

GEOGRAPHY

Reading Around The Subject



CHANGING PLACES

“In a globalising world, place meanings and character are mostly shaped and changed by external forces.”

Do you agree with this statement?

You might think geographers are only interested in volcanoes or rivers, but for some time geography research has focused on place and space; cultural geographers are interested in people's engagement with places, their experience of them and the qualities they ascribe to them, all of which are of fundamental importance in their lives.

By engaging in this project you will acknowledge this importance and engage with how places are known and experienced, how their character is appreciated, the factors and processes which impact upon places and how they change and develop over time. Through developing this knowledge, you will gain understanding of the way in which your own life and those of others are affected by continuity and change in the nature of places which are of fundamental importance in their lives.



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You need to be aware of key definitions before we go any further:

- Place:** Place has been defined as location + meaning. In this equation, location refers to a position within abstract space, such as a grid reference. Meaning, as the term is used here, has two components, and it is essential to recognise both. First, places can be meaningful to individuals, in ways that are personal or subjective. These meanings may be expressed in terms of the perceptions of place, for example, or of particular associations or attributes of place such as danger or beauty. Second, places can be meaningful at a social or cultural level, such that meanings are shared, for example when some but not all members of a community or society share an understanding of a place as beautiful or significant in some way.
- Demography:** the structure of an area’s population, in relation to many factors including: age, ethnicity, income, etc...
- Endogenous:** the local, internal characteristics which create a place's identity
- Exogenous:** external influences on a place’s identity. They are caused by a place’s relationship with other places.
- Sense of place:** refers to the emotional, experiential and affective traces that tie humans into particular environments.
- Place meaning/s:** what a place means to an individual or group, e.g. someone’s childhood home being special to them as they’re attached to it emotionally having grown up there.
- Place character/identity:** as people have unique characters/identities, so too do places. This is what the area is like and what it is known for: vibrant, multicultural, dangerous, etc...
- Place attachment:** connection to a place due to many reasons, including religion, family, etc...
- Rebranding:** is about improving the image of a place to attract inward investment, tourists and shoppers.
- Re-imaging:** using a variety of media and initiatives to improve the image of a location and make it more attractive to outsiders.
- Regeneration:** the practice of reversing the decline in urban areas by both improving the physical structure, and, more importantly, the economy of areas.

This is personal...

Before you begin, you must first realise how this topic affects YOU and those around you:

- 1) **Read** the extract on the following page and **write a diary entry** similar to this, but detailing your (virtual) walk down your local high street-use Google Maps' StreetView feature. This will help you realise (a) how unique your local area is and (b) how its identity is shaped by external forces such as migrants or international businesses.
- 2) Note down 3 **significant** changes you notice happening on your street or local high street using StreetView's back in time feature:



“Place is security and space is freedom: we are attached to the one and are longing for the other”

Yi-Fu Tuan (2001).

An extract from Doreen Massey's 1994 *A Global Sense of Place*:

Take, for instance, a walk down Kilburn High Road, my local shopping centre. It is a pretty ordinary place, north-west of the centre of London. Under the railway bridge the newspaper stand sells papers from every county of what my neighbours, many of whom come from there, still often call the Irish Free State. The postboxes down the High Road, and many an empty space on a wall, are adorned with the letters IRA. Other available spaces are plastered this week with posters for a special meeting in remembrance: Ten Years after the Hunger Strike. At the local theatre Eamon Morrissey has a one-man show; the National Club has the Wolfe Tones on, and at the Black Lion there's Finnegans Wake. In two shops I notice this week's lottery ticket winners: in one the name is Teresa Gleeson, in the other, Chouman Hassan. Thread your way through the often almost stationary traffic diagonally across the road from the newsstand and there's a shop which as long as I can remember has displayed saris in the window. Four life-sized models of Indian women, and reams of cloth. On the door a notice announces a forthcoming concert at Wembley Arena: Anand Miland presents Rekha, live, with Aamir Khan, Salman Khan, Jahi Chawla and Raveena Tandon. On another ad, for the end of the month, is written, 'All Hindus are cordially invited'. In another newsagents I chat with the man who keeps it, a Muslim unutterably depressed by events in the Gulf, silently chafing at having to sell the Sun. Overhead there is always at least one aeroplane - we seem to have on a flight-path to Heathrow and by the time they're over Kilburn you can see them clearly enough to tell the airline and wonder as you struggle with your shopping where they're coming from. Below, the reason the traffic is snarled up (another odd effect of timespace compression!) is in part because this is one of the main entrances to and escape routes from London, the road to Staples Corner and the beginning of the M1 to 'the North'. This is just the beginnings of a sketch from immediate impressions but a proper analysis could be done of the links between Kilburn and the world. And so it could for almost any place. Kilburn is a place for which I have a great affection; I have lived there many years. It certainly has 'a character of its own'.

