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Abstract	The chapter strives towards addressing the lack of interdisciplinary socio-spatial understanding of identity construction in contemporary urban environments, and aims to provide the missing link between the different disciplines and urban design. The chapters is based on a research project, conducted to study how international student communities' negotiate their identity in multicultural urban environments in UK cities. Drawing insights from current research on people-identity-place from diverse scholarly fields including human geography, phenomenological philosophy and social psychology, the research strives to reveal the relevance of these insights for a socio-spatial understanding of identity construction and negotiation in urban environments. The research findings are formulated into a set of propositions that play an important role in understanding various multidimensional factors which influence people's sense of identity, providing critical guidance for urban design interventions and planning in contemporary cities. The propositions are also potentially significant in examining the emergent socio-spatial patterns of belonging and network in multicultural cities.

Keywords (separated by '-')	Socio-spatial - Identity - Multicultural - Interdisciplinary - Planning - Urban design

Chapter 7
An Interdisciplinary Socio-spatial Approach Towards Studying Identity Constructions in Multicultural Urban Spaces

L. P. Rajendran

7.1 Introduction

Today people increasingly experience unequal political, economic, symbolic and cultural geographies (Short 2017) which create complex spatial encounters involving greater challenges for the negotiation of one's identity; as a result, the identity undergoes a more dynamic and continuous process of adaptation and reconstruction. The global phenomenon of identity conflict has been dealt with from different perspectives by many scholarly disciplines yet a comprehensive understanding of identity construction amidst the growing multicultural nature of cities that embraces a socio-spatial approach is clearly missing. As a practice and a discipline encompassing all aspects of people and place, the issue implores a liberal address by researchers in the field of urban planning and design, which has surprisingly given it little scholarly attention. Current research on people-place-identity from scholarly fields of human geography, phenomenological philosophy and social psychology has produced rich and diverse literature unfolding notions of identity from different standpoints (Golubović 2011; Jacobs 2010; Leary and Tangney 2005; Howard 2000; Norberg-Schulz 1991). Yet they are mostly rendered ineffective for the domain of urban planning and design, due to the somewhat specific nature of the writing from these disciplines. In addition, there is also a lack of innovative framework and methodology that establish the relationship between social and spatial practices in identity constructions processes which can facilitate better understanding in planning and design of multicultural cities. There is clearly a need for a renewed multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary approach in research to disentangle the complexity of peoples' identity construction in cities that can

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30 provide more directly understandable insights and applicable qualities for urban
31 planners, urban designers and architects for augmenting and improving interaction
32 with the built environment for all citizens. Building on the significance of place and
33 identity relationships and its potential to disentangle identity complexities and
34 people behaviour in multicultural cities today, the chapter sets out to examine the
35 significance of socio-spatial practices in understanding peoples' identity
36 construction/negotiation in multicultural urban environments.

37 7.2 Identity, Place and People

38 Comparing the historical and present context of identity formation, social psy-
39 chologist Judith Howard points out:

40 At earlier historical moments, identity was not much an issue; when societies were more
41 stable, identity was to a greater extent assigned, rather than selected or adopted. In current
42 times, however, the concept of identity carries full weight of the need for a sense of
43 who one is, together with an often overwhelming pace of change in surrounding social
44 contexts— changes in the groups and networks in which people and their identities are
45 embedded and in societal structures and practices in which those networks are themselves
46 embedded. (2000, p. 326)

47 In the context of examining identity phenomena there is an increasing ambiguity
48 in comprehending 'where one belongs to'. Concepts of multi-territoriality (Petcou
49 2001) and global sense of place (Massey 1994) have become common platforms of
50 discussions on identity issues in urban living. The increasingly mobile nature of
51 societies (de Waal et al. 2017; de Waal 2014; Bertolini 2006) results in multiple and
52 fluid identities. In addition, the lack of spatial referents accompanying spatial
53 mobility, which previously provided valuable cues for identifying oneself in urban
54 environments, has created a strong sense of uncertainty, deepening the questions of
55 'where' and 'how' people identify themselves. Identity itself is caught in a labyrinth
56 of diverse yet interwoven issues which inscribe differences at socio-cultural, eco-
57 nomic and political levels. This in turn is spatially manifest, transforming urban
58 environments into places for contestation and negotiation, resulting in a further
59 entanglement of meanings, experiences and place relations that facilitate in con-
60 structing one's identity.

61 Nevertheless, people and place/physical settings relationship still remain a
62 valuable domain to understand identity complexities. Places involve the whole set
63 of physical, perceptual, cognitive, psychological and social experiences, without
64 which it are difficult to comprehend any human related concepts. Social psychol-
65 ogist Altman (1992) explains that there are three general ways to relate the physical
66 environment to social relationships and psychological processes: (a) as an inde-
67 pendent variable in which aspects of the environment affect or cause variations in
68 interpersonal processes; (b) as an aspect of behaviour, for example, use of space,

69 personal spacing, territorial behaviour, use of the environment to regulate privacy,
70 possession and display of prized objects, decorating or personalizing places and so
71 on; and (c) as a context or setting within which psychological processes, rela-
72 tionships and behaviours are embedded. The third aspect Altman considers as
73 superior, as the physical environment becomes part of the definition and meaning of
74 the phenomenon occurring where place and people interact, developing a transac-
75 tional relationship.

76   Delving into the rich transactional relationship between people and physical
77 settings, the research aims to understand complex process of identity negotiations in
78 multicultural urban contexts—a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional phenomena,
79 with overlapping layers of people's experiences and perceptions.

