The impact of heritage decline on urban social life

Hanaw Mohammed Taqi M. Amin

The University of Sheffield, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Sheffield S10 2TN, United Kingdom

A R T I C L E   I N F O

Article history:
Received 7 January 2016
Received in revised form 14 November 2017
Accepted 3 December 2017
Available online 5 December 2017

Keywords:
Behavioural response
Social value of urban heritage
Place identity and place dependence
Disruption to place attachment
Sulaimaniyah

A B S T R A C T

This study explores the impacts of urban change on neighbourhood residents, by exploring the process of change, and by analysing the form of residents’ behavioural responses to such change. It is based on the concepts of place identity and place dependence, via a notion of environmental disruption, with a focus on the symbolic meanings associated with the historic city centre of Sulaimaniyah in Kurdistan, Iraq. For this purpose, a qualitative method is used, based on in-depth interviews, focus groups and document analysis. Results indicate a supportive behavioural response to place disruption in cases of threatened place identity and place dependence. The results show that the responses of residents are related to the social value of heritage. These results contribute to the study of behavioural responses towards environmental disruption in relation to the social value of urban heritage.

© 2017 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 34
1.1. Place identity and place dependence .............................................................................. 35
1.2. Environmental disruption .............................................................................................. 36
1.3. Heritage and social life .................................................................................................... 37
1.4. The present study ............................................................................................................. 37
2. Historic centre of Sulaimaniyah City ..................................................................................... 37
3. Research methodology ........................................................................................................ 39
4. Findings .................................................................................................................................. 40
4.1. Functional and symbolic meaning of the place ............................................................... 40
4.2. Representation of the place ............................................................................................... 41
4.3. Local residents’ emotional responses ............................................................................. 43
4.4. Behavioural responses and emotional responses ............................................................ 45
5. Conclusions .......................................................................................................................... 46
Acknowledgement .................................................................................................................. 46
References ................................................................................................................................ 47

1. Introduction

Studies of environmental disruption in psychological processes can provide a unique insight into urban changes and their consequences. Whilst the theory of disruption to place attachment has been used in the study of environmental concerns (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010), it has yet to be applied to the study of heritage. Such an application has the potential to extend the theory of disruption to place attachment in terms of behavioural responses. To date there have been very few studies in environmental psychology of urban heritage, or they have been studied separately. But what if the study of urban heritage was evaluated through disruption to place attachment? This is done here by using a series of stages to study local relations to place disruption, involving identification, interpretation, evaluation and forms of coping...
responses (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Devine-Wright, 2009). This concept of disruption to place attachment is identified to frame and analyse urban change based on the interpretation of residents' responses (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Devine-Wright, 2009). This explores local residents' perceptions of, and behaviours towards, the destruction of urban heritage. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the effects of urban changes on residents in historic environments. This is achieved by focusing particularly on behavioural responses to issues of place identity and place dependence.

Therefore, this paper describes an empirical study of local residents' responses to urban change in the historic city centre of Sulaimaniyah. It explores how the different types of architecture could cause discomfort. It explores their positive and negative effects on residents in a case where weak conservation planning practice, due to political instability, provides little protection for the historic built environment. The urban changes here relate to the decline of physical and social aspects of the urban heritage of the area. This is a result of the demolition of parts of the historic built environment and rebuilding in the form of new markets and commercial structures. New architectural structures are now integrated with the traditional texture of the historic city centre of Sulaimaniyah. This has created a sense of strangeness and an uncomfortable living environment for residents. For instance, the growth of commercial uses has brought crowds to the area such that the neighbourhood now serves as a main bazaar for Sulaimaniyah city. This has impacted upon the social life of local residents. It has brought crowds, strangers and car congestion into the heart of residential districts. This has deterred local residents from engaging with their environments and interacting in their urban spaces. It has also caused local residents to abandon their residential properties. Then this caused deterioration of the historic built environment and the decline of the public and human realm. In addition, these changes encouraged local residents, who wanted to take advantage of the economic benefits, to change the physical environment. Those local residents therefore changed their physical environment from residential into commercial use. For this group, the commercial uses and gathering crowds have improved their livelihoods.

All of the changes described above have influenced environmental psychology and the behavioural responses to urban change in Sulaimaniyah. Therefore, the links between this study, environmental psychology and behavioural responses to urban change in a historic environment are important, and are investigated here. Environmental disruption starts with an understanding of place attachment (Brown & Perkins, 1992). It explores the form of responses to urban change in terms of place definition, place identification and place dependence as constructs of place attachment (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Devine-Wright, 2009; Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014). However, aspects of urban heritage refer to community identity, distinctiveness and the special qualities of a place (e.g. see Relph, 1976). Distinctiveness defines what makes a place unique, and contributes to aspects of place identity. The role of historic places in place distinctiveness is a factor in the identity of a people and production of self (Korpela, 1989). Therefore, to understand the focus of the case study area in relation to place identity and place dependence, the historic environment and social life are central to the following subsections of the paper.

1.1. Place identity and place dependence

This discussion uses place identity and place dependence to understand the effects of these changes on the social life of residents in the historic environment in the case study city. The physiological dimension includes the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components of attachment. The place dimension emphasises the place characteristics of attachment, including spatial level, specificity, and the prominence of social or physical (both built and natural) elements (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p.1).

This discussion uses place identity and place dependence as useful concepts for exploring urban heritage. This requires an understanding of their connections. A connection is made through the concepts of place identity and place dependence, but how are these linked? This paper argues that the link is made based on the fact that principles of place distinctiveness and place continuity relate to both heritage and the concepts of place. For instance, first, we need to clarify how principles of place distinctiveness and place continuity relate to concepts of place identity and dependence. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) define three principles of place identity: distinctiveness, continuity, and self-esteem. Distinctiveness means people use place identity to distinguish themselves from others. Place continuity is the way that a place supports a sense of continuity through a person's desire to maintain a link to a place. This link is via the character of a place which is called place-congruent continuity, and place-referent which refers to past selves, experiences, and actions (Korpela, 1989). Therefore, place identity is influenced by functional and emotional aspects of the environmental experience. Place dependence is reflected in the functional bonding between places and people. It is developed when a place fulfils a user's functional needs, supports their behavioural goals and feels important and significant (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981).

Furthermore, we may ask how principles of place distinctiveness and place continuity relate to urban heritage? For example, aspects of urban heritage value refer to community identity, cohesion, and feelings of belonging to the historic environment. The historic environment expresses the distinctiveness and special qualities of a place, as shown in phenomenological studies (e.g. see Relph, 1976). Distinctiveness defines what makes a place unique, and contributes to aspects of place identity. The role of historic places in place distinctiveness is a factor in the identity of a people and production of self (Korpela, 1989). Therefore, to understand the focus of the case study area in relation to place identity and place dependence, the historic environment and social life are central to the following subsections of the paper.

