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Independence and Interdependence of
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A STUDY OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF TEMPORARY ASSEMBLAGE TOWARDS SENSE OF PLACE: IN ALUTH-NUWARA SACRED AREA, SRI LANKA

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Abstract: 'Sense of place' is a phenomenal which is still vaguely defined and appeared to be with the association of the inhabitants. The behavior pattern, the values people attribute in a built environment often said to have bought sense of place in urban environments. The composition of both permanent structures and temporary assemblages set forth to gets the form and character of every built environment. This has become more apparent in sacred built environments where non-lasting structures assembled for temporal benefits to play an important role in making them functional places in the formally arranged spaces. Nevertheless, the character, utility and sense of place build on to day-to-day lived in environments by these informally planned impermanent structures associated with many uncertainties, hence the existence of them considered as 'problematic' in formal planning and design arrangements. In the context where the limited studies in this regard, the study examines these temporary interventions and their impact in experiencing of places, for the purpose of expanding the awareness and thorough understanding of planners, urban designers and the authorities, who are responsible for the making of sustainable built environments. First, a review of relevant literature presents in this paper to identify a suitable theoretical framework to study the impacts of temporary assemblage on sense of place. Second, it employs the conceptual framework profound of '*Bennett's six triads'* to present the mutual transactive relationship between the behavior patterns of the inhabitants and activity spaces in "Aluthnuwara Devalaya" sacred area as observed by the authors. This shows how the temporary assemblages impact on the values and the behaviors of the inhabitants and thereby form the sense of place, within a formal built environment. The study highlights that temporary assemblage adds sense to places not only by their presence but also by changing people's behaviors.

Keywords: *Temporary assemblage, Sense of Place, Bennett's six triads*

1. Background

Sense of place is a complex phenomenon related with human inhabiting in spaces. Despite the fact that it cannot seem to be provided with a precise definition with some degree of accuracy, it is associated with people, how they attribute values in a particular built environment and the way they behave in it.

> "*In a world where planners look after the plans, architects look after the buildings, landscape architects attend to the landscapes, and traffic planners provide for the traffic it has become increasingly apparent that no one is specifically asked to look after the people*" (Gehl, 2010)

This famously cited Jang Gehl's articulation leads to inquiry as to what is there to be looked after of people, when there are plans, designs and projects for their benefit. It is at this point that one would moreover review Edward Relph's (1976) contention; that designers who pay no attention to sense of place, tries to destroy authentic places

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and make inauthentic ones. The embody meanings, various qualities communicated through the users and inhabitants put together for the formation and shaping of a place (Rapoport, 1977) and in return, inhabitants' comprehension and behavior are shaped by the places (Shinbira, 2012). Hence, the development of sense of place is understood as a mutual process between inhabitants and their socio-spatial environment. People gain sense of place by various means attributed in built environment. Temporary assemblage is one of them.

People meet and interact with these temporary interventions in their day today life when visiting cities. Formally built environments which are designed with 'formal' planning principles are often reshaped with these informally disorganized arrangements by people. It is important in maintaining a quality environment. Therefore, urban design is more endows with the identity and meaning of places. Temporary assemblage can be defined as short-term interventions in permanent built environments that enable makeshift use of spaces. (Bertino et al., 2019) show that temporary assemblage provides the unconventional solutions and the opportunity to experiment with functions, and it also enables circumventing bureaucratic planning procedures to find quick and flexible solutions. However, it is a matter of debate in formal planning authorities and these temporary assemblages are not so acceptable or whether they should be accommodated within formally built environment.

In the current debate while whereas numerous contend against them, some arguments stated that they go beyond quick and adaptable structures for sustaining places like; Allotment gardens, adaptive reuse in historic and abandoned buildings, regenerating sites, retail installments, outdoor functions, mimicking of traditional events and numerous other activities. While the appropriateness of the temporary assembles in the planned environments are in debate, their presence in heritage areas is mostly discussed as problematic. The reason for that is; the heritage sites will be preserved and remain intact for new development, only if the '*sense of place'* is achieved within it (Shinbira, 2012). This has come to peak when the occupation of important locations and sidewalks in the sacred areas by the street vendors and their stalls said to have caused inconvenience to their users. It also said to have contributed negatively to the visual quality and the cleanliness of the places because of the disorganized arrangements. When it comes to historical places, there is no proper system of linking all three components; historic environment, sense of place and social capital (Graham et al., 2009). But, well preserved historic environment underpins for the distinctive character of sense of place and for the coherence of character and identity through time. Since for the disorganized courses of action of temporary assembles that have contributed for the visual inconsistencies and practical inconvenience to their users, it is a challenge to ascertain how people value and understand the historical environment and act on reshaping them, to gain sense of place, as against formal planning arrangements by the institutions.

In this context, this research views it from people's attachment, identity or their positive attitude towards temporary assemblages trying to figure out on in which they contribute sense of a given place. The unique culture of Sri Lanka is evolved with its historic built environments, manifested through the cities, towns, culture and values of its people. The significance of this research is highlighted in a context, where there are limited efforts so far to explore the socio-spatial attributes that sustained their attachment with the society. This study will be of benefit to the designers, urban planners and decision makers for providing appropriate character for temporary interventions in urban context which makes more interaction opportunities for the community as well as to maintain such places and formulating pro-active strategies to sustain their sense of place.