7.3   Casestudy: Objectives and Methodology

81 The objectives of this research are

82 • To identify the implications of socio-spatial aspects of people and place expe-
83   riences for identity construction and negotiation in multicultural urban
84   environments.
85 • To examine the relative significance of socio-cultural and spatial factors in
86   identity construction.

88   The main case study for this research was based in the multicultural city of
89 Sheffield, UK. The research participants included fifteen international students
90 studying at the University of Sheffield. All participants had been living in Sheffield
91 for a period of two to three years, Sheffield being their first experience of living
92 outside their home country. The research participants included fifteen international
93 doctoral research students from China, Iran, Mexico, Thailand, Nigeria,
94 Netherlands and Romania. The different types of urban spaces in Sheffield that were
95 included in the study was carefully identified for three reasons (1) for their ability in
96 supporting everyday life of international students (2) to avoid the overly 'designed'
97 aspects of many contemporary cities. Such everyday spaces enable an under-
98 standing of how contemporary spaces accommodate or allow everyday life and
99 interaction, and how people respond to these spatial experiences, (3) Spaces were
100 also chosen for their frequency of use and familiarity among the international
101 student community, which facilitates a more detailed discussion of participant
102 experiences with the spaces. A total of thirty images of various physical settings
103 (numbered one to thirty) were used in the interview session (see Fig. 7.1). These
104 images included the everyday pathways leading to various university buildings,
105 public parks within the circulation zone of the university students, spaces outside
106 the student union building, bus stops, and city centre spaces.

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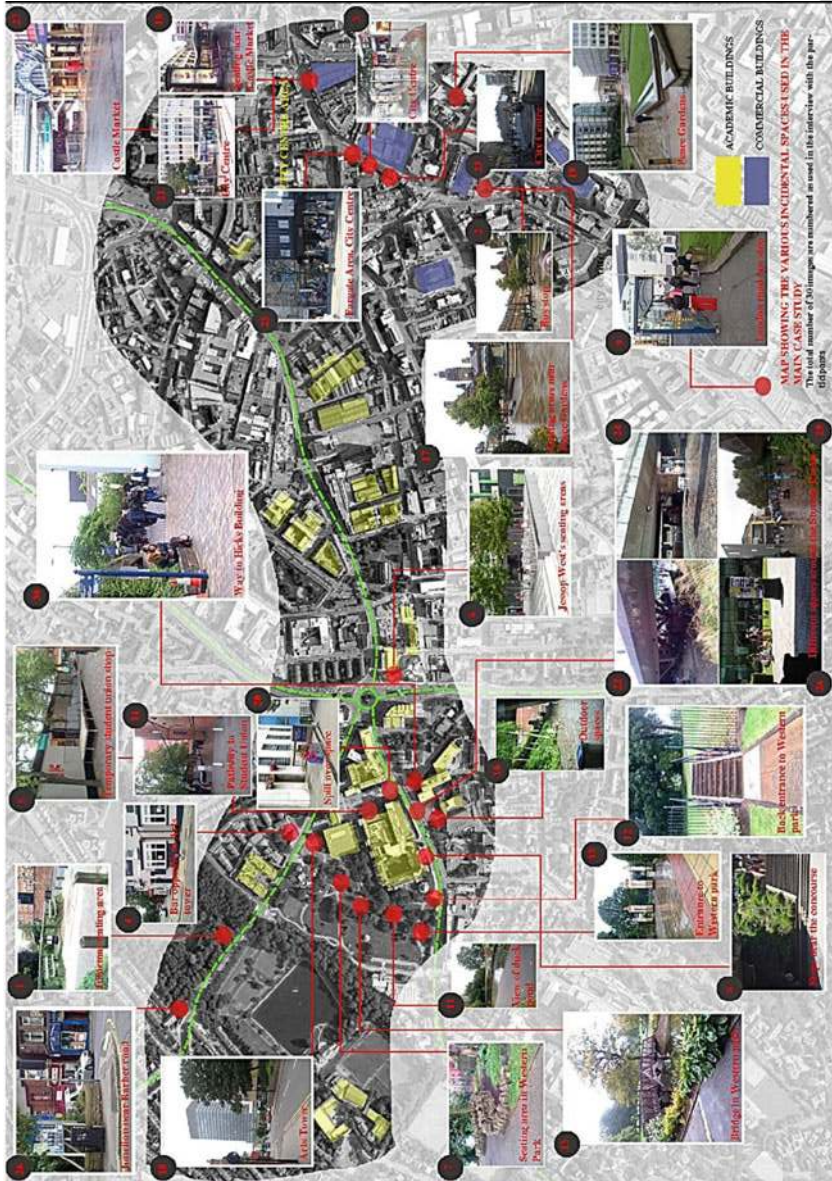
Fig. 7.1 Everyday urban spaces images used in the interview session
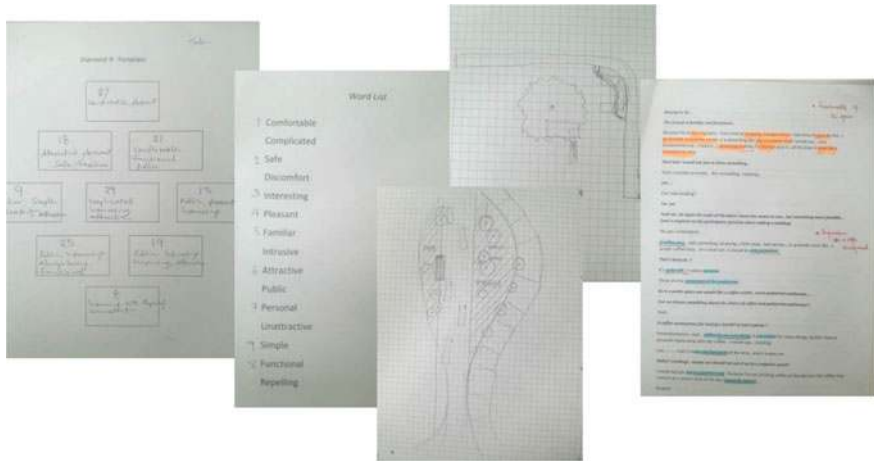
Fig. 7.2 Samples of data collection: Diamond 9 template, wordlist, sketching and interview transcript

