

The Sense of Place for Tourists: Place-making Under the Perspectives of Symbolic Interaction and Phenomenology

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Abstract—Organic place-making and planned placemaking are ends on a continuum of options for place making theories that give significant insight of tourism research. Sense of place is another concept that provides further theoretical and practical depth for understanding place making. With symbolic interaction and a phenomenology perspective, sense of place can be conceived as a stream of awareness composed of place images, place significances and place engagements, which are inseparably linked through the symbolic interaction between tourists and the place. Place image is produced biologically through sensory interactions between humans and place; place significance is generated semiologically in consciousness interactions; and place engagement is created existentially from emotional interactions. These three symbolic interactions create the experience stream which is a person's perception of a place. This stream originates in the authenticity and the organic structure of a place. While top-down placemaking meets the ordinary, recreational needs of tourists, the authenticity of bottom-up place-making gives tourists deeper and richer experiences through the individual's stream of awareness. The different experiences that various forms of place making engender can be better understood in terms of the complexity of the stream of tourist awareness. Mixed placemaking methods need to appreciate the authenticity protection of the back-stage place-making against the commercialization of front-stage placemaking.

Keywords—*sense of place; place-making; placemaking; symbolic interaction; phenomenology; tourist experience; theoretical model; authenticity; stream of awareness; place image; place significance; place engagement*

I. INTRODUCTION

As an innate human behavior, place making has been researched in such domains as architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, geography, sociology, and tourism. As far as tourism research is concerned, place making is usually regarded as an operational construct to describe how tourism-related planning and marketing shape the built environment, landscape, image, and imageability of a tourism destination (Bosman & Dredge 2011; Coates & Seamon 1984; Lew 2017; Hollinshead et al. 2009). Organic place-making and planned placemaking are ends on a continuum of options for place making theories that give significant insight of tourism research. But there are some

disagreement on place-making and placemaking economically which reveals the complexity of this problem and the lack of experience research on place making. The arguments in theory or in practice could be resolved on the basis of further experience research with symbolic interaction and a phenomenology perspective.

II. IMPORTANT VIEWPOINTS ABOUT PLACE MAKING RESEARCH

Generally, there are three ways of spelling “place making”, “place-making” and “placemaking”, which are not differentiated in the academic literature, Lew (2017) suggested using these to bring greater clarity to the place making discourse. Thus, for this discussion, place-making is an indigenous, bottom-up, and organic process that is distinguished from placemaking as a planned and top-down exertion; the two of which there by form ends on a continuum of broadly defined place making theories, methods, and practices (2017). Place-making (P-M) is unplanned actions, driven through individual agency, such as in the traditional ethnic villages of Southeast Asia (Yea, 2002), Chinatowns in American cities, and cultural landscapes of different parts of Europe (Brown, 2004), which are characteristically built through long-term social practices (Dyck, 2005; Lems, 2016). Placemaking (PM), in its purer forms, is master planned and intentionally global themed by governments, tourism authorities, and private developers, and includes mass tourism theme parks, entertainment venues and shopping centers, and even historically preserved shopping streets. These are professionally designed and often modern or post-modern in style. The distinction between P-M and PM gives insight into the macro tourism industry players and the micro-relationships of hosts and guests in a tourism context. This article is based on Lew's (2017) definitions of “place-making” and “placemaking”, and seeks to further extend this subject from an important different perspective.

Indigenous place-making, which has also been referred to as “minor placemaking” (Bosman & Dredge 2011) and “unintentional worldmaking” (Hollingshead, 2009), reflecting the degree to which modernity has come to be dominated by placemaking. In its pure form, place-making is never tourist-directed, but is instead a field-of-care (Tuan,

1979) that has deep internal meaning for the care giver. It is a spiritual avocation, not a commercial vocation. Placemaking creates and preserves the local cultural soul of a people in place.

Lew (2017) suggests that all forms of tourism are placemaking. Tourism development is always a planned, intentional activity that is other-directed (toward outsiders) (JB Jackson Reference). In its pure form, placemaking is a commodified master planned physical design and marketing image, intended to meet the consumption interests of tourists (and others).

