

Mapping Everyday Public Spaces in Urban Neighbourhoods.

The Case of Limassol

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Abstract

Central public spaces in cities have always played an important role in urban experience, and continue to have a city-wide significance, often described as the meeting spaces of cultures, politics, social and individual trajectories. Peripheral and/or neighbourhood public spaces, where the everyday life of citizens unfolds, rarely enjoy any of this significance and may not receive the attention needed from the main stakeholders involved. Many researchers have highlighted the significance of these public spaces in cities, pointing out that the patterns of everyday life in residential neighbourhoods – whether it is the chance encounters in the local market or conversations in the local square – are the essential material of society and may well have integrative social functions, of an individual or collective initiative.

This paper aims at an empirical contribution to a better understanding of the synthesizing mechanisms, which shape public spaces in cities' neighbourhoods, by addressing the variety of factors involved and their relations and by highlighting the need for manifold perspectives on the localized 'meaning' of places, constructed, and shaped by local practices and behaviours. Drawing on the theoretical framework of relational theories, the paper sets out to explore the links between the physical sphere and the social sphere of three different residential public spaces in the city of Limassol, critically exploring the ways in which the boundaries of public space are challenged and negotiated. Both spatial analysis and social sciences methods are employed to map and unveil the essential role residential public spaces play, in bringing together what society divides in contemporary, multicultural cities, where multiplicities of identities, languages, religions and cultures may naturally give rise to tensions and even hostilities. The potential for interaction and meetings between different people backgrounds in the public realm is shown to be a crucial prerequisite for shaping encounters during their everyday life, encouraging tolerance and a feeling of belonging.

Keywords: Limassol, neighbourhood public space, everyday practices, space syntax

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Cities, Public Space and Public Life

Public spaces in cities have long been a focal point of study across a multitude of academic disciplines. They have played an essential role in shaping the social and spatial fabric of urban settlements. Drawing from multidisciplinary perspectives, this paper delves into the multifaceted nature of public spaces, encompassing their historical, cultural, spatial and social significance, highlighting their crucial role in fostering social interactions and community engagement (Madanipour, 2004, 2010). Public space is viewed in this paper as a space for the people, a space of encounter and social engagement, a space that encompasses historical, cultural, and social processes, providing opportunities for meeting, fostering the capacity to live together among strangers in urban environments (Gehl, 2011).

However, this role is being redefined by contemporary dynamics, including commercialization, privatization, and urban sprawl, which raise questions about the relevance and accessibility of public spaces in modern urban life. Contemporary urban places have recently been associated with issues of alienation, fragmentation, and urban segregation, among others, that are driven by economic, technological, cultural, and political dynamics that have emerged since the 1980s. Saskia Sassen's observations on the crisis of public spaces underscore the extent to which commercialization and privatization have restricted the democratic potential of these spaces (Sassen 2008). This transformation mirrors wider societal realities, including power imbalances and social exclusion (Carmona, 2010). Such disparities often manifest in tensions, conflicts, segregation, and unequal patterns of development in the urban landscape. These factors influence the way public spaces are designed, used, and managed in different parts of the city (central, peripheral, neighbourhood), leading to significant implications for everyday urban life.

In addition, central public spaces have always been characterized by an essential role in the urban structure of the cities, and continue to have a city-wide significance, as they are regarded as a vehicle for facilitating social interactions, exchanges of thoughts, public discourses and political expressions. The plazas and central squares and parks in contemporary cities, are spaces of large investments, aiming to serve the needs of the market, making cities attractive for firms to relocate to and for tourists to visit. Public spaces in the historic cores of cities usually gather a diversity of public uses, and often act as the main arenas of public life, whereas residential areas often experience an "absence" of lively public spaces at the scale of the neighbourhood, as a result of the commodification and privatization of public space or as a consequence of the great pressure for expansion as the immense flows of immigration many times leads to unplanned urban patterns (Madanipour, 2004). Peripheral and neighbourhood public spaces lack the same significance as central public spaces and often receive less attention from local authorities.

However, it is increasingly acknowledged that neighbourhoods, often overlooked in favour of historic cores, hold equal importance in any city. Neighbourhood public spaces are vital contributors to everyday urban life and are essential for both the city's urban structure and its residents' well-being. These spaces come in various sizes, from residential streets to city squares, and play a fundamental role in fostering community engagement and a sense of belonging (Gehl, 2011). Well-provisioned, efficiently managed, and properly maintained public spaces are crucial for residents, as they provide meeting points and encourage interactions, thus nurturing emotional connections to both the

neighbourhood and the city as well as opportunities for community engagement, a sense of ownership, belonging, and overall well-being. This is particularly crucial in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where residents rely on public spaces to connect, enhance their quality of life, and create a positive neighbourhood image.

In such neighbourhoods, the neglect of public spaces often drives residents to seek alternative forms of social life. Citizens take the initiative to create bottom-up, unofficial processes like temporary structures, activities, and events within underutilized formal public spaces or vacant urban areas. So, despite the challenges discussed above, including commercialization and privatization, these spaces continue to play a crucial role in promoting residents' well-being and community development, often through grassroots initiatives that help safeguard the right to public space and advance social justice. As Mitchell rightly emphasizes, "struggle is the only way that the right to public space can be maintained and the only way that social justice can be advanced" (2003, p. 5).

Acknowledging the importance of neighborhood public spaces, this paper has a twofold objective. Firstly, it seeks to enhance the understanding of the intricate mechanisms responsible for shaping public spaces within urban neighborhoods. This involves delving into the multitude of factors at play and examining how they interact with one another. By doing so, the paper endeavors to unravel the intricate web of forces that influence the character and function of these spaces within neighborhoods.

Secondly, it emphasizes the importance of adopting a diverse range of perspectives when exploring these public spaces. In essence, it underscores the need to recognize that the significance of a place is not a fixed or universal concept but is instead a complex product of the local practices, behaviors, and interactions that take place within it. Public spaces take on unique and evolving meanings within specific neighborhoods due to the distinctive ways they are utilized, experienced, and valued by their local residents. This paper aims to shed light on the dynamic and context-dependent nature of these spaces, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of how they are constructed and shaped by the people who inhabit and use them.

Relational Perspectives on Public Space

A relational perspective that can shed light on the intricate dynamics of public spaces in urban neighbourhoods is discussed in this section. The past decade has witnessed significant changes in the utilization of public spaces, involving diverse stakeholders, contextual adaptations, and innovative supply mechanisms to meet collective needs. However, the mechanisms governing the provision and evolution of public spaces remain inadequately understood. This study aims at an empirical contribution grounded in a relational perspective, seeking to elucidate the interplay of factors influencing the creation, utilization, and transformation of neighbourhood public spaces. The comprehension of these mechanisms will potentially contribute to the enhancement of the quality of public life in urban neighbourhoods.