Participants were asked to rank the images in a 'Diamond 9' template,[1] based on the extent to which each image and the experiences associated with it related to their identity. The participants then matched the chosen nine images to words in the wordlist provided during the interview. The Diamond 9 method was used as effective tool for promoting discussion, rather than to understand the order of the ranking.

The word list included words such as 'comfort', 'safe', 'pleasant', 'complex' (see Fig. 7.2), which were deliberately chosen for their broad and general connotations- firstly, to easily allow participants to choose and associate them with the images they had chosen; and secondly, to increase the opportunities for exploring the implicit meanings associated with common words describing spatial experiences.

In the final task of the session, the participants were asked to sketch a place based on their personal choices and preferences that make them 'fit in' and feel comfortable. Based on the sketch provided, follow-up questions were posed to help understand the deeper meanings of the spatial narratives. Data at various stages were recorded using smart pen technology.[2]

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[1]Diamond 9 ranking allows participants rank their choices from most significant to least significant. The strength of the diamond 9 ranking lies in developing the interconnections between the various choices and basis on which it was organised by the participants.

[2]Echo Smartpen is a ballpoint pen with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder. When used with Anoto digital paper, it records what it writes for later uploading to a computer, and synchronizes those notes with any audio it has recorded.

7.3.1 Interdisciplinary Framework

Dealing with data which contains multiple layers of complex information related to people's spatial practices requires a strong analytical framework to enable significant interrelationships between several factors to emerge. The various interdisciplinary concepts which were used to develop the analytical framework is explained below.

Phenomenology: Interpretative phenomenological analysis

Research into identity construction in everyday life largely focuses on the implicit meanings of perceptual and spatial experiences of people. For this reason, the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method is considered extremely significant, as it explores and understands the lived experience of a specified phenomenon, providing a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their experiences (Smith 2009). IPA research follows philosopher Edmund Husserl's advice to go 'back to the things themselves', and denies any attempt to fix experiences in predefined or overly abstract categories. Focusing on the phenomenological understanding of lived experiences, IPA is particularly important for this research as it is context-dependent and contingent upon social, historical and cultural perspectives which have a great impact on identity (Smith 2009). IPA as a method enables understandings of peoples' place experiences that are deeper and unselfconscious, allowing the research to capture the complexity of people-place relationship that is crucial for this study.

Human geography: Relph's seven levels of experiential involvement/identification in place

Relph (2008) explains that the essence of a place is embedded 'in the experience of an inside that is distinct from an outside; more than anything else this is what sets places apart in space and defines a particular system of physical features, activities and the meanings'. He offers an interesting and important means to understand place experiences in terms of peoples' experience of being 'inside' or 'outside' a place. The notion of being 'inside' or 'outside' of a place becomes intrinsically connected the extent one identifies or feels a belonging to that place. Relph (2008, p. 49) states that 'the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place'. The dynamic changes in contemporary urban living has reconceptualised peoples' involvement and relationship with places. Relph's seven modes of experiential involvement/identification in places offer the required depth in the experiential concepts with different levels and layers for comprehending the complex spatiality and place engagement in contemporary urban environments. Table 7.1 provides a brief explanation of the various levels of Relph's classification.

Table 7.1 Relph's different modes of experiencing places

Types of identification	Characteristics
Existential insideness	The deepest involvement in place where a person feels being part of the place. The person feels at home
Existential outsideness	The person feels out of place. There is no involvement and the place gives a feeling of alienation, of strangeness
Objective outsideness	Involving deliberate distancing. The place is like an object of study, experienced based on reason, surveyed scientifically and logically
Incidental outsideness	Involving the situation where place is just a backdrop, as when the person is heading somewhere else
Behavioural insideness	When the deliberate experience of place is expected, there is a set of elements, views, landmarks which form the new place
Empathetic insideness	When a person from outside shows empathy with what the place demonstrates as the expression of those who created it and live in it
Vicarious insideness	A second-hand feeling, of indirect experience, the person is transported to the place via image, painting, film, mass media

Source Adapted from Seamon (1996)

*Social psychology: Motivated Identity Construction theory*

The concept of 'motive' brings out both explicit and implicit factors that govern peoples' spatial practices and experiences in a place. This research incorporates Motivated Identity Construction Theory within the framework of analysis. Drawing from the work of Easterbrook and Vignoles (2012) there are six motives of identity construction in people (distinctiveness, meaning, belongingness, continuity, self-esteem and efficacy) which were substantiated by recent studies in social psychology. Originally these motives are fundamentally related to how people develop their identity with the different group of people but in this research these six motives are interpreted as:

- *Distinctiveness*: How much does being part of a place give a unique sense of people's experience?
- *Meaning*: How much does being part of a place give people a sense of meaningfulness to their life?
- *Continuity:* How much does being part of a place make people feel that their past, present and future are connected?
- *Belonging*: How much does being part of a place make people feel that they are included or accepted?
- *Self-esteem*: How much does being part of a place make people see themselves positively?
- *Efficacy*: How much does being part of a place make people feel efficient, competent and capable?

