

Seeking common ground: three perspectives on public space

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Public spaces have been a central concern of urban planners for centuries; more recently they have also captured the attention of sociologists, geographers, political scientists and economists. Focusing on urban public spaces, this review outlines three major perspectives on public space. The legal–economic perspective seeks to answer the most concrete questions about public space (what is it and who pays for it?), thereby laying the definitional and institutional groundwork for other enquiries. The socio-spatial perspective takes the existence of public space for granted and is more concerned with questions of design and application (what does it look like and how is it used?). Finally, the political perspective asks about public space’s role in democracy, both abstractly as a site for discursive activities and concretely as a site of exclusion or empowerment. While these three perspectives frequently overlap in practice, they are nonetheless distinguishable in their origins, assumptions and foci. This discussion thus serves to illustrate the potential for further cross-disciplinary connections that would enhance understanding of how public space works.

1. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, public spaces have been a central concern of urban planners – from the management of Greek agoras and Roman fora to the planning of renaissance Italian piazzas and the nineteenth century boulevards and arcades of Paris. More recently, public space has become a focus for sociologists, geographers and political scientists interested not only in how such places are built and managed, but also in how they function socially, economically and politically. Demonstrating this surge in attention on public space, many books have appeared on the topic, including general introductions (e.g. Carr *et al.*, 1992; Lofland, 1998; Woolley, 2003), guidebooks (e.g. Longo, 1996), design handbooks (e.g. Cooper-Marcus and Francis, 1997), political critiques (Low, 2000; Mitchell, 2003) and collections of key texts (e.g. Orum and Neal, 2010).

Focusing on urban public spaces, defined as ‘all areas that are open and accessible to all members of the public in a society, in principle though not necessarily in practice’ (Orum and Neal, 2010: p. 1), this review outlines three major perspectives on public space (see Table 1).

- (a) The legal–economic perspective seeks to answer the most concrete questions about public space (what is it and who

pays for it?), thereby laying the definitional and institutional groundwork for other enquiries.

- (b) The socio-spatial perspective takes the existence of public space for granted and is more concerned with questions of design and application: what does it look like and how is it used?
- (c) The political perspective asks about public space’s role in democracy, both abstractly as a site for discursive activities and concretely as a site of exclusion or empowerment.

This categorisation is not intended to suggest that scholarship on public space – either theoretical or applied – rigidly adopts only one perspective. Indeed, the topic of public space is complex and multi-dimensional, and most researchers and practitioners recognise this fact. However, while these three perspectives frequently overlap in practice, they are nonetheless distinguishable in their origins, assumptions and foci. Thus, rather than review the admittedly multi-faceted current literature, this paper intends to distil its core elements and offer a useful heuristic tool for those who are newly engaging in issues of public space and urban design, as well as for those who are unfamiliar with key texts from outside their own discipline. Additionally, while current scholarship on public space and best practice recommendations for its development and maintenance already incorporate multiple perspectives, this discussion serves to illustrate the potential for further cross-disciplinary connections that would enhance understanding of how public space works.

2. THE LEGAL–ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The legal definition of public space in the USA has a long history, beginning with the 1939 case of *Hague v. CIO* (307 US 496), which affirmed the importance of public spaces as key sites of those activities protected by the first amendment. Of particular significance is the decision of the US Supreme Court in the 1983 case of *Perry Education Association v. Perry Local Educators’ Association* (460 US 37), which established the three-tiered legal concept of public space known as the public forum doctrine (Kalven, 1965; Massey, 1999). The most open type of public space, the quintessential public forum, includes places like ‘streets and parks which “have immemorially been held in trust for the use of the public and...have been used for purposes of assembly, communicating thoughts between citizens, and discussing public questions”’ (460 US 37, p. 45; quoting 307 US 496, p. 515). These places are, and must always be, open and accessible to all, with expressive activity limited only in very

