

ASSESSING THE PUBLICNESS OF PUBLIC PLACES: TOWARDS A NEW MODEL

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Abstract

In an urban world greatly concerned with sustainable development (Human Development Report 2007/2008; UN Climate Change Conference Copenhagen 2009), building more socially cohesive, environmentally friendly and economic competitive cities appears as a key prerequisite. Through their multiple functions and various roles, public places are central to achieving urban sustainability. But public space has been a contentious term in the academic literature and a ‘fuzzy concept’ in the practice of city-making. This paper will present the findings of my doctoral thesis, clustered around three main points:

- a new way of conceptualising the publicness of public space, defined as the sum of characteristics that make a public space public;
- a new methodology for practically assessing public places and
- the testing of the new methodology on three new public place case studies, created in the past three decades on the post-industrial waterfront of the River Clyde in Glasgow, UK.

The research was based on a new understanding of publicness as having a dual nature: it can be grasped simultaneously as a cultural reality and as a historical reality. As a result, it was considered that assessing the publicness of a public place comprises two things: first, a measurement of the site as a snapshot against the existent standard of publicness and second, an explanation of that measurement though exploring its development process. This was applied in practice, on three new public places created on the regenerated waterfront of the Clyde, in Glasgow and conclusions were drawn regarding the robustness and usefulness of this approach.

1. Introduction – What is public space?

Public space is neither an uncontested nor an uncontroversial arena in the disciplines of urban design and planning (e.g. see Atkinson, 2003; Raco, 2003). Indeed debates on the “politics of space” (e.g. the tension between surveillance and access rights to public space) continue to capture academic and public attention (see Lefebvre, 1991; Flusty, 2001; Mitchell, 2003; Madanipour, 2003; Kohn, 2004), raising important questions of social justice, such as: “Who makes and controls public space?” and

“Who benefits from the development of new public space in the context of restructuring the city?” There are even more pessimistic voices arguing for the breakdown of society and „the fall of public man” (Sennett, 1977) due to a change in people’s attitudes. From active participants in the life of the city, „the people” have become passive spectators to the display of neoliberal and market-driven forces (Foucault, 1986); the „public” has been „pacified by cappuccino” and lost its ability to fight for „social justice for all” (Zukin, 2000; Atkinson, 2003).

As a reflection of such concerns, a distinctive strand in recent urban design policy in the United Kingdom has been focused on urban design as making places for people (Urban Task Force, 1999 & 2005; DCLG, 2009; Carmona et al., 2003). As such, „the public” has been the subject of increasing policy attention over such matters as the commodification of space; cappuccino urbanism and a focus on affluent consumerism; the privatisation of public space; the militarising and securitising of space through CCTV and other express security measures; exclusion from public space; the emergence of gated communities; the Disney- fication of public spaces etc. In turn, public space is also the subject of a growing academic literature from the full range of social science and humanities disciplines (Carr et al., 1992; Sorkin, 1992; Mitchell, 1995; Zukin, 2000; Madanipour, 2003; Massey, 2005; Mensch, 2007). Each discipline sees public space through a different lens, and with particular interests and concerns to the fore. Political scientists, for example, focus on democratisation and on rights in public space; geographers on „sense-of-place’ and „placelessness’; legal scholars on the ownership of and access in public places; sociologists on human interactions and social exclusion etc. The result is a diverse array of multi-disciplinary approaches towards understanding „public space” (Figure 1).



What these

Figure 1 Public space – a multidisciplinary approach

various

disciplinary accounts seem to have in common though is a sense that something has been lost. It seems that a commonly accepted standard of publicness of public space has been tainted by the intrusion of economics and politics of fear and control (Sorkin, 1992; Mitchell, 1995; Davis, 1990; Zukin, 2000). The starting point of this research was to find out if there was a way to measure publicness and describe in a more rigorous way if and what has been lost.

The existence of these various understandings of public space from multi-disciplinary perspectives creates much confusion around the meaning of the terms „public space” and „publicness of space”. During the research, it became apparent that the notion of public space is such a „slippery term” because first, on a theoretical level, there are so many conflicting and confusing multi-disciplinary views and definitions in the matter. Second, on a practical level, the real, built public places are complex socio-cultural, political and environmental products of a social group while on a third, individual level, public space is also a subjective, personal construct. A space can be public to me but not to you. The first aim of this inquiry was to try to shed some light into the meaning and the complicated nature of public space. Because of the existence of so many different disciplinary perspectives on public space and as it was felt that none of them clearly explained why public space is such a „slippery term” and defined it in a comprehensive manner, the research sought to approach the matter in a fresh way. The next paragraphs will present the theoretical foundations that anchor this study.

