

# COMMON PLACES

## GUIDE FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF PUBLIC SPACE



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## **GUIDE FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF PUBLIC SPACE**

PUBLICATION AS PART OF THE PSSS RESEARCH PROJECT – PUBLIC SPACE'S SERVICE VALUE  
AS AN URBAN SYSTEM. AN INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY.

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This guide for the assessment and interpretation of public space was developed by an interdisciplinary team from the universities of Lisbon, Porto and Barcelona, within the research project “Public space’s service value as an urban system – PSSS (Public Space Service System)”.

Its central innovation is to try to go beyond existing established practices and prevailing ideas concerning the assessment of public space, proposing new concepts and tools to identify its systemic problems and develop its service potential.

The practical application of the PSSS method of assessing and interpreting public spaces, as a system that provides benefits because it provides services to the city and its users, is exemplified by several case studies which have been developed during the research.

Investment in public spaces has grown in many cities in recent decades, becoming more important in public policies and in daily users’ activities. This greater role, however, raises some questions:





# WHAT IS PUBLIC SPACE FOR AND WHAT DOES IT DEPEND ON?

– A REFLECTIVE  
AND OPERATIVE  
INTERPRETATION

- Does the widespread recognition of its importance, in the diversity of types and uses of space, show it to be a space for cohesion and equity?
- Are we facing a conceptual leap, to new ideas and principles, or are we deficient in our interpretation criteria, so as to support assessments and decisions?
- What are the problems, misunderstandings or failures of public space that cause waste, less return in the result or the devaluing of urbanity?
- Does public space have a function of embellishment associated with leisure, refinement or sophistication, more than the production and organization of urbanity?

The very notion of public space is not one-dimensional, because it mixes and links concepts and because spaces themselves offer many other services besides immediate functionality: it is in that same space that all forms of urban life interact.

**The multidimensional nature of public space is a factor involving complexity, calling for better interpretation.**

## GENEALOGY OF THE WAY OF THINKING

The theory of public space, within the framework of Urban Design practice, also has a recent history in Portugal but, both in theoretical terms and in the practice of its pioneers, exemplary references have lasted. In the second half of the twentieth century, Gonalo Ribeiro Telles popularized the notion (and operative action) of the “integrated cultural landscape” with recognized results, such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

Nuno Portas established the principles and stages of urban projects in memorable articles (among them Portas, 1998; Portas *et al.*, 2007; Portas *et al.*, 2011): actions to regenerate historical centres (the cases of Porto and Guimarães), projects with new central areas, based on infrastructure or the visibility of events (such as Expo’98 in Lisbon); initiatives for the dissemination of public space (such as the PROCOM, URBAN, POLIS programmes); and new phases of action involving interdisciplinary integration, in support of practice, in which we are participating with this project.

In 2002, the Portuguese Design Centre published an urban design guide, *O Chao da Cidade* (The City Ground), a distant source of the present work, integrating emerging perspectives: “The resolution of urban problems nowadays requires more systemic and integrated action (...) to the point that the need to start designing the city through the design of the public space – rather than terminating it – has become increasingly evident”. Following this, in 2008 the Direo Geral do Territrio (General Directorate for Territory) published *A Identidade dos Lugares e a sua Representao Colectiva* (The Identity of Places and their Collective Representation), extending public space types to the most interactive, intangible or those marked by subjectivity, which we have designated as “software”.

The variability of circumstances and the diversity of dimensions of public space impose multiple perspectives and interpretive readings, which should not be eliminated merely because they do not correspond to pre-established urban space typological or morphological canons.

**Thus, we have chosen to base our logic and the PSSS method on another way of thinking, involving the aspects of systemic interaction and interdependence of public space, considering the elements that create what is public, or common, in urban space: the essential contributions to urbanity.**



Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation garden, Lisbon; *Parque das Naes*, Lisbon; Book cover *O Chao da Cidade*

## PSSS FOUNDATION, PURPOSE AND METHOD

In urban contexts, situations and public space projects which are successful in satisfying their residents, visitors or social and economic activities, in many cases have no definitive explanation. In the last decades, however, various countries and continents have adopted strategies and regeneration practices, in which public space, besides having an improving function, imposes a strategic, conductive or organizing view of urbanity.

