Place identity, place attachment and the scale of place: The impact of place salience

2 authors:

Fátima Bernardo
Universidade de Évora
43 PUBLICATIONS   **666** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

José Palma-Oliveira
University of Lisbon
91 PUBLICATIONS   **1,266** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

Project   International Place Attachment Network (IPAN) View project

Project   MiLand - The impact of migration on landscape identity in an urban and rural context View project

Place Identity: A Central Concept in Understanding Intergroup Relationships in the Urban Context

Fátima Bernardo[1],[*] and José Manuel Palma-Oliveira[2]

[1]Centre of Urban Studies, Technical Institute of Lisbon (IST) and Psychology Department, University of Évora, Portugal and [2]Faculty of Psychology, Lisbon University, Portugal

> **Abstract:** The aim of this chapter is to emphasize the importance of the place identity concept in understanding inter-group relationships in the urban context. Due to the weakness of the concept, we propose to understand place identity as a self-categorization process in terms of belonging to a place. And in this sense, we propose to understand this concept using the principles and strategies identified by social identity theory. A set of studies developed by us in recent years are reviewed and discussed, in order to contribute to systematization of the concept and simultaneously contribute to the understanding of the city in particular, and the political space in general, as a mosaic of interrelated identities.

Keywords: Place identity, intergroup relationships, urban studies.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of intervention in urban environments there is a growing trend in delinquency problems, as well as positive and negative discrimination based on the sense of belonging to a particular geographical area. It is generally recognized that different parts of an urban area are associated with stereotypes about their residents. It is also expected that the place where we live determines how we perceive the city, and the residents of different neighbourhoods, and how we relate to them. Although the importance of inter-group relationships in urban management is largely acknowledged, few studies systematically focus on this theme, and in particular on the significance of place identity in inter-group relationships within the urban context.

In contrast, also in inter-group studies we are confronted with the systematic neglect of the environment value as an identity definer. However, if we look back through the history of psychology, there are references to the environment in conceptions of identity by classic authors such as James (1890) and Erickson (1956). James (1890) conceptualizes the Self using two main constituents, the "I" and the "me", which correspond to the known and the knower's self. In the "I" he discusses the difficulty in distinguishing between what is "me" and what is "mine" or what is "us" and what is "ours". In this sense some objects of belonging, for example a house, can be understood as relevant elements for identity. In the "me" James included the material self that consists of the body, clothes, home and possessions. Erickson (1946) introduced the concept of "spatial identity", and includes spatial aspects, such as place status, as defining factors of identity. But references to the relevance of the environment in identity have been few and far between since then.

The concept of social identity has been developed and extensively tested in the scope of social psychology, but only recently have there been some very timid references to the environment as a source of social identity (for a review see: Haslam, Ellemers, Reicher, Reynolds & Schmitt, 2010). In fact Social Identity Theory emphasizes that social identity is context-dependent, and in this sense several significant social identities are based on places (*e.g.*, nationality, place of residence, home). This is an important reminder, but still does not correspond to real integration of the spatial dimension in understanding identity.

In environmental psychology, the concept of place identity introduced by Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983), despite the controversy concerning its conceptualization and operationalization, has the merit of

[*]Address correspondence to Fátima Bernardo: Psychology Department, University of Évora, 7002-554 Évora, Portugal; E-mail: fatimab@uevora.pt

having led to a large number of studies. Nevertheless, their notion of place identity emphasized the importance of identity almost only from an individualistic perspective, neglecting the collective nature of the relations between persons, identities and place (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

> The aim of this article is to bring the concept of place identity into the context of inter-group relationships, by conceptualizing the urban space as a stage for intergroup relations, based on the subject's sense of belonging to physical spaces (which by definition, always include and are defined by people).

The Concept of Place Identity in the Environmental Tradition

In the field of environmental psychology, the concept of place identity was introduced by Proshansky and colleagues (Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky *et al*., 1983; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987) and defined as ''a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognition about the physical world in which the individual lives'' (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983, p. 59). The authors emphasize two main issues. The first is that development of self-identity is not only based on individual, interpersonal and social processes, but also extends to the physical environment, making the place a fundamental component of personal identity. The second issue has to do with the idea that place identity changes to some degree over the lifecycle, as a result of changes in the physical and social environment.

But despite the relevance of the concept, there is no agreement concerning the conceptualization and operationalization of place identity (*e.g.,* Twigger-Ross, Bonaiuto & Breakwell, 2003; Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). Krupat (1983) states "in general, this contribution (.) has asked far more questions than it has answered, and suggested far more possibilities than the concept may yet be able to deliver. It is only a start, but I believe it is still an auspicious one" (p. 344). This conceptualization has the merit of having generated a larger number of studies, and now place identity has become a core concept in environmental psychology. But these studies have focused on contexts, seeking only confirmation of the importance of the concept for understanding the relationship between subjects and the environment, rather than contributing to clarification of the concept.

In the literature, it is possible to identify at least three different perspectives or conceptualizations of place identity that are related to three research topics (cf. Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010, who identify four perspectives). The first conceptualization is the notion that place can be experienced as part of the self, as a self-extension (Proshansky, *et al*., 1983; Belk, 1992, 2000). In this context, some research analysed threats to place and their implications for identity. In the home context, some studies found similarities between home violation by a burglar and the reaction to body violation (Wirtz & Harrell, 1987; Korosec-Sefarty, 1976). Studies on the impact of significant changes in the area of residence such as reclassification of the place as environmentally protected (Bonaiuto *et al*., 2002) or urban renewal (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) have demonstrated their effect on residents' self-perception.

