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Original Research Article

«A theory of Good Form of Public Space» A Critical Review of the Criteria for the Formation of Efficient Public Space*

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Abstract

Problem statement: Regardless of the consensus about the necessity of efficient public spaces to improve various dimensions of life in the city, there is no agreement in terms of the criteria for the formation of efficient public spaces as an ever-evolving concept. It seems that some of the listed criteria, according to philosophical partialism, are not in line with the evolution of this concept from an urban space based on the opposition of mass and emptiness to an ideal space for the realization of democracy, the flourishing of social life, and a processual and relational existence. This issue clarifies the need to revise the normative definitions of “good form of public space” by adopting a holistic perspective that includes the human-meaning dimensions of the space and the effect of other agencies such as the characteristics of the context and power institutions.

Research objectives: The purpose of the current research is to evaluate the existing theories about “efficient public space” and its relationship with the process of the semantic and functional evolution of space in the public domain of the city. While providing a general picture of the development process of the interdisciplinary concept of “public space”, this study attempts to present the knowledge gap in the previous theoretical literature, and provide a more appropriate approach, to the possibility of progress and development of theory in this field.

Research method: This study used an integrative approach to combine and critique the previous views and lay the groundwork for the re-conceptualization of “space in the public sphere of the city.” The data was collected using the library method based on the conceptual structure of the review and analyzed using the methods of critical analysis and conceptual classification.

Conclusion: Normative-prescriptive definitions of efficient public space are not in sync with the evolution process of the content-descriptive definition of public space. As a result of the incorrect epistemological orientation to the concept of space, partial criteria only consider one of the physical and semantic aspects of space or the algebraic sum of the two and do not provide a comprehensive picture of the multi-dialectical and disputed concept of space in the public domain of the city. In such a way that, despite the new forms of interwoven communication between man and the city under the concepts of “public space” and “public urban process”, we witness a kind of historical regression to the concepts of “urban space” or a selected representation and image of the concepts of “public space” and “public space.” The definition of the good form of the public space, according to the continuously evolving and multi-factorial nature of the space, should go beyond the instructions about shaping the space and rely on a holistic approach and formulating a set of flexible and paradigmatic holistic, multi-dimensional, multi-scale, and multi-dimensional equations and dynamic processes. It includes the formation of public space.

Keywords: *Urban space, Public space, Social space, Pathology, Critical review.*

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Introduction

Throughout history, according to their dialectical and physical-semantic nature, public spaces have had various roles and functions, including leisure, political, social, etc. Successful public spaces are an important part of the city as a sustainable human construct, and without them, human societies are likely to move towards an increasingly polarized and private structure (Shaftoe, 2012). At the global level, organized events such as the Public Spaces Project (1975), UN Habitat's Global Public Space Program (UN Habitat, 2011; 2013; 2015b; 2016; 2019a; 2019b), special meetings of the Toolkit on Public Space (UN Habitat, PPS and Ax: son Johnson Foundation. 2015), the New Urban Program (2016), and subcategories such as the Four-Year Future of Places (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2015) and the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 (2015) have addressed the issue of public space.

Until the late 1980s, public space research was primarily concerned with design. However, with the social and political dimensions of the city's public sphere becoming more prominent in the 1970s and issues such as spatial justice, cultural rotation, and "place-oriented" and "process-oriented" approaches in the 1990s, public space studies became numerous and diverse. The public space has changed according to the realities of the 21st century, such as emerging uses and new methods of regulating, controlling, and monitoring the space. The ontological reconfiguration of public space and its optimal performance are crucial for a better dialogue with global geopolitical implications, reflecting the creative social practices, relations, and politics of public space formation (Rokem & Boano, 2017). Different stages of design, planning, development, and management of public spaces have a direct impact on their accessibility and identity. Since the range of actors and interests in urban development is very diverse and places have different dimensions and functions, the creation of public spaces becomes a complex and multidimensional process (Madanipour, 2021, 438). The public space is a

multi-dialectical system, a controversial issue with a wide range of meanings and functions and it does not lend itself to a single definition. The generality of the space as a holistic value must be explained through an adaptable model that takes into account the set of factors involved in each specific example and requires the realization of larger strategies and long-term processes (Abarghouei Fard, Mansouri & Motalebi, 2023). Based on this, in addition to the ontological reconfiguration of the public space, it is very important to explain its optimal performance criteria for a better dialogue with global geopolitical consequences, a reflection of creative social practices, relations, and policies of public space formation.

Today, designers should search for the expression of the public space as a political place that shapes civic identity and provides a platform for the formation of public life and various types of social action. An important concern for evaluating the multidimensional issue of public space is to examine it in such a way that it simultaneously addresses issues such as politics and democracy, sociality, leisure and recreation, economic exchange, symbolic value, and beyond (Mitrashinović & Mehta, 2021, 363–365). As a result of the continuous evolution of the narrative literature of the public space, some of its semantic and lexical dimensions are in an aura of ambiguity; In the field of urban studies, there is no clear and unified definition of the space belonging to citizens, and this issue becomes more pronounced at the intersection with normative views about the success of the public space. This has been in such a way that the gap caused by the conflict between the content-descriptive understanding of publicness and the normative-prescriptive design of public spaces has been one of the main points of criticism in the theoretical literature of public spaces (Moudon, 1992). On the one hand, concepts such as "urban space," "public domain," "public space," and "social space" with different functions have been used interchangeably without clear boundaries, and on the other hand, the success criteria of public

space, do not match its definitions as a “social and civil ideal” and “relational existence and adaptation process”.

In this way, a clear picture of the “good shape of the public space” has not been obtained and this problem is considered an obstacle to adopting a suitable approach in practice. The current research aims to clarify the relationship between the course of semantic evolution and the criteria for evaluating the efficient performance of space in the public domain of the city, and seeks to answer these questions: Have the criteria explained around the efficient public space model been in line with the process of its conceptual evolution? What are the shortcomings of the existing theories in this field? Why have the researchers not been successful in explaining the “good form of public space” model?

Research Method

The general purpose of the literature review is to critically evaluate and synthesize the current state of knowledge related to the subject under review as a means of identifying knowledge gaps that future studies should seek to address (Carnwell & Daly, 2001, 57). The integrated or critical literature review method has been chosen for the current research because it has more capabilities than simply covering, collecting, and summarizing the findings of previous studies. In this method, identifying knowledge gaps and combining and criticizing previous views in an integrated and holistic way leads to re-conceptualization, potential expansion of theoretical foundations, and the creation of new theoretical models (Snyder, 2019, 334–336; Torraco, 2005, 356–357).

• Conceptual structure of the review

The data collection method was informed by the theoretical nature of review, documentary, and library research. Based on the principles and general purpose of the integrative review for combining views from different research fields or traditions, data collection was started purposefully. The two key axes of the research lens in data collection and the main

subsets in the analysis of the findings included the maximum coverage of various theoretical positions about the “semantic and linguistic differentiation of concepts about space in the public sphere of the city” based on the keywords “urban space,” “public space,” and “public sphere” (narrative definitions) and “the integration of views about the criteria of an efficient public space” (normative definitions). The results show different dimensions and evolutions of the concept of “good shape of public space” in previous research and provide guidelines for future research. Based on this, more than 156 articles and books published on public space from 1944 to 2020 were selected and analyzed from reliable databases such as Springer, Elsevier, Web of Science, Scopus, Science Direct, and Willey.