2. Literature Review

The Latin term *'Genius Loci'* has a long history with the phenomenon of human life, which have been used to name the psycho-spatial quality experienced by people in their inhabiting places (Semon, 2014). It is then developed as '*sense of place'*; mostly used by architects, planners, designers to describe quality of environment and its atmosphere. In depth studies of sense of place is carried out (eg: Cross, 2001; Relph, 1976; Canter, 1996) with regard to people's attachments to places through various interactions and their attachments to community as two separate, but related aspects of sense of place to gain identity and meaning of places.

Therefore, Sense of place can be understood as a complex phenomenon that combines identity, attachment and meaning of a place. David Seamon (2012) observed that sense of place had been approached in scholarly work in three conceptualizing traditions.

i. Phenomenological Research - Examines experiential aspects of sense of place, evoke as both positive and negative qualities of human experience.
ii. Empiricist – Analytic Research – Measures sense of place in predetermined scales and criteria and correlates respondent's degree of sense of place, by means of interviews, questionnaires, etc.
iii. Social Constructionist Research – Studying the eternal human bonding with their history and culture and the conduct of different understanding of the same place's meaning at different periods throughout the history of the place.

In a phenomenological approach Norberg-Schulz explained '*Genius Loci*', describing the '*sense of place'* as a combination of human environment with all the other physical activities and symbolic values in nature (Seamon, 2012). Edward Relph's (1976) '*placeless and placelessness'* is a significant conceptual work on integrating role of human experience, which is a similar adopter on this regard. Canter (1977 and 1996) embraced a technical approach in understanding a place as an action setting, comprised of three tangled dimensions; the physical form, activities and imaginations. Many studies, empirical works have been conducted related to the *'environment-behavior'* stream, endeavored to recognize sense of place and the related socio-psycho-spatial aspects of places through quantitative approaches. Lefebvre's (1991) space production ideology was adopted by many subsequent authors such as the Soja (1996), Agnew (1987) to discuss the sense of place more as an evolving socio-political phenomenon.

All these phenomenological approaches, theories, traditions and concepts largely overlooked to explain the complexities of places. Yet they have paid less attention on the planning and designing aspects of physical environment that really matters for planners, urban designers and other professionals who legitimately involved in enhancing sense of place. Among limited work found in this regard, the studies of Jang Ghel's *'three types of outdoor activities'* (necessary activities, optional activities and social activities); outdoor activities depend on exterior physical conditions of the space 'between buildings' and it is important in connection with physical planning. This implies, if necessary and optional activities given better physical condition, it indirectly supported the social activities, which crucial for place identity, attachments, and the development of sense of place.

A great majority of the studies that justified the presence of '*informal*' interventions in *'formal built environments'* have either focused on the criticalities that forced them out of place (eg: Douglas, 1966) or attempted to develop a critical dialectic, but with a sympathetic understanding within planners and designers (eg: Perera, 2009).

Seamons' (2012) adopted a conceptual approach of the triadic interpretation on systematics developed by Bennett's systematics, used to explore the people - place relationship as a triadic relationship (three-ness) to explain a phenomenon like place. '*Geographical ensemble*', '*People-in-place'* and '*Genius Loci'* are the three dimensions of a place; identified by Seamon and he further explains these three dimensions can engage as six different modes to identify a place by its inhabitants. Place intensity, Place identity, Place creation, Place intensification, Place realization, Place Release are the six triads that are identified in investigating the phenomenon of sense of place.

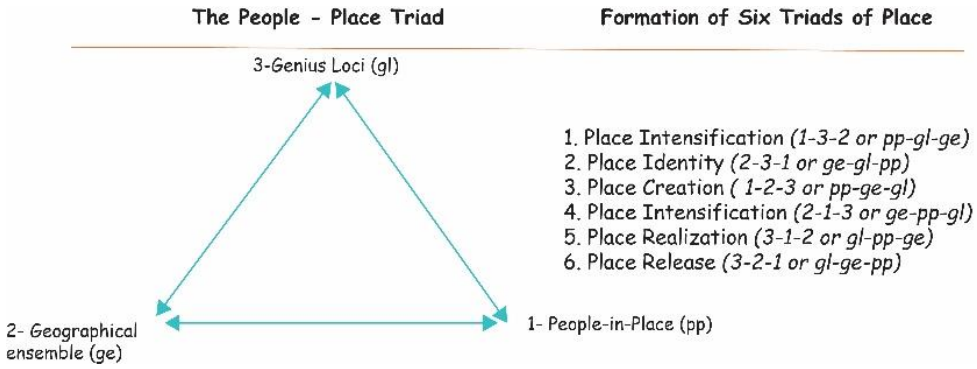

Figure 1: The three dimensions of a place *(Source: Seamon, 2012)*

Considering the studies of Seamon's approach of "*six-triads of identity of place*", based on Bennett's systematics shows a high potential to examine the contribution of temporary assemblage towards sense of place. The first reason is; examine of sense of place in temporary assemblage is a phenomenological study which is more appropriate to study a socio-spatial and psycho-spatial attributes such as sense of place. The second is; this research possess a qualitative aspect of a given built environment hence the six triads provide an analytical process to supports a

detailed scientific study. The third is the possibilities that it provides to account for physical ensemblement such as the temporary strictures, stalls, displays, etc., which is the subject matter of this study.

