The Influence of "Third Places" on The Quality of the Public Domain

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Abstract. The attractiveness of public spaces depends on many factors. Both physical components, functional and spatial solutions as well as the number and variety of activities of people using them are significant. However, one of the most important roles of public spaces is to enable user integration and interaction — the existence of the so-called sphere of the "public domain" by facilitating establishing relationships between people. These relationships can be varied and determined among others by the length and type of contact between people, but also by the distance between the users. The greater the possibility of a deeper relationship, the more the quality of the "public domain" increases. Certain places with specific features give such an opportunity. They are so-called "third places". They are informal public gathering places where people can interact and socialize. Care for the high level of the "public domain" and the broadly understood attractiveness of public spaces is important because it allows to increase the inhabitants' quality of life. This fact, in turn, may also have a direct impact on the growth of the value of a given space both in the social, economic as well as cultural and political context. This article is intended to bring closer the types of interpersonal contacts occurring in the public space as well as different ways of their qualification. Above all, the basic aim of the work is to familiarize readers with the idea of "third places" and to present the possibilities of increasing the quality of the "public domain" both inside the buildings and between them.

1. Introduction
The creation of public spaces by architects is a difficult and complicated task. It requires knowledge of not only the physical characteristics of its constituent elements but also those more difficult to define - parameters that interact psychologically and generate specific social behaviors. Due to the importance of the design decisions, it is vital to know a number of dependencies that rely on the quality of the created spaces. One of such elements of public space affecting the development of the public domain is the presence of the so-called "third places". This work aims to introduce the concept, describe its main features and indicate the role played in the context of spatial and social conditions.

2. Interpersonal contacts occurring between users of the public spaces and the different ways of their qualification
Public space is an element of the city structure and is understood as an open area, widely available to potential users. It is considered a common good and "property" [1]. In urbanized areas, it may be an external space, such as streets, squares or parks, or internal space, located within the buildings such as
museums or offices. Regardless of the location, public space gives the opportunity of contacting other people, and this contact is the essence of the public space which can be very diverse depending on the interpersonal distance. E.T. Hall [2] observed and described its four kinds. First, it is *intimate contact*. It takes place when the distance between people is less than 0.5 m which enables an exchange of many sensory details between them. This distance is reserved for family members and very close relatives. Second, it is *individual contact*. It occurs when the distance between people is in the range from approx. 0.5 m to 1.20 m. Within such distance, relatives spend time and talk to each other. In addition to the possibility of perception of many fragrances, audible and visible details, physical contact is also possible. Third, it is *social contact*. It is when the distance between people is in the range from 1.20 m to 3.60 m. It is the distance in which the interaction between people who don’t know each other well or at all takes place. There is no physical contact between them. The last one it is *public contact* occurs when the distance between people is in the range from 3.6 m to 7.6 m. People who remain in such a distance are strangers. Contact is connected only with the sense of sight; neither side expects an active reaction.

Depending on the distance between the people, the number of possible activities increases and they can be very diverse. L. Lofland [3] categorized them into four tips of contact. He named the first as *fleeting*. It is a behavior that lasts from a few seconds to several minutes and occurs between strangers. It may involve making eye contact between the passers-by or exchange of short phrases, e.g., "Is this place occupied?", "Yes, I'm sorry, I'm waiting for someone". He also specifies what *routinized contact* is. It is a short-term behavior that occurs mainly between strangers when certain reactions can be predicted. It is a kind of interaction that takes place for example, between a waiter and a restaurant client. L. Lofland also explains *quasi-primary behavior*. In his opinion it is a contact which is lasting from several minutes to several hours and taking place between people who are connected for some time by doing the same activities, e.g., waiting together at a bus stop/train station or watching a performance of the street artist. It can also be a conversation between strangers (traveling companions) in public transport vehicles. Last contact he specifies was *intimate–secondary contact*. It is a behavior that can last long, often or regularly. Activities of this type evoke positive emotions and are associated with creating a deeper relationship, e.g., between a hairdresser and a regular client or people regularly visiting a specific restaurant/bar/cafè.