This option differs from the still dominant discourses on attributes of those spaces, defined *a priori* as “universal criteria” for the evaluation of public spaces, based on abstractions about “vibrant environments”, “spirits of a place” and other endless and indefinable qualities that are difficult to evaluate. Thus, the search for alternatives demands new knowledge and interpretation.

To do this, public space analysis cannot be restricted to a scale (that of proximity), nor only to typologies of easily recognizable spaces (street, square, garden...) or to normative processes. It is necessary to consider a vision of public space as a network of places, sharing properties with other urban systems – landscape (a beach...), infrastructure (an interface...), communication (toponyms...) – extending to larger scales, providing common, comprehensive services with multiple objectives.

PSSS has as its main aim to highlight what public space is for, and how it serves its users, by clarifying the benefits and values it represents in different situations and contexts, allowing for its subjectivity and the various perspectives.

**In order to interpret the public space, we must consider the interaction of components and factors generating common places, as founders of urbanity: the system, the service, the actors, the value.**

Our work focuses not only on the material and measurable elements of public space but includes tangible and intangible issues, accepting contextual dependencies in those related to its stakeholders. It is based on the space's problems and its actors' dynamics and practices, that enable us to interpret it: because what is public, and common, depends.



Shared space allows interaction between all,  
Munich





BARCELONA

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## HOW TO INTERPRET PUBLIC SPACE NOWADAYS?

The question is important. Despite its short existence, Urban Design theory recognizes the positive role of public space in contemporary urbanity. However, both in normative and in dominant practices, the needs that the space covers and the services that it provides are not evident, with its evaluation centred within the scope of “quality”, an attribute that it must possess to be successful. However, although the attention given to public space has positive effects, predominant notions narrow the representation of the values in question, leading to a notion of public space focused on the primacy of its exceptionality and less on the perception of the factors related to its production, to its use or to its meanings.

It is now possible to reach a certain theoretical consensus about the issues and problems that are important to discuss: What are the current motivations and models in the production of public space? Which approaches and interactions can translate space’s public service? How can the variability of contexts, the subjectivity of values, and the multiplicity of actors and their interests be addressed?

This is the knowledge deficit that the PSSS aims to solve by proposing a theoretical framework for assessment and interpretation of the public space system, prioritizing the identification of benefits that public space entails. To do this, it has been necessary to develop new concepts and tools to highlight the value of public service of space, in an urban sense of serving.

The production of public space is currently quite diverse and complex and requires interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches. We will see how the critical analysis of production processes of urban space includes both physical elements (hardware) and relational elements (software) and how it leads us to models of interpretation focused on its systemic organization and on the value involved.

The conceptual framework of the PSSS method is therefore based on the following questions:

- SYSTEM** ▶ How does this public space relate to other spaces?
- SERVICE** ▶ What is this public space for and what does it offer to its users?
- ACTORS** ▶ Who are the actors in this public space and what are their needs?
- VALUE** ▶ What types of value can we find in this public space?



St. Peter's Square creates a confluence space in the surrounding urban network, Vatican

## URBANITY: A SYSTEM OF SYSTEMS

The dynamics, typologies, scales and investments in public space transformations have been growing and multiplying, resulting in increasingly complex and diversified spaces, which are not restricted to the city's traditional references. There is now increasing interest in systemic approaches to urban problems, especially in relation to environmental and infrastructure issues.

**If urbanity is made up of urban systems, then public space is an important structure that ensures its connections and dynamics, as an element of integration.**

It can be considered that all the places of an urban environment, where there is open space and public use (a park or garden, a street or a square...) constitute the network of public spaces. But such a definition of network does not express an essential aspect – public spaces are linked to each other and to a context. These relationships between spaces and contexts are the basis of what define the system.