In most review research, logic and conceptual thinking replace data analysis (Whetten, 1989). However, in the current research, the main methods of data analysis were “conceptual thinking”, and the “critical analysis” method. The methods were used to identify the strengths and key contributions, deficiencies, and problematic aspects of the theoretical literature, and the “conceptual classification” method was used as a complementary method. The synthesis¹ of pieces of data in the current research led to the formation of a narrative-normative framework and new questions for further research while raising the relationship between previous perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

• Semantic and linguistic distinction

Comparing terms or related semantic structures is the basis for theory development in the review research method (Snyder, 2019, 339). Identifying the philosophical roots of a concept and its evolution process is one way to understand the problem and find a suitable solution. According to the purpose of the current research, which is to review the concept of efficient public space, it is necessary to examine alternative and similar reforms in this field from a historical perspective.

• Urban space

Urban space was introduced based on the physical characteristics of the opposition of space and mass, mainly the space between building masses. The philosophical root of this definition is the absolute view of space, which means that there is something real and absolute that an urban person is only able to be in. Zevi (1957) introduces urban spaces as “voids” to create a closed and limited space: “Each architectural volume creates two types of spaces by creating a break in the continuity of space: the inner space and the outer or urban space defined by that building and other neighborhoods” (Zevi, 1957, 30). In the philosophy of modernist design, urban spaces were breathing spaces in the service of buildings for health and recreation (Sert, 1944). Carrier (1979) defines the urban space as a space surrounded by diverse views and having geometric features and aesthetic qualities. The bipolarity of indoor-outdoor space based on form and function and open and unobstructed space for movement in the open air is the basis for the formation of urban space. The existence of outdoor activities, being equipped, having symbolic meanings, specific arrangement, and specific physical order are factors contributing to the formation of urban space (Krier & Rowe, 1979, 15-24).

Urban designers have mainly conceptualized the city as a morphological phenomenon and physical-spatial structure and paid attention to the sensory and visual qualities of the urban space. This perspective requires abstraction to understand the complexity and continuity of the urban space and its indeterminacy. By defining the city as a place of residence, mental themes such as the cultural and social characteristics of users and the basic relationships between space and social processes have been ignored. Due to the focus on the abstract concept of spatial experience and ignorance of daily life, users, and their functional, social, and emotional needs, the produced urban space is often undifferentiated and neutral (Kallus, 2001, 129–130). Based on this, the concept of urban space has been critiqued by experts.

Among the criticisms that have been at the center

of postmodernism since the 1970s, we can refer to the conceptualization of “abstract undifferentiated space” (Colquhoun, 1989, 225), the view of space as “a uniformly developed substance,” which may be modeled “in various ways” (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, 12), the description of the modern city in the form of “simple volumes floating in a sea of unfavorable space” (Alexander, Neis, Anninou & King, 1987, 67), and the reduction of urban design “tactics” to a series of abstract spatial volumetric manipulations without meaningful reference to human behavior and the needs of real people and daily life (Peterson & Row, 1979). The reason is that the thinkers in this field have been interested in thinking about physical mass and its meanings in a new way. Based on this, the later concept of public space with philosophical roots hidden in the social and political action of citizens in the public domain of the city has been taken into consideration.

• Public Sphere

The concept of the public sphere gained recognition among political philosophers in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on the social and political dimensions of urban human life. The public is defined as a group of people who share common social, political, and civil interests and goals, and the broad term “populous” - meaning “people” - is at the heart of its many meanings in the sense that it is related to, influenced by, or shared by all members of social community or nation as a whole (Madanipour, 2003, 95–96). The public sphere is considered the arena of discourse and exchanges beyond the control of the government but limited to the borders of the nation (Ong, 1997, 193), through which the “public” is organized and represented (Hartley, 1992) and the cultural and ideological competition between different strata in its structured setting is formed (Eley, 1992, 306).

The public sphere depends on the government and society, global and specific categories, impersonal and interpersonal relationships, concrete and abstract concepts, and normative and descriptive concepts (Madanipour, 2003, 117). The public sphere is “a non-physical and conceptual place full of ideas about issues of public interest” (Neal, 2009, 4), “the communication

space of ideas and projects arising from society and addressed to decision-makers in institutions” (Castells, 2008, 78), “it has been introduced as a cultural-informational repository effective on public debates and government decisions” (Stewart, 2001), and “real self-determination, an excellence of moral development” (Taylor, 1995, 184).

In the formation of the public sphere, the concepts of public life, institutions, and social and civil life are inseparable from each other. The public domain is expanded to include personal, social, and civil life, as well as the individual and the state (Banerjee, 2001, 14). Thus, the public sphere is “the place of display, comparison, and re-formation of the individual masks and the social fronts of people” (Madanipour, 2003, 110), “including topical common spaces for the participation of people in collective events” (Taylor, 1995, 190–199), while emphasizing its social aspect; “the realm of consultation and collective action of citizens in line with public interests and public communication media” with emphasis on the political and civil aspect (Goodsell, 2003, 363); “an institutional field is defined neither in the sense of “government” nor “society, but rather as the field of collective action that connects these two fields” (Ethington, 1994, xiv) with an emphasis on the political and civil aspect.

The material and institutional dimensions of the public sphere are interdependent. Some consider the public domain and public space to be two separate issues; the public sphere is a universal, abstract, and immaterial realm for the occurrence of discourse, conflict of opinions, and public democracy. The independent concept of public space is a real and material site, an accessible space, a context for political activity, and something related to individual freedoms and the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1991; Mitchell, 2003; Mitchell, 1995, 117). On the contrary, some public space is presented as a manifestation and material expression, one of the physical forms and the factor of continuity and development of the abstract and global public sphere through the informal formation of public opinion, the debate over democracy and citizenship, and the reflection of citizenship values and ethical

and meaningful issues of society. They do (Mitchell, 2003, 134; Mehta & Palazzo, 2020, 2; Castells, 2008, 79).

In any case, public space based on inherent political values is an important part of the public sphere and ideal for democratic space (Mitchell, 1995, 116). The relationship between public sphere understanding and interpretations of public space is a relationship between the general cause and the obvious effect. By considering who constitutes the public, the public sphere becomes a more inclusive concept (Ryan, 1990; Matthews, 1992; Zukin, 1995). The logic of the public sphere in democratic societies can be used in the analysis of the public space. In such a way that the exclusivist dimensions of these two concepts correspond to each other; especially through the restrictive role of groups or interests that are more effective in determining the nature and importance of public space (Fraser, 1991; Cresswell, 1992; 1996; Madanipour, 2010, 11).

• Public space with socio-political functions

The public sphere is a conceptual space that is under the influence of society and the government, people, and institutions at the same time. Sometimes by focusing on the mental and intangible nature of space, it is known as an abstract and institutional domain, and sometimes by emphasizing the material and tangible dimensions of space, it is considered the seat of public social and political functions. The public sphere is the place of “public” organization and representation and a normative and legal issue because in it everyone in the form of society has access to the ways of social construction, institution, and power structure. In the same way, public space is an open and accessible space for everyone, where people can meet and interact with others differently (Habermas, 1989) and participate in the formation of a connected and interactive human process of communication experience including presence, seeing, and hearing each other (Goodsell, 2003, 370). As a result of the philosophical roots in the multifaceted concept of the public sphere, the public space has a multi-functional and simultaneously political and social structure and “represents the socio-political dynamics of a specific time and place and is an

important place to display social, cultural and political narratives reminding of the power of a group" (Hatuka 2012; Hatuka, 2020, 358).