My diary entry



Changes in my area!

Change in my area (i.e. new shop/s, buildings being renovated, new type of restaurants/pubs, etc...)	How I think it has changed my area's character/identity:
1)	
2)	
3)	

Notes area

Sometimes, in a process known as rebranding or re-imaging, external agencies will make attempts to influence or create specific place-meanings and thereby shape the actions and behaviours of individuals, groups, businesses and institutions.

This means they are actively trying to change the meaning associated with an area - its reputation and image. This is done to “shape the actions and behaviours” of people and business, meaning - for example - more people will visit the area and more businesses will invest!

Read the extracts on the next page and fill out the table below:

What the area was known for pre-changes:

What the aim of the changes was:

What was done to change the area and why:

The impact of the changes on the area’s reputation, meaning and character:



Extracts from 'On the Hard Work of Domesticating a Public Space' by Koch and Latham (2013):

- ❖ **The opening of the article:** The piano had been sitting in front of the cafe´ for not quite a week. An old upright, the sort you might find in a parlour or drawing room, it had been painted bright blue to match the newly decorated storefront. Beside it, four local residents lounged at the Parisian-style tables spread across a patch of artificial grass. As they sipped their coffee, the group seemed transfixed by the bustle of the traders setting up their stalls at the new market on the plaza. “Is it okay if we have a go on this?”, the young couple asked, gesturing towards the piano. “See the sign?”, one of the group members replied with a smile, “It says ‘Play Me. I’m Yours!’”. The young man sat down on the bench to play. “What you wanna sing?” he asked his friend. After a brief discussion, the duo launched into a rendition of Stevie Wonder’s Isn’t She Lovely. As the song unfolded, they gained in swagger and volume. Passers-by stopped to listen, a few people came out of the cafe´ and several traders left their stalls to get a better view of the performance. As they finished, the small crowd applauded and whooped. Despite pleas for an encore, the couple bowed graciously and left to browse the market.
- ❖ The five-way intersection, known as the Prince of Wales Junction, situated along a stretch of Harrow Road in central-west London was known for generating very different sorts of atmospheres. Over the previous decade it had become a regular site of street drinking, aggressive begging, prostitution and drug dealing. Lacking amenities beyond a set of public toilets, for most residents the space was somewhere to avoid or pass through quickly even though it was located at a central point in the neighbourhood.
- ❖ At night... it offered an attractive spot for some people to gather and drink. Before long, the new stretch of pavement also proved to be well-suited for drug dealing and for prostitutes to solicit clients,
- ❖ Many public spaces is that they are lacking in certain domestic qualities. That is, they fail to provide a sense of trust, comfort or amenity that might invite multiple publics to inhabit them.
- ❖ The transformations that led to the establishment of a market and other community activities on the site were not accidental. Rather, they were part of a deliberate strategy to re-imagine and reconfigure the Junction as a public space. The aim was to provide a set of interventions that might make it more habitable and attractive for local residents, and which might ultimately help to reinvigorate commercial activity along this troubled retail stretch.
- ❖ The newly designed Junction that emerged from this process roughly quadrupled the paved area available for pedestrians. It featured new granite paving stones, permanent benches, electricity and water points, bicycle racks, ground lighting and two rows of newly planted trees (see Figure 1). The centre-piece of the project was a market licensed to operate three days a week and during special events.
- ❖ The partnership’s redesign attempted to expand the range of affordances for public activity by imagining it as a plaza. This new conceptualisation provided a checklist of necessary features: plazas need to have open space, enough to allow a crowd of people to congregate and mingle; they need an appropriate surface and ideally landscaping and seating; they need to be relatively free of traffic; they need to provide facilities like power and water for events and festivals; and they need lighting to be useable after nightfall.
- ❖ Of all these furnishings, the movable furniture offered a consistent and easily observable set of engagements. Each day during summer, six plastic tables and thirty matching chairs were set out by the market’s manager. There was no branding or labelling to indicate propriety or expectation of purchase. Rather, they were made available for people to use, rearrange and cluster as they pleased. These inexpensive items were recognised as practical and they were used in a variety of perhaps unforeseen ways. People who purchased food at the market used them, but so too did elderly residents who needed a rest, men who scanned the day’s horse races before heading into the booking agent, people from the nearby care home who brought packed lunches out when the weather was sunny and occasionally people taking quick naps used them too.