When done right, it makes people feel comfortable, is easily navigable, and is well appreciated by both residents and tourists alike. Its image is often created through a mix of reality and fantasy, history and mythology, and intentional and unintentional events (Amaomo, 2012; Coates & Seamon, 1984; Lew, 2017; Massey, 2005; Wortham-Galvin, 2008). Placemaking often entails a political process through which one place story (whether real or not) comes to dominate, or even obliterate, all others (Buser, 2013; Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014; Hultman & Hall, 2012; Nichols, 2001; Peirce et al., 2011). It has been criticized as a misuse of government authority (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003), unreasonable gentrification (Frank, 2012; Richards, 2014) and contributing to an increase in placelessness (Friedman, 2010; Relph, 1976).

Advocates of placemaking believe that consumer-oriented designs will provide a better experience for both locals and visitors, as well as providing commercial value. They have generally been proven right to some extent, as seen in the economic successes of mass tourism and retailing. Compared to this powerful argument, place-making's insistence on authenticity seems to hold only a niche interest for consumers, as a way of adding colorful overtones to an essentially mass consumer experience.

The disagreement on place-making and placemaking economically reveals the lack of experience research on place making. Obviously, tourists tend to be fond of a tourism destination relying on their personal experience, which providing a better experience is prone to get commercial success. In the experience economy, it is the tourist experience that determines whether a tourist place is successful or not. But the key point is that it is not obvious to identify which is better in providing experience for its complexity. When we stand at the area of Disneyland or Rome Colosseum, can you easily distinguish which provides better experience? Perhaps it is some difficult for their complexity. Actually, we also can't draw a conclusion just from design method's tourist-orientation but from the deep research on the experience itself. The arguments could be resolved on the basis of further experience research.

Furthermore, the experience research enjoys much importance philosophically. Phenomenologists believe that a human being can know objects clearly from their personal experiences. That is, without the vital experience about place making, we cannot decide which is better or more rational. We can get deep cognition on place making for personal experience, yet some dispute on place making originates

from the scarce of experience or wrong expression of experience. Gadamer (1960) thought that experience had two nuclear characteristics for direct and final result. Husserl regarded the experience as a stream which is composed of vision, feeling, perception, love and etc. From this perspective, we can equate the experience of place with the sense of place which also expresses the personal comprehensive feel to a place. If we research clearly the sense of place, then we can make better acknowledgement on place making. What, then, are the differences between place-making and placemaking in the tourist experience? What is the sense of place for tourists?

III. QUESTIONS RAISED FROM THEORY AND PRACTICE

For theoretical and practical reasons, sense of place has many meanings. If we cannot figure out what is the sense of place is for tourists, we may be wandering about the tourism planning practice for the close relations between them.

There have been concerned about more extensive theme town makeovers in the US (Hoelscher, 1998; Lew, 1989) and European-stylized residential developments in China (Bosker, 2014). Furthermore, in China, most of the cities now attach importance to the tourism industry and are used to investing billions of dollars in such tourism projects as tourist towns, tourism complexes, tourism shopping streets, and theme parks. Some of them are artificial, duplicate, transplanted and homogeneous, which adhere to such a excessive belief that the copy of huge investment patterns will bring generous returns. Some planners and architects are used to normative procedures and blueprints, while a few government officers are more confident to control the planning by their intentions. Tourists-oriented and experience-satisfied have been the principles of placemaking practice. Although the prerequisites are acknowledged, will it meet the tourists' need completely, and does it provide satisfying experience genuinely and ultimately? The thorough research of the sense or experience of place is primary to resolve in practice.

Theoretically, the place is a conception which integrates natural, personal and cultural dimensions of an environment into one experimental whole beyond geographic space (Coates & Seamon, 1984; Othman et al., 2013; Tuan, 1977; Wortham-Galvin, 2008). Through the experience research in philosophy, architecture, geography and planning perspectives, people have a deeper understanding of a place. "Place habitation" means "the convergence with the earth, the sky, the sacred and the transience" (Heidegger, 1951), "place spirit" means "settlement" and "experience meaningful existence" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980), "urban place image" contains "districts, edges, nodes, paths and landmarks" (Lynch, 1960). However, most of these research perspectives are usually from residents instead of tourists. Now that there are such differences as the familiarity to the place, purposes to live and degree of experience, the sense of place for tourists has its characteristics obviously. When tourists travel around those world famous places with the unique characteristics, such as Vietnam Veterans Memorial or the Forbidden City, everyone can feel the deep and complicated places experience, which is different from the local people familiarly and innately, but also impressively

and lifelong memorable. Furthermore, there is still a lack of ontology description of experience for research findings which can give us vivid and integral feeling. Just as Tuan said, one person may know a place intimately as well as conceptually. He can articulate ideas but he has difficulty expressing what he knows through his senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and even vision (Yi-fu Tuan, 1977). In another word, it's easier to draw cognitive outcome than to express their genuine experience which frequently influenced by their preconception or wrong subjective conscious.

