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## Spirit of Place as an Attraction of Heritage Area In Medan City, Indonesia

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### Abstract

A "spirit of place" is a bond between a place and its people built on tangible and intangible aspects, forming the identity or character of a community. The development of a city brings changes in different aspects that might put pressure on historical worth. Places that have a spirit will have a meaning that visitors can feel. Meaning generated by a place affects the relationship between the individual's soul and the place where the individual is located. This study will use literature review methodologies to develop a spirit of place theoretical framework for heritage tourist attractions in Medan city.

Keywords: spirit of place, heritage tourism, Medan city.

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### 1.0 Introduction

A place must have an atmosphere to feel its soul or spirit, which can set it apart from other places and is typically created by the unique activities of the people who live there. These specific activities usually give a place special meaning (Schulz, 1980). The spirit of place is formed from tangible and intangible aspects (Garnham, 1985). Tangible aspects play a role in forming a place, whereas intangible aspects give a "spirit" to a place (Quebec Declaration, ICOMOS, 2008). The spirit of place is a restriction on changes in historical cities that must be understood for the growth and development of cities to always be in harmony with their past. Economic expansion, urbanization, and the physical environment can affect development in historic areas. A city's spirit deteriorates, leading to its decline and eventual disappearance (Ginzarly et al., 2018; Sudikno, 2004). Changes in the character and values of a historical city can lead to its loss of recognition (Quebec Declaration, ICOMOS, 2008). These changes also cause Medan to lose its spirit of place and vitality.

The spirit of place is the soul humans build to maintain a particular area's socio-physical and spiritual sustainability. Exploring the spirit of place in an area brings out its uniqueness. Therefore, in historic city conservation, the spirit of place is an important subject that must be identified and documented as a basis for holistic city conservation (Rifaioğlu & Güçan, 2013). The ethnic diversity in Medan forms the character of this city, making its architecture rich in styles and cultures. Europeans nicknamed this city "Parisjs Van Soematra" (Buiskool, 2005). The image of a city is shaped by its cultural and historical background. A spirit's existence in a place can potentially increase its tourist attraction.

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The uniqueness of an object is attractive to tourists because they want to see and discover new, unusual things. In both discourse conservation and urban form studies, the idea of the spirit of place has been theorized. The charters and declarations of international conservation organizations make it clear that the primary focus of the conservation discourse is on maintaining the location's authenticity, uniqueness, and spirit (Rifaioğlu & Güçan, 2013). Therefore, identifying the spirit of place in a historical area is very important. In-depth research is required to generate tourist attraction by recovering the spirit of place. Find out what causes this occurrence and what can be done to recover a spirit of place in this area so Medan, a historically and culturally significant city, can regain its vitality.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Spirit of Place

Spirit of place has been known since ancient Rome, with the term *genius loci*. *Genius loci* is a phenomenon where people believe that certain places have "spirits/souls" that inhabit those places. It reflects the uniqueness of the place, thus making it different from other places. The structure of a place is not eternal and fixed, but that does not mean that the meaning of the place will change or disappear because this meaning can be preserved (Schulz, 1980). Spirit of place is the unique characteristics of a place that people have known for a long time that distinguishes it from other places, resulting from interactions that maintain its memory, vitality, and spiritual continuity (Schulz, 1980). Buildings built based on the spirit can enhance the meaning of the place and create a harmonious environment. The definitions and aspects of the spirit of place can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. Definition and Aspects of Spirit of Place

No.	Author	Spirit of Place Definition	Aspect/Variable
1.	The ICOMOS Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of place (2008)	Spirit of place is an element that consists of physical and spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion, and mystery to a place.	Tangible and Intangible
2.	Stella Maris Casal (2008)	The spirit of place can change in buildings that are revitalized or have changes in function. New functions impact new behavior.	Tangible and Intangible
3.	Kapila D. Silva (2015)	The spirit of place is defined as a collection of meanings that develop from the interactions and negotiations between a place and its people within a particular historical and cultural setting.	Tangible and Intangible
4.	Shofia Islamia Ishar, et al (2017)	The spirit of place gives the area its atmosphere, shaping the public's perception of the region's attractions, influenced by architectural styles, perceptions of regional excellence, and expectations of what is acceptable.	Tangible and Intangible
5.	Sugesti Retno Yanti, et al. (2021)	The spirit of place forms the identity or character of the local wisdom of the community.	Tangible and Intangible
6.	Riajeng Sinta Damayanti, et al. (2022)	The arrangement of physical elements that serve as the identity of the place and the expressions were seen.	Tangible and Intangible
7.	Moertiningsih and Dedes (2022)	Spirit of place is a Roman concept that gives life to people and places and determines their activity, character, and essence.	Tangible and Intangible