The theoretical underpinnings relevant to this study, posit an interdependent relationship between the physical structure of the city and its societal fabric. These theories emphasize that society and space are inherently linked and mutually influential. Notable contributions by scholars such as Hillier & Vaughan, (2007); Lefebvre, (1991); Legeby, (2010); Tornaghi & Knierbein (2015), underscore the intrinsic connection between urban form and social dynamics.

Examples of the authors' own historical research into the social and cultural change in the city of Nicosia through time, revealed that the relations between these social and spatial trends may be more complex than was envisaged in the old Chicago School idea, according to which social relations can be read through their spatial attributes; the evolution of a city's spatial structure is only one component in the processes which shape the city as a social entity (Charalambous et al, 2015). Once a variety of groups, actors and processes are taken into account, the analysis still presents significant gaps in knowledge, which can be filled if greater efforts are made to widen the variety of social science approaches used in conjunction with a morphological approach. A sound grasp of the city' morphological history within its broader social context forms an important aspect of the historical concern to reconstruct the communal life of the past. When analysing the historical evolution or periods of urban form, urban theorists often tend to focus on physical aspects and actors with certain leverage on planning decisions, while sociologists may tend to highlight the impact of group formations on the city and the significance of everyday use and routine social activities in shaping the identity of a city. In this paper, we are interested in developing methods that link these two components: the physical and the human. Building on previous work, this paper maintains that space syntax, being a relational tool which identifies the lived relationality not just in terms of spatial relations but also in its practical applications (linking social phenomena to spatial characteristics) could engage with relational theories, such as the assemblage theory as developed by DeLanda (2006), opening up avenues for further methodological advances and development of its hermeneutic potentials.

More specifically, the theoretical underpinnings of assemblage theory, and space syntax theory inform the methodological framework of this paper. Assemblage theory, derived from Deleuzian philosophy, emphasizes that a city is a singular entity composed of diverse physical and social elements (De Landa 2006, 2016). Cities are viewed as a nexus of social assemblages at varying scales, with each scale offering a legitimate object of study. Assemblages comprise heterogeneous elements, which interact to generate cities and their properties, evolving through territorialization and deterritorialization processes. Space syntax theory, developed by Hillier and Hanson, examines spatial layouts and their connection to social activities, such as movement and social activities (Hillier and Hanson 1980). This theory underscores that urban space is inextricably linked to social practices and that spatial configuration plays an integral role in the experiences of individuals within space.

In line with these theoretical perspectives, the study embraces a relational interpretation of public space as an entity shaped by, and simultaneously shaping, social, economic, and political relationships. This approach challenges static spatial conceptions and introduces a dynamic portrayal of public space, emphasizing its co-creation through socio-temporal processes, and the spatial context. A conceptualization of public space from a relational perspective portrays it as multi-layered, fluid, dynamic, and continually evolving. Relational approaches suggest that space *"can only be explained by its social, political and cultural context and by the relations between people and objects, both at a given moment in time and in the course of history"* (Tornaghi & Knierbein, 2015, p. 4).

Drawing upon these theoretical foundations, this paper aims to address the methodological implications and to elucidate the mechanisms underpinning the creation, utilization, and development of neighbourhood public spaces in the city of Limassol,

Cyprus, which has undergone significant social, economic, and political transformations that have impacted its urban form and public spaces (Severis 2006).

Mapping Neighbourhood Public Spaces- a Relational Methodology

To this end, a methodology is developed that proposes the study of the interrelation between a number of key parameters. These include the study of the spatial configuration and physical attributes of public spaces, such as their topography, infrastructure, and accessibility; the part-whole relations analysing the interplay between different scales and components in the city's urban structure; the everyday practices to understand the varying roles of individuals and social groups in public space through their daily activities and interactions as well as the users' perceptions; the stakeholders relations through mapping of the networks of actors influencing public space development. The analytical tools utilised include:

Spatial configuration and physical characteristics:

- Axial Map Analysis: Examining connectivity and accessibility;
- Visual Connectivity: Assessing visibility potential from various points;
- Mapping Land Uses: Identifying activities and facilities, understanding the development of the area and its users. Utilizing walking surveys and land use maps for data collection;
- Recording Physical Characteristics: Documenting lighting, shading, furniture, and more;
- Observation and Photography: Capturing infrastructure and physical attributes;

The part-whole relations - interplay between different scales and components in the city's urban structure:

- Social and demographic data (census)
- Integration of spatial (space syntax axial analysis and land use mapping) and social data (census data, historical archive information, primary and secondary sources) to understand the impact of demographic, economic, and cultural changes on the city as a whole and on local areas and public spaces.

Everyday Practices (Users' Perception - Actual Use of Space):

- Questionnaires to gain insights into the perceptions and behaviours of individuals regarding public space use
- Observations (snapshots) to identify and map movement, activities, and interactions within public spaces.

Actors/Stakeholders:

- Mapping of the network of actors involved in the production, use, and development of public spaces through interviews, study of relevant sources to assess the roles of local authorities, policy makers, and decision-making bodies.

This comprehensive methodology offers a robust framework for delving into the multifaceted nature of public spaces within urban neighbourhoods, enabling a thorough understanding of both their spatial and social dimensions. The methodology is designed to facilitate a nuanced analysis, encompassing the physical and social characteristics, as well as the dynamic interactions among various actors and users, which collectively contribute to the evolution and shaping of public spaces. The proposed methodology is applied to three distinct case studies of urban neighbourhoods in the city of Limassol and their respective public spaces.

Limassol neighbourhoods: the case studies

A comprehensive understanding of the complex mechanisms that have an impact on the creation and evolution of selected public spaces in Limassol is attempted through an in-depth analysis of three neighbourhoods, each representing different spatial, historical and social characteristics. The choice of these neighbourhoods is informed by a range of criteria, including their social demographics, historical developmental timelines, noteworthy social occurrences, land use patterns, and spatial configuration.



Figure 1. The case studies. Source: Authors.