What is the sense of place for tourists? What is the genuine difference between place-making and placemaking from the perspective of experience? What is the meaning of organic or authenticity? All these questions are intertwined together and should be solved ultimately by the distinct illustration of the sense of place for tourists.

IV. RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTION AND PHENOMENOLOGY

This research is from the perspective of symbolic interaction as a sociology and social psychology theory which claims to the study of human groups from people individual interacting daily life with a natural environment, founded by the American sociologist Mead, and put forward by his student Blumer officially in 1937. In contrast to the irritable creation of experience, this theory stresses the process creation of experience through the symbolic interaction between subjects and objects:

The object is the construction of human and not entities which have an intrinsic essence. Their nature depends on the tendency and attitude of people. (H.G. Blumer, 1969)

The object must be seen (in terms of their significance) as a social creation,

as the formation and product during the process when people are defining and

explaining in the interaction.....When people gives meaning to the object in this

process, then they are forming, maintaining and transforming the objects of

their world. (H.G. Blumer, 1969)

Symbolic interaction theory is based on three premises: The first premise is that people carry out activities based on things that are meaningful to them. The second premise is that meaning comes from social interactions between people. The third premise is that people control and manipulate the significance of things through their interpretation in the interaction. In this way, it is different from ordinary theories about action and meaning. There is an usual and dominant view which believes human action is caused by the triggered factors or combination, such as motivation, attitude, the unconscious complex, stimuli configurations, desires, and situational factors. Furthermore, Science was endowed by this view to research the connection between action and some impetus causes. However, such views ignore

interactive processes between the individual and the world which is objected by symbolic interaction theory. From the perspective of symbolic interaction, the sense of place is not irritative but procedural and complicated which is created through the interaction process. The place is considered to be the space of meaning by a human, contains a rich human experience, and it is the important way to construct, understand and explain place for the human experience of space (Yi-fu Tuan, 1977). However, the sense of place usually means it has strong feelings and impression to tourists even after they leave, that is, those places are meaningful to tourists. The key is how to describe the ontology of the sense of place.

Due to the relation to inner experience, it is suitable for phenomenology to research than quantitative methods. Because the experience exists as consciousness perceived internally, so it is difficult for us to use such external investigations as physical, chemical or empirical studies, but to turn to the discussion of internal reflection. As a pioneer of phenomenology, Husserl believed phenomenology primarily marked a method and thinking attitude which was a philosophical thinking attitude and approaches especially. To construct philosophy as a "strict science"(Husserl, 1911), Husserl put the foothold of philosophy on absolute clarity without any doubt which was the existence of thought and experience. For example, when I think I'm looking at a tree, while it is possible to not exist for the visual "tree" in my dream, but it is unquestionable of the tree's experience in my consciousness, even in a dream it is inevitable to exist. Therefore, phenomenology is not the study about external existence but aimed at those objects which appeared in human's consciousness and can also be named as the "phenomenon" or "experience" in a broad sense. Then how to use the phenomenology for specific operation? First of all, phenomenology requires transcendental reduction which means all beyond things not perceived inherently must be invalid. However, phenomenology doesn't deny the existence of the external world but object to being influenced by all kinds of preconceived notions which are likely to affect the insight on the nature of the object. Transcendental reduction laid the foundation of essential intuition which means the understanding of the nature of objects. Essential intuition needs to select a typical object for an experience which is revealed to us as pure consciousness distinctly. Finally, the results are unfolded through phenomenological description. Husserl thought phenomenology fundamentally was a descriptive science, which was the description in the field of pure consciousness instead of outward objects. Through the real phenomenological description, the essence of things really emerges (Liu, 2013). In general, phenomenology believes that things are constructing itself in the experience, the original experience prior to things composed, and we can deeply understand the nature of things through analyzing the structuring process of experience. It is important to stress that the object of study in phenomenology is the typical experience after revivification rather than external things. Through the intuitive description of pure experiences, it makes the essence of things emerge automatically (Husserl, 1982). So there are two important advantages at least for phenomenology, firstly it can block

the negative impact of the previous views; secondly, it can reveal important and subtle natures through the detailed description of a true inner experience.

V. EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION ON TYPICAL CASES

The typical cases are selected according to the definition of place making previously. Due to the close relation between place making and authenticity, it is necessary to simply clarify several kinds of authenticity in the present research. We can divide tourism authenticity research into such four perspectives as objective, existentialism, constructivism, and postmodernism generally. Objective perspective scholars regard authenticity as the inherent attributes of objects (Boorstin, 1964; MacCannell, 1973). Constructivism theorists believe that there is not any kind of objective authenticity that exists inherently in the object, and tourism authenticity characterized with flexible should be regarded as a process or result constructed by society (Cohen, 1988). Postmodern theorists think that the world has entered the era of "simulation", where not the reality for has reference but only the symbols and abstract (Graburn, 2009). Existentialism theorists (Ning, 1999; Turner, 1979) research tourism authenticity from tourists experience perspective thoroughly, who believed there were not a necessary relationship between tourism experience and

objective reality. Though researchers took great efforts to distinguish tourism authenticity, most tourists seem to have an instinctual ability to distinguish those authenticities and place making style. That is, individuals have their own views to define their taken-for-granted lifeworld (Coate & Seamon, 1984). From the ordinary tourists' perspective, the typical cases are selected by the universal standards at the first sight. The place-making area with the authentic cultural landscape is a square with stone pillar columns located in front of Huishan Temple at Wuxi in China, while the placemaking area is Chong'an Shopping Square built recently also in Wuxi. The front square of Huishan Temple was built originally in Tang Dynasty about 1,100 years ago and preserved formidably from wars and natural disasters. And the most precious landscapes in this place are the two stone pillar columns called pillars with Buddhism lection and joss which are observably standing erect at the center of the square. According to the instructions, these stone pillar columns are created to prey for prosperity and delivery from disaster among common persons, through its sculptures of Buddhism lections and statues. Another placemaking area named Chong'an Shopping Square was designed by modern planners recently constituted by some delectable shopping streets, special restaurants, convenient facilities, characterized by the mix decoration of modern inside and ancient surface. (See "Fig. 1")



Fig. 1. The front square of Huishan Temple Chong'an Shopping Square.

When tourists came to the front small square of Huishan Temple which is composed of pillars, a gate of the temple, stylobates, a big tree, stone benches and so on, they were absorbed by the two pillars at the first sight usually. The pillars were protected by iron circles given its mysterious feeling and alienation from hilarious atmosphere peripherally. As tourists come near the pillars, they can get clearer vision gradually on their colors, materials, characters, and statues by shorter distance and encircling movement. Focusing on the front pillars with 6 meters high, we can find cracks and dark spots somewhere. Also, there are a lot of sculptures at the bottom, portraits in the middle, canopy carving at the top, but many carvings are incomplete and not very clear to read.

Furthermore, most tourists are attracted by its creation, what is the name, why did the pillars is erected here? Through the lateral instructions reading seriously, tourists understand its intention for building ultimately. Since Tang Dynasty, most local persons embraced Buddhism and believe in the mysterious power for pillars with Buddhism lection and joss. Historically, common people piously walked around the pillars by reading lections and praying for delivery from a disaster which given them psychic strength to overcome suffering. Despite the flames of wars, erosion of rain and the wind, coverage of big snow, the stone pillars tried "his" best to protect the common people who suffered from too much misfortune. The mottled and broken surface just was its

historical evidence and real glory instead of shame. Just like students, tourists pay attention to appreciate words and sculptures following its guidance tightly through perception, understanding, and imagination, and the place has a divine meaning to witnesses for the pillars. The tourists' whole experience was constituted of the perception on landscape surface, symbolic understanding, and serious emotion. The deep experience flow constructs a unique sense of place to tourists which produce a memorable place.