	Legal-economic	Socio-spatial	Political
Major topics	Public forum doctrine Public goods Business improvement districts	Design, mental maps segregation, health Civil order, identity	Power and control Exclusion Privatisation
Archetypal focal point	Public accommodation	The urban streetscape	The contested park
Attitude toward public space	Neutral	Optimistic	Critical
Future of public space	Agnostic	Evolving	Disappearing
Practical implications	Funding mechanisms	Design principles	Activism
Foundational scholars	US Supreme Court Paul Samuelson	Jane Jacobs Kevin Lynch William H. Whyte	Hannah Arendt Jürgen Habermas Henri Lefebvre
Table 1. Summary of perspectives on public space			

narrow cases. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the least open public space is the non-public forum, which includes ‘public property which is not by tradition or designation a forum for public communication’ (460 US 37, p. 46). Who may use these public spaces and how they may use them can be restricted to specific groups and activities. Between these two extremes, the US Supreme Court also defined a third type – the limited public forum; this includes public property that, unlike parks and streets, is not traditionally open but ‘which the State has opened for the use of the public as a place for expressive activity’ (460 US 37, p. 45). The Canadian courts, citing the ‘reasonable limits’ clause of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, rejected this categorising approach in favour of case-by-case evaluations (Moon, 1988).

The legal perspective on public space continues to develop as cases arise that challenge or seek to clarify the legal status of specific sites. For example, a 1990 case found that because the US Post Office is run like a business, sidewalks leading to its premises do not constitute a traditional public forum and thus are closed to free expression (United States v. Kokinda, 497 US 720). A 1994 case concerning the rights of anti-abortion protesters (Madsen v. Women’s Health Center, 114 S. Ct. 2516) spurred the passing of ‘bubble laws’ by many state and local jurisdictions that defined free speech zones within which expressive activity would be permitted. In some cases, rights of assembly and expression in public spaces require permits to be secured from local authorities; this has been met with scepticism because it places the legal status of such sites in the hands of those bearing guns and handcuffs (McCarthy and McPhail, 2006; Zick, 2006). Most recently, emerging technologies have raised new legal concerns about public space, including whether the proliferation of surveillance cameras in such places abridges privacy rights or the fourth amendment protection from unreasonable searches and seizures (Blitz, 2004).

The economic perspective on public space takes a similarly formalised and categorical approach. In its most basic form, public space is a type of public good, first defined by Samuelson (1954) as a resource that individuals cannot be prevented from consuming (i.e. non-excludable) and for which one individual’s consumption does not diminish its potential consumption by others (i.e. non-rivalrous). However, more recently, Webster (2007) argued that public spaces often follow a trajectory from a pure public good to a pure private good. Public spaces begin as pure public goods provided by the state but, with increasing

popularity, can become subject to rivalrous consumption due to overcrowding. To manage the congestion, an organisation charged with maintaining the space introduces regulations to restrict its use, thereby reducing consumption rivalries but also making the space more exclusive. As these regulations are incrementally expanded, assigning control over specific parts to certain individuals or groups, the public space takes on the character of a partly or completely private space. Figure 1 illustrates how this transformation from public good/space to private good/space might unfold in the case of an urban plaza. Though merely illustrative, such a transformation was observed by Zukin (1995) in the redevelopment of New York’s Bryant Park and by Whyte (1980) throughout New York more generally.

Because public space can take multiple forms as an economic entity, much of the research adopting this perspective considers the origins and financing of public space. In the past, through such public works programmes as Roosevelt’s ‘new deal’, the majority of public space was provided by the state and funded through public expenditure (Leighninger, 1996). However, in recent years, the creation of public space has increasingly been left to private developers. In some cases, developers are induced to provide public spaces through zoning laws that allow denser development in exchange for more street-level open space, although, as Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1993) found by comparing San Francisco and Los Angeles, there is much variation in how these arrangements play out. In other cases,

