



Imagined places of the past: the interplay of time and memory in the maintenance of place attachment

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Accepted: 14 February 2023
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Abstract

Place attachment describes the emotional connection that people hold with a physical space, and such bonds have been shown to be associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, as well as physical and mental well-being. Although a temporal element of place attachment is acknowledged, the exact nature of time's role in such relationships is yet to be fully understood. The current study addressed this using qualitative interviews with nine long-term residents of an urban centre in Northwest England. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was applied to explore the underlying mechanisms through which time asserts its influence on place attachment. Analysis developed three interrelated super-ordinate themes: what time brings, accumulated attachment, and time as a dialectic. As time passes, life events, cultural changes, and physical transformation to the environment affect individuals' interactions with place, and thus their relationship with it. Continued inhabitation leads to an accumulation of emotional salience. Ultimately, time interacts with human memory, offering individuals multiple perspectives through which to make sense of their present environment. Issues may then arise, as memory is heavily influenced by the passing of time. Consequently, present-day perceptions of the place's past are often viewed through a prism of nostalgia, with implications for the person-place bond.

Keywords Place attachment · Time · Memory · Place · Built environment · Community

Introduction

Place attachment describes a multidimensional emotional bond that individuals hold with a physical space (Halpenny, 2010; Low & Altman, 1992), thus influencing a person's perception of the environment (Junot et al., 2018). Also said to be pivotal for wellbeing (Horelli, 2006; Maricchiolo et al., 2021), stronger attachment bonds have been shown to be associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, well-being, social capital, and overall adjustment (Lewicka, 2011; Tartaglia, 2012). Conversely, disruption of existing attachments can impact both physical and psychological health (Abramson et al., 2008; Apfelbaum, 2000). Such disruption

may occur due to physical displacement, environmental change, or the perceived potential for these to occur (Billig, 2006; Lomas et al., 2021). It is therefore no surprise that place attachment is one of the most explored concepts in environmental psychology, as theorists seek to understand the underlying mechanisms that enable its development and maintenance.

One identified contributory factor is time, with duration of inhabitation considered a critical element of place attachment (Kaltenborn, 2009). At the root of this theory is the assertion that time is essential for deepening meaning and emotional ties to a place (Low & Altman, 1992). Smaldone (2006) notes, however, that the exact nature of the role of time in place attachment has not been fully examined. The influence of time on place attachment has been described as coming through the development of different place meanings, with the meaning of a place changing over time (Gustafson, 2001). In reviewing the various way in which place attachment is understood, Scannell and Gifford (2010) conceptualize it as holding three fundamental elements: person, process, and place. Here, individually and collectively developed meaning and psychological significance become

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applied to spatial elements of a location. This perspective acknowledges how for a more significant emotional attachment to develop, meaning must first be applied to a location, a process that requires time.

Lewicka (2011) considers the role of human memory in this process. From this position place attachment is seen to connect the present to the past, through the biographical experiences and memories associated with a particular space. Longer inhabitation means more experiences and, as a result, more memories. From a cognitive perspective, there are two forms of memory involved in this process: declarative and procedural (Goldstein, 2015). In exploring the generative mechanisms of place attachment, Seamon (2021) posits the concept of place-ballet, and how understandings of place are developed through the multiple ways in which people interact within a space. This process relates to procedural memory, with understanding developed through experiences over time. Declarative episodic memory serves autobiographical memories: the various life events experienced within a location (Goldstein, 2015). From the perspective of cognitive psychology, over time these will be utilized repeatedly, strengthening the emotional connection between person and place (Lewicka, 2011).

The formation and maintenance of place attachments is seen as an important factor in adjustment, wellbeing and health and an understanding of how this occurs is therefore essential. Although several theories attempt to explain the role of time in place attachment, there is still much to learn in terms of the actual underlying processes involved. This paper seeks to contribute to this gap in knowledge by drawing on findings from original primary research, which employed an in-depth qualitative methodology to generate the accounts of long-term residents of Pendleton, an inner-city area of Salford, in the northwest of England, which has undergone extensive urban renewal over the past half-century. Through the utilization of semi-structured interviews and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), the study provides a rich exploration of the interrelationships between people, time, and space, and is driven by the following research question: ‘what is the role of time in residents’ understanding of and relationship with place as it undergoes physical change?’

Research design

Context

The current research context is Pendleton, an inner-city suburb of Salford, a city located in the northwest of England. ‘Pendleton,’ however, is not how many of the participants refer to the area. A common name adopted by them is ‘Hanky Park’. A historic name for the area, ‘Hanky Park’ is

the setting of Walter Greenwood’s 1931 novel, ‘Love on the Dole’ and derives its name from the central thoroughfare of Hankinson Way, which is still present in the area. Another common epithet applied to the area is ‘Salford Precinct’, or simply ‘the Precinct’, which is how the central shopping area of Salford became colloquially referred to following the removal of the previous neighborhoods of ‘Hanky Park’.

