

Public space as an element of local identity

On the notion of quality in urban design

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Physical-spatial organization

One of the forces that lend local identity to a settlement unit is its *physical-spatial organization* – the nature of “the arrangement of shelters” and “their relation and communication with each other” (CERDA, 1867, vol. I, p. 32). Despite the fact that this “force” is unable to gain effect independently, it is nevertheless important as a determining factor in the overall frame-

work for the activities and behavior of the users of city, for their occupancy and their movement. In order to show what I mean by physical-spatial organization and to clarify the concept of *public space* within that context, I have differentiated between the following five components (FRICK, in press) (fig. 1):

- land division,
- building, utilities, landscaping (objects),
- public space,
- places and grid,
- levels of scale.

Socio-economic and ecological reference points with these five components are the use of the physical city, and the energy and material flows, its ecosystem.

In the following I focus on public space.

What is public space?

Public space may be physical or social:

- **Physical public space** is part of the entire outdoor urban space, namely that part which is determined by general accessibility, permeability and spatial continuity, and is usually

land division results in →	islands / block areas (and/or plots of land)	grid areas
buildings, utilities, landscaping develop on the areas of land →	buildings, technical facilities, planting	surfacing roads, utility networks, planting, 'furnishings'
these form outdoor spaces, especially public space →	parks, landscaped areas etc.	streets and squares as space segments and/or the grid of space
public space constitutes the relationship between places and grid →	between plots of land, buildings etc. and the grid of streets and pathways	between space segments and the grid of streets and pathways
places and grid are organized according to differing levels of scale ↗	places or space segments, neighbourhoods, local districts etc.	local, supra-local, regional grids of streets and pathways

Fig. 1: Components of physical-spatial organization. (Source: FRICK, in press).

oriented around the grid of public streets and pathways – in contrast to semi-public and private outdoor spaces.

- **Social public space** is the area of movement and encounter, publicly space-related activities and behavior linked with a “sign, symbol and representation system” (LÄPPLE, 1992).

Operationally, and in terms of the components of physical-spatial organization, public space is of the greatest logistic and strategic importance in planning. Its special function for town planning lies in the fact that it may not only be the product of the confining buildings, technical facilities and plantings, but that it may also determine their spatial arrangement. It is the central component in urban design, even though this was not recognized for a long time during the 20th century. After all, it is in the public space that block areas and grid areas, and private and public use come into contact. And it is the predominant agent of the technical infrastructure. It was *the* infrastructure of the city long before technical infrastructure existed as we know it today (modern utility-networks developed much later). Public space is the “cohesive primary system that permeates the whole city... the determinant and the shell for the development of the city” (SCHNEIDER, 2000, p. 135).

Physical public space fundamentally exists in a grid of space that is divided into space segments. When the grid has been suitably developed to the full, it connects every place with every other place and forms the definitive precondition for the relation and communication between the places, for movement and encounter. In this way, public space

- on the one hand makes the city practically *functional*;
- on the other enables the interrelated visual and physical perception of the city and makes its physical-spatial organization *intelligible*.

When walking or travelling through it, the inhabitants and passers-by are able to perceive and experience the city as a cohesive entity. Public space provides the perspective of city that presents itself to them with the greatest immediacy; this contrasts with a bird’s eye view or views of the city from the outside. Additional public outdoor spaces are integrated into the grid of space, for instance parks and waters, and public space also extends (at certain times of the day) into publicly accessible buildings and non-public outdoor spaces.

Physical public space is the agent of consistency in time and place and local sustainability. As a space kept free between islands or block areas it possesses a considerably longer “life span” than the buildings confining it. Its immateriality makes it less vulnerable to the “ravages of time.” Buildings may be demolished and replaced by new ones in certain cycles, while public spaces defined by them remain physically the same – in certain respects, and seen in connection with the division of land. This means that, more than buildings, open spaces function as the agents of the *identity* of the human settlement to which they belong. Where “buildings in different cities resemble each other, or where generations of completely different buildings successively replace one another on one particular piece of land, the city still remains true to itself. And it remains – compared with other places in the same city and with other cities – different and distinguishable: within public space” (PROJEKTGEMEINSCHAFT, 1995, p. 4). The “long-term stability of public space as a system depends on the adaptability of its structure and on the ability to change its uses, its unspecific multi-functionality. Public space enables everyone to read and experience the city, and it permits city users to orientate themselves, to use the city independent of other people’s help and to be in command of it. It is familiar, for everyone and everywhere, even in unknown places in the city.” (SCHNEIDER, 2000, p. 136).