188   Though these six motives may not be comprehensive (Easterbrook and Vignoles
189 2012), they facilitate this research by providing valuable insights into the impact of
190 spatial dimensions on these identity motives.
191   The study employed the theories and concepts discussed above to form an
192 interdisciplinary framework of analysis (Refer Figs. 7.3 and 7.4).   AQ3
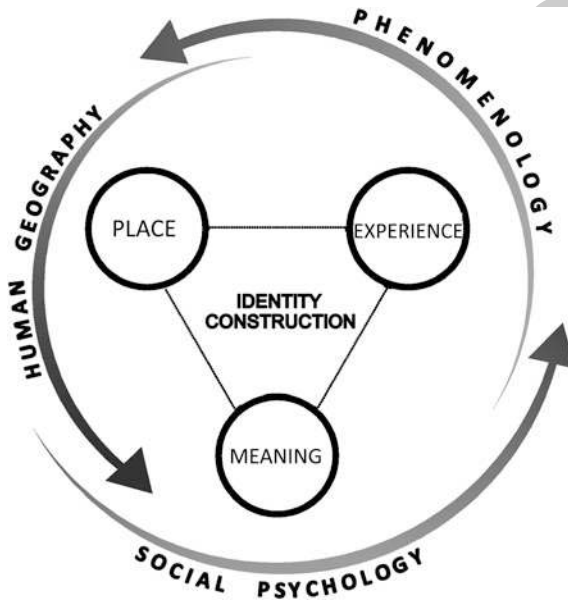
Fig. 7.3 Significance of the three disciplines in studying identity construction (*Source* Drawn by the author)
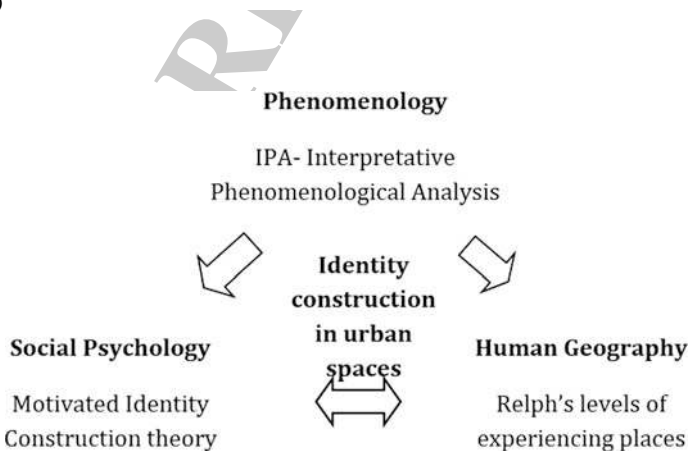
Fig. 7.4 Interdisciplinary framework of analysis (*Source* Drawn by the author)

7.3.2　Analysis

The interview transcripts prepared from the data collection of the 15 participants (referred as P1 to P15) were coded and interpreted using the IPA method, allowing several themes to emerge which were analysed for their socio-cultural and spatial relevance.

In the first stage, data was analysed, interpreted and categorised into three sub-categories from which emergent themes were identified.

- *More spatial than socio cultural*: more emphasis on the physical elements/factors
- *More socio cultural than spatial*: participant's narratives placed more emphasis on the socio-cultural elements
- *Equally socio-cultural and spatial*: participant's narratives implied equal emphasis on both socio-cultural and spatial elements (sense of enclosure, familiarity with places, enclosures etc.)

In the second stage these themes were used for comprehending the relationship between the identity motives and spatial experiences of participants. Finally the prevalence of various levels of place involvement in the participants' narratives that enabled identity negotiations/construction was analysed.

7.3.2.1　More Spatial Than Socio-cultural

For participants identifying with those urban spaces that were defined more by the spatial aspects of the environment, the themes that emerged consistently in most of their narratives were the notion of **visual appeal** of the place (landscape, natural setting, buildings), **familiarity** (frequency of use, everyday routine, proximity to home/work), **physical comfort and safety** (general safety, thermal comfort) and **functionality** (proximity, efficiency).

The feeling of comfort in urban spaces, which was expressed as a significant factor that enabled participants to develop their sense of identity, was related to the extent of spatial freedom the environment offered. This was explained in terms of participants' desire for uncluttered spaces, clarity in circulation, spaces without obstacles (behavioural restriction) and wider choices in using such spaces. One of the participants observed that a spatial experience which accommodated spontaneity to pause allowed them to be comfortable as it relieves the need to be cautious while strolling in a public space.

In the category of themes that manifested equal socio-cultural and spatial relevance were the notions of privacy/sense of enclosure and user group comfort. Participants from different ethnic backgrounds clearly expressed different ways in which they perceived the need for privacy in urban spaces. For example, a female Iranian participants expressed this need of privacy and sense of enclosure in public spaces more strongly (preference for physically defined elements and corner space)

whereas female Romanians and male Chinese participants were content with places where they were not the centre of attention. Different notions of defining boundaries existed in participants' narratives. Unlike some of the Iranian participants' notions of the absolute need for privacy, boundaries were also manifested through the semi-enclosed frame with the climbing plants, which presents a sense of comfort which enabled the participant a deeper engagement with the environment. However it is important to highlight how the notion of safety takes over the other visual aspects when identifying oneself with a place.

