Urban Plazas: The Politics of Space in Urban Constraints

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Abstract: The most crucial notion in built environment studies, space, is forced to undergo a reinterpretation due to the influence of numerous social phenomena and cultural movements, such as postmodernism, the information age, and globalization. The traditional concept of time subverts time division and space restriction, along with the changes brought on by contemporary urbanization and postmodernist cultural norms. As a result, the urban plaza area, which is a unique cultural space, begins to take shape. It brings together previously different places, such as "public and private," "political and daily," "working and leisure," as well as "physical and virtual." The urban plaza is a useful research subject since it is a public area where the majority of cultural traits associated with urbanization are found. The spatial politics of the urban plaza experience a historic shift from macro politics to micro politics under the influence of postmodernism. Premised on this notion, the purpose of this study is to investigate the specific space of today's cities, which is the urban plaza, as well as the politics of space and the in-depth interpretation of space culture. This study uses techniques from many other fields that are related to spatial ideas, including philosophy, political science, cultural studies, and geography. This study expands the cultural space of post-modernist interpretation of cultural depth of character based on the theoretical paradigm in multidisciplinary cross-application in order to enhance individuals' awareness of urban plaza cultural forms and further their understanding of its political and cultural space power traits as well as underlying meaning. This paper examines the role and culture of urban plaza from the perspectives of numerous well-known spatial culture theories in the context of the analysis. In addition to identifying the nature of the cultural politics, this paper addresses the significance of spatial politics of urban plazas.

Keywords: Dystopian architecture; Spatial expense; Politics of space; Spatial governance

1. Introduction

Individuals are turning to the impromptu "space" in prime areas, such as urban plazas, as a "substitute" for their search for nature in today's metropolis. Returning to the plaza is similar to returning to earth and to nature. We search for the sentiment of standing on earth and the habitat where human live freely from urban plazas. In the construction of contemporary urban space, the unique natural aesthetic landscape and open public space of urban plazas provide an important platform for urban life and heterogeneous urban residents who are far from nature to meet and interact. This not only helps to alleviate the contradiction and division between civilization and nature in urban space, but also provides a public bridge for urbanites to get out of their spiritual and psychological "pigeonholes" [1]. American architect Karsten Harries has once said, "Architecture has an ethical purpose in that it draws us out of the everyday banal, recalling the values that govern our existence as members of society; it summons us to a better, somewhat closer to the ideal life [2]." The city is an ensemble of buildings, the architecture is the primary body of the city, and the many volumes

and shapes of the city are significant parts of the city's personality [3]. Individuals have therefore discovered this "rewilded nature" in the public spaces of modern cities. We find "nature" in the city and enjoy our individual "solitude" and "freedom" there. Additionally, urban plazas have a carnival-like atmosphere in the urban lives of its inhabitants, bringing to life the joy of "heterotopic space" outside of everyday life and political space. Through this, individuals often feel relief from the difficult affairs of the world while they are at the urban plaza. The urban plaza thus becomes a place where individuals look for harmony with "nature" in the living spaces of contemporary urban inhabitants. The urban plaza has been transformed into the "earth" where people search for peace with "nature" in today's urban living environment. People tend to hide their identities, conceal their sexual orientation, downplay their social roles, put off worldly responsibilities, and luxuriate in nature when they are roaming freely and leisurely around the urban "wilderness" of urban plazas.

