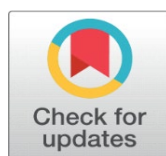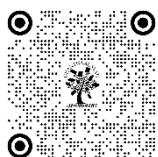# THE ETYMOLOGY OF PUBLIC SPACE- EXPLORING CRAFTING COMMUNITY SPACES

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ABSTRACT

The nature of public space has changed over the time period. Its role evolved and developed as per the requirement, context, and culture of people. Public space development is an art of creating a connection between the city and people. A city without public spaces creates a city without culture and history. Public space directly contributes for socio, the economic and environmental development of the city. Its traces can be found from Agora's in the Greek period to parks and squares in contemporary times. Public spaces have been focal point of the city in past, but they lost their attention during modern urban development. It acts as a stage for translation of art and the drama of city life. Different experts from various fields have introduced different terminologies to explain the same and much work is done on the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability. In contrast, the social dimension is yet to be explored. The public space directly contributes to social sustainability thus, it's essential to understand and integrate the concept of public space in the present time. In developing countries, the shortage of public space can be addressed by its effective utilization and the city's identity can be restored by developing an association between the city and people through publicness criteria identified in the study. The intent of the study is to provide a solution to fill the social gap created during modernism and technological advancement by taking references from the past.

Keywords: Public Space, Vernacular, Sustainability, Public Realm, Urban Public Space

1. INTRODUCTION

The term etymology was derived from the Greek word etymon which means "the literal meaning of a word as according to its origin.". The Etymology of public space in the paper can be defined as understanding the meaning of public space from its origin and development. The Oxford English dictionary defines public as an adjective "concerning all people or open to all." Public space is distinctly defined in varied literature. Public space is open to all common people without ownership of individual or private organizations Madanipour (2015). It is also defined as a place with free access, and opportunities for interaction Carmona (2010). It is a

democratic space Pourjafar et al. (2018) with accessibility and inclusion as major attributes Madanipour (2010). Public space is "space to which normally people have unrestricted access and right of way"Atkinson (2003). Public space is always being built due to socio-spatial connections Hatuka (2016).

Public spaces are one of the key factor in the formulation of a city and vital part of urban life Madanipour (2015). It acts as a stage for translation of art and the drama of city life. It helps in better connectivity, raising quality of life and property value, control over crime and catalyst for economic activity Mitchell & Staeheli (2009). The public spaces have their own distinct features such as associated history, cultural importance, revenue generation etc Spaces (2016). Three meanings are mentioned in the dictionary definitions of culture: the culmination of human effort, the process of progress, and the entirety of a way of life Madanipour (2016). The historic public places were integrated, functional part of city such as market place, streets, squares, plazas etc. and were not devised for recreational and relaxation purpose only Barnett (1995).

Public spaces have evolved significantly over time, imitating the variation in the social, cultural, and political structures and resulting into different typology of public space. In ancient times, public spaces were evolved as a result of activity such as shopping, religious ceremonies, or political activity. Few of the word famous examples of ancient public spaces are the Greek agora, the Roman Forum, and the Egyptian temple complexes. With the development of art and culture, its impression was also found in the public space in the form of ornamentation and decorations Moazzeni et al. (2023).

Major change in the trends of public space were identified after industrial revolutions. The encroachment of factories and mills raised the alarm for place for people to relax and interact. The public space in form of parks and plaza were intentionally planned for usage by public. Overall, the evolution of public spaces reflects the changing needs and values of societies over time, with a constant tension between functional efficiency and aesthetic expression.

2. LITERATURE STUDY

It has been observed that ancient public places are not intentionally planned but they were evolved between the buildings and its surrounding as per art, architecture and culture. The daily activities and regional culture serve as a self-reinforcing strategy for engaging in public life. The people and events are dispersed over both time and space, that there is practically never a possibility for individual actions to coalesce into larger or more significant sequences of occurrences Olwig (1989). Public place is recognized as a place made by the public for the public. The conception of public place alters with the time Ramlee et al. (2015). "Nothing happens because nothing happens" is result of scenarios where there are fewer people and less events happening in public areas Safiullah (2018). Whyte discovered three main factors for successful public spaces: accessibility, comfort, and sociability. Marcus and Francis claim the most important factor for successful space is its ability to accommodate multiple need

In past, several activities were conducted simultaneously in open area which resulted in stay of public more than required time, indicating a sense of association or placeness and evolution of context specific public place Hajela (2021). The intent of the study is to identify the dimensions contribution for the evolution and utilization of public place.

3. EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SPACES
3.1. THE SCENARIO OF PUBLIC SPACES ROUND THE GLOBE:
3.1.1. THE GREEK AGORA

The public space that lay at the heart of the polis and functioned as the hub of the town as well as a venue for political gatherings began with the Greek Agora Li et al. (2022), Thombre & Kapshe (2020). It was therefore important from a political, social, and economic perspective. It provided a location for both official and informal public gatherings Dickenson (2015). Private residences originally surrounded the Agora, but over time, stoas, porticoes, covered walkways, temples, and sanctuaries were added. In the later periods of Greek culture, outdoor theaters and gymnasiums were constructed as well.

3.1.2. THE ROMAN FORUMS

During the Roman Empire, the agora and acropolis functions in Greece were merged into one "forum." It was a semi-enclosed, enclosed space available for trade, social gatherings, political, religious, and sporting events. Like Agora, the forum was a public space dominated by the general public. Forums were rectangular in shape and had a 2 to 3 ratio. The Forums were enclosed by porticoes. The basilicas, marketplaces, stores, and temples that were housed in the forums produced a fusion of religious and civic structures. It included public baths and a theater, among other significant recreational amenities Activism Social (n.d.). It also functioned as the site of curia and comitium, or city council and political sessions, respectively.

3.1.3. THE MEDIEVAL MARKETPLACE

The marketplaces were created in the eleventh century, and during medieval era it became a prominent public space. The medieval markets were situated at the intersection of prominent throughfaresActivism Social (n.d.). They were generally found in front of the cathedral, and in the heart of the town. It was surrounded with workplace such as workshop, storage area, and place for trade. It was a regular place for common people to interact with the visitors.

Culturally, marketplaces were significant for the exchange of ideas and customs, particularly in trade hubs that connected diverse regions. Markets often coincided with festivals, attracting larger crowds and offering additional entertainment. Despite their benefits, marketplaces faced challenges like vendor competition, which sometimes led to conflicts, public health risks from crowded conditions, and prevalent theft and fraud.

The medieval marketplace was a multifaceted institution essential to the economic, social, and cultural life of medieval towns. The marketplace was not only an economic hub but also a dynamic public space where social, cultural, and communal activities thrived, reflecting the complexity and vitality of medieval urban life. It facilitated daily transactions, fostered community interactions, and enabled cultural exchanges, reflecting the dynamic nature of medieval society.

3.1.4. THE RENAISSANCE PLAZA

The Renaissance Plaza, used to be surrounded by the town hall, the cathedral, and other important building Langstraat & Melik (2013). The plaza was the place for the people to gather and have open-air celebrations. It was prominent place for

racial, religious, and political activities along with the plays and other theatrical performance. The majority of it had symmetrical shapes in its design. A cohesive facade on the buildings encircling the Plaza and the squares highlighted the importance of harmony and balance in architectural design. Furthermore, this design feature led to the development of affluent residential neighborhoods around the squares, which opened the door for a unique semi-public character Varna. (2011). New residential neighborhood designers also began to favor this innovative way of controlling public access to the plaza.

3.1.5. PUBLIC SPACE IN MODERN ERA

There has been a sharp shift into the modern era public space since the renaissance plazas. Rapid mobility in cities shaped urban development and fostered a close relationship between the surrounding construction area and open space. On the other side, there were development of new typology of public spaces for leisure and entertainment. In the 19th century modified and new public space came into existence, they were modified space for buying like shopping malls and arcades Varna. (2011).

3.2. THE SCENARIO OF PUBLIC SPACES IN INDIAN CITIES

In the past, public areas in Indian cities were thriving hubs of social, commercial, and cultural activity. As said by Sharon Zukin "Public spaces are window in city's soul." The public spaces included crowded marketplaces, courtyards in temples, and town squares where people congregated for religious ceremonies, festivals, public gatherings, and trade. These kinds of places encouraged a sense of community and promoted interaction amongst people from various social classes. They were frequently embellished with elaborate architecture and works of public art that reflected the area's rich cultural legacy. In addition to being essential to daily existence, these areas were also vital to the social and cultural cohesiveness of ancient Indian cities.

