The Global and the Local Identity in the City

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Abstract
The notion of urban identity has been the subject of many researches. In the era of globalization, the impact of urban change and the challenges which faces the local urban identity of the city increases. Some cities are experiencing a serious struggle with the issue of identity in various ways while they are exerting a great effort in its architectural character to be recognized among world cities. These cities are exposed to enormous forces that tend to assimilate its urban character to serve the interests of the new world order. The difficulty of deciding which trend of urban development suitable for the city creates struggles of keeping their Local Urban Identity which changes and takes different forms as a result of such struggles.
The goal of this paper is to highlight different trends of global urban development and their impact on the Local Urban Identity of the city.
The paper analyzes different approaches for urban development in cities for significant theorists and organizations regarding the issues of the impact of globalization on culture and local identity. Some Conceptions analyzes globalization and its associated cultural consequences and others introduces main approaches that deal with the issue of urban identity in support of urban development.
The analysis of such conceptions and approaches will highlight the conflict of Global versus Local Identity as well as the importance of following a planned process of deciding which trend of urban development to be approached by the city in order to maintain its local urban identity.

Keywords: Urban Identity, Urban Development, Dramatic Urban Events, Globalization and Identity

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Introduction

Urban Identity has been one of the key issues for the contemporary urban development. The word 'Urban Identity' refers primarily to the identity of people living in the city environment as well as the identity of the urban areas itself. The two are interconnected; the identity of city bears on the identity of those living in it and vice versa. The urban environment reflects human needs and values.

The Urban identity of a place is the product of the economic and cultural interactions of a society as determined by its natural response to its environment. It is frequently related to geographical location and a specific sense of place, a place which maybe characterized by a distinctive climate, and particular geographical, cultural, architectural, social and other characteristics.

Urban identity is an important issue in contemporary urban planning due to recent weakening of traditional architecture in cities. The loss of urban identity has negative impact on the sociocultural aspects in the lifestyle of people. On the other hand recognizing the value of urban identity in public realm, acts as a vital aspect in the quality of life experienced by communities.

The goal of this paper is to highlight different trends of urban development and their impact on the Local Urban Identity of the city. It analyzes different approaches for urban development in cities for significant theorists and organizations regarding the issues of the impact of globalization on culture and local identity. Some Conceptions analyzes globalization and its associated cultural consequences and others introduces main approaches that deal with the issue of urban identity. Four different approaches and conceptions for theorists and architects will be studied in this issue: Jan Nederveen Pieterse Conception, Robert J. Holton conception and the European URBACT approach.

Jan Nederveen Pieterse Conception

Jan Nederveen Pieterse is a Professor of Global Studies and Sociology in the Global & International Studies Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara . He focuses on cultural studies which are known in his book as Hybridity Theory. The concept of hybridity serves as a tool for interpreting the cultural dimensions of globalization. Pieterse introduces a new perspective in the Global and Cultural fields which is Global Multiculture. In his perspective, globalization in cultural terms tends towards a global Mélange or mixture. He argues that globalization as hybridization opposes views which see the process as homogenizing, modernizing, and westernizing and that it broadens the empirical history of the concept. Pieterse introduces three paradigms of Globalization and Culture as follows: Cultural Differentialism, Cultural Convergence and finally Cultural Hybridization.

Cultural Differentialism in which the world is envisioned as a mosaic of largely separate cultures where old and new cultures are beside each other. Cultural Convergence where globalization leads to increasing sameness throughout the world (sameness in culture).Cultural Hybridization is the mixing of Cultures as a result of globalization and integration of global and local to produce new and distinctive hybrid forms that indicate mixing rather than homogenization.

Pieterse conception focuses on the impact of globalization in general on local culture. In his opinion, this effect only takes three forms. This also can be applied on the Global identity and local identity in architecture. Accordingly it could be argued that the impact of global identity on the local identity takes three forms. One is that historical and traditional buildings lies side by side in different patches. The second one is the global identity dominates and erases local identity. The third form is that the impact of globalization produces a hybrid form of identity, a mixture or fusion from the old and new.

Robert J. Holton Conception

Robert J. Holton is at present Emeritus Professor of Sociology Chair at Trinity College, Dublin where he earlier held the Chair of Sociology. He is one of the best historical sociologists and wrote many publications in field of globalization. For him, globalization has been associated with a range of cultural consequences. Culture consequence of globalization is diverse and complex. He categorizes culture into three categories: Homogenization, Polarization and Hybridization.

