

DOI: 10.54664/TBRI9745

Abstract: A sense of security is fundamental to our existence. An understanding of how various aspects of our lives relate to this basic need can shape our understanding of what it means to feel safe, and identify ways to increase the perceived security of urban residents. Perceived security constitutes a prerequisite for a quality lifestyle. Psychological security of city dwellers is a synthesis of the objective impact of the city's features and the residents' subjective assessment of many aspects of their habitat. The physical environment is one of the key indicators of whether the urban environment is suitable for living. Even without people being aware of it, the urban environment constantly affects perception, cognition, and emotion. Therefore, the city perception and the affective reactions it elicits should not be considered separately.

Keywords: psychological security; city residents; perception of security; habitat.

As urbanization accelerates, more and more people are exposed to risk factors: monotony of the environment, higher population density, loss of contact with the natural world, nature deficit syndrome.

* **Елена Златева** – доктор, Международен славянски университет „Г. Р. Державин“, Свети Николе, Р Северна Македонија. e-mail: bear1972@inbox.ru

** **Олга Зотова** – Доктор по психологија, професор в катедрата по социална психологија, факултет по социална психологија, Универзитет за свободни изкуства – Универзитет за хуманитарни науки, Екатеринбург, Русија. e-mail: oiambusheva@mail.ru

As a result, they develop a sense of insecurity – a psychological price that they pay for living in megacities.

Today, research into the psychology of city dwellers is more than relevant in the search for effective ways of solving the following problems: studying the peculiarities of people's perception of their habitat and identification of significant factors that, according to the subject, hinder its favourable development; revealing the motivation for safe/unsafe behaviour; analyzing the regularities of the psychological effects of urbanization (deterioration of mental health, increase in the crime rate, etc.); formulating psychological methods, techniques, and programmes aimed at the formation of psychologically safe behaviour of citizens.

In recent decades, there has been a great deal of research into the perception of one's habitat in the context of urban life, which has led to the emergence of quite similar, overlapping concepts. On the one hand, they testify to a burgeoning interest in the subject, and on the other hand, to the fact that the search for paradigmatic concepts is still in progress.

Scholars who study ecological security more often show that air and soil pollution, as well as climate change not only influence physical health (Burnett et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018), but also harm human psychological health and well-being (Obradovich et al., 2018). It is no coincidence that issues related to the perception of cities, psychological well-being, and the health of citizens have recently been the subject of intense debate. The perception of the city is closely linked to a sense of community, psychological identification with this group (shared values, a sense of belonging, a sensation of being involved in community events, a sense of responsibility to the community, etc.). The American psychologist Seymour Sarason introduced the concept of the psychological sense of community, which is one of the foundations of self-identification (Sarason, 1974). David McMillan and David Chavis noted that a sense of community implies the existence of a sense of belonging and emotional security (McMillan, Chavis, 1986).

Human habitat strongly influences both behaviour and personal development, and people are constantly subject to the environmental impact. A multitude of factors evokes different emotions according to which the person's development can be either normal or slow, which is often the case with the effect of anxiety, fear, stress, tension, etc. If a person is aware of having contributed to the creation of a community, he or she will inevitably identify with it.

Place is the result of people's attribution of meaning to the part of space in which they live. While abstract knowledge of a place can be acquired relatively quickly, a feel of a place takes time to develop as it arises from many habitual actions, everyday experiences, and life events. In this way, long-term residence, its quality and intensity, gives a personal meaning to places. Over time, each person creates and acquires emotional and cognitive perceptions of the environment by forming associations with particular places, such as places of birth, work, and residence. All of this indicates that 'place' is a broad concept encompassing physical, geographical, architectural, historical, religious, social, and psychological connotations.