Public space in a political role can be a space-time continuum for political discourse (Goodsell, 2003, 370), an ideal for democratic civil society, and an ongoing negotiation arena for determining the right to the city (Koch & Latham, 2012, 3-4), a place to experience differences, an open and integration and not a unique project (Mitchell, 2003, 18), the context of struggle, exclusion, representation and social justice about space (Van Deusen, 2002, 150) and the formation of civil and political activities (Tonnelat, 2010): it is known as a temporary political society and the embodiment of political power at the top (Bodnar, 2015, 5), the main scene of political struggles and the formation of transformational results and a phenomenal space for communicating and forging meanings (Hou, 2020, 335&339), the mediator of civil society and state and the factor of creating collective opinion and will (Avritzer & Costa 2004, 708).

In its social role, the public space is the place where people meet and present a combined and global concept of society (Gehl, 2013, 28), the arena for the formation of powerful processes of social interaction (Madanipour, 2003, 95–96), and the stage on which the drama of social life flows (Goodsell, 2003, 364; Carr, Francis, Rivlin & Stone, 1992, 3; Madanipour, 2003, 118). The basis of public use and active or passive social behavior (Mehta, 2014, 54), "social space" produced by different groups such as the government, capitalists, different identity groups, etc. (Law, 2009, 1625–1626), and the agent solving social problems are listed in the perspective of positive environmentalism (Kohn, 2004, 155).

• Public place: Phenomenological experience of space

Contrary to materialistic views of public space, as a material situation where social interactions and collective activities of all members of the public occur (Mitchell, 2003, 131). In recent times, the public space has been interpreted in the framework of the more advanced concept of "place" and the adoption

of a holistic and relational perspective as a kind of public urban process. Since the 1990s, studies on public space have been inclined to a "place-oriented" approach as special places have different and varied uses, perceptions, experiences, and meanings. In this approach, public space is "not a static container or neutral background in which action unfolds", but "the result of specific interactions between people and places" (Gotham, 2003, 724; Knierbein & Tornaghi, 2015; Abarghouei Fard et al., 2020, 28). Public space, beyond the empty space between buildings and material form, is a socio-spatial structure, a place with meaning and value, the result of the experience of human presence in space and communication with others, and depending on the requirements of the time, it is a kind of urban model (Mansouri, 2012, 28; Gieryn, 2000; Crouch, 2006).

Taking a dialectical approach to the socio-spatial nature of space appropriation, public space beyond a designed territory is a "spatial agent" (Karimnia, & Haas, 2020, 41-42), meaning a spatiality that "has a certain effect on a situation or creates a particular place" (Kärholm, 2007, 440). As a result of this perspective, the physical dimension of the public space is not merely a tangible manifestation of design and legal determinations; Rather, it is an active element in materializing its sociocultural and political dimensions (Harvey, 2012; Crestani, 2017; Crestani & Brandão, 2018; Crestani & Irazábal, 2020, 390). To create more meaning and value, public spaces need to transform into places. The purpose of placemaking is to enhance the sense of place, sociocultural meanings, and attachments of individuals or groups to an environment (Gieryn, 2000; Glover, 2015; Silberberg, Lorah, Disbrow & Muessig, 2013; Stokowski, 2002).

Place-making continuously affects the public space through meaning-making, material transformation, and democratic and civil processes; No public space is a final product and always represents an unfinished project and a work in progress in the form of a transformative effort (Lashua, 2013). By considering design as a starting point, place image is considered an evolving process rather than a fixed outcome (Assche,

Beunen, Duineveld & Jong, 2013). Based on this, the public space should be imagined as a bozzeto - the initial and experimental design of a sculpture – whose proportionment is done by users in a collaborative and evolutionary process (Leqreq & Ponjani, 2020, 264-265). However, temporary strategies of “revitalization” emphasizing the deliberate and usually temporary use of festivals, events, and planned activities have not been successful as one of the key practices of place-making in the 21st century, (Reid, 2012; Glover, 2015, 96). Because they do not originate from the continuous and inherent meaning of human interaction with space. Also, the rights and meanings of different places are not necessarily interpreted in the same way, and unique social and cultural characteristics have been attached to the space in different contexts (Luger & Lees, 2020, 73). Although the merits of place-based research are not few, public space research has been enriched by reducing the focus on specific places and using process-oriented approaches.

Multimodal phenomenon and public urban process
With the discussions of globalization and urban mobility, attention to “spaces of flows” instead of “spaces of places” (Castells, 1996) found an important place in public space studies. An increasing number of researchers, beyond the analysis of places, are exploring the flows affecting the formation of public spaces by applying process-oriented approaches, which are known as a suitable method for studying the processual, relational and evolving nature of public space. Some have used the term “new mobility paradigm” or “mobility turn” to describe this change in approach (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Recently, a wide range of stakeholders, including private actors, large developers, and small non-profit social groups, have taken responsibility for designing, planning, regulating, implementing, and maintaining public spaces based on their specific goals and programs (Sennett, 1977; Németh & Schmidt 2011). and the desires, views, and characteristics of each of the human, contextual and institutional conceptual subsets affect the formation of the public space (cf. Mehta &

Palazzo, 2020, 2; Zamanifard, Alizadeh & Bosman, 2018, 2; Madanipour, 2020, 7 & Madanaipour, 2006, 189, Carmona, 2014b, 16-17; Leclercq, Pojani & Van Bueren, 2020, 3). Based on this, presenting a more comprehensive picture of the public space is conditional on considering the human components, context, internal forces and macro currents such as the government and market forces.

As a space for countless functions, interests, and institutions, the city contains many “publics”. The actors who occupy, maintain, and control the space, as well as the actors who identify with the public space, are diverse (Mehta & Palazzo, 2020,333). The frameworks of production, understanding, construction and use of public space in contemporary societies are formed by a set of components including cultural factors, laws, environmental and geographical conditions, changing economic conditions, disciplinary behavior of certain ethnic groups, geopolitical factors, etc. (Mehta & Palazzo, 2020,71). This problem makes the nature of the public space controversial, dynamic, even contradictory and bipolar, containing multiple symbolic meanings, and turns it into a multi-functional phenomenon (Abarghouei Fard, Mansouri & Motalebi, 2023, 93). The publicity of space is “intermediate” in terms of space, time, activities, and management (Aelbrecht, 2016). Public space is the social framework and order based on a continuous flow of relationships established between key actors in which various powers strive to establish and maintain social and political order. Representation of power and confrontation over worldview and narrative makes the public space a dynamic and negotiable category. Thus, the configuration and physical and symbolic characteristics of public space are only important in terms of the ways of use and interpretation. The socio-temporal processes of changing meanings of public spaces can be considered as moments of revision that change our perceptions of agreed meanings (Hatuka, 2010).

In this view, the public space is beyond an object limited in a specific place, and from a “process-

oriented” perspective, with a relational perception, it is known as a continuous flow with an open end and dynamic processes, a contested entity and an object that is constantly forming and changing (Van Melik & Spierings, 2020, 17). The relational processes defining the public space are very dynamic and as a result of continuous relationships with other public spaces are developed (Spierings, 2009). The generality of urban spaces as a holistic value is identified through larger development strategies and is altered by everyday spatial practices. [This duality] reflects the importance of “design” in the role of a non-linear process and includes the multiplicity of spaces, actors, and actions as a driving factor (Karimnia, & Haas, 2020, 36-37). By expanding the concept of public space to all actions, structures, performances, and regimes related to space, the planetary field of public space is formed based on all the simultaneous possibilities and paradoxes of place-specific (taking into account local characteristics) and spatial (involving global and multi-scale flows) (Luger & Lees, 2020, 81-82).

