

Planning public spaces according to the concept of the third place

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Abstract

Public spaces play a vital role in enhancing urban livability, social interaction, and community cohesion. In this context, the concept of the third place has emerged as a significant framework for understanding how informal social environments—beyond home and work—contribute to the social and spatial quality of cities. This study addresses the limited integration of third place principles within contemporary urban planning practices, particularly in developing contexts where public spaces often lack the capacity to support active social life.

The research aims to develop a conceptual and methodological framework for planning public spaces based on third place principles. It adopts a qualitative approach that synthesizes key theoretical perspectives, including Oldenburg's theory of the third place, Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, and Soja's concept of Thirdspace. Through this synthesis, the study identifies core characteristics such as neutrality, social equality, accessibility, informal interaction, and sense of belonging, and translates them into measurable planning indicators.

To validate the framework, the study analyzes the Canary Wharf experience in London as a practical case. The findings demonstrate that integrating third place principles into spatial design can significantly enhance social interaction, place identity, and urban vitality. The study concludes that adopting these principles provides a robust approach for creating inclusive, dynamic, and socially sustainable public spaces.

Keywords:(Tird place,public place,urban planning).

تخطيط المساحات العامة وفق مفهوم المكان الثالث

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الملخص

تؤدي المساحات العامة دورًا حيويًا في تعزيز جودة الحياة الحضرية، والتفاعل الاجتماعي، والتماسك المجتمعي. وفي هذا السياق، برز مفهوم "المكان الثالث" كإطار هام لفهم كيفية إسهام البيئات الاجتماعية غير الرسمية - خارج نطاق المنزل والعمل - في الجودة الاجتماعية والمكانية للمدن. تتناول هذه الدراسة محدودة دمج مبادئ "المكان الثالث" ضمن ممارسات التخطيط الحضري المعاصرة، لا سيما في السياقات النامية حيث تقتصر المساحات العامة غالبًا إلى القدرة على دعم حياة اجتماعية نشطة.

يهدف البحث إلى تطوير إطار مفاهيمي ومنهجي لتخطيط المساحات العامة استنادًا إلى مبادئ "المكان الثالث". ويتبنى البحث منهجًا نوعيًا يجمع بين منظورات نظرية رئيسية، بما في ذلك نظرية أولدنبرغ عن "المكان الثالث"، ونظرية لوفيفر عن إنتاج الفضاء، ومفهوم سوجا عن "الفضاء الثالث". ومن خلال هذا التجميع، تُحدد الدراسة خصائص أساسية مثل الحياد، والمساواة الاجتماعية، وسهولة الوصول، والتفاعل غير الرسمي، والشعور بالانتماء، وتُترجمها إلى مؤشرات تخطيط قابلة للقياس.

وللتحقق من صحة هذا الإطار، تُحلل الدراسة تجربة منطقة كناري وارف في لندن كحالة عملية. تُظهر النتائج أن دمج مبادئ المكان الثالث في التصميم المكاني يُمكن أن يُعزز بشكل كبير التفاعل الاجتماعي، وهوية المكان، وحيوية المدن. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن تبني هذه المبادئ يُوفر نهجًا قويًا لإنشاء مساحات عامة شاملة وديناميكية ومستدامة اجتماعيًا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (المكان الثالث، المساحات العامة، التخطيط الحضري).

1.1.Introduction

Public spaces play a fundamental role in shaping the social, cultural, and functional identity of cities, as well as in enhancing their overall livability and sustainability. In recent decades, the concept of the “third place” has emerged as a critical framework for understanding how urban environments can support social interaction, community cohesion, and everyday human experiences beyond the domains of home (first place) and work (second place). This concept has contributed to the development of interdisciplinary perspectives—spanning urban planning, sociology, and environmental psychology—that seek to define the characteristics of successful public spaces capable of fostering inclusivity, engagement, and a sense of belonging.

