

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Place attachment assessment of a heritage place: A case study of the Roman amphitheater in downtown Amman, Jordan



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Place identity;
Place identification;
Place dependence;
Social bond

Abstract

This research investigated the place attachment of a heritage place, namely, the Roman amphitheater, by using a valid model, the Kyle, Graefe, and Manning (2005) model. This model presents three factors to reach place attachment: place identification, place dependence, and social bonding. Although the validity of the used model was proved, statistical tests were used to verify the validity of the collected data because the model was used on a heritage site. In accordance with the mentioned model, the sample was interviewed using the model questionnaire to evaluate people's attachment to the heritage place during rush hours. Along with other statistical tests, the exploratory factor analysis of the sample elaborated that the Kyle, Graefe, and Manning model is not completely valid for this study, because the results added a new effective factor, namely, spiritual value. The place attachment estimation was then examined using the new model. The nature of the place was found to affect the model used to evaluate its place attachment.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary cities are suffering from weakening identity as manifested through poor city planning and the dismissive attitude toward community relationships to places (Ujang, 2010). Place attachment is linked to place identity, which is

related to people's perception and the meanings that elaborate the direct correlation between them. Owing to the consistent immigration to Jordan in past years, the social demography of the country has been changed. Specifically, the cultural and intellectual aspects of the people have changed, which indicate the significant need to

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preserve the people's attachment to heritage places in order to secure their identity (Ujang, 2010). Accordingly, the present study used the model of Kyle et al. (2005) to help identify the place attachment of a heritage place, with the Roman amphitheater as a case study. The model provides a valid measurement of place attachment by examining the social bond, place dependence, and place identity of a people.

1.1. Issues and objectives

The study area is one of the important heritage places in Jordan. The Roman amphitheater, located in downtown Amman (Fig. 1), was built in AD 167-177 into the slope of a forum constructed in 19 years after the amphitheater. It accommodates 6000 spectators and has 33 seats (Fig. 2) (Northedge and Bowsher, 1992)

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Place attachment

Heritage, as the UNESCO defines it, is “our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2005). An individual's identification of heritage places can be changed significantly over the years, and it addresses the difficult issue of preserving the identity of a valuable place (Tonkin, 2012). According to Ujang (2010), “to secure identity is to ensure continuity in the physical, social together with meanings and attachment held by the people” (p. 64). This idea emphasizes the social role of preserving place identity (i.e., preserving heritage place identity). Studies have related place attachment (i.e., people's attachment to a place) with place identity in many

ways. Place identity is a part of place attachment (Kyle et al., 2005) and vice versa (Lalli, 1992), but while place attachment and place identity are connected, they are different from each other (Hernandez et al., 2007). Fried (2000) explained that “the operational formulation of attachment theory, as it applies to place behavior, points to its origin and meaning in response to the availability of close, local relationships to people and, by extension, to the places of relational interaction” (p. 195). Low and Altman (1992) noted that place attachment contains several hidden concepts, similar to the symbolic aspect that is related to a specific environment. They also added that emotional attributes are attended by awareness and behaviors.

2.2. Dimensions of place attachment

Seamon and Sowers (2008), who relied on the studies of Edward Relph, stated, “If places are to be more thoroughly understood, one needs a language whereby we can identify particular place experiences regarding the intensity of meaning and intention that a person and place hold for each other” (p. 4). Some studies also considered the term “person-place bond” to contain both place identity and place dependence (e.g., Williams and Roggenbuck, 1989; Schreyer et al., 1981). In addition, self-dimensions define the individual's identity in a physical environment through complicated ideas, viewpoints, predictions, emotions, and so forth (Proshansky, 1978). This concept explains personal place attachment. Thus, to differentiate between personal place attachment and actual place identity, the current study will refer to the first term as place identification. However, place dependence focuses on setting efficiency with regard to serving goal achievement by giving different alternatives (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). Furthermore, social bonds are emotions of belongingness or people

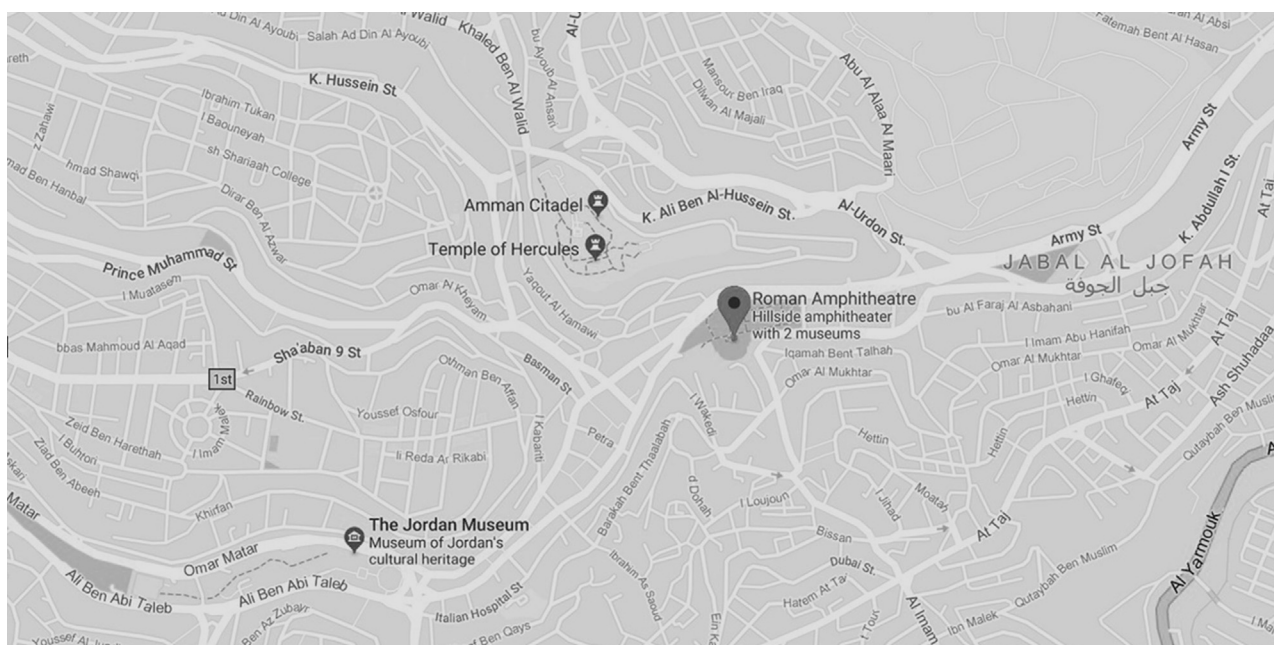


Fig. 1 Site of the Roman amphitheater. Source: Northedge and Bowsher (1992).

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