Pendleton represents an interesting and opportune location to explore the role of time in place attachment, having experienced extensive place change over the past six decades. The area underwent extensive redevelopment in the 1960s and 1970s, was identified as a General Improvement Area and underwent Estate Action in the 1980s, several Single Regeneration Budgets in the 1990s, and Housing Market Renewal in the 2000s. Furthermore, at the time of data collection, Pendleton was undergoing a £650m regeneration project, funded by a private finance initiative (PFI).

Design

The research design was developed in line with the intended application of IPA, a qualitative research methodology designed to investigate the lived experience of participants (Smith et al., 2009). Informed by the principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiographics (Smith et al., 2009), IPA can facilitate the development of deeper insight into data of a more descriptive nature. Through the application of the steps of immersion, notetaking, identifying themes within cases, and developing themes across cases, the aim was to delve below the surface of the place attachment experience, to shed light onto the role of time in its underlying generative processes.

In conducting the analysis, the authors adopted the philosophical position of critical realism. IPA is said to be theoretically rooted in critical realism, making the philosophy highly suitable for the current research context (Fade, 2004). Critical realism accepts the stable elements of reality independent of human thought, whilst recognising the mind-dependent element of perception, which struggles to understand said reality (Danermark et al., 2002). The different meanings and interpretations people hold of events and experiences are made possible, as they experience different parts of reality. Approaching the current research scenario from this perspective, the physical environment in which residents are situated can be regarded as a solid reality with stable characteristics. This reality, however, is viewed through the more subjective, mind-dependent lens of the area’s inhabitants.

For the current research, we conceptualized ‘place’ as a centre of meaning. From this perspective, the place attachment bond is seen as holding common elements, while encompassing an individual experience (Garner et al., 2012).

Place attachment is therefore multi-faceted, with individuals capable of identifying with an area in multiple ways and on varying levels (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Expanding on this, we drew on Seamon's phenomenological definition of place as being: "any environmental locus in and through which individual or group actions, experiences, intentions, and meanings are drawn together spatially" (Seamon, 2012, p. 11). In conducting the analysis, we drew on the five sub-processes of place identified by Seamon (2021) of place definition, place dependence, place bonding, place interaction, and place identity. This enabled us to examine the varying ways in which residents of Pendleton understand the place in which they live, and how this may have been altered over time.

Participants and recruitment

Participants were a sample of nine adults, in-line with Turpin et al.'s (1997) guidance on the appropriate numbers for effective IPA analysis. Participants were recruited on the basis on having lived in Pendleton for a minimum of five years, with the final sample having inhabited the area for at least eight years at the time of interview. This step was taken to ensure that participants had an adequate experience of Pendleton pre-development and prior to the consultation phase of the ongoing renewal initiative, allowing the consideration of the role of time in the interpretation of this process. This measure was not informed by theory but a practical application of what seemed reasonable to the research team, following advice provided by officers from the local authority on the occupancy and residency flows of the area.

Recruitment was facilitated through engagement with local community groups, including tenants' and volunteered associations, where the primary researcher introduced themselves and the project at various meetings. Information sheets were distributed to interested parties, which provided contact information should they choose to take part. Demographic information for the recruited sample,

along with their associated pseudonym, and property type is displayed in Table 1. Note that 'high-rise accommodation' describes a single apartment in a multi-story block of residential dwellings. It is also worth noting that the sample consists of middle aged, young-old, middle-old, and older adults. Whilst the researchers did not set out to focus on older people, the demographic profile of the area and those engaging with the community groups through which recruitment took place meant that contact was not made with younger residents.

Data collection

The research questions of the overarching project were drawn upon to develop an initial interview schedule that followed Smith et al.'s (2009) guide for good IPA interview practice. This entailed beginning with invitations for participants to give descriptive accounts of their experience, with encouragements for them to be more analytical occurring as the interview progressed, as well as through the use of prompts and probes. In formulating the phrasing of interview questions, prompts, and probes, guidance from Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) was followed, who identify the specific question types of descriptive, narrative, structural, contrasting, evaluative, circular, and comparative. Data was collected as part of a single interview with each participant, lasting between 90 and 120 minutes. According to participant preferences, interviews were either conducted in an office space within the resident management company of the local area, or in the home of the participant.