The literature reviewed in this research emphasizes that the effectiveness of public spaces is closely tied to their ability to function as third places—informal, accessible, and socially vibrant environments that encourage spontaneous interaction and collective use. Within this framework, urban space is not merely a physical setting but a dynamic social construct shaped by human behavior, cultural practices, and spatial design. The evolution of public space planning reflects a shift from purely functional and aesthetic considerations toward more human-centered approaches that prioritize social sustainability, experiential quality, and community well-being.

This study identifies a key problem in the limited integration of third place principles within contemporary urban planning practices, particularly in developing contexts where public spaces often lack the qualities necessary to support active social life. There is also a lack of clarity regarding the specific factors and indicators that define successful third places and how these can be systematically incorporated into planning processes. Accordingly, this research is based on the premise that adopting third place principles in public space planning can significantly enhance social interaction, urban vitality, and overall sustainability.

Therefore, the significance of this paper lies in its attempt to establish a conceptual and methodological framework for planning public spaces according to the third place concept. This framework aims to define the core components of such spaces and provide measurable indicators that enable the evaluation of their social, spatial, and environmental performance. By doing so, the research contributes to

strengthening the theoretical and practical foundations for designing inclusive and vibrant public environments.

Based on the above, this paper presents a qualitative exploration guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the third place.
2. To identify the key characteristics and elements that define third places in public space planning.
3. To formulate specific factors and indicators for planning public spaces according to the third place concept.
4. To review relevant global experiences and assess the applicability of the identified factors within different urban contexts.

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework:

2.1 The Concept of Third Place: Linguistic and Technical Definitions:

The concept of "third place" has gained considerable traction, particularly in urban studies, sociology, and community development. To fully understand it, we will first examine its general linguistic definition, followed by its more specific and specialized meaning.

Linguistically (in a purely linguistic sense), "third place" simply refers to what occupies the position after "first" and "second." This indicates a sequential order:

First place (First Place): Usually understood as the home or primary residence – the private sphere where an individual lives, rests, and maintains intimate relationships (Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Fayruzabadi, 2005)

Second place (Second Place): Usually refers to the workplace or school – the formal environment where individuals engage in paid work, education, or organized activities (Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Fayruzabadi, 2005)

Third place (Third Place): According to the simple numerical sequence, this is any place that is neither home nor work. Linguistically, this term does not carry specific social or functional connotations beyond its position in the hierarchy (Abdullah Ali Kabir, 2007).

Technically:

First: The Classical Social Definition: The third place is an informal space outside the home (the first place) and the workplace (the second place), providing a neutral environment for social interaction, conversation, and building community bonds (OLDENBURG, 2023).

Second: The Urban Planning Perspective Definition: The third place is a space that combines the physical and the imagined, the real and the lived, representing a hybrid area that transcends the traditional separation between physical and social space, and allows for new forms of interaction and urban creativity (Edward W. Soja, 1996).

Third: The Cultural-Critical Definition: The third place is a hybrid cultural space in which new meanings of identity and belonging emerge, and it reshapes the relationships between dominant and marginal cultures (Homi K Bhabha, 1994).

Fourth: The Societal Definition – The Transformative Definition: The third place represents a site of comfort and belonging, where individuals can engage in an "informal public life" that fosters a sense of community and balances the demands of modern life. (Ramon Oldenburg, 1999)

Fifth: A Contemporary Definition in Urban Studies: Third places are social spaces that encourage casual interaction between strangers, increase social capital, and enhance the quality of life in cities. (Seel et al., 2012)

Operational Definition of the Third Place: The third place is an independent social space outside the scope of the first place (home) and the second place (workplace). It is characterized as a neutral and informal environment that promotes informal social interaction between individuals and provides opportunities for networking, getting to know one another, and exchanging ideas within a framework of inclusivity and equality. Practically speaking, the third place is defined by measurable characteristics including accessibility, free interaction, a sense of belonging, and the provision of a safe and stimulating environment for social interaction.

