



# Redefining Public Space: The Evolution of Meaning in the Digital Era

İbrahim EREN<sup>1\*</sup>, Esin Özlem AKTUĞLU AKTAN<sup>2</sup>, and Aslı ALTANLAR<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yıldız Technical University, PhD Urban Planning, İstanbul, Türkiye

<sup>2</sup> Yıldız Technical University, City and Regional Planning, İstanbul, Türkiye

<sup>3</sup> Amasya University, City and Regional Planning, Amasya, Türkiye

## Abstract

Throughout history, public space has had a dynamic and evolving structure interacting with society and has undergone various conceptual changes and developments. This paper explores the evolving definition of public space, emphasizing the role of digitalization in this transformation. The study also seeks to delve deeply into the current meaning of public space, informed by perspectives from spatial design experts and İstanbul residents. The research employs a systematic literature review and a survey method, segmented across two distinct groups. The survey also concentrated on the spatial and digital dimensions of public space and asked participants to evaluate the personal meanings and usage patterns of these spaces. Besides, the advancement of digital technologies has led to literature that indicates an expansion in the definition of public space. The findings acquired from the research also supported this. In other words, analysis displays that public space goes beyond its traditional definition. Participants began to represent public spaces not only as physical spaces but also as digital platforms and social networks, and these findings supported the idea that the meaning and boundaries of public space augment and alter with digitalisation. This study emphasizes that the definition of public space cannot be confined solely to physical spaces but also includes digital platforms as integral components of this domain. Acquiring insight into public spaces' ever-changing and dynamic structure is essential for comprehending social and spatial dynamics in contemporary societies. This study revealed the evolution of the concept of public space and the effects of digitalization on this evolution.

**Keywords:** conceptual change, meaning of public space, public space, social space, space and society

## 1. Introduction

Public space has been one of society's necessities throughout recorded history. It played a central role in the social, cultural, and political life of the society, sometimes evolving with the requirements of the society, and sometimes the flow of public life could be interrupted to

reproduce itself. In these areas, individuals came together, interacted, exchanged ideas, and engaged in social activities. However, the definition and function of public space have also changed and developed over time. Today, it has become more complex with the development of digital technologies and has expanded with more comprehensive issues parallel to social events.

This study primarily aims to comprehend the semantic evolution of public spaces and the influences of the digital age on this evolution. The historical and conceptual transformations of public spaces have been significant areas of research for understanding the social and spatial structure of society. This phenomenon has been the subject of serious debates, particularly within the framework of society and spatial sciences, due to its interdisciplinary nature. Especially with the rapid development of digital technologies - according to Eren and Aktuğlu Aktan (2023), represent one of the most significant breakpoints in public life - the concept of public space has expanded to include virtual spaces, thus acquiring a multidimensional and expansive new structure with multiple layers.

This study, arising from this ongoing change and transformation process, aims to introduce the nature and semantic change of the public space to the literature. At the same time, it highlights that public space is not just confined to physical locations but includes the flow of ideas and the influence of digital technologies on these realms today. Grasping this evolving concept of public space is essential to understanding the social and spatial dynamics that shape contemporary societies. This study investigates in depth the conceptual transformation of public space and the consequences of digitalization on this transformation. In this regard, the research questions of the study were structured as follows:

- (1) What are the historical changes in the meaning of public space, what might be the main factors between these changes, and is it possible to make a definition parallel to the state of constant change?
- (2) What are the similarities between the existing literature on the definition of public space and the views of today's society and experts?

This research aims to investigate the changing definition of public space and the effects of digitalization on this transformation and concurrently presents a discussion on its current definition. In this context, the perspectives of various groups, such as residents of Istanbul and spatial design experts, are analysed to delineate the current meaning of public space in detail within the framework of users' views. A systematic literature review, coupled with survey data from individuals living in Istanbul and spatial design experts on the meaning of public space, form the primary focus points of the study.

## **2. Methods**

This study adopted a two-stage methodology to analyse public space's historical and semantic change: systematic literature review and survey.

The first stage includes examining how changes in the definition and function of public space are detected in the literature and the historical and semantic dimensions of this change. It aims to research the existing literature comprehensively and systematically on the evolution of the public space concept and identify significant theoretical approaches and changes in the meaning of public space.