Analysis

The analysis focused on the role of time in place attachment throughout the experience of place change. Analysis involved the systematic steps of immersion, notetaking, identifying themes within cases and finally, developing themes across cases, as advocated by Smith et al. (2009). IPA analysis begins with a focus on the particular, working

Table 1 Participant demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Duration of inhabitation	Property type
Allen	72	Male	White British	19 years	High-rise accommodation
Dennis	68	Male	White British	24 years	High-rise accommodation
James	63	Male	White British	61 years	House
June	73	Female	White British	59 years	High-rise accommodation
Mae	79	Female	White British	64 years	High-rise accommodation
Peter	70	Male	White British	70 years	High-rise accommodation
Rebecca	66	Female	White British	15 Years	House
Rosemary	60	Female	White British	60 years	High-rise accommodation
Sarah	56	Female	White British	8 Years	High-rise accommodation

outwardly to draw more general conclusions. The process moved from the descriptive to the interpretive, in an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007). Informed by Yardley's (2008) guidelines, analysis prioritized context sensitivity, commitment to rigor, transparency, coherence, and impact, to help ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

Findings

The conducted IPA analysis developed three themes relating to the role of time in how residents experienced place attachment as the physical environment in which they live has gradually transformed. Given the specific focus of the analysis on the role of time, these themes are highly inter-related and share much overlap. Each superordinate theme, along with associated sub-ordinate theme and their contributors is displayed in Table 2.

Super-ordinate theme 1: What time brings

The first super-ordinate theme relates to the events and changes in life circumstances that occur over time across an individual's lifespan. Although a universal phenomenon, ageing is a highly personal experience and ageing research has moved from a focus on access to resources and beneficial activities, toward a consideration of meaning-making as people encounter life changes (Chapman, 2009). The current findings offer accounts of this exact process.

Ageing

The first contained sub-ordinate theme of super-ordinate theme 1 relates to ageing itself. As time passes, we grow older and the more time that goes by, the more that this increasing age begins to impact our lives and the way in which we interact with the world around us:

Allen: "Although I now attend a church in Salford (pause) I'm not terribly involved in their social life. But that's more to do with my physical abilities than anything else these days."

As long-term residents of the area, the majority of the participants were of retirement age and above. Consequently, many of them described how ageing has influenced the way in which they and their peers engage with the environment. This demonstrates the consequences of time for place interaction, an underlying component of place attachment that describes how one's understanding of place is influenced by how they traverse and use the environment.

Mae: "Many old people are immobile basically. They can't get out and about the same, so they must lead a very, very lonely life."

These excerpts illustrate how although the environment may supply opportunities for social interaction, the experience of ageing may impact on a person's mobility, and thus their ability to take advantage of this. Place can be described as a physical, socio-cultural, and temporal phenomenon and it has been noted how place impacts individuals as much as people shape places (Chapman, 2009). As ageing impacts mobility, a person's place interaction is altered, with potential consequences for place attachment. Considering the factors that make a good place in which to grow old, research conducted by Finlay et al. (2018) identified the four inter-related themes of safety and comfort, service access, social connection, and stimulation. They concluded these to be the key elements to ensure both wellbeing and a continuation of place attachment and the words of the current sample appear to support this. However, one must remain mindful that even if a place offers opportunities for social interaction, individuals may still feel unable to do so. As people grow older, they can become less able to interact within a place as they desire. These altered experiences of place may then serve to undermine the prior relationship that an individual

Table 2 Structure of super-ordinate themes

Super-ordinate Theme	Sub-ordinate themes	Allen	Dennis	James	June	Mae	Peter	Rebecca	Rosemary	Sarah
What time brings	Ageing	X	X	X	X	X				X
	Bereavement			X	X	X				
	Cultural changes	X		X		X	X	X		X
	Changes to the physical environment		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Accumulated attachment	Time as an investment	X	X		X	X	X		X	
	The establishment of roots		X	X	X		X			
	A loss of place and history		X	X		X	X	X	X	
Time as a dialectic	Landmarks as vessels		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
	Then and now	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Nostalgia		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

shared with it, as the place ceases to address their various needs and their perception of the place suffers.

Bereavement

With the passing of time and our increasing age, human mortality also has an apparent role to play in place attachment.

June: *“Yeah, I met my future husband, and we got married after 7 years... Now, when I got married, I went down to the 7th because my husband lived on the 7th floor. So, I’ve not moved out of the block although I got married.”*

Loved ones play a significant role in our lives and experience of the world. Here, June outlines the long history she and her husband shared in close proximity within Pendleton. This was interpreted as her emphasising the integral role of this building in her life, serving as the setting of her autobiographical life experiences. The accounts of participants also showed the emotional salience of such ties:

James: *“And I went to where my mother’s were and there was somebody working on it, I said: “is there any chance of having a look inside it?” You know, for memories, and I shouldn’t have gone in because they’d gutted it.”*

Here, James describes the emotional impact of perceived harm to a property with associations with a significant other, in this case, his mother. James described holding a strong emotional bond with his mother, who had passed away approximately fifteen years prior to the current interview. What his accounts seemed to be demonstrating is how, over time, the significant emotional bond he shared with his mother became associated with the physical environment. In hearing his description of the physical degradation of structures, he appears to highlight how this is experienced as emotional pain. This finding coincides with past research evidence, which has shown how individuals displaced from a place of attachment can experience a period of grief (Abramson et al., 2008).