3. The Objective

The main objective of this research is to study on the role of elements of temporary assemblage and how they provide sense of place in an analytical manner. Analytical manner is important for it to be integrated into implementable strategies and practical planning work. Retail installations, boutiques sheds, huts, etc… have emerged in formal spaces, cities, streets and urban areas in the form of commercial activities, cultural practices, temporary functions or artistic installation. In such context, since the critique has focused on historically conserved built environments; there is a need for a theoretical investigation on the study of sense of place in temporary assemblages and to investigate their impact. "Aluth-Nuwara Devalaya" has been considered a good candidate in this regard.

4. Aluth Nuwara Devalaya

"Aluthnuwara Devalaya" located in Mawanella, Hingula – Hemmathagama main road, at the boarder of Kegalle-Kandy district of Sri Lanka. It has a history of more than seven hundred years dating back to Dambadeniya period (1267-1301 AC), and said to have built by King Panditha Parakaramabahu II (Malimage, 1996). "Aluthnuwara" has a very distinct character of its own. The sacredness of "Devalaya" related to the local deity; "Sri Dadimunda Devatha Bandara", whom for the "Devalaya" is constructed. The celebrational procession of "Aluthnuwara Sri Dadimunda Maha Perahera" has taken place in July/August of every year venerating the local deity. "Devala Poojawa" held in every day, and annually more than hundred thousand visitors, devotees and sightseers attend it to receive blessings.

This sacred area is comprised with strong built elements and historically evolved arrangements along with symbols of culture, social and religious significance in its physical setting and resembles a unique Kandyan architecture. The shrine of the deity is kept in "Devalaya"; located at a higher elevation towards the center of the premises. It is the dominant character which everyone attracted. Pathways are directed to enter to the "Devalaya". There are two main entrances to "Devalaya"; from "Udu-Veediya" (the upper street) from the east side end and "Yati-Veediya" (the lower street) from Mawanella – Aluthnuwara road, at the West end of the premises.

At present, this formal physical setting is integrated with the temporary interventions such as the street vendors, advertising materials, sign boards in historical buildings, colorful structures… The vendors have occupied the access roads and pathways of sacred area in "Devalaya" by of variety of commodities such as flowers, fruits, oil lamps, offering materials, garlands which are generally offered at the temple. Moreover, souvenir items, toys, cosmetics, sweets have more attention of visitors on their way back after visiting "Devalaya". As the permanent structure (physical design) of "Devalaya" does not provide formal spaces for vendors, they have made arrangements with temporary structures in-order to engage in selling activities. This has created an active interaction between the sellers and visitors.

5. The method

The study adopted a qualitative approach, because of the nature of the study; i.e.; sense of place, which may not necessarily be captured fully and effectively through quantitative methods.

Seamon's six-triad method is regarded as the basis on which the sense of place is felt by the inhabitants of this environment. The three designations of the three impulses were identified as '*six* conditions depending on the position of '*genius loci*'; namely, the *Interaction, Identity, Creation, Intensification, Realization* and *Release*. Therefore, the study is a demonstration of the '*six-triads*' in "Aluth-Nuwara Devalaya" sacred area. In order to validate the contribution made by the temporary assembles, the study compares the current real ground situation with temporary assemblage, and the hypothetically constructed situation with no temporary assemblage. The three triadic components in the original studies have been adapted into the study as *'built Environment'* (Geographic Ensemble), *'visitors'* and *'vendors'* (People-in-Place) and the 'experienced quality of the space' (Sense-of-Place).

Existing formal physical environment is reshaped with the temporary assemblages formed in experiencing both formal and informal arrangements of sacred area by its' inhabitants.

It is studied as a comparative situation analysis by which the temporary assemblage have contributed positively to gain the sense of place in "Aluth-Nuwara", the current situation is documented in the form of sketch maps prepared on the author's observations of the inhabitants' behavior of the place. The hypothesized situation is documented in the same form, but expecting the rational, objective oriented behavior of the inhabitants at a time that temporary interventions are not there within the premises.

To demonstrate the six-triads; first it observes the activities of temporary interventions in Aluth-Nuwara locations. The close observation of the behavior patterns of visitors and the stall keepers of the area was carried out performing a systematic field reconnaissance. Since the behavioral pattern of *'place users'* is the focus of the Bennett's triad study, the paths and routes, place specific actions, attractions and distractions caused by specific objects of place are the *'units of observations'*. They were recorded using sketch diagrams and field notes. These sketches and maps were analyzed based on the conceptual framework formed out of the Bennett's six-triads, to draw the conclusions in the study. This was expected to examine the impact of temporary environments on sense of place.

