



# Applying the Theory of Place as a Framework for Place Research in Libyan Context

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## Index Terms

Theory of place, place, framework, Libya.

## Abstract

The theory of place, encompassing physical form, social processes, and symbolic meaning, has significantly shaped urban design discourse. Despite its global influence, limited scholarship has examined its applicability within North African contexts undergoing rapid urban, political, and social transformation. This paper reviews the historical evolution of place theory and its operationalization in international urban design research, followed by a critical assessment of the extent to which its three dimensions can be applied to Libyan cities. Drawing upon international and regional literature, the study examines how physical form (spatial configuration, architectural character, and streetscape quality), social processes (patterns of public space use, social interaction, and community attachment), and meaning (identity, heritage values, and symbolic associations) have been conceptualized and empirically evaluated. A synthesis of existing Libyan studies on urban morphology, heritage environments, public spaces, and residents' perceptions reveals substantial gaps in empirical evidence, interdisciplinary integration, and participatory research practices. The analysis demonstrates that while place theory provides a valuable analytical lens for interpreting Libya's complex urban conditions, contextual challenges, including prolonged conflict, institutional fragility, and informal urban expansion, limit its direct transferability. The paper concludes by proposing a context-sensitive framework for place-based research in Libya, advocating a shift from standardized measurement approaches toward culturally grounded and participatory interpretations capable of informing more inclusive, resilient, and locally responsive urban policies.

## تطبيق نظرية المكان كإطارٍ منهجي لأبحاث المكان في السياق الليبي

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## الكلمات المفتاحية

نظرية المكان، المكان، إطار منهجي، ليبيا

## المخلص

لطالما كان لنظرية المكان الأثر البالغ في مجال التصميم الحضري والتي تشمل البعد المادي والاجتماعي، والدلالات المعنوية في الحوث الغربية والعالمية. ومع ذلك، وبالرغم من تأثيرها العالمي، فإن الدراسات الأكاديمية التي تتناول قابليتها للتطبيق في السياقات شمال إفريقيا وبشكل خاص ليبيا التي تشهد تحولات حضرية واجتماعية سريعة لا تكاد تطبق في الدراسات الحضرية في مثل هذه البلدان. تستعرض هذه الورقة التطور التاريخي لنظرية المكان وتطبيقاتها العملية في دراسات التصميم الحضري عالمياً، ثم تقم نقدياً مدى إمكانية تطبيق أبعادها الثلاثة على المدن الليبية. طبقاً على الأدبيات الدولية والإقليمية، يسلط البحث الضوء على كيفية تصور وقياس كل من: الهيئة المادية (الهيكل المكاني، الطابع المعماري، المشاهد الحضرية)، والعمليات الاجتماعية (استخدام الفضاء العام، التفاعل الاجتماعي، الارتباط المجتمعي)، والدلالات المعنوية (الهوية، القيم التراثية، الرموز الدلالية). يقوم البحث بتركيب الدراسات الليبية الحالية حول الشكل الحضري، والمناطق التراثية، والفضاء العام، وتصورات السكان، كاشفاً عن فجوات كبيرة في البيانات الميدانية والمناهج التشاركية. تبين نتائج التحليل على الرغم من قيمة الإطار النظري في فهم النسيج الحضري المعقد لليبيا، إلا أن تحديات مثل النزاعات وضعف مؤسسات التخطيط والتعمير العشوائي تعيق تطبيقه المباشر. وتختتم الورقة باقتراح إطار منهجي جديد لأبحاث المكان الحساسة للسياق الليبي، داعية إلى الانتقال من القياس المعياري إلى التفسير التشاركي المتجذر ثقافياً لدعم.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Urban design scholarship has long recognized that cities extend beyond their physical layouts; they are intricate socio-spatial systems imbued with meanings that shape individual and collective experiences (Relph, 1976; Canter, 1977). The "theory of place" emerged in the 1970s as an attempt to integrate three interrelated dimensions of the urban environment: physical form (the tangible morphology of buildings, streets, and open spaces), social processes (the activities, interactions, and behaviors occurring within those settings), and meaning (the symbolic, affective, and identity-laden attributes attached to places) [3]. This triadic framework has since underpinned diverse studies in environmental psychology, heritage conservation, urban design, and planning (see Figure 1).