However, V. Mehta [4] has a different approach to the classification of people’s activities in the public space and divides them into *passive, fleeting and enduring sociability*. He describes passive sociability as behaviors that are associated with the desire to be among other people, but they do not necessarily involve direct contact, e.g., verbal. It is more about "being alone in the crowd," and it is a form of relaxation involving, for example, reading a newspaper alone, listening to music on a city bench or watching other people from the sidewalk cafè. Fleeting sociability in the opinion of V. Mehta is short-term interpersonal contacts that may be the beginning of deeper interactions. These can include gestures directed to friends, for example waving, smiling, nodding, short conversations (e.g., about the weather with a neighbor or asking a stranger about the route/hour), passive and active participation in parades/festivals or observing and commenting atypical events such as a car accident. Finally, V. Mehta named the last type of people’s activities as enduring sociability. He explains that these are interpersonal contacts that occur regularly among the relatives. It is an intimate relationship, usually long-lasting. Deepening it is possible in a space which appropriates physical properties (e.g., seats conducive to the conversation) and in the area perceived as safe and peaceful, where people can relax. It is best if this space is located near services with the possibility of observing the surroundings.

Regardless of how specific behavior is categorized, it is in a large extent the result of interaction between the user and the environment in which he finds himself [4]. The environment, whose character can be very differentiated, is conditioned, among others by the location, applied architectural,
composition and spatial design solutions, functional layout, quality or access to a given space, but also by age, gender, culture, needs or emotional state of people who use it [2, 5].

3. What it is "public domain"?
Considering the fact various proportions of all kinds of interpersonal relationships occur in public places, we can notice a certain relation between the type of activity of people and the attractiveness of a given area. Without any doubts, some mentioned types of activities strengthen a sense of community of users of a given space more than others. The question should be asked: how proper selection of functional solutions of buildings and spaces between them as well as the selection of the level of their differentiation can contribute to the consolidation and intersession of relationships between the people. It is particularly important because by exploiting public spaces that provide a wide range of sensations and interpersonal contacts, the society identifies with a given space, and with the city as a whole. It contributes to the increase of the sense of identity. Likewise, this sense along with vitality and accessibility, W. Wicher says, "is one of the three determinants defining the value of public space as a place of possible social activities and behaviors" [6].

According to M. Auge [7] space, which enables its users to develop a sense of identification is connected with the existence of so-called "places" and "no places". According to Auge, "places" are engaging and lively, associated with the positive emotions of a person and his sense of belonging to a given group of people. A community that is connected by a characteristic place full of meanings, ties, and stories. And "no places" are not participatory. Auge describes them as such, in which people co-exist, but do not enter into any deeper relationship between themselves. Despite being in the crowd of other users, they feel lonely, making the space in which they find themselves indistinct and indifferent.

Therefore, the claim that the very existence of a space accessible to the public must mean that it is the space of real interaction is a misuse. In order to differentiate between the publicly available physical space from what may occur in it, a new term - "public domain" – was introduced. According to Hajer and Reijndorp it is defined as a place of "exchange" of patterns of behavior, views, experiences between people, a sphere in which relationships are formed, which in turn shape the society, because "we get to know this proverbial another, and we establish relationships with different behavior, different ideas and preferences" [8], which may eventually lead to changes in ourselves.

4. What they are "third places"?
Certain places in the public space may contribute to the building of the described relations. They can attract people to public spaces and support social activities. Such locations are called "third places". This term was first introduced by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg from the University of West Florida in Pensacola in his book entitled "The Great Good Place". He defined and described what "third places" are and what role they play. These are the places of rest other than the places of residence, the so-called "first" places - where people relax, but mainly with other family members. They are also not the workplaces, so-called "second" places that are more formal spaces that concentrate on generating economic resources. "Third places" are a place of socialization, which cannot be achieved either at home or at work [9].