2.0 Theoretical considerations

2.1 The dual nature of public space and the Star Model of Publicness

As a distinctive part of the built environment, the main stage where the life of the community unfolds, public space is deeply intertwined with the beliefs, traditions, experiences, political views and so on, what is generally understood as the culture of a particular society.

“The existence of some form of public life is a prerequisite for the development of public spaces. Although every society has some mixture of public and private, the emphasis given to each one and the values they express help to explain the differences across settings, across cultures, and across times. The public spaces created by societies serve as a mirror of their public and private values as can be seen in the Greek agora, the Roman forum, the New England common, and the contemporary plaza, as well as Canaletto’s scene of Venice” (Carr et al., 1992; p. 22).

In other words, on the background of larger political, economic and social structures, a certain society, at a certain point in time, holds a common understanding of what makes a public space, public, or otherwise said, what the ideal public space is and this is then translated in the various public places that are created. If one could grasp this general held view on the ideal public space and determine what key

characteristics are considered as giving a certain place its „quality of being public” or in a shorter phrase „its publicness”, then this could be used as a standard for measuring different public places. But how to grasp this ideal? The approach taken here was to investigate the literature in the field, from as many disciplines as possible (with a focus on urban design and planning), in a deductive manner (see Figure 2). This is the understanding of a public place as a cultural artefact and its publicness as a *cultural reality*.

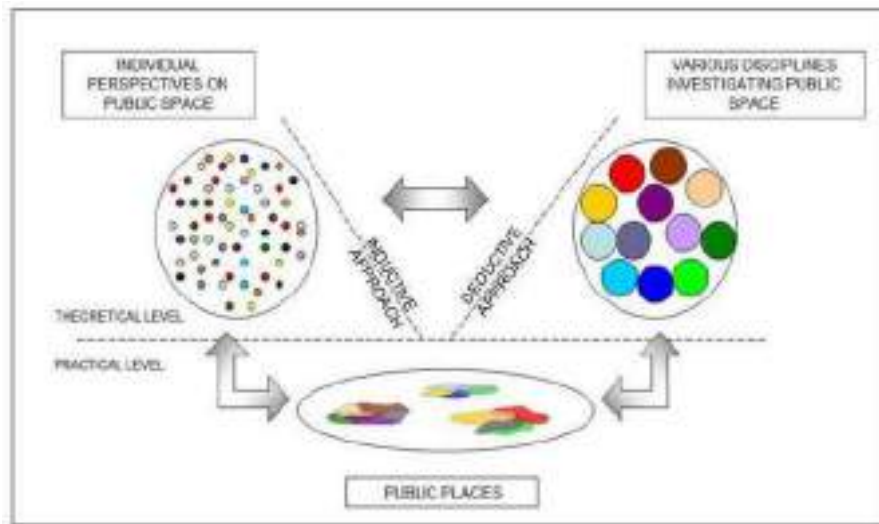


Figure 2 Deductive and Inductive approaches to studying public space

At the same time with being a cultural reality, the publicness of a public place is also a *historical reality*. As the western society changed in time, so did the conception and implicitly the physical representations of public space; a reflection on the history of public space in the western world shows that in different time periods, different public places were created according to different ideas and ideals of publicness. The ideal of publicness of the ancient Greeks reflected in the agora where women, foreigners and slaves were not allowed to take part (Mitchell, 1995) seems inappropriate for the contemporary western society. For the present inquiry, this means that an ideal public space and a standard for its publicness can only be defined for contemporary, newly built public places, in the UK and generally in the western world, in the last fifty years or so.