2. Heterotopic space: The spatial imagination of urban plaza
2.1. A space of utopia
In our daily lives and cultural concepts, we divide space into separate sections and assign cultural implications to each space. There are privileges and taboos specific to each space. For instance, private space (the bedroom) versus public space, political space (the parliament) versus commonplace space, religious space (the church) versus secular space for men and women, torture space (the torture chamber) versus free life, virtual space versus physical space, *etc*. The most fundamental means by which cultural power can impose behavioural discipline is through the division and segregation of spaces. Culture is continually functionalized and favoured during the construction process, which leads to the development of cultural taboos in certain settings. For instance, in Western religious culture, churches are sanctified; in institutional culture, castles and torture chambers are constrained; in spiritual culture, theatres and stages are constructed. This is how Michel Foucault interprets the significance of space in "Space, Knowledge and Power," "Space is the cornerstone of all public activity. Any right's operation is based on space [4]." "There are genuine places and real places that are intended to serve as societal institutions and the numerous practically realized utopias that make up a culture. These locations create sorts of places that are outside of all places although they are truly located by contesting and even inverting certain real places that are simultaneously shown. Given that they are so dissimilar from the numerous places they relate to or reflect, I shall refer to these places as 'heterotopic' [5]." Foucault asserts that this "heterotopic" zone serves two purposes: "Anomalies have the tendency to produce an illusionary space that plainly excludes all actual space and all actual locations where isolated human life exists. An abnormality like that is more surreal. A different, disordered space is produced by a different type of anisotropy. This anisotropy may be compensatory rather than illusory [5]." The former is comparable to a stage from a forbidden play, while the latter is similar to some colonies. In actuality, several cultural causes have split the immense cosmos of human life into various spaces. In addition to the partition of the world into national and ethnic zones, there are many more areas in our life, each serving a particular cultural purpose. For instance, due to the inherent cultural codes and unique cultural functions of certain regions, churches, plazas, brothels, gardens, torture grounds, theatres, colonies, cinemas, cemeteries, docks, and some forbidden places in primitive cultures, all of them form a certain status of cultural space and differ from other daily life spaces outside them.

According to Foucault, "We extend ourselves through the space in which we dwell. It is also a self-contained heterogeneous environment where our lives genuinely end, where our time and history occur, and where we are consumed and worn down [5]." In actuality, we look for the "I" and "we" spaces between one another and the location of "I," and in the overall relationships of these spaces, we discover the "space" of our existence and its significance. Our sense of security and belonging seems to be found in the existence of "home" and the occupancy of "place." In terms of industrial civilization's urban environment, "Freedom

and restraint coexist in the city. It offers a certain mode of behaviour, a certain manner of moving, and a certain paradigm of thought. It is the ultimate text that capital, law, and order have created and recreated. It is intended to achieve the most successful practise, that is, to ensure that the forces of capital, law, and order are present in all aspects of daily life. However, due to the complexity of its various control and discipline systems, as well as the cracks that exist between them, it is the most chaotic of all environments [6]." In fact, there is a zone for discipline and governance in a huge metropolitan spatial system, as well as a zone of release for the system as a whole. Forces that are related and unrelated to the system itself coexist as a conduit for the system's own security. The city has multiple dualities; it is both a real location and a place of fantasy; it has both an official and a hidden culture; it is an intricate web of roads, residences, public structures, transportation networks, parks, and commercial establishments; it is also a mashup of attitudes, traditions, expectations, and hopes that are ingrained in our hearts as urban subjects. We discover that there are several cities within cities and that the urban "reality" is not singular [7]. Consequently, a city is composed of numerous spatial activities serving a variety of purposes. There are a few diverse spatial forces operating within the overall urban spatial system. The qualities of the aforementioned diverse area are present in urban plazas. Both the "perceived space" in the empirical world and the "planned and sanctioned space" as viewed by scientists, urban planners, and politicians are distinct from this "alien space," which is a "liminal space" that is both built on and beyond these two spaces and one that transcends institutions, existing more as a disorganized spatial organization of social order. In his book "The Third Space," Soja [8] described his journey to Los Angeles and other real and imagined places and proposed the idea of "third space," which is a comparison between the first space (materiality) and the second space, by reviewing the spatial perspectives of Lefebvre, Foucault, and others (physical space). The idea of the "third space" is put out as both an integration of the first space (physical space) and the second space (social, cultural, everyday life, political, *etc*.), as well as a transcendence of both and a deconstruction and rebuilding of the two [9]. The urban plaza in the post-urban era creates a popularized culture of plaza revelry in the micropolitical sense of postmodernism's decentering and de-authorization rather than being restricted to a functional distinction or behavioural reproduction of the plaza at a specific stage in history. This type of spatial culture has a de-authorization, de-classification, and de-identification transgressive cultural nature. The urban plaza can be used for meetings, performances, games, competitions, and knowledge sharing. In addition to arenas and gymnasiums taking up some of the plaza space, large-scale political demonstrations and carnivals can also be hosted there [10].

