and



environment. The residents who feel attached are more likely to contribute to the well-being and development of the area, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

3. Long Average Residency of the Respondents

The average of thirty-one (31) years of residency among the participants is noteworthy. Long residency periods often contribute to a deep understanding of the community, its history, and its social fabric. It can also imply a stable community with established relationships and networks. It may contribute to a sense of continuity and tradition within the community.

4. Implication for Community Development

The combination of a strong sense of place, high attachment levels, and long residency suggests a community with a solid foundation for sustainable development. The local authorities and community leaders can leverage this positive sentiment to engage residents in community initiatives, development projects, and decision-making processes, residents who feel connected and invested are likely to be active participants in the betterment of their area.

5. Potential Challenges

While overall findings are positive, it's essential to be aware of potential challenges that may arise, such as resistance to change or external influences that could impact the unique balance of the place. Balancing the preservation of the community's unique identity with the need for progress and development may require careful consideration and community involvement.

Interpretation for Part 2 Sense of Attachment

1. Physical Improvement

The respondents' positive perception of physical improvement in terms of street dwellers' conditions and waste management suggests that there have been successful initiatives in enhancing the overall living conditions. Improved cleanliness and a good peace and order situation indicate a commitment to community well-being and safety. These improvements contribute to a more pleasant and secure environment for residents and visitors.

2. Community Changes

The positive response regarding the provision of livelihood opportunities reflects a proactive approach to community development. This suggests that there are efforts to enhance the economic well-being of residents and potentially reduce socio-economic disparities. Livelihood opportunities not only contribute to individual well-being but can also foster a sense of community empowerment and cohesion.

3. Personal Meaning

The community's high religious and traditional nature, along with a common nostalgic feeling, indicates a strong cultural and emotional connection among residents. The shared nostalgia suggests a community with a rich history and a collective memory that residents value. This can contribute to a strong sense of identity and belonging.

4. Opinion on Mix Culture

The unanimous high acceptability of good relationships, diverse cultural identity, and a welcoming community reflects a positive attitude toward cultural diversity. This acceptance can contribute to a harmonious and inclusive community, fostering a sense of unity among people from various cultural backgrounds.

5. Unforgettable Experience

The need to preserve historical structures and houses suggests a recognition of the importance of cultural heritage and a desire to maintain a connection with the past. The emphasis on parks, landscapes, and the Bayfront as factors contributing to an unforgettable experience highlights the significance of the natural environment and scenic areas shaping residents' perceptions. The connection between peace and order and unforgettable experiences implies that a safe and secure environment is crucial for residents to create lasting positive memories.



Overall Implications:

The positive responses across all criteria suggest a community that values improvement, inclusivity, cultural heritage, and a positive living environment. These findings can guide future community development initiatives, emphasizing the importance of addressing both physical and socio-cultural aspects to create a well-rounded and sustainable community. Preserving historical structures, fostering community interaction through green spaces, and maintaining peace and order are key factors in enhancing the overall quality of life and creating memorable experiences for residents.

Interpretation for Part 3 Urban Design

1. Needed Improvement on Physical Changes in the Community

The respondents' suggestions for improving sidewalks, roads, external construction of manholes, drainage systems, and additional lamp posts and street lighting indicate a concern for the physical infrastructure of the community. These recommendations not only focus on aesthetics but also prioritize safety and crime prevention, highlighting a desire for a well-maintained and secure environment.

2. Needed Improvement of Local Governance in the Community

The respondents' recommendations for the active participation of the city council, a larger barangay office, increased police visibility, and enhanced monitoring systems suggest a desire for stronger and more effective local governance. The call for additional facilities such as community health centers, fire stations, and police stations reflects a comprehensive approach to improving community services and emergency response capabilities.

3. Recommendations for Physical Improvement

The desire for better sidewalks and roads, preservation of old trees, increased police visibility, street lighting, allocation for street vendors, and open spaces for recreational activities indicated a holistic approach to urban design. Recommendations for multi-purpose facilities suggest a recognition of the need for versatile spaces that can cater to various community needs, promoting a more dynamic and inclusive environment.

4. Opinions on Old and Historic Buildings or Structures

The strong acceptance of old and historic buildings or structures aligns with a positive attitude toward cultural heritage. This acceptance is a valuable asset as it can contribute to preserving the community's history and character.

5. Suggestions on Old and Historic Buildings and Structures

The overall response to preserve old and historical buildings or structures reflects a desire to maintain the community's sense of attachment and identity. This preservation effort aligns with the notion that historical elements contribute to a unique character, fostering a stronger connection among residents.

Overall Implications

The combined recommendations for physical improvements and governance enhancements highlighted a community-driven approach to urban design. Safety, accessibility, and community services are key priorities for the respondents, indicating a desire for a well-functioning and secure living environment. The positive attitude toward old and historic buildings suggests an appreciation for the community's heritage and a recognition of the role such structures play in fostering a sense of attachment.