The objective is to encompass a broad spectrum of socio-economic and physical characteristics, presenting a comprehensive view of diverse urban neighbourhoods and the public spaces associated with them. This approach allows valuable insights into the intricate relationship between urban development and the social fabric of these neighbourhoods. More specifically, the chosen areas consist of a neighbourhood located

in Potamos Germasogeias under the jurisdiction of the Germasogeias Municipality, a neighbourhood known as Arnaout or Arnaoutgeitonia within the Limassol Municipality, and Apostolos Loukas, a neighbourhood situated in the Agios Athanasios Municipality as designated by the Department of Lands and Surveys (see Figure 1).

The first empirical study is conducted in the municipality of Germasogeia, situated along the city's coastal area, that has experienced significant and abrupt growth following the war in Cyprus in 1974. This locality has evolved into a prosperous tourist and residential destination, with a predominantly foreign population. In contrast, Arnaout is a deprived neighbourhood nestled in the historic core of the city, with its development dating back to the 19th century. It holds a unique historical significance as it was originally a Turkish-Cypriot neighbourhood, and post-war, Greek-Cypriot refugees from northern Cyprus exchanged their homes with Turkish-Cypriots. The third area studied is Apostolos Loukas, which was developed as refugees' settlements to house the Greek-Cypriot refugees following the 1974 war. Although this neighbourhood is located above a highway and surrounded by recently developed affluent areas, it has retained its status as a less affluent suburban region, mainly inhabited by elderly residents.

Aspect	Municipality of Germasogeia (Potamos Germasogeias)	Municipality of Limassol (Arnaout)	Municipality of Agios Athanasios (Apostolos Loukas)
Location	coastal area	old city	suburban area
Development	1960 and mainly after 1974	19th century	rapid expansion after 1974
Population	Cypriots and big proportion of foreigners	Greek Cypriots, Moslem, Roma	Greek Cypriots - refugees (locals)
Land Uses	tourist and residential zone	industrial and residential zone	residential zone
Character	beneficial area wealthy neighborhood	deprived area poor neighborhood conflict zone	poor area
Social Classes	Upper Class	Lower Class	Lower Class
Proportion of Unemployed	0% to 7.5%	14% to 18%	10% to 14%
Main type of buildings	apartment blocks	single house	row houses
Main Occupancy Status	occupied and used as usual residence high proportion of dwelling reserved for seasonal/secondary use and of vacant dwelling	occupied and used as usual residence	occupied and used as usual residence
Type of families nucleus	Married Couple Families	Married Couple Families and a high proportion of Lone Mother Families	Married Couple Families and a high proportion of Lone Mother Families
Main Ages (Mean Age)	25 - 39 (35.67)	25 - 29 and 50-54 and 80+ (43.60)	25-49 and 60 - 80+ (47.18)
Public Spaces	a coastal big linear public space (Dasoudi) and other smaller public spaces	a part of a linear park, a public park and a public square	a big number of small public spaces
Global Scale	main arteries - medium integration other areas - not integrated	main arteries - medium integration other areas - medium integration	main arteries - other areas - some integrated some not
Local Scale	main arteries - integrated other areas - medium integration	main arteries - integrated other areas - integrated	main arteries - integrated other areas - not integrated

Table 1. The main characteristics of the three case study areas. Source: Authors.

Table 1 provides an overview of the characteristics of each urban neighbourhood. These areas have been selected as they represent diverse urban contexts in terms of the

proportion of non-Cypriot residents, unemployment rates, and the social class of their population as well as in terms of their spatial configuration within the city of Limassol. These areas, along with their respective public spaces, have evolved within distinct social contexts, resulting in variations in social dynamics and spatial attributes. The multifaceted factors contributing to the creation of public life and public spaces within these distinct socio-spatial contexts are explored aiming to shed light on essential aspects concerning their generation and development. Table 2 provides an overview of the key factors identified in each case study, based on the methodology developed.

	Public Space		
	Germasogeia	Arnaoutogeitonia	Apostolos Loukas
Physical Characteristics	Ps1 - public park - clean - trees - good infrastructure Users visit it because: Near their house and good infrastructure Ps2 - abandoned Ps3 - public park - clean - some infrastructure Users visit it because: Near their house Ps4 - linear park - clean - infrastructure - trees and beach Users visit it because: Near their house, its quiet and for the activities	Ps1 - public park and kiosk - unclean - trees - infrastructure - vandalism Users visit it because: Near their house and its quiet Ps2 - public park - unclean - vandalism - infrastructure Users visit it because: Near their house and in central position Ps3 - linear park - sometimes unclean - some infrastructure Users visit it because: Near their house and its quiet and for the activities	Ps1 - public park and monument - clean - some infrastructure - vandalism Ps2 - public park - unclean - vandalism - infrastructure Ps3 - public park - sometimes unclean - some infrastructure Users visit it because: Near their house
Part - Whole	global scale (not integrated except PS4) local scale (integrated) main and secondary roads surround the public spaces	integrated local and global scale main roads near the public spaces	global scale (not integrated) local scale (medium integration) pathways surround the public spaces
Process - Time	Ps1 - during afternoon (25 - 44 age) Ps2 - no users Ps3 - during afternoon (25-34 age) Ps4 - all the hours but most during mornings and afternoons (all ages and ethnicities)	Ps1 - during all the hours especially the weekends (people over 55) Ps2 - during afternoon (people under 18) Ps3 - during afternoon and night more users (all ethnicities and ages)	Ps1 - during afternoon (people over 55 and under 18) Ps2 - during afternoon and night (people under 18) Ps3 - during morning and afternoon (people over 55)
Global - Local Tendencies	Residents: Cypriots and many foreigners Upper Class Mean age (35.67) Coastal residential and tourist area	Residents: Cypriots refugees, Roma and Moslem Lower Class Mean age (43.60) Old City	Residents: Cypriots refugees Lower Class Mean age (47.18) Suburban area
Actors Stakeholders	Involvement of the municipality Absence of the residents in the production or reproduction of the public spaces	Some involvement of the municipality Some involvement of the residents	Some involvement of the municipality Intense involvement of the residents
Everyday Practices	- Adding of toys in Ps1 - Sometimes vandalism	- Ps1 - Greek Cypriots (organization of events, cleaning) in the past planting, and events by Turkish Cypriots) - Ps2 - Turkish Cypriots (organization of events) - Vandalization	- Ps1 and Ps2 Greek Cypriots (taking fruits from the trees, planting, cleaning) - Ps3 put flower pots, plant trees and water the greenery (with private water) - Vandalization

Table 2 – Characteristics of the public spaces in the case studies. Source: Authors.