As a lasting element, the public space system is relational – it establishes relations between other spaces, both public and private, it receives a variety of overlapping functions, from the most functional to the most symbolic, as well as its users. As an interactive urban element, it is related to and coexists with other urban systems – infrastructure, landscape, communication, buildings, etc. – in a functional, morphological and meaningful connection.



As a terrace, a square or other public space provides a set of services that we can assess, we can also assess infrastructural and landscape aspects of an urban system – a public transportation system, a lighting network, a viewpoint, a bridge over a river that crosses the city, a central tree-lined avenue, an agricultural space or an outdoor fair, all utilize values that we can analyse through tangible and intangible aspects.

We assume that in a collaborative approach, networks of spaces – whether landscapes, infrastructures or public spaces – gain when we design them as systems and even more as interconnected systems, i.e., part of one another, that can exist for convergent purposes.

**In general, we can say that a public space system is a set of free access spaces, connected in a network, with different scales of relationship between each other and with the services they provide.**

The public space system includes diverse connected spaces, their uses and meanings: from those involving proximity, the street and the neighbourhood, to the large spaces of events – the encounter and interaction, related to passage, movement, as well as the potential exchange and sharing between acquaintances and strangers.

This organization provides a basis for a more inclusive assessment of urban values because it encompasses greater diversity and integrates different urban ensembles and natural elements into a common (physical, social and identity) frame of reference.



The network of physical and social relations in public space, Barcelona

Green spaces as references for meeting and interaction, at major events or in day-to-day life, Lisbon



The multiple services of informal public spaces, Antofagasta (Chile)

"In spatial terms, public spaces are by definition public, and as such expected to be accessible to all. However, public is not a single entity, as it is composed of different social strata, each with a different set of characteristics, interests and powers."

Madanipour, 2010

## THE SERVICE OF PUBLIC SPACE AS PUBLIC SERVICE OF SPACE

The definition of what public space is can be made within the scope of ownership (of the State or Public Administration), but also within the scope of practices and uses that are for all or for a community. Thus, what public space is can be defined by what lies at the basis of the public character of space: the common goods of a community – the commons<sup>1</sup> – enjoyed and shared.

In this sense it is important to start by asking: what are the services for the community promoted by urban space? As a collective common space, open to all users, public space anchors the social usufruct of public assets, where many activities (social, economic, leisure, political, dislocation, etc.) overlap, thereby ensuring the services which are essential and collectively valued, that is, that allow shared enjoyment and joint care, which can be translated into the space service value.

<sup>1</sup> The notion of "commons" refers to an accessible and managed asset or property under the responsibility of a community, while "public space" means "public use" or, in other cases, "ownership of a public entity".



The concept of service, developed in the field of ecology and expressed in ecosystem services is useful to define, by analogy, public space services, by increasing and diversifying their potential. These will be benefits that public space functions provide for present and future population needs.

Needs and services can be related by interdependence – one street serves the movement of people, vehicles and goods, offering the benefit of mobility, responding to a central need (access), but the street's public space also offers other services, such as shade, from trees, or by stimulating alternative paths in a guiding logic with a diversity of shapes and content. The services are benefits that a specific public receives. In this context, the public space system can offer more than one service, so that this articulation results in a multidimensional service. In the public space system there are service relationships with benefits resulting from physical form, uses or meanings.

**Given all this, the service of the public space is an interdisciplinary notion, which provides the exercise of activities with common meanings and representations – cultural, social, economic, or political – of and in everyone's lives. This is the basis on which to evaluate the costs and benefits of return, as a public space service.**



The improvement of public spaces can promote diversity and continuity of services, Lisbon



The utility of a poorly designed space: the use value of public space, Antofagasta (Chile)

## VALUE OR VALUES: WHAT IS VALUED IN PUBLIC SPACE?

In recent decades, public space has been the object of intense study in academic literature because its great importance for the overall quality of cities was recognized. Many studies start with the question: “What attracts people?”, trying to understand the options of users and pointing out reasons why some spaces are used, and others are not.