6. The Triad Analysis

The three designations of the three impulses were identified as '*six* conditions of *identity of place',* depending on the position of '*genius loci'*.

1) Place Interaction (1-3-2 or pp-gl-ge)

The devoted visitors enter into the premises with the intension of offering to deities and therefore, are looking for a commodity (flowers, fruits and other goods to offer at the temple) that are commonly available in similar settings. Hence, from one end the visitors (people-in-place) – sense the place - with the overall composition of physical arrangement, exhibiting a certain behavior within the premises. From the other end, vendors (people-in-place) - sense the place - offered by the physical environment as an opportunity to contribute their presence in it to full fill the needs of the visitors. Hence, vendors possess those commodities and with them, they are looking for an opportunity to exchange for money.

The devotees sense it is legitimate to purchase at this location as they are aware of the availability of the commodities in this place. And the vendors sense it is legitimate to offer these commodities at a good price at this location. Thereby both parties sense that legitimacy in the place.

Vendors find a space at the interface between the structures of formal setting and the behavioral space of the inhabitants (access roads) to exhibit their commodities. Such temporary interventions facilitate the interactions.

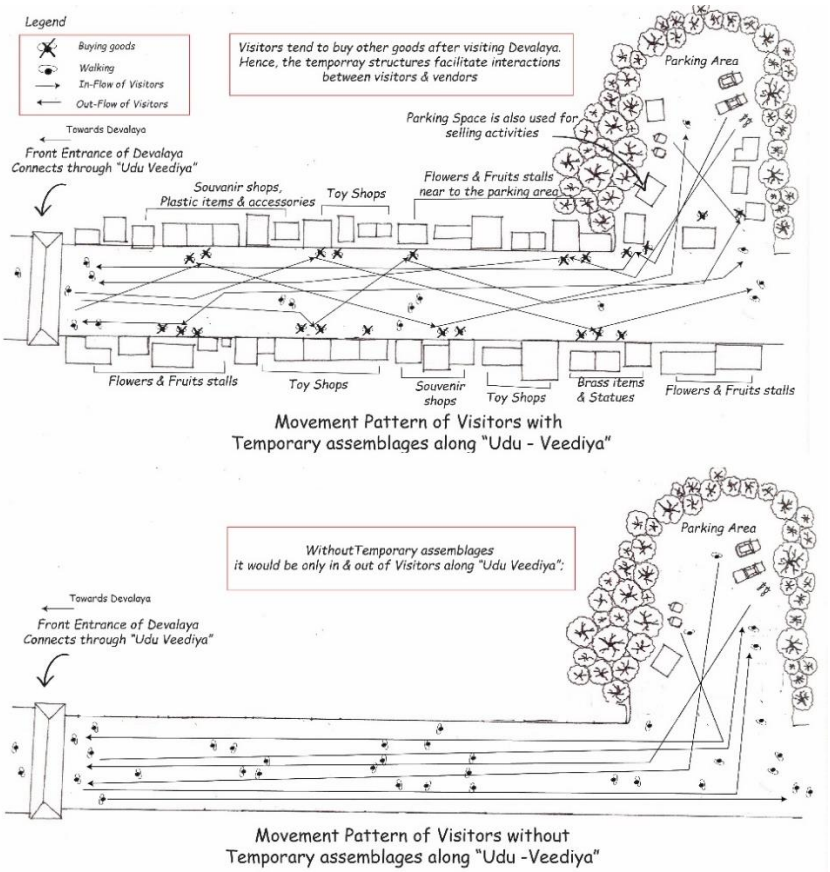

Figure 2: How temporary assemblages make interactions & change the behavior pattern of the visitors
(Source: Compiled by Author)

2) Place Identity (2-3-1 or ge-gl-pp)

The main two access roads; "Udu-Veediya"; through temple road and "Yati-Veediya"; from Mawanella-Aluthnuwara Road lead the pathways to enter users into "Devalaya". Temporary stalls are lined along the pathways to "Devalaya"

with the said commodities like; flowers, fruits and the unique characters of intangible elements like fragrance of flowers, smell of fruits, incense sticks and colors of temporary stalls symbolize the identity of a sacred area and sensed it as an integrated part of the "Devalaya" by the visitors. Since they experienced it within the premises those attractions modify the behavior of devotees (Figure 3). As Figure 4 illustrates, there could be a straight movement of visitors towards "Devalaya" in the situation where the temporary stalls are not there in the physical environment. It depicts a plain path because there is no reason for them to deviate from their journey to "Devalaya"

Since they influenced by the temporary arrangements by the vendors, these attractions modify the behavior of devotees. At the same time within this physical resemble and the sense of place caused by the symbolism and cues enable the place to gain an identity.