The Germasogeia area stands out as the most affluent municipality in the city, boasting a significant population of foreign residents. In comparison to the other two neighbourhoods studied, it is well-integrated at the local scale, but not at the global scale, with the exception of the linear park of Dasoudi (Public Space 4, as shown in Figure 2). Notably, those public spaces seamlessly integrated into the city exhibited higher levels of activity and better maintenance. Interviews indicated that the municipality prioritizes the refurbishment of these particular spaces, while others are earmarked for restoration at a later stage. The municipality plays a significant role in the upkeep of public spaces, which residents actively use for various daily activities, including playing and relaxation, as revealed through interviews, questionnaires, and snapshots. Apart from some citizens' own additions of playground games to Public Space 1, no grassroots initiatives were observed.

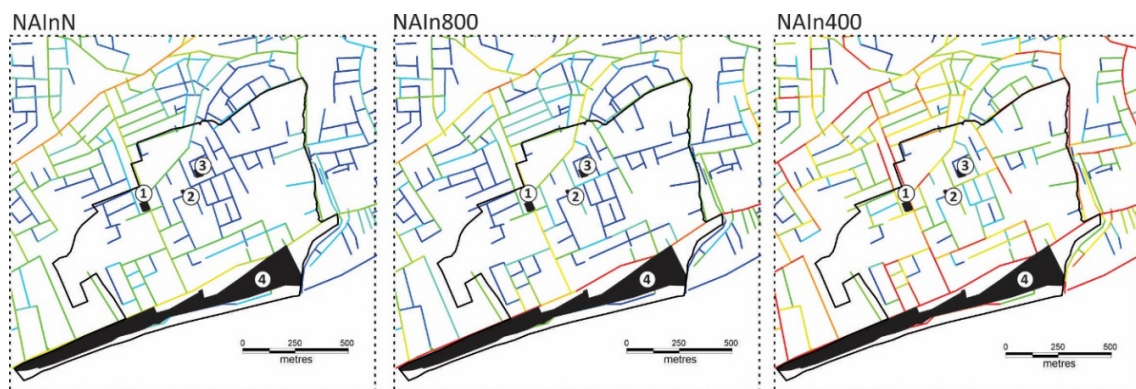


Figure 2. Integration analysis of a neighbourhood in Potamos Germasogeias (Dasoudi).
Source: Authors.

With the exception of Public Space 2, which is located on a secondary street (as depicted in Figure 3), all public spaces are characterized by their high maintenance standards. The linear park of Dasoudi caters to a diverse range of age groups (above 25) and ethnic backgrounds at all hours. Moreover, these public spaces are frequented by individuals from various ethnicities, primarily EU citizens, non-EU citizens, and Cypriots. The consistency and interrelated nature of the results contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Germasogeia's public spaces.

In contrast, the Arnaout quarter, which is not as affluent as Germasogeia, predominantly comprises the lower social strata of the Limassol population. While this neighbourhood is integrated both at the global and local scales, possibly due to its strategic location and grid-like planning, the results of the analysis and the responses from questionnaires reveal a significant degree of spatial segregation (Figure 4). Interviews with key municipal stakeholders suggest that the municipality bears responsibility for the maintenance of public spaces. However, questionnaire responses from the residents indicate a lesser degree of municipal involvement in their upkeep. Consequently, residents often take it upon themselves to clean the parks due to their deteriorating condition.

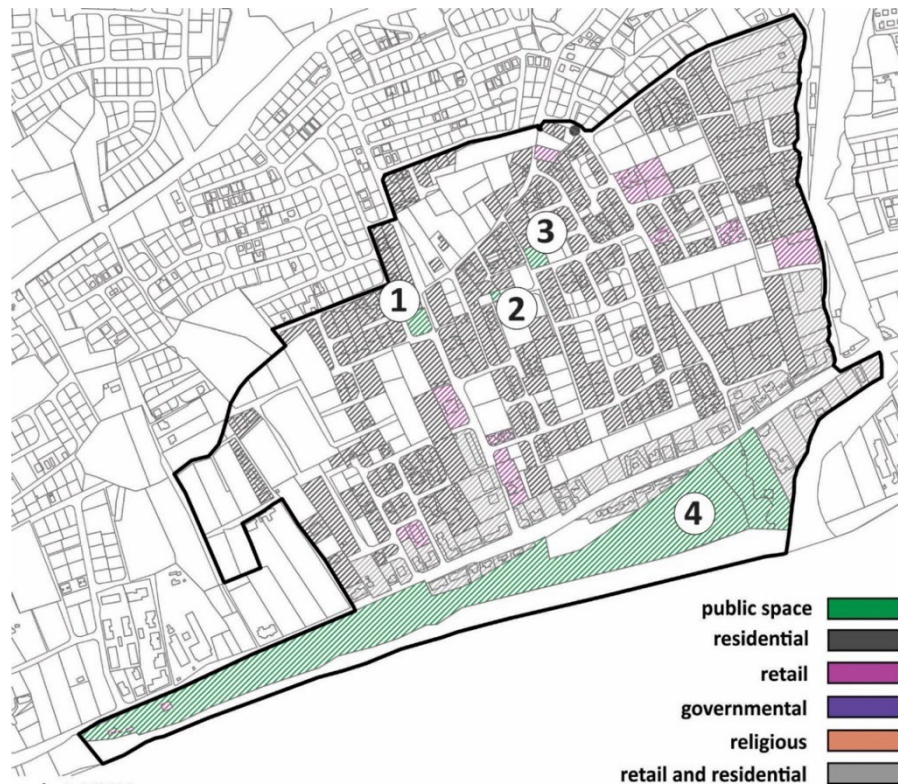


Figure 3. Land uses of a neighbourhood in Potamos Germasogeias, Municipality of Germasogeia.
Source: Authors.

In this neighbourhood, each public space is appropriated by distinct social groups (Figure 5): Public Space 1 primarily serves Greek Cypriot refugees over the age of 55, who share a sentimental attachment to the area. Public Space 2 is predominantly used by young people under 18, while the linear park of Garillis (Public Space 3) is frequented by diverse social groups in terms of age and ethnicity. Additionally, Public Space 1 hosts events organized by Greek Cypriots, whereas the few Turkish Cypriots living in the area usually organize any events in Public Space 2.



Figure 4. Integration analysis of Arnaoutogeitonia, Municipality of Limassol.
Source: Authors.