Table 1 shows that the spirit of place is a combination of tangible and intangible attributes that form the identity or character of the community and distinguish it from other places. There are numerous definitions for the "spirit of place" according to ICOMOS Québec Declaration (2008), the spirit of place gives meaning, value, emotion, and mystery to a place which includes physical and spiritual elements. Casal (2008) stated that if a building is renovated or its purpose is altered, the "spirit of place" may change. According to Silva (2015), the spirit of place is a group of meanings that emerge from interactions and negotiations between places and their inhabitants in particular historical and cultural contexts. Ishar (2017) defines the spirit of place as an aspect of a location that creates an environment and is impacted by architectural styles and people's views of regional benefits.

In some recent research, the spirit of place is the local wisdom of the community (Yanti, 2021). Damayanti (2022) defines the spirit of place as the physical elements that define a place. While according to Moertiningsih and Dedes (2022), the spirit of place determines the character and essence of a place. Researchers commonly focus on tangible and intangible aspects of the spirit of place, such as how things interact with their surroundings to create unique qualities and atmospheres. So in this study researcher also focus on both aspects.

### 2.2 Tangible Aspect

Tangible can be seen from spatial scale, intensity, landmarks, buildings, environment, and public domain or public space. This indicates that in the urban context, the spirit of place theory develops into an identity formed through a historic process where the tangible aspect is used to reference the physical aspect (Rifaioğlu & Güçan, 2013). Old buildings have aesthetics related to style, shape, and layout that represent the remains of the past, have unique features, and have a historical role in the city's development (Silva, 2015).

### 2.3 Intangible Aspect

Intangible aspects refer to the symbolic or intangible qualities connected to a place, such as memories, values, meanings, beliefs, and emotions (Schulz, 1980). A good place generates respect from the local community and visitors, as it represents their identity and has a unique value for visitors (Montgomery, 1998). So it can be concluded that tangible aspects play a role in shaping a place, while intangibles play a role in giving "spirit" to a place.

### 3.0 Methodology

This study uses a literature review with a narrative review method to review seven literature sources related to the spirit of place and tourist attraction originating from within and outside Asia. All of this literature is reviewed and analyzed by taking the essence of each study to collect relevant information to support the research. This study aimed to recover the spirit of place in the heritage area, a tourist attraction in Medan City, and the relationship between the spirit of place and tourist attraction through building attraction.