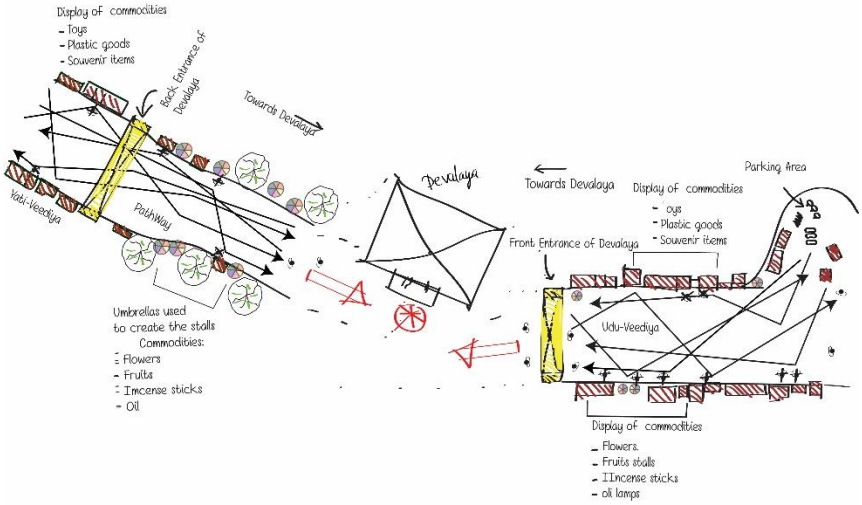

Figure 3: Two Access roads of "Devalaya" flanked with stalls
(*Source: Compiled by Author)*

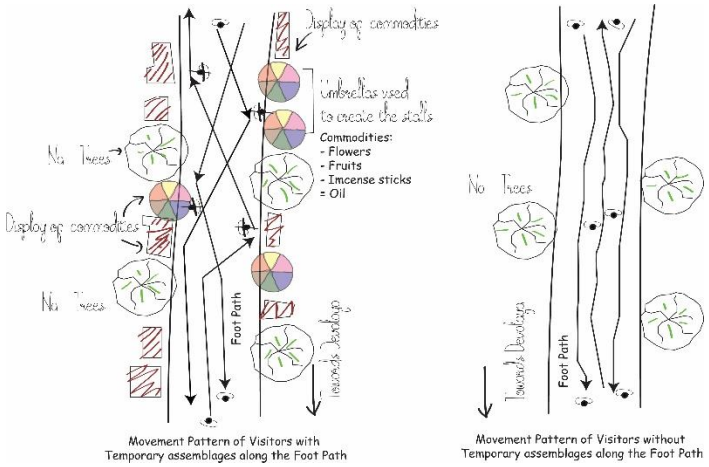

Figure 4: Temporary interventions attracting & modifying the behavior patterns
(Source: Compiled by Author

3) Place Creation (1-2-3 or pp-ge-gl)

While following the known order of a sacred area, visitors are also looking for commodities (flowers, fruits, etc…) to be offered at the shrine. The physical arrangement of "Devalaya" does not build a space for that. Therefore, vendors' make changes in place ("Devala area"); engagement in designing their stalls, occupying the side space of pathways of "Devalaya" to facilitate commodities.

Subsequently, the premises build into composite of both formal physical arrangement and non-permanent temporary environment with less dominant and more informal assemblages.

Vendors have resort non-permanent structures; flexible, simple and non-conformity with the architecture of the dominant structure. Accordingly, informal nature is enhanced by flower and fruit stalls made of non-lasting materials, umbrellas etc… shelters for the selling activities along the pathways.

The main attraction of the visitors is the sacred elements of the "Devalaya", which they sense in the formal built environment in contrast to the informality, variety and versatility associated with temporary assemblage. Vendors also sense the restrictive nature of formal environment, hence they assemble the temporary structures (Figure 5) reshaping the pathways for better interactions with visitors.

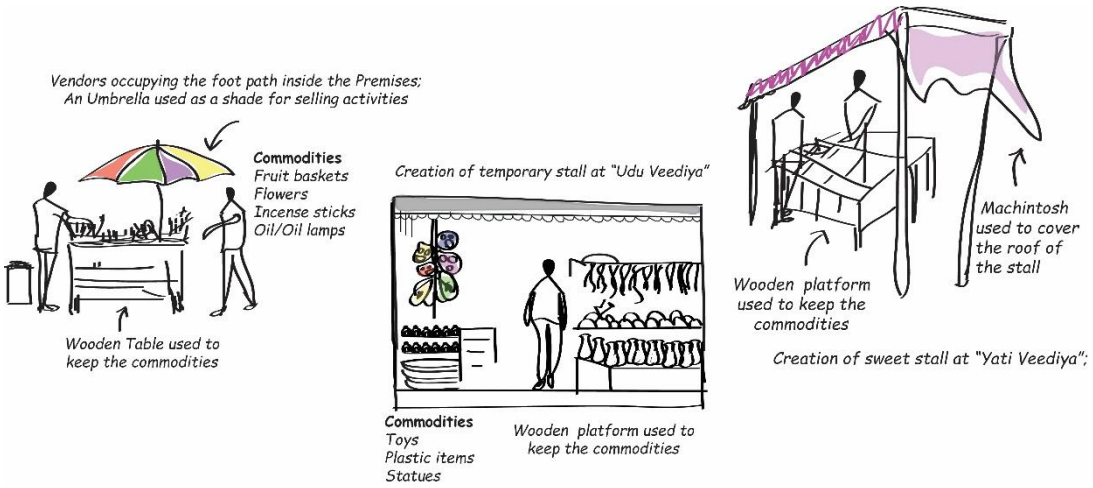

Figure 5: Informal creation of Temporary stalls in "Aluth-Nuwara"