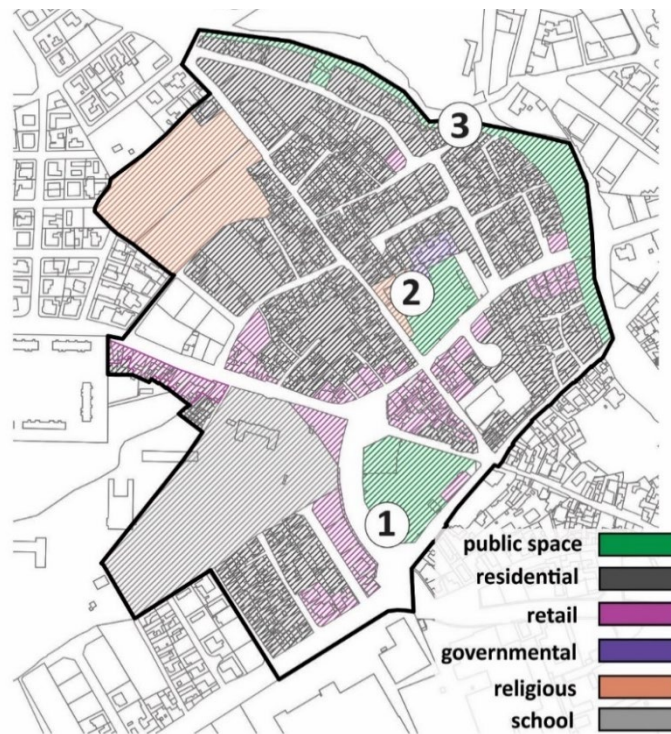


Figure 5. Land uses of Arnaout quarter, Municipality of Limassol. Source: Authors.

Apostolos Loukas, an economically disadvantaged area, is predominantly inhabited by the lower social classes of Limassol's population, and all its residents are Greek Cypriot refugees. This neighbourhood lacks integration both at the global and local urban structure scales (Figure 6). The public spaces in the area are enclosed by pathways that mainly connect to the rear of houses (Figure 7). Despite claims by the municipality regarding their involvement in the maintenance of these public spaces, the questionnaires and photographs paint a different picture: neighbours often take it upon themselves to clean the spaces, water the plants, and collect the fruit from the plants.

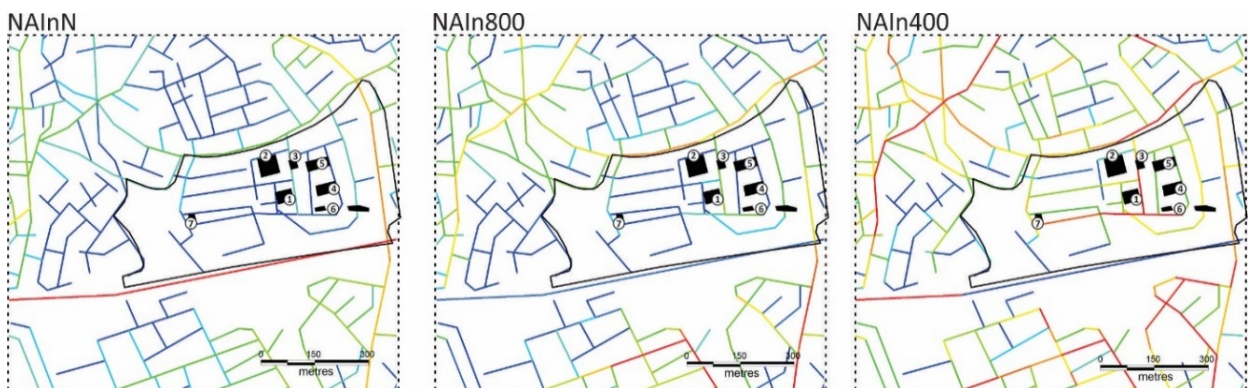


Figure 6. Integration analysis of Apostolos Loukas, Municipality of Agios Athanasios. Source: Authors.

As revealed through interviews, questionnaires, and snapshots, these public spaces typically function as extensions of residents' backyards (Figure 7). Two distinct age groups can be observed in these public spaces: the primary users of Public Spaces 1 and 2 are individuals under 18 years of age and those over 55, whereas elderly individuals predominantly use Public Space 3. Each social group frequents the spaces during specific hours, with young people primarily visiting in the afternoon and at night, while older people tend to use them in the morning and afternoon. Interestingly, while formal stakeholders in the interviews claim that the municipality is greatly involved in the maintenance of these spaces, the evidence from questionnaires, photographs, and snapshots suggests otherwise.

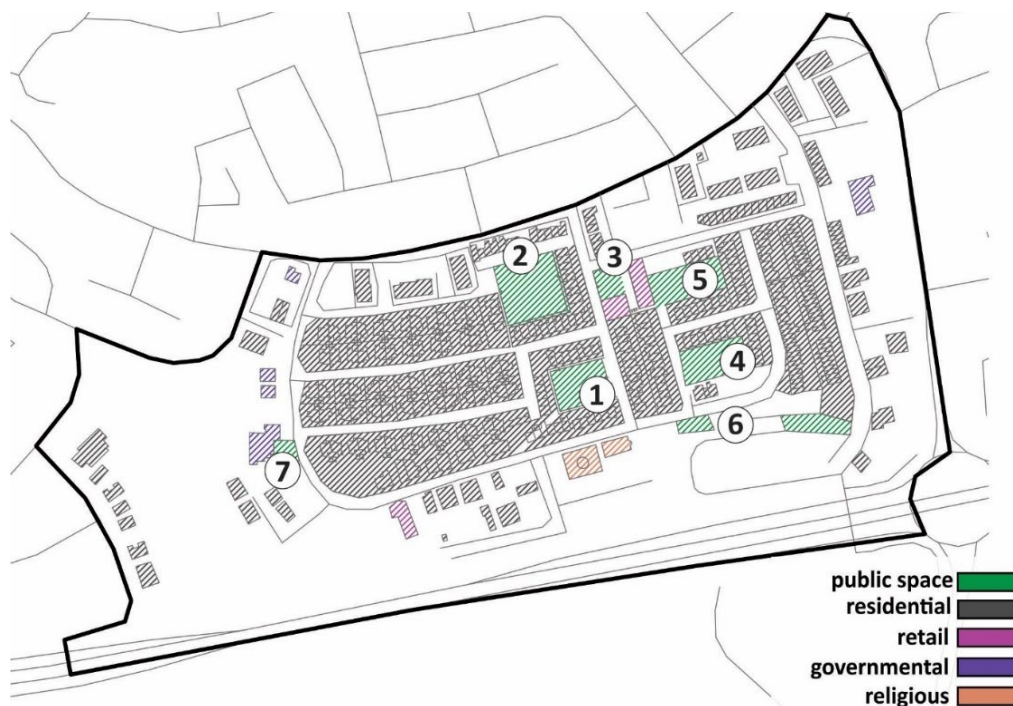


Figure 7. Land uses of Apostolos Loukas, Municipality of Agios Athanasios.
Source: Authors.