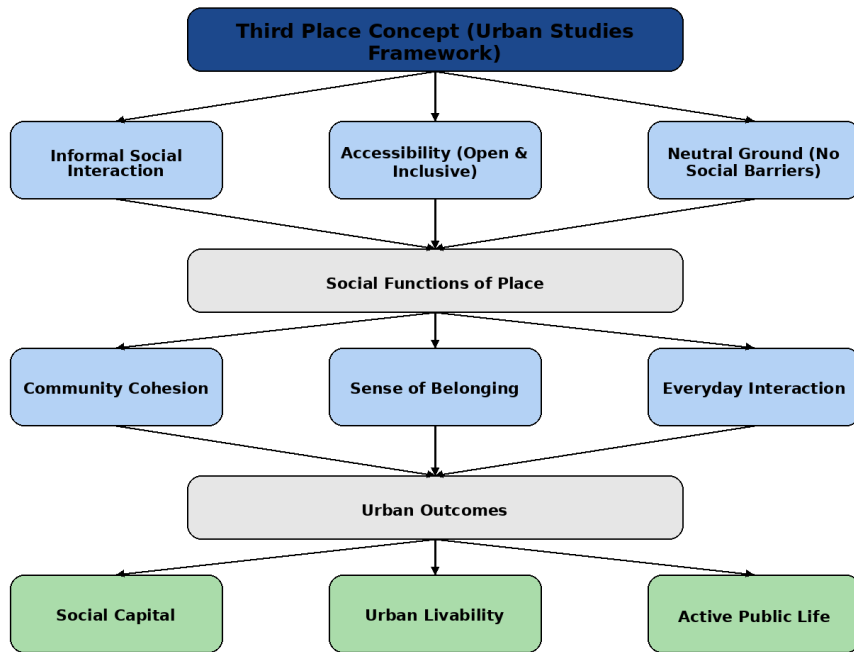


fig1. Third place concept (urban studies framework)

2.2 Principles of the Third Place

First: Neutral ground is a place where individuals can come and go as they please, without any formal obligations to others present. It is accessible to everyone in the community. (Soukup, 2006)

Second: Equality. Social status or economic position is often irrelevant in the context of the third place. People from diverse backgrounds can interact on an equal footing. (Hampton & Gupta, 2008)

Third: Dialogue is the main activity. Although other activities are possible, the primary purpose is often social interaction, conversation, and the exchange of ideas. (Jeffres et al., 2009)

Fourth: Accessibility and comfort. The venue is usually easily accessible, open for extended hours, and comfortable. (OLDENBURG, 2023)

Fifth: Regular customers. There is usually a core group of "regular customers" who give the venue a distinctive character and make newcomers feel welcome. (OLDENBURG, 2023)

Sixth: Simplicity. The atmosphere is often unpretentious and relaxed, without being overly formal or pretentious. (OLDENBURG, 2023)

Seventh: Fun atmosphere. The overall ambiance is fun and encourages relaxation and enjoyment. (OLDENBURG, 2023)