Closure

Investigating the process of the conceptual transformation of space in the public domain of the city indicates the change of one-dimensional diagnosis criteria to a macro-narrative consisting of multiple criteria, and multiple agencies cannot be accommodated in a single and general conceptual model and framework. This issue is rooted in the transition from an atomistic approach to the city to a trans-sectoral and holistic approach; In such a way that the definition of the city has evolved respectively, from the physical structure and the place of abstract experience of space, the idealistic concept of the arena of the realization of democracy and society and the place of an embodiment of the values and meanings of human life, to the arena of continuous formation and transformation of dynamic urban and processes affected by human and institutional positions. As a result, the public space, through an evolutionary process, has evolved from an external and empty physical space, a space accessible to the public and a

material representation of the public domain, to a place of human experience, a multifaceted and contested phenomenon, and a processual and relational entity. Therefore, the criteria of the generality of space and the formation of an efficient public space as a place for the realization of civic and social ideals of life in the city must include various aspects of the extensive interaction between humans and the environment, because today, the space in the public domain of the city, with the change in the structure of cities and based on or three main agency (trialectics) of man, the context and institutions of power and the many stakeholders related to them has evolved into a multifaceted phenomenon, a processual and relational and holistic concept that includes, produces and is formed from the said agencies (Fig. 1).

Public Space Efficiency Criteria

From the review of public space success criteria, three main conceptual subcategories can be identified: objective attributes focus on the physical body of the environment, mental attributes deal with humans as the audience of the environment, and some attributes focus on the relationship between humans and the environment. Based on this, we will continue to examine the mentioned criteria to determine the image drawn of the good form of public space in the previous theoretical literature by the evolution of the concept of public space.

• Prioritizing the form

The physical and social capacity of a place affects the human interactions within which they have been formed (Gaver, 1996; Abarghouei Fard, Saboonchi & Farzin, 2018, 6). Based on this, some physical characteristics have been considered for successful public spaces. Including;

- Finding appropriate locations

Efficient public space location by explaining criteria such as the possibility of viewing and communicating with the experiences and activities of nearby spaces, physical and psychological invitingness, emphasis on the edges, the existence of conversion areas, and the appropriate distribution of public spaces in terms of proximity

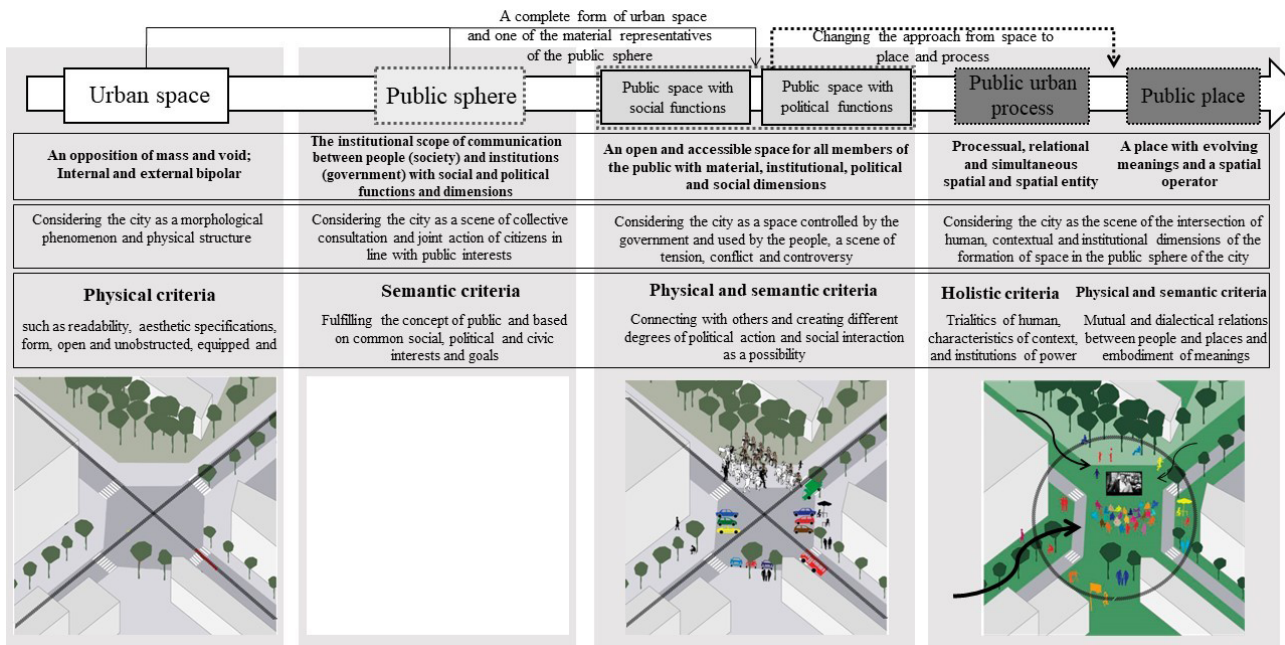


Fig. 1. The semantic transformation of space in the public sphere of the city from urban space to a multifaceted and process phenomenon. Source: Authors.

and connection to other parts of the city. The gradual formation, adaptation, and continuous coordination of space with functions have been considered (Gehl, 2011, 38– 44 & 113–121; Whyte, 1980; Gehl, 2013, 75–77; Mehta, 2014, 58).

- Physical quality

proper physical quality and organization including protection, security, proper spatial planning, suitable and multi-purpose furniture, having a suitable sitting space, having shelter from adverse weather conditions, visual quality and paying attention to details, and the richness of sensory stimuli affecting the experience. The sense of space, by influencing behavioral patterns and human activities, encourages citizens to stay in space and do more than forced activities (Whyte, 1980; Gehl, 2013, 21; Gehl, 2011, 33, 36, 155 & 16; Mehta & Bosson, 2009, 4; Mehta, 2014, 69).

- Environmental comfort

the available literature on the influence of environmental factors on human behavior shows that appropriate microclimate conditions, including temperature, sunlight, shade and wind, and the presence of water and trees, are important in supporting outdoor activities and the proper functioning of public spaces (Whyte, 1980, 40-50; Bosselmann et al., 1984; Carr et al., 1992, 15;

Liebermann, 1984; Banerjee & Loukaitou-Sederis, 1992).

- Physical safety

physical design, how to maintain physical conditions, the configuration of spaces, variety of land use, changes made in the environment, lighting level, readability resulting from physical signs, the existence of a clear and clear hierarchy, personal or impersonal space, and... It is proportional to the perceived safety from crime and affects the amount of use of public space (Perkins, Meeks & Taylor, 1992; Gehl, 2013, 10-98; Blöbaum & Hunecke, 2005).

- Prioritizing function

As a public, we have embodied beings in action, sharing space and performance (Koch & Latham, 2012, 8; Abarghouei Fard & Mansouri, 2022, 20-21). The place is given meaning by people and their activities in the mind of the audience, and usage gives meaning and shape to the space and its experience. Based on this, functional criteria have also been taken into account in explaining the model of efficient public space.