2.2. A space carnival of many languages

There is a free space outside of the system, a free imagination, freedom from roaming, freedom from exile, and freedom to stand out and observe the world outside of the metropolitan world. This transcendent space, which avoids all forms of spatial compartmentalisation, has consequently evolved into a field of unrestricted activities for the populace. It appears to have a subversive and disorderly spatial carnival meaning that sidesteps institutional rules and regulations as an urban space that is outside of the system. What sort of heterotopic space is the urban plaza, then? Also, what type of component of the urban ecosystem is it? The urban plaza can be characterized by the following characteristics: a place of frequent but guarded exchanges, dense but mixed, anonymous but transient, highly stimulating but with poor interactions among people, and a noisy but lonely vagrant state of mind, which is a deep sense of survival of individuals in the big city. It is a spatial attribute at the same time, with many voices and unrestricted conversations, devoid of hierarchy or identity. "An orgy is not a spectacle for people to watch; people are in it, and everyone is participating because the whole idea of an orgy is to involve everyone [11]." According to Bakhtin, this means that there is no stage in an orgy, that is, it does not distinguish between actors and audience. As a result, everyone is welcome to join in the free festivities that take place in the area. The

plaza and the surrounding streets serve as the primary platform for the carnival performance [11]. It is not a stage for a play. However, as a carnival in its broadest sense is international and inclusive, and since everyone must participate in close embrace, the only appropriate location is the plaza. The plaza is a universally recognised emblem. A symbolic meaning is added by the carnival plaza, the location of the carnival performance [10]. In the de-identified and non-hierarchical space of public contact, this type of plaza-like revelry and open discussion has given rise to a multi-voiced version of democratic politics that has an anti-monocentric ideology, and in turn a spatial political significance. In actuality, the "plaza" itself is a very political cultural area when it comes to the cultural analysis of the urban plaza. Agora is frequently the location of the government, but it is also where the majority of business, cultural, religious, and judicial activities take place. According to Ying Yu's article "Agora: The Revival of the Spirit of the Plaza," the Agora, which symbolizes an ideal of life aspiring to the values of freedom, equality, democracy, honour, profit, and sanctity [12], completely reflects the entirety of Western democratic society.

