



# ncge

## National Council for Geographic Education



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*"Advancing Geographic Education by connecting, facilitating, and sharing resources that encourage and support all geographic educators."*

# **Beyond Reading the Definition From a Slide: Teaching Sense of Place and Place Making**

NCGE Webinar 11/8/2022



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What do geographers and organizations have to say about sense of place and place making?

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sample lesson

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How are sense of place and place making related to essential knowledge in the CED?

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**PLACE IS SECURITY,  
SPACE IS  
FREEDOM.**

YI-FU TUAN





**01**

**What do geographers and organizations have to say about sense of place and place making?**



According to the International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, sense of place “refers to the emotive bonds and attachments people develop or experience in particular locations and environments, at scales ranging from the home to the nation. Sense of place is also used to describe the distinctiveness or unique character of particular localities and regions. Sense of place can refer to positive bonds of comfort, safety, and well-being engendered by place, home, and dwelling, as well as negative feelings of fear, dysphoria, and placelessness.”

Yi-Fu Tuan

and

# Space and Place

*The Perspective  
of Experience*

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

“What is home? It is the old homestead, the old neighborhood, hometown, or motherland.”

“Geographers study places. Planners would like to evoke ‘a sense of place.’”

Yi-Fu Tuan

and

# Space and Place

*The Perspective  
of Experience*

“The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.”

“Human beings require both space and place. Human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom. In open space one can become intensely aware of place; and in the solitude of a sheltered place the vastness of space beyond acquires a haunting presence. A healthy being welcomes constraint and freedom, the boundedness of place and the exposure of space.”



“Sense of place is a collective identity tied to a particular place, perhaps best thought of as the unique ‘character’ of a place. People are guided in their actions by particular identities that say who they are and what they can and cannot, should and should not, do. Belonging to a particular ethnic group socializes people into particular expectations and life-chances. Part of one’s sense of ‘belonging’ is attachment to place, which can translate into visions of what a place should be ‘like’: notably who ‘belongs’ and who doesn’t.”

# Introduction to Geopolitics

Colin Flint

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group

## Placeness and Place: A Brief Introduction to the Website

I understand *placeness* to mean everything that has to do with places and the concept of place. Various online sources define it as “the quality of being a place” and I have seen it used to mean something like “the quality of coming from a place.” The 1989 Oxford English Dictionary claims that “placeness” is *rare*, and defines it briefly as the quality of having or occupying a place. My view is that the suffix ‘ness’ means ‘a state or condition,’ so for me *placeness* is a conveniently broad term that allows me to consider everything to do with the diverse qualities, interpretations, uses and experiences of *place*, from place cells in the hippocampus to a global sense of place.

This website is meant to be a sort of mini-encyclopedia about *place* as a concept that relates to being somewhere, to here, there, elsewhere, home, roots and rootlessness, disembedding, placemaking, placelessness, branding, and dwelling. I am not interested in place as the word is used for place values in mathematics, nor the idea of someone’s place in the social order, nor in placing bets.



An artist's house in Ellensburg, Washington

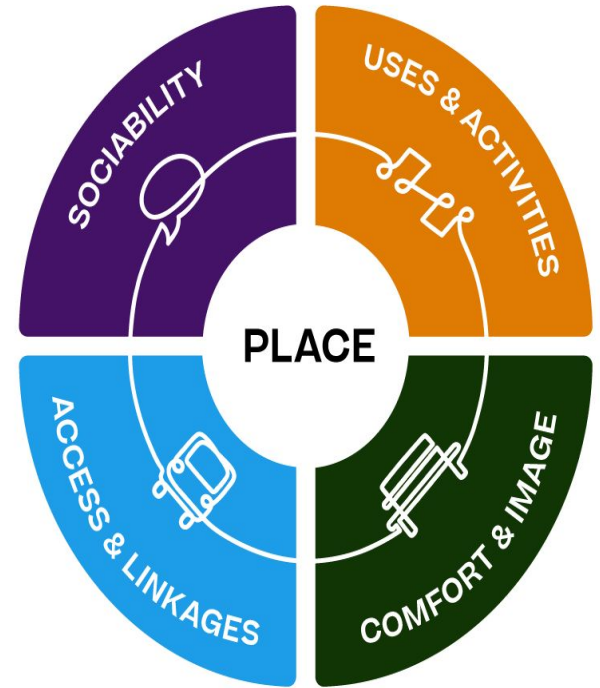
“Sense of place shifts across enormous scales – from direct experiences of grandma’s kitchen...to an appreciation of the entire globe ... And while it is almost always regarded as altogether positive, it is important to remember that sense of place can contribute to negative, exclusionary, even xenophobic attitudes, and ambiguity...”