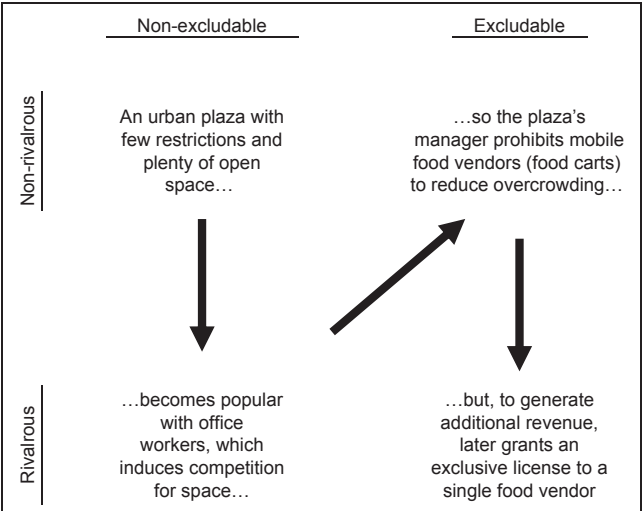


Figure 1. The economic trajectory of public space

public space is created or revitalised through public-private partnerships such as business improvement districts (BIDs), which allow businesses in a spatially bounded territory to finance construction aimed at economic development through a self-imposed tax (Levy, 2001; Mitchell, 2001; Steel and Symes, 2005). Whether of public or private origin, this perspective is also concerned with the economic consequences of public space or – put bluntly – the question of whether public space is worth it. As Robertson (1995) noted, public space lies at the heart of many urban revitalisation strategies, while a string of recent research argues that quasi-public spaces such as restaurants and shopping streets are essential to the economic viability of modern cities (Clark, 2003; Florida, 2005; Glaser *et al.*, 2001).

3. THE SOCIO-SPATIAL PERSPECTIVE

The socio-spatial perspective on public space takes a less formalised approach than the legal-economic perspective – it seeks to identify what such spaces do or should look like and how they are used. Much of the recent research in this vein traces to the foundational work of Lynch (1960), Jacobs (1961) and Whyte (1980), who addressed these issues from slightly different angles. Lynch (1960) brought the spatial features of public spaces to the foreground, examining how they give rise to socially constructed mental maps that allow individuals to navigate and make sense of complex environments. Jacobs (1961), in contrast, highlighted the social functions of such places, observing how the vitality and safety of certain neighbourhoods are intimately connected to their spatial configurations, especially to such features as density and diversity. By introducing a rigorous observational methodology, Whyte (1980) sought to empirically document the relationship between form and function, first for urban plazas and later for other types of open space.

Building on these seminal ideas, researchers adopting a socio-spatial perspective on public space have proceeded in two overlapping directions. The first direction, acknowledging that public spaces serve key social functions, focuses on how to maximise the utility of such places through careful design and planning, but is characterised by significant variation in attitudes toward urban design. Lang (1994) argues that there is an uncomfortable coexistence of four attitudes among designers. Those adopting a financially pragmatic attitude toward urban design seek to construct public spaces that ‘meet the profit demands of developers’, thus illustrating a practical instance where the socio-spatial and legal-economic perspectives blur together (Lang, 1994: p. 106). In contrast, those who view urban design as a problem-solving process more directly reflect the Lynch-Jacobs-Whyte attitude that social problems (and solutions) can be found in spatial form. The related attitudes of ‘urban design as art’ and ‘urban design through community participation’ represent different ways that designers may adopt a politicised perspective on public space, as illustrated by Breitbart and Worden (1994) and Levine (2002) (see Section 5).

Within the socio-spatial perspective, there is also much variation in the specificity of the approaches advocated by the numerous design handbooks that have appeared recently. For example, Francis (2003) recommends using the Landscape Architecture Foundation’s case study methodology to study a specific issue (e.g. children, vegetation) or a specific site (e.g.