Homogenization is the Global Culture is becoming standardized around a western or American pattern. Polarization is the presence of Cultural alternatives and resistance to western patterns. It can influence economic organization and technology, but culture is hard to standardize in societies. Hybridization explains that cultures borrow and incorporate elements from each other creating hybrid forms.

Holton's conception states that the impact of Global culture is centralized around the idea of western pattern. The influence of western pattern is easily absorbed than any other local pattern. In the case of urban identity, following Holton's concept, Global identity representing the American or western modern architecture dominates the city in one hand. On the other hand, there are other cities where the local identity resists any influence from global forces or global identity. However, in most cities there is a mixed or hybrid form of urban identity in which global and local identity are in harmony.

URBACT Approach

URBACT is a European exchange and learning program promoting sustainable urban development. It enables CITIES to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. URBACT program is jointly financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund) and the Member States. They have almost 500 cities. This approach is very important to study because it is a direct application on how cities choose their trend of urban development keeping the issue of Urban Identity into consideration.

In URBACT, there are three main approaches that deal with the issue of urban identity in support of urban development and regeneration. The goal of these approaches is to develop a more attractive identity in order to attract people from the outside to the cities where the development take place. The three approaches are cultural heritage, city model change and repair and reinvent.

In Cultural heritage approach, old buildings are used to attract people and use it in branding the city. In the city model change approach, the developments of the city change its identity into a brand new identity to attract people and global flows. Finally the repair and reinvent approach, uses empty plots and destroyed plots to repair them and reinvent them towards urban regeneration.

By analyzing these approaches in urban identity; the first approach depends revitalizing the local and traditional architecture in old city centers and historical areas in attracting people to the city. The second approach depends on introducing new global identity to the city and wiping the local and traditional identity and in that way the flow of people and economy will increase. The last approach depends on using empty and destroyed areas in the city in introducing the new global identity in the city, so the city will look like a patch work mixed between global and local identity.

Urban Development approaches and Urban Identity

The above conceptions and approaches are similar in many ways and explains the different trends of interaction between global identity and local identity in urban development. The impact of Global flows on Local Urban Identity can either be that the new architecture is together beside the traditional architecture or the new architecture is prevailing all over the city or finally a new architecture that is characterized by taking the traditional architecture into consideration and in the same time absorbing the new global flows to produce a hybrid mix of global and local architecture.

The importance of these approaches is that they provide a better understanding of the nature of urban identity of cities. They help in analyzing the different forms of change in Urban Identity of the city and acts as an indicator and guide in the decision making process during the urban development of cities. The different approaches of urban development influence both the Urban Identity of the city and its masterplan as well. The different approaches in the urban development and master plan of the city based on the conceptions in this paper can be summarized into three methods: the cultural approach, the new model approach and the replacement approach.

The cultural approach usually focuses on maintaining and polishing the traditional and historical buildings which are usually in the city center. Through such buildings and historical places, the flow of people, product and money starts in the city and hence the city starts to be recognized as a World city. The new model approach focuses on erasing the old identity of the city and creating a brand new identity for the city which is affected by the global architecture. In this way, the city will be in the same level of other famous world city and have a brand new image. The replacement approach usually takes place in dense old cities that do not have enough spaces for mega developments, so they use the empty and destroyed plots and reinvent them towards a new global image for the city. Each approach has a unique influence on the city map than the other approaches. The below diagrams will show the form of each approach on the city map.