These approaches may use simple tools and methods to answer basic questions about the usage of space: “How many?”, “Where?”, “For how long?”. But “Why?” is always more difficult to answer.

Other studies seek to evaluate public space based on a standard or norm, often based on the notion of quality, which includes the characteristics and valences the space must have or provide, with the premise that a better space will have them all.

Much of public investment relies on the notion of the benefit of public space, often based on consumption and leisure, associated with representations of quality of life, or a “happy lifestyle”. However, it can also be associated with other representations, especially with a commercial or real estate perspective. How to deal with such values for public space? Are they “public values” or just market qualities of products with exchangeable value being considered?

The idea that space generates value depends on the scope in which we locate ourselves and cannot be dissociated from the diversity of urban contexts. If it is easy to associate economic value with a notion of exchange value, we can find utility in the notion of use value in other circumstances.

Other notions of value do not come from a quantitative approach, but have more qualitative or symbolic characteristics, examples being cultural, social and environmental values. Likewise, the value of a space stems not only from the qualities of the physical space itself, but also from the way it is read and perceived. This means that the valorisation of the public space can either involve physical redesign actions in the space, or through the transformation of the ways of looking at it. How to facilitate this public awareness of public space system value?

The value of public space is not limited to a number or a quantity, but can be related from different perspectives and can be translated into a plurality of values and meanings.

**To extend the notion of value to the plural – values – is the same as accepting the contextual and relative dependencies of its stakeholders, contributing to making explicit and communicating the interests and implicit meanings of public space.**

“If the public authorities think and act like private firms, it means their basis for decision making would also be similar to that of the private sector firms (...). This would enable them to meet the demands of the economy, but would reduce their ability to meet some needs of the society (...). The remit of the public authority, therefore, is to provide use value, and to strike a balance with exchange value, rather than be primarily driven by it.”

Madanipour, 2006



The valorisation of the public space as a place of consumption, leisure and contemplation, Vila Nova de Gaia



Stage of urban and everyday life, the public space welcomes various actors and their needs, Lisbon

“There are pressing needs that public space can help people to satisfy, significant human rights that it can be shaped to define and protect, and special cultural meanings that it can best convey. These themes (...) reveal the value of public space (...).”

*Carr et al., 1992*

## **ACTORS AND INTERESTS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE – VARIOUS AND DIFFERENT**

The values and use of public space cannot be separated from its users and other actors. The diversity of interpretations and meanings, relative to different groups, is part of the inherent complexity of public space. How to deal with this multiplicity? Considering only one point of view as a representative interpretation or integrating different visions and interpretations, and their mutual relations?

Assessing implies making value judgements and, in a way, requires the ability to work explicitly or implicitly with objective and subjective elements. The subjective elements are, as a rule, related to the interests, references and interpretations of the different actors involved in the assessment process.



These actors include, first and foremost, those who make direct use of the space – because they live, work, have fun, visit or provide services in or near their surroundings. Others may be producers or regulators – carrying out the building, managing or controlling the space – and/or benefiting from the public space, albeit indirectly.

In general, different actors make different value judgements for the same public space, related to the interest or benefits that come from it. This space can also result in losses or negative consequences leading to losses of value. Personal and collective interest in one public space depends not only on the characteristics of the space itself but also on the actors themselves and their perceptions and representations of the space.

**Addressing the needs, interests and even the expectations of different actors, understanding the broad context in which these differences of opinion and values are made clear, allows them to be readable within a given public space system, through organizing them into an inclusive process.**

The conflict of values and interests is expressed daily in the infinity of decisions, both large and small, in the production, management and use of public spaces. Understanding these conflicts requires a reflective and collaborative practice.

Public value will not be the result of a linear and deductive process; on the contrary, it will be multidimensional, including numerous contradictions and overlappings.