Edward Relph, Canadian geographer, author of *Place and Placelessness*, in a [blog post](#)

“Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.”

*“What is Placemaking?”*

Project for Public Places





3. In the 1990's the central business and residential districts of cities in the United States became the focus of a revitalization process. Discuss how each of the following has contributed to this revitalization process.

- A. Economic factors
- B. Demographic composition
- C. Urban policy
- D. Sense of place

**D. Discuss sense of place** (2 points: 1 point each for identification and discussion, OR 1 point each for two identifications)

Emotional attachment to central-city locations based on cultural amenities, landscape features, lifestyle factors

Acceptable:

- Distinctiveness of inner cities; consumption of nostalgia/historic character
- Cultural amenities (theater, museums, sports venues, restaurants); leisure society
- Lifestyles; concentrations of populations with similar interests; acceptance of diversity
- Community pride; neighborhood associations

Not acceptable:

- "Sense of place" if discussed as an effect of revitalization gentrification without specific reference to character of neighborhood, OR if credit given for gentrification in part A, above.

Q3 2005

College Board, FRQ

+ Bilingualism in Canada

+ Central business district revitalization

+ Cultural centrifugal forces

+ Cultural Landscape

+ Cultural landscape and regional location

+ Language pattern

+ Linguistic fragmentation

+ Pattern of largest language family

+ Pilgrimage Sites 1

+ Pilgrimage Sites 2

+ Pilgrimage Sites 3

+ Pilgrimage Sites 4

+ Placemaking

## College Board AP Classroom

**What is Placemaking?:** People have been “making places” since we went from hunting and gathering to putting roots down in a place with the advent of agriculture (no pun intended). But the conceptual frame around placemaking has only been around for about 50 years, and entails more than just how to construct buildings, make roads, and design housing tracts. There is an implicit political stance in modern placemaking that makes community assets and aspirations central.

*With community-based participation at its center, an effective placemaking process capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well-being.*

*—The Project for Public Spaces*

Within a contemporary definition of placemaking are the following principles:

- a hierarchy of value: “first life, then spaces, then buildings”<sup>27</sup>
- a recognition of the importance of “place identity,” which involves the meaning that places have for the people who live in them, their sense of self, and their ability to build community
- the knowledge that places are social constructs that can mirror power relations in society, and therefore
- bottom-up, community-centered processes should be at the heart of placemaking.