The person dimension of place attachment refers to its individually or collectivity determined meanings. The physiological dimension includes the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components of attachment. The place dimension emphasises the place characteristics of attachment, including spatial level, specificity, and the prominence of social or physical (both built and natural) elements (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p.1). However, the
interpretation of self is explained by Bonaiuto, Breakwell, and Cano (1996, p. 160) as follows: “the interpretation of the self would use environmental meanings to symbolise or situate individual identity”. However, characteristics of place and symbolic meanings are explored through participations and engagements. Place identity relates to the symbolic importance of a place in relation to emotion and relationships that give purpose and meaning to life. It supports the sense of belonging, and that is why it is important to individuals’ well-being (Shamai, 1991). Given that, Uzzell, Pol, and Badenas (2002) believe that place identity is an important aspect of social identity.

In addition, the three dimensions of place attachment - affective, cognitive and behavioural components - play an interpretive role in the process of environmental disruption (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63). Given this, place identity relies on “our symbolic dependence on a place, the extent to which it serves a meaning-making function about who we are” (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 67). The outcome of place dependence is the kind of social interactions a place facilitates. According to Mihaylov and Perkins, place identity affects the negative and positive valence of one’s attitudes to environmental change. Further place identity and place dependence are constructs of place attachment. Place attachment is a positive emotional bond (having social and physical sub-dimensions) between individuals or groups and their locations such as home or neighbourhood (Altman et al., 1992). However, sometimes it can relate to a negative emotional connection (Manzo, 2005). It is both a process of attachment of oneself to a place, and a product of that attachment (Giuliani, 2002), and is related to the length of residence in a place (Brown & Perkins, 1992).

Further, “affective bonds to places can help inspire action because people are motivated to seek, stay in, protect, and improve places that are meaningful to them” (Manzo & Perkins, 2006, p. 374). Place attachment involves:

“positively experienced bonds, sometimes occurring without awareness, that are developed over time from the behavioural, affective, and cognitive ties between individuals and/or groups and their socio-physical environment. These bonds provide a framework for both individual and communal aspects of identity and have both stabilising and dynamic features” (Brown & Perkins, 1992, p. 284).

In much of the literature on place, place identity and dependence are viewed as contributing to people’s social lives and helping to enrich people’s wellbeing. For instance, research on two Dutch neighbourhoods found that place attachment was a strong predictor of a community’s social life and wellbeing (Kleinhaus, Priemus, & Engbersen, 2007). According to Relph (1976), place attachment is considered an ontological requirement, in part because place identity is a component part of self-identity (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Therefore, the three dimensions of place attachment: the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components influence an interpretative process of environmental disruption (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63). This leads to a social behaviour response to the place disruption in terms of action, adaptation, or acceptance (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63). This is explained in the following section.

1.2. Environmental disruption

This section aims to understand how concepts of place identity and place dependence are used to frame and analyse urban change. The concepts of place identity and place dependence contribute to interpretative understandings of environmental disruption (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63). However, this requires an understanding of environmental disruption. The theory of environmental disruption is related to the form of responses to environmental disruption. It is based upon place definition, place identification and place dependence as constructs of place attachment (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Devine-Wright, 2009; Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014). In their study, for example, Devine-Wright and Howes (2010, p. 277) use a series of stages to study local relations to place disruption, involving identification, interpretation, evaluation and forms of coping responses. Building on Devine-Wright’s model, Mihaylov and Perkins (2014, p.64) produced a model to explain local relations to place disruption. This included place attachment and related constructs such as place identity and place dependence. According to them, the three dimensions of place attachment: the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components influence an interpretative process of environmental disruption (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63). This leads to a response to the disruption in terms of action, adaptation, or acceptance (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63), which serves social behaviour response to the change of place. Therefore, the discussion above explains an interpretative process of environmental disruption. And thus, Devine-Wright’s stages of study to local relations to place disruption is used here based on Mihaylov and Perkins (2014, p. 63)’s model of local relations to place disruption. Their model explains local relations to place, and explains how concepts of place identity and place dependence are used to frame and analyse urban change.

So, in the literature, the impact of change on place can be characterised as a ‘disruption’ to place attachment (Brown & Perkins, 1992) or ‘threat’ to place identity (Bonaiuto et al., 1996). The interpretative process includes an understanding of factors of place attachment: “place definition and place identity are related because significant features defining a place are likely salient aspects of identity grounded in that place” (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 67). Place definition is based on attitudes and features that give a place a distinctive identity in the minds of residents. For instance, what makes it unique, what belongs to the place, and what fits in the place are identifications of place are all important elements. Devine-Wright and Howes (2010) demonstrates the significant of the definition of place for the evaluation of change in terms of opposition and acceptance.

In case studies of the impacts of change, change makes explicit connections between locations and persons (Brown & Perkins, 1992) and resulting in emotional responses such as loss and anxiety (Fried, 2000). Place disruption can include ecological events such as landslides or floods (Brown & Perkins, 1992), neighbourhood decline (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003), burglary (Brown & Perkins, 1992), workplace relocation (Inalhan & Finch, 2004), and voluntary migration (Brown & Perkins, 1992). It also includes demolition of homes and neighbourhoods (Fried, 2000; Speller, 1991). Place disruption influences not only the physical aspects of places but also the social relationships within them—especially the social networks that provide important support for individuals in low-income societies (Fried, 2000). A study by Vorkinn and Riese (2001) explores the role of place attachment in defining attitudes to a proposed hydropower project in Norway. The results show that the more strongly attached residents were to the affected place, the more negative attitudes they had because the proposed project disrupted their place attachment. Place disruption can be connected to specific behaviours based on the importance of meanings and residents’ willingness to take part in ‘place-protective’ actions. This is revealed in a case study by Steedman (2002) of planned new housing in a lakeshore area of Wisconsin. The results of this study showed how the opposition depended upon upon strong place attachments and the adoption of specific meanings: representing the place as ‘up north’ rather than as a ‘community of neighbours’ (pp.
The link between the historic environment and the above concepts allows for an understanding of the role of historic environment in terms of social and psychological responses to the change. In considering relationships between historic environment and place identity and place dependence, distinctiveness of place as well as how people use, experience and understand a place becomes relevant. This is important for exploring implications in terms of people’s use and experience of involving the experiences of emotional responses, and it is based on place identity and dependence for the interpretation of residents’ responses to the change. People ‘make up’ place based on their uses and understandings which involve their lived experiences of emotional attachment, spiritual unity, values and beliefs (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Proshansky et al., 1983; Williams & Vaske, 2003). People can participate and engage with a place by exploring its distinctiveness, including all different aspects of the built environment, topography, and experience of people (Graham, 2002; Jiven & Larkham, 2003, p. 70; Miles, 2005; Shami & Ilatov, 2005). Places are constructed out of physical form, activities and meanings (Montgomery, 1998). Meanings are associated with an individual’s internal psychological and social processes that generate perceptions (Steadman, 2002; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). According to Hull, Lam, and Vigo (1994), the meaning and identity of urban elements are crucial because they contribute to a sense of community, a sense of place and self-identity (Hull et al., 1994, p. 46). The identity of place does not completely rely on physical elements, but also the meaning and association developed between place and people. Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981 believe that meaning is created through interactions between objects and people, heavily influenced by cultural background.