It needs to be stressed that publicness is seen here from a critical realist point of view, as something *out there*, something measurable, independent of the human consciousness. However, it is accepted that publicness can also be grasped from a subjectivist point of view. Each individual has a slightly different way of perceiving what a public space is (from one’s experience of different public places and the personal meanings they are associated with). The subjective nature of publicness means that even though this ideal can be defined, it will not be shared by everyone. From this discussion, it results that on a conceptual level, public space is ever an

ideal, reflecting a general common view held at a certain point in time and in a certain socio-cultural setting; no reality can match it but by grasping this ideal and using it as a standard for publicness, public places can be measured, compared and as a result it can be known more clearly where they fail and how they can be improved. Therefore the research question anchoring this research was: *what makes a public space, public?* In other words, *how can one conceptualise and measure the 'publicness' of public space so that different public places can be graded and compared?*

In order to answer this, the dual nature of publicness theory was created. To analyse public space as a historical reality, there are available methods of research such as interviews, focus groups, document analysis and archival research. However, for analyzing the publicness of public space as a cultural reality, no actual method was found in the public space literature. Therefore, the Star Model of Publicness was developed to fill in this gap. Although the first of its kind, it is built upon several original and valuable attempts of analysing and quantifying different aspects related to the publicness of public places. The Dutch scholars Van Melik et al. (2007) looked at indicators related to one dimension of public space, management, and were concerned with comparing two opposed types of managed public places, “secured” and “themed” ones. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Americans Nemeth and Schmidt (2007) have also looked at the management aspect of public space and attempted to create a “methodology for measuring the security of publicly accessible spaces” (Nemeth and Schmidt, 2007).

When asking the quite deceptively straightforward question: “What is public space?” a web of closely related but loosely defined terms complicates the answer to this question greatly. As Orum (2010, p. 13) asserted “...the mystery and drama of public spaces begin with their very definition”. When closely analysing the different ways of defining and conceptualising public space, it can be noticed that the literature can be grouped in five thematic clusters.

First, a key characteristic of public space appears to be related to **ownership**. Writers from North America such as Lofland (1980), Kohn (2004) or Staeheli and Mitchell (2008) identify as a crucial element for a place’s publicness, its maintaining in public ownership. In addition to the above writers, there have been many voices arguing that a growing phenomenon of privatisation of urban space is responsible for much of the damage produced to the cities’ public realm. These have come also from North American authors such as Sorkin (1992), Zukin (1995) or Banerjee (2001). Kohn’s (2004) extensive study *Brave New Neighbourhoods: The Privatization of Public Space* is dedicated entirely to this phenomenon.

A second clearly defined cluster in public space research is concerned with the **physical configuration** of a public place. In several of the definitions and conceptualisations investigated, public space is associated with real physical urban places. For example Brown (2003) identifies urban public space as including “...formal squares, roads and streets, but also vacant land, verges and other ‘edge-space’” (p. 10) while Tibbalds (1992) describes the extension of the public realm

from "... all the streets, parks and squares of a town or city into the buildings which enclose and line them" (p. 1). The bulk of this literature on the physical appearance of public places comes from the disciplines of urban design and architecture.

A third strand of research is framed by the sociological and anthropological public space literature and refers to the use of public space, or in other words, to their **animation**. Being the places of free assembly and interaction among the members of a community, public places are the physical stage where "...the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivities" (Carr *et al.*, 1992, p. xi) take place. Whether the case studies are the Latin American plazas (Low, 2000), the New York's redeveloped parks (Zukin, 1995) or "the third places" of the western culture (Oldenburg, 1989) these writings share a common preoccupation with people's behaviours and actions in public space and how these change over time. Two key studies that document the use of public space in relation to the above mentioned dimension of physical configuration are in the USA, Whyte's (1980) *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* and in Europe, Jan Gehl's (1996) *Life Between Buildings*.

A fourth strand of research is related to public space as the arena where the fragile relation between freedom and **control** unfolds. Many authors, among which Carr *et al.* (1992), Mitchell (2003) and Goodsell (2003) consider the quality of a public place of being a democratic arena for public life as fundamental for its publicness. They note that public places are historically the places that have served as the stage for the expression of the people's dissatisfaction with a certain state of affairs. As a result, they are the places where fundamental rights guaranteed by a democratic society, such as the right to speak freely and assemble, are manifested. What appears to have happened recently is an increase in the surveillance and control measures in public space, noted by scholars such as Koskela (2000), Atkinson (2003) or Raco (2003).