Different experiences and forms of participation in the public space, Lisbon and Antofagasta (Chile)



## WHY IS PUBLIC SPACE ASSESSMENT INTERPRETIVE?

Public space has been gaining a central place in political, technical and even community discourse, attributing to it essential qualities for people and daily life activities. These “declarations of love” do not always correspond to actual practices of public space use. In view of this, what should be the first objective in the process of assessing public space systems? Predict? Compare? Measure? Integrate? Judge?

**As an interdisciplinary subject, the approach to public space should first be multidimensional, expressing its potential and its limits as a provider of services within urban space. Its interpretation is in itself a collaborative practice – the recognition of public values of space within an interdisciplinary understanding.**

Understanding public space’s global value requires an assessment of the social, economic, environmental and cultural values of urban systems. This assessment should also be based on common problems organized as part of the issues and problems of production practices.

### 1. Physical and social decline.

Socialization of use, overuse and non-use: the emptier the space is, the more it degrades; the more degraded, the emptier it becomes.

Issues of specialization and mono-functionality – security or security modes.

### 2. Appropriation or privatization of space.

The maintenance of its public character in the face of market-dependent processes, commodities and their value (of exchange) and inequalities of access.

Issues of economic values – the service managed as a business.

### 3. Exclusion (and non-attendance).

Physical, social, economic and cultural access influences the meaning of places. Non-attendance as a practice of effective segregation.

Problems of exclusions – restrictions, deterring the entrance of strangers.

### 4. Processes of governance.

Though as significant as production processes, planning and urban management do not guarantee “the expected quality” of space. Issues of diversity of interests and regulation.



Promoting tourism as a main activity in the public space can bring conflicts, Lisbon

Priority given to car use hinders the inclusiveness of public space, Lisbon

Thus, assessment can itself become an interactive (and iterative) process, where all those involved can make their values, issues and concerns explicit. Participation in the governance of public space is of a different nature than that of an attribute concerning the “performance” of spaces and cannot follow segmented criteria. Rather, it should look for answers, not in the cast of separate fields but in the integration of the variables – including infrastructure, communication, landscape, and so on.

Interdisciplinarity is indispensable: from street life to the intelligence of transportation, from ecology to social cohesion, from public art to economics. An inclusive culture is a whole, which is always more than the sum of its parts.



Views on public space: different contributions to its interpretation, Bologna

**“What is clear is that contemporary trends in public space design and management are resulting (over time) in an increasingly complex range of public space types (...).”**

Carmona, 2010

## WHAT IS IT TO INTERPRET A PUBLIC SPACE SYSTEM?

Systemic organization of public space can be the basis for the assessment of urban values, incorporating varied scales and integrating the needs, resources and roles of different actors into a common frame of reference. Public service of space is thus a social benefit provided through access to all systems – (public space, landscape, infrastructure) and activities (social, cultural, ludic, economic, political) with representations of everyone's life, in the city, expressing the public value of "service", its limit or potential.

The value of public space service is defined, not as a negotiating mechanism but as an instrumental analytical concept, understanding that the best views of public space should emerge from a systemic and multidimensional approach, centred on the actors and resulting from the service provided and not from a set of indefinable qualities, nor a transaction of "public space value" as a commodity. This is because public space provides services and generates value, even when it is not associated with standardized images of aesthetic quality or pleasantness.

Thus, the assessment tools developed in the scope of our research use a perspective directed to the identification and resolution of issues, within a logic of learning and transformation, combining interests and points of view. The proposed method is not closed within itself, but it fosters dialogue among the actors involved, as an instrument for understanding public space.

This new meaning only arises when public space has a diversity of stakeholders, contradictory actors (those who participate and those who do not participate) with various interests (conflictual or not), representing other meanings of citizenship.