As the famous shopping place in Wuxi, Chong'an Shopping Square provides convenient facilities and amicable services for residents and tourists. It has typical characters of

placemaking as master planned, intentional theme, top-down perspective, and tourist-orientation. Tourists usually feel comfortable when they walk along the square because they can make shopping, enjoy the delicious foods or drinks, and experience the modern life styles. Every landscape, every space, and every detail are designed for the customers, who are the most important persons in this space. But they don't spend a time to watch the memorial gateways or complicated decorations in the buildings because they believe those are artificial and its purpose is commercialization. Undoubtedly the experience in shopping square is happy and comfortable but superficial and lack of solemn. (See "Table I")

TABLE I. CONTRAST IN EXPERIENCE

Place-making	Placemaking
For itself and has its inherent reasons	For the tourists
Historical reality, Unique	Commercialization, Ordinary
Meanings construct deep feeling and the impression of the space	Ordinary joy make the space forgettable
Solemn, Divine	Contemptuous, Superficial
Situational legitimacy	Rootless

From the ontology description in phenomenology, we can distinguish two kinds of place making clearly. Place-making isn't built for customers and has its inherent reasons so it is authentic and unique, just like the pillar columns had been built merely for the requirements of ancient history, culture and life, that is, place-making has its situational legitimacy. Even more, organic place-making does not require planning because it has the possibility to reflect who we are as individuals and as cultural groups (Pink, 2008). While placemaking is obviously built for tourists and commercialized so you can find everywhere today faced with significant levels of globalization (Martin, 2003). Thanks for the historical authenticity, tourists will have symbol meaning feeling which pushes the space witnesses to attach importance to the place and produce a divine emotion. In placemaking area, tourists remain contemptuous attitude to the place for the ordinary and superficial experience though they feel comfortable. There is a paradox, compared to placemaking which is built for meeting tourists ordinary needs, place-making which adheres to its authenticity gives tourists deeper and richer experiences. Hereby there has a close connection with authentic, organic, history and perfect experience. Perhaps historical reality and endogenetic landscape characterized by the situational legitimacy are the souls of the place-making.

the place, such as the intention of building, the historical culture context, memorial aims for a grand event or great man, etc. Place engagement refers to the emotional state of immersed into the place, such as divine emotion, peaceful soul, intense joy or sorrow motivated, sense of inhabitation like home, and so on. The place significance organizes the various place images and motivates the creation of emotion furthermore automatically. Based on the authenticity or organic character, tourists have motivated a desire to explore and understand the meaning of the place which contributes to the creation of successful experience stream ultimately. (See "Fig. 2")

VI. THE EXPERIENCE STRUCTURE, INTERACTION PATTERN AND DESIGN METHOD

From the ontology description of tourists' experience, we can find an experience flow constituted of place image, place significance, and place engagement for place-making area. Place image refers to the sensory perception of the place, such as tactile impression of the materials(rock, wood or iron), visibility perception of the place(colors, forms, lights, scales), auditory sense (birdcalls, aeolian tone, purl), smell perception (scent of flowers, food flavor, wood flavor), position sense (sense of direction), and so on. Place significance refers to the understanding of inner meanings of

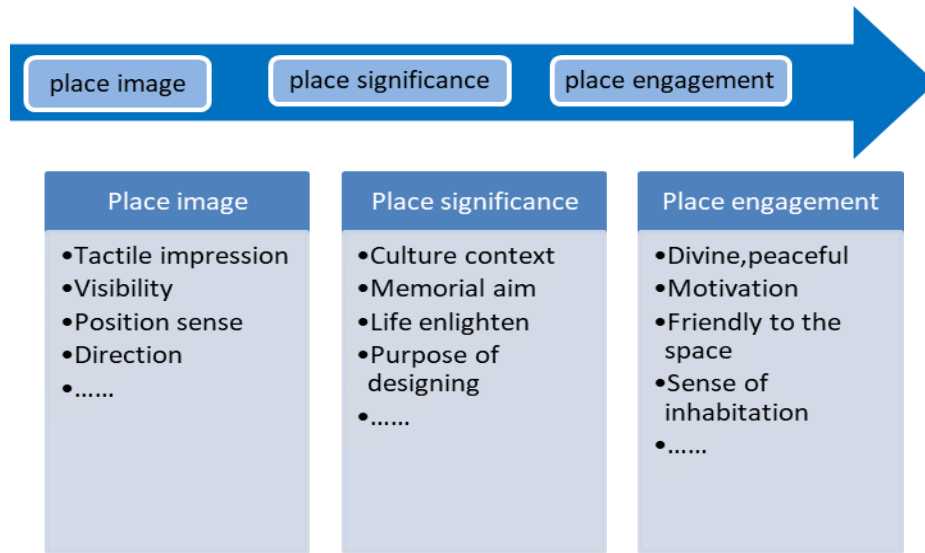


Fig. 2. Experience stream — the sense of place.