The second phase involved determining the survey's study group. Our research targets two principal groups: spatial design experts and the inhabitants of Istanbul. The first group is composed of professionals specialized in the spatial organization and design of public areas,

who play pivotal roles in urban design processes. This group includes landscape architects, urban planners, and architects. The study population consists of 101,666 members of the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, including the Chamber of Landscape Architects, the Chamber of Urban Planners, and the Chamber of Architects, as of 2023. The sample size was calculated considering a 95% confidence interval and a  $\pm 0.05$  margin of error, involving 356 participants in the survey. The survey was conducted online from May 16, 2023, to July 24, 2023.

The second group comprises 400 people over 18 living in Istanbul. The data of this group, which was preferred to explore how public spaces are perceived by society, were collected through computer-assisted telephone interviews (C.A.T.I.) and face-to-face interviews (F2F). Field studies were carried out between 26 September and 09 October 2023.

**Data Analysis:** The study employs data analysis approaches to identify changes in the meaning and use of public spaces and comprehend the underlying social and geographical dynamics. This methodological approach aims to provide a comprehensive analysis by addressing changes in the meaning of public space from theoretical and practical perspectives. For this purpose, participants' perceptions of public space were queried using an 8-item scale, and they were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 25 and Excel. Percentage and frequency analyses were employed to identify prominent items. For this purpose, responses of "Strongly agree" and "Agree" were considered positive (+) values, while "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree" responses were recorded as negative (-) values. Responses from spatial design experts and Istanbul residents were compared and evaluated.

### **3. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Public space, one of the most crucial components of social life, has evolved throughout recorded history in response to societal necessities. Habermas (2015) states that when private individuals, who constitute a collective being, come together in discourse, an element of the public sphere emerges. This phenomenon primarily includes the area within our social life where the public space is processed. Özbek (2015) stresses that the concept of public space, particularly under the influence of Habermas, has evolved.

Additionally, Negt and Kluge (2015), who have made significant contributions to the public space, highlight that the public space is not only a structure that produces public opinion but also embodies the collective experience that defines it. Arendt (1958) mentions that the public space is a realm of social action and visibility, indicating that it is an area where people live in harmony and act together (Arendt, 2003). Furthermore, Hannah Arendt explains that participation sets the public space apart from social and political life. Madanipour (2003) asserts that the public space represents an area that is either open to all or shared by everyone, emphasizing its role as a representation of the populace.

Many notable names have researched public space, and it is observed that these studies are predominantly developed within the context of social sciences and spatial sciences. Essentially, in this field led by figures such as Habermas and Arendt, Gökgür (2017) notes that Habermas and Arendt have developed critical theories on public spaces, and their mutual view is that public spaces express the presence of citizens and are areas where political actions are prominent.

In line with the work of Habermas and Arendt, Fraser (1990) stresses the significance of the public space as a diverse space where various communities come together and social issues are addressed. Moughtin (2003) defines public spaces as a communication channel where social

events occur and different communities meet. Carmona et al. (2018), based on spatial design and planning, emphasize that public space is of paramount importance for social life and activities. Additionally, Carmona (2008) discusses in his study that these areas reflect the diversity and dynamism of society.

Regarding change, it is evident that developments are occurring in tandem with social events. It is these "areas where social events occur," as Moughtin described, that, according to Habermas (1991) and Arendt (1958), have at times exerted significant influence on political life. In this context, initially, it is fundamental to consider the 1950s, a relatively recent period in history, before delving into the detailed historical transformation. Gökgür (2017) notes that since the 1950s, public space has transformed both function and quality. Throughout this period, the consequences of these significant changes have become apparent, altering the scope, use, and quality of public spaces.

As a result, the conceptual change of public spaces, which we consider as the circulation area of ideas and the area of freedom in the Ancient Age, requires an examination of what developments took place before and after this process. This analysis seeks to answer the question, "How has the conceptual evolution of public spaces been shaped by historical, societal, cultural, and political dynamics?"