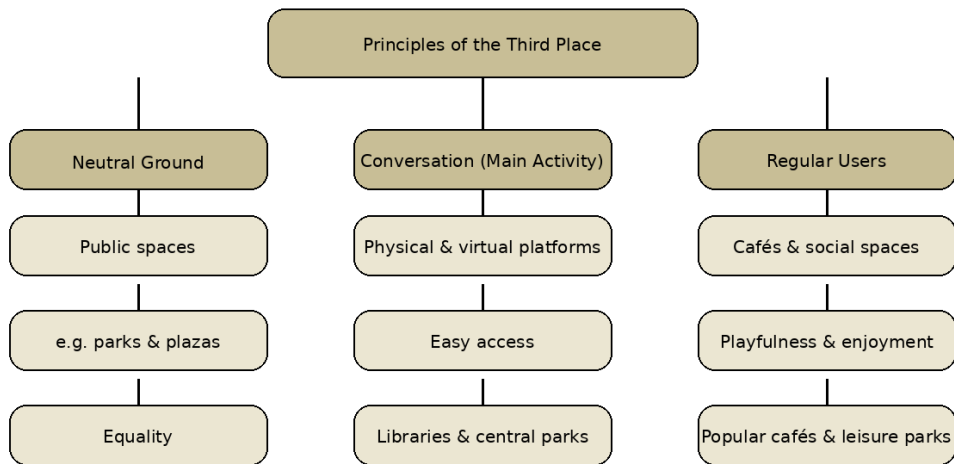


Fig2. Principles of the Third Place

2.3 The Origin of the Concept and Historical Development of the Third Place

2.3.1 First Phase: The Untheorized Social Roots of the Third Place

Before the term Third Place emerged as a clear theoretical concept, cities contained informal social spaces that effectively served as neutral social spaces, allowing for spontaneous social interaction outside of housing and work. In ancient Greek cities, the agora served as an early model of the public sphere, where people gathered without strict class constraints, fostering social equality and freedom of dialogue (Jürgen Habermas, 1989). Roman forums played a similar role as spaces that combined social, commercial, and political activity (Richard Sennett, 1977). In the Middle Ages and the early modern period, traditional markets, public baths, and European coffeehouses developed as venues for informal encounters, social

networking, and knowledge exchange (Lewis Mumford, 1961). These spaces played a crucial role in shaping collective identity and social memory, contributing to the emergence of what later became known as the informal public sphere. While the term "third place" was absent, these spaces practically embodied characteristics such as neutrality, openness, accessibility, and the prevalence of conversation and daily interaction as their primary activities (Spiro Kostof, 1991).



Fig3. the agora

2.3.2 Phase Two: The Development and Theoretical Emergence of the Third Place Concept (1989) – Late 1990s (A Sociological Concept)

The year 1989 marked a pivotal turning point in understanding these spaces with Ray Oldenburg's introduction of the concept of the Third Place. Oldenburg defined the Third Place as a neutral social space situated between the First Place (home) and the Second Place (work), characterized by a lack of formality, the absence of hierarchy, and the presence of social equality among its users. In this context, Oldenburg considered conversation to be the central activity of the Third Place, a space that fosters social belonging, familiarity, and a sense of psychological comfort (Ray Oldenburg, 1989).

He also pointed out that the Third Place facilitates frequent interaction and strengthens social capital, making it a fundamental element in supporting democracy and civic life. Examples of the Third Place during this phase included cafes, popular bars, libraries, neighborhood clubs, and community centers, as spaces characterized by social neutrality and accessibility (Putnam, 2000).

2.3.3 Phase Three: Expanding the Concept and Integrating it into Urban Design and Planning (2020- 2000)

With the dawn of the 21st century, the concept of the third place expanded to become part of the discourse surrounding urban planning and design (Jan Gehl, 2010). It was no longer limited to enclosed spaces but encompassed open public spaces such as plazas, active sidewalks, and urban parks. In this phase, the third place became associated with concepts of urban vitality, walkability, optional activities, and human interaction (William H. Whyte, 1980). Researchers such as Jan Gehl emphasized the importance of designing spaces that encourage lingering, sitting, pausing, and observing, considering the success of a place to be measured by its ability to foster everyday social interaction. The third place came to be seen as a supporting element for urban quality of life and a tool for promoting social integration within the city (Dolores Hayden, 1995).

2.3.4 Phase Four: The Third Place as a Carrier of Identity and Sense of Place (2018-2010)

This phase witnessed a deepening of the cultural and human dimension of the third place, as it became linked to concepts of sense of place, spatial identity, and collective memory (Yi-Fu Tuan, 1977). The third place was no longer understood merely as a space for interaction, but as a space that produces meaning and emotional belonging and reinforces cultural continuity (Edward Relph, 1976). In historic cities, traditional markets, squares, and cafes played a central role in consolidating memory and impressions, connecting individuals to the history and symbols of the place. Here, the third place became a mediator between daily experience and the symbolic meanings of place. (Dolores Hayden, 1995)



Fig4. Superblock of Sant Antoni / Leku Studio

2.3.5 Phase Five: The Contemporary Third Place, Sustainability, and Hybrid Spaces (2018–Present)

In the contemporary phase, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, the third place was reconsidered as a fundamental element of mental health, social recovery, and urban resilience (Setha Low & Neil Smith, 2006). The concept of the hybrid third place emerged, combining physical and digital spaces while preserving characteristics such as interaction, belonging, and social neutrality (Mehta, 2020).

