

# Place Identity

The Production of Space Through the Logic of Identity

Reflections from Contemporary Manila



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# 1 Introduction | Anywhere and Somewhere

A street can be anywhere, as in, a street can be unrelated to any specific place. But the street in the picture cannot be anywhere. It is somewhere, as in, it occurs in a specific place in time and space. The fact that it cannot be anywhere, doesn't stem from its mere physical presence in a given place. It is somewhere for the simple reason that there is something that indicated what it is, where it is, who occupies and moves around it. It is identified with something and by something. The street in the image is Filipino. The reason this is easily distinguishable is because of the colorful jeep/vans in it. These Jeepneys help identify Metro Manila while simultaneously defining its streetscape. Therefore they form and express the identity of the city they belong to.

There could be more to the picture than just the Jeepney. The way that street could be somewhere is if for example you could see the faces of the people in it, or the architecture of it. Its built fabric and its people can make it somewhere. In this paper I study how identity and place identity are formed and how this issue affects and is affected by the built environment and the architecture of place. I later discuss how identity can be considered in the context of urban and architectural design.

Throughout the essay, I focus on the case of Metro Manila to give an example of the development of an ambivalent identity and reasons behind it, and focus on the development of housing trends in it. The examples are based on observations and information obtained while on a study trip that was part of the urban shelter design course in Lund University. The trip's main purpose was to study social housing trends in Manila. However, the scope of study is not limited to Metro Manila as the problem of identity is present everywhere and hence the considerations for urban shelter design and the role of the architect are not limited to the case Manila.

## 2 Identity and Place Identity

I will first attempt to clarify how self and place identity is formed and how they are shaped and affected by various factors. In order to understand the concept of place identity it is important to start with a definition of the built environment that is best illustrated using the words of John Habrakan, who argues in his book, *The Structure of the Ordinary*, that the built environment is not solely compromised of physical forms but also of the people that act and react to the built fabric. *'If built environment is an organism, it is so by virtue of human intervention: people imbue it with life and spirit of place.'* (Habrakan, 2000, p.1)

People shape their environment but are also shaped by it. In earlier times, as David Sibley explains, the identity of individuals could be interpreted and studied separately from their social surrounding. This view was mostly adopted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when romanticism promoted a view of the individual as a free spirit. This notion was later reinforced by capitals forms of social organization that considered the individual to be a free agent who is in control of his own destiny. These views thus perceived the identity of the individual to be detached from their social environment and created no correlation or an influencing relationship between the people and the surroundings. These ideas were later challenged by the Freudian psychoanalysis which considered identity to be part of society and formed a connection between the developing self and the material world. (Sibley, 1999, 4)

People begin creating place-identity through their interaction with their built fabric. The logic of space in this sense relies on identity, presence and form to create and give meaning to space. This place identity is a substructure of a person's self-identity. It is made up of the knowledge and feelings that develop in everyday experiences with physical space. (Gieseeking, 2017) Thus, place identity means a reciprocal relationship between people and the built environment.

But not only physical qualities of the environment can form or define an identity, but also imaginary geographies<sup>1</sup> come into play. Identity is formed by producing a boundary between the self and non-self. The border is constructed through a series of misrepresentations that share an essential quality of otherness, of not being me. These representations of the others create social practices of inclusion and exclusion by defining the boundaries between the good and the bad, simultaneously defining the self. (Sibley, 1999, p.5) Hence an *imaginary place identity*, created by cultural difference and representation, comes into play in the study and creation of the built fabric.

Places function to provide a sense of belonging, construct meaning, foster attachment and mediate change, these places are both physical forms and imaginary spaces of exclusion, inclusion and cultural difference. The process of giving meaning to space and creating this sense of belonging forms a place identity that informs a person's experiences, behaviors and attitudes about other places. (Giesecking, 2017)

### a. The Production of Space in Manila

Place-identity, as previously mentioned, is a substructure of self-identity. Therefore, in order to understand it, it is important to understand how the Filipino self-identity developed through a historical analysis that explores both the physical forms and the imaginative geographies resulting from processes over time.