**"To think about the city is to hold and maintain its conflictual aspects: constraints and possibilities, peacefulness and violence, meetings and solitude, gatherings and separations, the trivial and the poetic, brutal functionalism and surprising improvisation. The dialectic of the urban cannot be limited to the opposition centre-periphery, although it implies and contains it (...) In thinking about these perspectives, let us leave a place for events, initiatives, decisions. All the hands have not been played."**

Lefebvre, 1985 (cited by Lefebvre, H., Kofman, E., & Lebas, E., 1996)

# CASE STUDIES

## – PRESENTATION AND EMPIRICAL ARGUMENTS



BAIXA DA BANHEIRA

The case studies that followed the construction of our interpretation and assessment method may now be presented, enabling us to highlight the feasibility and usability of the tool. From these references we are able not only to experience the application of the different concepts to specific spaces and problems but also infer, from practice, methodological issues and questions.

The choice of these cases was based on the diversity of urban contexts and types of public space systems, with varying scales and transformation dynamics. Different public space uses and services were studied, in some cases with economic activities predominating, in others environmental issues, questions of infrastructure, or related to the discussion of meanings represented in space.

## BAIXA-CHIADO, LISBON



The D. Pedro IV square, *Rosio*, is a historical landmark and a reference point for the identity of the *Baixa*

In the historical centre of Lisbon, central space and reference for the city, *Baixa-Chiado* went through a process of physical and functional decay, with the loss of residents and the departure of important activities, with impacts on public space and its urban dynamics.

In recent decades, several actions in public space, together with other urban policies (urban regeneration, mobility, culture and tourism, etc.), have contributed towards reversing this scenario. The actions involved redesigning some public spaces (mainly squares), but also opening spaces to new uses (the riverfront), improving accessibility and diversifying public transportation. Nowadays, a set of consumption, leisure and tourism activities seem to be dominant.

The analysis of this space focused on current transformations with the intention of mapping and understanding leisure and consumption activities, questioning its dominance and consequences for public space use.



Access to the underground in the *Chiado* square: a point of confluence of users and generator of dynamics between the high and low parts of the city centre



## DUQUE DE ÁVILA AVENUE, LISBON

*Duque de Ávila* avenue is part of the regular network expansion – *Avenidas Novas* – which took place in the nineteenth century and which formed part of the old *Estrada da Circunvalação*, an inner ring road urban infrastructure that included public transportation from the tram network.

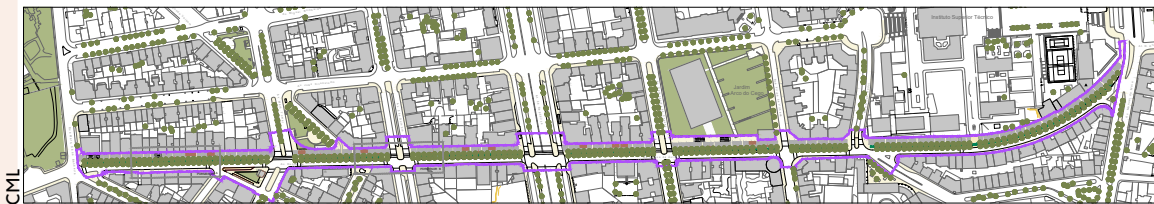
It took on a new character with the transformation of the infrastructure system and consequent redesign of public space in the early 2000s. The works began with the expansion of Lisbon Metro network, from *Alameda* station to *São Sebastião* station – connecting the four main lines. The delayed project works produced negative impacts, mainly on commercial activities. A second

phase followed, in which public space project favoured the pedestrian area, facilitating the setting up of pavement cafés and new commerce. The rearrangement of traffic and parking included a new cycle corridor in the continuous green ecological connection.

Forming part of a central and multifunctional Lisbon area, the avenue connects with other main axes of the city, with differentiated functions, as well as with other important public spaces, forming a space with varied uses and users. The identification of the conflicts and tensions resulting from the intensity of the avenue use was the focus of analysis of this space.