The second approach is the idea that place can be congruent with the values, attitudes and behavioural dispositions of the self. In this connection, Feldman (1990) introduced the term settlement-identity to stress the idea that each person has an identity linked to a particular type of settlement (*e.g.*, tall buildings, small houses in the countryside). Thus, residential mobility does not imply a redefinition of people-place bonds, if the old and new areas of residence are consonant with the place identity of the subject (Feldman, 1990). Some studies report the idea that the residents of an area support their place identity in the perception of equivalence between the elements that typify such an area, the nature of the interactions that occur there and the self values and attitudes (*e.g.*, Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Speller, Lyons, & Twigger-Ross, 2002; Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2005).

The third and most common approach has been the comprehension of place identity in terms of the emotional link to the place. In this sense, place identity can be seen as equivalent to place attachment. In the literature, the relationship between place attachment and place identity is not consensual, but there is general agreement that place identity and place attachment are two closely-related concepts (*e.g.*, Chow & Healey, 2008; Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007; Lewicka, 2008; Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2004). However, according to Hernandez *et al*., (2007) and Lewicka (2008), place attachment and place identity are two different

concepts, both connected to people's bonds with places. In order to clarify the relationship between these two concepts, Hernandez *et al.,* (2007), developed a set of studies and found that place attachment precedes formation of place identity (For a more detailed discussion of the two concepts see Hernandez *et al*., 2007; Lewicka, 2008; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). Thus, place attachment is the affective bond that people can establish with some places, where they feel content and secure. Place identity can be defined as a component of self-identity (Proshansky *et al*., 1983) and "a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place" (Hernandez *et al*., 2007).

Nevertheless, research on place identity has mostly emphasized the importance of identity from an individualistic perspective. In this chapter we explore the concept of place identity in the context of inter-group relationships. In this sense, the urban space can be conceptualized as a stage for inter-group relations based on the subject's sense of belonging to physical spaces.

In the absence of a theoretical tool to analyse relationships between the environment and the self, we present a conceptualization of place identity as self-categorization in terms of place, built upon the principles of Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) (Turner, 1985, 1987). This approach has also been used both explicitly and implicitly by other authors (*e.g.*, Lewicka, 2008; Hernandez *et al*., 2007; Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010).

Thereby, place identity is conceptualized here as a substructure of the social identity of the self, consisting of aspects of self-concepts that are based on the idea of belonging to geographically defined groups. Accordingly, places can be seen as social categories, with a shared social meaning as a result of the interaction between the elements of a group, and not only as a scenario where interaction occurs. It is important to stress that, according SIT, a group is defined as a psychological phenomenon, *i.e.*, a group exists insofar as a person believes that he/she belongs to it. Similarly, a place exists insofar as a person makes a psychological delimitation of its boundaries. If, conceptually, we can consider the theoretical possibility of a place defined without people, in practice a place is always defined with activities, the people who psychologically own it.

In this context, the aim of this chapter is to understand if the concept of place identity follows the same principles and strategies used in social identity. Thus, it is expected that (1) place identity may lead to positive appraisal of the place with which the subject identifies him/herself through overestimation of the positive elements and devaluation of the negative elements of that space. It is hypothesized that place identity contributes as another social identity to the individual's positive social identity. This positive distinctiveness may result in spatial distortions (distortions in the perception of space), including distortions in the perception of distance between areas that correspond to the perceived psychological distance of the group; (2) it is further expected that place identity may lead to processes of perception of in-group homogeneity, and inter-group differentiation; (3) we consider there are multiple identities based on a person's membership of different places. These identities become salient in different contexts according to needs of positive distinctiveness.

Finally, (4) some environmental physical factors can act as facilitators of the subject's identification with the space, and of the external perception of such a space as fostering a strong identity (*e.g.*, Brewer, 1993). Area size, type of organization and consistency of architecture are some of these factors.

In order to achieve these objectives, the second part of this chapter begins with a brief description of the main concepts of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self Categorization Theory (SCT). Then, some of the principles and strategies used in social identity are tested in relation to place identity. To this end, we review some of the investigations we have conducted in recent years.

Social Identity Theory and Self Categorization Theory: Main Concepts

Social Identity Theory (SIT) and subsequent developments, in particular Self Categorization Theory (SCT), is one of the most widely diffused and extensively used theories in social psychology (Brown, 2000). One of the reasons for this is the scientific utility of the concept in explaining inter-group relationships in general, the relation of the individual to the group in particular, and comprehension of the individual cognitions influenced by group phenomena (Capozza & Brown, 2000).

The social identity theory elaborated by Tajfel (1978), also in collaboration with Turner (1979, 1986), adds to the understanding of individual identity the social identity dimension, which is the part of self identity that derives from group membership (Tajfel, 1981). In order to understand this theory, we have to take two concepts into account: social categorization and social comparison. The concept of social categorization was transposed by Tajfel (1957) from perception of objects to perception of groups. It is a universal cognitive process of simplification of reality that assumes the perception of discreetness in groups when they could be more exactly described as continuous. These groups are associated with an emotional meaning (a value) that is achieved through the process of social comparison. Social stereotypes are thus constituted, and in this context they are understood as forms of subjective organization of the social reality. They are regulated by socio-cognitive mechanisms, and are fundamental for social interaction and the integration of individuals.

