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## The Impact of Physical and Social Factors in the Community Environment on Place Attachment: A Case Study on the Renewal of Community Public Open Space in Chengdu, China

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**Abstract:** This study aims to address the research gap regarding the influence of physical and social factors in the community environment on place attachment, specifically in relation to decision-making processes that engage individuals in recycling behavior. It seeks to build a theoretical and methodological framework by adapting a spatial approach to relationships with place, and to test this framework across different territories. Materials and Methods: The research utilized a spatial theory of sense of place to examine the dynamics of territorial attachments and meanings. Data were collected from respondents who evaluated various physical and social factors, including local landscape characteristics, to assess their place attachment and perceived restrictiveness. Results: The findings revealed that respondents exhibited stronger place attachment and perceived restrictiveness in relation to physical and social factors. Notably, strong local landscape characteristics, along with place dependence and place identity, were found to positively predict restorative perceptions among participants. Outcomes: The obtained results contribute new insights into the significance of local landscape characteristics for place attachment and restoration. They are relevant to guidelines on designing community landscapes to help planners accurately target and facilitate the formulation of effective policies and strategies to address green injustice, contributing to the place environment policies worldwide and vulnerable groups.

**Keywords:** Place attachment, place dependence, place affective, place social bonding



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# 社区环境中物质与社会因素对地方依恋的影响——以成都社区公共开放空间更新为例

**摘要：** 目的：本研究旨在填补社区环境中的物理和社会因素对地方依恋的影响方面的研究空白，特别是与个人参与回收行为的决策过程有关。它试图通过采用空间方法来处理与地方的关系，建立一个理论和方法框架，并在不同的地区测试这个框架。材料和方法：本研究利用地方感的空间理论来研究领土依恋和意义的动态。收集了受访者的数据，他们评估了各种物理和社会因素，包括当地景观特征，以评估他们的地方依恋和感知的限制性。结果：研究结果显示，受访者表现出与物理和社会因素相关的更强的地方依恋和感知的限制性。值得注意的是，强大的当地景观特征以及地方依赖性和地方认同被发现可以积极地预测参与者的恢复性感知。结果：获得的结果为当地景观特征对地方依恋和恢复的重要性提供了新的见解。它们与社区景观设计指南相关，旨在帮助规划者准确定位和促进制定有效的政策和战略来解决绿色不公正问题，为世界各地的环境政策和弱势群体做出贡献。

**关键词：** 地方依恋、地方依赖、地方情感、地方社会联系

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

Place attachment has received much attention since the seminar by Low and Altman [1], who conceptualized place attachment and illustrated its multidisciplinary roles. There has been a significant amount of literature on place attachment complimented by its measurements, and validity exchange forms of mobility are reconfiguring how people experience place attachment. The recent decades have seen rapid increases in non-migratory forms of mobility, such as airline travel, internet and mobile telecommunications, and international trade. The types and degrees of mobility vary widely across the world, whether they arise from urban redevelopment or gentrification [2].

The concept of place attachment is used as a lens to understand the relationship between gardeners and their gardens, employing a mixed-methods approach that measures the physical aspects of gardens and gardeners' self-reported experiences in these spaces [3]. Place attachment is practiced in the psychological process of place attachment involving emotions and beliefs.

The Factors in the Community Environment attachment gain popularity in China and around the world as a strategy to meet environmental and social objectives in urban areas, among other reasons. This project highlights the possible causes of place attachment to cooking and heating practices when hydrogen is added to domestic gas supplies. The first possible cause is the historical and cultural significance of hydrogen [4]. Therefore, the meaning of place attachment implies human existence and can be defined as the association between spatial structures and human experiences. Moreover, as encompassing and central as

it appears and despite its evident role in understanding societal functioning, the role of place attachment remains poorly considered and is not clearly understood recently. This process has transformed into a large number of obsolete residential neighborhoods that consume energy inefficiently and have an exclusively functional character [5]. Extensive population growth and planned urbanization have occurred in China over the past century, and urban areas with inadequate physical and social infrastructure have been formed.