Oldenburg also explains some of the features of "third places". First of all, they are accessible. They are located close to home or work and using them does not require membership or fulfilling of any special rules like a dress code, while getting to them does not require a lot of effort. Secondly, they are comfortable. Provide good and playful atmosphere, like "home away from home". Thirdly they are welcoming - no one is playing the role of "the host". "Third places" are used to associate with friends, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, and even strangers. In this kind of places, different types of people with different views or socio-economic status are equal and are treated more than just as a client. Furthermore "third places" offer their users food and drinks and their prices are not excessive. Eating
and drinking is an excuse to talk; it is another reason why people can be in a given place [10]. The "third places" may be, for example, restaurants, cafes, bars, small businesses, parks, gyms, hairdressers, churches or community centers [11].

Due to the fact that conversation and exchange of thoughts by third-party users is the main activity, it gives the opportunity to learn about and unite the local community. It also creates new friendships which in turn, promotes the development of social life, contributing to the increase of social trust and a sense of security [9]. By creating a kind of intellectual forum, all such informal meetings contribute to the intensification of the sense of community of the residents as well as affect the identification of the local community with the surrounding "third place" space - the building, square, street, and district. All of these factors are important for people's quality of life, which may contribute to the increase in the economic, cultural and social value of the whole space adjacent to the "third place" [12].

5. Physical features of the "third places"
The most important physical characteristics of the "third places" were pointed out and characterized by Vikas Mehta and Jennifer K. Bosson professors at the University of South Florida. They claim that the reception of a given "third place" is influenced by such features as personalization of the street front by the business, the permeability of the business to the street, seating and shelter provided by the business on the street space [10].

The first feature characterizing "third places" is personalization. It can be achieved by placing private objects in windows, shop windows or on the sidewalk directly in front of the building, thus expanding the private space [2, 4]. Examples of personalization include flower pots, display of products on the window shop, occasional decorations, notices boards, chairs, tables, umbrellas. The use of such elements in public space or at its intersection makes the territory more interesting and provides psychological security. It’s stimulating for the pedestrians and "creates a reason to stop and look [at]. [It can also] generate conversation and other social interactions" [10].

Another feature of third places is permeability of the street front. "[It] is more than just the transparency of the building façade. Permeable street fronts actively reveal the interior so that people on the street are able to sense what is going on and understand the activities inside the buildings" [10]. Lack of eye contact between what is happening inside and what is happening outside contribute to the decrease in the attractiveness of the place, reducing the number of potential users. According to R. Gibbs [13]a minimum of 60% of the front of the store should be a glass surface because the permeability of the place enables to see and understand what is inside of the business. Pedestrians not only can see goods and people inside the building but also experience the pleasure due to sensory stimulation of the shop windows [14].

"Third place" is also characterized by seating provided by the business on the public space. It is important because it supports social behavior in various ways. The main function of seats placed in public space is the ability to observe the surroundings. It is one of the most important forms of spending free time. Then, when the seat is additionally associated with eating and drinking, our activity can be connected with a feeling of relaxation and pleasure. Therefore, users can stay longer, which gives the possibility of observation of the surroundings as well as co-creation of urban life. Moreover, researchers like V. Mehta [4], W. Whyte [14], C. Hass-Klau [15] and J. Gehl [16] have proven that the mere presence of people increases the attractiveness of a given place. It should be noted that especially "movable chairs are a desired form of seating due to the choice, flexibility, and comfort they offer" says W. Whyte [14].

The last feature of the "third place" that support outdoor activities is shading. A shelter like canopies, awnings, shading umbrellas and overhangs also make public spaces "attractive for human use and social
interaction" because according to W. Whyte [14] it is said that at temperatures above 20° Celsius people prefer to move to areas covered from the sun exposure.