Following recognition of the importance of social categorization in intergroup behaviour, Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) developed Social Identity Theory. This theory seeks to understand group belonging and intergroup relationships on the basis of self-categorization, social comparison and the construction of a shared self-definition in terms of qualities that define the group. The central hypothesis is that individuals seek to distinguish the groups they belong to from other groups as a way of achieving a positive social identity. Social identity is a part of the self-concept derived from our belonging to social groups. This concept is associated with the group and inter-group relationships, and has consequences such as ethnocentrism, in-group favouritism, inter-group differentiation, and perception of self and members of in-groups and out-groups in terms of relevant group stereotypes (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005).

Following on from SIT, Turner (1985) developed Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), which aims to be more comprehensive and 'is concerned with the antecedents, nature and consequences of psychological group formation" (Turner, 1985, p.78). It focuses on the analysis of processes through which people come to conceptualize themselves in terms of social categories.

In Self-Categorization Theory, multiplicity of identities is a central issue. Thus, social identities can be as many as the reference groups the individual considers relevant in terms of belonging. The idea of multiple identities assumes that each one can become salient or not depending on the context in which a person finds him/herself (Hoggs & Abrams, 1988). This means that the subject self-categorizes on the basis of certain social identities that are active in a given context, and acts in conformity with that self-categorization. In other words, self-categorization theory highlights the contextual nature of identities, and takes into consideration different identity levels, from specific levels (*e.g.*, place identity) to more inclusive and abstract levels (*e.g.*, national identity).

URBAN STUDIES AND COMPREHENSION OF IDENTITY BASED ON PLACE

Place Identity and In-group Favouritism

Social Identity Theory considers that a basic motive that would lead a subject to identify with a specific group is being able to achieve positive distinctiveness (Brown, 2000; Capozza & Brown, 2000). Therefore, subjects with a high level of identification with their group tend to act in favour of their group and make an effort to maintain a positive image of it (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002).

If we transpose this idea to a specific place we can expect subjects with high identification levels to have a more positive perception of their space than non-residents. In a study on beach pollution at the local and national level, Bonaiuto, Breakwell and Cano (1996) found that the greater the place identity of residents, the lower their perception of pollution of the local beaches. This means that a strong feeling of nationalism caused respondents to perceive their country as having less polluted beaches. Thus, it can be expected that the greater the identification with the place, the greater the desire to express positive attitudes in relation to environmental transformations that could give a more positive character to that place. A number of studies confirmed this expectation. Carrus, Bonaiuto and Bonnes (2005) verified the positive role of regional identity in support for the creation of protected areas. Likewise, but in the opposite direction, strong place identity led to a negative attitude in relation to the building of a hydroelectric power plant (Vorkinn & Riese, 2001).

A set of studies conducted in Portugal on the perception of risk resulting from the construction of a waste incineration plant, showed that risk perception was linked to the value of the attitude in relation to the incinerator (Lima, 2003; Palma-Oliveira, Antunes, & Marques, 2007). Thus, when residents had a negative attitude in relation to building the incinerator, there was a positive relationship between identification with place and risk perception. Where there was a positive attitude in relation to the incinerator, the study found a negative relationship between identity and risk perception; (Palma-Oliveira, Antunes, Marques, 2007). Thereby, in the first situation identity had an amplifying function in relation to the risk perception, while in the second case identity had a protective function (Lima, 2003). But in both cases, place identity was associated with a desire for enhancement of the group belonged to.

Aiming to understand in what conditions place identity could lead to a positive distinctiveness of the in-group, we studied four neighbouring districts of Lisbon with very different characteristics and associated stereotypes ranging from the very negative to the very positive (Bernardo, 2011). In each of the four neighbourhoods, residents were asked questions relating to place identity and perception of the overall quality, prestige and safety of the areas. The results showed that residents have a significantly more positive perception of their neighbourhood in terms of overall quality, prestige and safety than non-residents. This finding was consistent for all four neighbourhoods and even when the stereotype for a neighbourhood was very negative. It was also important to examine the effect of place identity on the perception of a person's own neighbourhood. The results showed a significant positive correlation between place identity and perception of the overall quality, prestige and safety of the neighbourhood of residence. Hence, the greater the place identity of the residents, the greater their perception of the quality of their neighbourhood.

In order to find out if residents raise the value of their own place, they were asked about the distance between their neighbourhood and a number of central points in the city of Lisbon. The questions were designed to test the hypothesis that perception of greater proximity to the centre of the city, assumed to be evaluated as positive, revealed a higher valuation of one's own neighbourhood. The results confirmed this assumption. A significant negative correlation was established between place identity and perception of the distance between the neighbourhood and the city centre. In other words, the higher the identity level, the greater the perception of proximity to the centre. The study also showed that the greater the perception of the quality and prestige of the neighbourhood, the greater the perception of proximity to the city centre.
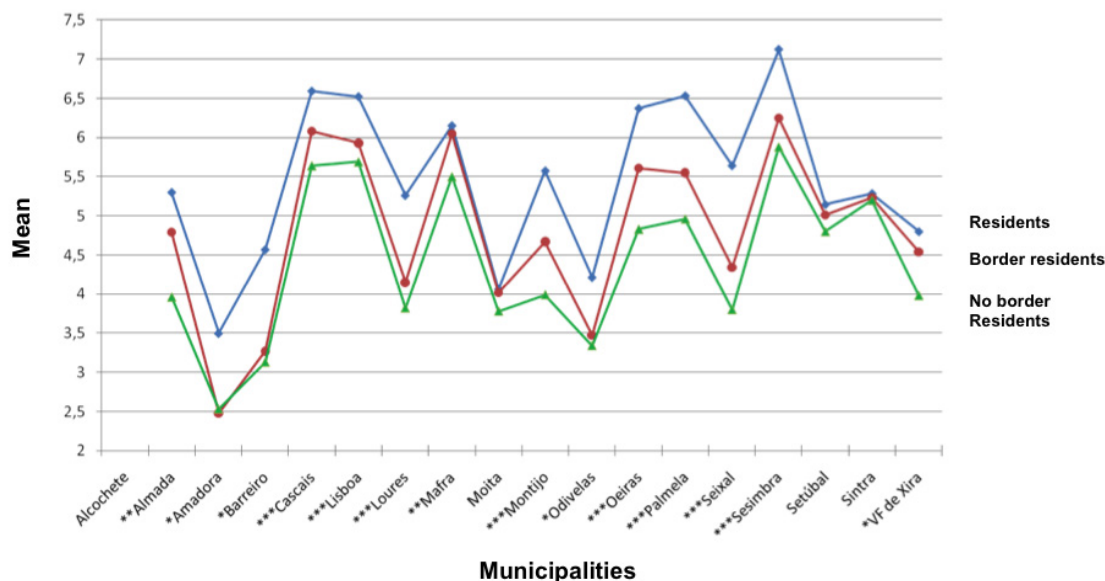