To be able to study the imaginative geographies that helped develop the Filipino identity, it is essential to study it in relation to the west since the Philippines has been under colonial rule, Spanish later the American, since the 16th century. The construction of what I call *imaginary place-identity*, the question of otherness and the creation of imagined geographies, occurs in relation to the colonial other. By imaginary place-identity, I mean the formation of a sense of belonging not to a physical space, but to an imagined place through a boundary

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<sup>1</sup> Imaginary geography is a term developed by Edward Said in his book 'Orientalism' in which he studied the ways the west influenced the east by producing a distinction between 'us and them'. I use the term in this paper to generally describe the way we come to define ourselves in terms of others and the way we produce this geography of distinction in our minds.

that exists in our minds. It is the process of defining where you belong and to whom you belong not in relation to a physical space, but to an abstract space that is imagined and through which people and societies come to define themselves. This imagined place-identity results from the processes and geographies of exclusion and inclusion.

The differentiation today between developed and developing countries stems from a historical demarcation of cultural and spatial boundaries between civilizations and the uncivilized others (Sibley, 1999, p.50). In this process the boundary between the self and the other is formed through a series of cultural representations of people and things which allows the social positioning of the self through that boundary and so the non-human world provides a context for selfhood. (Sibley, 1999, p.10)

The map of the world provides a way with which to read the imagined others. Europe, civilization, is placed at the center while the 'grotesque' occupies the peripheries. This expresses the desire for the literal distancing from the other and to 'demarcate the boundaries of society, beyond which lie those who do not belong' (Sibley, 1999, p.51).

The orient, including Metro Manila, is placed on the periphery of this map, from which the west tried to distance itself. (Sibley, 1999, p.51) But this desire to expel the abject, to separate between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered creates feelings of anxiety and fear in the west because such separations can never be fully achieved (Sibley, 1999, p.8). But at the same time, these very features that are reviled are also desired because they represent what has been repressed in Western society (Sibley, 1999, p.51). This resulted in an ambiguous attitude towards the people on the peripheries. The orient was romanticized and at the same time regarded as deviant (Sibley, 1999, p.50).

This fear of the orient in general and its unfamiliarity resulted in an attempt to domesticate the exotic and control the orient. Even in the context of the learned orientalist, the subject was not the East itself but the East as made known, as represented and perceived, and therefore becomes less fearful to the Western

public. An imagined geography was thus created through a mental operation that represents the orient as perceived and not as it is in reality. (Said, 1994, p.60)

*‘The relationship between the occident and the orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of various degrees of hegemony. The orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be ‘oriental’ in all those ways that are common place to average 19th century European, but also because it could be – that is submitted, to being made- oriental. Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority.’* (Said, 1994, p.6)

This idea of submitting to being made oriental and of trying to fit in the superior western mold manifested itself on the first day in Philippines, when we were shown a tourist promotional video of the Philippines that stated, ‘we are oriental but western too.’ This western influence and urge to conform to the occident was present not only in the Philippines’ depiction of itself and identity but is also reflected when studying the development of building and housing trends in the Philippines.

Before Spanish colonialism, different housing typologies showcase indigenous ways of building in the Philippines. Some of these are the Ifugao and Mangyan houses. The one-room Ifugao house is a pyramid that rests on four posts. It is enclosed by slanting walls, sloping roofs and a ceiling formed by the loft. Its interior is nearly spherical and the dark windowless chamber suggests a womb. The Mangyan houses in Mindoro were also able to create two types of house forms, the single-family and communal house. The communal house, occupied by several families, had no interior partition, each family marking its area by a mat on the floor. Some of these houses were also built on trees for protection from floods, wild animal and enemies. (Philippines, n.d., p.4) The point of mentioning these examples is to prove or showcase that the Philippines did have its indigenous architecture, that stem from climatic and social needs. This indigenous architecture was later transformed, altered and then eradicated by colonial and contemporary trends and by the Phillipino desire to be identified with west.

During the Spanish colonial period, the bahay na bato, a 19th century stone town house emerged. It was a product economic and social development as well

as architectural evolution. In that period, Manila was opened to international trade that resulted in the increase of agricultural and trade production increasing the fortune of the native aristocracy and creating a class of cosmopolitan *ilustardo*, the highly educated and wealthy, who needed a new house typology to suit their needs of spaciousness, durability and elegance. And even though the *Bahay na bato* could be described as a development of the indigenous *bahay kubo*, it was also influenced by the houses of Spanish residents who combined native and foreign styles of building in their two-story houses. The *bahay na bato* is an example of the development of indigenous Filipino architecture, from one room dwelling to multi-room house while still preserving some of the basic features. But this house grew also as a form adaptation to western influences forming a blend between native and immigrant art. It became a symbol of the affluent westernized Filipino. (Philippines, n.d, p.8)