3.2.1. GHATS

Ghats are an example of an approach of settlement at place where interaction between land and water happens along the banks of the river. It was created to access the varying water levels in different seasons Varma (2011). Ghats are vibrant public space with amalgamation of daily activities, religious rituals, commercial trade, celebration, cremation, cultural activities, and communal norms around the ecology.

Ghats of Varanasi are outstanding example of interaction between the natural and urban elements. Varanasi ghats are thin silver line of public space between dense city and the river Ganga Sinha (2020).

3.2.2. CHAUPARS AND CHOWKS

Chaupals are integral public space of city from ancient time. The square formed after intersection of roads is known as chaupars. These are gathering and social interaction place for public built around water distribution system and supported by other ancillary activities of everyday life in adjoining surrounding.

On special occasions, the badi chaupar in Jaipur is used for public gathering. They are three times wider than road width. It has underground aqueducts and

street-level drinking water sources. Chaupar now contains some of the largest bazaars, including Kishanpole Bazar and Gangauri Bazar. These markets are in harmony with the city's important temples and Havelis. The Chaupar's 100 × 100 m footprint allowed for four-way automobile traffic in addition to supporting substantial pedestrian activity.

A tree by the chowk encourages interaction while providing a sense of security and comfort. People living there are encouraged to feel safe by seeing people chatting and interacting with one another in their free time at the main chowks of the town or location. As they serve as the neighborhood's "eyes on the street," it lowers the likelihood of crime Gupta et al. (2019).Manek Chowk in Ahmedabad is an good and live example of public space Shukla & Navratra (2017).

3.2.3. STREETS AND POLS

Historically, streets have served as the focal point of towns and cities. Mobility, trade, and social contact have historically been the three principal uses of streets. The street, which is typically defined as a public area with residences, businesses, and other structures on one or both sides, serves social and economic purposes that are essential for urban life Warah (2013). Instead of being a function of the economy, streets in ancient towns were the product of a vision of civilization.

The residential lanes of Ahmedabad's walled city were known as "pols," and they frequently came to closed-off areas known as "chowks," which were heavily used for both social interaction and business. The street itself served as a gathering place for the neighborhood because the houses surrounding the street had steps facing the street called "otlas" where people could sit and observe street life.

3.2.4. INDIAN BAZAR

Most of the general public used bazaars as gathering place and adorn the same on festivals and event. In old days, these areas had a highly organic and dynamic quality. When designing public areas, the combination of formal and informal settings was given careful consideration. They are important commercial and cultural spaces and promote quality of life within cities Congress Indian History (2018).

Table 1

Table 1 Ancient Public Space, its Function, and Characteristics			
Public Space	**Purpose/Function**	**Location**	**Characteristics**
Agora	Market, political, social	Ancient Greek city-states	Central gathering place; symbol of democracy and civic pride; near important civic and religious buildings
Forum	Market, political, legal, social, athletic	Ancient Roman cities	Central square; symbol of Roman power and civilization; near political and religious buildings.
Medieval Market	Commerce, culture, social	European medieval towns	Bustling, vibrant space; important center of commerce, culture, and social life; located in town square.
Plaza	Social, cultural, political, entertainment	European cities	Public square or open space; gathering place for social, cultural, and political events; may be used for public markets or entertainment.
Ghats	Religious, ritual	Indian cities and towns	Series of steps leading down to body of water; important religious site; used for bathing and other religious activities.

Chaupars and Chowk	Social, cultural, religious	Indian cities and towns	Small public squares or intersections; gathering places for social, cultural, and religious events; surrounded by shops and vendors.
Street and Pols	Commerce, culture, social	Indian cities and towns	Narrow, winding lanes; important social and cultural spaces; lined with small shops and vendors.
Indian Bazaar	Commerce, culture, social	Indian cities and towns	Vibrant marketplaces; important centers of commerce and culture; noisy, colorful, and crowded; vendors sell a wide variety of goods and food.

The study from literature review can be summarized in matrix as following.