The above discussion of place identity and dependence establishes their link to the historic environment. The historic environment supports place distinctiveness, place continuity, place identity and self-identity and can encourage local pride in place distinctiveness: for instance, in the link between place attachment and the production of identity when individuals experience continuity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 216). In Twigger-Ross and Uzzell’s (1996) study of museums, they found that the historic environment of a museum produces a positive self-image for individuals. It derives from people’s identification with experiences of a place. The social value of the historic environment considers social aspects of the urban environment such as social networks, connections, and other relations that are not necessarily related to heritage. According to Pendlebury, Townsend, and Gilroy (2004, p. 26), the historic built environment supports social inclusion as a learning tool. It helps regeneration to occur in a prestigious historic environment through economic regeneration that brings money in where place as a market exists. In a study of Grainger Town in Newcastle, Pendlebury (2004, p.425) outlines distinctiveness of place, using different ways to explain a sense of place. For instance, the distinctiveness of a new development might include the need for and importance of conservation of ancient buildings. It might include respect for the material historic environment that considers of design style and authenticity. Smith (2006) focuses on how preservation of the historic environment allows a sense of continuity of identity, which is produced by the material continuity of the place, which in return, is an aspect of sharing and telling local stories. A feeling for place is explained in the traditional work of phenomenology: a place is ‘pre-represented’ (first noted) and then experienced by people through telling stories about local experiences of the place (Rowles, 2006). Engagement with the historic environment itself and with less conscious experiences helps the individual’s ability to tell stories about their life as an outcome of heritage and sense of place (Savage, Gaynor, & Brian, 2005).

Thus, historic environment via psychology of place identifies social and physical role of historic environments. It gives opportunity for interactions and use of place. It allows sharing knowledge about the past. This shows how historic environments and preservation of historic environments provide a sense of continuity of identity and encourage local pride in place distinctiveness. This understanding of place is based on historic environment, its characteristics, and its social role.

The present study focuses on place-related dimensions of urban heritage disruption. It focuses on factors that shape response processes by building on a series of stages to study local relations to place disruption by Devine-Wright and Howes (2010) and Mihaylov and Perkins (2014). Given that, this is used to explore reactions to heritage disruption by focusing particularly on social and behavioural responses to issues of place identity and place dependence. The use of the theory of disruption to place attachment in this study is relevant to mapping the process of environmental change, but this study explores if this theory applies to the context of heritage disruption. This is provided in the study. It has implications for behavioural responses and contributes to the theory of environmental disruption.

2. Historic centre of Sulaimaniyah City

This research is a case study undertaken in the historic centre of Sulaimaniyah City, Kurdistan, located in the Kurdistan Region and the northern part of Iraq (see Fig. 1).

The original pattern of the city was a compact organic arrangement around a palace, first established in 1784, and principally influenced by the traditional architecture of the community’s culture according to the principles of Islam. Islamic culture is rooted in traditional life in Sulaimaniyah city. This culture impacted on architectural design, in a way that Quranic verses defined the significance of family privacy. This influenced the layout of urban spaces in the city, especially as visual privacy was important for protecting female members of the household from the eyes of male strangers. The spatial fabric of the historic city centre was likely based on a horizontal dimension. Spatially, the structural layout consisted of one- or two-storey courtyard houses within narrow and irregular roads including cul-de-sacs. From a functional perspective, buildings can be divided into four types: administrative, residential, religious and commercial types. Before the process of urban change, the residential function dominated the area. The rest of the district was comprised of mosques and churches as a religious uses; houses as residential uses; shops, khans, and baths as commercial uses and authority buildings as administrative uses. The administrative uses were located in the centre of the city and connected to the commercial centre to the south of the city. In
addition, residential uses surrounded the centre of the city. Religious uses were mainly located in every district of the neighbourhood. Finally, commercial uses were directly connected to the central part. They contained small ownership parcels, which were mostly arranged in the rectangular shape and streamed towards the south direction of the city. The formation of different building types was typically courtyard. In the different administrative types, the middle open space was directly connected to the outside. They were built on the large ownership parcels. While mosques, khans and baths, as a different functional type of building, were defined by the distinctive characteristics of formal configuration. The architecture elements of dome and minaret are the dominant formation of these sorts of buildings.

In the case study area, buildings were constructed with mudstone, bricks, wood, and mud and straw for mud bricks. The spiritual living practices in these houses were linked to the comfortable life around these materials, brick walls and wood ceiling of their historic properties. The brick blocks are recognised as regulating the temperature to houses. Moreover, the courtyard was used for practising religious life based on their spiritual and visual communication with religious institutions. This allowed residents to hear azan (Muslim call to prayer) and get a sign for prayer time from the mosques when the lights go on from the minaret. Other different daily activities were used in the courtyard, such as, for food preparation, drying food or textile, spinning, and weaving, welcoming guests and flat roofs are for drying foods and sleeping. The traditional living environment of the central area was based on strong social connections among neighbours having daily connections, visiting each other at any time during the day or night, and often sharing meals with each other (from interview with male, aged 50, September 2014). In additions, Squares were public and civic places, where people gathered for social meetings. They were used for historical, social and political reasons, besides entertaining residents of the area. They used to show power and authority of government. These squares were important as administrative, religious institutions were built beside them.

The spiritual, traditional commercial atmosphere was practised by selling and buying traditional hand-made goods for a convenient price by local residents as a dominated business in the neighbourhood. Traditional commercial uses (e.g. Bazaar), were important for accommodating social and cultural activities of residents. Bazaar was a place for walking, social communications, and cultural interactions as public spaces. Mosques as religious institutions were used as a public urban space for residents as well. They had more than one entrance to residential narrow roads and to Bazaar. They were used as a passage entering one narrow road to another.