However, in the reality of the existing city and beyond the purely technical development, physical public space manifests

marked discontinuities and breaks in the wake of urban development and planning since industrialization, and particularly in the second half of the 20th century. The development of large industrial and commercial complexes and the creation of railways and fast roads have been major contributors to this process. In certain areas public space has become either unrecognizable or it has been “dissolved.” Many large residential areas of the Modern Movement dating from 1950 to 1990 (in the Western world) follow the concept of an open, moderately structured urban area with little or no differentiation between public, semi-public and private outdoor spaces, between front and rear elevations, external and internal areas, noisy and quiet outdoor spaces (PROJEKTGEMEINSCHAFT, 1995, p. 11). Here, space between buildings “flows” rather than being visibly separated. The interaction between buildings and outdoor space has no, or only limited, effect. The perception and intelligibility of city, the subjective aspect of form, then becomes extremely difficult, even in cases where a conscious concept existed for the arrangement of the buildings. But: “Spaces that are not enclosed cannot be identified, and thus do not result in any local identity on the part of the user – such an identity presupposes that a place is defined by certain forms, forces, emotions and meanings” (FELDTKELLER, 1994, p. 69). It makes it even more difficult to perceive settlement areas whose physical-spatial organization (beyond the utility networks) no longer follows any recognizable logic, but consists of an arbitrary constellation of buildings, technical facilities and plantings and even whole settlement areas.

Physical and social public space

My decision to concentrate on the physical-spatial dimension of the city is due, among other things, to the fact that when dealing with urban design – especially when drawing up plans – decisions have to be made about proportions and distance, length, width and height. This is not opposed by the fact that the quintessence of public space is what happens in it: the activities and behavior of the inhabitants and other users. This characterizes *social* public space. *Physical* public space is one of several conditions for what takes place. Its “social character” (SELLE, 2001, pp. 29/30) is derived from its functionality and intelligibility. The attention of the user and the observer focuses primarily on the social space which, in concrete terms, means the people who are active within the city. The physical-spatial conditions are of secondary significance. But “the physical features ... modify space in some way significant to actions, including enclosures, surfaces, channels, ambiances, and objects” (LYNCH, 1981, p. 48). Both dimensions of public space are the objects of visual and physical perception that subjectively constitute the “image of the city.” In objective terms this corresponds with the observable activities and behavior of the people and the material-physical nature, the *construction* of public space.

The key question in the description and explication of public space as a component of physical-spatial organization addresses the interactive relationship between the material-physical construction and the activities and behavior of the inhabitants and other users. Amos Rapoport has introduced the concept of *supportive environments* for this interactive relationship. It belongs to the paradigm of *environment-behavior relations*, the relations between “people and things” (RAPOPORT, 1990, p. 11). Here Rapoport refers to physical-spatial characteristics that are suitable for certain activities and consequently support these. The corresponding cues are emitted by the construction (fixed-feature elements), the furnishings (semi-fixed feature elements) and the people in the public space (non-fixed feature elements). These cues do not *determine* behavior, but

<i>construction</i> of public space	<i>functionality</i> of public space	<i>intelligibility</i> of public space	<i>activities / behaviour</i> <i>within public space</i>
space segments (settings):			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bounds of space / enclosure - dimensions, scale, grain - distances between buildings - orientation of spaces - differences in level - equipment (semi-fixed features) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accessibility - 'pleasant place' - safety - multifunctional suitability 	<i>Visibility field:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enclosure (openness / closeness) - overview / subdivision - clearness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>necessary activities</i> - <i>optional activities</i> - <i>'social' activities</i>
grid of space (system of settings):			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>laying-out of paths</i> - <i>division / subdivision</i> - <i>degree of interlacing</i> - <i>continuity / discontinuity</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>permeability</i> - <i>spatial continuity</i> 	<i>axial lines:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>overlapping of the visibility fields</i> - <i>leading towards focal points or landmarks</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>movement of persons</i> - <i>movement of vehicles</i>

Fig. 2: Characteristics of public space (Sources: Rapoport, 1986; Projektgemeinschaft, 1995; Gehl, 1996; Hillier, 1996; Schneider, 2000; supplements by the author).

they do have a mnemonic function that significantly influences behavior (RAPOPORT, 1986, pp. 166-167).

