Meaning of a public place: A story of Padang Pahlawan

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Abstract

This paper makes a case on how the existence of padang, a public place which is commonly found in most historic cities in Malaysia, develops place meaning and place attachment amongst residents. Using mixed method approach and reviews of literature across urban design and environmental psychology disciplines, a framework for the understanding the psychological dimensions of residents’ interactions with padang is demonstrated. The primary data was obtained from face-to-face interview (n=44) and surveys (n=165) with users of Padang Pahlawan, a demolished padang in Melaka city, Malaysia. The findings show (a) three processes and levels of place meaning; (b) the association between place meaning and place attachment; and (c) how changes of place changed people’s perception and meaning to particular places. The findings suggest that residents developed deep attachments to Padang Pahlawan however change of physical character and discontinuity of place experiences have altered its meaning. This study provides substantial aspects of people-environment relationship and has important implications to the task of place creation.

Keywords: padang, place meaning, place attachment, changes, place disruption

1. Introduction

Phenomenology of place in referring to the life-world encompassing the physical setting and social interaction, and intangible phenomena such as feelings that are much remains to be understood. Place is meaningless without the phenomenology (Tuan, 1977). Being qualitative totalities of a complex nature, places cannot be described by means of analytic and scientific concepts. Hence to study the meaning of place, attention to the phenomenology of the daily environment is vital (Noberg-Schulz, 1963). The study of phenomenology of place with historical and cultural significance is not much explored in Malaysia. Malaysia is comparatively considered as a new country; however it has many cities and towns which are of historic and cultural significance. Although such cities have undergone many changes and been expanded in size, in many cases the original part or the core area of the cities have survived to some extent. Some are now occupy a significant location in what might be modern, growing settlements. Since the 1970s there are many historic places and cultural sites which have been preserved and developed
into tourist attractions. However, there are also many historic areas that have been tampered with and turned into commercial areas intended to boost the economy.

This paper is divided into three main parts; the significance of place meaning, the historical town and the quality that is in it and how changes of place rich with historical and cultural significance changed people’s perception and meaning. Another focus of research, the significance of place and how it affects people; is widely explored in the field of environmental psychology. The studies have progressed to place related meanings and the ways in which these meanings can be applied various types of places. ‘Meaning’ is considered as second major element that comes after the emotional bond of people to a physical location (Casakin and Kreitler, 2008). For example, study by Williams and Patterson in 1996 revealed how environmental problems that occurred in a place have affected environmental meanings including inherent (aesthetic) meanings, instrumental (goal-directed) meanings, cultural (symbolic) meanings and individual (expressive) meanings (Brown and Raymond, 2007). Hence, this study delves into how an open area, locally known as padang means to the local residents and become an important cultural landscape site in Malaysia. A description of how padang evolved and continue to play a major role in the physical, cultural and social lives of the local people and in Malaysia will be explored. The study gives focus to the padang because, earlier studies and literature reviews conducted on this topic have found that out of ten padang identified in the old towns of Malaysia, half of them face a tremendous threat from commercial and tourism based development.

2. Literature Review and Definitions

a. Place Meaning

The study of place meaning sheds light on the importance of an array of places in people’s lives (Manzo, 2005; Gustafson, 2001; Green, 1999; Canter, 1977; Relph, 1976). For example, some people regard a particular place as being sacred and important. Thus, they may not even want the place to be altered or harmed due to its symbolic value and important characters it possesses, contrarily the same place could be ignored and less appreciated by different group of people. A number of writers have investigated on this phenomenon, which finally lead to hypothesis that meaning and significance of places are based on three broad interrelated components identified as: 1) the physical setting, (2) the person (an individual’s internal psychological and social processes and attributes, which are also tied to social and cultural factors), and (3) the activities or rituals done at the place (Relph, 1976; Montgomery, 1998; Smaldone et al. 2006; Low and Altman, 1992). Following the broader dimension on place meaning study, Rapoport (1990) reconsidered that one needs to distinguish among types or level of meaning as it was considered that built environments and material culture generally, may communicate several distinct types.
of meaning. Given that, Rapoport (1990) suggested that the meaning of environment has three levels. First is a lower level meaning or an everyday and instrumental meaning concerning mnemonic cues for identifying uses for which setting are intended and hence the social situations, expected behavior and the like. Second is a middle-level meaning which refers to the emotional values associated with the object those communicating identity, status, wealth, power that is the latent rather than the instrumental aspects of activities, behavior and settings. Finally is a higher level meaning refer less to the object than to broader values that related to, for example, cosmologies, cultural schemata, philosophical systems or the scared.