2.3. Free speech and political activity in the style of democratization

In specific settings, it offers a place to escape daily routines and let go of reasonable restraints, as well as a forum for unrestricted speech and unrepressed expression. The freedom of public uproar and public speech also gives room for the imagination to envisage defying societal norms and everyday conduct codes, such as escaping from hierarchical ranking and rational, disciplined behaviours. As a result, in addition to serving as a location for conventional political gatherings, the modern urban plaza also serves as a location for entertainment, free speech, and equitable discourse. The original site of political assembly has been replaced by a civic centre that serves a variety of purposes, including those related to culture and recreation. The urban plaza serves as a focal point for fully mobilizing public participation in both social and political affairs in the modern political concept of democracy and freedom. As such, it has the spatial potential to actualize the spirit of democracy, which is both an inevitable trend and a political potential of the plaza space itself. Individuals walking in this particular area are from various locations and have varying statuses, occupations, and levels of education. However, in this specific setting, they interact in an unidentified manner, that is, in a group activity. They avoid the privileges that society accords to a certain group or individual by greeting one another and establishing brief eye contact. As a result, within a certain context, "equality," "democracy," and "freedom" are created among them. They speak with a democratic-like freedom of speech and expression; there is no distinction in identity, difference in social rank or authority, or cultural antagonism of race or gender. As a result, the way that people live in this particular location is an expression of their culture and of democratic political life. In this disorderly realm of freedom, where social rights and laws are disorganized, individuals' freedom-related joy and desires, which the system have repressed, are allowed to run amok. It disregards the rules of society as a whole yet does not insult any particular person or group, invoking that "rules govern society, daily life, and the interpretations we make of it." They influence not only our conduct and judgement, but also the social categories that give the world its meaning. Categories are broken in orgy, just as brutally as people break the rules [13]. This "spatial game" of violating the laws of both space and individual's right to freedom is a game of defiance against the law, relishing the rush of fulfilling the need to breach the law. Therefore, the postmodern city, which is a spatial representation of cultural chaos blended with a jumble of styles, is gradually being recognized as a frequent trait. The terms "consumption" and "leisure" suggest activities in which people attempt to experience everything [14]. This is the distinctive cultural quality of modern metropolis, which is exemplified by the cultural syndrome of mixed styles, the juxtaposition of multipurpose spaces, and the freedom of transgressive revelry in the design and spatial organisation of urban plazas.

2.4. Spatial resistance to disorder

The spatial cultures of urban plazas are hence totally resistant. It is a roomy, creative setting. According to Gaston Bachelard, "Instead of living in a uniform and lifeless environment, we actually reside in one that is rich with characteristics and perhaps even illusions. Nature resides in the space we initially perceive, the space of our dreams, and the space of our passions [7]." The spatial "heterotopia" of urban plazas offers a way out of this dichotomy of spatial functions or more specifically a way out of social norms, developing into a heterotopic environment with a subversive or disrespect for authority. Considering that it re-creates a "third place" that is both beyond and outside the purview of a right to punishment, the "third space" is a place that is constantly open to possibilities, as American postmodern geographer Edward Soja describes in his book "The Third Space." The "new world" is built on the first space of experience or perception and the second space of ideology or utopia. It is not only a place of life and imagination, but also a "new world" of struggle toward new possibilities [12]. As a result, this space's dual nature, unusual nature, and counter-dual paradigm give it the qualities of a battlefield and a "public zone" that many people snobbishly invade or claim. It is revolutionary and rebellious due to its diverse "marginality" and "public sphere." Therefore, only an integrated study can observe, reflect on, and live in every area of the city [1]." This is the meaning of the "third space," as suggested by Edward Sawyer. The simplistic dichotomy between public and private spaces may preclude a deeper understanding of the characteristics of urban space.

This is what academics who are charged with achieving spiritual enlightenment are searching for. According to Nietzsche, "What we lack in our large cities are calm, open places for contemplation. There is a paucity of buildings and places that convey the magnificent sense of thought and of being outside [15]," when referring to how architecture impacts our spiritual space. He also expressed that modern cities' and their architecture's vocabulary is "too rhetorical and illiberal" [14]. "We, who do not believe in spirits and gods, are unable to think clearly in such a setting. As we move through these structures and gardens, we want to lift our feet up among our "selves" and witness ourselves change into wood and stone [15]." Baudelaire travelled the streets and plazas of Paris alone in the late hours of the night looking for a place of "otherness" to hold his spiritual solitude, like a "ghost" scavenging the waste of Western civilisation. Baudelaire appears to believe that his existence and modernity's "occasional and fleeting" mobility have temporarily ceased in the quiet and gloomy streets and alleys of Paris so that he could take a good look at this metropolis, which is the embodiment of modern civilization, and reflect on what has happened to modernity. What has happened to the existence of humans? Therefore, Baudelaire is not merely a "casual stroller [16]" or "wanderer," but rather a "ghost" beyond the system, as he ambles about the streets and plazas of Paris. These "ghosts" study the affluence and decadence that modernity has given to the city in the quiet night's darkness before using "stingers" that resemble scorpions to deeply inflict their curses on the rotting peach blossoms [17]. Intellectuals used this period as a "refuge" from the realities of their life and their passive circumstances, and in this heterotopic zone, they investigated both those who were a part of the system and the system itself. In order to live poetically in the contemporary urban environment, these lone wanderers looked for "earth" in the metropolis, while perpetually reflecting on human civilization and modernity. "We love the places we detest, we leave the places we love, and we go back to the places we love for the rest of our lives just to lose them," as Terence Davies states in his film "Time and the City" [18]. The study of urban space culture in the post-urban era has been further affected by this "return to the land" and the cultural tendency of reflecting on modernity. For instance, the postmodern social theory and democratic outlook of German philosopher Habermas are in and of themselves a conceptual critique of social institutions arising from the structural restructuring of the public sphere and spatial politics [19]. In addition, a number of academics, including Foucault, Lefebvre, Sawyer, and Crang [20-22], have concentrated on post-urban cultural space, creating a tendency known as the postmodernist spatial turn in cultural studies and the development of urban cultural studies.