- Attractiveness and multiplicity of functions

providing diverse activities and behavior patterns by the cultural context and unpredictable use of citizens, multiple social and symbolic functions, preventing

the creation of single-function spaces, freeing zoning codes, minimizing segregation, practicalizing and nurturing various groups. Humanity and activities together are a prerequisite for the connection of people and activities and the success of public space (Barker, 1968; Rapoport, 1969; 1977; Carr et al., 1992, 26-27; Gehl, 2011, 107; Young, 1990, 255; Gehl, 2013, 146-147; Walzer, 1986, 47-470).

- Functional integration

the coherent combination of physical space, users, and performance through complex functional patterns, humanizing the functional dimension of the space and prioritizing users in the formation of functions, meeting the basic and specific needs of the audience, supporting symbolic and cultural activities, creating foundational activities Sociability and place dependence, providing valuable social and recreational opportunities, is a suitable framework for a richer experience of urban life and public space (Gehl, 2011, 101-100-132; Gehl & Svarre, 2013, 6; Gehl, 2013, 19; Mehta, 2014, 58-59; Seamon, 1980; Garland, 2001, 126).

As a public, we have embodied beings in action, sharing space and performance (Koch & Latham, 2012, 8). The place is given meaning by people and their activities in the mind of the audience, and usage gives meaning and shape to the space and its experience. Based on this, functional criteria have also been taken into account in explaining the model of efficient public space.

- Attractiveness and multiplicity of functions

providing diverse activities and behavior patterns following the cultural context and unpredictable use of citizens, multiple social and symbolic functions, preventing the creation of single-function spaces, freeing zoning codes, minimizing segregation, practicalizing and nurturing various groups. Humanity and activities together are a prerequisite for the connection of people and activities and the success of public space (Barker, 1968; Rapoport, 1969, 1977; Carr et al., 1992, 26-27; Gehl, 2011, 107; Young, 1990, 255; Gehl, 2013, 146-147; Walzer, 1986, 47-470)

- Functional integration

the coherent combination of physical space, users, and performance through complex functional patterns, humanizing the functional dimension of the space and prioritizing users in the formation of functions, meeting the basic and specific needs of the audience, supporting symbolic and cultural activities, creating foundational activities Sociability and place dependence, providing valuable social and recreational opportunities, is a suitable framework for a richer experience of urban life and public space (Gehl, 2011, 101-100-132; Gehl & Svarre, 2013, 6; Gehl, 2013, 19; Mehta, 2014, 58-59; Seamon, 1980; Garland, 2001, 126).

• Prioritizing Human being

The meaning of place is a complex phenomenon and is influenced by the historical presence, human experience, and action over time and individual and collective experiences and the narrative of a place that has been taken into consideration by explaining the criteria in the formation of a successful public space;

- Human scale

the suitability of the whole space, its elements and physical characteristics with the dimensions and scales, limitations and physical capabilities of humans as well as compliance with physical habits and physical routines, by preventing the creation of impersonal, formal and functional spaces, an important ground for people to stay in public spaces and communication with others (Cullen, 1960; Gehl, 2011, 38- 44 & 93; Gehl, 2013, 38 & 53; Koch & Latham, 2012, 8; Mehta, 2014, 69).

- Universal access and spatial justice

physical and visual access of all sections of society to space, functions, activities, experiences, happenings, information, conversations, and internal communications individually and collectively and at any time of the day and night, with the possibility Meeting other people and acquaintances is the minimum condition for performing democratic and collective actions and one of the main conditions for the proper functioning of public space (Carr et al., 1992, 50; Atkinson, 2003, 1830; Salama, 2013, 10;

Oldenburg, 2009, 47; Oldenburg, 1989; Sezer, 2020, 139; Jalaladdini & Oktay, 2012, 667).

- Inclusion and inclusiveness

supporting different people and groups, different activities and behaviors with little barriers and no cost, prerequisites and no gender and racial exceptions, providing features required by a wide range of users and fair division of space among different classes. In considering different economic and cultural levels, the functional success of public space is dependent on recognizing the right of citizens to take over the common urban environment, providing suitable opportunities to identify and express the views of vulnerable groups, cooperatively solving daily needs, and assuming public space as a common. has a direct impact on (Mehta, 2014, 58; Purcell, 2002; Madanipour, 2006, 185; Mehta, 2019, 36; Németh, 2012, 813; Madanipour, 2010, 242; Low, Taplin & Scheld, 2009, 197; Corcoran, 2012, 8; Carmona, Heath & Tiesdell, 2003).

- Lack of demarcation and creating a neutral ground

A set of human characteristics that help to increase the productivity of public spaces are as follows: crossing social classification lines, creating weak, faint, or open borders, with high social mixing and diversity in culture, identity, and activity, paying attention to borders as elements that create an identity and social difference without exclusivity, the creation of a neutral and flexible territory, neutral and appropriate to the diverse performances of the drama of social life, the neutrality, and universality of the space design, including, neutrality, leveling and not being a single host of the space (Malone, 2002, 158-159; Tajbakhsh, 2000, 171-173; Madanipour, 2003, 111; Mehta, 2019, 36; Oldenburg, 1989).

- Striking a balance between the collective and the personal space

the possibility of socializing and communicating with others and benefiting from urban solitude and preserving individuality at the same time, preventing being together in the sense of a kind of compulsion, creating precise and defined private

and public territories, forming an integrated and functional combination of the private realm, next to the world of unfamiliar strangers and emphasizing the dual dimensions of human agency, are important prerequisites in creating a sense of security and social opportunities in the formation of public space (Jacobs, 1992; Gehl, 2013, 101; Oldenburg, 2009, 41; Tajbakhsh, 2000, 174).

- Narration

Among the features of public space which is used to mediate communication between members of society, we can refer to translating the meaning of the place to users, expressing individual and collective memories and characteristics of culture and heritage, symbolic visualization of history, power and memory in public spaces as rhetorical places and civic combinations, creative collaboration between current awareness and experience or expressing the past and presenting social meaning and shared experience through appearances [and manifestations of space] (Augé, 1995, 68; Gould & Silverman, 2013, 791-792; Boyer, 1994, 321; Johnson, 2002, 293; Boyarin, 1994, 22).

- Modeling the past

Creating sustainable social interaction belonging to the public domain of the city requires preserving and saving signs of the past and modeling them, paying attention to people's nostalgia for previous forms, symbols, functions, and historical monuments, creating a fantasy of old and new in space design, establishing a quasi-historical relationship with the city while responding to the needs Today, the influence of scientific and practical experiences of contemporary design of public space from the process of space transformation helps (Hackney, 1990; Carmona, 2014b, 12; Carr et al., 1992, 217).

• Prioritizing humanbeing and the environment

In the view of some thinkers, the behavior of people in public places can be explained by considering the social and physical context - the role of others and the environment around them - and "evaluating both the physical and social aspects of the environment to understand the user's needs" (for example, Lang,

1987; Brower, 1996) is necessary for explaining the model of successful public space. However, the mentioned criteria are often explained by focusing on the environment or the audience².