Therefore, the studies on place meaning suggest that meaningful places emerge as social context and also through social relations; they are geographically located and at the same time related to social, economic and cultural surroundings; and they give individuals a sense of place and a subjective territorial identity (Agnew, 1987, Gustafson, 2001). They encompass a range of affective states, positive, negative or even vacillating between different emotions. The attributes or dimensions that give places their meanings are expressed through intertwined and interactive processes in which none are isolated or compartmentalized.

**b. Place Attachment**

This paper explores the possibility that more than one discipline can reveal the complex relationships between the physical characteristics and the experience of people. A number of authors have reinforced from various fields of study suggest the importance of places by examining people’s emotional relationships with the places and the array of experiences that create place meaning (Green, 1999; Gustafson, 2001; Manzo, 2005). Researchers have predominately conceptualized place bonding within environmental psychology as place attachment (Low and Altman, 1992; Giuliani, 1991; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Walker and Ryan, 2008). The theory can be elaborated as positive affective bonds between people and places or an extent to which people’s values or identifies with a particular place (Burholt, 2006; Morgan, 2010; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). In similar context, Low and Altman (1992) elucidate the places as repositories and context with in which interpersonal, community and cultural relationship occur. In a research undertaken by Giuliani and Feldman (1993), they identified that the diversity of place attachment definitions as an important challenge to further progress in ‘place’ study field. Several authors also consider place attachment and place identity to be the same concept and either use both terms synonymously or operationalize attachment in terms of identity (Hernandez et al., 2007; Stedman, 2002). Stedman (2003) further defines place attachment as a bond based on thoughts and emotions and that identity is a vital component supported by place familiarity, dependence, belongingness, identity and rootedness (Hammitt et al., 2006). In relation to this, this study explores the association between place meaning and place attachment in identifying the salient dimensions of place which contains historical and cultural significance such as padang in old town of Malaysia.
c. Placelessness

Other than the profound attachment of people to places—where people share familiar, communal and ethnic or cultural bonds with the community, studies on place meaning also look into changes and alteration on attached places that can result in negative feelings such as grief and mourning (Brown and Perkins, 1992; Fried, 2000; Brown et al., 2003). Studies affirmed that changes to a place are among the most serious forms of externally-imposed psychosocial disruptions and discontinuities to people who are familiar to the attached places (Fried, 1963; Fried, 2000). A similar argument is described by Mazumdar et al. (2000) that loss of favorite and familiar places in life brings about disintegration of connection and anticipation. Brown and Perkins (1992) further distinguish that the disrupted attachments to place can be threatening or hurtful. Thus, the changes are seen as threats to the identity, stability and safety of an individual (Fried, 2000) causing ‘placelessness’.

According to Arefi (1999), the impact and influence of placelessness and non-place on the urban landscape are more profound and longer lasting than simply phenomena that will sometime soon melt into the air. In dealing with placelessness and non-place, two types of implications warrant attention: first, the geographies of nowhereness and otherness, and secondly, the crisis of identity. Much of the current malaise about the urban landscape can be attributed to these where fragmented, monotonous, homogenous, boring, ubiquitous, standardized, inauthentic are typical, familiar expressions used to describe many cities in the world today (Arefi, 1999; Shuhana and Bashri, 2002; ICOMOS, 2007). The fragments that compose the contemporary cities are also presented as a series of spectacles or as variations on a theme park, disneyfication and pseudo place (Relph, 1976; Banerjee, 2001; Nicholson, 2003).

