

# Place Making Capabilities Of Central Areas In Munich

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## Abstract

The paper has been written with a view to assess the various types of place making capabilities of a place. For this purpose, analysis has been done in retrospect of tourism and the architecture and design of the built forms that comprise the popular areas of Munich has been considered. These areas essentially entice tourists to visit the place and in turn enhance the economy, cultural importance and tourism of the place. The work has been guided by questions like what creates a sense of place in Munich; what kind of experiences are created by the volumes of built masses in the central areas of Munich; how do people except for citizens perceive the authenticity of the place. Moreover, an analysis of the story telling capabilities of the place with respect to art, architecture and design has been attempted.

## Introduction

Destinations around the world are under pressure of fierce competition to capture global travellers and create a discernable image in the minds of visitors. This research explores various avenues of place making, primarily the architecture and design of built masses of the place and its importance in creating a tourist experience. The meaning and structural understanding of the concepts of place making has been discussed by Bohl (2002), where he says that place making is the main element that shapes the development plans of urban areas and boulevards. On the other hand, it has also been stated that place making is upgrading the quality of localities by expanding them within that location (Markusen and Nicodemus 2014). By expanding, one would understand that the reference is drawn towards cultural expanse as well as that to do with art. This field research was inspired by the concept of Lew (2017). The author, in his study, highlighted that there are many other elements apart from the infrastructure and the appearance that contribute to the place making of a tourist destination. Toolis (2017) suggested that place making is a burgeoning trend wherein the residents engage in the development and modification of a place they reside in with the aim of building a strong relation between the dwellers and the space they share.

## Discussion

Effective place making and sense of a place are related. They play a crucial role in creating the identity of a site. The natives of a place have major impact on the development of sense of place (Hay, 1988).

It is very crucial to scrutinize and analyse the sense which the inhabitants are striving to develop and maintain for their place (Shamsuddin & Ujang, 2008)

This field research highlights the benefits of providing a unique experience at a tourist destination, which can enhance the travel experience of the visitors. Pine and Gilmore (Welcome to the Experience economy, 1998) emphasized the importance of providing an experience to the consumer. The authors contended that engaging a consumer in an immersive experience is more valuable than offering standard services. Drawing on the literature of Pine and Gilmore, this research also explored various experiences offered in Munich which create an unforgettable experience for the visitor and helps in gaining a guest's fidelity. The research also highlights the value of authenticity and the storyscapes in tourism landscape. The article on authenticity by Chronis and Hampton (2008) provided an articulate understanding of how authenticity is presented at various tourism attractions including war sites, architectural sites, sites with historical significance, museums etc and how it is

consumed by the visitors. The authors also discussed the role of object related, location, factual and contextual authenticity in creating an authentic and intensive experience. The theory helped to understand that architectural buildings, monuments expressing rich historical value can provide an immersive experience through constructive story telling.

## Research Method

During this research we acted as participant observers, which is a part of ethnographic research methodology, and depends on the active engagement of researcher with the help of field notes, photography and at times through memory. This allowed us to be a part of the environment, place and observe the activities, experiences which are offered in Munich. Information was gathered by taking notes at various sites, writing observations, taking pictures, conversation with peers and people of other age groups were recorded as well. Drawing on qualitative research data, we've put together various elements which play a significant role in the making of a place, understand various aspects and elements which contribute in making of a successful tourist destination.

## Conceptual framework

The Englischer garden, Chinesischer Turm and Monopteros were visited on the first day of this field research. On the second day, the Marienplatz and Allianz arena were explored and on the third day, Frauenkirche, Maximilianeum, Odeonsplatz, Graggenauer Viertel, Hofbrauhaus brewery were visited with a local peer group being our guide. The following are the three vignettes in various locations of Munich.



Figure 1 Different landscapes of Englischer garden, Chinesischer Turm and Monopteros.

Englischer Garten: The garden is in the heart of Munich city. The garden offers a great atmosphere, huge space to accommodate masses of people and is a perfect place for cycling, park run or a picnic, barbeque and beer. With an objective of understanding what creates a sense of place in Munich, the visit to the garden was purposely scheduled on a Saturday afternoon. It was a fortunate, sunny, autumn day. One could see leaves on the ground all over the park. The garden had a beautiful river where people could swim, surf and had many different landscapes. True to its name, the garden was indeed inspired from the rules and techniques of English garden landscaping, particularly how it has so many garden canopies, varied rolls of topography and thick turf and also so many gazebos standing authoritatively amongst various other landscaped elements. Unfortunately due to the low water levels, there were no surfers. As we walked through the garden, we noticed people having picnics and barbeques with their families and friends. The garden has restaurants and beer cafes to cater the visitors. We had a

chance to visit the Chinesischer Turm which is the second largest beer garden in Munich. The beer garden is a perfect place to decompress and socialize with friends and family. Although there were not many people there on that day, we were amazed to see a self-service place with a seating capacity of approximately 7000 people! As we were strolling down the garden, we decided to climb up to the Monopteros to check the views of the garden. The views from the Monopteros were simply breathtaking. There were many visitors and mostly youngsters at the Monopteros taking picture and videos of the different views of the garden. (Abhinav Vats, Amrita Bhandal, Field Notes, 2015)