Bryant Park, steps of the New York Public Library), thus providing a detailed needs assessment around which designs can develop. In contrast, Cooper-Marcus and Francis (1997) and Carmona *et al.* (2003) offer more general approaches that introduce typologies. Cooper-Marcus and Francis suggest detailed design guidelines and checklists for broad types of public spaces (e.g. urban plazas, neighbourhood parks), while Carmona *et al.* argue that successful development of public space must pay attention to at least six broadly social-spatial dimensions of design (morphological, perceptual, social, visual, functional and temporal). Still more general, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) suggests that certain design principles (i.e. best practices) have near-universal applicability, noting for example that many different public spaces fail due to lack of seating or that public space redesign need not be monumental but rather can simply ‘start with petunias’ (PPS, 2000: p. 33). Finally, documents such as the charter of the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU, 2001) propose a holistic philosophy of urban design that encompasses not only public space but also other land use issues.

A second approach within the socio-spatial perspective recognises the importance of careful planning and design, but focuses primarily on the social functions and consequences of public spaces. In some cases, these social functions are closely connected to the physical form of the space. Grannis (1998, 2005), for example, observes that the arrangement of small residential streets, often dismissed as trivial in spatial analyses of urban segregation, exerts a powerful influence on neighbourhood relations. As a result, racially ‘segregated networks of neighbourly relations emerge from segregated [e.g. by cul-de-sacs or pedestrian-impassable intersections] networks on residential streets’ (Grannis, 1998: p. 1530). Research on the linkage between social function and physical form is perhaps most robust in studies on the health-related effects of public space. The greatest attention has focused on how public spaces can encourage physical activity (Hillsdon *et al.*, 2006; Vojnovic, 2006; Vojnovic *et al.*, 2005), but research is also emerging on how such sites may also promote mental health (Guite *et al.*, 2006).

In other cases, however, a space’s physical form is not considered central to the social functions it facilitates. Indeed, in an enumeration of the social dimensions of such sites, Gieryn (2000) introduces a terminological shift from ‘space’, which denotes a location defined by abstract geometries of distance and direction, to ‘place’, which denotes a location defined by the meanings attributed to it by its users. Thus, some research adopting the socio-spatial perspective may more properly be considered as examining not public space, but public place. These public places can serve as ‘third places’ (Oldenburg, 1999) – the social gathering spots that lie between home and work and provide individuals with the opportunity to form bonds with one another and with the location itself, which can be severely disrupted if the place dissolves (Duneier, 1992; Milligan, 1998). Over long periods of repeated patterns of interaction, they can also give rise to a type of civil order structured around norms and behavioural codes like those observed by Anderson (1990) in the streets of a racially mixed area of Philadelphia or those illustrated by nineteenth century magazine engravings of New York City’s Fifth Avenue and Broadway (Domosh, 1998). Public places can also serve as the basis for individual and place

identity and the foundation of local culture (Zukin, 1995). For example, murals in Northern Ireland (Jarman, 1998) and Latino neighbourhoods (Delgado and Barton, 1998) were found to solidify the group identities of political and social factions. When 'the architecture of new cultural buildings is designed to reinforce the connection to the city' the city's brand as a tourism commodity is strengthened (NBM, 1998).

Despite the wide variation in research adopting a socio-spatial perspective on public space, a few key features draw the studies together.

- (a) They take as their archetypal focal point the urban streetscape. This partly reflects the initial foci of Lynch, Jacobs and Whyte, but also reflects the fact that such spaces are perhaps the most public and commonly encountered spaces of everyday urban life.
- (b) They tend to approach public space with relative optimism – not treating social dysfunction as a defining feature of the space, but rather as a challenge to be overcome by improved design.
- (c) In evaluating the future of public space, the socio-spatial perspective tends to recognise that such places evolve; old forms of public space may be disappearing, but new forms are being created (Neal, 2010).

4. THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The socio-spatial perspective is often placed in direct opposition to the political perspective, which views public space more critically as a site of contention where people are excluded and dominated, and as an institution that is disappearing as quickly as democracy itself (Goheen, 1998; Orum and Neal, 2010). Much of the empirical research adopting this perspective is grounded in the more philosophical works of Habermas, Arendt and Lefebvre.