Political instability has influenced local residents in Sulaimaniyah city. Throughout history, the city has been governed by different administrative regimes: the rule of Baban, the Ottoman Empire, British rule, Iraqi rule, and the Kurdish region government.
But, the actions against Kurdish people by the Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p.7–10) had significant negative effects on the development of Kurdish cities, especially Sulaimaniyah, and particularly in terms of laws and policies regarding the historic town (Interview with Ahmad Hama Rashid, 2014). The embargo against the Iraqi government and an economic blockade of the country by the Saddam regime brought independence for Kurdistan in 1991. However, after 2003, Sulaimaniyah’s social and economic system developed with concomitant increases in land and property prices. The resulting property redevelopment led to the dismemberment of the historic city centre and buildings (Slemani City Master-Plan Final Report, Directorate of Sulaimaniyah Municipality, 2011). Many old buildings have been demolished and turned into big commercial enterprises by their owners. In response, a plan for protection of the city centre and registration of listed buildings was initiated, in a Masterplan for the city in February 2006 (Slemani City Master-Plan Final Report, Directorate of Sulaimaniyah Municipality, 2011), but until the registration of listed building many of buildings were demolished (see Fig. 2).

In spite of several policies issued regarding urban conservation in the central city neighbourhood, they were not properly implemented. Today the area is under a historic preservation order (Slemani City Master-Plan Final Report, Directorate of Sulaimaniyah Municipality, 2011). However, due to a lack of funding, the area’s heritage has been neglected and is under threat from redevelopment. There is a shortage financial resources for restoration and conservation projects for the neighbourhood. Funding is only provided for specifically listed buildings under the ownership of Sulaimaniyah Directorate of Antiquities (Interview with Head of Sulaimaniyah Directorate of Antiquity, December 2014). Other listed buildings owned by locals have residents living in them or are vacant, and are under threat of demolition. Conflicts arise from this situation, especially since owners are prevented from carrying out maintenance and repairs unless in accord with the conservation policies (Shazad Jaseem: Restoration architect and official in Directorate of Sulaimaniyah Antiquity, December 2014).

The local authority has laws for preserving the whole neighbourhood and listed buildings enables Directorate of Sulaimaniyah Municipality to manage the historic Sulaimaniyah centre under special planning regulations, City Centre Guideline. The City Centre Guideline provides guidelines and planning permission for new constructions on the site of historic non-listed buildings (Rename Nawandi Shar-City Centre Guideline Report, 2010). However, guidelines only relate to new construction in the area, without including guidelines for maintenance of listed buildings. These regulations failed to be applied due to the fact that they are established based on a developed land-use change. They failed because of the existing of corruption among government officials who manage the neighbourhood (interview with an official, Directorate of Sulaimaniyah Municipality, 2014). This is established based on the fieldwork study as inconsistent constructions are allowed to be built in the area. In addition, residents, due to the lack of support and inadequate planning and conservation regulation, started to demolish their properties or maintain their own properties in modern architecture styles. That is why this study finds out about residents’ reactions to the loss of their urban environment and social networks through qualitative methods. Given that, to understand how information is collected the next section deals with methods of the study.

3. Research methodology

In this section, the research methodology is discussed. In this research, a mainly qualitative case study research methodology was deployed as this allowed multiple sources of evidence to be collected (Mason, 2002a; Yin, 2009). The empirical data were gathered through a review of documents, photographing of physical artefacts, face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. The field research took place between August 2014 and January 2015. A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 local residents and with 15 local government officials in the Sulaimaniyah Directorate of Municipality and Sulaimaniyah Directorate of Antiquities (see Table 1).

In addition, four focus group discussions were also held with local residents of the area, as focus groups enable a large amount of data to be gathered in a short time, and can often bring up unpredicted topics. In accordance with local Muslim tradition, the groups were divided into male and female participants. This provided a comfortable environment and avoided conversation being dominated by male or female (see Table 2).

In this local cultural context, both men and women participate in decision-making. While the majority of local social groups are Muslim there are some Christians and other minorities. But Islam has been the major influence on the cultural built heritage and this was taken into consideration for conducting interviews. Research participants were principally selected on the criteria of being a resident of the historic centre for at least 30 years, which allowed 20-year-old participants have had at least some experience of the area before the process of the urban change began in 2003. Local officials were selected for their role in conservation management, especially those who were mostly involved with preservation planning policy. Key respondents were identified and divided into two groups: residents and local officials. Further criteria, such as age and gender, were applied through snowballing technique of recommendations and through direct access to some participants.

For analysis, differences between respondents on key variables such as place identity and place dependence, as well as emotional

Table 1
Local residents interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2. The demolished listed house in Malkane district (Source: taken by author).
and behavioural responses are identified. Of the responses to interviews and focus groups with residents, a significant minority were in favour of the new developments and changes in the area. However, there are variations between different age groups in relation to the reasons for positive evaluations. Those of 60–70 years of age were more in favour of the economic benefit to the neighbourhood. They also appreciated the improved living conditions and the appearance of the new constructions. The 20–30 year age group were also seeking economic benefit for the neighbourhood and were in favour of the appearance of the new buildings, while the 50–60 year age group mostly accepted the changes and were concerned only about the appearance of the new developments. But more than half the respondents were opposed to the changes in the area. Those in age ranges between 40 and 70 years old age were concerned about the loss of values of the historic built environment, the loss of traditional social networks, and increased difficulties in life circumstances. However, those between 20 and 30 years of age were more concerned about difficult life circumstances, such as crowds in the area. In general, males and females had mixed perceptions in terms of favourable and unfavourable, except that more females were concerned about the lack of social networks. The majority of participants represented change in terms of the appearance of the historic built environment. New constructions and car parks not only affected the loss of historic built environment but also influenced traditional social networks. For instance, the role of narrow roads and cul-de-sacs changed from private into public places filled with crowds of people who are coming from outside the neighbourhood (see Table 3).

In addition, the traditional environment and social networks of the neighbourhood were useful in introducing the researcher to other people as well as potential participants; and adapting snowballing selection was helpful in identifying hidden population or power-elite groups which are difficult to reach using direct or immediate contacts (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). There were some difficulties with carrying out interviews due to the recent political instability in the country that influenced the building of trust. To overcome the possibilities of mistrust and fear of invasion of privacy, the researcher went to the neighbourhood with another person each time to conduct the interviews; this companion played an important role in opening up casual chats to ‘break the ice’ before the formal interview. This strategy was very successful in terms of reducing the incidence of refusals. Political instability linked to the historic environment of the place which is neglected by government in terms of conservation planning practice and financial resources for conservation projects. This is significant in relation to the finding of this study. It influenced on the behaviour/action of residents involved the destruction of urban heritage. This was taken into consideration for conducting interviews by asking residents about reasons for their behaviour responses. Residents were aware of this issue.

Further, for conducting focus groups, I arranged time and place for 60 min meetings with participants in the historic public places of the area. In one case, participants were already in a casual gathering in their cul-de-sac, which gave the opportunity to carry out a focus groups meeting there. The individual interviews with officials were carried out by making calls and visiting their offices.