The above observations helped us to understand the role of effective place making. The aim of placemaking is to develop a surrounding which is fascinating, enjoyable, easily accessible, draws both the residents and tourists, offers great variety of things to do (Lew, 2017). The Englishischer Garten is the perfect example of such a case, where in the local authorities have maintained an urban park which is centrally located, draws both locals and tourists, and offers a variety of uses. Kierchhoff (1997) argues that a cozy, organic and unimpaired environment is the most desirable element that a tourist expects from a place. Urban parks play a crucial role in the landscape and plan of a city. The contemporary world has adopted the notion of visiting places, as good for both mental and physical health (Coffey & Czikszenmihalyi, 2016).

As most of this field research was driven by literature, we were curious to learn more about planned place making as well as all the important elements appealing to residents and tourists. The next vignette is about our observations at the central areas of Munich and the experience at the Allianz arena football stadium.



Figure 2 Marienplatz – Munich’s central square which has many quaint coffee shops and bars and the Allianz arena football stadium.

Marienplatz is one of the most popular spots and is in the center of Munich city. I had a chance to explore the old town square and the surrounding areas on a Saturday morning. During the telephone conversation with my friend, we decided to meet at the Marienplatz as she could easily get there by S. Bahn. The town center has a huge array of food and drink stalls along with traditional and modern apparel stores. There was a huge exhibition in front of the Marienplatz (can be seen in the image) and many stalls which had a variety of things to offer to the visitors. The centre of attraction was the live band show which was acting as a magnet, as most visitors wanted to experience the German music with a beer on a Saturday noon. On one side of the central square, there was an aerial platform lift which could take the visitors to a height of approximately 100 meters showing them the mesmerizing views of the Bavarian country. It is worth mentioning that the service was absolutely free for all visitors. I wanted to experience the lift, however, due to time constraints and a huge queue,

I had to drop the idea as I had a guided tour booked for the Allianz Arena. The stadium is an architectural wonder and can accommodate over 75,000 people at one time and has a multi-parking available for 9800 cars. The acoustic character of the stadium enables the voice to bounce and create an echo' effect which enhances the visitor experience during the game. The space at the stadium is well organized and has dedicated sections for the VIPs and several food and beverage counters. The exterior of the stadium has led lightening effects and are lit during the live matches. Although I am not a huge soccer fan, but the tour at the Allianz Arena elevated my interest in the game and motivated me to experience a live match in that stadium.

(Abhinav Vats, Field Notes, 2015)

The observations from the above vignette are important because they provide an understanding about the various elements which make up for a tourist experience. Lew (2017), in his study highlighted festivals and special events, variety of shops, food and beverage outlets, formal and informal entertainment as essential elements for effective place making. In the central square of Munich, (Marienplatz) there were several stalls selling variety of touristic things, food courts, range of shops, which drew both locals and the tourists to the place. Pine and Gilmore (1998), opined that the service industry around the world is embracing the concept of 'experience economy', wherein an experiential element is added to the traditional offerings to enhance the consumer experience. The aerial platform lift at the central square is relatable to their concept because it provides a unique travel experience and can create a memorable experience for the visitors whilst being an engineering and architectural marvel. These experiences provide an opportunity to the destination to showcase its emblematic architecture and the viewscapes, contributing towards creating a successful tourist destination. While strolling around the central square, observing various buildings and architecture one comprehended that it is important to acquire knowledge about a place before the trip to have a better understanding about the sense of place.

Coffey and Czikszentmihalyi (2016, p.127) suggest that learning about the past and the traditions of a destination before the actual visit can shift the experience from hedonic to a eudemonic experience. Walking through the Marienplatz, looking at various outdoor settings, and architectural marvels both new and old, validated the imagination and meaning which was shaped through one's past knowledge about the place (Young, 1999, p. 388). During the guided tour at the Allianz Arena, we experienced the iconic architectural design of the stadium which has the potential of creating an engaging and unforgettable experience for the audience. The visit to the Allianz Arena and the grandness of the stadium gave us an impression about the game of football and its significance to the country (Lew, 2014, p.172). The central areas of Munich and churches around the Marienplatz gave a sense of historical character and importance to the place and the combination of these places gives the tourist an opportunity to experience a diverse culture (Lew, 2014, p.172).

While we were exploring Munich, we realized that there are several other elements such as authenticity of the place and various stories which add more meaning to a destination. The next vignette is about preserved landscapes and the role of authenticity in intensifying the storytelling experience of a place.