**Belonging in Oakland:**  
a cultural development plan *[draft]*

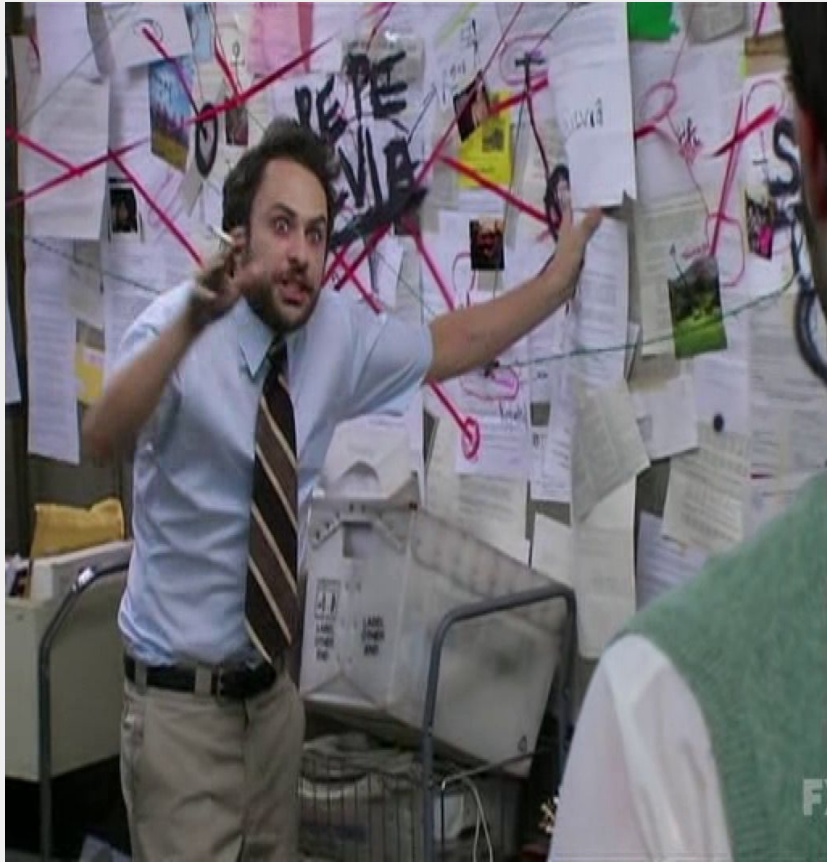
Spring 2018





# 02 How are sense of place and place making related to essential knowledge across the CED?





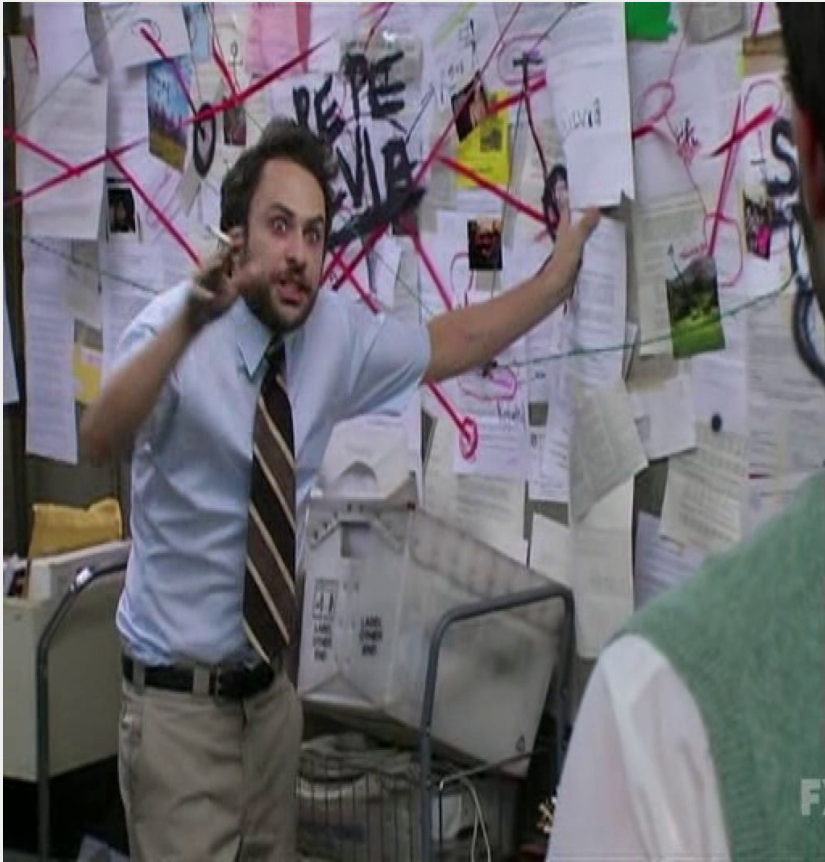
1.4 Spatial concepts include absolute and relative location, **space, place**, flows, distance decay, time-space compression, and pattern.

2.2 Cultural landscapes are combinations of physical features, agricultural and industrial practices, **religious and linguistic characteristics**, evidence of sequent occupancy, and **other expressions of culture** including traditional and postmodern architecture and land-use patterns.

3.2 **Attitudes toward ethnicity and gender**, including the role of women in the workforce; **ethnic neighborhoods**; and **indigenous communities** and lands help shape the use of space in a given society.

3.3 Regional patterns of **language, religion, and ethnicity** contribute to a **sense of place**, enhance **placemaking**, and shape the global cultural landscape.