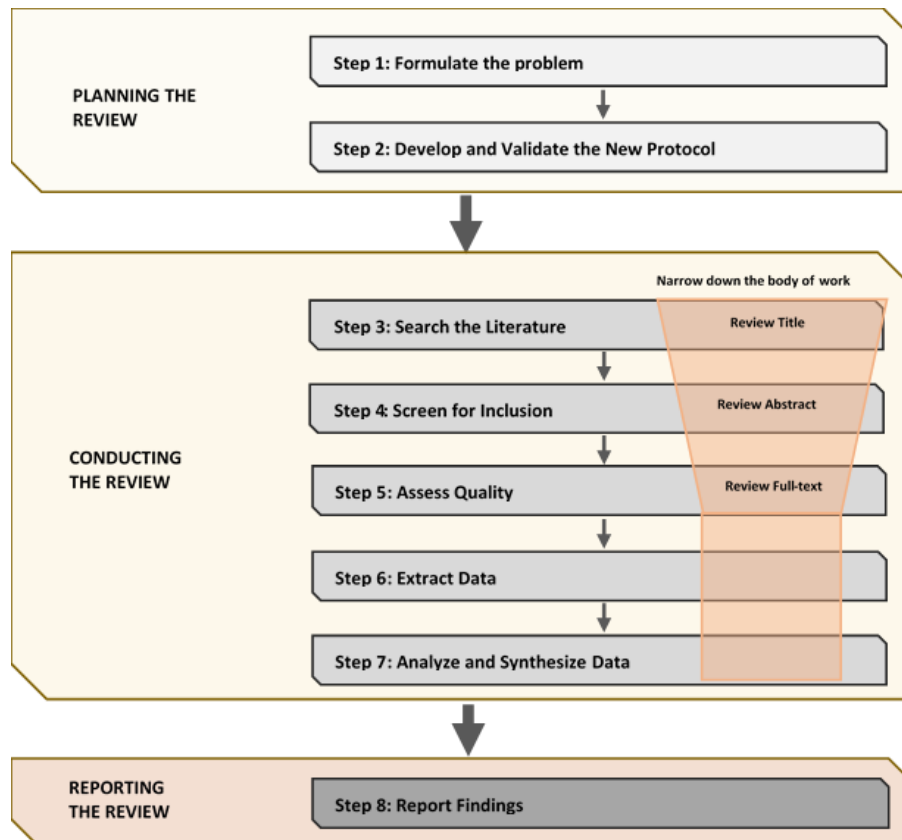


Figure 1: The Process of Literature Review  
(Source: Authors, 2023)

Figure 1 is a diagram of the literature review process. The steps that must be carried out in this methodology are (1) planning the review (formulate the problem and validate the review protocol), (2) conducting the review (search the literature, screen for inclusion, assess quality, extract data, analyze and synthesize data), (3) reporting the review (report findings).

### 4.0 Findings

The spirit of place is the process of human connection with the environment that living or inhabiting is a grounded activity where humans can orient themselves and identify themselves with the environment (Schulz, 1980). To understand the spirit of place in an area, we have to bring out the genius loci by displaying the aspects of image, space, character, and genius loci from the urban context through natural places and man-made places, where three aspects form the place, namely, meaning, identity, and history. Problems that exist in place can be solved by forming a place and discussing how the current place has lost its essence and is also being recovered to form the spirit of place in that place. A place with a spirit of place will have a uniqueness that distinguishes it from other places. This uniqueness will increase the tourist attraction in the region.

### 5.0 Discussion

Based on the literature reviewed in table 1, the spirit of place has two aspects/variables, tangible and intangible. Spirit of place gives identity to a place, and when the place is revitalized or changes its function, the place will form a new spirit of place (Yanti, 2022; Cassal,

2008). To understand the spirit of place, we can see these two aspects through image, space, character, and genius loci in a place formed from the relationship between humans and their environment.

### 5.1 Image

The image that can be felt in a place is an important aspect that can be traced to identify the genius loci. Image is a visual uniqueness that stands out in a place (Schulz, 1980). Finding visual uniqueness that can be felt and describing unique elements seen in that uniqueness are both required for exploring the image (Habibullah, 2021). The image in the spirit of place is an aspect of a place or area that differs from its surroundings. The image that appears in a place is the first aspect to be traced to identify Genius Loci (Habibullah, 2021). Image is a visual uniqueness that stands out in a place. It is required to identify the visual uniqueness that may be perceived and to define the distinctive elements that can be seen in that uniqueness to investigate the image.

### 5.2 Space

Space is where humans can engage in various activities while interacting with space components. Space is a place with meaning and value associated with local culture, formed by cultural activities and activities (Regina & Ekomadyo, 2022). Space is often used to express freedom from the potential of something that can produce an activity or activity that has meaning for its users and forms memories for humans (Al-Kamoosi, 2019). Space has meaning and value, individual and group experiences, emotions, and interactions formed by humans from an activity.

### 5.3 Character

A character can only be understood by considering its natural environment (Schulz, 1980). The character of a place is imparted through the immediate feeling of being in a particular place. A place may be considered friendly, cold, somber, lively, closed, open, and so on because of the spatial structure and architectural elements expressed by the spirit of the place and its inhabitants (Schulz, 1980). The character of a place is something that is formed from history, cultural landscape, natural conditions, and symbolic values that have the unique culture of the various ethnic groups that live in that place.

### 5.4 Genius Loci

The genius loci around a building must reflect the building itself (Schulz, 1980). Genius loci are tangible manifestations that can be found based on an image, space, and character analysis. Genius loci are considered a soul in an area that manifests in space and time (Hadi et al., 2022). Genius loci is a place's soul or spirit and have a significant role in shaping the uniqueness of the context in that place. It is a local uniqueness owned by a place different from others (Habibullah, 2021). It can be concluded that genius loci are the soul of a place that forms a uniqueness that sets it apart from other places.