The third space has also been linked to issues of spatial justice, social inclusion, and social sustainability, and has become a planning tool to address isolation and promote community ties. (United Nations, 2020)

3. Philosophical Theories of the Third Place:

3.1 First: The Theory of the Third Place (Ray Oldenburg) 1989:

The concept of the Third Place is one of the most important concepts that emerged in the late twentieth century to explain the social dimension of modern urban life. It was formulated by the American sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his books **The Great Good Place** (1989) and **Celebrating the Third Place** (1999), to describe a type of social space that lies outside the traditional dichotomy of home as the "first place" and work as the "second place." These spaces, which he termed "the Third Place," are considered essential components of daily life, as they provide informal

environments where individuals interact freely, away from family or professional pressures.

Oldenburg argues that the Third Place constitutes a neutral social mediator that brings together different segments of society on the basis of dialogue and participation, not on the basis of class or professional affiliation. It is an open, easily accessible, and low-cost space that allows people to form relationships based on friendliness and equality. Oldenburg describes it as a "home away from home," where individuals find a sense of familiarity and belonging, and relationships are built on daily routines and human warmth rather than self-interest or power.

In practice, these spaces are embodied in numerous real-world examples such as cafes, public libraries, barbershops, bars, parks, community centers, and local markets. These are places easily accessible without invitation, welcoming everyone regardless of their social or economic background. Their interactive, social nature encourages spontaneous conversation, fun, and cultural exchange, making them ideal environments for generating what sociologists call "social capital".

The significance of the Third Place theory lies in its reaffirmation of the importance of informal spaces in the social fabric of modern societies, after the decline in the significance of social gatherings due to the rapid pace of urban life. The theory has helped to highlight the vital role of place in supporting democratic life and strengthening social cohesion. These spaces provide opportunities for interaction between different social groups, creating a foundation for trust and mutual understanding, which is the essence of healthy democratic societies.

Despite the profound contribution of Oldenburg, his theory has faced several criticisms. Most notably, it was largely descriptive and normative, focusing on presenting an ideal model rather than offering a structural analysis. Furthermore, his study originated from a Western, patriarchal, middle-class context, limiting its applicability to non-Western environments or societies experiencing inequalities in access to public space. Additionally, the original version of the theory did not address the impact of technological and digital transformations on the concept of "social encounter," which later led to the development of new concepts such as "hybrid third space" or "digital third space," combining physical and virtual interaction.

Nevertheless, the influence of Oldenburg's theory remains broad and profound in the fields of urban planning, sociology, and cultural studies. It has inspired many researchers and planners to rethink how to design cities in ways that foster social encounters and enhance the quality of urban life. The theory has also become a key reference point for explaining the emergence of new public spaces such as community centers, open parks, cultural cafes, and even digital platforms that mimic the experience of real human interaction.

At its core, the Third Place theory offers a humanistic vision of space, balancing its physical function with its social and cultural role. It does not view space merely as a physical area, but as a living social structure that produces meanings, identities, and connections that reshape the city and give it its human character. Therefore, it can be argued that the Third Place represents one of the philosophical keys to understanding the relationship between people and space in light of the rapid transformations of the digital age and globalized urbanization.