Cultural changes

Not just impacting the individual experience, time also brings changes in culture. As time passes, younger generations of differing attitudes, values, and behavior come to inhabit a particular space. This, in turn, serves to influence how people experience it:

Peter: *“Some of these supermarkets now and, as I say, a lot of them are geared (pause) you serve yourself. You go to the actual self-service area and there’s just*

a lady standing behind you in case the machine plays up, but you serve yourself. And some of the people on the tills; you may not see the same face there, you know, two or three weeks running... it’s not like the old corner shops where you’re dealing with the same person in there. It’s a very personal thing, shopping. Whereas now, it’s quite anonymous.”

In the excerpt above, Peter describes how the shopping culture present in Pendleton has changed over time. This same point was raised by a number of the interviewed sample and is a phenomenon that is not exclusive to Pendleton. What these accounts highlight is how wider societal changes have implications for context-specific experiences. In making sense of this, we can draw on the work of Seamon (2012), who discusses what he calls place-ballet and the interaction of the individual routines of multiple parties within a single space, which serve to sustain place attachment. This process can serve to damage place attachment when events disrupt routine interaction, which can cause friction and conflict and alter the perceptions held of the location (Seamon, 2012). Within the accounts of participants is the indication that such detrimental impacts have indeed taken place as a result of cultural changes:

James: *“All go. Yeah, all rush, rush, rush, rush, rush. There’s no like, erm (pause) you used to talk, years ago you used to stop and talk to somebody, and you’d be there for about half an hour. But now it’s... all rush, rush, rush. As though people haven’t got time for each other now. You know, just let on and that’s it. Not “how are you? How’s the kids?” or anything like that... it’s just gone! Just gone completely.”*

James’s words describe how cultural changes, such as the altered shopping experience, have led to the neighbourhood feeling less familial. The more time that has passed, the more changes in population, technology and, ultimately, culture, stand to influence the people-place relationship. In the case of the current sample, this appears to have led to the area being seen less favourably and to an apparent weakening of the place attachment bond.

Changes to the physical environment

In addition to personal circumstances and societal change, time also brings changes to the physical environment. The current research context, Pendleton, has been undergoing continued, pocketed regeneration activities for over 60 years. Such activity can lead to

residents seeing their environment from a different perspective:

Rebecca: *“It’s just going to look odd though (pause) It’s a shame really that Northern Counties aren’t thinking (pause) well, they’re all doing it up, why don’t we do ours as well? Because it’s going to look stupid, to be honest.”*

Although previously seeming to hold no negative attitudes toward her property, the modernization of a neighboring block has led Rebecca to reconsider her home, with her now regarding it less favourably. As the physical features of a place change, so do individuals’ perceptions and understandings of it. We can understand this in relation to the concept of place definition, the underlying process of place attachment encompassing the environmental elements that contribute to individuals’ understanding of a location, providing it with a form of identity (Cresswell, 2008). Here, we observe how physical changes can lead to an altered understanding of space, even if such changes do not impact that space directly, as individuals draw comparisons in evaluating the features of a location. Participants also described further consequences of such physical changes:

Mae: *“It was white tiles. It was made of white tiles, and it was quite tall... That was at the top of this road (pause) That’s where this landmark this was. And the rest of it, it was either pubs or churches. They were landmarks. Like, if you knew where Pendleton Church was, you could direct people – in a few directions from Pendleton Church to wherever.”*

Not only do changes in physical structure change one’s understanding of place but also their sense of familiarity with it. Here, Mae describes the removal of an art-deco monument once present in Pendleton, which she deemed to be a defining characteristic of the local area. Now this has been removed, the place has become less familiar, with consequences for navigation. As a result of such changes, several participants thus describe a sense of disorientation in a once familiar location.

Super-ordinate theme 2: Accumulated attachment

Super-ordinate theme 1 has revealed how, over time, as personal circumstances change, so does one’s relationship with the place in which they live. Occurring alongside this is the amassing of life experiences and an accumulated sense of place attachment, as we observe an increase in the emotional salience of a place. This process is encapsulated as the second super-ordinate theme.