Table 2

Table 2 Categorization of Ancient Public Space Based on Function.							
S. No	Public space	Festival/ cultural	Political identity/ meeting	Commercial activity/ trade	Religious purpose	Athletic	Socializing
1	Agora	●	●	●	●	○	●
2	Forums	○	●	●	●	●	●
3	Market	○	○	●	○	○	●
4	Plaza	●	●	○	●	○	●
5	Ghats	●	○	●	●	○	●
6	Chaupal and chowks	○	●	●	○	○	●
7	Street and pols	●	○	●	○	○	●
8	Bazar	●	●	●	○	○	●

The matrix provides clear interpretation about multi functionality, socio-cultural and economic aspects of public space. Along with socialization, there were secondary activities associated with the space such as festival celebration, cultural and political procession, trading, athletics etc.

3.3. CONTEMPORARY CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLIC SPACES

Open spaces are classified into following three categories by city development plan i-e: Recreational space, organised green space and other open spaces. As per URDPFI, there is no defined definition for recreational space where as organised green space is categorised as parks, playfields, specified parks, amusement parks, green gyms, maidan, multipurpose open spaces, botanical gardens, zoos, and traffic parks and vacant lands/open spaces including flood plains, forest cover, etc. in plain areas are listed under other open spaces Gujar et al. (2022), Ministry of Urban Development (n.d.).

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space of different typology, time period and geographical location to understand the progression of public space Siláči & Vitková (2017). The above said analysis helps in identifying the trend and gradual evolution of public space over the time.

Extensive literature study is conducted from different journals, books and website to understand the setting and activities carried out in historical public space. The identified attributes are than categorized under broad parameters based on similarity of properties Praliya & Garg (2019). From the study conducted it could be identified that public places from the past have different activities in terms of necessary activity and optional activity along with opportunities to socialize, supported by visual and physical accessibility and safety by presence of people.

The historical analysis provides insights into the changes in public spaces, revealing how they have evolved to meet the needs of their users. The comparative analysis allows for the assessment of public spaces across different eras and regions, highlighting the similarities and differences in their development. This dual approach not only identifies the trends in public space evolution but also uncovers the factors driving these changes.

The study reveals that ancient public spaces facilitated a variety of activities, categorized as necessary and optional activities, and provided opportunities for socialization. These spaces were characterized by their visual and physical accessibility and the safety provided by the presence of people. By understanding these attributes, the study sheds light on the essential components that have historically contributed to the functionality and appeal of public spaces. This comprehensive methodology thus provides a robust framework for analyzing and understanding the evolution of public spaces over time.

Figure 2
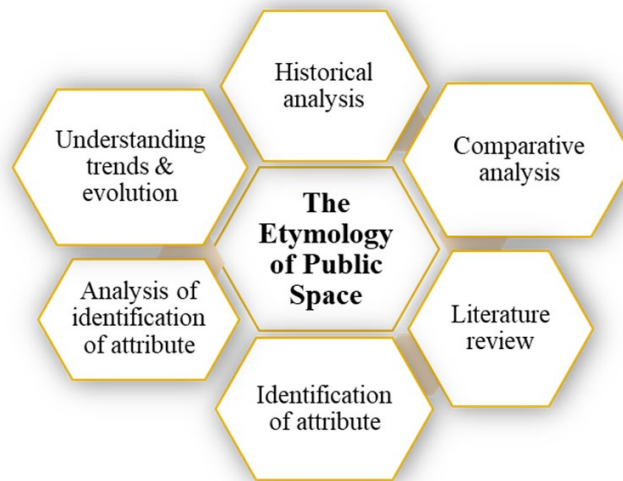
Figure 2 Methodology Chart

5. DISCUSSION AND RESULT

Ancient public spaces were integrated component of the ancient societies. It providing a platform for public to associate, interact, business, and engage in cultural and political activities. The public spaces served as nuclei for community life, bringing people together and developing sense of belongingness. It invited people from diverse background, age group, ethnicity, class to interact and exchange idea. Ancient public space clearly outlines the characteristics for inclusive public space.

Public spaces also played an important role in promoting civic engagement and participation. They were often used for political gatherings, where citizens could voice their opinions and participate in decision-making processes. This helped to create a more democratic and participatory society, where people felt empowered and engaged in the political process.

However, ancient public spaces also had their weaknesses. For example, they were often designed to cater to the needs and interests of a particular group, such as the ruling elite or the dominant cultural group. This could lead to exclusion and marginalization of certain groups, particularly those who were not represented in the decision-making process.