Figure 1: Perceived attractiveness: residents *vs.* border residents *vs.* non-border residents (source: Palma-Oliveira *et al.*, 2010).

Another approach on a different scale had already produced the same results: a study of municipalities in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML) (Palma-Oliveira *et al*., 2010). A total of 1,058 AML residents were interviewed and the results confirmed the influence of place identity on perception of the characteristics of the municipalities. They also revealed a tendency for people to assess the municipality of residence as more attractive and safer in comparison to the assessment made by non-residents. The data also showed that the proximity of residence to a municipality also influenced perception of quality. In other words, residents of neighbouring municipalities reported an intermediate perception of quality regarding a certain municipality, *i.e.* between that revealed by residents and that by non-residents (Fig. **1**).

Homogeneity and Intergroup Differentiation

As stated above, at the basis of social identity is a process of social comparison. In this process we can highlight two aspects. The first is the relevance of spontaneous social comparisons in evaluation of people of the same group, and the second concerns choice of the out-group for the comparative process. The process of self-categorization as a member of a group is inherently comparative and is also contextual and relative (Turner & Reynolds, 2010), and that process can be achieved through a process of meta-contrast, where there is an accentuation of the similarities within a group and minimization of differences between group members. In other words, there is increased perception of perceptive and behavioural homogeneity amongst group members, and an increase in differentiation between our group and the other group (Turner, 1981). These aspects were tested in some of our previous investigations. In the study comparing the four Lisbon neighbourhoods (Bernardo, 2011), results showed a positive correlation between place identity and the perception of homogeneity of the in-group, *i.e.* the greater the residents' place identity, the greater the perception of homogeneity amongst the residents of a neighbourhood.

The second aspect considered was the choice of out-group for the comparative process. To achieve this purpose we investigated the extent to which residents of each neighbourhood perceived themselves as being different from the residents of the other 3 neighbourhoods. This was a measurement of inter-group differentiation. The results showed that when taking only the objective characteristics of the populations of the different neighbourhoods into consideration, residents of each neighbourhood did not differentiate themselves from those of the other neighbourhoods. But when we take place identity into account, the results showed a strong positive correlation between the identity and differentiation of certain neighbourhoods. Thus, we could distinguish three types of relations between groups: the comparative group, *i.e.*, the group chosen for the comparative process. The comparative process was made with this group, and in this case residents differentiated themselves from the residents of neighbourhoods that constitute, in SIT terms, their comparative groups. The second type was the groups that function as an idealized reference group. This type of group was not used in comparison with the group, because it was seen as very positive, a gap being perceived between the in-group and this group, which made the comparison process impossible. The last type was the groups that were not relevant in this process, and so there was no comparison group or reference group.

Fig. **2** shows how the four neighbourhoods in our study relate to each other, *i.e.*, the neighbourhoods that functioned as a comparison group in this context revealed a positive correlation between identity and inter-group differentiation. The groups that functioned as reference groups revealed a negative correlation between place identity and inter-group differentiation. Results showed that, for example, the neighbourhood known as "Chelas" - which had a low self and hetero-evaluation of quality, prestige and safety with a clearly negative stereotype in the city of Lisbon - was not used by any of the others as a reference of comparison. Therefore, there was no significant correlation between the place identity of each of the other neighbourhoods and perception of differentiation in relation to the residents of Chelas. On the contrary, this neighbourhood presented a negative correlation between its place identity and inter-group differentiation, *i.e.* the greater its identity, the less its need to differentiate itself from the other groups. In other words, the other groups functioned as idealized reference groups.

In a study of national identities, Marques and Palma-Oliveira (1988) determined that the Portuguese used a smaller set of positive attributes and a larger set of negative attributes to assess the Spanish, in comparison

to how they assess themselves. But for the French, the Portuguese made a clearly positive assessment. In other words, the Portuguese positive social identity seems to have been built at the expense of a more negative view of the Spanish group; the Spanish were perceived as an out-group, which is supported by historical interrelations. On the contrary, the French were not perceived as an out-group, but as an idealized reference group.
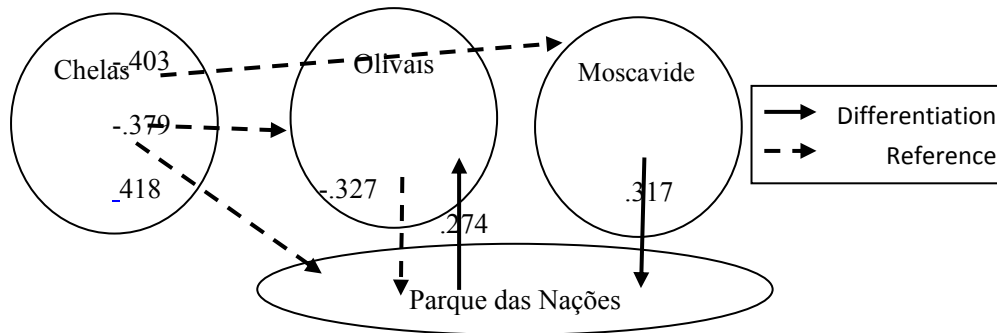

Figure 2: Significant correlations between the four neighbourhoods.