Time as an investment

A factor identified within the accounts of participants that relates to this is the apparent pride that residents attach to the length of time they have spent in the local area:

June: *“I worked there for 4 years. And I had my sister in there you know, as well. And then I get fed up with that, so I went next door to Tols and I was there for 7 years... And I went on the Precinct then.”*

Several of the participants were keen to express not just the length of time they have lived in the area but how, throughout this time, they have personally contributed to making the place what it is. Here, June was describing her employment history within the local area. In doing so, she emphasized the significant time period that she spent at each place of work and she also emphasized the accumulation of this time. We can interpret this as her showing the importance of this to her and the sense of pride that she holds towards it. As long-term residents of Pendleton, several other members of the interviewed sample were keen to emphasize the significance of their time commitment to the area. Furthermore, as the time committed to activities undertaken in the area increases, so then does its apparent emotional salience:

Peter: *“Like these housing associations. So, when we started off in 1992, we’re 25 years old this year by the way, when we started off, we got a kick-back first time round because they thought “they’ll probably go away” you know “they’ll probably make a few noises, but they won’t be around in a few years’ time.”*

In this quotation, Peter describes the formation of his housing association and his belief that it was successful against the odds. Once more, the length of time devoted to this cause is highlighted pridefully, as if it is indicative of the personal investment he has made to the local area and community.

The establishment of roots

Over time and through continued investment in the local area as outlined in the section above, within the accounts of participants is the notion of their personal history becoming intertwined with the local environment:

Peter: *“My parents, both my mother and father, lived in Hanky Park. Literally, adjoining streets... One of them lived in Berry Street and the other one lived in Marple Street... I was born in Culverwell Street, which was a few streets away from Hanky Park, but*

it's still technically in the Park. And I now live on Cross Lane... And so, I've always lived in this post-code for sixty-nine and a half years."

Here, Peter speaks proudly of the fact that not only has he spent the entirety of his life in the area but that the link he shares with Pendleton is entwined with the branches of his family tree. This account speaks to the concept of rootedness, which is said to arise from one's place of birth, duration of residence, and the fostering of younger generations (Schellenberg et al., 2018). The majority of the interviewed participants had spent the entirety of their own life living in Pendleton, but for a portion of these, their family history in the area extends back further. One such participant was Mae:

Mae: *"So I was born there and then we moved onto Liverpool Street because my dad was an electrician and owned a radio shop. He used to repair radios... My dad used to charge up these batteries as you call them... But when they pulled the houses down to move us, I just sort of moved back in a straight line to Lime court, which is now the gateway. They knocked the lime court down and built the gateway. And we were there from my daughter being 9 until - well, I've been here 14 years. So, we just moved back in a straight line. But yeah, I've always lived in this area."*

Here, Mae outlines how her family's history in the area pre-dates her birth, as she gives a brief account of her life in the area. She outlines having moved several times due to forces beyond her control, yet in every circumstance, opting to remain within the central area of what is now known as Pendleton. The words of James highlight the potential impact of inhabiting a single area for the entirety of one's life:

James: *"But my roots was always been in Salford... inside I am Salford. And I always will be Salford."*

In this excerpt, James was describing how and why Salford is so important to him. Having lived in Pendleton, the central area of Salford, for the entirety of his life, his words indicate a sense of rootedness and are indicative of an intertwining of person and place: the environment has become an extension of himself, and he is a product of his environment. Several members of the current sample spoke about how Pendleton and Salford are not simply locations in which they live but are, in fact, a part of them. We can understand this in relation to the concept of place identity, an identified sub-construct of place attachment that highlights how the accumulation of experiences and spatial memories can lead to a location becoming instrumental in one's life (Cheng et al., 2012), forming a symbolic connection between a person and place. In these accounts, people and place are not presented as separate entities. The people make the place,

but the place also contributes to who they are, through a reciprocal relationship.

A loss of place and history

As time has gone by, such long-term residents have seemingly built a meaningful relationship with the place in which they live. However, this is a relationship that has altered according to the changes that the local area and community have experienced:

Mae: *"If you go into the old people's home, they've got pictures of the old town hall. And to me, that itself, all that old area was Pendleton. You felt at home. There was Pendleton Old and Pendleton New railway stations. There's neither now... If I went to, say where my daughter lives in Staffordshire and said, oh I come from Pendleton: "Where's that?" They just wouldn't know Pendleton because it's non-existent any more now."*

As highlighted in the analysis above, Mae is another participant keen to highlight her roots in the area. As a result of physical changes to the environment, however, there is the indication that the place she once called home no longer seems to exist and has been replaced by a sense of unfamiliarity and reduced feelings of belonging. Physical structures referred to were the town hall that was previously home to Salford City Council, as well as two railway stations, which have all since been removed from the local area. Other examples provided by the participants included an outdoor market, public houses, and picture houses, all of which have now been demolished. The words of participants, expressed most emotively by Mae above, underscore how it is not simply that the area is now experienced differently, but how such changes in physical structure have almost led to a symbolic redefinition of the place. As if a Pendleton of old has now been replaced by the Pendleton of new. As such, several participants hint at such a loss of place and expand to highlight the emotional significance of this experience:

James: *"I miss them. Because you think now, what used to be here? What used to be here? You know and it'll come to you, then your mind goes running around like that."*

Here, James is expressing the feeling he experiences when reminiscing about structures that were once present in Pendleton. He expresses regret towards their removal as he recalls how life in the area once was. What these accounts highlight is how changes trigger memories, leading to a sense of regret and sadness resulting from the symbolic 'loss' of the Pendleton they once knew.