The literature reviews reveal that there has been a prominent aspect of research on the study of place whereby it consists of a multiplicity dimension when one wants to assess a good public place. Also, researchers have examined the antecedents of place by examining placelessness, place meaning, place attachment and place disruption. By identifying the unique assemblage of various dimensions and by defining the relationships between these dimensions, salient attributes related to what makes one place special are suggested. The study suggests that a good place is a process of manifested physical, social and economic division. In contrast with places that possess desirable characters, reviews were extended to a study of placelessness. The reviews on the study of placelessness reveal that among the factors of a placeless geography or nowhereness are modern movement in design, privatization, urban renewal and transportation development. Based on the reviews, the study suggests that a place is not just a space which is physically recognized as a room with single function. Instead, it is a combination of an experientially-based understanding and awareness where its changes caused different environment and feelings to its users.
3. Padang as the Attributes of Historic Cities in Malaysia

Malaysia derives its town planning systems from British practice and legislation. Town planning during the colonial time operated for different client groups; primarily for the colonial administration, British commercial interests, traditional elites and white settler communities. Soon after the completion of the basic infrastructures and administrative centre in many historical cities, there were growing demand for spaces for recreation and sporting activities such as horse racing, golf and cricket and football pitches to supplement both spaces. A standard model of colonial town planning in Malaysia emerged from the late 18th century to 1957. The Green Belt or the physical separation of town and country was found as a source of British planning concepts. Public squares and plots that reserved for public purposes were among two early major components of the British model of colonial town planning. These open spaces acted as a ‘microcosm’ of colonial society and as their political, military, social and recreational hub (Ismawi, 1992; Goh; 1990; Nor Zalina, 2007). Their establishments were on sites which function as centre of administration, commerce and European settlement (Loukaitou et al., 1998). Penang, Taiping and Kuala Lumpur are among the examples of town with comprehensive open spaces establishment. The establishment of open spaces in the colonial town in Malaysia completed around 1930s.

The use of a square in colonial town settlement reflects the influence of London, and indeed the square has been called ‘London’s principal contribution to town planning’. In the early days, most squares were built rectangular in shape and close turfed with grass. The British called it as ‘the esplanade’ while commonly known by locals as padang. The padang were usually reserved for private use but in the more egalitarian colonies they fulfilled a multitude of public purposes (Home, 1997). It was also used for parade to impress the local population with the coercive power of the colonial rulers. With the rise of the organized sports in the nineteenth century, it accommodated equestrian activities and games of cricket (Home, 1997; Amree, 2007). It is also surrounded by monuments represented the pinnacle of British colonial, their civic pride and the commemoration of end of World War I (Lim and Wong, 2000). In the latter period, besides being a multipurpose ground for the British, the padang had played a greater role in attracting the citizens to participate in struggling for the country’s freedom (Zakiah, 1996). Later, after Malaysia gained its independence, arrived the modern movement with its emphasis on recreational setting for the population of newly developed residential area (Jamil, 2002).

4. Padang Pahlawan

Padang Pahlawan is a large open field located in the heart of Bandar Hilir, Melaka. With an area of 217,381 square feet, it is situated near the foothill of St. Paul Hill (Figure 3.6). It was formerly known as Padang Bandar Hilir, a name of a town in which it is located (before it has been
Padang Pahlawan was formed as a result of a huge reclamation of the beach carried out by the British. According to Museum and Antiquity Department, the development of Padang Pahlawan was initiated when the British conjoined Melaka, Penang and Singapore under an administration unit known as Strait District. During this time British laws were enforced and by 1826, Melaka was used to place convicts, who were vital man-powers for projects around the city. These projects which started in 1921 included the reclamation of the sea and rivers and it was these particular reclamations that led to the existence of Padang Pahlawan.