In recent years, the Chinese government started an urban renewal process with the target of renewing eight million dwellings in the next 20 years [6]. Moreover, this appears to be dealing with sustainability planning, as the structures in the community environment are planned, and until now, urban renewal practice has mainly focused on the physical community environment of the buildings, meaning improving earthquake resistance and physical conditions of the buildings, but nothing beyond that. As a result, the opportunity to create a built environment with various components, such as open and green spaces, designs, and facilities aimed at disadvantaged groups, good transportation facilities, etc., will contribute for many years to the social dimension in addition to the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

Place attachment brings a sense of security, familiarity, control, and relaxation in everyday life. This study contributes to theoretical and practical knowledge. Theoretically, it establishes how place attachment can psychologically influence Community Environment behavior to return to or revisit certain places.

This study establishes that the theory of reasoned action is important in explaining place attachment in the Community Environment literature. In addition, the use

of the theory of reasoned action is well documented in the literature.

### 1.2. Research Problem

The problem of place attachment in Chengdu, China is complex and involves a variety of aspects within the community context, including both physical and social factors. The term ‘place attachment’ refers to the emotional relationships that exist between individuals and their surroundings. This attachment is influenced by several factors, such as the physical environment, social interactions, and individual perspectives [7]-[8].

Residents’ perceptions of environmental impacts have a huge impact on their attachment to their area, which in turn influences their support for UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Chengdu is located in China’s capital city. Positive environmental perceptions strengthen place attachment, whereas negative environmental perceptions weaken it. This highlights the significance of environmental quality in cultivating community attachment [9].

By offering spaces for social interactions and emotional connections, which are vital for the development of a sense of belonging, the physical environment, such as urban parks, plays a crucial role in community attachment [10].

This is because the physical environment provides a space for interpersonal relationships. However, the incorporation of migrants into the urban fabric presents obstacles because people who live in urban villages frequently have a lesser commitment to their place of residence than those who live in more established neighborhoods, despite the fact that they have strong contact with their neighbors [11]. It appears that the quality and kind of physical surroundings also have a substantial impact on place attachment, although social connections are important.

According to [12], Chengdu’s increasing urbanization and globalization may result in a loss of local individuality, which may contribute to the emotions of placelessness and rootlessness. These feelings can destabilize conventional relationships with places.

Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive approach to address these issues. This approach should consider both the improvement of physical surroundings and the strengthening of social relationships to cultivate community attachment that is both resilient and durable in Chengdu. Specifically, as highlighted in [13], the application of place attachment in communities can act as “a catalyst for the development of local social capital and community mobilization and citizen participation in response to perceived threats to place.”

## 2. Literature Review

This study developed a conceptual model for environment and place attachment and validated its structure in a country destination. Assessment and confirmatory factor analyses revealed that the environment comprises three underlying dimensions: infrastructure, atmosphere, and cultural factors. was positively correlated with the factors of place attachment (place identity, place dependence, place affective, and place social bonding). Moreover, the results found no support for the relationship between the cultural aspect of the environment and place attachment [14].

Another study [15] analyzed the struggle of the people to recover an aquifer that historically supported their SES, starting from a hypothesis regarding the association of feelings of attachment, sense of belonging and collective identification as factors of the relationships between populations and the socio-ecological systems of which they are partializing sense of place attachment and community environment belonging, and the collective identities built on them could be considered main in terms of clarifying the role played by the social factors. It was concluded that, conceptually, place attachment represents an attitude toward a place that can influence behavioral intentions. The study found that stronger place attachment levels indicate more intentions to return to and recommend a place, and examined behavioral loyalty as an indicator of attachment. Moreover, the model showed that loyalty significantly predicted place attachment dimensions. This inverse relationship contradicts much of the previous research on place attachment and parks. The study also suggests that as park visitors increase their use of the parks, both in frequency and proportion to participation elsewhere, they start to form stronger attachments to those parks. It is not attachment that causes them to come back, but rather improves the use that strengthens attachment [16]. The study highlighted certain limitations, such as data collection that occurred for part of the year, and therefore may not be representative of all park users. Moreover, only a survey was presented. The region has a diverse population. Some park users may have been discouraged from participating because of language barriers. Further research can be conducted in the future. Research on the relationship between place attachment and loyalty has yielded conflicting results. Previous research has shown that place attachment has an indirect effect on behavioral loyalty when mediated by attitudinal loyalty [16]. This study indicates that this hypothesis is fully supported. Place attachment moderated the relationship between perceived similarity to other customers and attitude and loyalty. However, these indications did not hold to the same extent as the perceived similarity to employees. There was a marked and important difference in the