The Philippines' occupation by the United States in 1898 marked a new era of development of not only Filipino architecture but in the urban fabric as a whole. In contrast to the romantic air of previous colonial architecture, the 20th century architecture in Philippines was '*rational functional and seemingly plain.*' It was mainly influenced by architects who went to study in the United States in schools that were influenced by the school of *Beaux arts* in Paris. These architects were supporters of the neoclassical style characterized by monumental scale but also remained loyal to local tradition. The metropolitan theater by Juan Arellano, in an example of this trend where within its disciplined classical form the architect succeeded in incorporating art deco motifs, stylized interpretation of native plants, and a variety of colors and textures. A new form of suburban house developed, the *tsalet* or *Cahlet*, its basic design was a house on slits which could be described as functional and plain. The second generation of Filipino architects however, in 1930s broke away from tradition, in a period marked by attempts of national independence and development of the business magnate that required new forms of buildings like commercial, hotels, apartments, and homes for upper class. But this departure of modern Filipino architecture from the *beaux arts* traditions was still a product of western influence and way of conformism to western trends. (Philippines, n.d, p.11)

The atrocities of the Second World War in Manila were followed by the atrocities of reconstruction. New building forms sought fresh inspiration from contemporary western architects, like Oscar Niemeyer, whose sunbreak became an object of extensive and irrational imitation. The post war houses marked a complete departure from native tradition to the one-story California bungalow that represented the Americanization of the Filipino House. With the growth of the urban population, that resulted from high birth rate and uncontrolled migration from rural areas, the government was no longer capable of providing adequate housing for everyone and so the urban poor began building their one room houses in shanty towns using discarded materials, cardboard boxes, rusty roofing sheets and rotten wood, while the upper-class residential architecture is found in the sprawling houses with spacious gardens and the deluxe air-conditioned apartments in high-rises condominiums. (Philippines, n.d, p.12)

This history of development of architectural trends in the Philippines showcases an on-going Western influence and an earlier struggle to maintain identity while at the same time to conform to western trends. But the effort to maintain identity was lost in the end and complete adherence to western influence can be found at the contemporary stage in Philippines' Architecture. The West defined the orient, the east and the Philippines; the definition excluded it from a civilized society to which the Filipino sought to belong. But these attempts to belong and create a place-identity in relation to west, ultimately let to the forgoing and forgetting of what it meant to be Filipino.

Hence, the current physical fabric in Metro Manila was formed by this imaginary geography of exclusion where the average Filipino tries to form his narrative of place-identity within.

## **b. The Production of Place-Identity in Manila**

Every society attempts to produce its own space, the space that houses its social existence and its identity. But forming this identity becomes difficult, with colonialization and industrialization. Industrial production became synonymous with uniformity. Since the machine produces identical commodities, the mass production of identical dwellings turns them into industrial products devoid of any



individuality. This uniformity could have been sought in association with the prestige of industrial production. However, in reality, uniformity results from centralized decision making and execution. (Habraken, 2000, p.272)

In colonial cities, urbanization took place without industrialization in contrast to the closely linked industrialization and urbanization in western cities. This scheme has been called 'dependent urbanization', where the colonial cities were dependent on trade with the metropolis rather than their own production. (Jenkins et. al, p 106) Thus the expansion of the Western Empire and development of capitalist mode of production depended on 'fitting dependent territories and dependent peoples into the cosmic order of the dominant powers.' (Sibley, 1999, p.49)

The 19th century schemes to shape the city, including the American scheme by Daniel Burnham to shape Manila, can thus be viewed as a process for purification, designed to exclude groups that are considered polluting, the poor, the residual working class, racial minorities and so on (Sibley, 1999, p.57). Built environment is thus the product of people acting and the physical properties reveal how agents produce control (Habraken, p28)

In contemporary Manila, the geographies of exclusion and creation of physical fabric is not only a result of western influences but also of a current class structure that shapes the urban form of Manila. These geographies start with the gate. Gated communities are being constructed around the city. The National Housing Authority mostly chooses to relocate informal settlers from unsanitary and unsafe environments to newly built residential buildings where each family is allocated a unit. The inhabitants of these gated communities come from the same social background, mostly from the urban poor and very frequently relocated from the same area. This might help in fostering and recreating the sense of community that might have existed in the previous residence. It also helps in creating a feeling of safety for the residents, as they fear from the high crime rate in Manila. But while the gate might help in some of these practical issues, it only does so on a superficial level as the problem of safety and community cannot be solved by the gate. The gate protects from crime but doesn't solve its roots and the creation of a diverse balanced community cannot happen inside the boundaries of a gate. A

gate, by nature, excludes. Its incorporation into housing schemes leads to the segregation and densification of the urban poor in specific areas.