While the theory of place has been widely applied in North America, Europe, and parts of Asia, it remains under-explored in North African contexts. Libya, in particular, presents a unique case study. Its cities have undergone successive layers of urbanization from Islamic medinas and Ottoman quarters to Italian colonial grids and post-independence expansions resulting in a heterogeneous urban fabric. Concurrently, decades of political instability, rapid demographic change, and weak planning institutions have reshaped social life in public spaces and threatened the continuity of place meanings (Remali & Abudib, 2022). Despite the rich opportunities for research, systematic studies of Libyan urban areas through the lens of place theory are scarce.

Despite the extensive development of place theory within urban design, environmental psychology, and humanistic geography, its methodological application remains uneven across global contexts. While cities in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia have benefited from integrated empirical studies examining the relationships between physical form, social practices, and symbolic meaning, similar approaches remain largely absent in Libyan urban research. Existing studies in Libya tend to address isolated aspects of urban environments, such as historical morphology, heritage conservation, or public-space transformation, without employing a unified conceptual or methodological framework capable of capturing the multidimensional nature of place.

Consequently, the central research problem addressed in this study is the **absence of an integrated and operational framework for studying place within the Libyan context**. Current scholarship lacks methodological coherence, empirical integration between spatial and social dimensions, and culturally grounded tools capable of translating international place theory into locally applicable research practices. This gap limits both academic understanding and practical planning outcomes, as urban policies and regeneration initiatives risk being informed by fragmented knowledge rather than a holistic interpretation of how Libyan urban spaces are physically structured, socially experienced, and symbolically understood.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to answer the following research question:

## How can the theory of place be theoretically and methodologically adapted to provide a coherent framework for conducting place-based research in Libyan cities?

To address this question, the study aims to:

1. Review the theoretical evolution of place theory and its principal dimensions;
2. Examine how these dimensions have been operationalized in international urban research;
3. Critically assess the current state of place-related studies in Libya; and
4. Propose a context-sensitive methodological framework capable of guiding future empirical place research and urban policy development.

By explicitly defining the research problem and objectives, the study positions itself not merely as a literature review but as a methodological contribution bridging global place theory and the specific socio-spatial realities of Libyan cities.

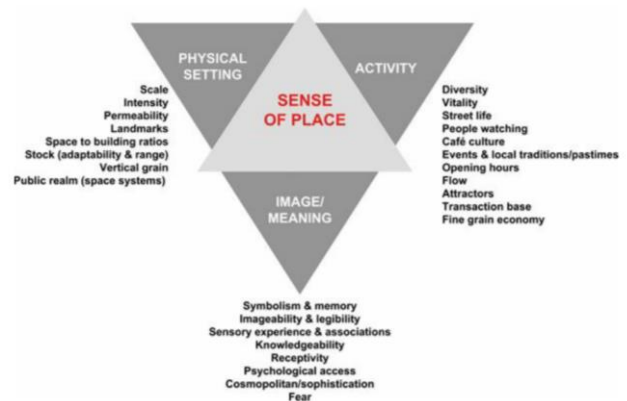


Figure 1. Figure 1. The place diagram  
(Source: M Carmona et al., 2010).

## II. RESERCH PROMBLEM

Libyan cities exhibit a complex urban morphology shaped by various historical and socio-political factors. Traditional medinas such as the historic core of Tripoli have evolved through organic street networks and inward-oriented courtyard houses, reflecting Islamic principles of privacy, social cohesion, and climatic adaptation [6]. Studies of traditional settlements in Ghadames, Tripoli, and Gharyan illustrate how courtyard geometries and passive cooling systems historically enabled environmentally responsive and socially integrated forms of place-making [7]. These environments illustrated the strong relationship between physical form, environmental adaptation, and cultural identity within Libyan urbanism.