Another weakness was the potential for public spaces to become sites of conflict and violence. Because they were often used for political gatherings and demonstrations, they could be a target for those who sought to disrupt or challenge the status quo. This could lead to tensions and conflicts that could spill over into the broader society.

Overall, the strengths and weaknesses of ancient public spaces depended on how they were designed, managed, and used. When designed with inclusivity and democratic participation in mind, they could be a powerful force for social cohesion and civic engagement. However, when they were exclusive or became the site of conflict and violence, they could undermine social harmony and democratic participation.

Ancient public places were often located at the center of a city or town, and were easily accessible to the public. They were designed to accommodate large gatherings of people for various purposes such as religious ceremonies, political assemblies, markets, entertainment events and often had symbolic value, representing the power and prestige of the ruling class or a particular religious institution. Ancient public open spaces were sometimes designed with symbolic elements that reflected the values and beliefs of the society. For example, the ancient Greeks often used statues and monuments to honor their gods, heroes, and important historical figures. They were also equipped with infrastructure such as seating and water sources. Ancient public open spaces served a variety of purposes and were designed with different approaches depending on the culture and time period. However, they often reflected the values and priorities of the society that built and used them, and they continue to influence urban design and planning today.
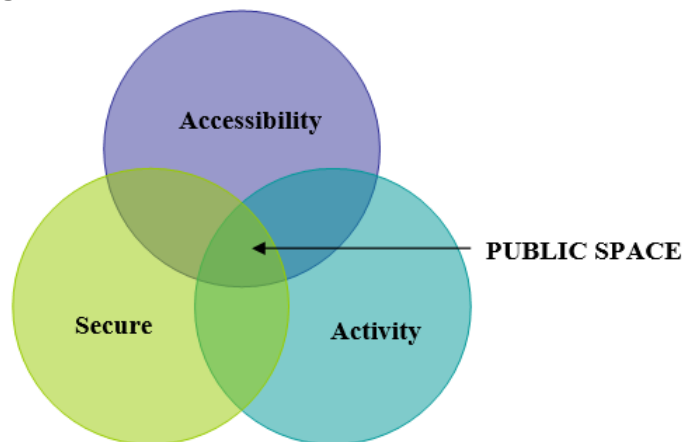
Figure 3

Figure 3 Attributes Identified from Ancient Public Space for Successful Public Space

6. CONCLUSION

Public places often played an important role in the cultural life of ancient societies. They were venues for festivals, games, and religious ceremonies, and they also served as centers for education and intellectual discourse

Today, many ancient public spaces continue to serve as important cultural and historical landmarks, attracting visitors from around the world who come to learn about the people and civilizations of the past.

Ancient public places were often designed to serve multiple functions.

Public places were important for fostering social cohesion and community identity. They provided a space where people could come together to share experiences, exchange ideas, and build relationships with others.

Social interaction: Ancient public spaces were designed to encourage social interaction and exchange of ideas. People gathered there to buy and sell goods, discuss politics and religion, and participate in cultural events. Today, we can use this knowledge to design public spaces that foster social interaction and community building.

Urban design: Ancient public spaces were often designed with a clear purpose and function. For example, marketplaces were designed for commerce, while forums were designed for public discourse. Today, we can use this knowledge to design public spaces that are purposeful and serve the needs of the community.

Sustainability: Ancient public spaces were often built to last and were designed with natural materials and methods that were environmentally sustainable. Today, we can learn from these practices to create public spaces that are environmentally sustainable and resilient.

Cultural identity: Ancient public spaces were often a reflection of the cultural identity and values of the community. Today, we can use this knowledge to design public spaces that reflect and celebrate the diversity of cultures and communities.

The role of public art: Many ancient public spaces featured sculptures, paintings, and other works of art. These pieces were often used to convey important messages or to celebrate cultural achievements.

The importance of community: Ancient public spaces were central gathering places for people to meet, socialize, and exchange goods and ideas. These spaces fostered a sense of community and belonging, which is still important today.

Finally, ancient public spaces can teach us about the importance of public participation in governance. Many ancient societies held public meetings and debates in these spaces, providing a forum for citizens to voice their opinions and influence political decision-making. This is a valuable lesson that we can apply to our own democratic systems today, as we work to create more inclusive and participatory forms of governance.

Overall, learning from ancient public spaces can provide valuable insights into how to create public spaces that are socially, culturally, and environmentally sustainable, and that serve the needs of the community.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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