4) Place Intensification (2-1-3 or ge-pp-gl)

The supportive designs and constructions which are located within the premises intensify in creating *'places'*. The physical setting of Na trees along the pathway inside "Devalaya" premises and parking area at "Udu-Veediya" located adjacent to "Devalaya" area intensify business activities of vendors by offering vendors to create their temporary stalls. People change their behavior with the presence of stalls mingled with the formal permanent setting in pathways, or else it would have been a straight movement as explained under Place identity. The attraction of vendors, their commodities have deviate the movement pattern of visitors and added an informal setting to the premises. Because of the informal behavior, it has transformed into this non-regimented, bustle full atmosphere enabling the visitors and vendors to sense and find comfort in the supposedly sacred formal environment. Thus, the informality has become a part of place (Figure 6 - contract people behavior (paths) between two situations). In this manner, these designs and constructions evidently strengthen the people-in-place and thereby intensify a strong sense of place in its inhabitants.

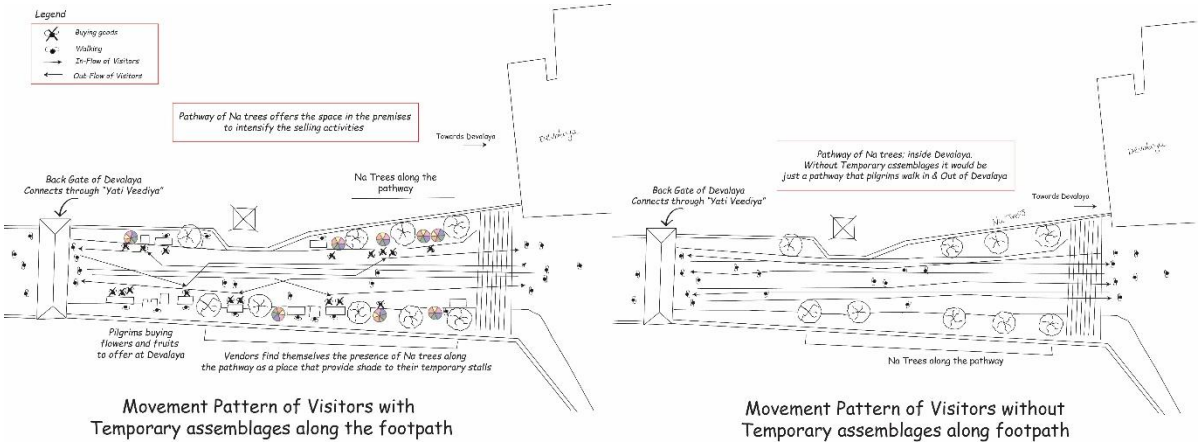

Figure 6: Supporting design of "Na"-trees along the footpath intensifies selling activities *(Source: Author)*

5) Place Realization (3-1-2 or gl-pp-ge)

The sacredness of the "Devalaya" is manifests through the formal physical arrangement including the temporary assemblages. Devotees sensed it as an integrated part of the scared place, because it provide other sensory matters like fragrance of flowers, colors, textures and commodities which symbolize and sense the place in a more intimate human scale. Vendors rearranged the place and create stalls to sell commodities, in such a way presence it gives a feeling of belonging.

Inhabitants involve themselves in experiencing the both formal and informal built environment at "Devalaya". Vendors possess the pathways to make temporary stalls and engage in selling activities to serve the demands of

visitors and devotees. Both vendors and visitors engage in physical environment as well as interact with each other, which result in enhance the realization of the place.

Strip of temporary assemblages either side of the roads, along the pathways of "Devalaya" intensify a unique character to the sacred place. It generates a sense of taken for granted in a sacred area with its own particular presence. Visitors are enabled to continue their journey towards "Devalaya" without any disturbances. Thus, the place realization of visitors supported by the temporary assemblages. Similarly vendors' place realization is concretized by the same physical and material setting of "Devalaya" with the close contacts of visitors.