• **Prioritizing the environment**

- **Uncertainty**

Uncertainty in the logic of the formation of the public space while following the general order of the city and balance in diversity and lively use, valuing urban complexity and diversity, using disorder and disorder in the form of the idea of unregulated spaces, creating disorder and disorder. Positive, unplanned activities and flexible performance, avoiding the inflexibility of prescriptive environments, paying attention to the public space as an open process and the product of socio-material association through re-gathering, the convergence of diversity and complex communication, the possibility of being sociable and participating with others and tolerating differences. increases in the public space (Bodnar, 2015, 6; Sennet, 1992; Sendra & Sennet, 2020; Franck & Stevens, 2006, 15; Sendra, 2015, 820 & 834; Amin, 2008, 9).

- **Multiplicity, difference, variety**

experiencing diversity and creative disorder, complexity while being fluid in everyday life, providing a context for determining identities and flexible and combined possibilities, reflecting the difference and fluidity of uses, diversity of temporal and spatial patterns of daily use, irregularity and constructive conflicts. Through qualities such as “open, crowded, diverse, incomplete, improvised and disordered”, putting together global diversity and difference in urban life in a common space, the presence of stimuli that change the character of the space and creating a domain with an open end and changeable by people’s actions. , is a generator of powerful and effective social and civic works on the performance of public space (Tajbakhsh, 2000, 171-173; Rishbeth, 2020, 32; Mehta, 2019, 1; Amin, 2008, 10-11; Amin, 2010; Massey, 2005).

- **Half-finished design**

lack of complete planning and design of the space, the possibility of autonomous and random formation of events, providing opportunities for adaptation and improvisation at design discontinuities, adaptation, self-regulation, continuous change and adaptation, creation

of a flexible and upgradable public realm, away from the social framework Planned, the blurring of power hierarchies and increased self-regulation of space increase the possibility of using space in different and more collective ways (Relph 1981, 104; Graham & Thrift, 2007, 5; Sennet, 1992; Iveson, 1998, 25; Sendra, 2015, 828-830;).

- **Patterns and fixed rhythms**

with specific rhythms and patterns through habit, purposeful orientation, and instruction of objects and signs, time-space routines, physical (body-associated) and spatial ballets, allocating space to a specific activity, creating a socio-material complex and intensifying assets. The activities, interests, and sense of the common space and the continuity and collective repetition of the daily life rhythm of the public space become a patterned context and a common place for socialization and a synergistic human-environmental whole (Amin, 2008, 12 & 22-23; Seamon, 1980, 128; Amin & Thrift, 2002, 47; Sendra, 2015, 828).

- **Expressing environmental stimuli**

the presence of environmental stimuli and catalysts through triangulation, rearranging urban elements in unexpected ways and attributing new functional capacities, collecting things and new potentials in creative and sometimes unusual ways, and the presence of stimuli that change the personality of the space, by creating a more expressive environment The formation of dynamic social and civic life and better functioning of public space have an impact (Whyte, 1980; Gehl & Svarre, 2013, 17; Dovey, 2011, 350; Sendra, 2015, 825; Koch & Latham, 2012, 13).

• **Prioritizing human being**

- **Vitality**

attracting a large number of people at different times of the day and night, the existence of active life, social integration, the symbolic and common meaning of the place, and the presence of a diverse range of people by conveying a sense of vitality and good and safe space increases the motivation to attend and passive enjoyment. It strengthens the collective life in the city (Jalaladdini & Oktay, 2012, 666-667; Gehl, 2011, 19-23; Gehl, 2013, 98-102; Madanipour, 2006, 187).

- Spatial security through social monitoring

A variety of factors such as public surveillance of people in space, spontaneous, unplanned, or systematic care by considering the activity, continuous use of space and making it spectacular, the presence of mixed uses and activities at night have a direct effect on strengthening the bilateral and complementary relationship of security. And sociability has a public space (Madden, 2010, 198; Gehl, 2013, 98-102; Whyte, 1980; Jacobs, 1992, 35-36).

- Domestication of the space

domestication of space and “civic housekeeping” based on people’s participation in the production of public spaces, delegating the responsibility of design and management to private actors, preventing the blurring of space boundaries as a result of applying order and discipline, making it more comfortable, inviting and Even making the city look like a home, personalization means modifying the physical environment to meet specific needs and activity patterns and giving priority to the habits formed about the world and everyday experience, by increasing security and trust in others and the world, the factor in solving many disorders of the public space. is known (Koch & Latham, 2013, 6-19; 2011, 11; Zukin, 1995; 1998; 2010; Allen, 2006; Atkinson, 2003; Mehta & Bosson, 2009, 3; Bridge, 2008, 1576).

- Community enactment

the formation of social values and meanings, the interaction between people, and a sense of solidarity has been under the influence of the existence of a degree of integrated actions, places, or events for people to act in harmony, the possibility of negotiating common goals and confirming relationships by community members and going beyond the gathering of people, the intersubjectivity of the space, the strong role of the audience community as a partner-participant and not a mere spectator, the realization of “collective symbolic ownership” and valuing of “collective, common and civil inculcations” and as a result, the performance

of public space is improved (Wilkinson, 1986, 5-6; Stewart, Liebert & Larkin, 2004, 325; Kohn, 2004, 9-12; Hester, 1984; 1993; Mehta, 2014, 59; Amin, 2008, 8-9; Majidi, Mansouri, Sabernejad & Barati, 2021).

Discussion

• A critique on the ineffectiveness of the mentioned theories about the criteria of a successful public space

Two common positions in explaining a definition are criticism and theory. The ability to express criticism of theory and move from theory to criticism is a fundamental factor in determining the future of the theoretical foundation of various disciplines. Different epistemological classifications, theoretical perspectives, methods, and modes of representation can be used to examine the relationship between criticism and distinct theoretical positions (Swalfield, 2006, 21). The final step in the literature review is to identify strengths and weaknesses, and gaps in previous research, explain inconsistencies, compare and show contrasts (Hancock, Algozzine & Lim, 2021, 28).

Based on this, the review of the criteria for the formation of “efficient public space” has been criticized based on the incorrect epistemological orientation³ towards the issue of space and the lack of compatibility with the evolution of the concept of public space (Fig. 2).

- Materialistic approach to space and focus on physical and functional dimensions

Considering only physical criteria to define an efficient public space is the result of a materialistic view of space. In this approach, the public space as an absolute and real thing like a void waiting to be filled is independent of the human being who occupies it with his presence, use, intervention, and experience. In this way, man has a passive role and space is a constructive phenomenon and a physical and functional container with specific characteristics and capacities that, as an existing reality, has little effect on the formation of human interactions and actions. Although the mentioned criteria affect the more productive use of a successful public space; they are not the definitive foundation of human actions

and the formation of social interactions. Examining some examples of public space shows that the proper physical quality and functional setting of the space do not necessarily play a decisive role in the success of the public space.

Materialistic approach to space due to excessive determination and planning without considering the variable and dynamic nature of human-environment interaction, the agency of institutions, and the unique characteristics and context of every public space, the formation of “urban space” and “public space” with the lowest level of social function. And civil based on the criterion of access and not the realization of democracy brings citizens in the form of a mass of people who only can attend and use them for basic activities. In this way, the meaning of “public” as people with common social and political interests and goals or society as a group of people with stable human interactions and the general agreement is not realized. In this situation, the physical space is often used as a tool for urban managers and specialists - designers, developers, and planners - to produce desirable social-spatial order and space representations. This issue has resulted in the homogenization of space and the conditioning of human action, and the success conditioned by external factors in public spaces is one of their short-term achievements.