Table 2. Aspects of the Forming Genius Loci

Author (Year)	Image	Space	Character	Genius Loci
Siregar, H. H. et al. (2018) ; Agumsari, D., et.al. (2020) ; Habibullah, S. et al. (2021)	The historical and cultural background, activities, and social interaction between people and a sociocultural place form image.	A place's uniqueness with the surrounding conditions and tangible elements.	Formed from a strong history and are unique from various tribes and cultures, obtained by exploring the atmosphere formed by the tangible elements.	Genius loci are the cultural diversity formed from the region's economic activity history, described through the relationship between human activity and space.
Hadi, D.S.N., et.al. (2022) ; Kaffah, M.F. et al. (2022) ; Regina, Y.V. et al. (2022)	The uniqueness of a place or a culture.	A place with various activities, meanings, and values related to the local culture is formed by cultural activities and activities.	Formed from the local culture, the close relationship between a place and its people, and the physical elements of a place.	Genius loci are tangible aspects based on an image, space, and character analysis. Genius loci are also described as a guardian spirit of a place.

### 5.5 Place

A "space" can become a "place" if the space is known better, given a value, has a unique character and has three essential components: meaning, identity, and history (Tuan, 1977; Schulz, 1980). Humans cannot create meaning entirely from humans; the meaning of an object is contained in its interaction with other objects, precisely what the object has collected (Heiddeger, 2005; Schulz, 1980). The identity of a place is determined by its location, social configuration, and characteristic articulation.

On the other hand, others may be located in a typical landscape but still have clear and distinct configurations with different characters (Ong, 2004). The spirit of place becomes real in a place by determining the location, spatial layout, and articulation that characterize the place itself. As cultural and social change manifests itself physically, we might analyze the challenge of change in terms of how genius loci can be maintained under the strains of the times (Schulz, 1980). The spirit of place is the "soul" or "spirit" built by humans to maintain a particular area's socio-physical attributes and spiritual sustainability; it focuses on aspects of the physical and human environment but does not cover the behavior of its inhabitants.

### 5.6 Tourist Attraction

A tourist attraction can increase visitors to a place (Suwanto, 2004). Natural, built, cultural, and social attractions fall under tourist attractions (Middleton, 1995; Zaenuri, 2012). As natural tourism develops, tourists' demand for protected areas will increase due to the

desirable features of the site (Deng et al., 2002). Natural tourist attractions can be differentiated based on the uniqueness of the natural environment in marine waters and land areas (Pujaastawa, 2015). Build Attraction is an attraction that includes buildings with various architectural styles with particular themes (Middleton, 1995). Heritage buildings can create elements of a landmark in a place, and the atmosphere comes from space-forming elements (Hernowo, 2015; Chrissetianto, 2013). Cultural attractions include historical heritage, folklore, traditional arts, ceremonies, and special events such as historical festivals and heritage (Yoeti, 2006; Witt, 1994). Social attractiveness is the way of life of a society, the variety of languages, and other social activities (Yoeti, 2006). It can also be the lifestyle of residents at tourist destinations (Witt, 1994).

The spirit of place correlation on tourist attraction in this study can add to the tourist attractiveness of an area, especially historical areas, by analyzing the spirit of place, which consists of tangible and intangible aspects. Visitors can sense the significance of places that have a spirit. The relationship between a person's soul and a place is influenced by the meanings that a place creates. Visitors may be drawn to the region, develop a connection that will encourage them to return, and lengthen their stay.

### 5.7 The Relationship Between Spirit of Place and Tourist Attraction

Using historic buildings as tourism products is one way for these buildings to survive with the increasing number of modern facilities around them. Using historic buildings as tourist attractions also poses severe challenges because conservation measures are also required in addition to having an economic impact on the community. One way to be done is to change old buildings that are no longer used or have been abandoned into new buildings that support the city's tourism activities. Not a few buildings in the city have been neglected due to changes in function, city dynamics, trends, and community activities.