result variables between similar employees' condition and similar customer condition. In other words, a high level of perceived similarity to other customers influenced the focal customer's attitude and behavior to a much greater extent than did a high level of perceived similarity to employees [17]. The study concluded about the influence of social trust (interpersonal trust and institutional trust) on farmers' PCBDM in geological disaster-prone areas, and incorporated place attachment as a mediator and self-efficacy as a moderator to understand PCBDM. Moreover, gender-specific differences in the relationship between social trust and place attachment have a positive influence on other people and institutions in a community that enhances cohesiveness, influence, interpersonal harmony, and place identity, which leads to a higher place attachment environment [18]. According [19], ample evidence was obtained for the experience of solastalgia in the community and environment, with emotions of sadness, worry, and disappointment most strongly expressed. Solastalgia was most strongly related to the length of residence in the community, and the expression was huge for those who had lived in the Court's own or river chapel for more than 25 years. Moreover, place attachment and solastalgia experience were strongly positively correlated. Place attachment was weakly expressed through place dependence, suggesting continued adaptation of relationships with places in the community. Therefore, solastalgia was strongly correlated with a negative outlook for the future, for both individuals and future generations.

According to [20], place social bonding is a stronger predictor of pro-environmental behavior than is personal place attachment. The role of place social bonding is corroborated by research on community studies. Moreover, place attachment is held as an item of social and behavioral processes rather than cognitive or perceptual. In the same argument, the meanings of pro-environmental behaviors are constructed through people's social environment interactions, which are then further translated into action. There are different eco-communities participating in activities that significantly influence pro-environmental behavior.

The focus of [21] was on the changes and effects of the economic foundations of a region that in the end would test substance and strengthen place attachments. The regional and local scale initiatives aimed at either promoting, resisting, or enhancing responding to the negative effects of transition must account for these highly localized sets of attachments. Internationally, the energy transition movement seeks to develop awareness of the environmental constraints present in the international economy, particularly those related to fossil fuel energy use and climate change. Forging change beyond the international and national levels will require policy- and decision-makers to resolve some of

the most difficult aspects of the just transition question: social, economic, and environmental behavior.

According to [22], investment in behavioral change projects would not be possible without knowing their prerequisites and determinants, including intention, moral norms, identity, and place attachment. This study demonstrated a significant positive effect of place attachment on the moral norms of water conservation and the intention to conserve water. Moreover, rather than reducing agricultural activities, which were fully ineffective and expanded agricultural activities by non-indigenous farmers, it is important to modify the cultivation and irrigation patterns and diversify the livelihood activities of farmers in the region (e.g., development of both livestock and agricultural activities). This can enhance the attractiveness of rural (agricultural) areas in comparison with urban areas, and consequently can lower movement to cities and enhance farmers' place dependence. In addition, the entry of non-indigenous profiteering farmers into this region can be largely protected.

According to [23], place attachment is a higher-order construct with lower-order dimensions, including place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, and social bonding. It redirects theoretical and empirical attention to understanding the relationship between place influence and pro-environmental behaviors. The study concluded that people-place relations can play a role in local environmental actions, in addition to the call for refinement of environmental programs from a place-based perspective. Place attachment is an antecedent of specific behavioral constructs that determine the current recycling intention.