Figures 8 and 9 provide an overview of the various types of public spaces in each neighbourhood, shedding light on their physical characteristics and the surrounding land uses, which play a pivotal role in assessing issues related to accessibility and visibility. In Germasogeia, the public spaces are predominantly situated amid main or secondary streets, buildings, and houses. Contrastingly, in the Arnaout neighbourhood, these spaces are positioned along main roads and are surrounded by retail or public buildings and houses. In contrast once again, the public spaces within the Apostolos Loukas area function as enclosed areas nestled within the heart of linear semi-detached houses, resulting in limited visibility and accessibility.

It's worth noting that there are two linear parks in these areas, namely the linear park of Dasoudi in Germasogeia, which is on one side connected to the beach and on the other side to the coastal hotels in the vicinity, and the linear park of Garilli in Arnaout,

directly linked to the street and nearby houses. However, the visibility of the linear park of Dasoudi is obstructed in several areas by the adjacent hotels, whereas the linear park of Garilli remains visible from the street due to its direct connection. In general, as observed in all areas, public spaces are intricately intertwined with their surroundings in diverse ways. These variations can have different effects on the emergence of everyday practices and the stakeholders involved in the production and transformation of these public spaces.

Germasogeia neighborhood



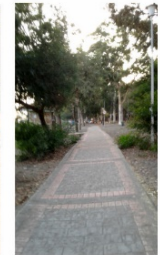
Public Space 1
Arnaout neighborhood



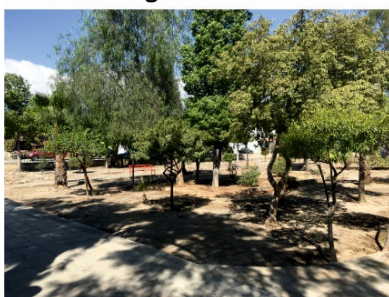
Public Space 2



Public Space 3



Public Space 4



Public Space 1



Public Space 2

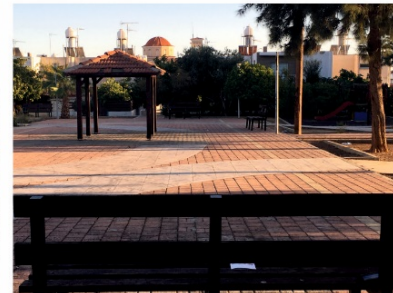


Public Space 3

Apostolos Loukas neighborhood



Public Space 1



Public Space 2



Public Space 3

Figure 8. Photographs of all the public spaces studied. Source: Authors.

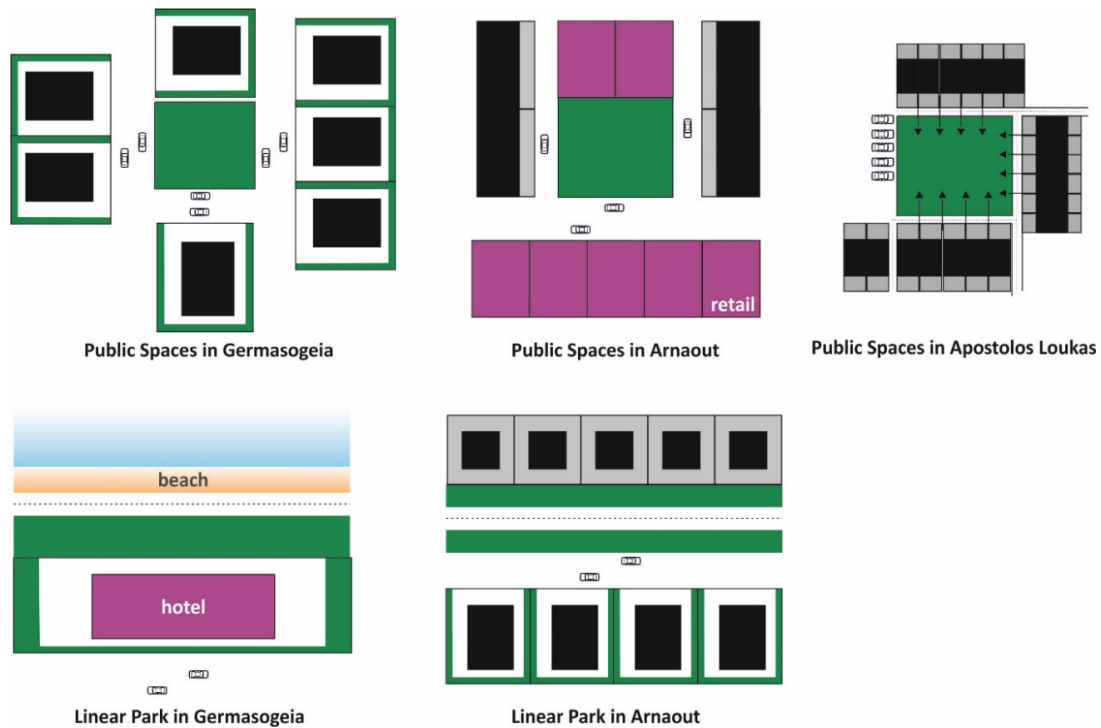


Figure 9. Diagram of the public spaces in the three areas in association with the surrounding land uses. Source: Authors.

In terms of the primary formal and informal stakeholders and actors involved in the production and transformation of these public spaces and their respective roles, it is essential to acknowledge that the formal stakeholders responsible for the construction and maintenance of these public spaces mainly include the State, the Town Planning Department, and the Housing Department. They own title deeds for the majority of these spaces and establish the legal boundaries that shape the urban landscape. Moreover, the maintenance of these spaces falls under the jurisdiction of the local municipalities in each area. While municipalities ostensibly oversee the maintenance of public spaces, in practice, they sometimes do not consistently adhere to maintenance, resulting in local residents from areas such as Arnaout and Apostolos Loukas taking on informal roles in maintaining these spaces through their everyday practices. Informal actors, instrumental in transforming the public spaces in each area, were identified and mapped through questionnaires, snapshots, and photographs. The following graphs illustrate the primary user demographics in each area, considering factors such as age, citizenship, and proximity of their residences to the public space. Notably, Arnaout quarter and Apostolos Loukas neighbourhood feature a mix of elderly and younger users, while Germasogeia quarter primarily attracts a younger and more diverse demographic (Fig. 10). Public spaces 1 and 2 in Arnaout quarter and Apostolos Loukas neighbourhood share a common user profile, with both spaces seeing a combination of younger individuals and seniors occupying them at specific times. Conversely, the two linear pathways, Garillis and Dasoudi (public space 3 in Arnaout and public space 4 in Dasoudi respectively), cater to users of various ages who visit these spaces at different hours and on different days.