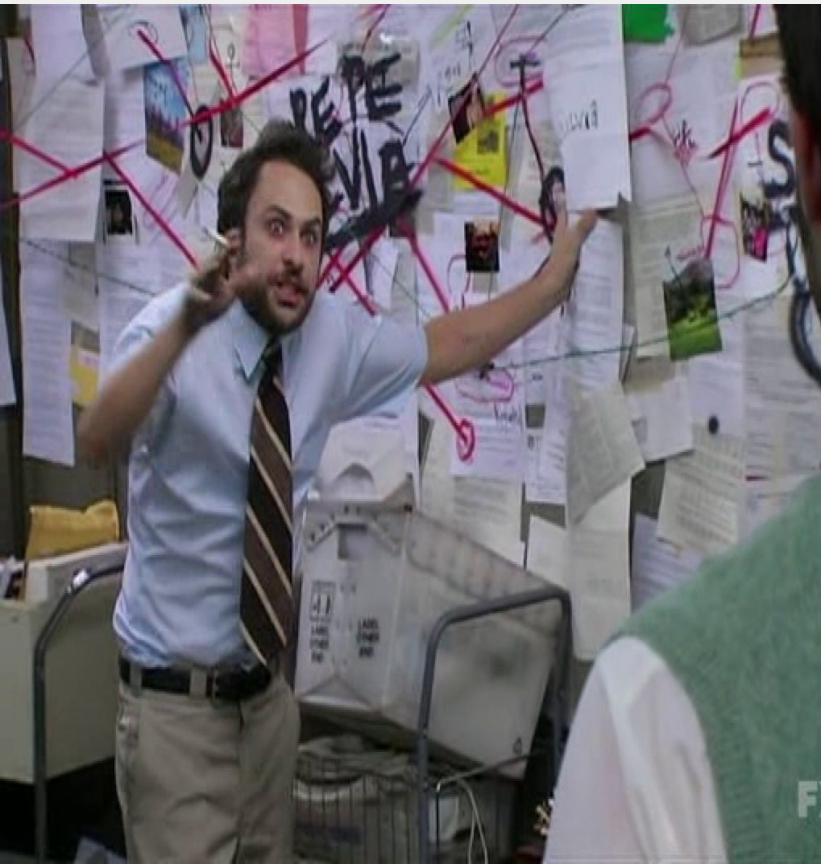


4.1 Types of political entities include **nations**, nation-states, stateless nations, multinational states, multistate nations, and autonomous and semiautonomous regions, such as American Indian reservations.

4.2 Colonialism, imperialism, independence movements, and **devolution along national lines** have influenced contemporary political boundaries.







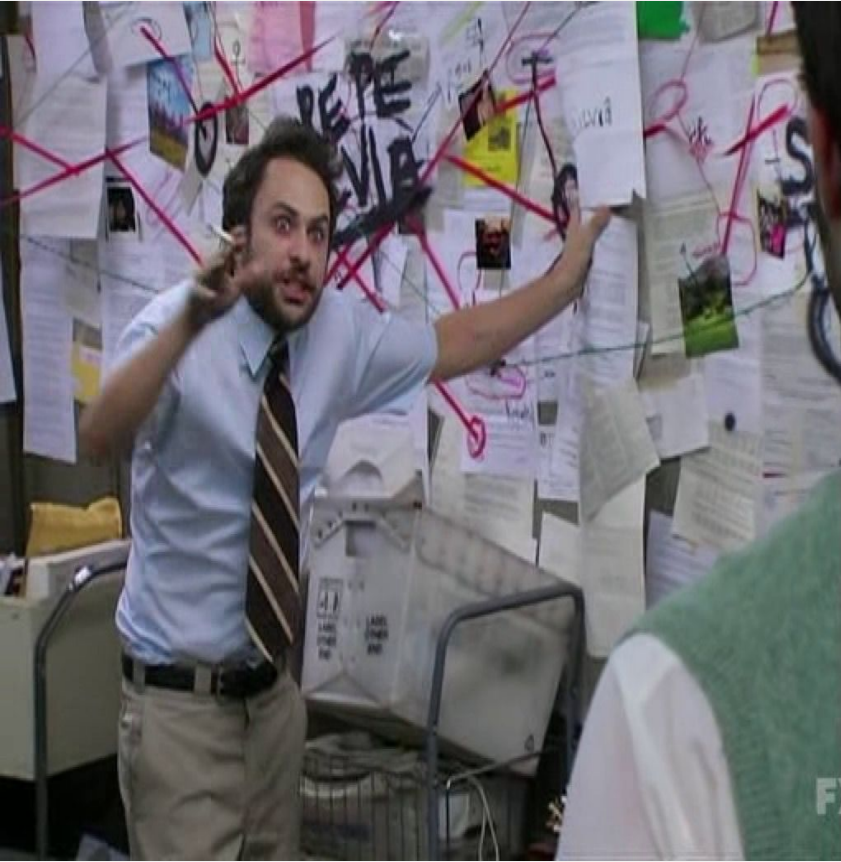
6.1 Site and situation influence the **origin, function, and growth of cities**.