According to the authors of the paper "Third Places and the Social Life of Streets" Vikas Mehta and Jennifer K. Bosson, it can be stated which of the mentioned and described features affect the attractiveness of the "third places" to the greatest extent [10]. The authors of the paper researched three main commercial streets located in three towns in Massachusetts, USA. The streets are very similar. They are well connected with the rest of the city, all of them are defined mostly by old and four-story high buildings, and all three were renovated in the past decade to make them more pedestrian friendly. The function of the buildings is mixed. It is a combination of housing, small local businesses, and big chain stores. The most important thing is that each one included a combination of "third places" and "non-third places". First, the researchers selected characteristic buildings and then interviewed the pedestrians and collected their opinions about the business in this objects. Owing to that information, "third places" were selected on every street. Then the researchers measured the characteristics of this setting: personalization, permeability, seating, and shelter in all 120 businesses on the three main streets. They counted each seat and canopy and awarded points from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) for personalization and permeability. Visual surveys were only conducted during days with temperatures between 55°F [12.8 °C] and 85°F [29.4 °C] from late May through early October in fair weather between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. on weekends” [10]. As a result, "third palaces" compared to other businesses on the street received higher ratings in all four categories. The study suggests that, although "personalization and permeability are clearly important features of the third places," they are not as important as features of businesses that "increase people’s physical comfort by providing a place to sit and shelter from the sun" [10].

Therefore, according to J. Gehl, seats should be arranged in such a way that they allow for casual conversation (e.g., mobile chairs placed around the table or at a 90-degree angle), and at the same provide the opportunity to observe the surroundings (e.g., by setting them in the direction of busy tracks and openings) [16]. In addition, if the seats are covered from the sun, they increase the comfort of users because on sunny days our body is less overheated, and the sun does not dazzle us anymore. It should also be emphasized that people using the shade provided by businesses feel more intimate - thanks to the roofing they are separated from a larger space, argues J. Jacobs [17].

6. How and where is the opportunity to create "third places"?

Knowing the conditions described above, authorities, city planners and architects, depending on their capabilities, wanting to develop public domain in generally accessible spaces, are increasingly using methods that support and create "third places" or limit the creation of these functions that prevent socialization of residents.

The creation of "third places" may be supported by creating detailed records in the Local Development Plans, which it effectively influences the functions that are located in the buildings. For example, in Denmark, in order to prevent the creation of boring frontage, it was forbidden to locate functions such as offices and banks at ground level or the length was limited to 5 m [16]. Areas covered by plans create spaces of interactions in a more predictable way. They also reduce social problems and prevent the degradation of a given space by bad decisions.

In addition, the creation of "third places" can be facilitated the resources from the city budget or as part of the Citizens' Budget, as it is in Wroclaw. The revitalization of the Przedmiescie Odrański and Oławskie districts resulted in the formation of the object named Ruska 46, which is a new space for culture, Local Activity Centers, Center of Non-governmental Organizations, Extreme Sports Hill, Infopoint, or art studios. Each of these places, due to its location and function, can become a place of rich contacts of the local community.
The theory related to the influence of "third places" on the development of the public domain is reflected not only in creating them as a component of public space but also as part of the buildings. Thanks to this enrichment of the functions provided by a given building, it fulfills the emotional and social needs of its users.

Despite their leading function, bookstores frequently serve as a place where you can sit comfortably, drink, read something and, above all, stay among other people (e.g., Bona and Bonobo Bookstore in Krakow, Matras in Rzeszów). It is, of course, a marketing strategy which, by causing a comfortable situation for the body and the spirit of the customers, encourages shopping. However, it may also give a much more important social role to the commercial object. Some bookstores go even further and expand their offer. In Seattle bookstores called Third Place Books, apart from distributing books in "[t]he common areas host community programs such as college jazz concerts, game nights, knitting clubs, farmers markets, story hours, and tai chi lessons, while meeting rooms in the back offer gathering spaces for more private activities like study and support groups, or foreign language and computer lessons" [18].