During the British occupation, the padang was used for military drills besides increasingly functioned as a public recreational ground (Figure 1). After the relocation of the police barrack, this padang again became the setting for ceremonies and rituals that legitimized British rule. The Melaka Sports Club was once stood on the padang. A number of important and historic buildings lie on the northern end of padang (Figure 2). Situated at its north is St. Paul Hill that act as a backdrop of Padang Pahlawan. Padang Pahlawan was a historical piece of land that is meaningful to the nation because it was a site when the first prime minister proclaimed Independence of Tanah Melayu in February 20th 1956. Since then it was maintained as an open space to the public accommodating a place for local traders, and a place of history and culture for the local people. In the early days, when approaching Bandar Melaka, one often feel impressed by the quaint and picturesque appearance of the padang which was also incorporated with a lush green garden located next to Sungai Melaka (River of Melaka). Following the rapid tourism development in the 1980s, scores of souvenir stalls selling local products were placed on Padang Pahlawan, providing jobs for the villagers who became the majority of the sellers.

Figure 1: Views of Padang Pahlawan throughout history (Source: National Archive)
However in 2004, this historical landmark was threatened by commercial development under the name of Pahlawan Mall and Dataran Pahlawan (a roof top square to replace the Padang Pahlawan). The loss of Padang Pahlawan over a hypermarket and entertainment ground is now a daunting history of Melaka and its residents (Figure 3). The hawkers who vend at the edge of the padang has been moved to a new building constructed in the padang. Recreational activities such as horseback riding, family ride on bullock carts were abolished and transferred to Ayer Keroh new recreation area, located about 15 kilometers from the open space. Waiting and playing area for the kids in front of the school has also been moved to the side of the road. Football games were prohibited from operating as the new open space is now is a privately owned space and monitored by cctv. In conclusion, all activities formerly carried on the field no matter formal or informal, can no longer be held. It remains now only as a piece of open space that contains declaration of independence plaque and the remnants of prehistoric archaeologist within the fence.

5. Methodology

This research is exploratory and semiotic in nature applying a sequential mixed method: qualitative and quantitative. The study involves the physical and spatial aspects of place and the
descriptive and affective aspects of environmental experience and meaning. The case study approach is adopted for this study because it allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues (Zaidah, 2007) and in-depth enquiry into the subject being studied (Yin, 2003; Lynch, 1960). It is seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining.

a. Questionnaire Survey

The study includes the quantitative method in order to identify and quantify why and how the properties and attributes of Padang Pahlawan are valued. The research also considered how landscape effects derive from changes in the physical character of the landscape and how it is experienced.

i) Sampling Design and Unit of Analysis

The respondents were selected based upon judgment of the researchers about some appropriate characteristics of the sample. In relation to this, the respondents were residents living in Bandar Melaka who are between the ages of more than 18 years old to the age of not more than 90 years old. The units of analysis fulfilled the criteria of the judgment sampling method because such residents consider Padang Pahlawan as a familiar place, in which they consider as the main public place which they visit regularly. In other words, they mostly engaged and participate in outdoor activities and aware and acknowledge the existence of the padang respectively.

The total number of completed surveys was 165. To identify the adequate sampling size for the study population, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is used. KMO index ranges from 0 to 1; the range of 0.6 of the analysis is suggested as the minimum value for a reasonable sampling (Pallant, 2005). In this study, the KMO test was also used to factor analysed sets of parameters in the survey questionnaire for properties and attributes and well-being parameters. Results of the tests found that that the KMO index on a set of parameters for properties and attributes and place attachment was 0.81 for a set of similar parameters for Padang Pahlawan. Thus, statistically, the index of the tests were high, suggesting that the size of the sampling obtained from the surveys is valid in this study.

ii) Design of Questionnaire and Measurement Levels

Some of the items contained in the survey questionnaire are parameters constructed based on the literature research and survey interviews. The parameters in the pilot survey is applied and added based on the addition of information obtained from the literature research. There are 26 questions altogether and they are divided into two respective categories; the open-ended and close-sectioned. The questions also offer two sets of languages; Bahasa Malaysia and English and they
are chosen based on the preference of respondents. The survey questionnaire intends to identify resident’s knowledge and experience as a resident who uses padang. It also recognizes meaning of padang suggesting their sense of attachment.