This is based on my existing networks, as being urban architect in Sulaimaniyah municipality for 6 years since 2005 until 2011. I easily established these links with officials, booking appointments, before I began my fieldwork, as I knew them during those years. The interviews were between 30 min and an hour and half long and conducted in officials’ own offices. Since people in Sulaimaniyah speak the Kurdish language, I interviewed them in Kurdish and then translated into English. I made notes after each interview, in order to remember important points. In doing so, when I interviewed residents, I translated the audio into English. However, I didn’t translate it literally due to language and culture, but I interpreted in English and then transcribed it.

For the analysis, I worked towards arranging the data into themes according to the research questions. Different sets of questions were prepared for the interviews and the focus groups in order to separate out the impacts of urban change (i.e. physical change in the built environment) on social life (e.g. what people do) and constructs of place attachment (i.e. what they feel). Different sets of symbolic meanings, interpretive, evaluative and behavioural responses were captured based on constructs of place attachment, place identity and place dependence. In addition, different types of place attachment were captured. This is based on a standard scale of place attachment, diagnostic of emotional bonds that people have with their residence places (Lewicka, 2005). They comprised of “this place is a part of me”, “I am proud of this place”, and both as a measure that is corresponded to the correlated both with traditional and active attachment. Traditional attachment to “inherited place” is indicated by statements such as: “Even if there are better places, I am not going to move out of this city”, “I have never considered if living somewhere else would be better” (Lewicka, 2011b). Therefore, after this process and based on analytical framework, the findings of this research is explained in the following section.

4. Findings

4.1. Functional and symbolic meaning of the place

Place identity and place dependence are used in the interpretative process of residents’ responses to urban change. This is according to the three dimensions of the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components influence an interpretative process of environmental disruption (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63). This leads to a social behaviour response as a response to the place disruption in terms of action, adaptation, or acceptance (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 63). In this sense, place dependence as an established dimension of place attachment on the individual level (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004), and place identity (Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989) influences the interpretation of environmental disruptions. In the context of this study, place dependence refers to the individual’s physical and functional connection to the place. The functional connection is found, related to residents’ investment in the area due to the change. Individuals take advantages of economic resources of the change. For instance, working near one’s home and having the market in walking distance is preferred by residents. “I am working near my home, as today everywhere is turned into a market. I can visit my home four or five times a day” (Male, aged 37, Shexan district, August 2014). Another respondent claimed that “the recent change made my life easier. I turned my mother’s house into a store for keeping my extra stuff and the shop is very close to my house. I can bring any stuff to my shop that customers ask for” (Male, aged 45, Sarshaqam district, August 2014).

For these residents, urban change allowed for usability and functional value of the place. On the other hand, place identity is
related to peoples’ negative attitudes and behaviours in relation to environmental change and their response as an evaluation of a disturbance (e.g., Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Kyle et al., 2004). For example, in this context, the unique residential area serves as a historic symbol. The changes to the area disrupted the place distinctiveness, place continuity and individuals’ self-esteem. Place dependence was disturbed by negative attitudes and behaviour of residents in relation to the change. For instance, in terms of the crowds that came to area because of those who demolished their properties and turned them into commercial uses and available car parking. Place dependence in terms of individuals’ daily practices is also disrupted: a 70 year old female respondent commented that she misses praying in a mosque:

“I could see the Great Mosque and hear everyday prayer, but today these buildings block the view from my house” (Female, aged 60, Malkane district, August 2014).

Others respondents experienced changes to their daily lives within the distinctive traditional historic environment which affected their place dependence. A respondent complained about incompatible constructions in the area, such as the new style of markets that disrupted the distinctiveness of traditional historic environment: “I went to Caso Mall, but I didn’t like to shop in modern buildings. I prefer our traditional markets. I do not think I will ever go there again” (Female, aged 40, Sabwnkaran district, September 2014). In these examples, changes disturbed place dependence and had significant effects on these residents’ place identity.

Many respondents were concerned about the disruption to their daily lives caused by the disruption of the distinctiveness of traditional architectural styles, textures, and materials of historic buildings and spiritual spaces. They felt the disruption in terms of the incompatible styles of the rebuilt residential and commercial uses; in the inconsistent building materials used for maintenance and repairs, and in the additions and extensions to listed houses. A respondent commented: “I miss walking along the narrow road of the neighbourhood daily, and I remember buildings were all the same” (Male, aged 37, Sabwnkaran district, September 2014). The demolitions altered this resident’s place identity due to the loss of spirituality and distinctiveness of the place and the disruption to daily life. Another respondent was concerned about the new practices of covering roofs with Nylon sheets or using concrete instead of traditional materials: “when I see people have covered their roof with a Nylon sheet or concrete, it makes me miss those days when we were helping each other to smooth the roofs of our houses”. Another respondent commented on construction materials: “when I go to my neighbour’s house, since they rebuilt it with concrete blocks, I want to leave quickly. Their house is not as warm as their old house when it was built with bricks”. There are widespread concerns regarding changes to original structures; for instance, one or two-storey courtyard houses are being changed into four and five-storey commercial uses and causing problems with access to light and ventilation for the neighbouring houses (See Table 4).

Therefore, in the context of this case study, place identity and symbolic meaning are connected to the importance of the traditional architecture of the historic centre of Sulaimaniyah and the practice of daily life in the traditional living environment. They are connected to the religious, spiritual, and material distinctiveness of the place. Thus, for some residents, place identity and self-identity are threatened as their place dependence is disturbed. As the original structure of the neighbourhood is changed, the uses and practices of daily life based on distinctive architecture, aspects of space, spiritual and religious practice are also changed. On the other hand, for some place dependence is opposite to place identity as the change influenced their attitudes and behaviours towards urban change. For them, their place dependence is based on economic resources of the change. This is evaluated it’s cognitive based on functional meaning. Therefore, place identity and place dependence affect the positive and negative attitudes and behaviours in the process of urban change which is explained in the following section.

4.2. Representation of the place

A series of stages to study local relations to place disruption involve identification, interpretation, evaluation and forms of coping responses (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010). Those stages are used to analyse the qualitative data. Place definition is used to
understand local resident’s responses. Acceptance of the change is identified, associated with sets of functional meanings which were indicated in the previous section, such as a source of financial and business opportunity, development, and better-living conditions (see Table 5). For these residents, the place represents a business and financial centre for their benefit. For instance, a respondent explained that they are taking advantage of the commercial uses and benefits from turning their area into a big market:

“I am getting a good deal selling my house. This change makes our place close to the big market, hospitals. Service, water supply, and electricity are better and the cost of everything is cheaper than anywhere else” (Female, aged 50, Malkane district, August 2014).