A fifth and last common theme is concerned with the maintenance of public places according to certain standards, so that they are clean, friendly and inviting areas. Although this meta-theme of **civility** is not as explicit as the others, many of the reviewed writings identify the presence of refuse and decay in urban public places as a cause and a mark of the broader decline of the urban public realm. One of the writings where the issue of public space maintenance is thoroughly addressed is Francis Tibbalds' *Making People Friendly Towns* (1992) where he states with concern:

"... we are now witnessing a serious decline of this rich domain. Many of the world's towns and cities – especially their centres – have become threatening places – littered, piled with rotting rubbish, covered in graffiti, polluted, congested and chocked by traffic, full of mediocre and ugly poorly maintained buildings, unsafe, populated at night by homeless people living in cardboard boxes, doorways and subways and during the day by many of the same people begging on the streets." (Tibbalds, 1992; p. 1)

Five key dimensions of publicness have been presented, differentiated for the purpose of this theoretical endeavor into five meta-themes: ownership, physical configuration, animation, control and civility (Figure3).

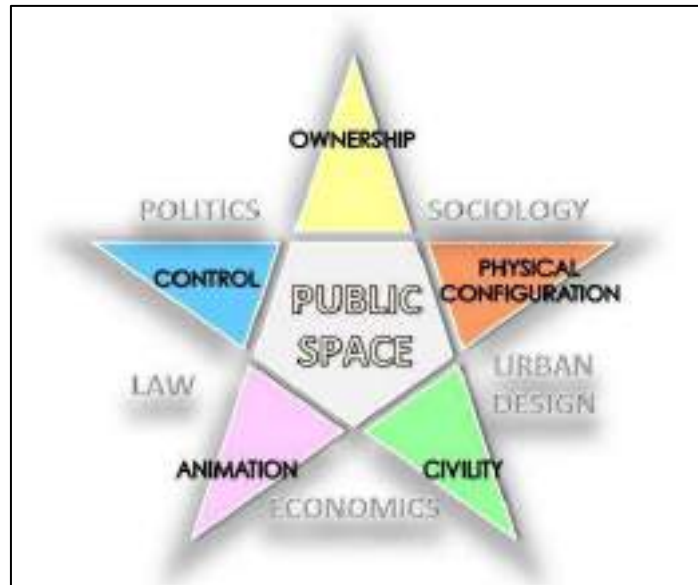


Figure 3 *The Star Model of Publicness*

Through their synergic interaction, where the sum of all is greater than the parts added together, they create the publicness of public space. Public ownership of a site means that the place is owned, in a way, by all members of the society and is, in principle, open to all members of the public, no matter how one defines that public. It means that decisions about its use and accessibility are subject to some form of public accountability. High connectivity and visual permeability enable greater access into a public place, while specific elements of design support different activities, responding to different needs of people in public places. The absence of oppressive control allows for a freer and therefore more diverse use of a public place. A more civil place – one that is well lit, clean, green and inviting, will attract a greater number and diversity of users. A more animated place, where a variety of activities are performed by a large and diverse public will also designate a more public place. Therefore in this research public space is defined as:

the concept referring to all public areas, that are publicly owned by democratically elected bodies, well connected in the surrounding urban grid and designed according to principles that foster activity and social interaction, used by a large and diverse public in a variety of ways, controlled in an non oppressive manner and characterised by an inviting and tidy atmosphere.

The definition illustrates the common understanding found by the researcher of what

constitutes a *very public* public place today in the UK and in the Western world generally, in relation to which existent public places can be measured. A key aspect is that these disciplines can be seen as varying from a *more public* to *less public* situation (Figure 4). This was the foundation for constructing a new tool for measuring public spaces.