### **3.1. Transformation of Public Space**

Understanding how this phenomenon has developed with the evolution of the public space in the historical process has become a significant and striking issue. Gökgür (2017, p. 26) mentions that only the temple is remarkable for the agricultural cities established before Christ regarding these areas that existed with social needs. However, the Acropolis, a gathering place in ancient times as the first public space, attracts attention. Agora in Greek cities comes to the fore with its role as a place to integrate society and share ideas (Madanipour, 2010, p. 6-7; Camp II, 2010). In ancient times, they were considered areas where democracy and public opinion were shaped. In this period, public space was defined as the common property of society, accessible to everyone, an integral part of city life and social interaction, and a circulation area for ideas.

In the Middle Ages, public spaces came to the fore as churches, village squares, and marketplaces where social and religious functions took priority. During this period, the boundaries between public and private spaces became evident within the hierarchical structure of the feudal order (Kostof, 1991; Gökgür, 2017; Elias, 1983; Madanipour, 2003; Gurevich, 1985). This period marked a period in which public space was more under control with a limited understanding of freedom. During the Enlightenment, public spaces once again became places for expression and liberty. According to Habermas (1991), the public space emerged during the Enlightenment as a phenomenon in which individual liberties, rationality, public spirit, and traditional authorities were questioned. During the Renaissance, public space became the centre of art, science and the exchange of ideas. Public space has been redefined as a place where individuals can express themselves and where artistic and intellectual activities take place, and its significance has increased (Tuan, 2001; Hall, 2014).

Gökgür (2017) emphasizes that public spaces became places of power in the 16th and 17th centuries. With the Industrial Revolution, the use and function of public space has undergone a significant transformation. With the acceleration of urbanization and industrialization, new public spaces such as parks and recreation areas have emerged for the working class (Madanipour, 2003; Gökgür, 2017). During this period, while public spaces transformed into areas of social interaction and recreation, they also functioned as places where social and political actions took place.

In the 19th century, when cities expanded, the new street concept that developed along with hygiene policies came to the fore. It is also highlighted that the functional and decorative public space of this period turned into a space granted by the political authority (Gökgür, 2017).

On the one hand, was limited public life, while on the other, as industrialization accelerated, the urban landscape continued to change and transform quickly. According to Gökgür (2017), while the public space changed under the industrial shock during the industrial period, it turned into a field of spontaneous relationships. According to Herzog (2006), the transition to the Industrial Era caused a crisis in the public sphere; It has had profound effects on its nature and use. In particular, with the transition to a preliminary "spatial" order, which was previously based on "visible order", it was replaced by more rigid social class conditioning. Strict controls have been introduced over the use of public space.

The Modern Era brought radical changes in urban design and public space. During this period, urban open and green areas were designed with the logic of urban reinforcement, and they have turned into movement or cultural landscape areas (Gökgür, 2017, p. 30-31). Cities are seen as clusters of objects in space (Herzog, 2006, p. 59). After the Second World War and during the Cold War, public life transformed again; Society and public spaces, which witnessed the rise of capitalism and a new phase of globalization, were the areas that experienced these events. In addition, in the post-Cold War period, the acceleration of the development of digital technology was revolutionary, and on the other hand, the public sphere continued to change with the sceptical and questioning perspectives of the postmodern period (Eren and Aktuğlu Aktan, 2023; Eren, 2024). According to Tekeli (2017, p.8), what is meant by the "post" suffix is the emphasis on change and continuity, endings and transcendence.

Following the 1950s, there were substantial modifications in the use of public space. The abandonment of city centres and public spaces has resulted in the popularity of new forms of public space, such as shopping malls and private parks. During this time, public space began to become more closely associated with individual consumption and private property. Additionally, the 1960s saw a change with counterculture movements and movements that diminished modernism (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1997). In the 1960s, economic and social development in public spaces fueled insecurity and social conflict, and in the 70s, the flowering of social permits as a production area (Gökgür, 2017). In the 1980s, a serious transformation took place in the public space. According to Madanipour (2010, pp. 3-5), after the 1980s, new free public spaces were transformed into controlled and restricted spaces, as opposed to more accessible and inclusive. It also left its mark on the privatization of the general area of this period.

The arrival of the Berlin Wall just before the 1990s and its fall in 1989 were the beginnings of many periods, and the rise of capitalism, new phases of globalization, the Digital Revolution and subsequent neoliberal policies continued the change of public spaces, which are the communication links of the society (Eren and Aktuğlu Aktan, 2023). Friedman (2000) highlighted that in a 1999 advertisement, the world was described as ten years old and reborn when the Berlin Wall fell. With the Digital Age, the reach and densification of public buildings have been expanded, focusing on the combination of the internet and social media, online and offline communities. Today, with the rapid continuation of these digital technologies, physical and virtual communities also bring up new debates.