Figure 3 pictures of various locations of Munich, which are preserved as original.

Munich is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful cities one can choose to travel to in the world. The architecture of the city is far from the ordinary. During this field trip, we had an opportunity to take a guided walking tour in the central areas of Munich. The purpose of opting for this guided tour was to learn about the concept of authenticity, from the words of a local and then compare it to what we perceive as visitors. It was very interesting to note how narrators construct stories, additional elements that add meaning to the place. The tour started from the Marienplatz with a brief introduction about the square and its importance in Munich's history. Notably the tour guide was not using any kind of technological device to narrate the stories. We were impressed to see how the building was preserved and restored over the years. As the tour started with a bit of a history lesson, we were expecting the whole tour to be focused on past events and dates. Interestingly, our tour guide was experienced, had a master's degree in drama and theatre education and was successful in engaging the audience. The guide had a unique storytelling approach and was cracking jokes, telling interesting myths about different places which added a fun entertainment element to the whole experience. As we walked through the central areas of Munich, we learned that most of the buildings in Munich were damaged and were reconstructed back to their original shape and scale. This instance made us think about how the residents, locals and citizens are willing to preserve the 'original character' of the place. While they had the option to reconstruct the buildings and monuments (after the devastation caused by the World War II) to a new shape, they still chose to keep it authentic.

(Amrita Bhandal and Abhinav Vats, Field Notes, 2015)

The guided tour helped us understand the concept of authenticity in tourism landscape. Moreover, a conversation with the guided tour guide revealed that back in the days both the residents and the local authorities were in favor of reconstructing a city's landscape to its original shape. Today, when the city council approves the design of new buildings before its construction and as per the city laws, the design of the new buildings must match the current theme of the surroundings. Constructed surroundings which are preserved as authentic and original play a significant role in expressing the heritage of a place (Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003). As discussed by Chronis and Hampton (2008), the authenticity of a place and the preserved environment has the tendency to transport the consumers to the past. The aesthetical value of a place which manifests its original character often entices

potential visitors to visit a destination. Wilson and McIntosh (2007) contend that the appearance of heritage buildings often motivates the participants to indulge in the culture of that region.

The preserved environment which is close to original also plays a significant role in providing an immersive story telling experience. The story telling at the original site can arouse the emotions and trigger the imaginations of the visitors (Chronis, 2008). The preserved buildings, monuments and environment of Munich, based on our prior knowledge helped me to visualize the past and connect with the stories which were related to the place. Chronis (2008), explained that visitors during a story telling experience engage, re-contextualize, seek and compare the past with the present using their real life experiences. During the tour, we noticed that most of the participants were engaged in the stories. Hence, after the experience we can say that authenticity plays an extremely important role in heritage tourism and for places with historical significance. It helps in stimulating imaginations.

## Conclusion

The aim of this research was to assess various types of place making capabilities of Munich and provide a better understanding about various characteristics that play a role in enhancing visitor experience to a site. Among these, sense of place, authenticity and stories play the most important role. The findings of this research suggest that the infrastructure of a city is not the only element which stimulates the consumers to visit a destination. There are several other elements which entice the visitors to experience the destination. Among these are creating a sense of place, unique experiences through various offerings, effective management of the space, authenticity, stories which are related to the site and its people, etc.

The creation of dedicated urban spaces in a city can facilitate the locals and attract tourists to the place. The Englishs chergarten in Munich is a great example which provides an opportunity to the visitors to socialize, appreciate the nature and promote wellness. Effective place making provides an indispensable platform to a city to create memorable experience for the visitors. Travellers nowadays seek to dive deep into the culture of a city, prefer to stay near the traditional places, learn more about their beliefs, etc. in order to enhance their experience and to have a better understanding about the place. The town center of Munich is easily accessible, has traditional restaurants and cafés and century old buildings that create a sense of place to attract visitors. In addition, festivals and special cultural events make it more appealing. Marienplatz can be considered as a perfect example of effective place making which attracts the visitors to the place.

The findings of this research would suggest that the preserved environments and buildings play a vital role in expressing the history and stories of a place. It is firmly believed and agreed upon that the idea of Chronis and Hampton (2008), these tangible remnants from the past are the silent witnesses of the history. The environment which is well maintained creates a convincing environment for the consumers and help to spark their imagination. Preserving the culture and the 'original character' of a city can benefit the host society as it can draw masses of tourists who desire to experience the authenticity of a place and thus enhance the overall visitor experience.

There were certain limitations to this research as well as this research methodology was based on personal experience. Besides this, time constrain was another aspect which restricted us to pursue this research further. During the research, we were able to identify certain elements and place making capabilities of Munich and meet our research objectives. However, further quantitative research needs to be done in order to learn more about different perspectives.

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