Prior studies have advocated strategies for encouraging pro-environmental behaviors by directly targeting a single aspect of motivational factors, such as attitude.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was developed based on the notion of topophilia, the affective bond between people and place [24], which examines the search for environment in the city, suburb, countryside, and wilderness from a dialectical perspective, distinguishes different types of environmental experiences, and describes their character (Figure 1).

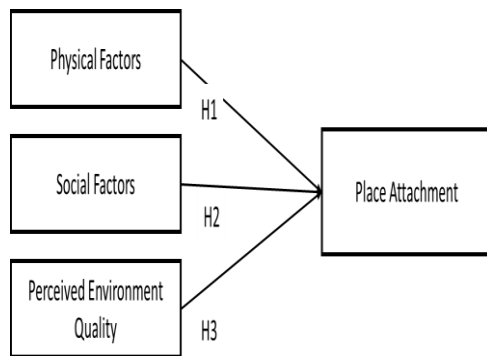
#### 3.2. Research Hypotheses

H1: Physical factors in the community environment positively impact place attachment among residents.

H2: Social factors in the community environment positively impact place attachment among residents.

H3: Perceived environmental quality mediates the relationship between physical factors and place attachment.

H4: Perceived environmental quality mediates the relationship between social factors and place attachment.



**Figure 1. Conceptual framework, developed by the authors based on [24]**

### 3.3. Research Methodology

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of the physical and social aspects of the community environment on place attachment. The research design used in this study was a quantitative research framework, and the survey was structured. The research was centered on the city of Chengdu, which is located in China. The scope of the study was reduced to focus on neighborhoods that have successfully completed public open space regeneration initiatives in recent times. By restricting the scope to these revitalized locations, it is possible to conduct a more in-depth investigation of the ways in which these enhancements influence people's relationships with spaces in their community. Residents of Chengdu are included in the population of interest, particularly those who reside in close proximity to freshly renovated public open spaces or who frequently use them. This demographic will be used to determine a sample size of between 300 and 400 participants to guarantee statistical reliability and representativeness. The sample size was chosen in accordance with the standard requirements for community-level research. With this particular sample size, a solid basis will be established for the data analysis, which will provide insights into the generalizability of the findings. As a result of the fact that the data obtained will reflect each person's impressions of the physical and social aspects, perceived environmental quality, and their sense of commitment to the community, the individual resident serves as the unit of analysis in this research. Within the context of Chengdu's revitalized public spaces, this approach aims to provide complete knowledge of the variables that contribute to place attachment.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the internal consistency coefficients of the study variables.

Table 1 shows that all the variables had Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability. This indicates that the items measuring physical and social factors, perceived environmental quality, and place attachment are consistent and reliable.

**Table 1. Cronbach's alpha analysis (compiled by the authors)**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Physical Factors	0.82
Social Factors	0.78
Perceived Environmental Quality	0.85
Place Attachment	0.81

### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The mean scores suggested high ratings for perceived environmental quality and moderate levels of place attachment (Table 2).

Standard deviations show moderate variability, indicating a range of responses but with overall positive perceptions.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics results (compiled by the authors)**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min. values	Max. values
Physical Factors	4.2	0.6	3.0	5.0
Social Factors	3.8	0.7	2.5	5.0
Perceived Environmental Quality	4.1	0.5	3.2	5.0
Place Attachment	3.9	0.6	2.8	5.0

### 4.3. Correlation Analysis

Significant positive correlations existed between Physical/Social Factors and Place Attachment, as well as between each factor and Perceived Environmental Quality (Table 3).

This suggests that as perceptions of physical and social factors improve, both perceived quality and place attachment tend to increase.

**Table 3. Correlation analysis results (compiled by the authors)**

Variable Pair	Correlation (r)
Physical Factors & Place Attachment	0.63
Social Factors & Place Attachment	0.58
Physical Factors & Perceived Quality	0.66
Social Factors & Perceived Quality	0.61

#### 4.4. Model Fit and Diagnostics

The model explained 57% of the variance in Place Attachment ( $R^2 = 0.57$ ). VIF values below five indicate no multicollinearity issues among the predictors, and the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.98) suggests no autocorrelation in the residuals (Table 4). This confirms a good fit for the model with the assumptions met.