3.2 Second: The Theory of the Production of Space (Henri Lefebvre, 1974)

Henri Lefebvre is considered one of the most prominent thinkers who brought about a radical shift in the understanding of urban space. He redefined it as a social product, not merely a physical container or a backdrop for human activities. In his book, **The Production of Space** (1974), Lefebvre presented a dialectical vision that sees space as produced through a complex interaction between three interconnected moments: spatial practice (perceived space), spatial representations (conceived space), and representational spaces (lived space). This triad forms a framework for understanding how the material, symbolic, and political dimensions intersect in the production of space, and how space transforms from a mere physical space into a social entity bearing meaning and power.

Lefebvre argues that perceived space refers to the everyday practices that constitute people's direct experience of space—that is, how individuals use and perceive space in their daily lives through movement, work, and social interaction. Conceived space represents the conceptual framework produced by planners, engineers, and authorities through maps, designs, and urban policies—that is, space as it is intended to be. Experienced space, on the other hand, reflects the emotional and symbolic experience of a place, the meanings, memories, and identities that individuals project onto their space.

Applying this framework to the concept of the third space, Lefebvre offers a deeper perspective that transcends the superficial view of space as a neutral social environment.

At the level of perceived space (spatial practice), we can analyze how people use third spaces daily—such as cafes, parks, or cultural centers—in terms of seating patterns, conversations, and frequency of visits, reflecting the routines and interactions of social life.

At the level of perceived space (representations), we see how planners or business owners view third spaces as an economic product or a tool for urban revitalization, reflecting their ideological or capitalist orientations in organizing public space. At the level of lived (representational) space, the symbolic and emotional dimension of the third space is revealed, where individuals connect these spaces to memories, identity, and belonging, making them places of both personal and collective meaning.

Through this analysis, it becomes clear that the third space is not merely a space for encounter or recreation, but rather the product of complex social, economic, and political relationships. The third space can be an arena for interaction and solidarity, but it is also a field of conflict and symbolic domination, where the forces of power, capital, and resistance are embodied. Thus, Lefebvre demonstrates that every space is a contested space—whether in terms of meanings, uses, or spatial control.

Lefebvre's theory enriches our understanding of the third space because it reveals its multiple layers: social, symbolic, and political, and it emphasizes that these spaces are not neutral but are constantly produced and reproduced within specific social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, combining his vision with the concept of the third place enables researchers to interpret the transformations that occur in public space under globalization and technology, as processes that reshape the relationship between man and place through the channels of production, consumption, and lived experience.

3.3 Third: The Third Space Theory (by Edward Soja) 1996

Edward Soja is considered one of the most prominent thinkers who developed Henri Lefebvre's theory of space production. In his book, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), he presented the concept of

the Third Space as a critical philosophical perspective for understanding contemporary space. Soja builds upon Lefebvre's work but goes beyond it, proposing a postmodern and post-structuralist vision that sees space not merely as a physical reality or a mental representation, but as a hybrid, open, and lived space that transcends traditional dichotomies such as real/imaginary, mental/material, public/private, and local/global.

Soja defines the "Third Space" as the point of convergence between physical space (the first space) and mental or conceptual space (the second space), producing from them a more complex third space that represents the experience of living in a place, with all its imagination, memory, social interaction, and symbolic meanings. This third space is not merely a geographical area, but a cognitive and lived experience where material, cultural, and political layers interact. It is a space resistant to stagnation and categorization, representing a field for reimagining social relations and constructing identities in unconventional ways.

Applying this vision to Oldenburg's concept of the third space, the third space becomes not just a site for social encounter or communication, but a philosophical space that transcends the boundaries of the material and the abstract, where everyday reality meets the collective imagination. In Soja's approach, the third space is simultaneously lived and imagined—it contains a physical structure (like a café or a square) but is also symbolically reproduced through the memories, interactions, and meanings that its users ascribe to it.

From this perspective, the third space can be viewed as Soja's Third Space, a multi-layered space that combines the tangible (like furniture, layout, and light) with the intangible (like familiarity, belonging, and collective identity). It is a dynamic space, open to pluralism and difference, challenging rigid divisions between private and public, formal and informal.