Super-ordinate theme 3: Time as a dialectic

As part of the interview, participants were asked to give their thoughts and feelings about their current life in the area. In seeking to clearly express this, they would frequently go back and forth between past and present, drawing comparisons between how the area once was and how it is in the present day. The final super-ordinate theme thus relates to the mental processes seemingly involved as individuals engage with time in making sense of their lifeworld.

Landmarks as vessels

What the first sub-ordinate theme highlights is how definitive landmarks of the landscape serve to link residents to past experiences of the place:

Mae: “...All the pubs are shut now. Like there used to be the Woolpack and on a (pause) weekend you used to have people get up and sing and that. You know. You used to have (pause) an artist in there. I mean, the men would tell you that – think, I don’t think there’s a pub round here.”

As highlighted by the analysis of super-ordinate theme 2, such structures have come to be associated with personal, often emotive memories of the past and as such become symbolic, not just of the place that is but the place that once was. In this excerpt, Mae describes the pleasant memories she associates with one of the local pubs once present in the area. Within the accounts of participants are further indications of the almost transcendental power of such structures:

James: “That’s going back in time! Because trams used to be the norm and now they’ve come back. You know what I mean? Oh, they’re more modern but it’s exactly the same thing. I’m behind the tram and it puts its lights on to turn into a train station and you’re thinking ‘Bloody hell!’.”

Here, James is discussing the introduction of the Metrolink tram system, which connects central Manchester to several urban centres across the wider Greater Manchester Region, including Salford, Eccles, Ashton-under-Lyne, and Didsbury. His reference to time travel alludes to the prior existence of the Manchester Corporation Tramways system that was present in Salford and ceased operation in 1949. Accounts such as that provided by James illuminate the potential that such landmarks hold to transport individuals back to the Pendleton that many of the sample deemed to have been lost. In interpreting such accounts, this can be better understood by drawing on the work of Hornstein (2016), who notes how architecture is not only a physical entity but is also symbolic of a place beyond its physical

‘self’, as recalled by individuals. The narratives provided by the participants illuminate the deep symbolic significance of physical structures, be it those currently situated within the area, or those that have been removed.

Then and now

Another way in which participants engage with time is by drawing on past experiences of the area, in order to make sense of its current form and nature:

Dennis “You don’t know, in a street, who’s living next door to you. Or opposite. Whereas in the old days – this is equivalent (the tower block in which he lives)... to two terraced streets. Where everybody knew everybody else... And you had these people in the past who neighboured. They lived in streets.”

In this excerpt, Dennis draws on past experiences in evaluating the current situation. Specifically, he is drawing comparisons between life in the area before and after the replacement of terraced streets with high rise tower blocks that took place in the late 1960s. He describes how these modes of inhabitation represent very different ways of living and in doing so, singles out the consequences of such a change for social interaction and feelings of community. In this case, engaging in this process of reflection has led to a negative perception of the current area but, within the sample, there are varying examples of how this process manifests:

Rosemary: “I’m glad the doctors is there now, ‘cause it used to be in a different place. And now the doctors is there... So, it’s a good area. It’s a good place.”

Within the accounts of all participants, there are repeated examples of how they draw on past events and structures associated with the landscape in making sense of their present situation. Unlike the majority of the examples provided by participants, in the excerpt above, Rosemary provides an example of physical change leading to the Pendleton of the present being regarded more favourably in comparison to its past nature. What this account highlights is when changes to the area are sensitive to the needs and desires of a population, residents can perceive the place as it is at present in a positive light, giving the potential for a strengthening of the place attachment bond.

Nostalgia

A further theme that is highly apparent in the data and across the sample is that of nostalgia:

Mae: “Well, people were nicer. People were all poor. There wasn’t many people that had a lot of money. The war was on as well, so everybody helped everybody

else (pause) And people are not now as caring, shall we say, for want of a better word, as they were when I was younger. You get the odd few that might be, but you get a lot that are not. They don't pass the time of day."