Changes in transportation and communication, population growth, **migration, economic development**, and government policies influence urbanization.

6.8 Sustainable design initiatives and zoning practices include mixed land use, **walkability, transportation-oriented development**, and smart-growth policies, including New Urbanism, greenbelts, and slow-growth cities.

Praise for urban design initiatives includes the reduction of sprawl, **improved walkability and transportation, improved and diverse housing options, improved livability** and promotion of sustainable options. Criticisms include increased housing costs, possible **de facto segregation**, and the **potential loss of historical or place character**.





6.9 Quantitative data from census and **survey** data provide information about changes in population composition and size in urban areas.

Qualitative data from **field studies** and **narratives** provide information about individual attitudes toward urban change. (See *Belonging in Oakland* for potential stimuli.)

6.10 Urban renewal and gentrification have both positive and negative consequences. (See Q3 from 2005.)





# 03

## Lesson: Teaching Sense of Place and Placemaking

The lesson was designed to teach PSO 3D *Explain patterns and landscapes of language, religion, ethnicity, and gender*. It could also be used as inspiration

- to teach PSO 1A Define major geographic concepts that illustrate spatial relationships (might make a great beginning of the year exercise if you teach students who are new to your campus);
- to teach PSO 6A Explain the process that initiate and drive urbanization and suburbanization;
- to teach IMP 6C Identify the different urban design initiatives and practices;
- to teach IMP 6D Explain the effects of different urban design initiatives and practices;
- to teach IMP 6E Explain how qualitative and quantitative data are used to show the causes and effects of geographic change within urban areas;
- to teach SPS 6A Explain causes and effects of geographic change within urban areas;
- to teach SPS 6B Describe the effectiveness of different attempts to address urban sustainability challenges;
- after the AP exam as part of a project



To begin the lesson, students do a **quick write**:

*Write about your favorite place. Where is it? What memories do you associate with it? How does thinking about that place make you feel?*

My favorite place is deep inside the bighorn mountains in Wyoming. It's close to the small town of buffalo, and the city sheridan. The memories that I think about when thinking of this ranch are, for one, horses. I think about galloping through the rain with my yellow pancho swooshing, trying to get back to the barn so that I can dry off. I think of reaching up to touch the loose tree branches, or looking down at the ranch from the north pasture. I think about the sunrise hikes, and the bell that rings when its time for lunch. This place truly makes me happy, and cheerful. I feel ambient and calm, when I can sit down and imagine the cold wind in my hair.

I think my favortite place would probably be one of the familiar homes in greece. I've made a ton of memories during the summer with my grandparents and with random stray cats i would take in for a handful of months before having to come back to the US. Thinkning back makes me feel wistful and melanchony since i havent been back since my grandma got sick and i know that even if i was to go back it would all be different from how i remeber it.

I think my favorite place is my house or my grandparents house (I'm going to write about my grandparents' place, though). It's a big property in St. Petersburg, Florida, and I always go there in the summer. My cousins from Cincinnati go to Florida, too, and, because it's rare to see them, I always cheirsh my time and memories there. I associate it with playing hide and seek, making weird (kinda innapropriate) jokes at the dinner table, listening to the adults roar with laughter, the smell of fresh, homemade Italian food...thinking about this makes me feel warm and loved, and reminds of the fact that I have a safe place to go.