In the 21st century and the digital age, the rise of digital technologies and globalization has significantly transformed the use and access to public spaces. Alongside physical environments, virtual spaces have emerged as new arenas for social interaction and expressions of freedom. This shift indicates that public space has expanded beyond physical limits to

encompass online forums, social media platforms, and digital communities. The ascendancy of network society is notably significant in this transformation. Castells (2008) emphasizes that the expansion of digital networks redefines public space boundaries by facilitating remote interactions among individuals and communities. The impact of digital technology on democratic participation is a critical issue, with Benkler (2006) discussing how network-based production affects participation in public spaces. In addition to highlighting the positive effects of technology on social and political engagement, Zuboff (2019) also highlights the detrimental influences that technology may have on democratic processes, such as surveillance capitalism.

The two-way effect of social media on public space has been analyzed by Fuchs (2014), who examines it within the contexts of both opportunities and challenges. Van Dijck and others (2018) evaluate the influence of social media platforms on public discourse from a broader perspective, discussing their significant roles in society.

The influence of mobile technology on social interactions within public spaces has been studied by Hampton and others (2008; 2015), focusing on how Wi-Fi usage in these areas affects social engagement. Kitchin (2014) critically approaches big data and smart urbanism. Additionally, current debates are increasingly centred on digital twins and the metaverse; Lv et al (2022) have highlighted how these technologies act as bridges between physical and virtual worlds.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on the use of physical public spaces have significantly increased the importance and use of virtual environments. This situation has accelerated the pandemic's expansion of the concept of public space to include both physical and digital environments.

This historical analysis reveals that public space is a dynamic entity, continuously transforming in alignment with societal necessities and regenerating itself through lived experiences. Additionally, the evolving concept of freedom significantly influences this transformation. Specifically, the notion of freedom has shaped the evolution of public spaces from the agoras of Ancient Greece to the digital environments of the modern era. Public space, therefore, is consistently redefined over time, mirroring shifts in individual and collective liberties, social interactions, and technological progress. The change of public space throughout the historical process is explained in detail in Table 1.

*Table 1: The evolution of the concept of public space throughout history*

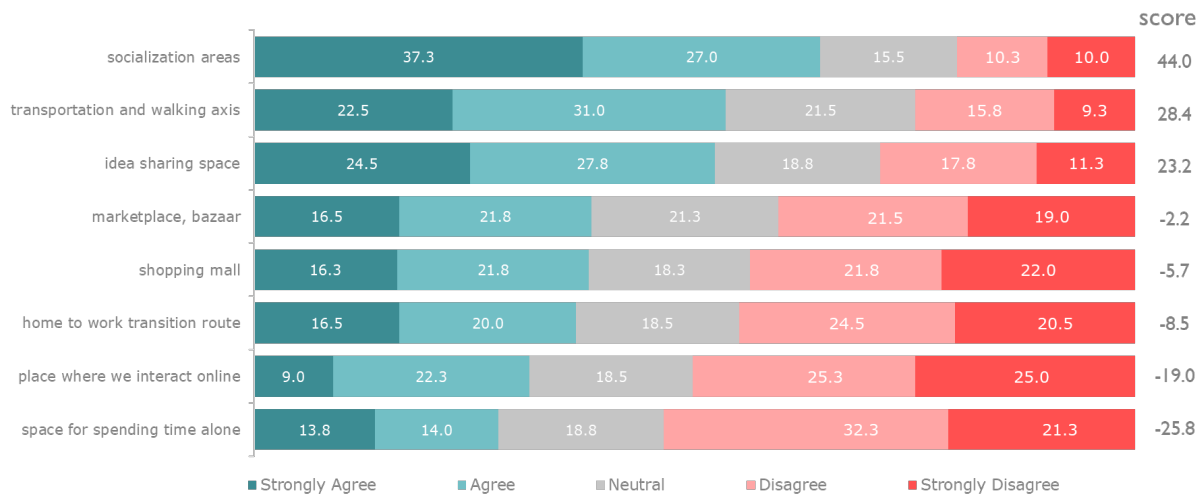
Period	Definition of Public Space	Prominent Places	Function and Freedoms	Social Dynamics	Technological Developments	Meaning and Freedoms
Ancient Era	Centres for social and political interaction	Agoras and Forums	Democratic participation, idea exchange	Concept of polis and citizenship	Use of writing	Discussion of common good
Middle Ages	Centres for religious and economic life	Churches, marketplaces	Social order under religious authority	Feudalism, power of the church	Architectural innovations leading to larger public buildings and churches	Limited public interaction
Renaissance and Enlightenment	Freedom of knowledge and ideas	Cafes, salons	Individual freedoms, enlightenment	Individualism, secularism	The printing press, the first newspapers	Individual freedom of expression
Industrial Revolution	Arenas for class struggles	Factories, union buildings	Workers' rights, social justice	Urbanization, class consciousness	Telegraph, train	Space for mass movements