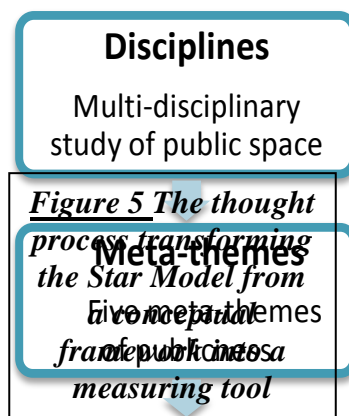
More public	-	Less public
Publicly owned space with public use	OWNERSHIP	Privately owned space with public use
Well-connected/located within the movement system (i.e. on-the-beaten-track); strong visual connection to external public realm beyond space; without obvious entrances and thresholds; a wide range of supports for a wide range of activities	PHYSICAL CONFIGURATION	Poorly connected/located within the movement system (i.e. off-the-beaten-track); poor visual connection with external public realm; with explicit entrances and thresholds; narrow range of supports creating a limited potential for activities
A large and diverse public engaged in a variety of activities	ANIMATION	Dead public space: few people engaged in few activities
Free use and a comforting police presence	CONTROL	Overt and oppressive control presence - human and electronic surveillance; highly visible security presence
Cared-for; well-kempt; inviting	CIVILITY	Untidy, vandalised, dirty and uninviting

Figure 4 Descriptors of 'more public' and 'less public' for each meta-dimension

2.2. The Star Model – a practical tool for measuring public places

The thought process driving the translation of the Star Model from a theoretical construct into a practical tool to measure and represent publicness is shown in Figure 5. The challenge was to find elements for each meta-theme that could be measured easily and quickly so that anyone with an interest in a site could calculate its publicness. Bearing these in mind, a search was initiated for those elements that could be measured and that were influential for determining the five meta-themes (Annex 1).

Following this, the second stage was concerned with calibrating them. In this respect, a rating scale was decided upon for grading their variation from low to high publicness. In



previous research, Nemeth and Schmidt (2007) have used 0, 1 and 2 values and created statistical modeling for a large number of public places in New York. This was considered as a too superficial way of observing and translating into measurements the different shades of publicness of particular public places. As a result, it was opted for a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest publicness and 5 the highest. A scale more than 5 would have complicated the model too much while a lower one would have not been sensitive enough for the different levels of variation. For each grade, the researcher tried to give a description as objective as possible for every indicator and create a scale ranging from „less public” to „more public” based on the theoretical decisions made during the literature review stage. Although it is acknowledged that the rankings have an inherent degree of subjectivity, the researcher tried to be as objective as possible and create a model as less arbitrary as feasible with the available time and resources. In relation to aggregating the results, it was decided to consider all indicators equal for each meta-theme, recognising that it is a task for future research to find out other more complex ways of calculating the measurements for each meta-theme.

To illustrate the results pictorially it was decided to translate the Star Model into a Star Diagram. The larger and better delineated the star, the highest the publicness of the public place would be while less well-delineated, even „negative” stars would reflect a site with a low value of publicness. In order to apply the model in practice, the majority of the indicators can be measured by using the method of structured observation. The only indicator that cannot be measured in this way is *Ownership status*. The rating for this indicator needs to be found out during the investigation of publicness as a historical reality, for which the methods of document analysis and semi-structured interviews were chosen. These made possible for the researcher to construct the development story of each site and understand how its publicness was influenced by different actors during this process. However, this will be not covered here due to the paper’s limitations. Instead, only the results of applying the Star Model will be presented.

2.3 Applying the model in practice

The creation of new public places on the recent regenerated waterfront of the Clyde,

the central river in Glasgow, has not been adequately investigated. From a highly industrialised river that brought wealth into the city and made Glasgow the second city of the empire, in the second half of the 20th century, the waterfront underwent slow decay culminating to the city having turned its back to the river. The recent regeneration of the waterfront has been therefore a controversial process that captured the attention of the public, the media and the research community. In the process of urban regeneration, public space has been seen as a priority for changing the image of the city and for promoting Glasgow on the world stage. By assessing the publicness of new public places on Glasgow's post-industrial waterfront it was intended to apply and test the model, while investigating the recent transformation of the river as part of the broader background of the city's regeneration.

Regarding the number of case studies, a balance needed to be found between the advantage of investigating more case studies, which would help test the applicability of the model and the disadvantage regarding less time available for appropriately exploring the development process and historical background of each site. Consequently, three case study new public places created on the post-industrial waterfront of the River Clyde were selected. These were new public places, created in the last decades of waterfront regeneration, similar in purpose, in the sense that they should all have been created for the 'wide public', Glaswegians and tourists alike (and not for specific categories of users, such as a children's playground). Also, in order to introduce variation and see how the model works in slightly different circumstances, each case study was chosen as part of a different type of development that has been produced in a different period in the last thirty years or so. Based on these considerations, the following sites were chosen:

Pacific Quay, one of the first places where development started to happen on the derelict post-industrial landscape of the Clyde's waterfront, was the location for one of the first cultural regeneration events in the city – the Glasgow Garden Festival in 1988. It is an area dedicated to leisure and tourism but also to the media industries, representing Glasgow's new „Media Quarter (the new headquarters of BBC Scotland have been relocated on site in 2007). The site is situated approximately one mile to the west of the City Centre, on the southern bank of the river. On the northern bank, opposite to the case study public place are the SECC (Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre) and The Clyde Auditorium or 'The Armadillo' – two famous landmarks in the cultural and touristic life of the city.