Notes area

As you've seen already, the Prince of Wales junction was utterly transformed, from a site of criminal activity and fear, to a vibrant public space.

Use these resources to add more to your notes on how its meanings, perceptions and character was changed by an external force:

- <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/public-space/>

Meanings of PoW junction pre-changes	Meanings of PoW junction pre-changes

→

→

The Prince of Wales Junction is being re-developed in early 2008 as a community square.

What would you like to see here?

Westminster Council has organised a series of displays and meetings in November, so that local residents can discuss with them which of the proposed schemes should be built.

Please come along to one of these important events and help make sure this neighbourhood gets the space it deserves.

For further details of any of these events contact Andrew Lockhart on 020 8968 5543 or at andrew.lockhart@pcha.org.uk. Comment on the provisional designs at harrowroadblog.com



Task : Geography matters!

For some places around the world, it is their physical geography (topography, landforms, etc...) which shape its character, identity and meanings. These are endogenous factors!

Use the following links and your own research to look into how the physical geography of TWO of these areas has contributed to their character and identity:

Place	Links
Jardines del Pedregal, Mexico City	https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/depave-paradise/transcript/ ; https://en.mxcity.mx/2016/03/natural-places-to-visit-in-mexico-city/ ; https://www.elledecor.com/it/best-of/a28707855/casa-pedregal-luis-barragan-mexico-city/ ; https://www.collater.al/en/casa-pedregal-luis-barragan-architecture/ ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jardines_del_Pedregal ; https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/depave-paradise/
Göreme, Turkey	https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/world-heritage/cappadocia/ ; https://www.britannica.com/place/Cappadocia ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6reme ; https://theculturetrip.com/europe/turkey/articles/the-story-behind-cappadocias-famous-fairy-chimneys/ ; https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/fairy-chimneys-turkey-180956654/ ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_G%C3%B6reme ; https://www.goreme.com/forgotten-cave-churches.php
Mont-Saint-Michel, France	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mont-Saint-Michel ; https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/80/ ; https://theculturetrip.com/europe/france/articles/8-things-to-know-before-you-visit-the-mont-saint-michel/ ; https://uk.france.fr/en/normandy/article/mont-saint-michel-0 ; https://www.britannica.com/place/Mont-Saint-Michel ; https://kids.kiddle.co/Mont_Saint-Michel#Geography ; https://fiveminutehistory.com/10-fascinating-facts-about-mont-saint-michel-the-medieval-city-on-a-rock/
CHALLENGE	Constantine, Algeria; Montserrat, Spain; Venice, Italy; Kandovan, Iran; Shilong, Meghalaya (India).