Nostalgia is an emotion that involves reflecting on the past through rose-tinted glasses, missing time, relationships, and holding a desire to return (Hepper et al., 2012). This is evident in the words of Mae, who describes a bygone golden age of sorts. The accounts of participants also show the emotional salience of such memories:

Peter: *"Now, that was a massive meeting place... Everybody in Salford went on that market. It was an absolute (pause) well, it was so important... But you'd get farmers coming from Preston and Blackpool and Litham St. Anne's and Fleetwood and they'd be coming there three times a week, bring all their fresh stuff. Literally grown on the farms and they were bringing their farm products there... They weren't dealing through middle-men; they were dealing directly with customers."*

Here, Peter is talking about an outdoor market that was once present in the area. Like many of the other local landmarks once considered definitive of Pendleton by participants, this has since been removed. Nostalgia is said to be triggered by events unique to an individual, linking them to an experience of temporal distance, which is pleasant but, ultimately, irretrievable. These emotional reflections, such as described by Mae and Peter above, seem to lead to a sense of sadness and a longing for the past. As discussed throughout the analysis of super-ordinate theme 3, residents appear to draw on past experiences in making judgements about the place as it is currently experienced. With the past being seen in such a romantic fashion, this leads to negative emotional responses when reflecting on present life in the area.

Discussion

Main Findings & theoretical implications

The findings presented in this paper serve to further highlight the role of time in place attachment. Although its contribution to the people-place bond is acknowledged, with length of association and past experiences being attributed to the strengthening of such attachment bonds (Hummon, 1992), the available literature is limited in the way it is able to fully explain the temporal element of place attachment (Smaldone, 2006). The findings presented here offer greater insight into this process, through the utilization of IPA. By examining the lived experiences of long-term residents of

a particular area, the analysis was able to delve beyond the surface of the relationship between time and place attachment. Where quantitative methods may have served to measure the interrelationships between factors associated with this process, they would fall short of examining the intricate nature of the subtle processes that underlie them.

In readdressing the initial research question, the first finding relates to how as time passes, significant events occur in one's life. People grow older, experience loss, and the world undergoes cultural changes. As personal circumstances change, so do the relationships that the interviewed participants have with Pendleton. This finding is consistent with Milligan's (1998) conceptualization of place attachment, which identifies the bond forming as a result of the meaning given to a place through the continued process of person-environment interactions. The findings also show how as people invest time in and dedication to a place and its contained activity, there appears to be an accumulation of emotional salience in place attachment. Place attachment is said to include emotions, attitudes, and memories, evoked by interactions with a particular environment (Kyle et al., 2004) and is also said to play an important role in such basic characteristics as personal identity and sense of belonging (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). In the current context, the words of participants appear to frame time as a form of investment: something they have sacrificed for the sake of the place in which they live. With this investment, we observe the establishment of roots and a sense of connectedness to place. As the physical landscape changes, however, we can see a sense of loss, both of the place itself and of the history that people share with it.

The most novel of the current findings, however, is how as the time spent dwelling in a particular location grows, individuals are granted ever-increasing means of drawing comparisons of the place through time. As experience is gained, personal circumstances change, and the physical environment slowly transforms, time serves as a constant, binding them all together. This was strongly evident in the words of participants, who would frequently draw on experiences and descriptions of the area from the past, in seeking to articulate their perceptions of life in the area in the present. As such, place is not simply a physical entity, but a metaphysical experience. It has been said how, as agents, individuals are predisposed by past experience, which influences their understanding and interpretation of the social world (Anthias, 2002). Crucially, the human memory is fallible and memories gradually change over time. In recalling memories, we misremember and we unconsciously embellish, filling in the blanks to aid their coherence. It has also been noted how memories can change according to who we are speaking to (Echterhoff et al., 2005) and there is abundant evidence that we add detail to memories (Harry et al., 2018). Furthermore, the more memories are recounted

verbally, the more they change through retrieval enhanced suggestibility (Chan et al., 2017). This is said to occur as the process of recall involves the use of memories, temporarily making them malleable. Research also shows how during recall, people are biased towards expediency, which although less cognitively demanding is less reliable in summoning accurate representations of events, a phenomenon that has been referred to as the cheap strategy bias (Nash et al., 2017).

This manifests in many of the participants of the current study as nostalgia, which serves to link time and space. Participants describe the area as having declined during their time living there and display a sense of longing for the past. In describing the Pendleton of the past, participants are almost describing a form of utopian, by-gone age. In their accounts, place appears to be connecting the past and the present, seemingly serving to influence their making sense of current events. This is largely driven by the association of physical landmarks of the area with significant, often vivid autobiographical memories. Such landmarks as pubs, picture houses, markets, and an art-deco clock tower seemingly serve as vessels through which to 'revisit' the place's past or, more precisely, how the place is remembered. Utilizing an idealized version of a place's past as a reference point thus leads to negative perceptions towards the place as it is currently experienced.

We can make sense of this by drawing on Ahmed's (2015) use of Ricoeur's (1984) work on time and narrative and Bakhtin's (1981) use of the chronotope: a configuration of time and space within discourse. Nostalgia too can be understood as a form of chronotope, as it holds the potential to link 'lost' place and 'lost' time. In the current scenario, nostalgic recollections appear to be being drawn on by participants, to make sense of their changing environment. This chronotope, however, is dictated by human memory and all of its limitations. From the perspective of critical realism, agents do not have direct access to present reality, nor do they to past 'realities.' When thinking back to past experiences of the area, participants' descriptions of the previous sense of community in the area are almost utopian. Ahmed (2015) describes the concept of community as being romantic, involving the idealization of a by-gone age and notes how it is often considered lost through modernity. Anderson (1991) describes this phenomenon as the 'imagined community', questioning whether such a utopia ever existed.