In order to understand inter-group differentiation, residents were asked about the distance between their neighbourhood and the other 3 neighbourhoods. This inter-group differentiation measurement had already been used elsewhere, for example in situations of two settlements in conflict (Palma-Oliveira, 1986). In that study, results revealed an overestimation of the distance between settlements. Thus, we considered the hypothesis that the perception of being further way from other neighbourhoods would reveal a need for differentiation. This hypothesis was confirmed in the AML study (Palma-Oliveira, *et al*., 2010). As the Lisbon metropolitan area is approximately divided in the middle by the River Tagus, the study found an overestimation of the distances resulting from crossing the river. In other words, the residents on each river bank thought the other bank was further away than it really is. This overestimation was greater amongst residents of the north bank, where the centre of the AML, the city of Lisbon, is located, who rarely cross the river. In fact, commuters normally go from the south bank to the north bank, where most jobs and commerce are located. There was also an underestimation of the distance to places on the opposite bank, which is in line with the perception of homogeneity in the out-group.

Levels of Self-categorization and Salience

Another central aspect in the current conceptualization of Social Identity is the idea that we do not have one, but several identities (*e.g.*, woman, European, psychologist…), and that different levels of inclusiveness define conceptually distinct construals of the self. This assumption helps to understand the dynamics of the different levels of self-representation which are activated at any particular time. Self-categorization theory (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) emphasizes that self-categorization at different levels is inherently variable, and dependent on contextual factors that make particular social categorizations more salient and meaningful in a given social setting. Place identity is expected to be conceptualized as a hierarchical system of multi-identifications (Russel & Ward, 1982) (*e.g.*, my house, my neighbourhood, my town, my country), with diverse levels of inclusiveness that are evoked in relation to the geographic scale. This aspect was underlined by Twigger-Ross, Bonaiuto and Breakwell (2003): "Not only can place act as a social category providing identity in its own right, but also it can act as a 'trigger' for identities to emerge" (p. 207). Simultaneously, the social identity value of different group memberships is dependent on the geographic scale.

In order to evaluate these ideas, a study was conducted with a group of university students (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2011) who were asked to complete a Twenty Statement Test (TST, Harley, 1970). They were requested to generate spontaneous self-descriptions with the question "I am …"., for four descriptions of the group context on a differentiated geographic scale: (1) new high school in their area of residence; (2)

university in a different city; (3) in the Erasmus Context (Europe); and (4) on a post-graduate course in USA. Each participant responded to the four situations in a random presentation. The second task was for each respondent to rate each self-description in terms of the importance of these aspects for others' comprehension of him/her and also the degree of importance of these characteristics to the participant him/herself.

Results indicated that participants use reference to "places" to describe themselves, but use of the "place" reference depends on the scale of context, and is more frequent in larger contexts. Thus, reference to a place was found to occur in 30.2% of cases in the area of residence context; 46% in the different city context; 66.7% in the European context; and 65.1% in the USA context.

Results also revealed that the geographical context influences the scale of place reference used in self-descriptions. In the area of residence context, participants referred more to the city and the neighbourhood; in the different city context they referred more to the city and the region; and in the European and USA contexts they referred more to the country.

Finally, results showed that the importance of self-description was also related to the scale of the situation, and varies in relation to the same self-description, for instance the Portuguese in different scale contexts (*e.g.*, European or USA context). For example, reference to the city of birth in the national context was more important (ranking 2.5) than in the city context (ranking 1.0). The same occured in relation to the importance of reference to a place for others' comprehension of him/her. For instance, the city reference was more important in the national context (ranking 5.0) than in the city context (ranking 2.5) for others' comprehension of him/her (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2011).

These results confirm that people use reference to places to describe themselves, especially in larger contexts. The results also emphasize that place identity can be conceptualized as a hierarchical system of multi-identifications, with diverse levels of inclusiveness that are evoked in relation to the geographic scale of the situation. Since place identity is dependent on context (Turner *et al*., 1994), the importance of belonging to a specific place can vary depending on the situation (Brewer, 1991).

In environmental psychology, a particular concern in recent years has been understanding the relationship between place scale and place attachment. For instance, Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) studied the emotional bonds with three places (home, neighbourhood and city) and reported a curvilinear U-shaped relationship between the strength of place attachment and the scale of the place. More recently, Lewicka (2010) confirmed these findings in four studies carried out in four cities in Central Europe. But in our opinion it is important to add to this discussion that the importance of a place to the individual depends on the situation. In this regard, Hopkins, Reicher, and Harrison (2006) interviewed young people living in a Scottish town close to the national border, in order to study their future possible geographic mobility throughout the United Kingdom. Results showed that answers are very dependent upon whether respondents identified with Scotland or Britain (the more spatially inclusive). The same participant could have a different representation of places over the course of the interview depending on whether questions referred to Scottish or British contexts.