Place attachment is a complex, multi-dimensional construct, and the heterogeneity of psychological knowledge greatly contributes to the fact that it is treated differently – as a dependence on the place (Williams, Vaske, 2003), belonging to the place (Williams et al., 1992), social ties in the given place (Kyle et al., 2005), attachment to the community (Sampson, 1988), rootedness (Hay, 1998), religious, genealogical, economic attachment (Mishra et al., 2010), and affective attachment (Kyle et al., 2010). As a rule, researchers create their own indicators and criteria of place attachment on the basis of the specific components under study, which results in the formulation of a wide range of indices (Hidalgo, Hernandez, 2001; Jorgensen, Stedman, 2001; Kyle et al., 2005; Williams, Vaske, 2003).

More often, place attachment is defined as a positive emotional linkage between people and their habitat (Shumaker, Taylor, 1983), a linkage that creates a sense of comfort and security (Rivlin, 1990). Place attachment is based on the attitude towards it and involves emotions, knowledge, beliefs, as well as behaviour and actions towards

that place. From the perspective of psychoanalytic theory, place perceptions are incorporated into selfhood, creating internalized objects that serve as sources of security under stress or isolation (Greenberg, Mitchell, 1983). In a modern world characterized by uncertainty and risk, the attachment to a place and the sense of belonging and security it can provide can play an essential role in people's lives. Psychological security is a state in which the individual is able to satisfy basic needs for self-preservation and a sense of being (psychologically) protected in society (Zotova, 2012, p. 89). Thanks to the integrating function of the state of security, a link emerges between the peculiarities of the habitat, psychic processes, and psychological characteristics, i.e. the state of psychological security acts as a kind of equilibrium that transforms the space around it: when psychological security deteriorates, place attachment strengthens; when a person feels secure, the need for security acquires a latent character. The intensity of people's attachment to a place can also vary depending on the number of contacts with the place, its size and location, and on whether the place is safe. If people believe that the place they are attached to is under threat and that they may lose their emotional attachment to it, they may behave in a negative way towards the people who are responsible for this change.

One should note that going through difficulties can strengthen attachment to the city. For example, Clive Taylor and Alan Townsend write that a third of respondents relate their attitudes to their place of residence to their previous hardship, and it is the people who have had previous hardships that feel most attached to the neighbourhood (Taylor, Townsend, 1976). Harold Proshansky and his colleagues highlighted the fact that people only become aware of their sense of place when the place they are attached to is in jeopardy (Proshansky et al., 1983). Miriam Billig concluded from a study of Israelis living in Gaza that threats to a place can increase people's awareness of their attachment, and this increased awareness of attachment can reduce their perception of risk and make them want to stay in the place they are attached to, even if it is no longer safe (Billig, 2006).

Place attachment has a number of benefits, such as high quality of life (Harris et al., 1995), good physical and psychological health, and satisfaction with social relationships and the physical environment (Tartaglia, 2012). On the other hand, place attachment can have negative side effects. Marc Fried noted that this attachment can become dysfunctional if it prevents people from considering future alternatives (Fried, 2000). Clare Twigger-Ross and David Uzzell found that people with a strong attachment to their homes may refuse to move out even if life in that place becomes very difficult (Twigger-Ross, Uzzell, 1996). Place attachment can lead to intergroup conflicts when newcomers are significantly different (in terms of culture, ethnicity) from the majority (Fried, 2000); locals with strong attachments are very likely to take them for a threat to their lifestyle and to the physical and social characteristics of the neighbourhood. In other words, when events occur that disrupt the habitual 'feel' of a place, the state of psychological security is lowered. This provokes the emergence of defensive behavioural strategies.

The intensity of place attachment is determined by various social and demographic factors. For instance, unlike urban inhabitants, people in rural areas are more attached to the place (Lewicka, 2005), together with home owners (Lewicka, 2010) and elderly people (Hidalgo, Hernandez, 2001; Lewicka, 2010). Women are more attached to their homes than men (Hidalgo, Hernandez, 2001; Rollero, De Piccoli, 2010), perhaps due to the fact that they spend more time and effort on household chores and childrearing, i.e. they are the main housekeepers, which can result in stronger attachment.