One of Soja's most significant contributions is his emphasis on the marginal and resistant dimension of the Third Space. He sees these spaces as sites for renegotiating power and identity. They are places that allow for alternative experiences outside dominant structures, making them spaces of liberation and equality, and sometimes of cultural and social resistance. Thus, according to Soja's approach, the Third Space becomes not only a space for interaction but also a tool for producing spatial awareness and spatial justice.

Soja's approach deepens our understanding of the Third Space because it shifts it from a descriptive social framework, as in Oldenburg's, to a dialectical philosophical framework that views space as a network of interconnected relationships that constantly generate new meanings. This understanding also provides urban planners and researchers with a perspective that integrates lived experience, imagination, and power in analyzing public spaces, especially in contemporary cities where the physical and virtual worlds intersect to produce "hybrid third places" that combine the real and the digital.

Table1: It explains the indicators that were extracted from the theories.

Theory	Theoretical/Methodological Approach	Key indicators
Oldenburg's Third Place Theory (1989)	The social theory of informal public spaces emphasizes community and democracy.	Neutral ground
		social equality
		easy and fun conversation
		universal access
		homely comfort
Henri Lefebvre's theory of space production (1974)	Lefebvre views space as a social product created through dialectical interactions between spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces.	<u>Social production</u> : Space reflects capitalist or collectivist ideologies.
		<u>Daily practices</u> : Focus on routines, rhythms, and social interaction.
		<u>Symbolic dimensions</u> : Memory, identity, and power relations within space.
The Third Space by Edward Soga (1996)	The third space is the meeting point of imagination, physical reality, memory, and social interaction—a deeper philosophical level of Oldenburg's concept of the third space.	Pluralism: Space is multi-layered, multifaceted, and dynamic
		Marginality and resistance: Space as a place of inclusion, resistance, or liberation.

4. The Canary Wharf Experience in London (Canary Wharf Group, 2023)

Canary Wharf is a business district in East London comprising 1,486 square meters of office and retail space, and home to the European headquarters of several major companies. It contains some of the tallest buildings in Europe and is managed by the Canary Wharf Group plc. Canary Wharf is a prime example of management approaches to privately owned public spaces. Designed by a Canadian architect, its North American architecture caters to a range of office services. Although it is one of London's largest major business districts in terms of the number of employees, opportunities for employees to relax are limited. The original design was heavily criticized for the lack of social opportunities outside of consumption spaces, as evidenced by the absence of communal public spaces and a corporate atmosphere. Public spaces in this development are minimized in an effort to maximize profitable uses. This results in a place that prioritizes anonymous transactional market values over the need for social space. More recently, the Canary Wharf Group plc has taken these criticisms into account and has made efforts to improve public spaces through programmed activities and art installations. Despite the investment of time and money, the results do not address the obfuscation of the place's identity, nor do they address the formality or excessive control over its open spaces.

4.1 First: Neutral Ground

The concept of neutral ground is manifested in this experiment by transforming the space from a transient transit point requiring no social commitment into a space that allows for voluntary presence without imposing formal roles or obligations on users. Before the intervention, the space was used merely as a passageway, where individuals passed through without interaction or a desire to stop. After the redesign, the space was reorganized to allow sitting, pausing, and observing without the need to purchase or participate in a specific activity. This transformation eliminated the sense of ownership or control, making the space open to everyone. This fostered a sense of welcome among users regardless of their social or economic background, which is the essence of the neutral ground concept in the third space.

4.2 Second: Leveler/Equality

The experiment reflects the principle of equality by designing the space in a way that minimizes class and social disparities among users. Any hierarchical structure of seating or usage was eliminated, and no areas were designated for specific groups.

Instead, everyone used the same seats, the same paths, and the same stopping points. The absence of formal or luxurious symbols also contributed to removing class-based connotations,

enabling horizontal interaction between different age groups and social classes. Thus, the space transformed from one reflecting inequality (as in the Non-place) into one that encourages equal encounters, which supports one of the most important



foundations of the Third Place.