Similar results were obtained in a study about place identity and place attachment in two groups of university students: permanent residents and temporary residents in the neighbourhood and city (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2011). When the study was described as a research about neighbourhood perception (the neighbourhood is made salient) the permanent residents reported a significantly higher level of place identity with the neighbourhood than when the study was described as about perception of the city.

These results emphasize that place identity is context-dependent, in the sense described by social identity within SCT (Turner, 1985). This has several consequences. Firstly, at each moment the individual activates the level of identity that best corresponds to his relationship with the context, and is in line with the scale of context. Secondly, the intensity of place identity can vary depending on the situation.

Group Dimension, Place Identity and Discrimination

Place size is an important variable to be taken into account when studying places (for a more detailed discussion see Lewicka, 2010). However, environmental psychology has not paid much attention to this, and when it does, it focuses on the scale of the place (*e.g.*, home, neighbourhood, city…) (see Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Hernandez, *et al*., 2007; Lewicka, 2010), and not so much on comparing neighbourhoods or cities of different sizes and their influence on respondents' identity.

In the context of SIT, many studies focused on the group size variable as a moderator of the search for a positive identity in group members, with effects on inter-group relationships. Generally speaking, investigations showed that small groups present more inter-group bias than large groups, both in laboratory contexts (*e.g.*, Liebkind, Henning-Lindblom, & Solheim, 2008; González & Brown, 2006; Leonardelli & Brewer, 2001) and real contexts (*e.g.*, Hewstone *et al*., 2002). But despite consensus about the influence of group size on inter-group bias, different explanations are used for the motives behind minority groups showing more favouritism towards the in-group and greater discrimination towards the out-group. Two groups of arguments can be identified to explain this effect. The first explanation centres on the idea that belonging to minority groups is a more vulnerable source of safety and positive identity for group members. Thus, when given the opportunity, subjects seek to reinforce positive identity by holding the in-group in greater esteem and being more unfavourable towards the out-group (*e.g.*, Lucken & Simon, 2005; Blank, Mummendey, & Otten, 1995; Ellemers, *et al*., 1992).

An alternative explanation is Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT), understood as an extension of Social Categorization Theory (SCT). ODT proposes that an optimal identity in a given context is that which satisfies the need for inclusion in the in-group, and simultaneously serves the need for differentiation through distinction between the in-group and out-group (Brewer, 1991, 1993). The minority group satisfies these two human needs more easily due to its higher distinctiveness (Brewer & Weber, 1994; Simon & Hamilton, 1994). In this regard, we can predict that both for artificial groups and real life groups, the members of small groups have higher levels of identification and satisfaction with their group, and more inter-group bias than the members of majority groups.

In order to understand if the size of groups based on space also influences subjects' identification, we cite two studies - a laboratory and a field study that we carried out in recent years. In the laboratory study (Bernardo, 2011), using Tajfel's allocation matrices, a minimal group categorization scheme was used to classify individuals into two groups: individuals with a preference for small neighbourhoods (fewer than 250 families) and those with a preference for large neighbourhoods (over 500 families). All participants were also evaluated in relation to place identity and place satisfaction. The analysis indicated a significant main effect of the in-group size. Smaller groups reported higher identification with the in-group than larger groups. There was also a significant interaction effect between the group dimension and identification. Thus, smaller groups presented high identification scores, but larger groups with high identification levels reported higher scores in identification than smaller groups with low identification levels. Larger groups with low identification presented the lowest identification scores. Concerning discrimination, the results showed that members of smaller groups had more in-group bias than members of larger groups. The results showed that smaller groups discriminate more and have greater identification and satisfaction, but larger groups with strong identification discriminated as much as small groups. The same results were reported in the field study (Bernardo, 2011) carried out in a Lisbon neighbourhood.

In both studies, what we seen was a higher level of identification in smaller-sized groups. As far as discrimination was concerned, the studies showed this occurs more in small groups with high identification levels but also occurred in large groups with similar identification levels. In other words, it would appear that small groups discriminate more than large groups but that discrimination was the same for large and small groups when identification levels are high.

Thus, small groups can achieve a better balance between the need for in-group/out-group differentiation and the need for inclusion in the in-group (Brewer, 1993). In fact, some studies reported the idea that

people prefer to live in small neighbourhoods (*e.g.*, Mouritzen, 1989; Bonnes & Bonaiuto, 1996). But in the real world, neighbourhood size is frequently associated with other variables such as the presence of infrastructures or social interaction.

But we cannot use the size of the neighbourhood or city as the only important element in place identity. Variables such as building size (for a review see: Gifford, 2007), type of housing, (*e.g.*, Lewicka, 2010) or characteristics of the settlement (*e.g.*, Kim & Kaplan, 2004) have also been identified as important factors in people's relationship with places, and can also be explored.

CONCLUSION

This article had two specific objectives: first, to contribute to systematization of the concept of place identity; and second and more importantly, to stress the value of conceptualising place identity as a social identity and self-categorization phenomena, allowing a fuller understanding of, and giving new dimensions to, inter-group relations in the urban context. Despite the importance and wide dissemination of the concept of place identity, the study shows some weaknesses that have not yet been resolved.

In this context, the aim of this paper was to review some research we carried out in recent years, and demonstrate in a systematic way that place identity can be understood using the principles and strategies identified for social identity. In other words, place identity, as other authors have also pointed out, can be seen as social categorization based on belonging to geographically defined groups, and not only the scenario where social interaction occurs.