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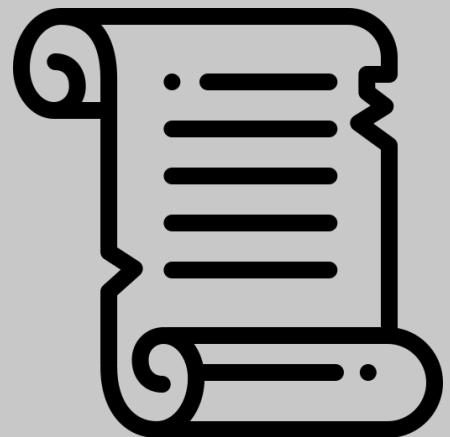
Do you agree with this statement?

Over to you

There are some places around the world whose history defines their character and meanings - external forces have had a much less significant impact on them.

Past and present connections/processes of development can be very important. You decide the article/s, YouTube video/s, website/s and explore how these places' history defines them:

- Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
- Luxor, Egypt.
- Granada, Spain.
- Dubrovnik Old Town, Dubrovnik (Croatia).
- Cholula, Mexico.
- Sultanahmet (Old City), Istanbul (Turkey).
- Quito, Ecuador.
- Cuttack, India.
- Carcassonne, France.
- Timbuktu, Mali.
- Gothic Quarter, Barcelona.



Task : The Wall of Truth

On 14 June 2017, a fire broke out in the 24-storey Grenfell Tower block of flats in North Kensington, West London - it caused 72 deaths.

Since then, there have been several attempts by the community to come together to deal with grief and loss. The event may have taken many members of the community away, but it has brought the rest much closer to one another. For example, on the 14th of every month, the community gather for a silent walk in remembrance.

Look into the following spaces and explore how they are great examples of a community coming together to create new meanings for a place nearly torn apart by a great tragedy:

- The Wall of Truth (below):
<https://www.facebook.com/thebuskingproject/videos/vb.129125297129185/1869730813068616/?type=2&theatre>; https://twitter.com/maxilla_space?lang=en;
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/134566913871821/about/>;
- Bay 20 Community Centre: <https://www.westway.org/apply-now/our-spaces/bay20/>;
<https://www.bay20.org/>;
- Bay 56 ('City' community space): <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/dec/13/this-is-not-a-squat-how-the-grenfell-community-is-taking-control-of-its-destiny#maincontent>
- The Curve: <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/grenfell-response-and-recovery/curve/about-curve>;
<https://www.mylondon.news/news/west-london-news/its-place-been-restored-again-16236411>; <https://tsunami-axis.com/ta-news/the-grenfell-curve-community-centre>



"In a globalising world, place meanings and character are mostly shaped and changed by external forces."

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Poster time!

You are now going to create a poster to bring together your understanding of place -

- First you must choose a place - it needs to be relatively small, so an area in a city as opposed to a whole city - or a small town or village. I've put some ideas on the next page.
- Then you need to use internet research to complete both sides of this A3 poster, showing off all you have learned about place in relation to a new case study which is unique to you!
- Once this poster has been completed, you need to write me one paragraph (max. 500 words) answering the question below, a question you should have enough evidence of having completed all the previous tasks!

HINTS:

What makes it unique?	<i>What makes the area special and different from others?</i>
Profile	<i>Include population, location, etc...</i>
Brief history	<i>Start roughly 70 years ago and make a timeline of major events.</i>
Sketch map	<i>Find a map of the area and make a quick sketch of it!</i>

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Poster time!

Some ideas of places you could look into for your poster (for ones in italic, you will have to find areas within it, as you can't do a whole city):

- Brick Lane, London.
- *Dubai, UAE.*
- Haworth, England.
- Canary Wharf, London.
- *Honolulu, Hawaii.*
- Stratford, London.
- City of the Dead, Egypt.
- *Medellin, Colombia.*
- *Belfast, Northern Ireland.*
- OR it would be great to see some of you doing your own local areas!

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