Furthermore, those focus groups were in favour of development, were happy about new building designs and new styles: “I prefer new constructions, they are nice and better” (Male, aged 23, Focus group 2, Jwlakan district, November 2014). Some others believed that the historic built environment has deteriorated, and replacing it with new constructions is a better option: “modern houses are clean. They do not need maintenance as much as the old ones, besides; the government allows us to rebuild our houses” (Female, aged 23, a local resident of Shewe qazi, Focus group, November 2014).

On the other hand, in the case of opposition to urban change, the neighbourhood is represented with different sets of symbolic and functional meanings, such as a distinctive historic residential area. This associated with traditional living environment and cultural heritage that represents the city’s original history. The changes have meant loss of the historic built environment, the loss of traditional living environments, and producing difficult life circumstances (see Table 6). For example, in the process of urban change, new style buildings and new construction materials are being introduced into the historic environment of the area. This disrupted a sense of continuity. A respondent blamed the government and commented that: “buildings are built without using bricks. The government is missing as regulations are not enforced. People use alcobond material and new materials in the area. They are ugly in this historic area” (Male, aged 23, Focus Group 2, Jwlakan district, November 2014). Another respondent also commented on the negative consequences of urban change: “commercial buildings blocked the view from our house” (Female, aged 40, Sabwnkaran district, August 2014; see Fig. 3).

For another respondent, the threat to traditional social life is related to social networks and the departure of original residents: “we do not interact with new neighbours because we do not know who they are” (Female, aged 30, Dargazen district, August 2014). Urban change is also seen to be the cause of bringing crowds in the area. One respondent commented: “people demolish their

Table 4
Impacts of urban change and place identity and place dependence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place identity</th>
<th>Place dependence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional meaning</td>
<td>Urban change enhances usability and functional value of the place (place as an economic value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic meaning</td>
<td>Negative attitudes and behaviours in relation to the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place identity</td>
<td>Place dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional meaning</td>
<td>Urban change enhances usability and functional value of the place (place as an economic value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic meaning</td>
<td>Negative attitudes and behaviours in relation to the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place identity</td>
<td>Place dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional meaning</td>
<td>Urban change enhances usability and functional value of the place (place as an economic value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic meaning</td>
<td>Negative attitudes and behaviours in relation to the change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Place definition based on local residents’ response to the urban change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place definition</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>The area represents a deteriorated place with historic buildings that are ignored by their owners and government.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>The change</td>
<td>There is a need for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living conditions are better</td>
<td>The change</td>
<td>Change represents a newly constructions with a new architecture style, tall and clean buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic benefit</td>
<td>The change</td>
<td>It represents deteriorated historic buildings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, in the case of opposition to urban change, the neighbourhood is represented with different sets of symbolic and functional meanings, such as a distinctive historic residential area. This associated with traditional living environment and cultural heritage that represents the city’s original history. The changes have meant loss of the historic built environment, the loss of traditional living environments, and producing difficult life circumstances (see Table 6). For example, in the process of urban change, new style buildings and new construction materials are being introduced into the historic environment of the area. This disrupted a sense of continuity. A respondent blamed the government and commented that: “buildings are built without using bricks. The government is missing as regulations are not enforced. People use alcobond material and new materials in the area. They are ugly in this historic area” (Male, aged 23, Focus Group 2, Jwlakan district, November 2014). Another respondent also commented on the negative consequences of urban change: “commercial buildings blocked the view from our house” (Female, aged 40, Sabwnkaran district, August 2014; see Fig. 3).

For another respondent, the threat to traditional social life is related to social networks and the departure of original residents: “we do not interact with new neighbours because we do not know who they are” (Female, aged 30, Dargazen district, August 2014). Urban change is also seen to be the cause of bringing crowds in the area. One respondent commented: “people demolish their
properties to build car parks and markets. This brings crowds to our area” (Female, aged 70, Sarshaqam district, August 2014). Another respondent addressed the same condition: “our place is very noisy, and if you step outside, your feet get under the tyres of cars” (Male, aged 40, Sarshaqam district, August 2014). But abandoned houses, on the other hand, mean that the area becomes like a rubbish bin, and dilapidated houses threaten to collapse, endangering the life of residents and pedestrians. “Abandoned houses are falling down. It is scary for anyone who is walking through the area” (Female, aged 60, Interview, Local resident, Dargazen district, August 2014) (see Fig. 4).

Therefore, residents’ place definition was associated with sets of functional and symbolic meanings. However, to understand residents’ coping with the change, the following section is based on interpretative process of residents’ responses to the urban change.

4.3. Local residents’ emotional responses

This purpose of this section is to understand how local residents’ are coping with the change, as one of the stages of psychological

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place definition/ Opposition</th>
<th>Loss of heritage: historic of historic built environment/religious and spiritual life</th>
<th>The neighbourhood</th>
<th>The change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The area represents a distinctive historic built environment. It represents narrow roads and cul-de-sacs. Distinctive courtyard buildings. One and two-floor buildings. Construction materials were bricks and stones.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Distinctive and symbolic religious institutions</td>
<td>Disrupted a sense of continuity in the area due to Introducing inconsistence architecture style to the historic environment. Inconsistent new style of buildings influenced by Western styles different from a traditional style of buildings. Building structures and maintenance with inconsistent construction materials Building low-quality structures. Unregulated parking lots and vacant properties; changing the role of residential roads from private to public places Destruction of the layout of narrow roads due to demolition and linking several properties after demolition. Blocking visual access by building multi–storey structures, five to six storey buildings. Changing appearances of residential buildings for commercial uses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Disappearing traditional life circumstances | The neighbourhood represented strong bonding in terms of traditional social life | The close relationship among neighbours based on watching and taking care of each other. Exchanging dishes. Offering free rides. Giving physical and psychological support for one’s need. Living like a family. | Resulted in isolated environments for residents due to newcomers and departure of old inhabitants and friends. Outdoor chatting disappeared due to the crowds, a lot of visitors, cars, and strangers passing through the neighbourhood to the city centre. Exchanging dishes disappeared between neighbours. Less contact and interaction with neighbours due to the departure of local residents and arrival of newcomers based on low renters. Unacceptable behaviours, lack of care for each other. Stuck inside the houses due to strangers and crowds. This is why neighbours meet at night Danger environment due to crowds and fast passing cars. |

| Difficult life circumstances | The neighbourhood provided a calm environment The neighbourhood had a clean environment. Inhabitants embraced the value of the neighbourhood and maintained it well | The change represented crowds due to car parking and commercial uses. The change is expressed in unhealthy life circumstances as it turned the neighbourhood into a rubbish tip. The threat to the life of residents due to abandoned deteriorated houses that face more demolition The threat to the life of residents due to the low quality of construction materials. High price of goods. Discomfort due to noisy commercial uses. Dirty environment due to light industrial and commercial uses in the area. New buildings block air circulation | |

Fig. 3. The view of the houses blocked by commercial buildings (Source: taken by author).
response to place change such as becoming aware, interpretation, evaluation, coping, acting (Devine-Wright, 2009). Analysis of qualitative data in relation to emotional responses and attitudes of local residents indicated the negative and positive emotional responses to the change. Local residents were feeling angry, disappointed, frustrated, annoyed or happy. Their responses are indicated by the diverse reasons they give to explain how different forms of place attachment are developed (See Table 7).