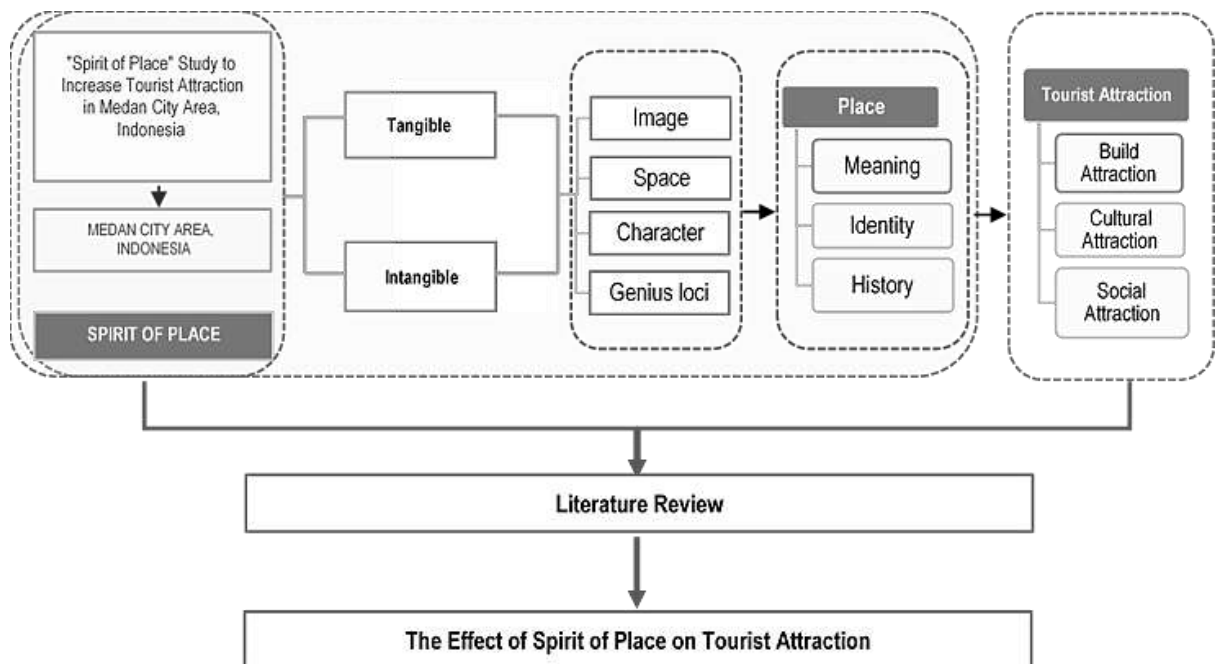


Figure 2: The Search Process for Finding The Effect of Spirit of Place on Tourist Attraction (Source: Authors, 2023)

## 6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In local definition, a spirit of place is the character of a place that can become part of the regional image and will become the region's identity. Maintaining it is a reason to make the region still have an image so it will have an identity, survive, and be sustainable. The universal definition of the spirit of place is an aspect that gives it meaning, value, emotion, and mystery that is impacted by architectural styles, people's ideas of regional excellence, and acceptable standards. This research was conducted in areas that have elements of cultural heritage, history, and tourism that can become potential for the area, namely urban conservation buildings with historical values, and which have uniqueness and activities in the area which play a significant role in the formation of the spirit of place (Sampaio, J.C.R., 2008). Medan is characterized by its ethnic diversity, making its architecture rich in styles and cultures. The Maimun Palace, Tjong A Fie Mansion, and Pos Bloc are suitable buildings to represent the spirit of place in the heritage area in Medan city because these three buildings reflect three crucial roles in the growth of Medan city, namely as representative buildings for the Malay Sultanate Deli, Chinatown, and Dutch Colonial Region.

Furthermore, these three buildings are unique in architecture, history, and culture. The buildings' uniqueness is preserved by recovering the spirit of place in these locations. This uniqueness separates Medan from other cities, making the city rich in architecture, history, and culture. This uniqueness is crucial for tourist attraction, as it attracts tourists to visit. This study is limited by the spirit of place in the research area, which is based on oral and written assertions and observations of the tangible and intangible components around

the building of Istana Maimun, Tjong A Fie Mansion, and Pos Bloc. So future research is needed on the other factors supporting tourism attraction development.

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### Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This research contributes to urban and tourism planning to develop tourist attractions by finding the spirit of place of heritage area in Medan, Indonesia.

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