City Space Architecture

EDITORIAL

Mapping Urban Injustices in Public Space.
Challenges and Opportunities

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Cities, as human constructs, are undergoing rapid transformations influenced by economic globalization, mobility, and European integration. This dynamic evolution brings about substantial changes in European urban landscapes, marked by the intense flow of people and cultures. This social and cultural diversity challenges established notions of identity and social relationships (Phillips, 2007) directly affecting public spaces. The need to understand the evolving role of these spaces as shared resources and as a common good to exercise democratic rights, cultural demands and social needs in a diverse urban environment is highlighted.

Public spaces, seen as essential components of urban experience, do play a pivotal role in accommodating the diverse social life of various groups (Madanipour, 2003). The complexity of interactions within public spaces becomes apparent when observing the ways different user groups relate to the urban environment and to each other. Spatial dynamics further complicate the issue, as highlighted by Noussia and Lyons (2009). Coexistence in public spaces may give rise to spatial boundaries, acting as locales where diverse people, activities, and ideas come into contact, maintaining a distinctive contrast. However, this contrast can lead to the exclusion of certain groups, resulting in the colonization of urban space by dominant groups and contributing to a sense of fragmentation. Artificially constructed boundaries in cities, as noted by Hillier, can shape people's experiences of space, potentially reflecting social inequalities in the spaces they occupy (Hillier, 2005). Legeby further emphasizes that inequalities in the use of public space can influence movement flows, co-presence, and the nature of activities, directly contributing to spatial exclusion (Legeby, 2009).

The continuous and fast-paced transformation of cities has not only reshaped the physical landscape but has also sparked intricate social conflicts, sets of cultural values and beliefs and political contentions among the diverse urban groups that often assert competing claims over the decisions and processes that influence urban transformations, raising fundamental questions about the fairness and justice of these processes. A prominent concern revolves around the prioritization of affluent urban

interests, potentially neglecting the well-being of more vulnerable communities. Madanipour (2019) in this respect has differentiated between original claims in public space debates, and their rhetorical embracement by agencies catering for the wellbeing of affluent groups. In response to these perceived injustices, global initiatives have been undertaken, albeit primarily at a declarative level, to address this disparity. The New Urban Agenda, endorsed at the 2016 Habitat III Conference of the United Nations, emphasizes the pivotal role of public spaces in fostering sustainable cities that embody qualities such as inclusivity, connectivity, safety, and accessibility—fundamental components of urban justice (UN Habitat, 2016). The agenda aligns with the notion that quality public spaces are indispensable for enhancing the overall quality of life for individuals from diverse backgrounds. These environments not only cultivate a communal atmosphere but also strengthen the local economy while encouraging interactions that surpass social, cultural, and political barriers, leading to citizens well-being (Andersson, 2016).

In this dialogue, public space emerges as a pivotal focal point—a potential catalyst for a more equitable and just urban transformation. Public spaces, by their nature, possess the capacity to embrace layers of political, economic, and cultural expressions, providing platforms for diverse urban groups to articulate and assert their rights within the urban fabric. Beyond this, public spaces serve as dynamic arenas where different urban actors can engage in encounters, negotiations, and interactions, facilitating a dialogue that could lead to more inclusive and fair urban development. They hold the potential not only to foster social cohesion but also to contribute to the fair allocation of wealth, resources, benefits, and opportunities. In the ever-evolving economic, political, and social reality, there is an urgent call for a critical re-evaluation of public space as not merely a passive backdrop but as a dynamic and transformative facilitator of urban justice while acknowledging the wide spectrum of urban injustices that currently can be mapped in contemporary public space worldwide.

"Mapping Urban Injustices in Public Space: Challenges and Opportunities" is a nuanced exploration into the complex dynamics that shape contemporary cities, particularly focusing on the inequalities and injustices manifesting within public spaces. The special issue seeks to address the intricate question of how urban (in)justices can be effectively mapped. This thematic inquiry navigates the multifaceted challenges inherent in identifying and understanding urban injustices, while concurrently unveiling the opportunities that arise from employing diverse mapping strategies. The challenges embedded in mapping urban injustices within public spaces are manifold. Urban environments are intricate ecosystems influenced by historical, social, economic, and cultural factors, making the identification and representation of injustices a complex endeavour. The multifaceted nature of these injustices, spanning racialized, class-based, social, religious, national, ethnic, gendered, and other dimensions, further adds layers of complexity to the mapping process. Additionally, the rapid pace of urban development and the dynamic nature of social structures necessitate methodologies that are responsive, adaptive, and capable of capturing evolving injustices.