Those residents who accepted the change exercised choice in their attachment to place, based on the economic opportunity of the change in the area. For instance, Table 7 shows that they are happy and hopeful. Their place attachment is based on economic benefit of the change. In these instances, “place bonding has a judgment function similar to that of place identity for attitudes towards the change” (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014, p. 67). Functional meanings based on acceptance of the change in the neighbourhood transformed residents’ place attachment into attachment dependent on the economic value of the change. For example, a seller with a barrow in a big market was positive and happy about the changes to the area: “Everywhere here is a big market. It is a good opportunity for finding jobs and making money. I feel have a future here and never want to leave” (Male, aged 40, Malkane district, August 2014).

On the other hand, those who expressed opposition to the changes felt they had no choice about where or how to live, especially linked to the lack of conservation practice in the area. Their traditional and active place attachment became non-attachment or alienation. For example, Table 7 shows that some of them are traditionally attached to the area but disappointed, frustrated and angry. Those expressing active place attachment based on an active choice felt disappointment and anger. For them, urban change was perceived as damage to the historic neighbourhood, and threats to the aesthetic beauty and distinct character of the buildings. It was perceived as breaking of social ties, and mutual support networks and community safety.

Those with traditional place attachments, associated with being proud to stay in the area, expressed disappointment and anger in relation to their pride in their family history and reputation and the history of the place. Statements have been made by respondents in the present study:

“I am proud of my neighbourhood; however I am also disappointed. But I will never leave this place, only maybe after my funeral. My family is well known here. Everyone respects me. I cannot take a risk go to a place where no one knows who I am. I like this place because of Xanaqa mosque, and I feel it all the time. I like to live in these traditional houses; they are warm in winter, and cool in summer.” (Female, aged 60, Dargazen district, August 2014).

This participant adapted to the urban change by developing both traditional and active place attachment, linked to the historical bond with the place and her biographical relationship as she has grown up in the area. Her active attachment is based on her interest in the history of her family. She is well known in the area because of the length of her residence and her family history in the place, but her active attachment is developed with a cognitive conscious rootedness (Savage, 2010). Lewicka (2011a) suggests that attachment to primary residences may more often rely on social ties. This respondents’ emotional bond was linked to her strong spiritual, religious, distinctiveness, aesthetic and historical bonds which were significant, in spite of her disappointment to the change. However, she is having the choice to leave the area. The participant has a spiritual relationship as a significant connection with the mosque: her local identity is defined through her emotional bond and her spiritual identity by the value of the religious place. Another respondent was keen to stay in the area because of the distinctiveness of the built environment: “my house is mud and brick which is warm and is very comforting, I do not like to live in a modern house” (Female, aged 60, Dargazen, 2014). The building materials give a distinctive character to the place, which indicates place identity. Therefore, factors of the historical bond, biographical relationship, spiritual, religious and social ties are important in people’s place attachment in the process of urban change.

However, some residents lost their emotional bonds with the place, due to the loss of their place identity and place dependence but they had no choice except stay in the neighbourhood. These residents’ place attachment changed into non- or alienated attachment because they were unable to leave (see Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). According to Lewicka (2011b) non-attachment is characterised by statements such as: “people should not get attached to any place”; “This city has many advantages, but if I find a better place, I will move”. These residents’ affective bonds are altered by the difficult life circumstances created by change. For example, a respondent talked about the crowds and strange passers by whom she avoided in order to practice her social and traditional life - chatting and spending time in their cul-de-sac:

“I feel disturbed by the crowd, as the area is full of men. They park their cars in our cul-de-sac. If I get a chance I will definitely leave the area” (Female, aged 50, Malkane district, August 2015).

Thus, the respondent’s non-attachment is reflected by a desire to leave the neighbourhood due to the difficult life circumstances. Therefore, in this section, local residents’ level of coping with the changes in their neighbourhood are indicated by the negative and positive emotional responses to the change. The finding indicated that the oppositional response of residents represented with negative emotional responses and supportive responses of residents is represented with positive emotional responses. Different types of place attachment are linked to the character of the place in terms of distinctiveness of the built environment, the economic benefit of the change, and behaviour responses to the change. However, to understand residents’ acting to the change behaviour
I always liked this place because of its heritage and traditional style. However, I wish I rebuilt it with a traditional style, applied for rebuilding permission, no one asked me to rebuild it in a modern style, however, they are in opposition to the change. A port. For instance, people replacing their traditional houses with modern houses in terms of neglect, political instability, and lack of financial support from anyone especially as we owners of this listed house were not getting support from anyone (Male, 45, Malkani district, August 2015). Another respondent with positive emotional response to the change pointed out that rebuilding in traditional styles is difficult because “there were no skilled labourers and modern materials are cheaper than bricks” (Male, 45, Malkani district, August 2015). Another respondent with negative emotional response to the change explained how he had demolished his house and rebuilt it in a modern style:

“This neighbourhood is a fortune for me; it is close to the bazaar and to my own shop. That is why I replaced my house with a new modern house. I liked the modern house, it is development. My old house was dilapidated and it was hard to maintain, especially as we owners of this listed house were not getting support from anyone” (Male, 35, Sabwnkaran district, August 2015).

Therefore, residents with negative and positive emotional responses have supportive behavioural responses by rebuilding in non-traditional styles. However, these residents’ behavioural responses are not related to their emotional responses and place identity and place dependence. It is related to the condition of the place, which was seen as dilapidated and derelict that had been neglected by the government due to financial and political instability. This finding is in contrast to the findings of other studies of environmental disruption behaviour. For example, behavioural responses of residents whose place attachment were disrupted by offshore wind farms in North Wales in two coastal towns, involved the actions of signing a petition against the project, writing letters to a paper or to a local politician expressing opposition, or joining a protest group (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010).