- Deficiency of idealistic approach to space and focus on semantic dimensions

The meaning-oriented approach toward the public space is rooted in an idealistic view of the world and its phenomena. In this view, public space exists as a relational concept only in connection with different dimensions of human existence and life, such as time, experience, perception, etc. Embodying human values in explaining the semantic criteria of a successful public space can be investigated in two ways; In the first case, prioritizing the presence, performance, and individual perception of humans in the framework of the basic features aimed at privileging users such as accessibility and non-demarcation is considered. In such a situation, the meaning dimension, taking into account the human rights to enjoy and use the space, will lead to the formation of “urban space” and “public space” in

the sense of everyone, not necessarily will result in the realization of democracy and social interaction.

In the second case, semantic extensions including physical, functional, and event signs related to the historical dimensions of human presence and activity are considered in the form of narration and modeling from the past. This process in the field is often continued by shaping the space in a physical order that conveys meanings, and physical extensions and basic qualities are suggested to cover the intended meanings in the design of the space. Activating the meanings related to memory and time as a kind of effort to upgrade space to place, work under certain time conditions, and manifest often in a temporary and sectional form, the formation of a universal and more humane space and a place of memory with less lasting appeal and in general, the representation of “public space with It brings “social capability” and “public place”. Considering the role of the audience and humans in the process of place-making, it should be beyond the semantic and historical signs attached to the physical aspect of the space and planned events. In other words, the meaning of space is derived from its gradual growth and development and is proportional to the characteristics of the context and the two-way and dialectical interaction of man with the environment, and the meanings that are mechanically added to the space by external factors will not be stable and effective.

- Deficiency of the intermediate approach

The intermediate approach - physical and semantic - to the public space is a step ahead compared to the two materialist and idealist approaches; In this approach, the shaping of space and social relations, in the form of a collection and components related to each other, including humans and the environment, is considered by specialists in urban and geographical sciences. However, there have been some social assumptions and concerns regarding this issue. As a result, the criteria centered on the physical and functional characteristics of the environment such as uncertainty, diversity, multiplicity, hybridity, etc., are considered to produce social relations and active human actions, while criteria related to the meaningful role of the audience including

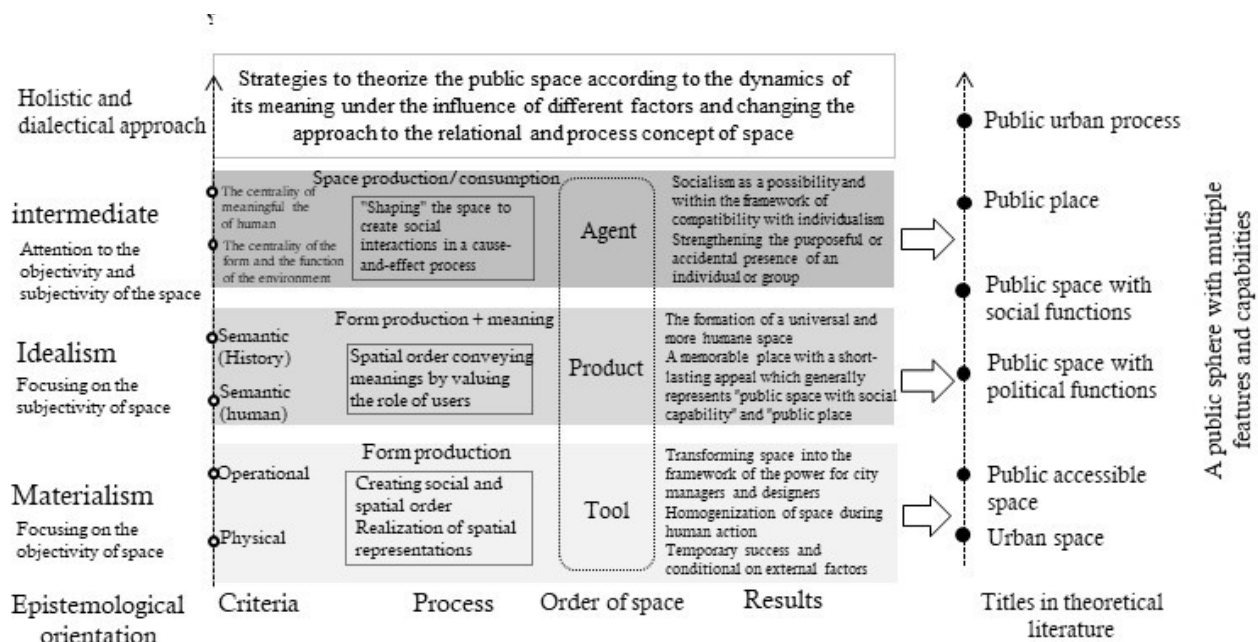


Fig. 2. The non-inclusiveness of the criteria for diagnosing and design.ng successful public space in previous research as a result of adopting a wrong epistemological position towards the concept of space. Source: Authors.

relationships, ratios and social priorities such as vitality, social supervision, etc. shape current social relations in the space. In other words, fleeting social relations, daily life, and leisure are formed in the context of space, and “public space with a social nature” and “public place” are created. In these conditions of the public space, the factor will be the recognition of social difference without exclusivity and the purposeful or accidental presence of individuals or groups will be strengthened that social interaction and the feeling of being a part of the society is not a fixed principle, and the person, along with his individualism, recognizes socialism as a possibility arising from the environment (physical) or the audience (semantic) and in a framework of adaptability for himself or others.

However, the formation of human interactions in the mentioned process - by “shaping” the space and not its gradual “shaping” - is created in a cause-and-effect manner and is not spontaneous and self-contained in nature. In this way, the sociality arising from the common human experience of space will not be the overall formation of both physical and semantic dialectic of man and the environment, because in the mentioned example, environmental factors such as uncertainty, diversity, the presence of stimuli, are somehow equal

to the consumption of space and the purposeful arrangement of objects. It is in the environment for the formation of social relations (orientation towards the environment) and it is in contrast to semantic factors such as vitality, social supervision, a kind of purposeful production of space, and planning the relationship between man and space to strengthen sociability (orientation towards man). In this approach, man and the environment are implicitly considered separately and the logic governing the said process shows social relations as a result of physical and semantic characteristics and not as a product of the constructive interaction of both the mentioned dimensions.

A common mistake

The physical and semantic dimensions of space in the city arise from the social and civil characteristics of citizens' lives and affect them in such a way that every spatial order corresponds and coexists with the characteristics of the society and human groups to which it belongs. As a result of this, the physical and semantic dimensions of the space are intertwined and cannot be separated by a cause-and-effect relationship and fixed criteria. Even though the criteria of successful public space in previous studies often consider one

of the physical, functional, or semantic dimensions of the formation of public space, public space in its contemporary meaning is a concept of place, processual, relational and intermediate existence. And it does not pay attention to a dynamic and controversial category. In such a situation, the public space, regardless of its efficiency and inefficiency, is not in sync with its evolved and late definition. The contemporary meaning of public space is beyond a fixed and constructive object, and its efficiency cannot be included in an ideal model that can be cited for all examples. A specific and fixed design pattern does not include the complex definition of public space as a “totality” resulting from the multi-dialectical relations of human positions on the formation of the space, the historical, cultural, and social features of the context, and the external economic, political, and social flows related to the institutions of power.