In 1962, Habermas used the term 'public sphere' to describe an abstract, discursive form of public space filled with ideas, opinions and debates about issues of public interest (Habermas, 1989). Thus, the public sphere provides individuals an opportunity to engage in political participation through discussion, forming opinions and building consensus. Previously, in 1958, using the term 'public realm', Arendt described a similar kind of space, but one that facilitated both talk and action (Arendt, 1998). Individuals not only build consensus in the public realm, but also engage in political collective action to pursue mutual goals (Benhabib, 1992; Goodsell, 2003). Building on the Habermas–Arendt concept of public space, some have argued that because we live increasingly private lives and spend more time in private rather than public spaces, there has been a significant decline in political engagement (Putnam, 2000; Sennett, 1972). Adding a specifically urban element to this discussion, Lefebvre's 1968 phrase 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996) captures individuals' basic rights of access not only to physical public spaces that allow gatherings and interaction, but also to discursive public spheres of political participation that such sites make possible.

Typically, these ideas have appeared in empirical research as examinations of the ways that the openness and accessibility – that is, the democracy – of public space have been hampered by the exercise of political power, leading to the exclusion or

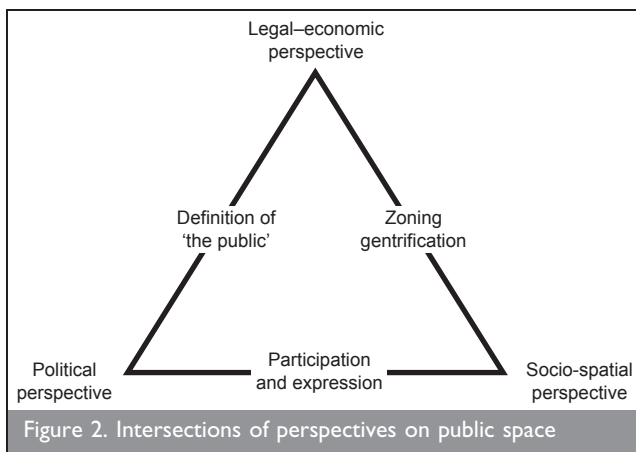
domination of others. A recent collection of readings edited by Low and Smith (2000) demonstrates this by its inclusion of discussions of how private interests dominate the maintenance of the public space and sphere, how fear is strategically deployed to shape the public environment, and how undesirable individuals are scrubbed from the public landscape. In addition to these general themes, several specific issues have become central to the political perspective on public space. For example, in a detailed analysis of plazas in South America, Low (2000) explores the political legacy of colonialism as the indigenous plaza form of public space was co-opted by European explorers. Low focuses on how such relations of domination yielded cultural changes in how such spaces were used and by whom.

Indeed, exclusion is a significant theme in the literature, appearing in multiple regions and with different groups being excluded. Crawford (1995) explores the exclusion of street vendors and the homeless in Los Angeles. In a particularly vivid and long-lasting confrontation, Mitchell (1995) documents how the University of California sought to exclude nearly everyone but students and professionals from People's Park in Berkeley. Similarly, Law (2002) describes how Filipino domestic workers struggle against being excluded from traditional Sunday gathering places in central Hong Kong. In the European context, Madanipour (2004) considers how marginal public spaces (i.e. sites that are open to marginalised ethnic groups) are often neglected compared with more the exclusive, prime public spaces that are open only to more dominant groups (compare with Duncan (1978)). Madanipour found that these exclusionary practices that divide public spaces into strata as readily as income or education generates class structure produce a sense of entrapment among already disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

A second key theme within this perspective is the role of, and mechanisms for, behaviour control in public space. In a critical study of Los Angeles, Davis (1992) highlights several mechanisms of control, including barrel-shaped benches, sprinklers and decorative enclosures around trash dumpsters designed to keep the homeless away from specific areas. However, behavioural control in public space is not limited to the 'undesirables'; it can also include middle-class shoppers and professionals when 'circulation is internalized in corridors under the gaze of private police' in shopping malls or office complexes (Davis, 1992: p. 226). Extending control to specifically political behaviour, Roberts (2008) describes how, although public space is the primary locus of the discursive activities of the public sphere, places that serve as sites to express dissent (e.g. through protests and rallies) are closely monitored and often designed with the potential for controllability in mind. Also gaining attention in the literature is the trend towards the privatisation of formerly public spaces. This represents perhaps the most extreme form of control by effectively removing the disposition of public space from the discussions and consensus-building of the public sphere (Kohn, 2004; McKenzie, 1994).