In this chapter, we tried to stress the importance of understanding the political space in general, and the city in particular, as a mosaic of interrelated identities, with direct implications on how people perceive and relate to the inhabitants of other areas. Thus, the development of new urban areas, and reconstruction of existing ones, should take into account the principles underlying place identity in order to simultaneously contribute to subjects' identification with their areas, and reduce disparities between neighbourhoods. At the same time, these factors would also play a role in reducing discrimination based on place of residence.

REFERENCES

Belk, R. (1992). Attachment to possessions. In: Altman, I., & Low, S. M. (Eds.), *Place Attachment* (pp. 37-62)*.* New York: Plenum Press.

Belk, R. (2000). Are we what we own? In: Benson, A. (Ed.), *I shop therefore I am: Compulsive buying and the search for self* (pp. 76-104). London/New York: Jason Aronson.

Bernardo, F. (2011). Place Identity or the Place of Identity: contribution to a theory of social identity of place. Unpublished dissertation, University of Évora, Portugal.

Bernardo, F., & Palma-Oliveira, J. M. (2005). Place change and identity processes. *Medio Ambiente y Comportamiento humano, 6*, 71-87.

Blank, M., & Mummendey, A., & Otten, S. (1995). Perceptions of relative group size and group status: Effects on intergroup discrimination in negative evaluations. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 25*, 231-247.

Bonaiuto, M., & Bonnes, M. (1996). Multiplace Analysis of the Urban Environment: A Comparison Between a Large and a Small Italian City. *Environment and Behavior, 28*, 699-747

Bonaiuto, M., Breakwell, G.M., & Cano, I. (1996). Identity processes and environmental threat: The effects of nationalism and local identity upon perception of beach pollution. *Journal of Community & Applied Psychology, 6*, 157-175.

Bonaiuto, M., Breakwell, G.M., & Bonnes, M. (2002). Local Identity Processes and environmental attitudes in land use changes: The case of natural protected areas. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 23*, 631- 653.

Brewer, M., & Weber, J (1994). Self-evaluation of interpersonal versus intergroup social comparison. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66*, 268-275.

Brewer, M.B. (1991). The social self: on being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 475-82.

Brewer, M.B. (1993). The role of distinctiveness in social identity and group behaviour. In: Hogg, M.A., & Abrams, D. (Eds.), *Group Motivation: Social Psychology Perspectives* (pp.1-16). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Brown, R. (2000). Social identity theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 30*, 745-778.

Capozza, D., & Brown, R. (Eds.). (2000). *Social Identity Processes: trends in theory and research.* London: Sage.

Carrus, G., Bonaiuto, M., & Bonnes, M. (2005). Environmental concern, regional identity, and support for protected areas in Italy. *Environment and Behavior, 37*, 237-257.

Chow, K., & Healey, M. (2008). Place attachment and place identity: First-year undergraduates making the transition from home to university. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 28*, 362-372.

Dixon, J.A., & Durrheim, K. (2000). Displacing place identity: A discursive approach to locating self and other. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 39*, 27-44.

Dixon, J., & Durrheim, K. (2004). Dislocating identity: Desegregation and the transformation of place. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 24*, 455-473.

Droseltis, O., & Vignoles, V. L. (2010). Towards an integrative model of place identification: Dimensionality and predictors of intrapersonal-level place preferences. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 30*, 23-34.

Ellemers, N., Doosje, B., Knippenberg, V. & Wilke, H. (1992). Status protection in high status minority groups. *European Journal of Social, 22*, 123-140

Erikson, E. H. (1956). Ego identity and psychosocial moratorium. In: Whitmer, H. L. , & Kosinky, R. (Eds.), *New perspectives for research in juvenile delinquency* (pp. 1-23). US Children Bureau: Publication nº 356.

Feldman, R.M. (1990). Settlement-identity: Psychological bonds with home places in a mobile society. *Environment and Behavior, 22*, 183-229.

Gifford, R. (2007). The consequences of living in high-rise buildings. *Architectural Science Review, 50*, 2-17.

Gonzalez, R., & Brown, R. (2006). Dual identities in intergroup contact: group status and size moderate the generalization of positive attitude change. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 42*, 753-767.

Hartley, W.S. (1970). *Manual for twenty statement problem*. Kansas City, M.O.: Greater Kansas City Mental Health Foundation.

Haslam, S.A., Ellemers, N., Reicher, S.D., Reynolds, J., & Schmitt, T.S. (2010). The social identity perspective tomorrow: opportunities and avenue for advance. In: Postmes, T. & Branscombe, N. R. (Eds.), *Rediscovering Social Identity* (key readings in social Psychology) (pp. 357-380). New York: Psychological Press.

Hernandez, B., Hidalgo, M.C., Salazar-Laplace, M.E., & Hess, S. (2007). Place attachment and place identity in natives and non-natives. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 27*, 310-319.

Hewstone, M., Rubin, M. & Willis, H. (2002). Intergroup Bias. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53*, 575-604.

Hidalgo, M.C., & Hernández, B. (2001). Place attachment: conceptual and empirical questions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 21*, 273-281.

Hogg, M.A., & Vaughan, G. M. (2005). *Social psychology*. Harlow: Pearson Education

Hogg, M.A., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes*. London: Routledge.

Hopkins, N., Reicher, S. & Harrison, K. (2006). Young People's Deliberations on Geographic Mobility: Identity and Cross-Border Relocation. *Political Psychology, 27*, 227-245.

James, W. (1890). *The Principles of Psychology*. New York: Holt.

Kim, J., & Kaplan, R. (2004). Physical and psychological factors in sense of community: New urbanist Kentlands and nearby Orchard Village. *Environment and Behavior, 36*, 313-340

Korosec-Serfaty, P. (1976). Appropriation of space. Proceedings of the Strasbourg conference. IAPC-3. Strasbourg-Lovaine La Neuve: CIACO.