Fig5. Equality

4.3 Third: Conversation as the Main Activity

After the interventions were implemented, the primary activity in the space was no longer limited to movement. Conversation and social interaction became the most prominent aspects of use. The arrangement of facing seats, the reduction of kinetic noise, and the provision of a visually comfortable environment all contributed to encouraging users to sit for longer periods and engage in conversation. Furthermore, the proximity of activities to one another created opportunities for spontaneous communication between strangers, representing a clear shift from a silent and transient space to a vibrant social space where conversation is a fundamental element of the spatial experience.

4.4 Fourth: Accessibility and Ease of Use

The experience demonstrates a clear focus on accessibility through the reorganization of pathways, facilitating pedestrian and bicycle movement, and reducing car dominance. Access to the space has become more visible and seamless, both in terms of connectivity to the urban network and ease of entry and use for diverse groups, including the elderly and people with disabilities. This improvement has boosted daily user engagement, transforming the space into a part of the urban



visit point .

Fig6. Accessibility and Ease of Use

4.5Fifth: Regulars and Customers

As the space has become a comfortable and inviting environment, a class of regular users has emerged. These regulars have contributed to creating a social identity for the space, becoming an informal element in its organization and fostering a sense of familiarity and security. Their continued presence reflects the success of the experience in transitioning from a temporary, memory-less space to one with a recurring social character, which is one of the most important indicators of achieving the third type of space.

4.6 Sixth: Low Profile

The experience is characterized by a low level of formality, achieved through simple design, the use of familiar materials, and the absence of elaborate architectural elements. This informality makes users feel comfortable and relaxed, encouraging them to use the space freely. This contributes to reducing psychological barriers

between people and the space, transforming it into a familiar and unthreatening environment.

4.7 Seventh: Playful Mood

The playful atmosphere of the experience is evident in the variety of activities, the lively movement, and the use of colors and greenery, which create a relaxed and informal feel. This aspect helps create a positive spatial experience, where presence extends beyond function to include enjoyment and relaxation, strengthening users' emotional connection to the space.

4.8 Eighth: Home Away from Home

With repeated use and increased comfort, users begin to treat the space as an extension of their daily lives—a "home away from home." This is demonstrated by prolonged sitting, leaving belongings behind, or using the space for reading and informal work. This sense of belonging reflects the complete transformation of the space into a genuine third place, imbued with personal memory and experience for its users.

4.9 Ninth: New Features Introduced in the Experience

The experience incorporates contemporary features that transcend the classic model of a third place, such as enhancing the sense of security and integrating movement and anticipation.

Table2: Analysis of the characteristics of the third place in the experiment

The characteristic	How was it achieved in the experiment?
neutral ground	The space was reshaped to be open to presence without obligation or compulsory activity, thus eliminating the sense of ownership or control, and making the place available to everyone as a neutral public space.
social equality	A unified design was adopted without a hierarchical progression in use, with the absence of class symbols, which allowed for horizontal interaction between different age and social groups.
The conversation	Organizing seating and reducing the dominance of movement encouraged the emergence of interaction and spontaneous

	conversation, transforming the space from silent to social.
accessibility	The traffic network and ease of access have been improved, with priority given to pedestrians, thus integrating the place into the daily urban routine.
Regulars and Customers	Frequent daily use has led to the emergence of regular users who have contributed to building a social identity for the place and enhancing familiarity and security.
Low Profile	The design was characterized by simplicity and the absence of expensive elements, which eased psychological barriers and encouraged free and informal use.
Playful Mood	The positive atmosphere resulted from the variety of activities and the liveliness of the movement, rather than from artificial entertainment elements, which strengthened the emotional connection to the place.
Home Away from Home	With increased comfort and frequency of use, users began to treat the space as an extension of their everyday living space.
New Features	The experience added the dimension of safety, time flexibility, and social sustainability, confirming the evolution of the concept of the third place in the contemporary urban context.

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