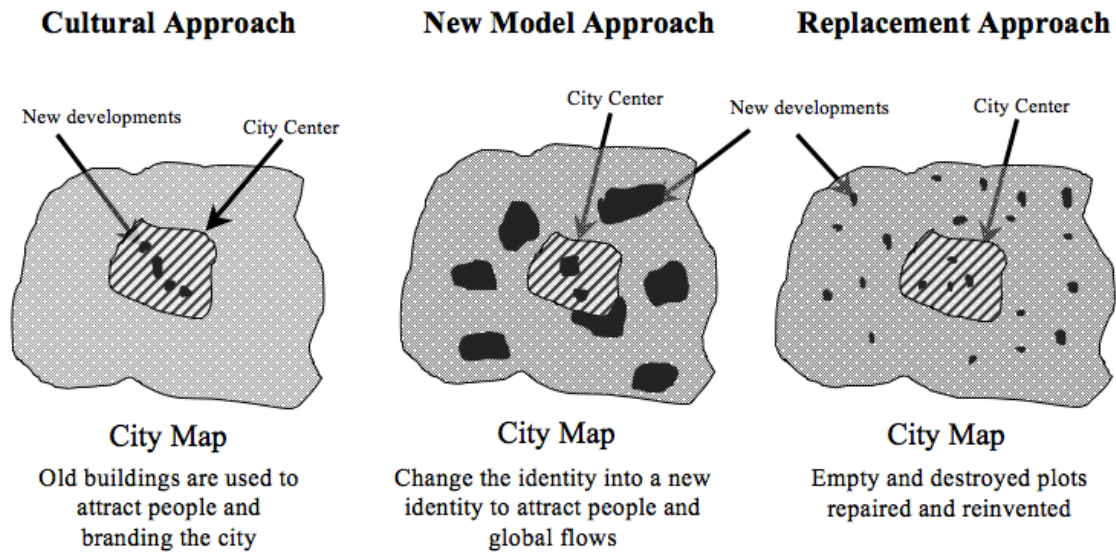| Cultural Approach | New Model Approach | Replacement Approach |

Figure (1): Diagram showing different approaches of urban development that affects the urban identity of the city

In the Cultural approach, old buildings are used to attract people and use it in branding the city. Usually the development takes place in the center of the city where the historical places are located. This approach focuses on the cultural and historical place in the city, so the map of the city looks like spots of new developments in the historical locations usually in the center of the city. Renewed historical places have many cultural events which attract the community as well as tourists and visitor. They usually interact and get involved with such places. The new developments are usually in harmony with the traditional one regarding the scale, skyline, materials and pattern. It also acts as source of knowledge and education as most of such places are involved in cultural events like music, theater and workshops.

The new Model approach influences the whole map of the city so that big lots of new developments are spread all over the city maps. Most of the developments of this approach influence many vital places of the city with huge areas. Usually the new developments exist in huge areas all around the city to gradually erasing the old identity of the city and introducing new imposed identity. In this way, the city will be in the same level of other famous world city and have a brand new image. The replacement approach looks like scattered plots around the city mostly in the peripheral parts of the city. The developments of this approach focus on small demolished spots far from the center of the city because the center is much occupied. Usually this approach takes place in dense cities where there are no empty plots for new developments. Instead the new developments are small and scattered.

The replacement approach looks like scattered plots around the city mostly in the peripheral parts of the city. The developments of this approach focus on small demolished spots far from the center of the city because the center is much occupied. Usually this approach takes place in dense cities where there are no empty plots for new developments. Instead the new developments are small and scattered. The resulting urban pattern of the city has a mosaic form with newly developed places beside other old undeveloped places. This approach respects the traditional identity in

its architectural style. The new developments are usually in harmony with the traditional one regarding the scale, skyline, materials and pattern. This kind of development produces a new product mixing the global with the local and trying to influence the core and real identity of the city. It absorbs and recognize the new and in the same time does not ignore the old.

Conclusion

Urban identity is a very broad concept. It relates to tangible and intangible heritage: buildings, history, memories. Identity helps citizens become attached to their environment and confirms that it belongs to them, individually and collectively. This increases their willingness to advocate for a place. Identity can also help to improve the image of a city and supporting social transformation by positively influencing the place.

The perceived identity of a city by its people can also be used to identify and detect improvement measures towards the desired image and environment quality. For some cities it means that identity is an anchor, providing continuity for development, preserving rich traditions of communities, and making sure that changes brought about by time do not lose the essential qualities of the city itself. For the process of urban rehabilitation and development, it means to respect and even build on the positive local identity as it provides a sense of home, security and community for the civil society.

The different conceptions and approaches in the field of globalization, culture and identities help in explaining the different trends of interaction between global identity and local identity in urban development and in monitoring and tracing the forms of change of urban identity in a city. These forms of change in local urban identity of cities acts as a guideline for decision makers and city planners in deciding the right approach to embrace for the urban development of the city keeping in mind its local urban identity.

Conscious Architecture and urban development shapes contemporary cities while recognizing traditional architecture, maintaining the urban identity, ensuring sustainable developments and reflecting the social values; all of this using the new technologies in materials and structures.

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