Figure 2 shows (in the sense of a provisional disposition) the interactive relationship between the *construction* of public space and the *activities and behavior* of the inhabitants and passers-by in the public space, as imparted by its practical *functionality* and its perception-related *intelligibility*. The listed features of construction, functionality, intelligibility, and activities and behavior are categorized according to (individual) space segments and the grid of space. The features listed in the construction column can be directly influenced by town planning. The features listed under functionality and intelligibility represent basic criteria or aims necessary for the construction of public space if it is to support, or even enable at all, the activities and behavior of the inhabitants and passers-by within the public space. *Functionality* means, in the case of the individual space segment (street, square etc.): accessibility, "pleasant place," safety, multi-functional suitability; in the case of the grid of space it additionally means: permeability and spatial continuity, among other things for the movement of pedestrians and vehicles. *Intelligibility* means, in the case of the individual space segment: enclosure (closure/openness), overview/subdivision, clearness; in the case of the grid of space: overlapping of the visibility fields, leading towards focal points or landmarks, general orientation; so that "the degree to which what we can see from the spaces that make up the system... is a good guide to what we cannot see."

Spatial synergy

The decisive factors in urban design are what actually constitutes the *quality* of physical public space, what the supportive characteristics are, and thus what specifics the features of its construction have to possess so that they can support the human activities and behavior in the public space. This refers directly to the question of the existing, or insufficient, quality of urban design in itself. As we all know, town planning has not only positive but equally negative effects. In the following I focus on the concept of *spatial synergy* in an effort to access this question.

The word *synergy*, from the ancient Greek *συνεργία* means working together. Basically it signifies a win-win situation. The city was probably invented because of its economic, social, ecological and physical-spatial synergetic effects. Keywords in this connection are division of labor, productivity, exchange, information, communication, innovation etc. *Spatial synergy* is based on the interaction between "things and things" (RAPOPORT, 1990, p. 11), the way buildings, technical facilities and plantings in a settlement unit are (or will be) arranged in relation to each other, thus producing public space which in turn secures the relation and communication between the places within the area (fig. 1). This can apply to differing scales: street segments, squares, neighborhoods, local districts or the whole city. The putting together or the *configuration* of objects, and thus spaces, in an area either constitutes spatial synergy, or it does not (dysergy). *Spatial synergy*