7.3.2.2 Equally Socio-cultural and Spatial

Amongst the themes which were defined equally by socio-cultural and spatial parameters of place experiences, the most prominent and frequently occurring themes were **familiarity** and **belonging to a place** (derived from similarity to their native spatial elements), **user group comfort**, **socio-psychological comfort**, and **territoriality**. The main theme of discussion here was how participants' spatial experience revealed interesting yet implicit manifestation and negotiations of their need to 'belong' to the place. Participants expressed strong affinity and associations with urban spaces which enabled spatial reinterpretations that linked to their socio-cultural identity in terms of the architectural features or the kind of activities present in the urban environment. Although these themes were defined by the socio-cultural background of participants, they are realised through spatial manifestations. For instance, one of the male Chinese participants, while explaining the notion of territoriality, discussed his preference for circular forms of seating area along with a road defining its location which marks the space of his group when using an urban space. Additionally, the participant highlighted how such an arrangement could give them more privacy from other student groups. Similarly Iranian female participants rarely engaged themselves in some urban spaces which are busy, as they felt uncomfortable due to the sense that they were being watched. In this case, although the participants' socio-cultural background defined the meaning of 'comfort,' it was influenced and further defined by the particular spatiality of places.

7.3.2.3 More Socio-cultural Than Spatial

Those themes that placed more emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of place experience and which encouraged the sense of identity for participants were **religious needs**, **nostalgic place memories,** and the **sense of community/social life**. Participants' religious backgrounds played a significant role in determining the personal choice of places they could identify themselves with. In this context, the

proximity of a mosque or church, meeting people with similar religious belief, and the resulting social life, emerged as an important need for participants identifying with a specific urban environment.

Participants' narratives showed the different perceptions of spaces by international students, indicating the influences of socio-cultural conditioning of participants in engaging and identifying themselves with various urban environments. During the interviews when participants discussed their personal space, whether enclosed or outdoor, the prominent theme that emerged was the notion of openness and inside/outside connectedness. Participants viewed this characteristic feature of urban spaces as providing them with a sense of safety, and an escape from feeling isolated.

Multiple layers of meaning emerged from participants' responses on accommodating themselves in public spaces. While the chapter did not include the intercepts from the participants narratives, the intercepts below is included to show the richness, depth and complexity embedded in the narratives of place experiences. One of the female Iranian participant while sketching her personal choice of public space where she would identify with the most, explained,

A coffee area with seats… self-service or probably even like a proper coffee shop or a small van… it should be pedestrian as its safe and make me relaxed [P11]

Does choosing coffee shop is synonymous for having a break? Or just a pause? [I]

Hmmm, well coffee for me is everything. It is symbol for many things…It's like I have personal relationship with the coffee. I would say [smiling] [P11]

Further probing into the participant's coffee habits revealed implicit connection with the socio-cultural aspects of her narrative:

A coffee area in a public space makes me feel good; it makes public space for me a better place or maybe some kind of a social thing. Maybe I cannot see myself sitting in a public space doing nothing, holding a cup is doing something. Gives me a reason to sit in a public space. [P11]

Why do you think you cannot sit not doing anything? [I]

Probably whenever I sit without doing anything, it's just, I don't feel personal. If I'm busy doing something, I'm doing my own thing. [P11]

It can be observed that apart from the physical elements (in this case, the enclosure) which allow the participant to accommodate herself in the public spaces, it is also the activities they perform which helps them to negotiate the urban environment. The above participant's place interaction implies what Castells (2007) explains as, that although spatial meanings are culturally created, their final meaning depends on people's interaction with the places.

Table 7.2 shows the summary of various themes derived from the analysis of the interview transcripts using IPA. The themes are categorized and colour-coded according to the socio-cultural and spatial relevance of each theme. This colour-coding is followed throughout the analysis.

Table 7.2 Themes developed using IPA

Summary of emergent themes and their socio-cultural and spatial relevance		
Socio-cultural > spatial	**Equally socio-cultural and spatial**	**Spatial > socio-cultural**
Religious needs	Historic/grandness	Inside/Outside connectedness
Nostalgic place memories	Similarities to native places	Nature
Childhood associations	User group comfort	Spatial freedom
Entertainment	Sense of enclosure	Functional
Social life	More observer/ less observed	Uncluttered spaces
Territoriality	Memory objects	Safety-natural surveillance
Familiarity through native spatial experiences	Familiarity-personal experiences	Attractiveness
	Visual and physical connectedness	Everyday connectivity
	Inspiring	Entertainment
	Visual appeal	Belonging in relation to home/ everyday activities
	Tactile experience	Safety
	Socio psychological comfort	Personal meaning
		Unselfconscious behaviour
		Convenience
		Physical comfort
		Haptic experiences
		Sense of Ownership

Source Drawn by the author

7.3.3 Identity Motives and Their Socio-spatial Relevance

The themes under all three categories discussed above were analysed for their interconnections with the various identity motives (namely Distinctiveness, Meaning, Continuity, Belonging, Self-esteem and Efficiency) and their socio-cultural and spatial relevance/significance in participants' place experience as this related to identity constructions (see Table 7.3). Belonging and Distinctiveness

Table 7.3 Identity motives analysis

Identity motives and their socio-spatial relevance															
Identity motives	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15
Distinctiveness		●	●	○	●	●	●	●			●				●
Meaning				○	●					●	○	○	○	○	○
Continuity															
Belonging	○	○				●	○	○			●	○		○	
Self-esteem													○		
Efficiency		●		●	●	●	●	●	●					●	
Non-categorical	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒

were manifest as the most prominent identity motive in the place experiences of 12 and 9 participants respectively. Distinctiveness was attached to themes which involved more spatial elements (for instance, the historicity of the structure, native style of buildings, the significance of the activities which the spaces lead into etc.).