*‘The gate simultaneously engages form and territory. It encloses and connects physically defined spaces. The way in which settlement draws boundaries will determine whether or not it has territorial meaning.’* (Habarken, 2000, p.183). The gates in Manila convey protection, separation, seclusion and beginning of another space. These gates, separate and segregate. And in ten years times, if the trend continues, there will be no integration. People will be born within the boundaries of gates that they stay in because they don’t have the chance to reach beyond it into somewhere different.

Another way geographies of exclusion are being created in Manila is by an obvious rejection of the shanty towns that manifested itself during various field visits around Manila. Most of the shanty towns are being ruined as they are considered unsafe and hazardous while few survive by being regulated. Shanty towns are undesired to the point that DMCI, a major developer in Manila, would depict them as green spaces on a housing model. But this rejection of shanty towns and the dominating desire to ruin them will in the end turn Manila into a city that lacks identity. Shanty towns aren’t just inhabitable, unsafe, unsanitary and temporary housing areas built by the homeless urban poor. They are spontaneous settlements that grew naturally out of people’s needs to first settle, but also to express. And although their current situation needs improving, there is potential in developing and regulating them to create spaces that fit the living standards while still maintaining this identity and coherent character they express. In a shanty town, individuals have the freedom to control their surroundings. This control is important in establishing a sense of place-identity.

The idea of control is important in the urban fabric. Habraken explains that built form provides a role of people to play aside from the role that is determined by society. When people gain or lose control, behavioral change commonly results. For example, when renters buy multifamily houses, they become renter and come to view the world differently (Habraken,2000, p.29). This control also explains the way people come to shape their environments. Each agent in the built environment brings private interests to the field, an example of which is the

difference between an absentee landlord and owner occupant landlord, where one is considered beneficial to urban quality and other less so. (Habraken,2000, p.29)

In Manila, the contemporary housing trends not only try to fit into a western mold, but also aim to create the uniformity that is fostered and created by centralized decision making from both the National Housing Authority and private developers. In their attempt to make everything, orderly, rational and clean (all Western definitions of a good space), NHA creates a typical typology with a typical unit that it builds and rebuilds everywhere around the city, while DMCI, the private developer, puts houses like products behind a vitrine for the middle income and the high income to consume. This rejection of individuality and ignorance towards identity leads to the creation of an environment that the people are disinterested in and cannot relate to. Therefore, that built environment cannot thrive and succeed.

## 4 Urban Shelter Design

### a. Observations from Manila

Contemporary trends in residential building in the Philippines do not foster the creation of a sense belonging or a place-identity which is vital for the creation of fostering communities. This can be best illustrated using examples of various housing areas visited in Metro Manila. From the pictures, one can get a sense of the spaces that have been appropriated and express and of the spaces that fail to do so.

## Appropriation | Spontaneous vs Planned



This is the commonwealth area, in Quezon City. Previously this area was a shanty town, but instead of relocating its inhabitants, it was regulated and people were allowed to stay in the homes they built. The houses are not the most refined and neither are the streets, but the area is alive and has a character. People seem to appropriate the space they're in, with flower pots, street seating and personal things in front of their homes. And the space seems kind towards them. It is a benign space whose streets and buildings compose an atmosphere that expresses and is consistent with the people in it. The character in these pictures implies that it cannot be anywhere. Instantly, there is the impression that the area represents and that it was created in a non-centrally organized disengaged manner.



This is in Bonifacio Global City, a financial district in Metro Manila whose development began in 1995 by BLDC and Ayala Corporation. It is a previously a US military land that was sold to Bases Conversion and Development Authority of the Philippines. The high street of BGC that is in the picture is a typical modern street that is stripped from identity and fails to represent. The scale of the people seems too small compared to its broad width and to the buildings surrounding it. The residential buildings are only around 20% occupied and only expected to be never fully inhabited. This city was built following a contemporary international trend that is customized for the westernized Filipino. This trend has made the space hostile towards the character of its inhabitants who have to conform to it and hostile against whoever doesn't 'belong' to it.