Glasgow Harbour, developed mainly as a housing project, especially in its first stages, started in 2000 and it is one of the most controversial developments in Glasgow in the last decades. This is due primarily to the demolishing of the famous Meadowside Granaries, a significant landmark from Glasgow's rich shipping industrial past, to be replaced with luxury apartments and a new public place. It is situated to the West of the city centre, bordering the traditional working class neighborhood of Partick and was planned as an extension of the close by West End – the most affluent part of the city and the location of the University of Glasgow.

Broomielaw, the latest public space development on the Clyde waterfront, was

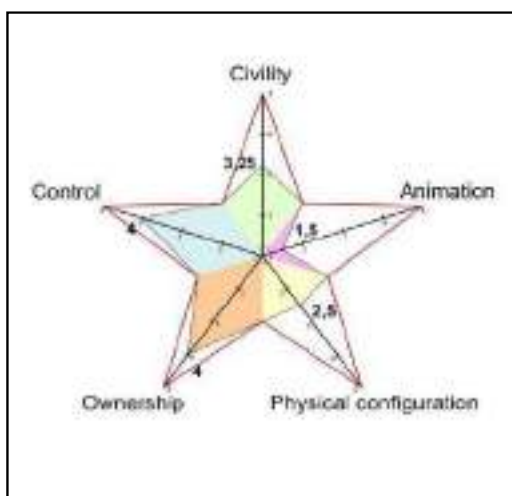
opened in 2009. It is part of a larger project consisting of two regenerated river walkways, one on the north side of the river at Broomielaw and one on the south side of the river at Tradeston, connected by a new pedestrian and cycle bridge, the Squiggly Bridge. Due to the current recession, the Tradeston development is not yet completed; the greatest progress has been made in the Broomielaw part and as such, the new public place here – the river walkway - was chosen as the case study. The site is in the City Centre of Glasgow, next to the International Financial Services District (IFSD) and has been a publicly led project by the Glasgow City Council.

Three days were spent in each location, from morning until evening and measure the indicators: Mondays to account for the week use, Fridays and Sundays for the weekend use pattern. It was considered that it was insufficient to record the animation of a place only for one day, because this would lead to a biased set of data. In that specific day, adverse weather conditions, a special event or celebration in the city or other similar factors could greatly influence the animation of a site. It was decided to perform the observations in the autumn of 2009, for approximately two months, from the end of September until the beginning of November.

3. Results

Applying the model was a successful attempt in the sense that the publicness of each public place could be graded and as such, comparisons were possible among them. The results show that the most public, public place is Broomielaw, with a value of **3.63** and the least public is Glasgow Harbour, with a value of **2.6** while Pacific Quay rates intermediary, with a value of **3.03** (Figure 6). The Star Diagrams allow for comparisons in terms of each meta-theme while the investigation of each site’s development story allows for explanations of the obtained ratings.

Regarding the first meta-theme, each public place presents a different rating, illustrating a different ‘shade’ of ownership. Broomielaw is in public ownership, and as such it rates the highest. This is a result of the public place being in the ownership of the Glasgow City Council, the local democratically elected public authority, which led the regeneration process and kept its hold on the site.



Pacific Quay – overall rating of publicness **3.03**

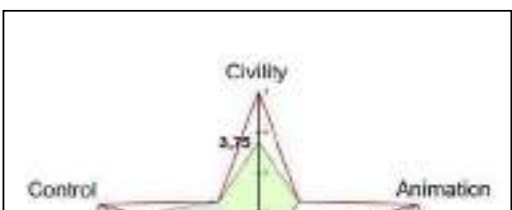


Figure 6 The results of the Star Model application in Glasgow, UK

Pacific Quay has a mixed ownership, comprised by two owners, the BBC and the Science Centre. Glasgow Harbour is in the private ownership of Clydeport, the local port authority which has always owned the land and led the regeneration process. It cannot be concluded from these three case studies that a phenomenon of privatisation of public space is happening on the Clyde Waterfront. A larger study, involving more case studies would be required to establish this.