The Italian colonial period (1911–1943) introduced fundamentally different spatial logics, overlaying European urban models onto existing fabrics with grid-based planning and monumental axes. Subsequent post-independence development adopted modernist planning approaches characterized by zoning regulations, large-scale housing estates, and automobile-oriented infrastructure [8]. More recently, prolonged political

instability and weak governance structures have led to informal urban expansion, spatial fragmentation, and the deterioration of historic districts. Contemporary reconstruction initiatives increasingly recognize the central role of urban form, heritage preservation, and public space quality in rebuilding community identity and social resilience [9] [10].

Alongside these morphological transformations, patterns of social life within Libyan public spaces have also shifted. Traditional suqs and squares, once vibrant centers of commerce and sociability, are often underutilized or spatially degraded [4]. Changing social conditions and economic pressures further influence the accessibility and experience of public spaces. However, historic environments continue to maintain strong symbolic meaning and emotional attachment among residents, underscoring their importance for collective identity. Nevertheless, historic environments continue to maintain strong symbolic meaning and emotional attachment among residents, reinforcing their importance for collective identity and cultural continuity. Empirical evidence from traditional commercial districts confirms that users' attachment to place extends beyond functional characteristics to include memory, belonging, and shared social experience [11].

Despite extensive documentation of Libya's urban morphology and heritage, no study has yet applied an integrated place-based framework that examines physical form, social practices, and symbolic meaning through a coherent methodological approach. This fragmentation reveals a critical research problem: the absence of integrated studies that simultaneously explore these dimensions, leaving a gap in understanding how places function experientially and socially [12] [13].

Addressing this gap necessitates adapting place theory to the Libyan context through developing locally grounded indicators sensitive to climate-responsive design and informal spatial practices; incorporating participatory methods that capture residents' perceptions and meanings; and bridging heritage conservation discourse with everyday urban design and planning practices. Applying a place-based framework offers significant analytical and practical benefits. For instance, physical audits of streets and public spaces can inform strategies for walkability and conservation, while participatory mapping can reveal diverse patterns of spatial use. Integrating symbolic and historical meanings into planning processes can strengthen community attachment, support cultural tourism, and facilitate urban regeneration [3].

By moving beyond purely aesthetic or functional interpretations of urban space, this study seeks to establish a multidimensional understanding of Libyan urban quarters, positioning place theory as a methodological bridge between historical urban

knowledge, social experience, and contemporary planning practice.

In conclusion, moving beyond purely aesthetic or functional interpretations of urban space, this study seeks to establish a multidimensional understanding of Libyan urban quarters. By positioning place theory as a methodological bridge between historical urban knowledge, social experience, and contemporary planning practice, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of urban environments in Libya and inform effective planning strategies that resonate with local identities and experiences.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW: THE THEORY OF PLACE

The understanding of "place" has evolved significantly through interdisciplinary contributions, particularly from humanistic geography, environmental psychology, and urban design theory. Early phenomenological interpretations emphasized the experiential and symbolic dimensions of environments. Edward Relph's seminal work, *Place and Placelessness* (1976), established a critical distinction between authentic places, which are rich in identity and meaning, and standardized environments that lack cultural depth. This framework highlights the importance of place in shaping human experiences and social interactions.

Canter (1977) further developed the concept of place by defining it as the interaction between physical settings, activities, and meanings, laying a foundation for later triadic models of place that encompass these interconnected dimensions. This conceptualization aligns with Kevin Lynch's (1960) cognitive approach articulated in *The Image of the City*, where he elucidated how individuals construct mental images of urban environments based on identifiable elements such as paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Lynch's work shifted the focus from the purely physical attributes of urban form to the perception and legibility of spaces, thereby underscoring how spatial organization influences orientation, memory, and emotional attachment.

From a humanistic geography perspective, Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) expanded the theoretical understanding of place by differentiating between abstract spaces and meaningful places endowed with human experiences. Tuan's emphasis on lived experience, memory, and cultural interpretation illustrates how environments transform into meaningful places through subjective perception. This perspective reinforces the significance of social and cultural contexts in place research [5].