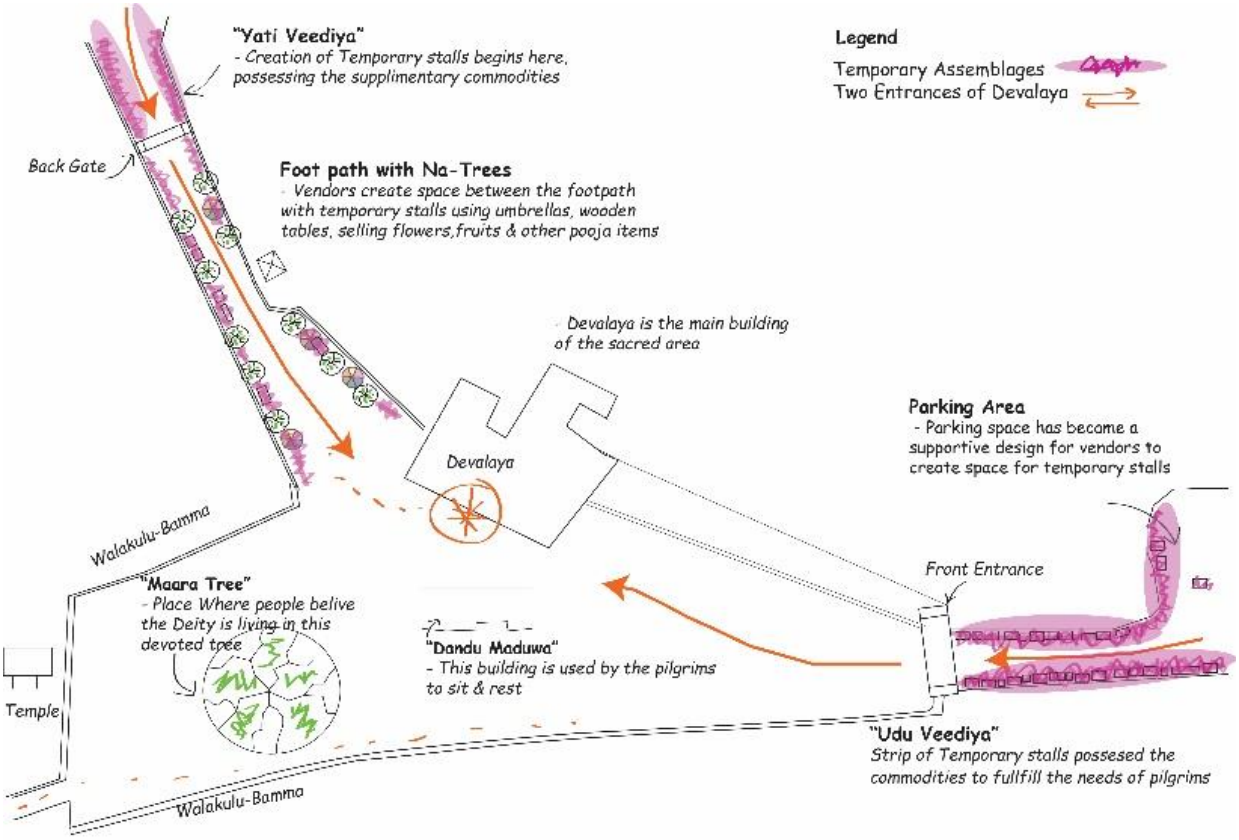

Figure 7: Composition of formal & informal arrangement of "Aluth-Nuwara Devalaya"
(Source: Compiled by Author)

6) Place Release (3-2-1 or gl-ge-pp)

Even though "Devalaya" is the dominant character of the place, temporary assemblages have been an expressive part which reconfirm and recreate a mutually naturalized behavior pattern in the physical environment. Both visitors and vendors can experience their desired types of behavior with this recreated environment and there by release in the place.

Varieties of stoles; flower and fruits stoles, plastic items, toys, accessories, souvenir items, food stalls etc… are lined along the pathways to fulfill the demand of visitors. These temporary interventions are freely experienced by the visitors from the start of their journey to the end without any disturbance. Instead it full fill their demands, thus, devotees/visitors sensed it as a part of the sacred area. It allows them to make interactions through the place therefore both visitors and vendors find satisfaction and more self-belonging through the place.

It can be distinguished by comparing the two situation where; with and without temporal activities, that; there is a high interaction with stalls before visiting "Devalaya". Toy shops, souvenir shops, food stalls, plastic good stalls etc… are the other attractions that visitors interact after visiting "Devalaya".

And deploying situation where without temporary activities it would be a straight movement forward in the pathways to "Devalaya". No terminations or stoppings from beginning to the end of the journey.

Therefore, it is demonstrated that without temporary assembles there is no interactions and it would be an ordinary movement of visitors to "Devalaya". Hence the presence of temporary assembles aggrandize the quality of place in "Aluth-Nuwara" (Figure 8).