The Efficiency motive was prevalent to the same extent as the Distinctiveness motive. The Efficiency motive emerged from those narratives where the participants indicated the functional efficiency of the urban spaces as an important criterion to developing of sense of identity with that environment. While Continuity and Self-esteem motives rarely occurred in the participants' experiences, interestingly some of the themes raised did not fit under any of the aforementioned motives. It is important to note that all the participants' narratives suggested the prevalence of non-categorical motives which indicates how considering spatial aspects of people identity experiences introduces several other interesting factors in identity studies, to name a few physical comfort, inside/outside connectedness, spatial freedom, and familiarity, sense of enclosure, territoriality. It is also interesting to note that the Continuity motive was not reflected in the participants' narratives, and the Self-esteem motive was reflected in only one participant's identity-related place experiences, again highlighting how non-categorical motives can not only offer renewed understanding of peoples' identity construction but also provide important cues for comprehending and addressing the significant concepts of territoriality and boundaries (that was reflected in the participants' narratives), which varies for diverse cultural groups and individuals.

Based on the analysis of identity motives and their socio-spatial significance inferred from the narratives of 15 participants, a summary of their responses was tabulated as shown in Table 7.3. From Table 7.3 it can be observed that the maximum number of identity motives and most prevalent combination that

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occurred in participant narratives (In 5 participants) were Distinctiveness, Belonging, and Efficiency, in addition to Non-categorical motives, followed by the combinations of Meaning, Belonging and Non-categorical motives (in 6 participants' place experiences). It suggests the relative significance of the combinations of identity motives and their associations with identity constructions.

In Table 7.3 Individual cells are colour-coded, referring to the extent of socio cultural and spatial relevance attached to each motive. Where the motives did not occur in a participant's place experiences, the respective cells are left blank. While Distinctiveness and Efficiency motives largely emphasised the spatial aspects of people experiences, Meaning and Belonging motives involved both socio-cultural and spatial aspects of people's experiences. In this stage of the analysis it became difficult to explain the socio-spatial relevance of responses, due to the complexity of non-categorical motives; hence the coding with grey colour indicates only the prevalence of non-categorical motives in each participant. Analysis of the identity motives based on the various sub-themes that emerged in the first stage of analysis explains the complex factors intertwined in place and identity relationships experiences by the participants. While the analysis importantly identified the prevalence of non-categorical motives in identity related experiences, it also evidenced the significance of Distinctiveness, Belonging and Meaning motives proposed by the Motivated Identity Construction Theory.

7.3.4 Modes of Place Involvement and Sense of Identity

In the final stage of the analysis, participants' narratives were studied in order to comprehend the modes of place involvement experienced in urban spaces that were related to participant identity construction. Table 7.4 illustrates the presence (cells coloured) and absence (blank cells) of various modes of place involvement that occurred in the participants' experiences. It can be observed that Existential Outsideness (complete alienation from the place) and Vicarious Insideness (indirect experience of places) rarely occurred in the participants' narratives. Behavioural Insideness was the most prevalent (14 participants) mode of place involvement in identity-related experiences, followed by Objective Outsideness (13 participants) and Empathetic Insideness (12 participants).

It is important to note here that places that allowed logical reasoning and efficiency (in terms of safety, location and functional aspects of a place) played an equally significant role as the observable qualities, visual patterns (created by the visual appeal of the place) and emotional experiences (associated with the notions of sense of belonging). It was also observed that complete unselfconscious involvement with the people was notably prevalent (8 participants) in the experiences of participants pertaining to identity construction.

Analysing the various levels of place involvement in individual participant's narratives, it was observed that Empathetic Insideness, Behavioural Insideness and Objective Outsideness simultaneously existed in 10 participants' narratives.

Author Proof

**Table 7.4** Modes of place involvement analysis

Place involvement and sense of identity relationship														
Modes of Place involvement	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15
Existential insideness		■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■				
Empathetic insideness	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Behavioural insideness	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Vicarious insideness										■	■				
Incidental outsideness								■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Objective outsideness	■	■		■	■	■									
Existential outsideness															

The characteristic nature of these three levels are highly comparable with the notions of Distinctiveness, Belonging and Efficiency, which were are also highly prevalent and coexisted in some of the participant's narratives. This indicates the significance of distinctive experiences, visual quality, belonging and functionality of a place for developing a sense of identity with that place.