A sense of security in everyday life of each person is a fundamental aspect of his/her existence. Understanding how different aspects of life, including the urban environment in which one lives, relate to this fundamental need can help raise awareness of what it means to feel secure, what conditions are necessary for this to happen, and how to improve the perceived security of urban dwellers.

In fact, the ability to understand and form perceptions of the environment is a rather complicated topic to talk about. It is obvious that the way in which people perceive their environment varies ac-

ording to their gender, age, personal experience, and even their size and height (Wohlwill, 1976). Nevertheless, psychologists, architects, and designers emphasize universal aspects, general patterns of spatial experience (Lippmann, 2010). Evidence of this is the fact that people's perceptions of aspects of space organization are similar (Ellard, 2009). For example, some researchers showed that a close visual connection between an inhabited space and nature are beneficial for psychological well-being (Heerwagen, Orians, 1993); people who live in a greener environment feel happier and more protected (Kuo, Sullivan, 2001), while blocked perspectives can cause negative reactions (Heerwagen, Orians, 1993). Besides, studies often show that people prefer to look at water because it is perceived as calming (Heerwagen, 2017). In O. A. Kaptsevich's view, the degree of familiarity with the environment, the semantic connotations of its perception, the personal experience of interaction, and the perceived possibility of satisfying current needs can significantly influence perceptual effects (Kaptsevich, 2021).

Differences in perception determine people's level of trust in the world around them, which in turn affects their perception of danger/safety and their willingness to contribute, while „a shared sense of responsibility among urban dwellers motivates activity and demands to living conditions“ (Emelyanova et al., 2022, p. 9). That is why connotations of psychological security modify according to the environmental background. Abraham Carmeli and Jody Gittell, working in Israel and the United States, suggested that psychological security refers to how people view their social environment and how they react to it (Carmeli, Gittell, 2009). Combining people's perceptions of themselves, society, and the urban environment, Chinese psychologists have defined psychological security as urban dwellers' risk assessment of their urban living conditions based on past experience or intuition (Wang et al., 2019).

Therefore, to understand the relationships that people maintain with cities, it is necessary to analyze the aspects that transform space into place and, consequently, people's attachment to places. The key aspects of place, namely physical (form and space) and psychological (emotions, feelings, meanings, etc.), are always perceived through the

prism of security, which in turn is a kind of regulator of the order and categorization of the world around them. Security for the individual is always a set of meanings attached to his or her secure world in which place attachment plays an important role. The place and the attachment to it are thus a resource for the psychological security of its inhabitants.

REFERENCES

- Billig, M.** (2006). Is my home my castle? Place attachment, risk perception, and religious faith. *Environment and Behavior*, 38(2), 248–265.
- Burnett, R. et al.** (2018). Global estimates of mortality associated with long-term exposure to outdoor fine particulate matter. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(38), 9592–9597.
- Carmeli, A., & Gittell, J. H.** (2009). High-quality relationships, psychological safety, and learning from failures in work organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 30(6), 709–729.
- Ellard, C.** (2009). *You are here: Why we can find our way to the moon, but get lost in the mall*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Emelyanova, T. P. et al.** (2022). Activity of muscovites in the urban environment: The role of the responsibility factor. *RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics*, 19(1), 7–20.
- Fried, M.** (2000). Continuities and discontinuities of place. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20(3), 193–205.
- Greenberg, J. R., & Mitchell, S. A.** (1983). *Object relations in psychoanalytic theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harris, P. B. et al.** (1995). Relocation and privacy regulation: A cross-cultural analysis. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 15(4), 311–320.
- Hay, R.** (1998). Sense of place in developmental context. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 18(1), 5–29.
- Heerwagen, J.** (2017, June 6). *Psychological value of space*. Whole Building Design Guide. http://www.wbdg.org/resources/psychspace_value.php
- Heerwagen, J., & Orians, G.** (1993). Humans, habitats and aesthetics. – In: Kellert, S. R., & Wilson, E. O. (Eds.), *The biophilia hypothesis* (pp. 138–172). Washington, DC: Island Press.