## Appropriation | Scale & Identity



The picture is of DMCI middle income housing project in Metro Manila. The project can exist anywhere in the world, as in it represents an international identity that fails to express the local people and the place it is in. It has a non-individualized, rigid building form that no one seemed to have appropriated. One of its main characteristics is its uniform verticality and repetitive floors. The units in this building are all the same, with no variety and no flexibility for alteration. The unit that is sold, is exhibited down, which turns a house into a product that is readily bought, which also impedes the process of creating a place identity and a sense of belonging.



This is a gated NHA Housing Areas in Manila. The project is composed of houses or single units that are one story high and loft-able from the inside. The units dis-individualized, i.e, every family is allocated the same unit and the neighborhood has uniform built fabric. The inhabitants come from the same socio-economic background, either original inhabitants of the site, temporarily relocated during building, or newly relocated families. This space, however, seems to have been appropriated to a certain extent. It cannot be described as benign space since it doesn't seem to nurture a sense of belonging and character the way the commonwealth area does, but perhaps, because of its scale and the lack of the suppressing verticality present in the DMCI housing, the people have been able to find a small way for them to alter, infect and appropriate the space somehow expressing themselves in the rigid fabric that surrounds them.

## b. Benign Spaces & the Urban Planner

The examples show that some spaces have an identity and nurture the development of one. These spaces could be described as *benign spaces*, while others are rigid places that do not provoke a sense of belonging or appropriation. To have an intimate and genuine space that can be a home and not just a product bought is vital to having a flourishing and comfortable social life.

*‘Every society produces a space, its own space. Any social existence aspiring or claiming to be real but failing to produce its own space, would be a strange entity, a very peculiar kind of abstraction, unable to escape from the ideological or even the cultural realm. It would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether, there immediately losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality’*  
(Lefebvre, 2009, p.52).

This means that if the society loses this space, it becomes at a danger of disappearing and losing its identity and character. The space that is being referred to is not the mere physical space, but it is the social space in which everyday life occurs. But social space cannot occur in un-relatable building fabrics that attempt to hegemonize and oppress individuality and spirit of place. The built environment is comprised of physical forms and the people who act in it. In order to produce a coherent environment all its parts must be in spontaneous harmony. This means that the built fabric must not attempt to repress or control, but it must allow itself to be altered by the everyday practices of its people.

But contemporary trends in building are, in the words of Vincent Scully, at ‘a moment of supreme silliness that deconstructs and self-destructs.’ (Tschumi, 1996, p.228) In the case of Manila, the remaining of self-identity and spontaneous built fabric and being deconstructed and eliminated thereby leading to the self-destruction of the society. If these trends continue, there will be no relatable social space left where people can form their narratives and create a sense of belonging and place identity.

The second reason why the creation of these *benign spaces* is crucial is the great effect the home environment has on shaping the identity and self-image of the individual. Since in a home, *'things can tell us who we are, not in words but by embodying our intentions. In our everyday traffic of existence, we can learn about ourselves from objects, almost as much as from people'* (Sibley, p10). For a member of household for example, the home environment reflects an expanded boundary of the self, the objects becoming signs of ties to the larger system of which they are part. (Sibley, 1999, p.10) Hence, a repressive banal environment will only foster the creation of dis-engaged, non-creative, rationalized human beings that only attempt to conform and fail to express themselves leading to problems in creating an intimate society where people can belong. When people belong to a society, only then, can it really flourish. Therefore, a home should be an extension of the individual and not a product to be consumed and purchased from behind a windowpane or a banal unit given the urban poor by the government.