7.4 Socio-spatial Propositions Defining Identity Construction and Negotiation in Multicultural Urban Environment

Comparing and correlating the emergent themes with the identity motives (from social psychology) and different levels of place involvement (from human geography), the following list of socio-spatial propositions were evolved to define identity construction and negotiation in multicultural urban spaces; **Boundaries, Restoration, Meaning, Distinctiveness, Belonging, Functionality and Safety**. Figure 7.5 illustrates the seven socio-spatial propositions developed as the research outcome, all of which are grounded in the socio-spatial realm that define the identity in urban environments. Based on the interdisciplinary analysis, the propositions were developed from the identity motives. Some new propositions were developed from the non-categorical motives while others were based on the socio-spatial reassessment and reinterpretation of the identity motives formulated by Motivated Identity Construction Theory.
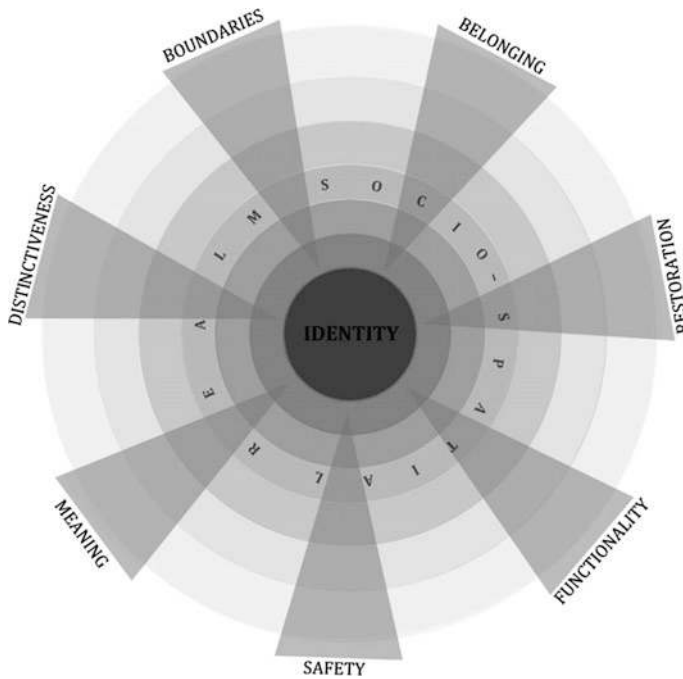
Fig. 7.5 Socio-spatial propositions defining identity constructions in multicultural urban environment (*Source* Drawn by the author)

7.4.1 Boundaries

The need for understanding one's boundaries in the physical environment are strongly linked to the way people identify with that environment. Woodward (2003, p. 167) writes 'difference and sameness involve the marking of boundaries and the identity story is characterised by the moments at which boundaries are drawn, redrawn and transgressed and this is part of the dynamic of identity.' The primacy of boundaries in physical settings are generally well accepted, as to define space literally meant to determine boundaries (Hays and Tschumi 2000). The analysis showed some interesting insights of boundaries embedded in participant's identity experience which ranges from being suggestive and implicit, to an almost necessary and explicit need. Boundaries help in identifying a territory and defining individuals' spatial behaviour within that territory. Kim Dovey explains the importance of territories, which are particularly crucial in urban situations, as 'largely people feel out of place when not aware of "how to act" in that particular place' (Dovey 2009, p. 37).

This become more pronounced in multicultural settings as the boundaries marking territories also act as a haven offering the socio-psychological comfort for different user groups. As in multi-cultural settings, aspects of boundary recognition

⁴²¹ bring an added layer of complexity as there are more chances of potential
⁴²² mis-recognition of boundaries due to particular cultural expectations with their
⁴²³ concomitant spatial manifestations: where meanings and definition of boundaries
⁴²⁴ differ between cultures. However, careful study and understanding of boundaries
⁴²⁵ become a potential means for enabling identity negotiations serving as a
⁴²⁶ socio-cultural buffer particularly in a multicultural urban environment.

7.4.2   Restoration

⁴²⁸ Korpela et al. (2001) defined restoration as a process of recovery that follows stress
⁴²⁹ or fatigue, involving an enhancement of mood, a renewed capacity for directed
⁴³⁰ attention, and possible self-reflection. Contemporary urban living is often charac-
⁴³¹ terised by speed, a sense of alienation and displacement, leading to an increasingly
⁴³² fragile relationship between people and place. Hence people tend to seek restorative
⁴³³ qualities in places that enable them to reconstitute their self and identity and
⁴³⁴ develop a sense of attachment to the physical world. Spatial experiences that offer
⁴³⁵ personal and social restoration are considered to be an important factor that enables
⁴³⁶ people to identify with places, hence Restoration is one of the propositions iden-
⁴³⁷ tified in this research which define identity construction/negotiation. Restorative
⁴³⁸ environments make the place compatible to one's preference, hence it enables a
⁴³⁹ sense of identity by being favourable for engaging and connecting with such a place
⁴⁴⁰ in the contemporary urban environment.

⁴⁴¹   Restorative experiences fall under the characteristic nature of peak experiences
⁴⁴² which is the 'integrated feeling, spontaneity, creative, ease of functioning, positive
⁴⁴³ etc' as described by Maslow (1961, p. 257), and discussed as the most appropriate
⁴⁴⁴ situation for evoking a strong sense of identity in a person. In such experiences,
⁴⁴⁵ Maslow explained that people feel more integrated in many ways and feel a sense of
⁴⁴⁶ complete relaxation. The research demonstrated the restorative quality of a place
⁴⁴⁷ which occurred in various ways such as inside-outside connectedness, or land-
⁴⁴⁸ scaping elements allowing people to associate with nature. In addition some spatial
⁴⁴⁹ tactics were also adopted to overcome the stressful and complex urban condition:
⁴⁵⁰ places that allow pause and moments of reflection and contemplation, and expe-
⁴⁵¹ riences associated with such places of restoration, facilitate the interaction with
⁴⁵² one's self so as to reconstitute or restructure one's identity.

7.4.3   Meaning

⁴⁵⁴ One of the broad definitions of meaning is something that generates perception and
⁴⁵⁵ is associated with an individual's internal psychological and social processes
⁴⁵⁶ (Stedman 2003). This research indicated that people identify themselves with urban
⁴⁵⁷ environments that enable meaningful experience, though they are similar to the

restorative experiences in places but are different in terms of providing a sense of purpose and personal meaning being associated with some places. Since the affective perception is generated from the psychological process (meanings and attachments) rooted in the setting, the identity of place is determined not only by the physical components but also the meanings and associations developed between people and places. Meaning may be generated by various factors but broadly this research indicates that personal meanings are attached to places associated with people's everyday life, work, memories, sense of restoration and home, whereas religious places, and urban spaces with social activities and interaction, foster social meanings. While personal meaning attached to places, as mentioned earlier, is based on individual experiences which may be diverse for different people, social meaning are often derived based on the cultural background and conditioning of individual and groups.