Discussion on

Sense of Place – the majority of the respondents have high regard for their community, they know the strong character of their locality and they are proud to have a diverse cultural set-up and a thriving community, however room for improvement can still go a long way for its urban renewal. This answers Research Question 2, on how urban design needs to be improved. Although there are existing installations of urban streetscapes present in the area, most are in disrepair, missing, or in rapid dilapidation, this can be addressed only by government intervention for maintenance and urban renewal.

Place Attachment – the majority of the respondents have a strong attachment to their locality, being locals and having been in the area for several decades reflects their nostalgic attachment to the area. This nostalgic feel also radiates on their tangible heritage that needs to be protected. This answer Research Question 3, on how heritage sites, structures, and infrastructure are an asset rather than liabilities. Safeguarding these tangible structures alongside the intangible traditions and customs of the district, can help enrich further Malate's rich cultural setting. As of Dec 12, 2023, Manila has been cited as one of the leading top destinations by the World Travel Awards 2023.



Urban Design – the majority of the respondents welcome physical changes that can help better their community. An appealing community will draw more tourists and commercial income to the district. This answers Research Object 1, on how our streets affect the community, with its current situation, based on perception survey and focus group discussion, there is a fact that it needs further improvement with better urban design solutions.

Conclusion

Heritage – the survey gave insight that our younger respondents have little knowledge about cultural heritage, thus, heritage education must be strong not only in the community but also in the mainstream education of the youth. Although the majority have high regard for its importance and preservation, there should be a steady stream of information and awareness on this cause.

Urban Elements of the City (Image of the City) – this level of questioning and survey should be focused on professionals, city planners, and government officials. Though our respondents have little knowledge of streets and streetscapes, a rich response would be very helpful if the instrument is given to another group of respondents.

It is common to have improvements on our streetscapes, landscaping, and providing inclusive design for all.

Elements of Responsive Elements (Ian Bentley) - Urban Design – this level of questioning and survey should also be focused on professionals, city planners, and government officials. Though our respondents have little knowledge of urban elements it would have a deeper response if the instrument was given to another set of respondents.

Urban Design Elements – those mentioned elements in the survey have a strong acceptance among our respondents. Accessibility not only to PWDs but to normal pedestrians as well as inclusive in nature. Emergency Services – in terms of disaster should be focused on how to be prepared and not to be in despair in times of calamity. Additional places for evacuation could be in place for different kinds of calamities in the future. Green Open Space – having big open parks like Rajah Sulayman and the Manila Zoo, with Rizal Commercial Complex as a recreation center, has a big impact on the community, however, there are fifty-seven (57) barangay in the districts that need community parks or pocket gardens as a breathing space in their respective jurisdictions. Lighting – the streets have lamp posts, however, it is not enough, particularly on major thoroughfares and roads. Solar lamps can be a solution to this problem for short-term solutions with less maintenance. Wayfinding – common street names are present but most of them are missing or unavailable, common wayfinding installation is not only by putting street signs, it can be another aspect of creativity to showcase the rich diverse culture of Malate. This can be developed into thematic signs, or moving street art that depicts areas on their unique identity. People should be given space to express their art, music, and the intangible heritage it can offer. Cultural District – this is a proposal to safeguard the locality in the sudden loss of heritage in the area, both tangible and intangible aspects of heritage should be documented and preserved for the future of this district. It should maintain its rich Filipino identity while it becomes more diverse and multicultural in the growing influx of foreigners residing in the area. Historic Preservation comes with or without a declaration of a special cultural heritage zone label in the community. As long as a structure is already more than fifty years old (50) and above, still uses its original function, and can still withstand the next few decades with the effects of climate change, can be inscribed as a heritage structure, which can give added jewel or keepsake in the common heritage in the area.

Sense of Place – Malate's distinct spatial features and its unique difference from other districts make the area full of meaning for its residents, their lifelong journey in the community depicts the meaning of a contented life with their long years of stay. They are hopeful that even though it's not a perfect community, there is more to it from its humble beginning as a swap land and barrio settlement a few centuries ago.

Place Attachment – Among its resident respondents, they have a strong and meaningful bond with the place. They are all in sync with the community. Even though they represent the local governing body of the area, they are residents experiencing everything. Their decision-making on local issues will greatly affect them in general. There is a tight-knit community in the area that values the people and their locality. They have high hopes and concerns with their district.

Urban Design – the respondents have little knowledge of Urban design, Streets and road is already urban design to them, but there are more to it than streetscapes. Knowing their immediate physical needs is a good thing, but this is a government budget in nature. It is more on governance than urban design solution, however, for further study, this could be addressed as well by city planners and government legislatures to fully grasp the lack of urban design awareness and lack of urban renewal efforts in the community.

A good example to follow for the city of Manila is local zoning for urban design codes similar to Quezon City. For its Cultural Heritage, - Cultural Heritage Zone, It can pattern its effort similar to Iloilo City Downtown Central Business District Heritage Zone.



Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor(s)

Author is a faculty of Architecture at the College of Architecture, National University - Philippines, obtained his Bachelors and Master's degree at the Mapua University, has a diploma degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of the Philippines – School of Urban and Regional Planning (SURP). His interest are in Urban Design, Housing, Heritage and Community Planning.