From the perspective of symbolic interaction, the sense of place is produced through the symbolic interaction between tourists and the place. The theoretical model should

be constructed to illustrate the creating process from three dimensions. (See “Fig. 3”)

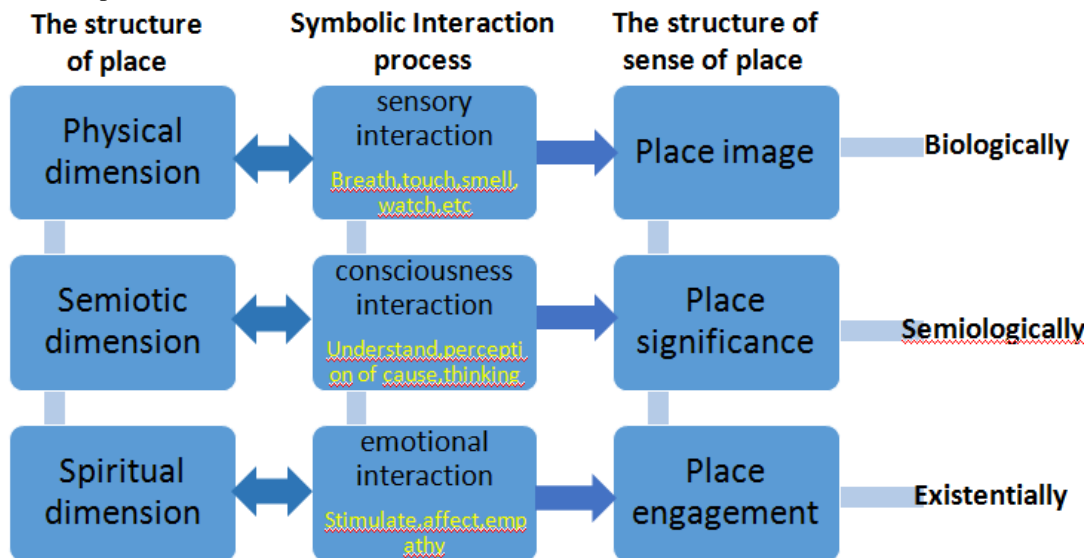


Fig. 3. Symbolic interaction pattern.

Other than pure objective space, the place is a complicated space with meanings to persons. We can understand the space from such dimensions as physical, semiotic and spirit. Every place has its physical characters for its extension, material (built for the border fence or platform), color, shape (square or irregular), etc. The semiotic dimension means that place has its designatum as a symbol owing to the culture or history. The symbol represents the binary relation between the signifier and the designatum, and the signifier referring to "sound image" while designatum referring to the concept expressed by the signifier. Saussure compared them to a piece of paper, thoughts (concepts) is the front of the paper and the sound is the reverse of the paper, so they are always inseparable unity at all (Saussure, 1945). Like a book, the place has many

meanings to tourists, for example, its building intentions, hidden secrets of nature, cultural meaning or values. Thirdly, the place has its spiritual dimension for intangible tales, religious atmosphere, solemn emitted from the place etc. Tourists usually can capture the spiritual character of the place when they enter into the famous churches, grand memorial plazas, or the Rome Colosseum.