There is a lake i went to as a child a lot. I cant remember where its at exacly but its close to a farm and rural area. My dad and his friend from work would take me fishing with them, its where i learned i actually enjoy it. His friend is associated as a grandpa to our family. It makes me feel comfortable and safe. It was a quiet lake and it was usually cold when we went so we always drank hot chocolate. i wouldnt be surprised if another family made a lot of good memories on that lake.

My favorite place is this small conerstore by Buffalo exchange. I love the choclate truffles there, and there is a flower shop that connects to it. I associate this place with my mom because it is the place that we usually go to for dates together. When I think about this place I feel warm and calm because I usually don't get to hang out with my mom.

Edmonds, Washington. Specificky down-town Edmonds. I have a lot happy memories there. Memories of reading in cafés, spending time with friends, watching movies and going to the farmer's market. In all honsety, I don't think there was another place that has ever made me feel so at home. I loved it, especially because of how close it was to the sound. When I think of this place it makes me feel comforted but also slightly depressed that I can't be there now.

My favorite place is Durango, Colorado. I go there every year during the summer, Thanksgiving, and New Years, since we own a house up there that we share with family friends. It's so different from Dallas, with the cold weather and fresh air. We are nestled right into the moountains, and have a river running right in front of the house, so it feels very cozy and safe. The town is quaint and the people are so nice, and all of the restaurants are amazing. I have so many good memories like siing, fishing, and just taking calm walks down the river. To think about Durango makes me feel cozy, like I'm nestled on the couch playing UNO in front of the fireplace, or cooking dinner with my mom and watching the Macy's parade. I could stay there for the rest of my life, and never lose the feeling of love I feel when I'm there.

One of my favorite places is my grandpa's farm. Growing up, my family and I would always visit the farm, help my grandpa with his farm errands like feeding goats, picking eggs from under mommy chickens, play with the donkeys, sleepover and watch movies in the mini house, and more. This place makes me feel nostalgic and remember a bright childhood that I wish stayed longer in my life.

My favorite place are these train tracks that me and my freinds spent a lot of afterschool days, weekends, and summer days there. My favorite memeory from iis jumping of this bridge down the tracks (into water) and swimming in the dirty river water. I always get a sence of nostailgia thinking about it.

My favorite place is home because its not here; where I have to worry about my school anxiety or schoolwork/homework often I just go gome and wish I didn't homework. All I want to do when I go home is chill but then I have to do homework for all 4 of my core classes. Sorry for ranting but home is my favorite place because I have the comfort of my family and its where I became who I am, where I cried and laughed. I've had tghe craziest conversations of my life at home and the most serious, it's where I get into the most trouble and where I get into the least trouble.



Next, students were asked to look at these photos (from the place I associate with home, eastern Pennsylvania) and think about the pattern, where it might be, and how it might be connected to culture. *What recurring elements of your local cultural landscape could you use in your classroom?*



Next, give students the definition of *sense of place*. Apply quotes from Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* to the definition and the writing students did at the beginning of class.



Introduce the Project for Public Spaces and what areas (access & linkages, sociability, uses & activities, comfort & image) students will evaluate during the field study.

Give students questions from the Project for Public Spaces: What Makes a Successful Place? (NOTE: I sent an email to everyone at my school letting them know what students would be doing and encouraging them to report inappropriate behavior to me.)

Give students at least 20-30 minutes to conduct the field study.

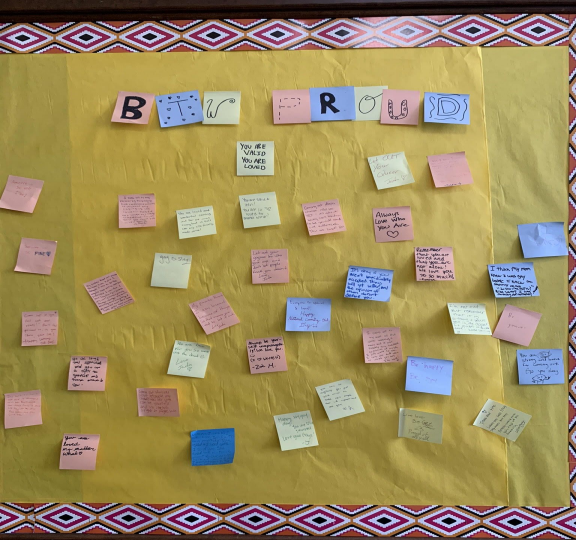
#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ON SOCIABILITY:

- Is this a place where you would choose to meet your friends? Are others meeting friends here or running into them?
- Are people in groups? Are they talking with one another?
- Do people seem to know each other by face or by name?
- Do people bring their friends and relatives to see the place or do they point to one of its features with pride?
- Are people smiling? Do people make eye contact with each other?
- Do people use the place regularly and by choice?
- Does a mix of ages and ethnic groups that generally reflect the community at large?
- Do people tend to pick up litter when they see it?

Debrief the field study. Ask students what they noted as strengths and areas for improvement.

Give students the definition of *place making*, deliberate efforts to create or evoke a sense of place, and discuss why place making is done. Discuss evidence of and/or opportunities for place making at your school.







formative assessment:

Considering the results of your field study, explain the degree to which a sense of place is created in people using the space at \_\_\_\_\_. Be sure your first sentence establishes the degree: to a great degree, to a moderate degree, to a small degree, to no degree at all. Then write a few sentences in which you use specific data/details from specific questions on the handout to support your answer.

A sense of place is created by people using the space at 2501 Flora Street to a great degree. This building is located in the middle of downtown and is quite famous for being an arts school, accessibility to the building is ever plentiful, with trains, buses, and different ways to get there. This gives it a specific sense of place in that it is always there and people know it is. Because of the fact that Booker T is an arts school and due to the way it teaches its arts with dignity, there are always activities going on. Musicians are playing, artists are painting, actors are blocking their scenes, and dancers are practicing with grace. There is a significant amount of people at this school, it's huge and greatly accessible. Although some improvements can be made regarding accessibility for people with mobility issues, there are still ways to get around without too much difficulty. A sense of place is created and most definitely felt with a high level of comfort and safety at this space on 2501 Flora St.

At 2501 Flora St. the sense of place is to a great degree, you don't feel judged or like you don't fit in. The comfortability is amazing, there are seats everywhere in the green room and a couple lounge places inside. Booker T uses the space to try and make every activity possible for the students and teachers. The accessibility getting to the school is good but inside the accessibility for people in wheelchairs or disabilities is not great. There could be more ramps and elevators.

I think that the people at 2501 Flora St. have created a very nice sense of place to a great degree. There is definitely room for improvement when it comes to Access and Linkage because of the lack of resources for disabled people. But besides that, this school is constantly active, the mixture of cultures, arts, and academics can be seen from all over this building. The green room is a great example of this because that's where we came during I Am Booker T day, that's where we eat lunch and have lunch jams, and it's also a great space that all of the students and faculty can be held there at once.

A sense of place is created to a great degree at BTWSPVA. The sociability is certainly the strongest aspect of place here. People of all different races and conservatories are able to socialize with one another in numerous places throughout the building. The most active areas are the green room and the cafeteria. There's always something going on, or some interaction in these places. Other aspects of place are represented here too. The visual art shown all around the building, even outside, creates a strong source of comfort and image. It's hard to find a blank wall. The one area that could be improved, I'd say, is the accessibility of the building. We could benefit from a sky way connecting the new and historic buildings, and more ramps and elevators to support disabled persons.

Considering the results of my field study, the people at Booker T. Washington contribute to the sense of place here to a great degree. Many students fought to be accepted here and they come here regularly by choice. That establishes an environment filled with people passionate about what they do and people who are willing to work hard. Visitors tour this school and our staff points out our history with pride because of the people who have come here. For example, Ernie Banks came here during the Bulldog Era and went on to become one of the best baseball players of our time. Students go to a great school because they- along with teachers and donors- make it a great school.

The space 2501 Flora St is used as a performing and visual arts high school. The people at Booker T Washington HSPVA create a sense of place by making a comfortable, accessible and full environment. For example, in the halls, no matter where in the building you are, it is never quiet. There is always someone playing their instrument or listening to music. The halls are always filled with art and you see dancers practicing. Everyone at this school is welcoming and accepting, even if you are a stranger to them, they'll always acknowledge you.