Related to physical configuration, the case studies can be discussed in terms of both macro-design and micro-design. Related to macro-design, none of the public places was found to be very well integrated in the surrounding urban grid. The best connected is Broomielaw, due to its proximity to the city centre, the creation of a

continuous walkway along the river in the 1970s and also to the desire of the Glasgow City Council to link the IFSD to the less developed south side of the river. Both Pacific Quay and Glasgow Harbour are very poorly connected to the surrounding urban grid, apart from the northern direction. In the case of Pacific Quay, this has resulted from a combination of factors: the lack of strong leadership and focus from the main actor, Scottish Enterprise, the continuous delay from the part of the private actors, who own the adjacent land and the lack of agreement among the public and private parties. In the case of Glasgow Harbour, there is a similar lack of development in the surrounding areas, a consequence of the recent economic crisis but also of the disagreements between the public and private actors to build a bridge over the Clyde.

In terms of micro-design, there is a good provision of walking opportunities in all the public places while sitting opportunities are better delivered in Glasgow Harbour and Broomielaw (although the focus was on robustness not comfort). In the case of Glasgow Harbour, the private owner and developer, Clydeport, wanted high quality materials in order to create an upscale housing development while in the case of Broomielaw, the aim of the Council was to create a postcard for the IFSD and Glasgow as a whole. In the case of Pacific Quay, there are very few and poor quality sitting opportunities, a reflection of the lack of emphasis on the development of this new public place. The Science Centre is an indoor venue, the BBC, a public office building and Scottish Enterprise focused mainly on bringing development on site and not creating a high quality public place. There are no active frontages bordering the new public places and very few opportunities to actively engage with and discover the environment. In other words, there is very little to make these places into destinations as they were intended.

All the public places rate fairly low regarding animation. This can be related to the lack of opportunities for active engagement and the poor connectivity with the surrounding environment, as discussed above. Pacific Quay and Glasgow Harbour rate the same and seem relatively empty places. Broomielaw is the most animated out of the three public places (with five activities performed in a short time interval), which can be related to a better connectivity of the site and its proximity to the City Centre. In terms of the number of people, although there could be no straightforward indicator devised, the indirect indicator, the Presence of Street vendors and/or entertainers reflects the number of users of the public places (448 people were recorded in Pacific Quay and 420 in Glasgow Harbour, with no street vendors and/or entertainers in either of them, with a much higher number of 1391 people recorded in Broomielaw, where there was only one street vendor present).

All three public places rate fairly high in relation to control. This is due to the overall absence of signs deterring behaviours and of sadistic street furniture. Also, a fairly low presence of guards was recorded. There were no private guards observed in any of the three sites and no public guards were observed in Glasgow Harbour and Pacific Quay. However, daily patrols were observed in Broomielaw. This is related to the existence for a long period of time of a negative image for the area (violence, drug abuse and prostitution) but also to recent incidents of children climbing the

newly built bridge. All the public places have been found to be observed by CCTV cameras.

Related to civility, analogous, medium ratings have been obtained. None of the new public places have been provided with public toilets, a result of the Glasgow City Council's policy of closing them down on account of diminished public budgets. All of the public places have a fairly good provision and maintenance of greenery and lighting, Broomielaw rating marginally better. In terms of the tidiness of the area, the least clean site was Broomielaw. One of reasons is the fact that it is more animated and it seems that generally in Glasgow, the public does not respect the tidiness of the public places (littering, graffiti). Another reason is the lack of appropriate, high standard maintenance provided by the Glasgow City Council.