Krupat, E. (1983). A place for place identity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 3*, 343-344.

Kyle, G., Graefe, A., Manning, R., & Bacon, J. (2004). Effects of place attachment on users' perceptions of social and environmental conditions in a natural setting. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 24*, 213-225.

Leonardelli, G. J., & Brewer, M. (2001). Minority and Majority Discrimination: When and Why. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 37*, 468-485.

Lewicka, M. (2008). Place attachment, place identity, and place memory: Restoring the forgotten city past. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 28*, 209-231.

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

Liebkind, K., Henning-Lindblom, A., & Solheim, E. (2008). Group size, group status and trait valence as determinants of intergroup bias: Stereotyping in Finland and Swede. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 38*, 637-651.

Lima, M.L. (2003). Terramotos, amor e outras coisas perigosas: uma abordagem psicossociológica da percepção de riscos. In: M.L. Lima, Castro, P.E., & Garrido, M. (Org.), *Temas e Debates em Psicologia Social*. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte.

Lücken, M., & Simon, B. (2005). Cognitive and affective experiences of minority and majority members: The role of group size, status, and power. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 41*, 396-413.

Marques, L., & Palma-Oliveira, J.M. (1986). National Identities and levels of categorization: Self-Stereotypes, Attitudes and Perception of Other Nationalities. In: Canter, D., Jesuino, J.C., Soczka, L., & Stephenson, G.M. (Eds.), *Environmental Social Psychology* (pp. 312-319). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Mouritzen, P.E. (1989). City size and citizens' satisfaction: two competing theories revisited. *European Journal of Political Research, 17*, 661-688.

Palma-Oliveira, J. M. (1986). Estimativa das distâncias e o conflito intergrupal. Unpublished master's thesis, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal.

Palma-Oliveira, J. M., Antunes, D., & Marques, N. (2007). Monitorização Psicossocial da Valorsul. Available from http://www.valorsul.pt/media/106615/ monot_psicossocial_2007.pdf [Accessed 11th August 2010]

Palma-Oliveira, J. M., Gaspar de Carvalho, R., Luís, S. Bernardo, F., Soeiro, V., Carvalho, J., Nunes, L. & Kellen, D. (2010). Perception of Space occupation in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area: the impact of identity, risk perception and distance distortion. In: Kabisch, S., Kunath, A., & Feldmann, H. (Eds.), 21 IAPS Conference "*Vulnerability, Risk and Complexity: Impacts of Global Change on Human Habitats* (pp.167-168). Leipzig: Helmoholtz Centre for Environmental Research.

Proshansky, H.M. (1978). The city and self-identity. *Environment and Behavior, 10*, 147-169.

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

Proshansky, H. M., & Fabian, A. K. (1987). The development of place identity in the child. In: Weinstein, C.S., & David, T.G. (Eds.), *Space for Children*. New York: Plenum Press.

Rollero, C. & De Piccoli, N. (2010). Place attachment, identification and environment perception: An empirical study. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* (article in press).

Russel, J., & Ward L. (1982). Environmental Psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology, 33*, 651-688.

Simon, B., & Hamilton, D.L. (1994). Social Identity and self-stereotyping: the effects of relative group size and group status. *Journal of Personality and social psychology, 6*, 699-711.

Speller, G.M., Lyons, E. L., & Twigger-Ross, C. (2002). A community in transition: the relationship between spatial change and identity process. *Social Psychological Review, 4*, 39-58.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups and Social Categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge Academic Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In:. Austin, W.G, & Worchel, S. (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 7-24). Monterey CA: Brooks/Cole.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J.C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In: Worchel, S., & Austin, W. G. (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 7-24) Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Tajfel, H. (1957). Value and the perceptual judgement of magnitude. *Psychological Review, 64*, 192-204.

Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between Social Groups*. London: Academic Press.

Turner, J.C. (1987). Self Categorization Theory. In: Turner, J., Hogg, M. Oakes, P., Reicher, S., & Wetherell, M. (Org.), *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self Categorization Theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Turner, J.C., & Reynolds, K.J. (2010). The story of social identity. In: Postmes, T. , & Branscombe, N.R. (Eds.), *Rediscovering Social Identity* (key readings in social Psychology) (pp.13-32). New York: Psychological Press.

Turner, J. C. (1981). The experimental social psychology of intergroup behaviour. In: Turner, J.C., & Giles, H. (Eds.), *Intergroup behaviour* (pp.66-101). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Turner, J. C. (1985). Social categorization and the self concept: A social cognitive theory of group behaviour. In: Lawler, E.J. (Ed.), *Advances in group processes* (pp.77-122). Greenwich: JSI Press.

Turner, J.C., Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S.A. & McGarty, C.A. (1994). Self and Collective: Cognition and social context. *Personality and social psychology Bulletin, 20*, 454-463.

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

Twigger-Ross, C. L., Bonaiuto, M. & Breakwell, G. (2003). Identity theories and enviromental psychology. In: Bonnes, M., Lee, T., & Bonaiuto, M. (Eds.), *Psychological Theories for Environmental Issues* (pp. 203-234). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Vorkinn, M., & Riese, H. (2001). Environmental concern in a local context. The significance of place attachment. *Environment and Behavior, 33*, 249-263.

Wirtz, P. W., & Harrell, A. V. (1987). Assaultive versus nonassaultive victimization: a profile analysis of psychological response. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2*, 264-277.