7.4.4   Distinctiveness

Distinctiveness is the quality or state of being different, and according to this research urban spaces that offer distinctive experiences are considered to be special compared to other spaces. It was also observed in the case study analysis that such spaces were potentially significant for developing a sense of identity, as people were more attracted and eager to be part of such experiences. Distinctiveness in urban spaces, similarly to 'meaning' discussed above, can be manifest through socio-cultural, spatial, visual and symbolic elements in the environment. Distinctive spatial experiences can serve to balance the routine, mundane and homogeneous nature of much of the contemporary urban environment. Distinctiveness can be perceived and experienced through the uniqueness of spatial elements; for instance, the historicity of the building elements, the simplicity of the spatial planning and design to enrich experience, an interesting juxtaposition of activity spaces, and so on.

Contextual experiences that are distinctive offer valuable cues for locating and orienting oneself with the place and serve as points of reference. Such urban environments allow people to confidently manoeuvre through, engage with, and gradually develop a sense of identity with the environment.

7.4.5   Belonging

A sense of belonging creates a deeper and reciprocal relationship with places, where people identify themselves with the place and the place in turn reinforces their identity. Apart from the socio-cultural factors that play a crucial role in belonging to a place, the research case study indicated that familiarity and comfort with a place are also some of the factors that enable the sense of belonging to a place. The notions of being connected (whether through spatial or visual experiences) with the

place as a part of one's everyday life also allowed participants to initiate the sense of belonging in the urban environment.

It is exactly these ordinary places, and our everyday performativity in them, which is also reciprocal in the sense of allowing one to extend one's self to identify in that place and in turn reassuring, reinforcing or restructuring one's identity with the place itself, that nurtures the human self, anchoring and securing them to the physical world. On the other hand, interestingly, places in the present urban context can also evoke a sense of belonging whose underlying characteristics and nature can be linked to Fortier's (1999) observation of how certain nomadic groups, through ritualised repetition of symbolic acts and stylised practices, tend to rein-scribe themselves into a space. The comparison that is crucial here is the urban setting which accommodates these repetitive practices, which can also be seen as a spatial tactic of people to develop a sense of identity with the environment. With the multicultural nature of the urban environment, individuals and groups may tend to follow specific spatial practices—for instance, developing a preferred route to visit/reach a place, appropriating specific places—all of which possess and enhance their own social meanings. Hence urban spaces providing opportunities for various spatial tactics create a favourable environment for developing a sense of identity.

7.4.6   Functionality

The functional capacity of an urban environment is observed as an important factor for people to feel attracted to the place and identify with it. The functional efficiency of places is regarded as an essential characteristic of urban spatial experiences. The research case study indicated that people preferred places that ease the complexity of urban activities. The relationship between people and place is more of a necessity which gradually becomes part of their lifestyle. Flexibility and multiple-use of urban spaces manifests the ability of the environment to be efficient when engaged with by different people.

7.4.7   Safety

Physical safety is considered as a default requirement in the urban environment for people to enable any form of interaction and connectedness with them. Safe urban spaces allow people to explore them and help in gradually developing a sense of familiarity and comfort with that environment. Safety for pedestrians is an important factor initiating the process of place engagement, as it reduces feeling of being conscious of the safety factor and fosters spontaneity in activities and movement. As in Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, safety assurance of a place is considered as a prerequisite for other higher-order experiences of identifying one's self with that place. A safer environment also allows people to be more flexible, and

offers them the confidence to creatively use or negotiate urban spaces. Safer places enable people to develop a relationship of trust with them, to become more connected with that environment. Physical safety also implicitly offers psychological comfort and freedom in a multicultural environment and fosters healthy social engagement.

7.5 Conclusion

The study demonstrated how by adopting a socio-spatial approach in understanding identity construction and negotiation in urban environments can develop a symbiotic relationship between spatial and non-spatial disciplines. The research showcases the complex interlacing of social and spatial structures in cities defining peoples' everyday urban practices. It is important to highlight that the suggested propositions for identity construction and negotiation are strongly linked to the existing socio-spatial structures as it forms the matrix in which these propositions essentially operate. The higher order of the socio-spatial propositions suggested allows for further research into each of them for more specific spatial interpretations which can be instrumental in examining emergent networks and patterns of belonging and behavior in cities. Some the works undertaken by architects and urban designers have resulted in developing framework/guidelines good urban design, place making etc. such framework and guidelines can be potentially revisited and reinterpreted to understand in depth, how they facilitate in actually enabling people and place interaction which is fundamental for identity construction/negotiation in cities.

7.6 Limitations and Further Research

The very complexity of this research topic, identity in multicultural contexts, poses several difficulties and challenges in conducting the study. Given the constraints complexity of data, though it was deemed advantageous to limit the sample of participants to 15 student participants' from six countries (China, Thailand, Romania, Nigeria, Iran, and Holland), it clearly is a limitation to delve into the large issues of multiculturalism and present more specific examples which manifested the impact of cultural background of the people in identity construction or negotiation process. However an increased number of participants and greater diversity of nationalities would make further empirical and theoretical contributions to the research topic. The research aimed to study identity construction in multi-cultural environments for which the selection of Sheffield as a case study was justified in terms of the data describing the percentage and diversity of its international student population compared to other cities in UK. Though the multicultural diversity of the case study was justified, the spatial features and characteristics of each and every

city would have an impact on the ways in which people interact with the spaces, which make the data analysed here very context-specific. However this limitation can be considered as potential direction for further research.

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