3. Politics of collected space
3.1. Space-related festivities or consumption

"This is the direction of social control, which positions individuals and collectives in the coordinates of time, space, and existence. The category schema formed by accidental and passing social patterns give the world its order and the objects of the world their identity. Through their acts within that space and their comprehension of that space, civic subjects, as members of a particular society, learn about the space in which they are positioned and embrace their identity as citizens [1]." Individuals spend the majority of our time and energy in their daily lives consuming space both during the day and at night [22], immersing themselves in the joyous playground of daytime pleasures. Holiday resorts, public places, trade shows, supermarkets, amusement parks, malls, pubs, cabarets, *etc*. have all evolved into designated areas for people to unwind. People play around with the cultural connotations of these metropolitan settings and indulge in their own interpretations of what space means. They take pleasure in the contentment and comfort of the field in these particular venues for enjoyment in a symbolic reverie of democratic freedom and identity. They engage in unrestricted play and relaxation in this "disordered" setting that is governed by civilized order. Modern individuals who experience existential repression and the quick flow of modernisation need to balance, relax, let their bodies transcend, and let their minds rest; thus, in addition to a living space and material requirements, these spaces also cater to their spiritual solace and artistic pursuit. The urban leisure plaza, which is a community space that is full of warmth and laughter, is just one example of a location where individuals may unwind and enjoy themselves. They can completely unwind their typically uptight brains whether they choose to stroll or converse, congregate for enjoyment, or enjoy the festivities [23]. Even so, Bachkine has given an eternal cultural-philosophical significance to this temporary departure from the rational order, elevating it to the level of philosophical ontology, and thus called it a "new culture of human relations" based on the "culture of laughter" [24]. The cultural rebellion and postmodernist cultural politics of Bakhtin's "carnivalization" theory are, however, far more important than the theory's historical documentary significance. In fact, it could be argued that the former is more of a cultural imagination and political fiction of the present. The carnivalized nature of folk culture raises questions about its historical veracity [24]. Furthermore, according to folklore, a "carnival" is a semi-realistic, semi-performative folkloric event that generally disappears in a hurry. This is because people resume their normal, orderly everyday lives after a brief carnival [25].

3.2. Spatial catharsis and re-ordering

In the post-urban era, the urban plaza has almost entirely evolved into a place where people can uninhibitedly amuse themselves, unwind, and shop. However, the creation of urban space is frequently imposed by a certain ideology. Instead of being an ideal zone of freedom, the urban plaza is a public sphere that the state ideology has purposefully created. It is an area that is openly governed and secular. The presence of social power is a manifestation of the social and economic power of the city, although the plaza fosters a free spatial ecstasy and a democratized nature of life that subvert authority since it is independent of the power regulation system. Its omnipotence and pervasiveness, however, display the existence of social power. Consequently, authorities are continually watching over and controlling the diverse territory of the plaza. A "public realm" that the government purposefully chose for the public to be schooled, where the government exhibits its unshakeable governing stance, the plaza is itself a type of cultural discipline, from its establishment to the cultural symbols and spatial arrangements of the plaza. In the case of Piazza San Marco, on the one hand, the interface and layout of the space is a metaphor or manifestation of the Republic's ideals, making it the embodiment of the Venetian Republic's political, religious, and economic power, which, like the national flag, fosters a sense of identity and pride among its citizens; on the other hand, the distinctive environment the space creates will arouse various emotions in visitors. The plaza