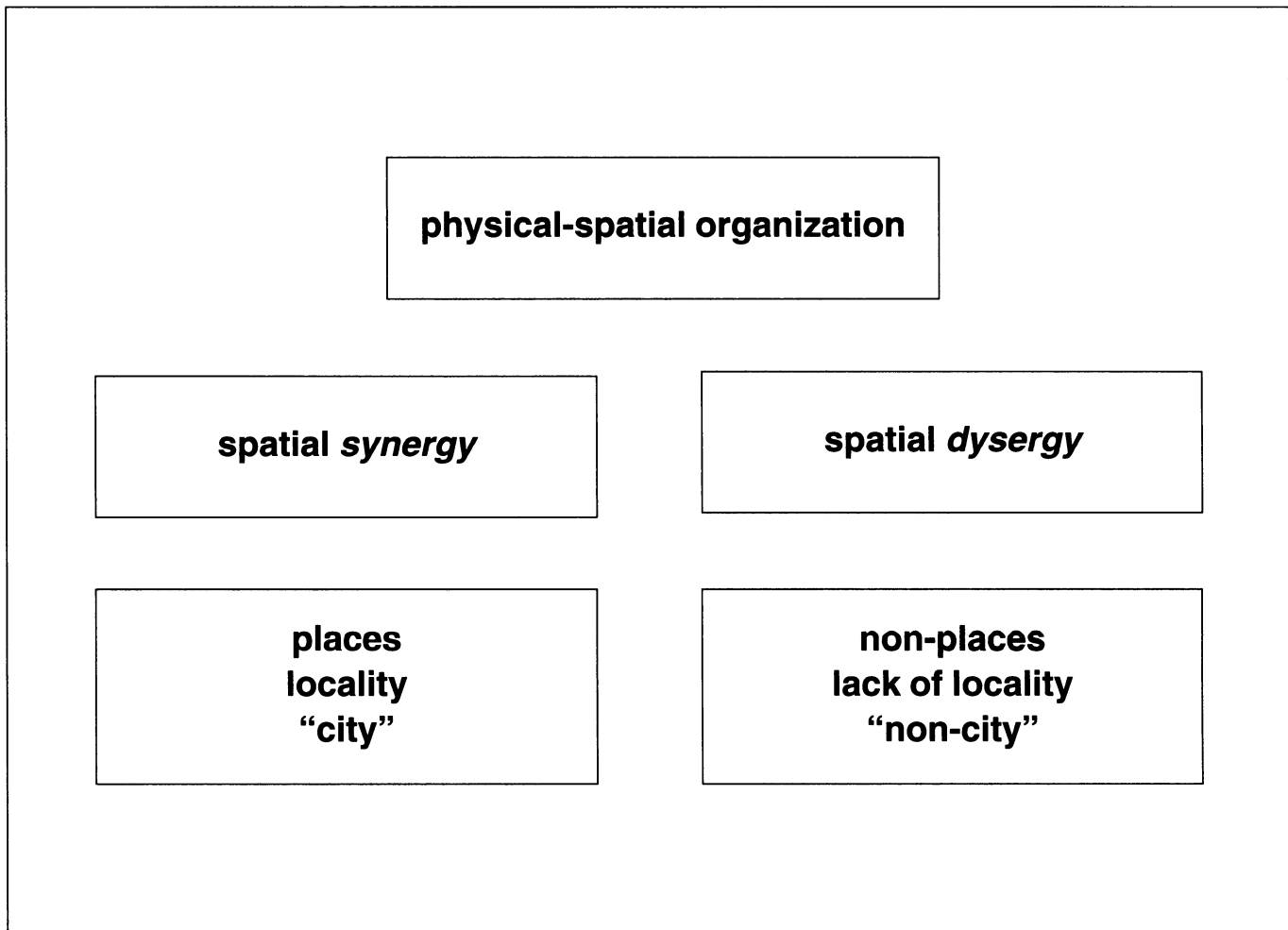


Fig. 3: Synergy and dysergy.

means the presence or development of places: that locality can be perceived, and that a space segment or a settlement unit can be associated with the idea of "city." Spatial dysergy means the absence or the destruction of places: lack of locality, "non-city" (fig. 3). The concept of *supportiveness* (RAPOPORT, 1986, p. 165f) as a link between social and physical public space enables the empirical determination of supportive characteristics and thus a gauge of quality, spatial synergy or dysergy. When the supportive characteristics prove to be empirically and analytically relevant and sustainable, they can be used for the assessment of existing public space and for the drafts of modifications or new designs.

- *One* determination level of spatial synergy in a city or settlement unit is based on the way in which buildings, technical facilities and plantings are arranged, and how the forms of the space segments (streets, squares etc.) develop from this.
- *A second* determination level of spatial synergy is based on the way space segments, or the places characterized by them, are connected with each other, thus forming a grid of space.
- *A third* determination level is based on the varying distance between each space segment and all other space segments ("universal distance"), and conversely the accessibility and thus the location of the space segments or places within an area.

Concerning the first determination level: space segments can

be defined as visibility fields (convex spaces) (HILLIER, 1996). According to Hillier a visibility field is a spatial unit where every point can be viewed from every other point; this also results in the respectively restricted extent of a space segment (street, square etc.). Generally the segment has at least two access points, to a certain degree it is confined by buildings or plantings, and it contains technical facilities at or below street level. It provides the surrounding plots and buildings with direct access. On the one hand the space segments are constituent parts in the overall system of public space; on the other hand their characteristics are co-determined by their relations to all other space segments within the particular settlement unit. The space segments form the actual local level of scale. They acquire quality as a result of their supportive character, thus becoming "places" (HEALEY et al., 2002, p. 53). The features that lend a space segment supportive character are diverse. The most important are length, width and height. Based on extensive studies for pedestrian streets Amos Rapoport names 36 characteristics and/or features which he combines into 6 groups:

- (A) likely to have high levels of enclosure,
- (B) likely to be narrow,
- (C) likely to have complex spaces, i.e. many potential noticeable differences,
- (D) likely to have short or blocked views,
- (E) likely to have highly articulated surfaces of enclosing el-

	physical-spatial features	empirical values
(A) likely to have high levels of enclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enclosing elements likely to be tall - vertical width / height ratio - low percentage of sky visible 	typically between { 1:1 - 1:5 to 1:2 - 2:5
(B) likely to be narrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relatively low width <p>average / narrow streets: principal or main streets:</p>	8-12 m / 3-6 m 20 m
(C) likely to have complex spaces, i.e., many potential noticeable differences (sudden changes, irregular rhythms, transitions of various sorts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - variation in width, hence variation among minimum, maximum, and average width - many turns and twists per unit length within a given space - articulation of space - hence space made up of a sequence of subspaces - high contrast among these spaces and in those sequences - presence of major projecting elements (buildings, trees, doorways etc.) - large number of projecting elements per unit length 	
(D) likely to have short or blocked views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short subspaces - limited length of views, hence division into segments, defined by horizontal blocking or by use of angles or overlapping planes - use of level changes to block views vertically - use of overhead elements - use of bends, curves, and angles - use of cross-streets 	most below 100 m
(E) likely to have highly articulated surfaces of enclosing elements	<p>(1) <i>Side planes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - large number of elements or units per unit length, hence fine grain of enclosing surfaces (small module, variegated treatment, irregular setbacks, etc.) - high overall visual texture of enclosing surfaces - rich treatment of each individual unit, hence rich details, cornices, steps, porches, doorways, balconies, windows, and other projecting or three-dimensional elements - use of highly textured materials - use of a variety of materials - use of different colors - use of irregular rhythms - use of sudden and/or abrupt changes <p>(2) <i>Underfoot plane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of highly textured materials compatible with walking (or to indicate non-walking areas) - use of a variety of textures and materials - changes in level: ramps, steps, slopes, etc. - changes in light and shade <p>(3) <i>Overhead plane</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presence of projecting elements overhead: roof overhangs, awnings, arches and bridging passages over street; balconies etc. - large number of overhead elements per unit length - complex and intricate roof lines, chimneys, etc. 	significantly below 9 m
(F) high complexity at the <i>area</i> level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - large number of possible paths - large number of choice points - indirect views hinting at further spaces (streets, courts, plazas etc.) - sequences of different spaces at the area level - high contrast among spaces at area level 	

Fig. 4: Supportive characteristics (according to Rapoport, 1990); “a hypothetical repertoire of visual fixed-feature elements for achieving complexity in pedestrian streets.”

ements,

• (F) high complexity at the area level

(RAPOPORT, 1990, p. 288 ff., see details in figure 4).

In his book *Life Between Buildings. Using Public Space*, Jan Gehl describes a differentiated series of supportive characteristics and/or features, which he classifies according to activities: (1) walking, (2) standing, (3) sitting, (4) seeing, hearing, talking, (5) a pleasant place in every respect, (6) soft edges

(GEHL, 1996, p. 135 ff.) (see details in figure 5). "When outdoor areas are of high quality, necessary activities take place In addition ..., a wide range of optional activities will also occur because place and situation now invite people to stop, sit, eat, play, and so on. In streets and city spaces of poor quality, only the bare minimum of activity takes place" (GEHL, 1996, p. 13).

Concerning the second determination level: the grid of space, the way in which the individual space segments are put

activities / behavior within public space	physical-spatial features	empirical values
(1) walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dimensioning of streets - paving materials and street surface conditions - walking distances (for most people) - direct routes when the destination is in sight - spatial sequences: no long, straight pedestrian routes; rather winding or interrupted streets - when large spaces are to be crossed: pedestrian routes along the edge (building facades, arcades) - differences in level: street crossing as much of a horizontal fashion as possible; ramps rather than stairs 	10 m (for 100 people / min.) 400 - 500 m
(2) standing (staying)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at the edge of a space: under colonades, awnings, sunshades along the facades; in niches, recessed entrances, porches, verandas, plantings in the front yards - elsewhere in the space: on corners, in gateways; near columns, trees, street lamps, bollards - in summary: irregular facades and a variety of supports within the outdoor spaces 	
(3) sitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'primary seating': benches and chairs placed in carefully chosen, strategically correct locations: 'space within the space', niches, corners; places that offer intimacy, security and a good microclimate; view on whatever is going on in the space - 'secondary seating': stairways, pedestals, steps, low walls, etc. 	
(4) seeing, hearing, and talking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the borders of the space corresponding to the limits of the 'social field of vision': maximum distance for seeing events maximum distance for seeing facial expressions - lighting of pedestrian areas being ample and well directed - limited background noise, still enabling conversation to hear other loud and soft sounds of voices, footsteps, songs, etc. - talking: benches opposite one another (not back to back) or placed at an angle 	70 - 100 m 20 - 25 m < 60 dec. 45-50 dec.
(5) a pleasant place in every respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - protection from crime: access roads and open spaces clearly connected to the individual residences in the form of precisely defined common areas (avoiding 'no-man's land') - protection from vehicular traffic: pedestrian streets or areas of speed limit (e.g. <i>Woonerf</i>) - protection from unpleasant weather, good access to good weather (in northern countries): sunny and wind-protected outdoor spaces; low and attached buildings, placed along narrow streets, rather no high-rise buildings; windbreaks, trees, hedges, covered areas, etc. 	
(6) soft edges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being able to stay next to the buildings: linking indoors and outdoors; good resting areas directly in front of houses (doorways, semiprivate front yards etc.); places to sit at the entrance doors - distance from the houses to the street not too great 	< 4 m