Period	Definition of Public Space	Prominent Places	Function and Freedoms	Social Dynamics	Technological Developments	Meaning and Freedoms
Modern Era	Areas for free assembly and cultural expression	Parks, museums	Cultural expression, social control	Multiculturalism, social rights	Radio, television	Media and political participation
Postmodern Era	Spaces reflecting fragmented identities and cultural pluralism	Urban squares, cultural centres, mixed-use developments, art installations	Challenging traditional norms, promoting cultural diversity and individual identity.	Fragmentation of narratives, increased scepticism towards universal truths, questioning of authority and traditional roles	The rise of television, video art, and diverse media forms; the beginning of digital influence.	Diversity in communication, critique of grand narratives, and the emergence of localized interpretations.
Digital Age	Online and offline communities blending	Internet, social media	Expanding, complex freedoms	Digitalization, network society	Internet, smartphones, artificial intelligence	Risks of surveillance and manipulation
Contemporary Period	Integration of virtual and physical community spaces	Urban squares, co-working spaces	Access to information, freedom of movement	Globalization, increased mobility	Social media, data analytics, artificial intelligence	Enhanced connectivity, privacy concerns
Thinking about the Future	Hybrid, inclusive spaces fostering individual and community growth	Sustainable communities, multifunctional hubs, digital platforms and virtual spaces, green landscapes	Environmental and social sustainability, social justice, individual freedoms	Ecological sustainability, equality, individualized societies	Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, robotics for care	New definitions of public and private spaces, ethical considerations

#### 4. Meaning of Public Space According to Experts and People of Istanbul

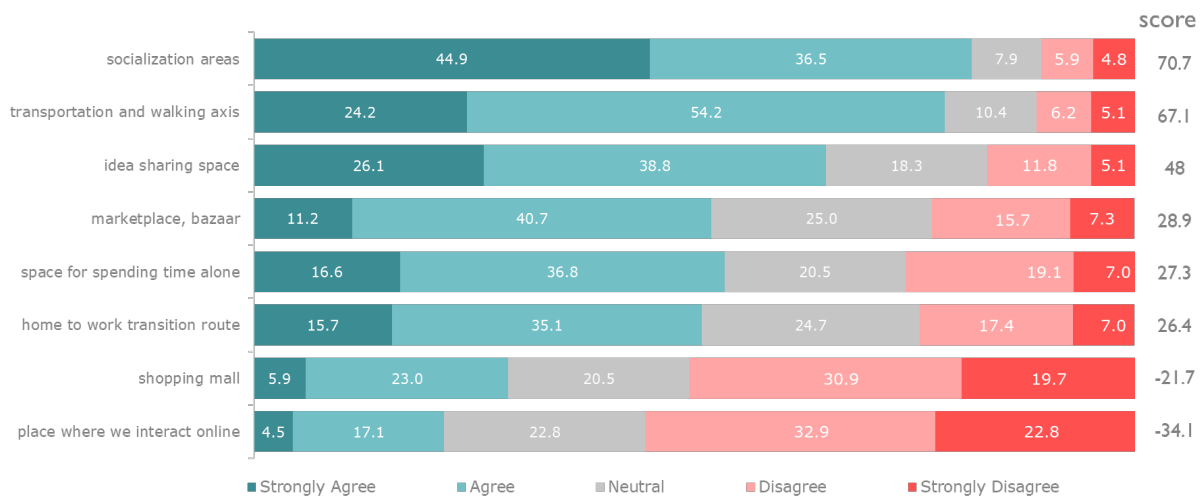
This section examines the perceptions of Istanbul residents and spatial design experts on the use and functions of public spaces, comparing their views. Both groups were asked eight questions on a five-point Likert scale about the meaning of public space. In the study related to the people of Istanbul, the responses highlighted the following elements in descending order of importance: socialization spaces, transportation and walking routes, areas for idea sharing, markets and bazaars, shopping centres, routes between home and work, places for online interaction, and areas for spending time alone. The first three items received responses approaching "agree," indicating positive values, while the others were rated negatively (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Istanbul people's views on the meaning of public space