**Table 4. Model fit and diagnostics results (compiled by the authors)**

Metric	Value
R-squared	0.57
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) < 5 for all predictors	
Durbin-Watson	1.98

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Practical Contribution

Specifically, in the context of the characteristics of the local landscape, the practical contribution of this study resides in the insights it provides into the relationship between the physical and social factors present in community surroundings and place attachment. The findings provide urban planners and politicians with recommendations that can be used to design and develop community places that support restorative behaviors and foster strong place attachment. This study provides practical recommendations for creating landscapes that promote both individual and community wellbeing. These recommendations stress the significance of local landscape characteristics, such as esthetic qualities, accessibility, and social components. Furthermore, this research highlights the significance of location and place identity, which can be used to guide policies intended to address issues such as social inequality and green injustice in urban design. By conducting this study, planners can be provided with a more in-depth understanding of how to successfully target vulnerable groups and how to create policies that contribute to the creation of communal spaces that are more inclusive and sustainable.

### 5.2. Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, this study contributes to spatial theory and sense of place by providing empirical evidence on how physical and social factors influence place

attachment, particularly in the context of local landscapes. Using these data, a theoretical framework was developed to establish a connection between place attachment and the qualities of the local landscape. This framework provides fresh insights into how individuals' relationships with their environment impact their perceptions of restoration and territorial attachment. In addition, this research contributes to the expansion of spatial theory by demonstrating how place reliance and place identity can serve as variables that predict restorative views. This new theoretical breakthrough contributes to existing discussions in the fields of environmental psychology, urban studies, and spatial theory by adding depth to our knowledge of how physical and social contexts come together to generate a sense of place.

### 5.3. Future Research

The findings of this study can be expanded upon in further research by investigating various cities to gain a better understanding of how place attachment differs across a variety of cultural and environmental circumstances. Furthermore, longitudinal studies can provide insights into the ways in which changes in physical and social factors influence place attachment over time. The expansion of the model to incorporate additional variables such as environmental sustainability and individual demographic considerations can further deepen our understanding of the elements that influence place attachment in urban regeneration initiatives.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study highlight the substantial role that physical and social factors, notably the qualities of the local landscape, play in the development of place attachment and restorative perspectives. The findings demonstrate a stronger connection to place, which indicates that different local landscapes, in addition to place reliance and identity, contribute to this link. To improve community attachment and environmental well-being, these insights highlight the significance of including both physical design and social interaction in urban planning. Urban designers should prioritize local landscape characteristics, such as green areas and community-centered designs, to improve place attachment and encourage restorative experiences. This recommendation is based on the data presented herein. In addition, integrating local citizens in the design process helps guarantee that spaces are adequate to meet the requirements of the community and enhance the uniqueness of the location. The provision of fair access to green areas should be the primary emphasis of efforts to combat green injustice, particularly in vulnerable populations. In subsequent studies, it might be possible to investigate the long-term effects of local landscapes on place attachment and the connection between these

factors and sustainable behaviors. Finally, the theoretical framework produced in this study should be utilized by policymakers to influence policies that facilitate the creation of environments that are favorable to the well-being of communities, social cohesiveness, and environmental stewardship.

## Declarations

### Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Y.Z. and IMSU.; methodology, Y.Z. and IMSU.; software, Y.Z.; validation, Y.Z. and IMSU.; formal analysis, Y.Z.; investigation, Y.Z. and IMSU.; resources, Y.Z.; data curation, Y.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, Y.Z. and IMSU.; writing—review and editing, Y.Z.; visualization, IMSU.; supervision, Y.Z.; project administration, Y.Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

### Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

### Institutional Review Board Statement

Rigorous ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout the study to ensure participant privacy and data confidentiality, in compliance with institutional and national research standards.

### Informed Consent Statement

Participation in the study was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement.

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Funding information is not available.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies, have been completely observed by the authors.

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