5. COMBINING PERSPECTIVES

Individually, each of these perspectives on public space provides key insights into how such places function. However, combining multiple perspectives allows researchers to consider some aspects of public space that are important but may otherwise be obscured (see Figure 2).



Zoning restrictions are one of the primary legal devices used to shape the form of public space, but their consequences can have implications on how the space is actually used. Simultaneously approaching public space from both legal-economic and socio-spatial perspectives, Smithsimon (2008) asks why New York's bonus plazas – an artefact of zoning laws that allow the construction of taller buildings in exchange for street-level public space – tend to be unused, unwelcoming, barren spaces. The economic explanation that developers 'do the minimum' required by zoning laws is a suggestion, but Smithsimon offers a more compelling socio-spatial explanation: that developers actively sought designs that would discourage people from lingering. A similar phenomenon is now also unfolding in San Francisco (King, 2008).

Understanding how public spaces are affected by gentrification – an essentially economic process of increasing land values but with wide-ranging social consequences – could also benefit from combining these two perspectives. While there is evidence that different groups use public spaces in different ways (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995), it is only recently that researchers have started to consider how changes in usage patterns are connected to larger processes of gentrification. When covered in *The New York Times*, this issue sparked a lively online discussion about whether disadvantaged groups become unwelcome in parks in their own neighbourhoods following beautification campaigns (Chan, 2007).

The combined lens of the socio-spatial and political perspectives has proven useful for researchers examining how the form of public space impacts citizens' participation in civil society, especially through the expression of a political agenda. Breitbart and Worden (1994) describe how the disruption of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in Boston by the relocation of the orange line subway was softened by involving residents in the redesign of, and selection of public art for, new stations. Similarly, Levine (2002) documents how the installation of Richard Serra's controversial Tilted Arc sculpture prompted citizens in New York City to organise both for and against the artwork, raising questions about who should decide what public space should look like. Billboards, among the most public of visual spaces, also present an opportunity for expression and participation, albeit transgressional and illegal when billboard correctors strategically modify advertising messages to make political claims (Drescher, 2000). Moreover, as Henaff and Strong (2001) note, political claims can be expressed through

the form of public space not only by individuals, but also by institutions like governments or corporations that use architectural elements such as imposing plazas to indicate status and power.

Consideration of political and legal-economic perspectives together allows researchers to consider questions of the openness and accessibility of public spaces, especially as definitions of 'the public' evolve. Although most definitions of public space, and indeed its formal legal status, identify such places as those that are open and accessible to the public, precisely who is a member of the public and thus to whom these places ought to be accessible remains contentious (Neal, 2010). Fraser (1992) is critical of Habermas's account of the public sphere, suggesting that it should include not just a single, dominant public, but also a variety of subaltern or counter-publics. Thus, some have advocated a multi-public model of public space wherein diversity and difference is embraced and such places are rendered open and accessible to all rather than only to members of a specific public (Iveson, 1998; Young, 1990). More concretely, Holston (1999) describes certain public spaces as spaces of insurgent citizenship, where those whose status as legitimate members of the public is not yet fully established, but where they nonetheless hold their ground and make claims of the legitimacy of their presence. This process is particularly visible in the case of documented and undocumented immigrants who, because they occupy the fringes of citizenship, challenge legal and normative conventions about the openness and accessibility of public space. Yet, for Holston, it is their continued presence in and use of such spaces that, over time, expands conceptions of 'the public'.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