In order to create these benign spaces, it is important to have faith in and to trust the collective and not just the individual. Habraken explains, that *'The common understanding about form ranges from explicit bylaws and building codes to deeply implicit customs and habits. Between these two extremes there exists all manner of ongoing rule making, agreement, and consensus. What remains unspoken, what is taken for granted, makes for the strongest bonds. True coherence resides in the implicit.'* (Habraken, 2000)

The creation of a friendly and intimate and safe environment is not limited to and cannot be created only using building codes and by-laws. There should be a trust in the common understanding between people, that they will all aim to create a good environment to live in. *'And as long as the people are actively involved and find a built environment worth renewing, altering and expanding, it endures. In this sense, the environment becomes a product of people acting.'* (Habraken, 2000)

A benign space is space can only be created following the logic of identity. In order to create these spaces we have to abandon the idea of creating spaces that conform to international trends. There should be no such thing as a module or a fixed way

of doing things. Each place is unique. And just like an individual should be treated for who they are, each place should be treated for what it is. And you can never do the first without doing the other. People shape place and places shape people. Therefore, people everywhere should be allowed to and be able to infect the spaces they are in. Infect them with who they are and make them their own.

Bernard Tschumi argued in his book *Architecture and Disjunction* that ‘*Architecture only exists through the world in which it locates itself. If this world implies dissociation and destroys unity, architecture will inevitably reflect these phenomena.*’ (Tschumi, 1996, p117) Societal problems then cannot be fixed by architecture, they are reflected in the architecture of place. Therefore, the society should aim to fix social problems that are beyond our gates and uniform buildings. This fixing will eventually be reflected in the naturally growing environment.

Finally an answer to the question of how to create benign spaces can be found in the place where the essay began, the Jeepney. The story behind it gives insight on how to create, foster and express identity. The jeepneys were previously military jeeps left from the US after the Second World War. Harry Stonehill, an American Soldier, was asked to dispose of these jeeps, but rather than destroying them, he chose to create a black market for them. In the hands of the Filipinos, the jeeps became the Jeepneys, the most popular way of public transportation and a symbol of Filipino Culture. The Jeepney even made it to the Philippines pavilion, in the New York World’s fair in 1964, as a national image of the Filipinos.

Therefore, to create a benign space it important to:

- 1- Not aim to create the environment, but let it evolve. You can’t create benign spaces, they are created.
- 2- Limit design to the building level and people should be able to infect this building.
- 3- Only Regulate on the neighborhood level.
- 4- Foster the continuation of the everyday practices of people. Through these practices, people’s needs evolve and so do their spaces.
- 5- Abandon international trends. International is not an identity. It is an abstraction that only leads to conformity and subjugation.



- 6- Accept history and don't try to eradicate it. History, whether colonial or not is part of the identity. However, one part of history should not eliminate the other.
- 7- Trust that 'common understanding' can produce cohere functioning environments better than an urban planner can ever design.

## 5 How does the architect produce places that have a sense of identity?

Previously, I mentioned the jeepney, to give a concrete example of benign and spontaneous development. Keeping this story in mind, I will narrate another story that is important in discussing our role as architects. In 'The Poor Little Rich Man' by Adolf Loos, a rich man hires an architect that keeps adding and specifying the layout of the spaces and objects to the point that nothing is left for the client to touch or move. The rich man ends up feeling excluded from the space of his own home and can no longer live as he wishes.

The question to take from these two stories is what makes a Jeepney say manila while house fails to do so? In 'The Poor Little Rich Man', that architect eliminates his clients ability to alter the space and express himself through it. He turns it into a rigid space that the client no longer relates to and cannot form a sense of identity in it anymore. Like a society, an individual also attempts to create his own space, and once this space is eradicated, the person's identity becomes close to the danger of forgetting.

The Jeepney is not a purely Filipino invention and certainly it is not being used the way it was perceived when designed. The jeepney expresses the history of Filipinos and accepts it. At the same time, people added to, altered and infected it and made it their own. This alteration was not planned but was a spontaneous development and fulfillment of current needs. And because of this, because of its appropriation it became a symbol of Pilipino identity.

The architect should consider the relation between identity and place and look at it as a reciprocal relationship. Their role should be to ensure that the spaces

become an extension of their inhabitant and to ensure that the inhabitants become the creators of spaces. Their role is to guard these spontaneous spaces with their knowledge of building. When creating homes their role is to make sure the spaces are flexible and benign, in the sense that they can be altered and to make sure that they express the person who will inhabit it and to always reject a rigid module unit.

Finally to respond to the question of how do we produce environments and places that create a sense of place-identity? I answer we, as architects alone, can't. These environments are created by the people spontaneously at first. Then with time, our role extends to regulating the buildings and the environment to make sure it is safe and habitable. And then with people, we start assisting them with building their own homes, the individualized customized homes. We should always make sure that people can breathe in the spaces we create.

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