Fig. 5: Supportive characteristics of outdoor areas. (Source: Gehl, 1996).

together and succeed each other, secures the material-physical relation and communication between all space segments within a settlement unit. It is based primarily on the public grid of streets and pathways and connects every place with every other place. It organizes the differing levels of scale of public space: neighborhoods, local districts, the whole city (and beyond). The grid of space can (according to Hillier) be represented on the basis of axial lines, the length of which results from the distance a person can see from each of the individual places. The spatial relation of all axial lines with one another within an area can be measured according to their degree of "integration." This reveals something about the quality, or the supportive character, of the grid of space. Important features are the length and direction of the axial lines, the way they are interlinked, the relation between continuous and broken lines, the mesh width and/or block sizes, the street widths.

Concerning the third determination level: the sum of the distances between each space segment and all other places in an area describes its 'integration' and, conversely, its accessibility (HILLIER, 1996, p. 104 ff). This is an abstract mathematical quantity that has actually proved to be highly significant. The distance between two spatial elements, space segments or axial lines, is calculated from the number of other spatial elements that have to be traversed, the "depth." The sum of the distances from one spatial element to all other spatial elements in an area is the "total depth" or *universal distance*. When entered onto a map, the different values for the total depth result in the distribution pattern of varying accessibility or location of all space segments or axial lines in an area. The printouts of the maps, each for a different level of scale, show the spatial distribution of the different functional potentials (functionality, intelligibility) in the public space of a settlement unit.

Hillier in particular has shown that the *configuration* of objects and spaces in an area represents the key to spatial synergy, "the key both to the forms of the city and how human beings function in cities" (HILLIER, 1996, p. 152). He has also shown that the supportive characteristics of space segments and the grid of space are measurable. And his measurement results display a high correlation with the actual activities and behavior of the users in the public space, so that quality can in fact be determined. In the case of the first two determination levels the measurement values are very concrete, since they are based on visual perception (visibility fields, axial lines). But on the third determination level measurements are made of "what we cannot see," the relation between every spatial element (or object) and every other spatial element within an area (integration or accessibility). By representing the spatial links between the visibility fields or axial lines in connection with the total grid of space it is possible to show the supportive characteristics of physical public space both geometrically and in mathematical values, while combining measurement and quantity with the subjective element of perception.

Local identity

Local identity denotes a relationship between people and places in the context of urban design: people who live in a settlement unit (neighborhood, local district, city as a whole) or frequent and use these from time to time. When the relationship is strong enough, for whatever possible reason, it can form a counterbalance to the relationships that the people have with other places throughout the world. The problem closely associated with the buzzword "globalization" and its consequences can be attributed to the fact that relations with other places and dependence upon them have increased markedly over the past two centuries; that on average the other places lie further away from an individual's own place than was pre-

viously the case, yet they have shifted into closer proximity; and that even life in the most isolated village is, voluntarily or involuntarily, affected by worldwide changes. In many places this has led to shifts in meaning and significance.

The tremendous expansion of the communications spectrum has advantages and disadvantages, and these are distributed in different ways for different places and groups of inhabitants. Reactions vary: on the one hand there is euphoria and a pronounced interest in the expansion and multiplication of relations between places; on the other hand there is a legitimate fear of becoming too dependent on external forces and ending up among the losers. What interests us in the context of our theme is how the places present themselves and develop in their social and physical-spatial organization, and what influence do the construction of public space and its active shaping by urban design measures have here. It can be observed that both the communities and regions that see themselves on the side of the losers, and those that see themselves on the side of the winners, make mistakes in their urban planning policy: either by being insufficiently acquainted with their physical-spatial organization, or by assessing it incorrectly; by often wasting this potential; by failing to create locality (in the above-mentioned sense) and in fact destroying it. This, however, is by no means new. One only has to consider the exaggerated construction and extension of urban highways in the second half of the 20th century (a process that at times continues into the present) and the often accompanying gross negligence of public space.