Jan Gehl (1987; 2010) advanced the study of public life by developing systematic methods for observing human activities in urban spaces. His behavioral mapping, pedestrian counts, and public-life surveys demonstrated that successful urban environments arise from the interplay between spatial design and everyday social practices. Gehl's human-centered approach bridges

theory and practice, highlighting how urban form directly influences social interaction, inclusivity, and vitality.

The contributions of Lynch, Tuan, and Gehl collectively broaden the theoretical foundations of place research. Lynch foregrounded spatial perception, Tuan emphasized experiential meaning, and Gehl operationalized the study of social behavior in public spaces. These perspectives reinforce a multidimensional understanding of place as an integration of physical structure, lived experience, and social activity, principles that underpin contemporary place theory.

Subsequent scholars have expanded these ideas. Montgomery (1998) linked urban vitality to the relationship between form, activity, and image, while Lewicka (2011) synthesized decades of research on place attachment, underscoring the emotional bonds between people and their environments. Seamon (2021) and later studies have introduced dynamic interpretations of place, emphasizing that places are continuously produced through interaction rather than existing as static conditions.

Despite this rich theoretical development, the integration of these complementary perspectives remains limited within Libyan urban research. Existing studies often address morphology, heritage, or social change separately, neglecting a unified analytical framework that incorporates cognitive perception, lived experience, and observed public life. This literature gap calls for an adaptation of place theory to the Libyan context, leveraging the comparative contributions of established frameworks to provide a more holistic understanding of urban environments.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a **systematic narrative review methodology** to examine the evolution of place theory and evaluate its applicability within the Libyan urban context. The selected approach combines the structured procedures of a systematic literature review with the interpretive depth of narrative synthesis [14]. This methodological choice is particularly appropriate for research areas characterized by dispersed theoretical traditions and limited empirical studies, as is the case with place research in Libya. The methodology was designed to ensure transparency, analytical rigor, and replicability while allowing contextual interpretation.

##### a. SEARCH DESIGN

The research followed a four-stage methodological process:

- i. Literature Identification – systematic collection of relevant theoretical and empirical studies;
- ii. Screening and Selection – application of predefined inclusion criteria;
- iii. Thematic Coding and Analysis – classification of studies according to the three dimensions of place theory;

Interpretive Synthesis – development of a context-sensitive framework for Libyan place research.

##### b. LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY

To ensure a comprehensive and unbiased literature collection, a systematic search was conducted across several major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. The search strategy combined keywords and Boolean operators related to two primary conceptual domains: (1) the theory of place and (2) the Libyan urban context. Key search strings included: ("theory of place" OR "sense of place" OR "place attachment" OR "place identity" OR "genius loci") AND ("Libya" OR "Libyan" OR "Tripoli" OR "Benghazi" OR "North Africa"). The search was intentionally broad to capture literature from the fields of urban design, architecture, environmental psychology, geography, and heritage studies.

##### c. ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

The literature selection process followed a staged screening protocol. Initially, articles were screened by title and abstract for relevance. To be included in the final review, publications had to meet the following criteria:

- Focus: Explicitly or implicitly address at least one dimension of the theory of place (physical form, social processes, or meaning/identity) in an urban context.
- Context: Pertain directly to Libya or provide a methodological or theoretical framework from international literature that could be critically assessed for its applicability to Libya.
- Type: Include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, and conference proceedings. Given the nascent state of the field regarding Libya, seminal theoretical works were included regardless of publication date, while empirical studies were prioritized from 1990 to the present to capture contemporary debates.

The selected literature was analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. The triadic framework of place (physical, social, meaning) served as the primary analytical lens. Findings from international literature were systematically categorized according to this framework to establish a baseline of common methods and operationalizations. Subsequently, Libyan-specific studies were critically assessed against this baseline to identify gaps, divergences, and patterns of fragmentation. This process allowed for an interpretive synthesis, moving beyond mere description to develop the proposed framework for context-sensitive methodological adaptation presented in the discussion.