Pedestrian area after redesign actions



Avenue general plan <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Image kindly provided by the Lisbon City Council (CML). Urban redesign project team for the *Duque de Ávila* Ave. – *Rovisco Pais* Ave. axis: operation and project coordination by the Landscape Architect João Castro (CML); previous study and basic project by the Landscape Architect Maria da Conceição Candeias (CML); execution project by the Architect Manuel Bastos and Landscape Architect Sandra Candeias (Ferconsult).

## CENTRAL AREA OF AGUALVA-CACÉM, SINTRA

Forming part of the Sintra-Lisbon urban axis, the city of *Agualva-Cacém* had a rapid and deregulated growth based around road and railway infrastructures. The peripheral and run-down environment, coupled with environmental and urban infrastructure problems and a lack of public spaces and facilities, led to a major operation involving public investment in the urban central area, with POLIS Cacém project (beginning in the 2000s). The integrated urban regeneration operation, with a strong environment and improvement component, focused on the development of a new centrality.

Actions such as the improvement of the *Jardas* stream and the creation of an urban park, the restructuring of the road network, the improvement of public spaces and the upgrading of some of the existing spaces, such as the collective transport interface, had positive effects on the linking of the city spaces, in terms of the urban environment and urban experience.

The analysis focused on understanding the effects of these actions on the *Agualva-Cacém* urban system, considering the achieving of its initial objectives, seeking to answer the question: "Has the POLIS Cacém project led to system structuring and the creation of a new centrality?"



*D. Maria II* street, one of the main axes of the project



ACB

*D. Domingos Jardo* linear park, completed in 2009

## SPACES OF MEMORY, BARCELONA

In Barcelona, during the forty years of dictatorship, prisons, places of execution, concentration camps, police delegations, were part of the fascist repression and control system, strategically located in the city's fabric, affecting different areas of daily life. This network of repression areas lasted until 1978 (the date of first democratic elections), after which this configuration was replaced by different urban dynamics or forgotten over time. Currently, although there are ongoing processes involving claims, there is a weak recovery of the memory of these places, in part due to the lack of a specific programme of action.

The spaces that for many years functioned throughout the city as a system of social and political repression and which can today form the basis of a memory communication system were analysed. How can a system of memories (of meanings) be constructed in public space? How are relations between memories, urban context and current uses linked together?

Attention is centred on the symbolic and meaningful aspects, deepening the capacities and potentialities of public art and urban design, in their interaction.



PFMPDC<sup>3</sup>

Image of the former women's prison of *Les Corts*, contrasted with the *El Corte Inglés* shopping centre which now occupies part of that land



*La Modelo Prison*, a space under discussion in a participatory process led by the Barcelona City Council

<sup>3</sup> Image kindly provided by the *Plataforma Futur Monument Presó de Dones de les Corts* (PFMPDC)

## WATERFRONTS, VILA NOVA DE GAIA

The Vila Nova de Gaia municipality is a territorial area shaped by different patterns of urban occupation. Although mostly urbanized, it has areas of great environmental and ecological importance.

Over the past twenty years, infrastructure works in the municipality's sanitation network have addressed existing environmental problems and fostered a range of other subsequent actions. Through environmental rehabilitation of its streams, actions in the road circulation channels, pedestrian and cycle routes and other actions to enhance the seafront, there have been environmental improvements as well as an urban transformation and use of the coastal strip. This process has involved the creation of a large-scale structural system, anchored on the strategic vision of the Municipal Ecological Structure, in a logic of linking the network of public spaces with the ecological and infrastructural networks.

Following these upgrades and given the recognition of the diverse elements and characteristics of this territory, analysis focused on riverside and seafront public spaces, the streams that flow within its coastal border and the potential to link public space, establishing links between these different realities.



Leisure space next to the *Pedras Amarelas* Beach, in the connection between the river and the sea



Strategic mapping of Ecological Structure of Vila Nova de Gaia

<sup>9</sup> Image kindly provided by GAIURB – Urbanismo e Habitação, EM.