Just as Tuan said, "See", is not only a simple record by the external environment stimulation but also the process of selectivity and constructive. Through the entire process of seeing, environmental stimuli will provide meaningful consultation symbols through an organization (Yi-fu Tuan, 1977). The symbolic interaction process takes place from three levels as sensory, consciousness and emotion. Firstly,

when tourists enter into the place, they will take sensory interaction with the environment surrounding them. They can breathe the smell of the space, touch the surface of tangible objects, watch the colors or shapes of landscapes, and play with the equipment in the place. Secondly, they will have consciousness interaction with what they experienced through perception and understanding. Human beings are animals of asymbol (Cassirer, 1944). That is, human beings are used to exploring the hidden meaning of objects whenever possible. Because place-making provides an organic and authentic environment, tourists will get more desire to explore the designatum of the place through the reading of instructions, questioning tour guides or inquiring the historical background from books or network. The third emotional interaction is created through empathy, stimulation, or affection which is based on the sensory and consciousness interaction automatically. Simply to say, the place image is produced from the sensory interaction biologically, and the place significance is created from the consciousness interaction semiologically, also the place engagement is generated from emotional interaction existentially. Though we differentiate the symbolic interaction with three dimensions, the experience of place is like stream blending various elements and inseparably.

According to the precise research on the sense of place or tourists' experience, we get the genuine differences between

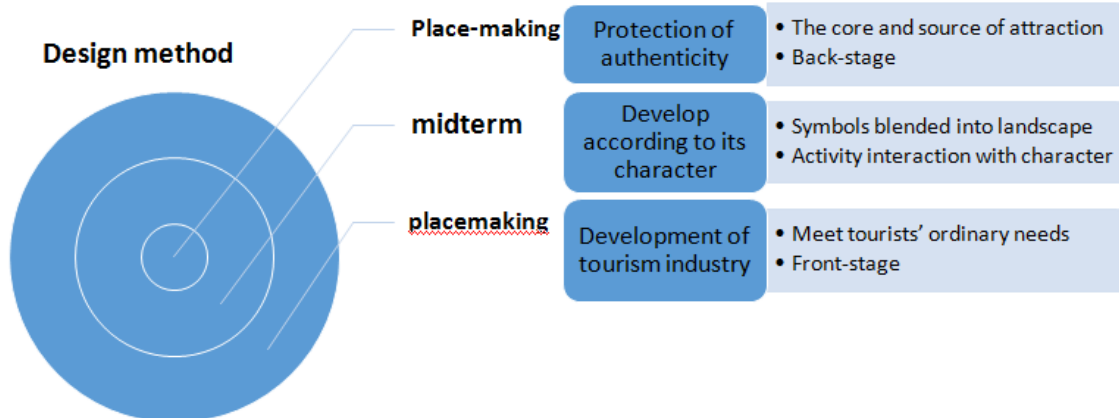


Fig. 4. Design method pattern.

VII. CONCLUSION

The place is considered to be the space of meaning to a human. The sense of place is a stream which is composed of place image, place significance and place engagement inseparably through the symbolic interaction between tourists and the place.

Separately, the place image is produced from the sensory interaction biologically, and the place significance is generated from the consciousness interaction semiologically, also the place engagement is created from emotional interaction existentially.

It plays a crucial role to create the experience stream for the perception of place which originates from the authenticity and the organic structure of the place. But we

place-making and placemaking. Approval of the tourists' orientation, placemaking provides a comfortable, functional and wizened experience rather than the complex experience of place-making. The absence of authenticity or organic factor makes placemaking vulgar and ordinary place which can't provide the experience to a world like place-making. With the development of abundant experience of tourists, the failure of the tourism planning providing single experience due to the boredom of tourists seems to be inescapable. Generally, the experience of place-making is deeper than placemaking which is also good at providing the functional experience for common tourists. On the other hand, place making should provide complex experience for tourists instead of meeting their superficial needs merely. The mixed design method seems to be appropriate to fuse the advantages of place-making and placemaking. In the back-stage, we should protect the authenticity of place which provides a deep attraction to tourists and avoid a diminishing of localness and an increasing in placelessness (Relph, 1976; Friedman, 2010). In the front-stage, we should design modern tourism equipment and industry to provide functional experiences. In addition, we can design activities interaction with character, for example, symbol blended into the landscape, immersing plays with culture theme etc. (See "Fig. 4")

can seldom find it in placemaking which is absent of authenticity and endogenetic structure culturally or naturally.

While placemaking is built for meeting tourists ordinary needs, place-making which adheres to its authenticity gives tourists deeper and richer experiences. We should attach more importance to different experiences given to tourists through various planning methods, and it is valuable to research those planning methods which provide complex experience.

Place-making should provide complex experience for tourists. Mixed design method should appreciate with the authenticity protection of back-stage and the commercialization development of front-stage.

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