However, within these challenges lie significant opportunities: The act of mapping itself becomes a powerful tool for raising awareness and advocating for change. By visualizing injustices, mapping brings visibility to marginalized communities, fostering a shared understanding of the issues at hand. It becomes a form of civic engagement that empowers communities and informs policymakers, thereby initiating conversations

around the need for more inclusive, radically emancipatory, and democratic, and indeed more just urban policies. Moreover, mapping urban injustices in public spaces offers an opportunity for intercontextual and intersectional research. It encourages a deep and thoughtful examination of various forms of injustices, recognizing their interconnectedness and exploring how they intersect and impact specific urban environments. This intersectional approach enhances the depth of analysis and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play when seeking to understanding the present urban experience as a catalyst of the contemporary human condition.

The special issue aims to showcase practical and case-study-based mapping experiences, offering a tangible exploration of challenges faced and lessons learned in mapping urban injustices. By presenting empirical case studies, critical thought, and real-world applications, too, the contributors aim at bridging the gap between theoretical debates and actionable strategies for addressing urban injustices by using multiple and combined research methods. "Mapping Urban Injustices in Public Space: Challenges and Opportunities" serves as an important intellectual space where scholars, practitioners, and policymakers can delve into the complexities of urban inequalities. Through thoughtful analysis and practical insights, the issue contributes to the ongoing discourse on how mapping can be a transformative force in fostering more just, inclusive, and first and foremost more democratic and equitable cities.

The articles in this issue offer an understanding of these viewpoints. The range in city sizes and path dependencies, and the unique historical and contextual elements contribute to a detailed contextual and intercontextual exploration of the topics discussed.

Public space's potential role in fostering encounters, negotiations, and interactions between urban actors, facilitating a dialogue that could lead to more inclusive and fair urban development lies at the heart of the first paper "Mapping Everyday Public Spaces in Urban Neighbourhoods. The Case of Limassol". The paper focuses on the city of Limassol, Cyprus emphasizing the often-overlooked significance of peripheral and neighbourhood public spaces in contrast to well-recognized central public spaces. While central areas are traditionally considered vital for cultural and social interactions, the paper argues that neighbourhood spaces, where daily life unfolds, are equally crucial. It aims to enhance understanding of the mechanisms shaping neighbourhood public spaces, stressing the importance of considering various factors and perspectives in their analysis. Employing relational theories, the paper explores the links between the physical and social aspects of three residential public spaces in Limassol, examining how the boundaries of public space are negotiated. Spatial analysis and social science methods are used to reveal the essential role these spaces play in fostering interactions and bridging societal divides in multicultural cities. Given the coexistence of various identities, languages, religions, and cultures, tensions and hostilities may as well arise as new points of contact, respect, and collaboration. The paper contends that the potential for interaction and meetings in these public spaces is essential for fostering encounters in the daily lives of individuals, thereby encouraging tolerance and a sense of belonging in diverse urban environments. The paper proposes that acknowledging the nuanced 'significance' of these places, influenced by local practices and behaviours, is pivotal for fostering effective urban planning and robust community development.

In a similar line of research, the second paper "Between Alienation and Revolution. Incursions into Collectives of Soirees in Metropolitan Public Spaces in Belo Horizonte, Brazil" explores the dynamics between alienation and revolution, through the realm of collective gatherings in metropolitan public spaces in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Central to the analysis is the exploration of the role of everyday life, emphasizing the perpetual oscillation between routine and innovation, a concept elucidated by Lefebvre (2014) and Knierbein (2023). These collectives, formed by young residents proud of their peripheral identity, go beyond mere social gatherings—they represent a distinct form of political action. Within the evolving social and symbolic landscape of the peripheries, daily life takes on a transformative quality, catalysed by broader social changes. The ethnographic study employs a nuanced lens to unravel the intricate fusion of poetry, performance, and the utilization of public spaces within these gatherings. Essentially, these collectives serve as dynamic expressions of everyday resistance. Their activities, from poetic expressions to unique bodily movements and innovative organizational methods, contribute to the creation of new public spheres. In the midst of these soirees, a collaborative process of critical and political reflections unfolds, giving rise to a creative and liberating capacity that defines the essence of these gatherings. The paper sheds light on how these unique social spaces become arenas for the emergence of innovative forms of expression, resistance, and collective empowerment within the context of urban life in Belo Horizonte.

Citizen empowerment is also explored in the third paper of the issue "Participation as a Global Urban Strategy Towards Resilience. A Case of 'Benevolent Urbanism'". The prevailing notion in academic discourse that citizen participation in public space production is integral for democratic governance and justice is addressed here. While citizen involvement in urban planning has gained prominence, the paper focuses on its conceptualization in the context of the Rockefeller Foundation's "100 Resilient Cities" initiative. The emergence of philanthropic foundations as key players in Greek urban development, particularly during austerity politics, is explored and critically evaluated. Specific public space projects funded during the crisis reveal hegemonic discourses endorsed by these foundations. The paper then critiques the Rockefeller Foundation's initiative and the resilience strategies adopted in Athens and Thessaloniki. Despite inclusive rhetoric, the paper argues that participation, instigated by an international foundation and facilitated by global consultants, does not organically emerge from local planning processes. The analysis suggests that within this global initiative, participation becomes a matter of techno-managerial "know-how," thereby raising crucial questions about its limited potential to address socio-environmental injustices and contribute to democracy.