Overall, the survey questionnaire consisted of closed-choice questions, including dichotomous (division of two), nominal measures (multiple-choice, categorical) and ordinal scales, and a few open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were included to obtain more information about the residents’ definitions of padang and to expand on the responses made in the closed-ended questions. The survey questionnaires were distributed around the padang and in close proximity to Bandar Melaka. Respondents were briefed about the objectives of the survey and were explained the significance of their encounters alongside their willing participation that ensures the smooth launch of the survey. The two methods use was 1) dropping off surveys door-to-door in the government offices and commercial premises, and (2) intercepting passer-bys and visitors at the padang and in the town centre.

b. Interview

The research takes the form of an interview study as a dominant source. The interview session was carried out following the survey session. The interview explores several sections dealing resident’s experiences in padang. The objective of this approach is not to draw a statistical representative. The objective of this approach is to obtain a wide range of variation in the responses (Gustafson, 2001) of the following subjects:

i. To explore and describe the meanings, sentiments, memories and personal attachment to aspects of experiences in both padang and its surrounding area by residents;

ii. To explore and describe physical properties and social attributes of the padang that contribute to identity of padang and its historic district;

iii. To gain and understanding of the associations between meaning and place attachment; and

iv. To gain and understanding of the associations between placelessness and place disruption.

i) Sampling for Interview

A face-to-face interview was carried out randomly involving the exploration with 44 numbers of residents at Padang Pahlawan (PP). The sampling procedure resembled recommendations for strategic non representative sampling. 44 participants from PP were involved in the success of the interview and ranges from 20 to 84 years old, generally lived 1km to 40kms away from Bandar Melaka. Even so, the existence of the padang is no longer accustomed to the residents
despite researchers allegations regarding the development consent and relation to Padang Pahlawan.

ii) Method of Interview

Participants were interviewed in the town centre and in front of their working spaces. Before commencing the interview, the researchers introduced themselves and enlighten the participants about their research objectives. Screening questions were used to ensure that the participants have lived and experienced both padang for more than six months, as this has been suggested as the minimum time required for attachment or non-attachment to occur (Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Ryan, 2009). Types of engagements (recreation, relax, waiting for kids, watching football match etc) differed as well as their level of familiarity (works nearby, star nearby, daily visitors etc.). In this investigation, past experience and familiarity were considered of significance in the sampling process as these factors were expected to be associated with differing meanings and level of attachment to padang.

6. Results and Discussions

The findings from this study show that there are three levels of meanings constructed by residents on padang as a public space (Figure 4). They are denotative, connotative and abstract meanings. Each of the meaning explicated has distinct characteristic that make it salient in comparison to the others. This finding suggests that sense of place is not easily analysed in formal and conceptual terms. Viewing the findings in light of the connection between meaning and place attachment, this study subsequently shows that different types of attachment were conceptualised in different level of meanings. The study has revealed four dimensions identified as distinctiveness, diversity, and valuation and symbolic as significant in mapping meaning of place. These meanings encompassed of four repeatedly mentioned constituents namely the physical properties, culture, history, activities as well as communal and personal interactions. The findings suggest that there are three meanings of attachment attached to padang from the residents experiences.
a. Denotative Meaning vs Cognitive Attachment

This level of meaning includes cognitive and descriptive process in which it is the substantive and content aspect of place. The cognitive function of a place influences what people see, think and feel in varying encounters with the physical environment of the *padang*. In the study, the meaning derive from resident responses on distinctiveness of physical properties and social interactions that occur within a particular setting. At this level, people often emphasize the aesthetical values, profound historical events and profound cultural values and representation in constructing meaning for *padang*. An understanding of the function and roles of *padang* throughout history is uniformly acknowledged and well accepted by residents suggesting strong sense of place familiarity. This implies for the emergence of place attachment subsequent to this denotation on the place meaning.