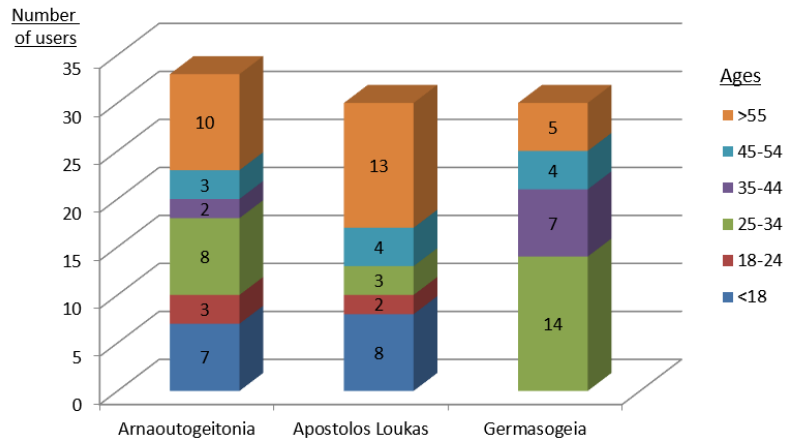


Figure 10. Graph shows the number of users according to their age in the three neighbourhoods. Source: Authors.

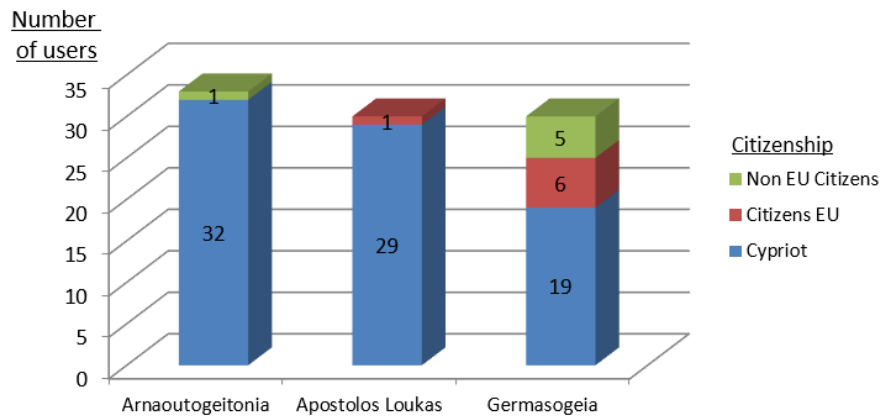


Figure 11. Graph shows the number of users according to their citizenship in the three neighbourhoods. Source: Authors.

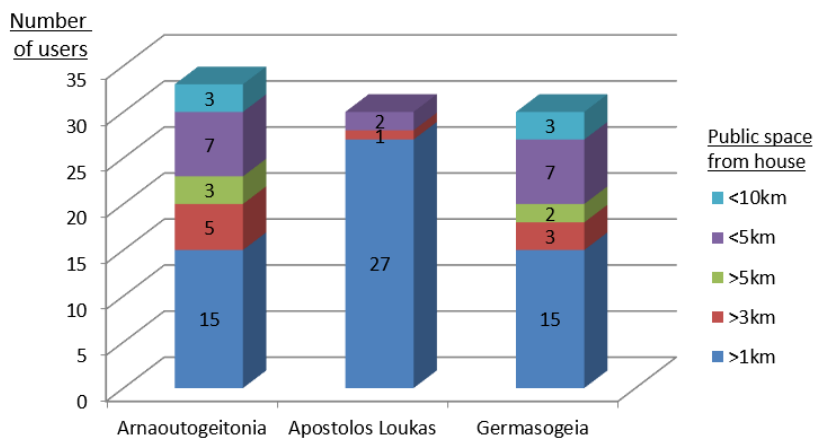


Figure 12. Graph shows the number of users according to how far is their house from the public spaces in the three neighbourhoods. Source: Authors.

Moreover, in Arnaout and Apostolos Loukas quarters, nearly all users are Cypriots, while Germasogeia's quarter attracts a more diverse group of ethnicities (Fig. 11). Notably, the vast majority of users in the public spaces of Apostolos Loukas are residents of the neighbourhood itself, whereas in the other two quarters, these spaces draw users from other parts of the city (Fig. 12).

To sum up, the analysis of the three case studies—Germasogeia, Arnaout, and Apostolos Loukas—reveals significant differences in the spatial configuration and spatial characteristics, the community engagement in maintaining these spaces, and the actual usage of public spaces within each neighbourhood.

Germasogeia:

- Identified as the most affluent municipality, with a considerable foreign resident population.
- Well-integrated spatially at the local scale, but less integrated in the global scale, except for the linear park of Dasoudi.
- Public spaces that are spatially more integrated exhibit higher activity levels and better maintenance.
- Municipality plays a significant role in refurbishment, upkeep, with residents actively using spaces for various daily activities.
- Minimal grassroots initiatives observed, except for citizen additions to playground games.
- The linear park of Dasoudi caters to a diverse range of age groups (above 25) and ethnic backgrounds at all hours.

Arnaout:

- Not as affluent as Germasogeia, populated by lower social classes.
- Area integrated both locally and globally; but different spatial characteristics between public spaces.
- Distinct social groups appropriating each public space.
- Municipality's responsibility for maintenance acknowledged, but residents often take on cleaning and maintenance duties due to neglect.
- Each public space relates to specific social groups, with events organized accordingly. Public Space 1 is primarily used by Greek Cypriot refugees over the age of 55, Public Space 2 is predominantly used by young people under 18, and the linear park of Garillis (public space 3) is frequented by diverse social groups in terms of age and ethnicity.

Apostolos Loukas:

- Economically disadvantaged area, inhabited by lower social classes and Greek Cypriot refugees.
- Lacks integration at both global and local scales, with public spaces enclosed and limited in visibility and accessibility.
- Residents take significant responsibility for maintenance due to municipal neglect, treating public spaces as extensions of their backyards.
- Usage patterns vary by age group, with distinct hours for different demographics. Two distinct age groups observed in public spaces: primary users of public spaces 1 and 2 are individuals under 18 years of age and those over 55, whereas elderly individuals predominantly use public space 3.