Also, libraries frequently enrich their offer with additional functions. According to M. Pędich, "[...] the library is not only a home for the book but above all, it is a place of social contacts. It is facilitated by the separation of departments for readers from various age groups, and the special service for the minority groups"[19]. It can be achieved, for example, by designing in the library building meeting space (conference rooms, cafes), exhibition space or playground zones for the children. These places can encourage and extend the time spent in a given building. They allow people of different ages and needs to interact which would not be possible in other circumstances. These complementary library functions, significantly deepen the relationships between the users, by increasing the regularity of the meetings. Examples of such libraries from Poland include the Library in Opole, Kultura Station in Rumia, Sopoteka in Sopot or the Library in Czarny Bór.

However, the concept of designing "third places" has been deeply rooted mostly in business buildings. It was noted that the presence of "third places" in offices could have a direct impact on the productivity of the employees, which in turn, brings tangible economic benefits. Bearing in mind the fact that it is not the time spent behind the desk, but freedom of choosing the place to work affects the creativity of people, multipurpose and flexible office spaces were created. They fully adapt to the changing needs, preferences, and forms of employee’s activity. The concept of creating such offices is called activity based working. Office spaces using these ideas are characterized by the maximum increase in the comfort of employees by providing a choice of various:

- seats (e.g., chairs, couches, poufs);
- meeting and work rooms (intended for smaller and larger groups, more or less isolated, of a different nature - more or less formal);
- preferences related to work ergonomics (e.g., adjustable chair and desk height, color and intensity of the light).

"Third places" are therefore one of the ways to diversify the offer of functional offices. Owing to the right choice of equipment and decor, these places resemble a café rather than a classical conference room and thus facilitate a more casual conversation. The examples of the headquarters that used the theory of activity-based working include the CBRE offices - Warsaw, Codewise - Krakow and probably the best known examples from around the world: the offices of Microsoft, Google or Facebook.

In addition, some of the offices encourage their employees to work outside the building in separate roofed spaces that offer the seats, Internet access as well as food and drink. Apart from the increased profits of a given company, these activities also contribute to the revival of public spaces in the vicinity.
of the building. Examples of such solutions include Outbox, in Silver Spring, Maryland or the previously mentioned Facebook offices in Menlo Park in California or Google in Mountain View also in California.

The importance of introducing the described solutions in the office space can be summarized by the words of Lynette Reed – researcher and facilitator on human potential for personal and organizational development - "[...] the third place adds balance to employees' lives and has the potential to create a corporate culture that improves employee engagement and productivity. The future holds new and innovative ways to balance all the places: home, work and the other".

7. Conclusions
The presence of "third places" both inside and outside of the building creates a space for user interaction and becomes a potential secure of livability. Through active participation of the users, and the confrontation of behaviours or views between individuals or social groups, they develop social connections.

"Third places" also build a community through the development of people's closeness and belonging to a given place. The stronger these relationships the higher the quality of the public domain. However, apart from creating interpersonal bonds, there is a deepening of relationships not only with the given place but also with the city as a whole. Owing to the "third places" that are the heart of a community, the city is vibrant with life.

However, it should be remembered that since the "third places" must provide their users with comfort on many levels, both psychical and emotional, there is no single formula for this type of place. People are different also in their needs, and so places that these needs meet also have to vary. It is important to be aware that the more differentiated "third places" will be, the more they will enrich the state of society and the space in which these places are located.

Knowledge about creating and activating public spaces is essential when designing new or transforming existing public spaces. Bearing in mind that only a broad spectrum of relations and activities of users of these spaces affects the identification with a given space, it is necessary to carefully create places bursting with the life of the local community. "Third places" in which new ideas can be born, or the values important in a given environment can be consolidated or evolve.

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