Based on the thematic synthesis, recurring patterns and deficiencies were interpreted to formulate a context-sensitive methodological framework for future place research in Libya. Rather than directly transferring international methods, the framework proposes adaptive

principles responsive to local socio-cultural conditions, data limitations, and post-conflict urban.

### V. RESULT

The analysis of literature revealed that the perception and production of place within the Libyan context are structured around a set of interrelated dimensions. These dimensions emerged inductively from the qualitative analysis are as the following:

Table 1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE AND GAPS (SOURCE: AUTHOR'S WORK).

Dimension	Typical International Methods	Libyan Evidence & Critical Gap
Physical Form	Space syntax, GIS-based metrics, urban design audits.	<b>Strength:</b> Detailed historical-morphological analysis. <b>Gap:</b> Lack of quantitative, performance-oriented spatial analysis of the contemporary urban fabric.
Social Processes	Behavioral mapping, time-activity surveys, GPS tracking.	<b>Strength:</b> Anecdotal and interview-based accounts of social change. <b>Gap:</b> Total absence of systematic, observational data on how public spaces are actually used.
Meaning/Identity	Place-attachment scales, cognitive mapping, photo-elicitation.	<b>Strength:</b> Macro-level discourse on collective heritage and symbolic identity. <b>Gap:</b> No empirical measurement of micro-level, personal place attachment or identity formation.

- Physical Form: A Focus on Historical Morphology over Quantitative Metrics
- Social Processes: Anecdotal Evidence of Decline, Absence of Systematic Observation
- Meaning and Identity: Symbolic Value Asserted, Personal Attachment Unmeasured

#### 1) Physical Form: A Focus on Historical Morphology over Quantitative Metrics

The review of Libyan studies reveals a corpus of work strong on historical and descriptive analysis but weak on contemporary spatial metrics. Research such as El-Hasumi (2018) provides invaluable chronological accounts of urban layering in Tripoli, expertly tracing the evolution from organic Islamic medinas to imposed colonial grids. However, these studies typically stop at description; they do not employ tools like space syntax to quantify how these different morphological layers affect actual movement patterns or social interaction today.

Similarly, studies like Mohamed et al., (2016) address walkability but focus predominantly on policy and regulatory frameworks, sidestepping the empirical measurement of physical conditions on the ground. Work by Remali and Abudib (2022) offers rich architectural descriptions of heritage urban form but does not translate these observations into standardized indicators (e.g., floor-to-area ratios, connectivity metrics) that would

allow for cross-city comparison or evidence-based design guidelines.

The gap, therefore, is not a lack of interest in physical form, but a methodological one. Libyan urban scholarship has prioritized historical-genetic analysis understanding how the urban fabric came to be over performative analysis understanding how that fabric functions in the present. This leaves planners with a deep historical awareness but without the quantitative, spatial data needed to address current challenges like pedestrian safety, microclimate improvement, or integrating new development. The existing studies provide the essential historical narrative, but they now need to be complemented with modern spatial analytics to become actionable.

#### 2) Social Processes: Anecdotal Evidence of Decline, Absence of Systematic Observation

Libyan studies frequently reference a "decline in social life" or "underused public spaces," especially in historic areas. However, these assertions are seldom backed by direct observation. Evidence of social change is usually derived indirectly from interviews with residents and merchants [16], who nostalgically reminisce about a more vibrant past. While these perceptions provide valuable insights into the "meaning" aspect, they serve as a weak substitute for objective data regarding the "social processes" dimension.

For example, a researcher might report that interviewees feel a square is unsafe, but without systematic observation, it is impossible to correlate this perception with actual usage patterns does the square empty at dusk? Are certain demographic groups absent? The sole reliance on interviews creates a research loop where the narrative of decline is perpetuated without being empirically tested. This conflation of collective memory, the shared narrative of a vibrant past, with empirical evidence of present-day use creates a self-perpetuating loop that hinders accurate diagnosis. There is a complete absence of studies that use behavioral mapping or time-lapse photography to document the ebb and flow of public life in Libyan squares or streets.