In the survey conducted with spatial design experts, the answers were respectively: Socialization area, transportation and walking axis, idea sharing area, bazaar-market, area to spend time alone, transition axis between home and work, shopping centre and a place to interact online. In these responses, the shopping mall and the place where online interaction was made remained negative, and it was determined that the majority did not consider these expressions as a public space (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Spatial design experts' views on public space



The data highlights distinct differences between experts and the residents of Istanbul in their use of public spaces for socializing, transportation, and idea exchange. For example, experts emphasize the importance of socialization in these areas more than the city dwellers (70.7% versus 44%). While both groups acknowledge the importance of transportation and pedestrian routes, experts (67.1%) underscore their significance much more than Istanbul residents (28.4%). This trend extends to spaces intended for idea sharing, where experts place a higher value on these areas (48% versus 23.2%), as indicated in Table 2.

When it comes to markets and bazaars, a smaller proportion of Istanbul residents view these as public spaces (-2.2%), in contrast to experts who are more inclined to see them as such (28.9%). There are also notable differences in the valuation of commute routes between home and work and locations used for solitary time.



As for shopping malls and online interaction spaces, both groups show negative perceptions of these as public spaces. Despite extensive research on virtual interactions, participants' recognition of online exchanges as public spaces is extremely low (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparative evaluation of two groups

Items	Istanbul Inhabitants	Spatial Design Specialist
socialisation areas	44	70.7
transportation and walking axis	28.4	67.1
idea sharing space	23.2	48
marketplace, bazaar	-2.2	28.9
home to work transition route	-8.5	26.4
space for spending time alone	-25.8	27.3
shopping mall	-5.7	-21.7
a place where we interact online	-19	-34.1

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explores the change in the meaning and function of public space throughout history and tries to explain the nature of the change, especially by emphasizing the effects of the digital age on this evolution. Throughout history, the public sphere has functioned as a centre for the exchange of ideas, a space constantly evolving in interaction with social events and technological developments.

In the literature, it is observed that studies on public space have been conducted from various disciplines such as physical, social, historical, economic, environmental, and so on. The emphasis on "new" in the public sphere has been a momentous issue highlighted in various periods. For example, Mitchell (1995) directly addressed the concept of innovation in the public sphere in his article. While Habermas (1962/1991) examined how the public sphere developed in bourgeois society, Sennett (1977) discussed the transformation from the 18th century to the 20th century and the innovations of this period. Sennett (2018) also highlighted this issue while discussing the significance of great social transformation. It is possible to notice a detailed analysis of this impact and transformation situation in many noteworthy names. Lefebvre (1991) discussed the identity of public space in capitalist society from the perspective of social relations and the reproduction of space. Zukin (1995) discussed urban space becoming a cultural product and characterized public space as a venue for performance and consumption. Castells (1996) debated this phenomenon through the effects of digital technology on society and public space. On the other hand, Ulubaş Hamurcu (2022) discussed the metaverse and online communities that we have started to hear frequently in recent times, and Gökgür (2017) and Madanipour (2010) directly and indirectly touched on the new phenomenon while examining the historical process of change in the public sphere. While Eren and Aktuğlu Aktan (2023) discussed the evolution of public life through an analysis of the recent past, they also identified the breaking points in this process and discussed the dynamic, dynamic, and self-reproducing nature of the public space.