In the following I would like to formulate two theses in connection with public space and local identity:

- the first thesis is that the physical city represents a significant part of the local potential; even, and especially, under the conditions of current globalization processes and beyond the competition of the metropolises and large conurbations for the biggest profit;
- the second thesis is that a certain quality in physical public space is contributed by means of spatial synergy and its supportive characteristics to different activities and behaviors as well as to its corresponding use and perception, and this can promote the process of identification with a settlement unit to produce a sense of local identity.

Within a settlement unit there are "inferences from organization of space (and artifacts) to organization of communication and meaning" (RAPOPORT, 1990, p. 85). If it is true that physical public space (as described above) is the most important component of physical-spatial organization in a settlement unit, it can – through the way it is designed and shaped – influence the everyday use and the visual and physical perception of city, and conversely, it can become the object of territorial appropriation and identification. Insofar as this leads to identification with their settlement unit on the part of the inhabitants or other users, identification that is sustained over time, then we can speak of local identity. It refers to a kind of objective singularity that distinguishes the place (neighborhood, local district, city, region) from other places and provides it with a place in the system of the many places around the globe. This also means that the inhabitants and other users can have a spatial-geographic reference point and at the same time an openness toward the outside, without necessarily having to take refuge in the non-commitment of the worldwide net. An important role is played in the process of identification by the supportive characteristics of the physical city, especially the physical public space. To a certain extent local identity can be seen as dependent on the quality of public space, which means that public space becomes a constituent part of local identity.

In order to gain more precision and provide some evidence,

I would finally like to take a brief look at the concepts of *place* and *placemaking*, already in use in Anglo-American discussion and recently introduced into German debate. In a contribution by Dietrich Fürst et al. on the theme of *Placemaking and Local Governance* the question is asked: "How do social place constructs relate to the artefacts that are included in them?" (FÜRST et al., 2004, p. 14). This question addresses clearly environment-behavior relations. "Spaces become places because they are acknowledged as such by those living there, doing business there This can generate synergies or clashes of place conceptions ..." (HEALEY et al., 2002, p. 53). The shaping of places is "more likely to gain in significance again, despite all conjectures about the increasing spatial dependence of globalized economic processes" (FÜRST et al., pp. 25-26). "The space of flows permeates not only all levels of human experience in networked society. Both in advanced as well as in traditional societies, the majority of people live in places, and as a result they perceive their space as place related. A place is a locality that, in form, function and meaning, is independent within the borders of physical proximity" (CASTELLS, 1999, p. 75). "If then, the qualities of places are important in determining the futures of people, of economic activities, and of environmental systems, how are they produced and maintained? How can they be improved?" (HEALEY, 1998,

p.1532). This question posed by Patsy Healey leads to the concept of placemaking, which is understood as "a collective process of people living and acting in a space to improve the quality of space use and to socio-emotionally 'appropriate' it" (FÜRST et al, p. 22). "Placemaking embraces all measures concerning public space, its functionality and its formation, as well as its symbolic representations" (p. 54). This refers explicitly to public space in connection with place and locality, placemaking and appropriation as a sign of identification or local identity.

Summary

In figure 6 the interactive relationship between the social and physical-spatial dimension of public space is again summarized (the highlighted frames reflect the theme of this contribution in the narrower sense): A settlement unit is fundamentally defined by the relationship between physical environment and social behavior (environment-behavior relations). It manifests both social organization and a clearly distinguishable physical-spatial organization. This particularly applies to *public space*. The quality of a settlement unit should be measured according to the degree of correspondence between social and physical-spatial organization and the *spatial synergy* pro-