While there is no shortage of research on best practices for public space design, the majority of this work adopts the socio-spatial perspective, focusing on how aspects of spatial form can be manipulated to achieve desired social ends. Many best practice principles derive from relatively commonsense pronouncements articulated decades ago by public space observers such as Jacobs (1961) and Whyte (1980). Jacobs distilled her understanding of what makes urban streetscapes work into four key requirements:

- (a) the ability to serve multiple functions such as shopping and exercise
- (b) short, meandering streets that encourage chance encounters among residents
- (c) diversity in the built environment to add aesthetic interest
- (d) a sufficient population density to provide a critical mass of activity.

In the context of urban plazas, Whyte added to this list an obvious but often overlooked fact that 'people tend to sit where there are places to sit', thus suggesting that one 'best practice' in the design of public space is simply to provide more of it: both public space generally and seating in particular (Whyte, 1980: p. 28).

More recent scholars have continued in this vein. For example, while Gehl's (2002) recommendations are often tailored to individual cities and their unique spatial conditions, they can be grouped into best practice categories that reflect earlier ideas:

build a city for walking and staying (e.g. sidewalks and benches (Whyte, 1980)) and reduce through traffic (e.g. to facilitate chance encounters (Jacobs, 1961)). Similarly, as discussed earlier, several public space design manuals have appeared within the past decade that offer variants on these best practices (e.g. Cooper-Marcus and Francis, 1997; Francis, 2003) and many independent municipalities have begun to prepare their own design manuals and best practice guidelines focusing on public spaces (Hawkes and Sheridan, 2009), including New York (NYCDoT, 2009) and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT, 2006). The PPS has collected many of these best practices, as well as its own research, in publications and online resources with titles such as 'Ten principles for creating successful squares' (PPS, 2010).

Notably, these best practice guidelines adopt a primarily socio-spatial perspective on public space, often providing only brief comments on these places' legal, economic or political features. To be sure, some guides take a wider view than others. The PPS, for example, includes 'diverse funding sources' and 'image and identity' among its ten principles for creating successful squares; these touch upon the legal-economic and political perspectives, respectively. However, the creation of successful public spaces will require future research on best practices, and especially new best practice manuals and guidelines, in order to more explicitly incorporate a multi-dimensional perspective on public space that reaches beyond the socio-spatial elements that are traditionally considered of central importance. Whereas such manuals currently include chapters and best practice guidelines on topics such as furniture or materials, subsequent iterations should also address issues that lie at the intersections of multiple perspectives on public space (see Figure 2).

Designers and planners guided by more encompassing best practice research would be better equipped to consider (at the intersection of the legal-economic and more traditional socio-spatial perspectives for example) the potential economic impact that redevelopment would have on the surrounding community and to reflect on the fact that increasing property values are not necessarily a universal benefit. Similarly, by combining socio-spatial and political perspectives, questions about the usefulness of and demand for public space could be expanded to include questions about whether its use constitutes genuine democratic participation or expression. Finally, where the legal-economic and political perspectives meet, design plans and processes that consider a public space's potential users (i.e. 'the public') could be extended to also consider users' legal (e.g. citizen versus alien) and normative (e.g. property owner versus homeless) standing in the community.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This review has demonstrated that public space continues to capture attention in a number of different fields. While researchers and practitioners often recognise the complex and multi-dimensional nature of public space, their work nonetheless usually begins from a disciplinarily informed perspective and, as a result, yields insights that are potentially restricted in breadth. Each of the three perspectives considered (i.e. legal-economic, socio-spatial and political) has notable strengths and robust literature upon which to draw. Although the perspectives frequently overlap in practice, they also highlight some historical and conceptual boundaries that are distinguishable

and will persist if not acknowledged. This conceptual model of perspectives on public space may serve as a useful heuristic tool that gives a skeletal structure to an otherwise highly complex topic, and offers a toolbox of concepts that can be combined in various ways to yield a more complete understanding of how public space works.

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