A sense of place is created by the people using the space at 2501 Flora street to a great degree. An emotional attachment to a space is our sense of place. One thing that stood out to me about 2501 Flora St. was its sociability. When I observed 2501 Flora St., it was evident that there was interaction between people. Groups of people were in the halls, socializing and smiling. The also space contained a variety of ethnic groups and ages. These are all things that make a great place. And in Booker T's case it's its social atmosphere.

Next, connect sense of place and place making to language, religion, and ethnicity. Give students five photos related to language, religion, and ethnicity that can be examined in the context of sense of place and place making. Have them view the photos silently for about a minute, noting one thing about each image (what do they see, think, or wonder?) while also trying to determine where the images were taken. I chose to use Montreal.













SPEAK FRENCH

After having students look at the photos, have students discuss with a partner what they wrote and where they think the images were taken. You could also ask students if they can think of similar examples in your local area, especially if you teach in an urban or suburban location.

Then go back through the photos, specifically discussing ethnicity and language, which are more evident than religion in the photos. With each photo, ask students how sense of place and/or placemaking is more evident. Answers will vary, but accept any answer that reflects the development of an emotional connection to a place (sense of place) or the deliberate attempt to foster or create sense of place (place making).

If teaching the lesson during unit 3, consider having students make these connections:

- A. Explain how the French language serves as a pull factor to Quebec for certain immigrants to Canada.
- B. Describe features of the cultural landscape evident in the photo of the pavilion and the photo of Chinatown.
- C. Explain why place making is used by governments to create a sense of place for residents.
- D. Explain why place making is used by governments to create a sense of place for tourists.
- E. Explain how language can be a centripetal force at the subnational scale in Canada.
- F. Explain how language can be a centrifugal force at the national scale in Canada.



formative assessment:


This image shows an exit from the highway leading to Makkah (Mecca), Saudi Arabia, the most sacred place in Islam. Citing specific details from the image and using what you have learned, explain how cultural traits such as religion, language, and ethnicity create a sense of place.



Cultural traits such as religion, language, and ethnicity can create a sense of place by making people feel more comfortable and connected, or sometimes more distant from others. In this picture it shows at least three different languages, which is one way that this space could create an inclusive sense of place. However, the picture also shows that only on religion is allowed to go to Makkah, while others cannot, which could create an increased sense of place for Muslims because they feel more safe and included, while non-Muslims would feel less comfortable because they are not included.

This road in the picture says that there is way for non-Muslims to go and Muslims to go. I think this creates a divided sense of place because it is written in English and the language of the Muslims. Also because if you're not Muslim you can't go to Makkah just because it's the holiest and sacred place. It is definitely based off of ethnicity and religion because if you're not Muslim you can't even come and tour the sacred place for them. It is a very interesting picture and image that they are putting out there.

Religion in the image is creating a sense of place because it has a section for Muslims and non-Muslims. Specifically saying that if you're Muslim then you can go to Makkah, which is important for their religion. So it is keeping in mind of the Muslim religion and creating a sense of safety and inclusive sense because it's not disrespecting the religion. Concluding that if you're non-Muslim then you can't go there and have to respect the fact that it's not apart of your religion.



summative assessment:

Find an image from the Project for Public Spaces, or take an image in your community. Ask students to:

Describe how the photo reflects a sense of place that may be experienced by [residents of the local area an/dor visitors to the area].

Explain the degree to which the photo reflects place making in [location].





# 04

## Resources





lesson plan with sources, a link to this presentation, and presentation to use or modify

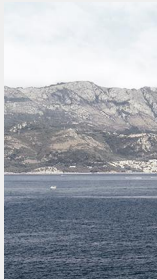
Find images on Flickr or Pixabay.

Special thanks to the humans who make BTWHSPVA such a great place; the BTWHSPVA Advisory Board for funding faculty enrichment; Jane H. for helping with feedback on the lesson and participating in the webinar; Yi-Fu Tuan for writing so eloquently on the *human* in human geography; and the Project for Public Places.

Questions or feedback? Please feel free to ask or comment now, or email [laura.kmetz@gmail.com](mailto:laura.kmetz@gmail.com).







# Thank you!



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