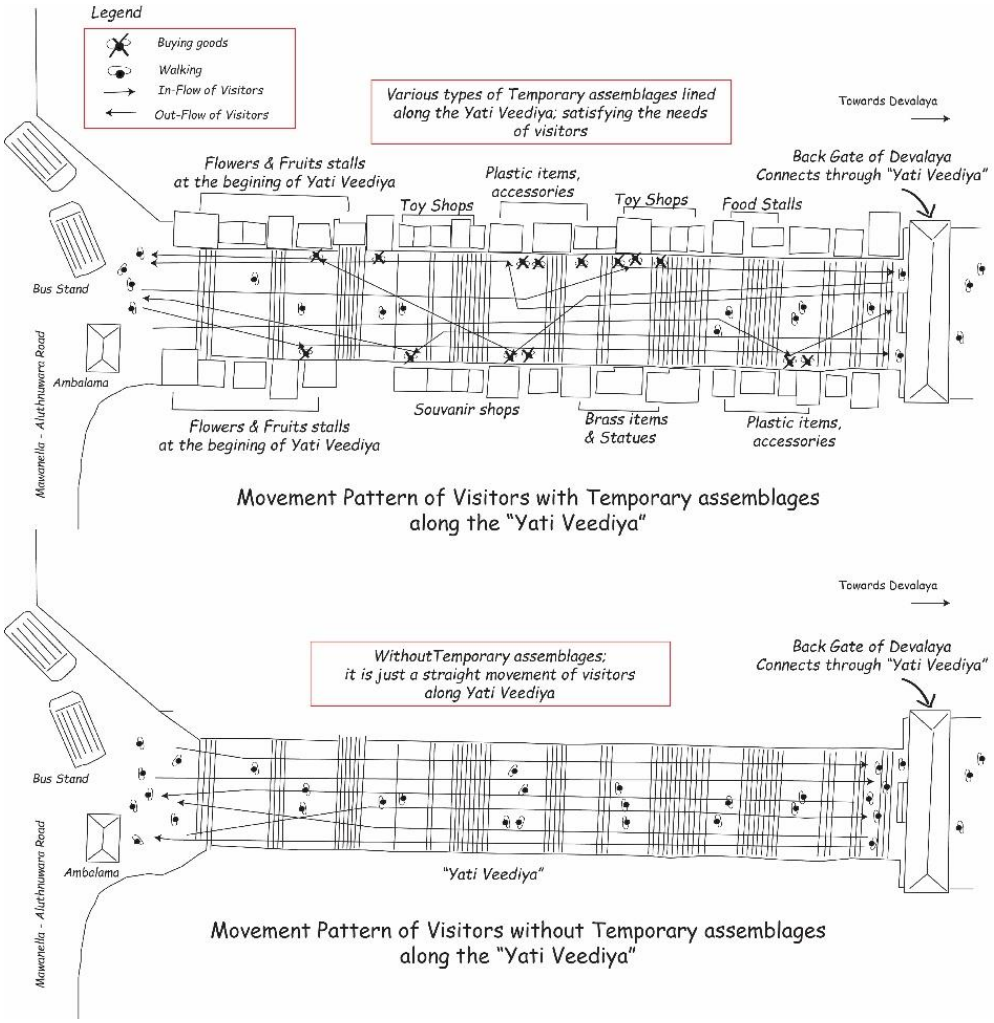

Figure 8: Changes of the activity patterns of visitors; with & without temporary interventions
(Source: Compiled by Author)

Figure 9: Temporary assemblages lined at the paths of "Aluth-Nuwara Devala" area *(Source: Author)*

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

Sense of place is still vaguely defined and less firmly established by the means of its achievement. There are many approaches, theories, traditions and concepts of sense of place largely overlooked by scholars to explain the complexities of places. Thus far most of these works are limited in explaining the concept in a manner that it can be progressively and effectively strategized in spatial planning and urban design. However, the basic function of human memory; the '*environmental experience'* has the greatest influence in attributing the sense of place in its inhabitants. The experienced environments are results of both the dominant orchestration of permanent physical elements framing formal spaces and temporary assemblage built in to the same for shaping the formality into informal vitality. Yet it is a matter of debate as to whether the temporal structures should be accommodated within formal conserved

built environments, historic cities, sacred areas and what impact such temporary interventions may have on sense of place. That being the case, this study ventured to analyze the impact of temporal arrangements on a historic built environment employing the concept of *'Seamon's six-triad of identity of place'*, in which sense of place is one out of the three impulses.

This study shows the manner in which Pilgrims/devotees, visitors, and vendors who involve themselves in experiencing the temporary assemblage and sensing the built environment in "Aluth-Nuwara Devalaya" premises. Vendors' creations of stalls, unique commodities, visual structures, color, and smell provide place presence and legibility. Such arrangements of temporary interventions in "Aluth-Nuwara" make interactions with visitors and vendors. Hence it evokes experiential aspects of the inhabitants.

This study has demonstrated what changes is made by the temporary structures in the place and how they also change the behavior of the people in that place. This was explained by comparing the two situations; when temporary assemblage are there and when they are not there. Hence temporary interventions add sense to places not only by their presence but also by changing inhabiting (People's behavior) of the place. The use of '*six-triad of identity of place'* concept in such evaluation on sense of place can further help in guidance for qualitative understanding, decision making, environmental policy and sustainable design.

The study is concentrated only on one historical sacred place of the local context. It is obvious that this study is not adequate to generalize the findings to other types of built environments. Other dimensions of temporary assemblage in formal environs, where space economics, space optimization, spatial movements, etc., also need to be given equal consideration. It may also be argued that the findings are biased to the positive impact of temporary assemblages towards sense of place. Yet, in a context where limited studies regarding the assessing of sense of place, this study facilitate for better understanding and help in guidance for decision making, environmental policy and sustainable design.

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