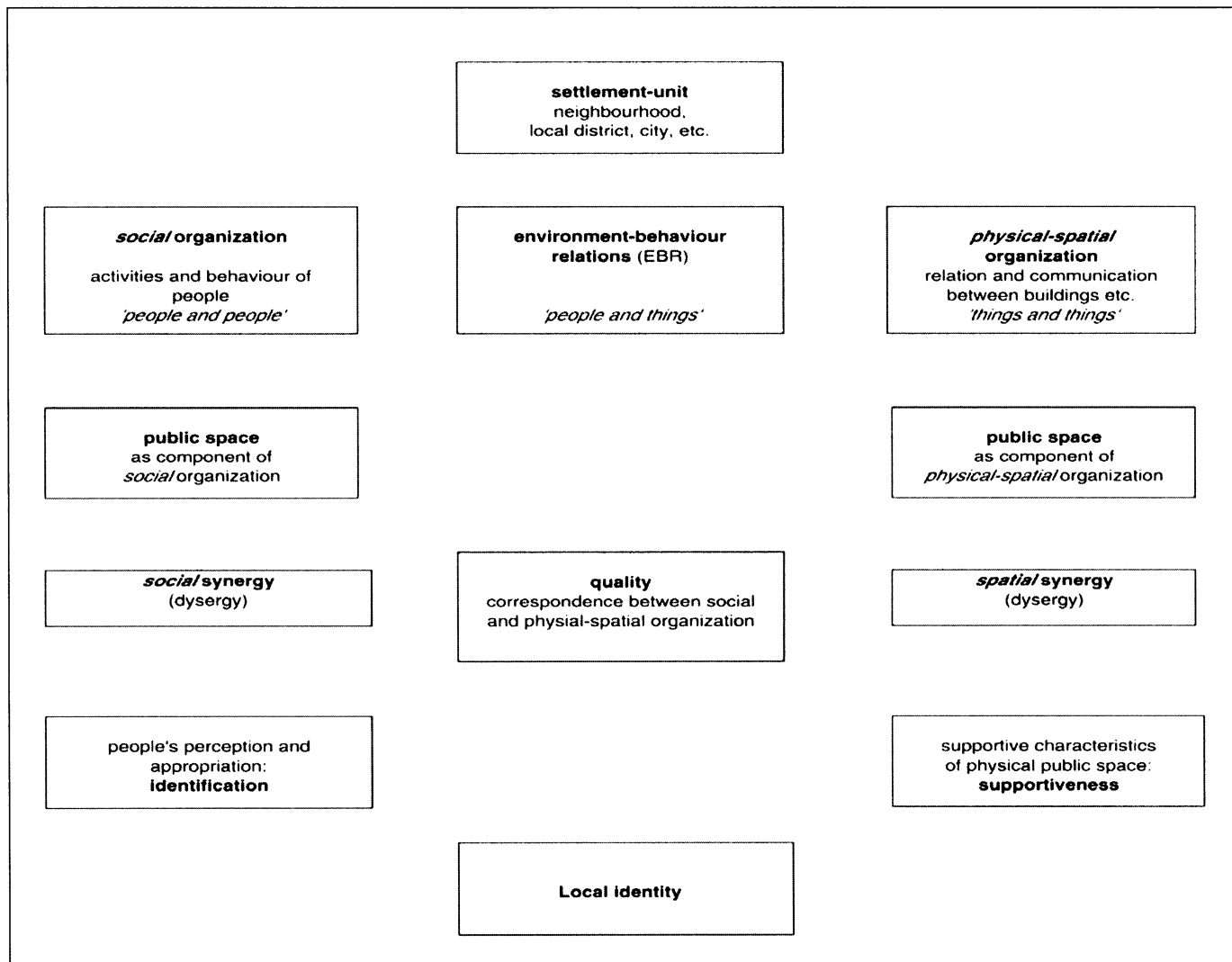


Fig. 6: Public space and local identity.

duced by it. When the inhabitants and other users are able to identify with their place because of this quality, this will be complementarily influenced by supporting characteristics, the *supportiveness* of physical public space. This can give rise to the emergence of *local identity*.

In this contribution I wanted to show:

- what constitutes public space within settlement units;
- which special weight it has as social and physical public space for the functionality and intelligibility of settlement units: both analytically in relation to the potential that each existing city already contains, and in terms of action for the planning of city;
- how the relation between social and physical public space can be theoretically and empirically grasped and measured (relations between people and things) using the paradigm of supportiveness;
- how the interaction between the various elements and/or characteristics of physical public space (relations between people and things) can be grasped and measured using the paradigm of configuration; and finally,
- in which respect urban public space can contribute to the formation of local identity and thus become a constituent part of it.

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