This gap is critical. It means that urban policy is potentially being guided by anecdote and perception rather than evidence. The claim that public spaces are degraded and underused may be true, but without systematic mapping, planners cannot diagnose the root causes. Is it a lack of seating, poor lighting, encroaching traffic, or a shift in commercial activity? Adapting systematic observation methods is essential to move from describing a perceived problem to understanding its specific spatial and social mechanics.

The systematic observation method includes structured behavioral mapping (plotting activities in space and time), gate counts, tracking studies, and surveys to understand who uses a space, when, and for what purpose [17]. This approach generates replicable data on pedestrian flows, gendered use of space, and the vitality of informal economies, moving from general impressions to specific, measurable patterns.

### 3) Meaning and Identity: Symbolic Value Asserted, Personal Attachment Unmeasured

The dimension of meaning is operationalized through concepts like place attachment (the emotional bond between people and places) and place identity (the ways a place contributes to self-identity). Research employs validated psychometric scales, cognitive mapping exercises where residents draw their mental maps of a city, and photo-elicitation interviews to uncover deep-seated values and associations (Lewicka, 2011; Ujang et al., 2015).

In the Libyan context, meaning and identity are overwhelmingly discussed at a macro, collective level. Studies rightly emphasize the profound symbolic significance of heritage sites like Tripoli's Old City for national and cultural identity (Remali and Abudib, 2022). However, this discourse operates at the scale of collective memory and official heritage value. What is almost entirely missing is research into the micro-scale of personal, everyday place attachment.

There are no published studies that use validated place-attachment scales to measure how strongly different residents (long-term vs. new migrants, young vs. old) feel connected to their neighbourhood. There is no cognitive mapping research to understand which landmarks or routes hold the most significance in the mental maps of Libyans. The "meaning" of place is assumed or described historically, but it is not empirically measured from the perspective of contemporary inhabitants. When Shinbira (2012) mentions a loss of "place identity," it is a general observation, not a finding grounded in structured surveys of resident perceptions.

This creates a significant disconnect in conservation and planning. While the symbolic value of a heritage site is championed, the functional and emotional relationships that current residents have with it are unknown. A building might be architecturally significant, but if residents feel no personal connection to it, support for its conservation may be weak. Understanding meaning at the individual level is not an academic exercise; it is crucial for building the community support necessary for successful regeneration projects.

## VI. DISCUSSION

- *Applied Illustration: Operationalizing Place Theory in a Libyan Urban Context*

To demonstrate the practical applicability of the proposed framework, this section provides an illustrative urban application showing how the theory of place can be operationalized within a Libyan city. Rather than presenting a full empirical investigation, the example serves to translate theoretical insights into a realistic research and planning scenario.

A suitable illustration can be drawn from historic urban quarters such as Tripoli Old City, where layered historical morphology, evolving social practices, and strong symbolic meanings coexist. These environments

embody the interaction between physical form, social processes, and meaning, the three core dimensions of place theory.

- *Physical Form Application*

From a physical perspective, the Old City demonstrates characteristics typical of traditional North African medinas: compact street networks, shaded pedestrian corridors, courtyard housing typologies, and climate-responsive architectural elements. Applying the proposed framework would involve:

- conducting **urban design audits** assessing enclosure ratios, street permeability, and shading performance;
- mapping pedestrian routes and informal circulation patterns through community-verified spatial surveys;
- documenting the relationship between historic fabric preservation and contemporary accessibility needs.

Such analysis moves beyond descriptive heritage documentation toward evaluating how spatial configurations actively support comfort, walkability, and environmental resilience.

- *Social Processes Application*

The social dimension can be examined through observation of everyday activities occurring within markets, squares, and transitional spaces. In many Libyan historic districts, public life has shifted due to economic change, security perceptions, and mobility patterns. Applying place theory would involve:

behavioral mapping of public-space uses across different times of day;  
 participatory observation with shopkeepers and residents;  
 documenting gendered and generational patterns of space utilization.

This approach allows researchers to distinguish between perceived decline in public life and measurable patterns of social interaction, generating evidence-based insights for urban regeneration strategies.