- Adopting a holistic and strategic approach instead of reductionist and atomistic obsessions in design and physical characteristics such as the way of spatial configuration
- Simultaneous and equal attention to different physical and semantic dimensions of the interwoven interaction between humans and the environment
- Presenting an intermediate concept of the generality of space in the form of a primitive, malleable, and changeable concept based on the specific characteristics of each sample, considering the possibility of changing it by time-space realities.
- Drawing the relationship between different dimensions of the abstract concept of publicness as a goal and its concrete experience in the public space as a result in a relationship with the ability to adapt and a multi-scale framework
- Not limiting the quality of publicness to the physical dimensions of the space and the need to pay attention to multiple actors and the dynamics of the powers involved in the city.
- Definition of efficiency criteria in a multifactorial equation and a non-linear process based on the role and effectiveness of actors, stakeholders, and various stimuli and the social, cultural, and historical

features of the context as the driving forces of spatial production and sources of human action.

- Paying attention to flexible planning, management, and long-term development process concerning the variability of dimensions and different agencies that make up public space over time.

Conclusion

The criteria explained for the formation of efficient public space are not in sync with the evolution of the concept of public space. This issue has widened the gap between the content-descriptive understanding of publicness and the normative-prescriptive design of public spaces and disrupts the reductive and conventional narratives about the “good form of public space” in the form of design criteria. The definition of a successful public space has often been made by adopting a wrong epistemological position towards the concept of space, so that the prescription of partial criteria based on philosophical partialism has taken into account one of the physical and semantic aspects of space or the algebraic sum of the two, and a comprehensive picture of the multi-dialectical concept and The contested case does not provide space in the public domain of the city (Fig. 3). Except for a few cases, by focusing on one of the many aspects of the phenomenon of space and ignoring the undeniable role of context and institutions, the mentioned criteria conform to the concept of “urban space” or a selected representation and image of the concepts of “public space” and “public place”. The simultaneous attention to physical and semantic criteria is in reality far from the two-way and intertwined relationship between man and the environment, and the concept of public space is at the level of public and sometimes social space, and not an ideal space for realizing the democratic concept of “public” or the social concept of “community”. and the experience of intersubjective communication and the shared meaning of place is considered. In this way, despite the new forms of interwoven communications between man and the city under the concepts of “public place” and “public urban process”, we are witnessing a kind of historical

stoppage and even retrogression. As a result of this, a comprehensive picture of an efficient public space has not been presented and the criteria have only remained at the level of guidelines about the design of the space. Meanwhile, defining the good shape of the public space according to the slippery, constantly evolving and multi-functional nature of the space requires avoiding partiality. Adopting a holistic approach that includes various substantive and functional dimensions of public spaces in such a way that the desired model goes beyond the fixed principles of design and focuses on the dynamic process of public space formation and compiling a set of flexible strategies and rules and general processes to determine definitions, rights, and expectations. and include delegation and management, planning, and governance approaches. Despite the possibility of adapting and interpreting the general principles with the details of each specific example and even the continuous developments of a single public space over time and space and under the influence of the aforementioned multiple agencies; The good shape of the public space will be explained in a holistic, multi-

dimensional and multi-scale paradigm framework and a multi-unknown equation.

A Perspective on Future Research

The discussion about the efficiency criteria of public spaces shows the necessity of changing the epistemological orientation and new conceptualization in this field. Future researchers should look for ways to theorize the public space according to the dynamics of its meaning under the influence of different agencies. Changing the approach to the relational and process concept of space, in redefining the successful public space as a part of its historical evolution process, may be useful.

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Endnote

1. Critical analysis and synthesis are used as tools to generate knowledge sequentially to create new perspectives on the subject as a whole while summarizing the findings of previous research (Torraco, 2005, 363).

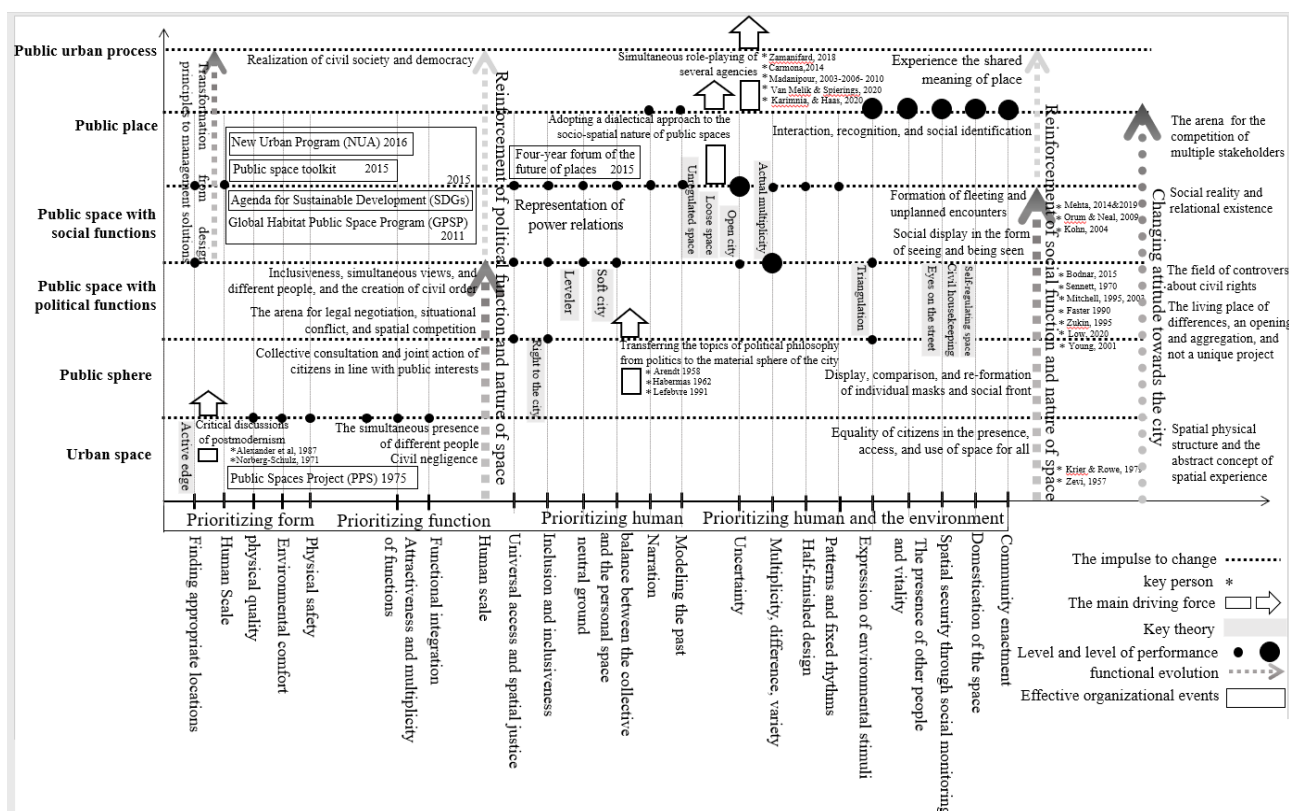


Fig. 3. A Comparative study of existing criteria about "efficient public space" and its relationship with the semantic and functional evolution of space in the public domain of the city. Source: Authors.

2. Interrelationships between objective dimensions of space and city and its meaning and mental image for citizens have been the subject of some researches (Hemmati, Mansouri & Barati, 2022).

3. A person's epistemological orientation reflects his belief system about the nature and acquisition of knowledge. This concept is part of the philosophical assumptions that influence the methodology and methods that researchers consider appropriate.

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