Hidalgo, M. C., & Hernandez, B. (2001). Place attachment: Conceptual and empirical questions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3), 273–281.

Jorgensen, B. S., & Stedman, R. C. (2001). Sense of place as an attitude: Lakeshore owners' attitude towards their properties. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3), 233–248.

Kaptsevich, O. A. (2021). Psychological effects of urban environment visual perception: A systematic review. *Psychology, Journal of the Higher School of Economics*, 18(3), 575–597.

Kuo, F., & Sullivan, W. (2001). Environment and crime in the inner city: Does vegetation reduce crime? *Environment and Behavior*, 33(3), 343–367.

Kyle, G., Graefe, A., & Manning, R. (2005). Testing the dimensionality of place attachment in recreational settings. *Environment and Behavior*, 37(2), 153–177.

Kyle, G. et al. (2010). The influence of home and community attachment on firewise behaviour. *Society and Natural Resources*, 23(11), 1075–1092.

Lewicka, M. (2005). Ways to make people active: The role of place attachment, cultural capital, and neighbourhood ties. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25(4), 381–395.

Lewicka, M. (2010). What makes neighbourhood different from home and city? Effects of place scale on place attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(1), 35–51.

Lippmann, P. C. (2010). *Evidence-based design of elementary and secondary schools: A responsive approach to creating learning environments*. New York, NY: Wiley.

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6–23.

Mishra, S., Mazumdar, S., & Suar, D. (2010). Place attachment and flood preparedness. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(2), 187–197.

Obrovich, N. et al. (2018). Empirical evidence of mental health risks posed by climate change. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(43), 10953–10958.

Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3(1), 57–83.

Rivlin, L. G. (1990). The significance of home and homelessness. *Marriage and Family Review*, 15(1–2), 39–56.

Rollero, C., & De Piccoli, N. (2010). Place attachment, identification and environment perception: An empirical study. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(2), 198–205.

Sampson, R. J. (1988). Local friendship ties and community attachment in mass society: A multilevel systemic model. *American Sociological Review*, 53(5), 766–779.

Sarason, S. B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a community psychology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shumaker, S. A., & Taylor, R. B. (1983). Toward a clarification of people-place relationships: A model of attachment to place. – In: Feimer, N. R., & Geller, E. S. (Eds.). *Environmental psychology: Directions and perspectives* (pp. 219–251). New York, NY: Praeger.

Tartaglia, S. (2012). Different predictors of quality of life in urban environments. *Social Indicators Research*, 113(3), 1045–1053.

Taylor, C. C., & Townsend, A. R. (1976). The local „sense of place“ as evidenced in North-East England. *Urban Studies*, 13(2), 133–146.

Twigger-Ross, C., & Uzzell, D. L. (1996). Place and identity processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16(3), 205–220.

Wang, J. et al. (2019). Measuring the psychological security of urban residents: Construction and validation of a new scale. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2423. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02423>

Williams, D. R. et al. (1992). Beyond the commodity metaphor: Examining emotional and symbolic attachment to place. *Leisure Sciences*, 14(1), 29–46.

Williams, D. R., & Vaske, J. J. (2003). The measurement of place attachment: Validity and generalizability of a psychometric approach. *Forest Science*, 49(6), 830–841.

Wohlwill, J. F. (1976). Environmental aesthetics: The environment as a source of affect. – In: Altman, I., & Wohlwill, J. F. (Eds.). *Human behavior and environment* (pp. 37–86). New York, NY: Plenum.

Zhang, X., Chen, X., & Zhang, X. (2018). The impact of exposure to air pollution on cognitive performance. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(37), 9193–9197.

Zotova, O. Yu. (2012). Communicative interaction technologies for safety and trust. *National Psychological Journal*, 1(7), 88–94.