Interestingly, the study discovered that the parameters to measure place attachment are similar with denotative meaning as it encompasses both dimensions: distinctiveness and diversity of physical properties and social attributes of a place. In this case, people localized ways of knowing about the properties and attributes through intimate interaction and long term association with place. Emotional bond is formed between people and both dimensions through the cognitive act of distinguishing places with distinctive properties and diverse attributes. Therefore, the cognitive process emphasizes the manner in which people personally construct
their notions of *padang* as a place. It means that collective knowledge on character and functional properties of *padang* form place familiarity. The strength of the attachment is derived from functional goal for human experience and activity in order to fulfill people’s basic need which implies that place dependence as another dimension appeared in this process.

b. **Connotative Meaning vs Affective Attachment**

This level of meaning refers to the recognition function, serving as a comparative tool for evaluating a place. This function identifies past experiences as a crucial component in evaluating the place. The evaluation includes people’s expectations, feelings and preferences toward the place. Preference for evaluation in term of the significance, preeminent, delightfulfulness, belonging and satisfaction being in a place are salient in this process. The residents demonstrated their enjoyment and appreciation to the *padang* afforded by the amount of its qualities and attributes. In other word, the evaluation involved the process of weighting each property which is of considerable importance in establishing a more consequential meaning. For example, the residents with long term engagement, perceived buildings, trees, sea and social activities at *padang* as far more than just an element. Instead, they distinguished these elements as beautiful, useful, comfortable and enjoyable or in short they are very meaningful properties. It was clear that evaluation of place meaning stemmed from shared environmental, cultural, social and economic values. This process clearly shows how the meaning of *padang* that is rooted in diversity and distinction has been dissolved into another level of dimensional meaning, that is evaluation.

Association between meaning and place attachment were intertwined between the connection between people and *padang* that consists of a collection of memories, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about the *padang*. This process also shows that meaning that is infused in *padang* through cultural, social and economic activities decreases the compatibility of one place to another. Simultaneously, these distinct activities in portraying the image of a place determined the level of place attachment in which the sense attachment is found to be supported by feeling of stability and consistency across time and setting of place. From the findings the study provided accounts of emotional attachment that provided support for the inclusion of interpersonal relationship with *padang* in the formation of place identity and belongness. This means that a drastic change of place may hinder an individual security, confidence and satisfaction; as a result the people often re-evaluate the place and try to form a new attachment.

c. **Abstract Meaning vs Symbolic Bond Attachment**

This level of meaning focuses on the deeper level of understanding of a place which goes beyond recognition and evaluation of a place. Similar with previous process, at this stage the process
involve with the identification and assessment of how well a place influences and matches a person’s identity and how bad the change of the place affected the person’s and the community’s sense of rootedness on a place. Here, the study reveals how a highly valued place is transformed into analogical and symbolical meaning when the meaning allied to culture, history and personal experiences. For example, *padang* that was valued as an important public place in city is revaluated as ‘a soul of the country’ once it is been associated with profound local culture, historical events and personal experiences. Furthermore the study found to identify the symbolic meaning and place attachment, that it was best understood when discontinuity between people’s role and the setting appear. The loss and change of place evokes the strong desire and feelings of a place. The study found that abstract that is symbolic meaning is centered on social, historical and cultural values of a place. Furthermore, people’s dramas or memories are another metaphor for understanding meaning of place, in which *padang* become a stage in which these dramas occur. The environmentally based connections are viewed as the environmental past of the people, where the past consist of the properties of *padang* that have supplied biological, psychological, social and cultural needs of the people.

In term of the association of this meaning with place attachment, it is evident that symbolic attachment is formed through in-depth understanding, strong sense of ownership or continual engagement to places. Place attachment was developed through history and family lineage that is encapsulated in social and cultural practices. This implies the significance of narrative bonds in highlighting the power of story in linking people to the physical world. It also highlights that place attachment centre on a cultural activities and profound historical events that is strongly associated to people with high self-esteem and self-efficacy at the same time suggesting high patriotism level. For instance, it is found from the study that people with strong link and valuable memories with *padang* identify it as a reflection of his own and place’s identity. Whilst people with high patriotism level immediately associate the *padang* to the most important event of the country by being the first place to announce the national independence and as a place where numbers of historical events occurred suggesting strong sense of rootedness toward a place. These imply that *padang* at this stage have become a place where people constructed reminders of their past, past events and tragedy of placesness. Here it seems people recognized and understood their origins and culture better than the first two stages; denotative and connotative. Hence the study categorized this theoretical framework/concept in two types of dimensions subsumed from place attachment theory as place identity and place rootedness.