- *Meaning and Identity Application*

The symbolic dimension of place remains particularly strong in Libyan historic environments, where collective memory, cultural identity, and heritage narratives intersect. Within the proposed framework, meaning would be explored through:

- oral-history interviews capturing personal memories associated with streets and landmarks;
- guided walks enabling residents to narrate spatial experiences;
- photo-elicitation techniques comparing historical and contemporary urban conditions.

These methods reveal how emotional attachment and identity influence community support for conservation and redevelopment initiative.

- *Integrated Application and Planning Implications*

When the three dimensions are examined together, a more holistic understanding of place emerges. For example, a public square may appear physically intact yet socially underused because symbolic meanings or perceived safety conditions have changed. Conversely, informal adaptations introduced by residents may strengthen social vitality despite formal planning deficiencies.

The applied illustration demonstrates how the proposed framework can guide:

- heritage-led regeneration projects,
- public-space revitalization strategies,
- community-based planning processes,
- climate-responsive urban design interventions.

Importantly, the example shows that place theory should not be applied as a fixed analytical model but as an adaptive tool capable of integrating spatial analysis, social observation, and cultural interpretation within Libya's evolving urban realities.

Including an applied illustration bridges the gap between theoretical synthesis and practical implementation. It confirms that the value of place theory in Libya lies not only in conceptual interpretation but in its ability to inform actionable urban research and policy development. The framework therefore offers planners and researchers a structured pathway for transforming fragmented urban knowledge into integrated place-based practice.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how place theory can serve as an analytical and methodological framework for urban research in Libya. Through a systematic narrative review, the analysis synthesized international scholarship and critically evaluated existing Libyan urban studies using the three interrelated dimensions of place: physical form, social processes, and meaning.

The results of the review reveal a consistent pattern of methodological fragmentation in Libyan place-related research. First, analysis of the physical dimension demonstrated that, while Libyan scholarship provides rich historical and morphological documentation, it rarely employs contemporary spatial-analytic tools capable of evaluating how urban form performs in present-day conditions. Second, examination of the social dimension showed that discussions of declining public life are predominantly perception-based, relying on interviews rather than systematic observation or behavioral mapping. Third, findings related to meaning and identity indicate strong recognition of heritage symbolism at a collective level, yet an absence of empirical investigation into everyday place attachment among residents.

Taken together, these findings confirm that the principal limitation is not the relevance of place theory to Libya, but the absence of an integrated methodological approach capable of linking spatial structure, social practice, and symbolic interpretation. The analytical results therefore directly support the study's central argument: effective place research in Libya requires methodological adaptation rather than theoretical replacement.

In response to these identified gaps, the study proposed a context-sensitive framework for future place research. The framework translates international methodological practices into locally appropriate strategies, including community-verified spatial analysis, culturally grounded participatory methods, and narrative-based approaches for understanding meaning and identity. This framework emerges logically from the review findings and provides a practical pathway for overcoming the disconnection between theory and application identified throughout the analysis.

The implications of these results extend beyond academic debate. For urban planning and design practice in Libya, integrated place-based research can support heritage-led regeneration, improve public-space functionality, strengthen community participation, and enhance climate-responsive urban design strategies. By grounding planning decisions in empirical understanding of how people experience and value urban environments, place theory can contribute to more resilient and socially responsive urban development.

Nevertheless, several limitations remain. As a review-based study, the research relies on existing literature rather than original fieldwork, highlighting the urgent need for empirical investigations applying mixed methods in Libyan cities. Future research should test and refine the proposed framework through applied case studies, comparative urban analyses, and expanded inclusion of Arabic-language scholarship and institutional documentation.

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that place theory offers a powerful conceptual foundation for understanding Libya's layered urban environments. The study's contribution lies in clarifying how this theory can be operationalized within a post-conflict and rapidly transforming context. Advancing place research in Libya therefore depends not on importing universal models, but on developing adaptive methodologies that integrate physical environments, social life, and cultural meaning into a coherent framework capable of informing both research and practice.

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