Table 7
Types of place attachment and affective responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment/Opposition</th>
<th>Attachment/Dependence on economic benefit of the area</th>
<th>Traditional attachment</th>
<th>Active attachment</th>
<th>Non-attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of attachment</td>
<td>Family history</td>
<td>Active attachment</td>
<td>History of the place</td>
<td>Alienated attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family reputation</td>
<td>Family reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td>If they have a choice they leave the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective and emotional response to the change</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choices

Having choice

Non-choice

Table 8
Supportive behavioural response to urban change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land use change</th>
<th>New style of buildings</th>
<th>Inconsistent materials</th>
<th>Vacant land</th>
<th>Road congestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demolition of residential properties and linking them together. This widened narrow roads and consequently changed the use of the roads for commercial purposes.</td>
<td>Demolition of the traditional houses and rebuilding in new styles. Building new style of markets, malls, flats, offices, and clinics or adding and removing parts of buildings with new styles. Using Western classical elements that are not directly relevant to the traditional character of the area.</td>
<td>Decorating facades with new products, wallpapers</td>
<td>Leaving lots vacant after demolition with the consequence they become waste areas.</td>
<td>Roads are blocked due to irregular car parking and traffic along narrow roads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning ground floors of residential buildings into markets or stores for commercial purposes.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rebuilding with concrete blocks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Conclusions

This study aimed to understand impacts of urban change on residents in an historic built environment setting, by exploring social relations/behavioural responses to the change in urban heritage, drawing upon a series of studies to study local relations to place disruption, involving identification, interpreting, evaluating, coping, and behaviour responses (Devine-Wright, 2009). Behavioural responses in previous studies of place disruption are likely to vary. For example, residents with oppositional responses to place disruption stand against place disruption in terms of their behaviour and actions. Their behavioural responses involve the actions of signing a petition against change, writing letters to a paper or to a local politician expressing opposition, or joining a protest group (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010). Thus, previous studies have suggested links between emotional responses and oppositional responses. This is by indicating how the disruption of place threatened place identity for those with a negative emotional response to the disruption of place. Therefore, this led to negative attitudes to the disruption and oppositional behaviour. But the findings of this study add to the previous studies of disruption of place (Devine-Write & Howes, 2010; Stedman, 2002; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001), and Devine-Wright’s (2009) model of place disruption through the use of new field research and case study evidence from a different cultural setting.

This study shows how supportive behavioural responses emerged to the disruption of place in cases of threatened place identity and of negative emotional bonds to the disruption of place. Therefore, the findings of this study indicated that behavioural responses are inextricably linked to the social value of urban heritage. For example, residents were in opposition to the change and their place identity and place dependence was threatened by the change. However, in contrast to this, their behavioural responses supported the change. For instance, their behavioural responses involve the destruction of heritage due to the political and financial instability that the place is neglected by the government. The place is without conservation management. However, residents still value the heritage of the place. This has been shown when those who were in opposition to the changes in spite of their anger and disappointment, they are proud of their family. They interest in the history of the place and the distinctiveness of the historic environment of the place. They do not want to lose the place. But their behaviour has more to do with the fact that the government neglected the heritage of the place. Therefore government is not supporting residents to preserve their heritage. Consequently, they destroy their own heritage in terms of maintenance or reconstruction of their properties, and without conservation planning guidance. This shows the importance of social value of heritage and the important of its conservation. In this sense, the finding shows that residents’ behaviours are not simply related to their place identity and place dependence. It is linked to the heritage that neglected by the government.

In addition, this study has shown that residents’ responses to the changes in their neighbourhood were more mixed than some previous studies might suggest and included acceptance as well as oppositional reactions to change. For residents with oppositional responses, change is perceived in terms of the loss of the historic built environment and the disruption of their sense of continuity in the place and was linked to resulting alterations to social aspects of life. On the other hand, for residents who accepted the changes, the place was seen as dilapidated and derelict that had been neglected by the government, whereas the changes were seen as factors in an economic source of development and better living conditions.

The research has shown that the ways in which neighbourhood change affects residents depend on the forms of their place identity and place dependence, and the importance of the physical environment as a symbolic meaning. The findings indicate that in the historic centre of Sulaimaniyah, traditional social life, family reputation, and religious and spiritual life are significant. They are significant in defining residents’ place identity and influencing the effects that urban change has on residents. Architectural forms and spatial aspects of the place were important in defining its meaning, especially as many of the demolitions turned community cul-de-sacs into public thoroughfares. Identifying these symbolic meanings based on perceptions of residents is significant in the study of heritage and its management. Current academic discussions around urban cultural heritage management highlight the interest in perceptions of community and the importance of participatory relationship among stakeholders. Zancheti & Hidaka, 2011 argue that aspects of urban cultural heritage that are considered worthy of conservation efforts are those that society perceives to be significant. This means that heritage conservation needs to be counterbalanced by the views of community members. It is important for the leading organisation of urban heritage conservation to identify and understand the interests of all stakeholders, from individuals to groups to the whole community (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Thus, theory of this study, environmental disruption provides these perceptions of residents who live in the area. Therefore, this theory is significant for urban heritage and conservation, especially to draw lessons for conservation planning in urban context of Sulaimaniyah, when conservation planning is failure. Given that, failure in conservation planning is identified by Amin and Adu-Ampong (2016). They identified that local residents are excluded from the process of conserving their built urban heritage: “management of the historic centre of Sulaimaniyah is contested by different stakeholders leading to an increase in conflict and a failure in meeting conservation aims.

Further, the theoretical scope of this study and some of the results are part of the international literature on place meanings and place experiences. But to inscribe theoretical insights this study due to contextual and cultural differences, the meaning of place and behavioural responses are different and related to the context of the area. That is why using this theory in heritage contexts allowed introducing characteristics of historic environments based on distinctiveness and symbolic meaning of place. Especially, characteristics of Sulaimaniyah city centre are explored for the context of this study. The link of this theory to the historic context of this study will allow opportunity for using the theory to the destruction of heritage in other contexts of Middle Eastern countries. This is particularly true when heritage in Middle Eastern countries is neglected due to political conflicts and financial difficulties and even social instability.

However, this theory is also relevant to the Western context, and is indeed based on assumptions about how society works, and the assumptions that hold in one society do not necessarily have the same meaning in another society. That is why taking these kinds of normative assumptions somewhere else is problematic, however, using them is challenging as well. Therefore, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the implications for residents’ physical surroundings, social relations and individual behaviours of urban change in historic environments. It contributes to the study of behavioural responses to place disruption in heritage context that shows the importance of social value of heritage. It shows that not in all cases oppositional attitudes with threatened place identity and dependence lead to negative behavioural responses to disruption of place.

Acknowledgement

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding...
agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. I would like to express my very great appreciation to Dr Alasdair Rae at the University of Sheffield, for his constant support. I would also like to thank Dr Steve Connelly and Dr Aidan While for their comments. I also thank two anonymous reviewers for comments on an earlier draft.

References