Life is framed in time and space and is to a large extent shaped by our physical surroundings, a phenomenon described as 'being-in-place' (Casey, 2009, p. 178). To adopt a phenomenological position, as we have in the current research, enables the production of a reductive rendition of this experience (Seamon, 2012). Place has been described as offering a means to articulate the experience of the

'lifeworld,' the taken-for-granted nature of existence (Graumann, 2002). Seamon (2021) has described place attachment as the phenomenology of people experiencing place, conceptualizing it as a complex process through which meaning is applied to a place. One way this can be understood is in relation to what he terms 'lived dialectics' (Seamon, 2021, p. 13). These can be thought of as lived opposites: positions that enable an individual to reshape their understanding of place by enabling a self-reflective awareness of the people-place relationship. Such examples include the dialectics of insideness versus outsideness and dwelling versus journey. Turning to the current findings, we argue that time can also be seen to serve as a form of lived dialectic. Reflecting on place as it is experienced in the present, individuals can be seen to be drawing comparisons with the 'imagined place' of the past, the perception of which stands to be influenced by the chronotope of nostalgia.

Limitations

The nature of IPA demands rich accounts of experience (Smith et al., 2009). A potential limitation of the findings is that data was generated through interviews, which explored life experiences over a significant time period. As explored above, the human memory is fallible. Therefore, the more time that passes, the more memories are vulnerable to degradation and embellishment. The age range of the sample must therefore also be critiqued, with age having a significant role to play in autobiographical memory (Waters, 2014). Research has shown age to be positively related with levels of memory content, including spatial details, persons, objects, and emotions, as well as age-related feature specific alteration, caused by the repeated subjective recall process (Gardner et al., 2015). This highlights the potential challenges faced by a study without younger and young middle-aged adults among the recruited sample. It should be noted, however, that by adopting the position of critical realism, the current project did not set out to explore the objective reality of life in the area but, rather, relationships with place as they are encountered from the unique perspective of individuals. What the current findings achieve is to illuminate how the interplay of time and human memories (be they accurate or otherwise) plays a significant role in shaping an individual's understanding of a place and, thus, the nature of their relationship with it.

Conclusion

The current findings serve to further highlight the utility of IPA in developing a greater understanding of the person-environment relationship. Here, the findings further

underline the central role of time in the maintenance of place attachment. With places holding a central role in people's lives, as time passes, individual circumstances and needs change, so then does the relationship that people hold with place. As inhabitation continues, the more life events and significant personal relationships become embedded in the physical landscape, leading to the intertwining of person and place. Furthermore, the more time that passes, the more opportunities individuals have to draw comparisons between the place as it is perceived in the present and how it is remembered from the past. Here, we draw attention to the notable role of human memory, the limitations of which can impair the accuracy of recollections of the place's past, with implications for present day perceptions of the environment. These findings have implications for a range of community stakeholders, such as town planners, housing officers, and community practitioners, as they seek to maximize the ability of community spaces to meet the various needs of residents. They pose the challenge for placemaking professionals to work with people who have deep rooted understandings of a place through time. Community engagement should be sensitive to how understandings of place are not simply rooted in what is there now but what has been there before. Such development of a rich understanding of place, generated through the application of psychological approaches in practice can thus enhance the places we build and live in. Building on the current qualitative findings, future research should seek to test the potential mechanisms identified in the current findings, through the application of quantitative measures of nostalgia and place attachment, and the analysis of their potential interaction with length of inhabitation.

Acknowledgements The primary author wishes to acknowledge Samantha Gregory for her ideas and support in integrating elements of cognitive psychology into the analysis. Further thanks go to the members of the Salford Psychology writing group, whose advice and encouragement greatly facilitated the completion of the project.

Authors' contribution M. J. Lomas: Conceptualization; Funding acquisition; project administration; methodology; investigation; formal analysis; data curation; writing – original draft, review & editing.

E. Ayodeji: Supervision, methodology, data curation.

P. Brown: Supervision, project administration, methodology, data curation, writing – review & editing, validation.

Funding The project took place as part of a wider PhD project that was funded by a University of Salford 'Pathway to Excellence' PGR studentship.

Data availability Data was collected in accordance with the ethical frameworks of University of Salford and the British Psychological Society. Ethical approval for the project was granted by the School of Health & Society's Research Ethics panel at the University of Salford. The study was performed in accordance with the ethical standards as

laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Declarations

Competing interests All authors state that they have no competing interests to declare.

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