### d. Transformation of Place Meaning

From the study, it is also evident that the meaning of a place is changed due to three main attributes identified as change of physical character, discontinuity of experiences and insecurity. The study of Padang Pahlawan demonstrate that the meaning of *padang* is relative in which the more rapid and intensive the surrounding development, the more meaningless it becomes. A
distinct difference of place meaning is found after Padang Pahlawan’s total lost. The study has shown that real meaning of Padang Pahlawan is disappearing or weakening. The changing character of the physical properties as well as its surrounding area is apparently related to continuity both in the residents’ experience of change and in the very nature of physical changes that serve to weaken a sense of association and attachment to it. It also appears that the soul of the place has symbolically died as it has been transformed into full of new activities and steely structure. The commercial development taken place nevertheless had been stripped of its original meanings. As a result, now the padang and the surrounding historical structures have become little more than object or a site of casual, commercial and uncommitted visits among the youngsters and tourists rather that its residents.

e. Change that Create Place Disruption

The study demonstrates on how discontinuity of physical character, discontinuity of experiences and the feeling of insecure and unsafe had badly affected resident’s positive perceptions toward padang and its surrounding area. The study in Padang Pahlawan reveals that after undergone partial changes, positive feelings had gradually decreased amongst the less affected residents. Furthermore, residents who were badly affected due to the abrupt disruption of the physical properties and social attributes of the padang, were even found to be traumatised by the loss. It is evident from the findings that the most significant factors which had led to the disruption and detachment are due to a change in its physical character, a decline in social interaction, deterioration of historical and cultural representation, loss of normal and economic activities. Despite these discontinuities that afforded sadness, stressful feelings and life fragmentation, most residents still remained addicted to the former padang that used to offer countless experiences and activities. These circumstances indeed have resulted to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in social fabric, affecting a group of people who have achieved some degree of cohesion.

The following figure (4) shows the correlation of the resident emotions while going through an idiosyncratic alteration of their public place in their daily lives. The outcomes can be classified as an extension of the field in research known as “place disruption” in which the graph is designed according to findings discovered by Inalhan and Finch (2004) which based on reactions of employees regarding the relocation of their project offices. This process is similar despite adapting it to a much larger scenario that involves a huge number of people that varies in age, occupation and living statuses. It is found that there are three main stages identified in the emotional process that the residents have gone through in dealing with the changes and demolition of their place. The process gone through by the residents of Padang Pahlawan can be chronologically observed starting from pre-demolition, followed by demolition itself and ending with post-demolition.
Figure 4: The correlation of the resident emotions while going through changes of their public place in their daily lives.

7. Conclusion

People place a proliferation of meanings to urban public space such as padang. The meaning are derived from long and multiplicity of experiences; social, cultural and historical engagements. The engagement affords people to recognize the padang as a place that they are attached and depended on. It is cultural landscape places that are rich in history, daily routine, social interaction and transaction of the local people. More pragmatically, the study shows that different prioritisations depicted between residents with preserved public space and residents who had lost their public place. The differences indeed have highlighted how the preservation and demolition of public place affected people, physically and psychologically. Being located in the middle of the city, padang is under tremendous pressure from development and change of it use. The losses of social, cultural and economic activities and historic remnants and path have contributed to a sense of placelessness and the change and disruption of its physical character have resulted to a placeless geography. With insights drawn from these findings it is anticipated that preservation of place of this kind is considered as a crucial prerequisite to a better quality of life and assure the sustenance of place character besides conforming to the quality of a good city form.
References


