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## Children's Sense of Attachment to the Residential Common Open Space

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### Abstract

Children's separation from the natural environment in an urban area has caused difficulties in their mental and physical development. This study aimed to investigate the children's perception in order to determine a successful residential common open space in high-rise gated communities by stressing on physical characteristics of the place, which enhance the sense of attachment. Result of qualitative data from children drawing and story-telling revealed that the presence of natural features and facilities has more effect on developing children's sense of place attachment than architectural design of surrounding building such as material and colour of façade and access-related features.

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**Keywords:** Residential common open space; place attachment; children-environment; visual research method

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### 1. Introduction

Children in the urban area have isolated from the natural environment. This separation has caused difficulties in mental and physical development process. Providing attractive open spaces in neighborhood level for children become a serious concern of urban residential designers and architects (Hamdan, Yusof, & Marzukhi, 2014; Nasution & Zahrah, 2014). In addition, many researchers stated that residential place attachment is the essential indicator of human well-being and sustainability. This positive emotional bonding to place has been emphasized as one of the most important objectives in children environmental design. Spencer (2005), an environmental

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psychologist, emphasized the essential role of place in developing self-identity in children and providing a sense of stability and security. Bonding and rootedness necessary for place attachment are also mandatory for healthy development. For example, a child explores the world around them from a secure and nurturing home base through ever broadening circles. Psychological disturbances are often the result of a lack of place-based support or a secure home base. Building and maintenance of successful relationships in children's life are connected with place, identity, and well-being (Green, 2005; Mohit, 2013). Nurturing children's bond with their environment, especially a residential area, could create a strong and secure self-identity. One of the goals in this study was to explore the characteristic of a residential common open space that facilitate a child's sense of attachment to a place.

Architectural and planning practices focused on the concept of place attachment as the ultimate goal of creating favorite place for children. Therefore, this study tried to find the architectural characteristics of a place that could develop and improve sense of attachment in children to the common open spaces in residential high-rise gated communities.

## 2. Residential common open space

The term "open space" was probably used for the first time in the year 1833. Open spaces include public parks and recreation grounds, grassed areas as open parks, non-roofed-over urban land and undeveloped natural landscape, neighboring spaces between buildings, and urban space that is open for public access. By form, it refers to the part of the three-dimensional void that is not occupied by man-made features constructed for spatial enclosure. By function, open spaces are considered as an outdoor area that provides an opportunity of spontaneous activity, movement, or visual exploration for a number of people. It is defined as urban space that draws people together for passive recreation. In residential communities, the common open spaces around and between buildings are limited to use by the residents (private space for their residents) and usually classified as semi-private space (Shabak 2014; 2013). However, these kinds of spaces have the characteristics of public spaces because of the large number of users.

### 2.1. Common open space in Gated Communities (GC)

One the important specification for Gated Communities (GC) developments is that they contain both private housing units and public areas that are places with common benefits and facilities. These spaces are used by all residents of the GC and thus they should be considered to be a type of public space. The term common or public space refers to the streets, sidewalks, parks, and open spaces that are accessible and open to the residents of a GC. There are multiple ideas about what constitutes a residential common open space in a GC, as exhibited in several different studies that all attempt to provide an appropriate definition. Term "privatized public spaces" are used to explore public space but only available to residents of a particular housing estate. These Common open spaces in high-rise GCs with no private open spaces provide opportunities for improving the individual, social, and environmental quality of the area (Chiesura, 2004 in Maruani & Amit-Cohen, 2007).

### 2.2. Architectural characteristics of common open space

The design of common open space is a significant element in its usability and value (Almhafdy, Ibrahim, Ahmad, & Yahya, 2013; Huang, 2010). However, there are various approaches and criteria of planning and designing an open space. Moreover, many studies considered physical design of these spaces as an important predictor of developing a sense of attachment in users.

There are many categorization and classification for physical and architectural characteristics on environmental studies for evaluating open spaces (Bajunid, Abbas, Nawawi, & Rodi, 2014; Jamaludin, Mohamad, & Thani, 2014; Smith, 2003). These classifications have been based on either objective, externally verifiable indices or perceptions of the environment by residents. The architectural characteristics measured in this study were derived from the architectural and urban design literature, and most importantly validated by interviews with an expert panel. It considered six architectural characteristics for residential common open space. These characteristics are counted as below:

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