appears to be merely a "stage" for festivals and processions, but in reality, it forms a whole with the processions and any activities that take place in them, strengthening the people's identity with the current social order and hierarchy of power by allowing them to observe or participate [26]. The area served as a hub for popular petitions, protests, and revolutions in its historical incarnation as well as the favoured location for the state authorities to assert their authority and carry out public disciplining. Naturally, the plaza's role as a site of public catharsis has diminished as a result of this power demonstration, and it is now more subtly acknowledged as such. The key method is the "non-repressed anti-sublimation" catharsis of desire, which keeps its approval of freedom and consent to celebration, even the expression of rebellion, within the bounds of control. They resume their identification with reality and system compliance after the catharsis. In this way, the plaza serves as the cultural system's vent, in which after emotions have been let out, the door is carefully shut. No culture can actually sustain its own constant waste, nor can it stand to have its body coated in the "abominable" excrement. As a result, the plaza evolves into a designated and predetermined location for the general population to enjoy themselves, creating a sense of independence and rebellious thrill. However, in the state of "disorder," the desire for destruction and subversion return to their old calm, the rushing waves return to the river valley, and the vanished "embankment" reappears on the horizon. This is an assessment of the "embankment" and a release of pent-up energy. The flood of lust and the "embankment" of civilization keep bumping against one other in search of a "proper" location. As a result, the plaza, the centre of the city, becomes a place for festivities, fairs, leisure, chanting, meetings, and discussions; for following the development of the city; and even for watching the prisoners on the gallows, thus becoming a microcosm and witness to the growth of civil society. All of these are genuine reflections of the urban plaza and daily life.

4. Conclusion: Diversified and juxtaposed flow space

In the 1950s and 1960s, as postmodernist culture and post-urbanization both grew, the traditional Western division between public and private spaces, with the former serving as a place for action, production, and political participation, and the latter serving as a place for consumption and reproduction, has come under intense scrutiny from theorists who contend that gender inequality and economic injustice are to blame for in this regional distinction [26]. However, the urban plaza's modern purpose gives it a transcending quality that goes beyond the dichotomous concept. The urban plaza dismantles the conventional theoretical binary partition of space in this way. The urban plaza is a site where several forces and voices are contrasted at the same time. A cultural battle over space is currently taking place between areas where public announcements are made by the government, areas where people can move freely, and areas where companies are located. A variety of forces, including governmental, commercial, popular, intellectual, and vagrant forces, occupy this public area. As a result, it attracts a large number of voices from people of different nationalities, areas, and cultures. These voices combine in the plaza to create a polyphonic thematic variation of many voices. A micropolitical influence of plaza politics is produced by the historical modification of the functions of the urban plaza in the post-urban era, which has also led to its transition to a stage of democratic life in modern society. It has spawned a wide range of new positions and equally vibrant new potentials, which have in turn led to corresponding modifications in the law, behaviour, morality, attire, architecture, *etc*. [26]. The urban plaza has evolved into a postmodern cultural space as evidenced by its ambivalence, ambiguity, and inconsistency, the breakdown of binary models, the obfuscation of boundaries and the complexity of the composition of the subjects of activity in the plaza, as well as the eclectic juxtaposition of domination, obedience, entertainment, revelry, and resistance. This has resulted in the adoption of a more postmodernist democratic politics by the plaza.

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