Numerous studies have factored in social and technological events and their effects on public space to comprehend its dynamic and changing nature. From this perspective, public space is accepted as an ever-evolving phenomenon, continuously experiencing and reproducing. Over time, unexpected events such as epidemics, wars and disasters have occurred in public life. These unexpected events sometimes directly affected the public space over time and hastened

the transformation. Throughout history, considerable global events have continued to transform social life. In addition to the COVID-19 epidemic we have experienced in the recent past, the transition to network society and online platforms and the process of defining these elements as a new phenomenon of the public space have also accelerated. For example, Madanipour (2023) discussed public space from a critical perspective in his book "Rethinking Public Space" and examined what happened after the pandemic process. Social inclusion and participation are also among these issues.

Today, under the influence of technological advancements, sustainability approaches, and social dynamics, the definition and use of public spaces continue to transform. Luo (2024) also notes in the critique of the book 'Rethinking Public Space' that it presents an analysis inspired by the changes in the public space paradigm following the global pandemic that began in 2020. In studies related to public space, a variety of topics are encountered. Lind (2024) mentions that digital projections are critical tools that alter the meaning and use of public space. Additionally, issues including security, privacy, ethics, and the use of digital technologies in public spaces are prominent in discussions about public space. For instance, Ciaux and Runkel (2024) explore how security and anti-terrorism measures used in urban squares alter the usage of the square and the atmosphere of urban space.

With the rise of the digital age, the integration of physical and virtual environments has given rise to a new understanding of the concept of public space. While these new public spaces allow individuals to express themselves, exchange information and create communities, they also carry risks such as surveillance, censorship and social inequalities.

The definition and use of public space are transforming under the influence of technological advances and social dynamics. The public sphere emerges as a phenomenon that constantly renews itself through new experiences. In this context, reshaping public space and increasing democratic participation necessitates incorporating these dynamic dimensions into design and policymaking processes.

One of the most crucial issues regarding the change in public life has been democracy and participation. The changing forms of freedom and democracy in the historical process that we examine in this study have directly affected public spaces, the circulation area and the communication channel of ideas. While Demir Kahraman and Türkoğlu (2022) discussed the transformation of public space in the context of city squares in their work, the emphasis on democracy again occupied an important place.

In this article, surveys conducted among the people of Istanbul and spatial design experts indicate that the perception of virtual environments as public spaces is not entirely reflected. However, findings from the literature show that public spaces are not limited to physical locations alone; digital environments such as social media platforms and virtual spaces have also become integral parts of the public realm. We believe the reason for this may be related to the adoption, adaptation, and resistance to losing the sense of belonging provided by physical public spaces.

We have investigated the deep and multidimensional structure of public space from both a historical perspective and through its semantic evolution. As long as social life exists, public spaces will continue to experience perpetual renewal, increasingly enrich their complexity, and become the subject of many more studies, paralleling social and technological events. In light of all the findings, defining public space may prove challenging due to its continually evolving nature. Based on our research findings and discussions, we believe reflecting on this issue in the definition is crucial.

## Redefining Public Space

Public space is a multidimensional, inclusive, dynamic, and vibrant environment and channel of communication where individuals and communities freely share their ideas. These areas can be the stage for social innovation and solidarity, as well as conflict and division. Public space continually reinvents itself through social experiences, keeping pace with the rhythm of societal events and technological advancements, thereby always embodying a state of 'newness'. These spaces support individuals' freedom of expression, cultural diversity, and democratic participation, while also potentially encompassing dynamics such as surveillance, censorship, ethics, privacy, social inequalities, and urban and individual rights. The depth and functionality of public space are shaped not only within the framework of local and global scenarios but also within the complex fabric of social norms, power dynamics, and technological innovations.

In conclusion, under the influence of digitalization, sustainability approaches, and social dynamics, public space is evolving into a more inclusive and dynamic entity by integrating physical and virtual environments. This study asserts that public space, understood as a multidimensional concept, encompasses both physical and digital environments, each now essential to public life. The emerging paradigm underscores the rise of virtual public spaces as crucial platforms where communities convene online and freely exchange ideas and information. It also reflects on issues of individual freedom and ethics in a contemporary context, echoing historical experiences. This transformation fosters new discussions and ideas on how the roles and meanings of public space should adapt in an increasingly digital world. Understanding public space as a dynamic, self-evolving, and multidimensional structure is crucial for comprehending the social and spatial dynamics of modern societies. Besides uncovering the semantically rich nature of public space, this study also highlights its essential role in facilitating vital components of social interaction.

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