Overall, formal stakeholders like the state, the Town Planning Department, and the Housing Department have an important role in the development and maintenance of public spaces, although municipal inconsistencies often lead to informal resident involvement in maintenance. Patterns of use differ across neighbourhoods and relate to socioeconomic factors, spatial configuration (at the local scale and at the global scale of the city) and spatial characteristics. Germasogeia attracts a diverse population, while Arnaout and Apostolos Loukas primarily host local residents, albeit with different age distributions in time. These variations underscore the complex interplay between the spatial dimension, socioeconomic dynamics, stakeholders' involvement, and community engagement possibilities in shaping public spaces.

Everyday Spaces of Encounters: Interpreting Public Space Dynamics

Aiming at addressing the critical need for more comprehensive research on the intricate dynamics between the physical attributes and social dimensions of public spaces this paper discusses discernible patterns in socio-spatial processes in the city of Limassol through the lens of a relational perspective.

The analysis of three case study areas illuminates the intertwined nature of important factors elucidated through relevant theoretical underpinnings, which inform the paper's methodological framework. The factors mapped in the paper encompass temporal aspects, spatial configuration and physical attributes, everyday practices, and stakeholders/actors involved. The intersections and interactions among these factors unveil the synthesizing mechanisms that shape public spaces across diverse socio-spatial urban settings and their impact on daily life, determining the extent to which they foster or hinder a sense of public life.

The connection between the various factors shaping public space is evident in the contrasting characteristics and dynamics observed in the three case study areas of Germasogeia, Arnaout, and Apostolos Loukas. Significant interrelations emerge between the factors explored.

Public spaces maintenance and stakeholder involvement.

In Germasogeia, the municipality plays a significant role in the upkeep of public spaces, resulting in higher activity levels and better maintenance. This underscores the importance of municipal involvement in maintaining public spaces, particularly in more affluent areas. Conversely, in Arnaout, although the municipality is responsible for maintenance, residents claim that they often take on cleaning and maintenance duties due to neglect. This indicates a gap between municipal responsibility and actual maintenance practices, highlighting the importance of effective governance in ensuring the upkeep of public spaces as well as the implications on use. Similarly, in Apostolos Loukas, residents take significant responsibility for maintenance due to municipal neglect. This emphasizes the role of community involvement in maintaining public spaces, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods where municipal resources may be limited.

Everyday use patterns, the role of time and the potential of “blurred” public spaces

In public spaces such as in Apostolos Loukas, not very well integrated locally and globally, with low accessibility and visibility, lack of municipality involvement in

maintaining them, age but also social clustering is observed more frequently. The degree of interaction between age and/or social groups in these public spaces was found to be rather weak and confined to maintenance activities. Different groups in these cases either maintain distinct artificially constructed spatial boundaries within overlapping areas or access distinct spaces through temporal negotiations. The interface between these groups in the public spaces is found to be delineated according to social – rather than spatial – differences and the degree of place sharing seems to shift across time to the groups that claimed and negotiated ownership of each space, sometimes resulting in tensions and hostility. Usage patterns differ according to age groups; younger people tend to prefer the relatively segregated spaces whereas older people tend to occupy spaces where there is more flow of through movement and better visibility.

Public spaces such as Dasouli and Garillis, that are well integrated spatially, well maintained with an active involvement of all stakeholders and an active role of the municipality, contain a diverse population in terms of age, ethnicity, and gender. Group clustering is less frequently observed in these spaces and when it happens it is found to shift in time between the different groups.

Franzen (2009) has referred to spaces such as Dasoudi and Garillis, as ‘blurred spaces’; areas in the city where any lines of segregation are getting blurred. He finds that such spaces are of interest since they have the potential for greater integration over time. He suggests that the outcome – either greater social integration or greater hostility – depends on the stakes involved in maintaining group differences. The analysis of the synthesizing mechanisms shaping such spaces through a relational perspective, provides a test-bed for the understanding of the nature of ‘blurred’ public spaces and their social outcomes as a shared resource.

Empirical findings from the case studies reveal notable distinctions in the level of integration among public spaces, exemplified by the contrasting dynamics observed in spaces like Dasoudi and Garillis compared to those in Apostolos Loukas. The former exhibit a diverse mix of individuals engaging in spontaneous interactions, while the latter are frequented by more homogeneous groups that utilize specific areas as established social hubs. Public spaces such as Dasoudi and Garrilis could be seen as fields of maximal encounter between the maximum number of potential individuals; the more a space is integrated and diverse, the more potential it offers for inter-group connections; the more a space is segregated and uniform, the more limited and specific are the possibilities of connecting to a member of a contrasting group such as in the cases of Apostolos Loukas.

Configurational analysis provides valuable insights into the spatial utilization patterns of public spaces, contextualizing each location within the broader urban landscape. The empirical evidence underscores the significant role played by urban form and spatial characteristics in determining the advantages or disadvantages offered by each public space, aligning with Legeby's assertion that these factors directly influence everyday experiences and the social and physical utilization of public spaces (2010).

Nevertheless, mapping the dynamics shaping public spaces comprehensively reveals inherent difficulties and complexities. Usage patterns vary across neighborhoods and their public spaces, sometimes exhibiting distinct and enduring traits, while in other instances, they remain fluid and subject to continuous modification over time. This highlights the imperative of examining public spaces through their temporal dimension, integrating the analysis of different times and rhythms of practices in public space

(Knierbein, 2014) and recognizing them as dynamic entities where boundaries are constantly negotiated, bridged, and dissolved along various social lines. Interpretations of spatial phenomena must consider additional factors beyond those captured by configurational analysis. These factors are intricately interwoven, shaping public spaces in distinctive ways. They engage in a continuous process of socio-spatial transformation, influencing the production, use, and development of public spaces. The extent of spatial integration in the local and global urban context, the form of governance by public authorities and relevant stakeholders, and social conditions all contribute to shaping the utilization, the experience and sharing of public space and collectively impact the quality of public life in neighbourhoods. A detailed exploration of the interplay between spatial, social, and temporal dynamics in public spaces where activities, uses, and users blur boundaries promises to enrich our understanding of public space as a collective resource. Approaching the mapping and analysis of public space through a relational perspective is thus imperative. Each public space is a constituent part of a complex social assemblage, comprising diverse physical and social elements. The configuration and reconfiguration of these components give rise to distinct characteristics, shaping the role and function of each public space. Through these relationships, public spaces evolve and fulfil varying roles in different contexts, displaying a range of capabilities.

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