

than these components and dialectics, yet serves to link and embrace them. This is the attribute of identity that has been variously termed 'spirit of place', 'sense of place' or 'genius of place' (*genius loci*)—all terms which refer to character or personality. Obviously the spirit of a place involves topography and appearance, economic functions and social activities, and particular significance deriving from past events and present situations—but it differs from the simple summation of these. Spirit of place can persist in spite of profound changes in the basic components of identity. Rene Dubos (1972, p.7) writes: "Distinctiveness persists despite change. Italy and Switzerland, Paris and London have retained their respective identities through many social, cultural and technological revolutions." The spirit of place that is retained through changes is subtle and nebulous, and not easily analysed in formal and conceptual terms. Yet at the same time it is naively obvious in our experience of places for it constitutes the very individuality and uniqueness of places. D. H. Lawrence (1964, p.6) wrote:

"Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars; call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality."

Types of identities of places

The identity of a place is comprised of three interrelated components, each irreducible to the other—physical features or appearance, observable activities and functions, and meanings or symbols. There is an infinite range of content within each of these and numberless ways in which they can combine. Hence there is no discernible limit to the diversity of identities of places, and every identifiable place has unique content and patterns of relationship that are expressed and endure in the spirit of that place.

But it is not feasible to argue that uniqueness and the individuality of identity are the only important facts in our experiences of places. While each place is unique and has a persistent sameness within itself, at the same time it shares various characteristics with other places. In terms of our experiences this sharing does display certain consistencies that make it possible to distinguish a number of types of identities of places.

1. From the individual perspective or sociality in communion of existential insideness places are

lived and dynamic, full with meanings for us that are known and experienced without reflection.

2. For empathetic insiders, knowing places through sociality in community, places are records and expressions of the cultural values and experiences of those who create and live in them.
3. From the standpoint of behavioural insideness place is ambient environment, possessing qualities of landscape or townscape that constitute a primary basis for public or consensus knowledge of that place.
4. In terms of incidental outsidersness it is usually selected functions of a place that are important and the identity of that place is little more than that of a background for those functions.
5. The attitude of the objective outsider effectively reduces places either to the single dimension of location or to a space of located objects and activities.
6. The mass identity of place is a consensus identity that is remote from direct experience for it is provided more or less ready-made by the mass media. It is a superficial identity, for it can be changed and manipulated like some trivial disguise so long as it maintains some minimum level of credibility. It is also pervasive, for it enters into and undermines individual experiences and the symbolic properties of the identities of places.
7. For existential outsiders the identity of places represents a lost and now unattainable involvement. Places are all and always incidental, for existence itself is incidental.

With the exception of existential outsidersness which replaces all the others, these various types of identity are not discrete, nor mutually exclusive, nor unchanging. Thus we may know our home town as dynamic and full of meaning, yet be quite capable of also viewing it as professional planners or geographers from the perspective of objective outsidersness, and also participate in its mass identity. For each setting and for each person there are a multiplicity of place identities reflecting different experiences and attitudes; these are moulded out of the common elements of appearance and activities and the borrowed images of the media through the changing interactions of direct observation with preconceptions.

The identity of place is not a simple tag that can be summarised and presented in a brief factual description. Nor can it be argued that there is a real or true identity of a place that relates to existential insideness. Indeed an outsider can in some senses see more of a place than an insider—just as an observer