The three case studies investigated can be seen as representative for Glasgow's re-invention as a post-industrial city. The Pacific Quay site shows the focus of the city towards enhancing its media services, the Glasgow Harbour site is illustrative for the new trend of creating up market, luxury housing developments while the Broomielaw project is part of the new trend of establishing Glasgow as a financial and business centre. As part of this broader context, the average ratings of publicness obtained for the three new public places can be related to several factors. Among them is the relatively late regeneration of the waterfront, begun only at the end of the 1990s and the permanent empty purse of the Glasgow City Council, combined with a lack of funding from a national level (although the River Clyde is considered a Scottish national priority). Also, the divided ownership on the banks of the Clyde, the lack of a comprehensive vision for the river's regeneration from the part of the local authorities and the existence of a variety of public agencies and actors in charge with the public place provision and maintenance, frustrate the publicness of the new public places.

4. Conclusions

The following paragraphs will highlight the main ways in which this research project has addressed the existing literature, presenting both what this study challenges and what it confirms.

By initially reviewing multi-disciplinary literature, in which public space and publicness were conceptualised and defined in many different ways, this research gives a multidimensional definition of public space and proposes a unified theoretical model to describe the publicness of public places. Measuring publicness has proven to be a difficult task, and although a model has been created, and its first testing showed promising results, there remains plenty of scope for improvement. This is most evident in respect to the meta-theme of Animation, where more and better indicators need to be found. Also the possibility of measuring Animation in a similar way to the other four meta-themes needs to be reflected upon in more depth.

Through the application of the Star Model of Public Space, light was shed on the two overarching contemporary phenomena that have been identified recently as leading

to a loss in the publicness of new public places; privatisation of space and increased control of public places. Concerning the privatisation of public space, the results obtained by applying the model to the three new public places in Glasgow did not show conclusively that such a phenomenon is taking place in the Scottish city. However, they did show that indeed, increasingly, there is a blurring taking place between the boundaries of public and private as noticed by commentators such as Madanipour (2003), Kohn (2004) or Marcuse (2005). Concerning the control of public space, the results did show an increase in control measures especially electronic surveillance (i.e. CCTV).

Regarding the strengths of the model, first, on a theoretical level, the Star Model of Publicness brings together, for the first time, different key elements of publicness into one single entity. As such, the model clarifies the slippery concept of the publicness of public space and offers, at one glance, a comprehensive image of what makes a public space, public. Second, it measures publicness, quantifying in an objective way a concept previously considered mainly as a subjective construct. More, the publicness rating is not only encapsulated in one numerical value but it is also illustrated in a Star Diagram of Publicness. This is a new graphical representation that shows in a straightforward manner exactly where publicness is eroded or where it is enhanced. Third, the model offers a much-needed method to compare and contrast different new public places, created in the urban western world. The comparisons allow for understanding which public places are more public than others so that knowledge exchange is made possible and lessons are learned from the success and/or failure of different projects.

Apart from these theoretical strengths, the model is also deemed useful in the practical creation of public places. First, by giving one clear and comprehensive definition of what a standard public space is, the model facilitates information exchange in the development process, helping to overcome misinterpretations that cause many projects to be compromised in terms of quality. Moreover, by offering a standard for public places, the model functions as a decision support tool. In this respect, the different actors in the development process can strive to create not just a public place, but a public place with at least, for example, a publicness rating of 3. Second, a chief advantage of the model is that it can be used as an audit method in the redevelopment of public places. Those in charge of such a project can assess where publicness fails, in a quick and informed way, so that interventions can be made towards the right areas and delays overcome.

Critically reflecting on the research undertaken and on the Star Model created, although this is deemed useful both in public space research and practice, several limitations should be highlighted. First, by applying a common standard and a common way of measurement to all public places, it can be argued that the particularities of a public place are lost when its publicness is translated into a number and respectively, a Star Diagram. Each public place has its own identity, its own atmosphere or *sense of place* resulting from the particular geographical location, the historical character of the area, the colours, the smells, the sounds, the specific layout and materials used, the type of greenery etc.

Second, although it is asserted that the Star Model measures publicness as objectively as possible, it has to be recognised that this is the subjective creation of the researcher. At any time, other researchers might find other key meta- themes or indicators to measure publicness. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this investigation will open the way towards more rigorous and objective studies of public space and publicness.

Overall, this study can be seen as an experiment at the border between social and physical sciences, aiming to express in a formula, a complex social concept – the publicness of public space. It is felt that although a new conceptualisation of publicness was brought forward and an innovative way of measuring it was created, this is only the first, small step in a long journey towards more rigorous and more objective studies of the publicness of public space.

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