Finally, the concept of public space pedagogy emerges in both the fourth and the fourth paper, respectively "Discovering and Mapping Aspects of Spatial Publicness. Observations from an Undergraduate Architecture Studio in Cyprus" and "Lived Urban Form. Using Urban Morphology to Explore Social Dimensions of Urban Space", as a transformative thread, offering new frameworks for understanding (un)just urban morphologies in the realms of urban research, planning, architectural theory, and praxis. Such a pedagogical approach challenges conventional perspectives and encourages a more nuanced examination of the complex interplay between justice and urban form.

Within the undergraduate architecture studio at the University of Cyprus (fourth paper), the focus revolves around two pivotal questions: "What fundamental design elements contribute to the success of public spaces, and how are they consciously incorporated

into the design process?" This paper endeavours to explore the concept of spatial publicness, translating observations from its inquiries into tangible design strategies and tools. The core design aspects identified in this exploration have served as the foundation for recent design briefs, rigorously tested within the architectural studio's 2nd-year coursework. Simultaneously, these aspects have been transposed into transferable values, including diagnostic and synthetic tools suitable for an undergraduate architectural studio setting. This ongoing approach, seamlessly integrated into the studio context, employs case studies derived from the students' work output. The analysis of these case studies aims to yield conclusions that guide the pedagogical approach, facilitating an iterative and evolving exploration of effective design principles for public spaces.

The fifth paper argues that the urban configuration functions as both a political and social arena, shaped by the complex interplay between lived space and the actors driving the transformative processes within urban space. Traditional studies of urban form have grappled with the intricate task of understanding a city's intricacies by closely examining its physical characteristics. In response to a growing concern about the nuanced processes and tensions inherent in the dynamics of social and cultural change, this paper explores how various urban morphological approaches conceptualize, analyse, and navigate the intricate relationship between social space and urban form. By drawing upon insights from the Erasmus+ project, Emerging Perspectives on Urban Morphologies (EPUM), this study investigates how diverse approaches interpret the dimensions of lived space inscribed within the urban form. Furthermore, it engages in debates on how a multidisciplinary, open educational approach can challenge normative notions surrounding the agents, practices, and processes involved in producing lived spaces. This expanded perspective shifts the study of urban form beyond a singular focus on a static object, embracing the dynamic processes and tensions spanning changing scales. It also considers the material expressions of urban populations and their multifaceted political, economic, and cultural practices, all of which contribute to the ongoing production of the built environment.

Important key themes are highlighted in this special issue. Everyday Practices and Locality emerge as a key themes in mapping urban (in)justices in public space. The exploration of neighbourhood public spaces in Limassol emphasizes the transformative potential of everyday practices. It recognizes that interactions in these spaces contribute to a sense of belonging and tolerance. In Belo Horizonte, the paper addresses the role of collective gatherings in reshaping a broken everyday life in peripheral areas. These gatherings become arenas for creative expression and political reflection, challenging traditional notions of public space use and redefining new forms of creative and prosaic protest by marginalized subjects. The urban configuration study further acknowledges the importance of everyday practices in shaping transformative processes within urban spaces. Local practices and actions, whether in Limassol, Belo Horizonte, or beyond, emerge as critical factors in understanding the nuanced significance of public spaces.

Inter- and first and foremost transdisciplinary collaboration also emerge as key themes, with the papers highlighting the necessity of integrating insights from various knowledge fields and knowing subjects to address the multifaceted nature of urban challenges. The call for a collaborative approach extends beyond academic research to encompass urban design, policy formulation, NGOs, NPOS, artists activists and other forms of community engagement. The papers collectively advocate for a more differentiated understanding of urban phenomena that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

All papers discuss social justice and related intersectional research paths as a key topic of this issue. The discussion of injustices spans multiple dimensions, addressing not only the spatial but also social, racial, and economic aspects. The coexistence of various identities and cultures, emphasizing the potential for tensions and hostilities as well as for care and friendship is acknowledged in Limassol. The examination of 'just' in present-day politics highlights the ambiguity of the term, encompassing moral and ideological dimensions. It brings attention to the rise of injustices, particularly in Europe, driven by neoliberal policies and austerity politics. The critique of the Rockefeller Foundation's initiative and resilience strategies underscores the need to consider socio-environmental injustices within the discourse on fake urban participation. These papers collectively advocate for an intersectional understanding of urban inequalities, urging a comprehensive approach that considers diverse social, cultural, and political dimensions in the pursuit of social justice.

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