## DISPERSED URBAN AREA, BURGÃES AND REBORDÕES (SANTO TIRSO)



*Burgães, settlement centre with rural matrix*

Dispersed occupation, characteristic of the Portuguese Northwest, builds on a rural settlement matrix with the introduction of industrial elements and activities and, consequently, other forms of urbanization and infrastructure. In these settlement patterns, urban living coexists with spaces with rural characteristics and traditions. Areas with spread out occupation differ from canonical models of urban design, with consequences for the interpretation of public space. Space typologies differ from those of urban centres, as do daily practices and the relations that residents establish with these spaces.

What is public space when it does not correspond to what is traditionally expected? In a space where there is a dense network of infra-structured but not well-developed spaces, and major presence of landscape, environmental and rural elements, which are the elements that make up the public space network? Based on the study of two settlement centres in Santo Tirso municipality (part of the old parish of



National highway 105 crosses the study area

*Burgães and part of the parish of Rebordões), the analysis focuses on identifying and understanding the public space network in the dispersed urban area.*





BARCELONA

# ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION GUIDE

## – WHAT IT IS AND HOW DOES THE PSSS METHOD WORK

The PSSS proposes a theory and a method for interpreting and assessing the public space service, highlighting issues, incorporating the perspectives of its actors and showing the value generated, or its potential, in the assessment process.

### HOW USEFUL IS THE PSSS METHOD?

- Understanding the dynamics of using a public space: understanding what works and what does not, why it is more or less used.
- Identifying what is needed to improve a public space: outlining solutions or recommendations and defining strategies.
- Creating conditions for dialogue between different actors (and interests), identifying needs and desires.
- Supporting planning and management of public spaces.

### WHAT TYPES OF SPACES CAN BE ASSESSED USING THE PSSS METHOD?

The developed method is suitable for any public space, whether it is one of proximity — a street or a square — or larger — the urban mesh of a neighbourhood or a set of parks. But its central object is the notion of public space system. It can include spaces in use or spaces to be developed, either in terms of its physical aspects (hardware) or its meaning and interaction (software).

### WHO CAN USE THE PSSS METHOD?

An assessment initiative can start with anyone with an interest in the subject, being advisable to include other individuals with different knowledge and interests in the space in question.

This method includes practical guidelines for assessing and interpreting public space systems, illustrated by its application to case studies.

In order to better understand the problems of a public space, it will be possible, through this method, to:

- identify opportunities for upgrading actions, gathering resources and bringing partners together;
- question what is more, and less, valued in public space by different actors;
- define strategies and implement actions that result from a shared vision and values;
- evaluate projects, proposing alternatives;
- integrate communities into public space design and management actions;
- foster communication and discussion between actors and agents interested in public space;
- establish space monitoring measures and carry out post-occupation assessments;
- support decision making.

An assessment and interpretation process can participate in other processes, such as:

- policies, plans, projects, programmes, criteria, action strategies in the public space;
- protocols, partnerships, collaborations between institutions for public space provision or management.

## **ROADMAP: HOW TO USE PSSS**

The roadmap organizes and structures the different phases of a public space assessment and interpretation process. Here the main content of PSSS is described, establishing links to other sections of the guide – the guidelines.

The guidelines include a description of the essential content of each phase, including recommendations on how to address each issue. Each guideline is treated as an independent document, although there are connection points between them.

The assessment includes phases, with tasks, that can be undertaken sequentially or require several iterations along the way. Since the methodology allows for adaptations on a case-by-case basis, the link between the guide sections allows flexibility in choosing the most appropriate route and returning to the starting point where necessary. Decisions to be taken throughout the assessment process may need to be determined by practical criteria, resource availability and time, but focus should always be maintained.



## STARTING POINT

The starting point is the structuring of the assessment process. This implies defining the object and purpose of the assessment, the starting conditions and the way the process will take place.

### STRUCTURING

What is the object and purpose of the assessment?  
Starting conditions and prior decisions

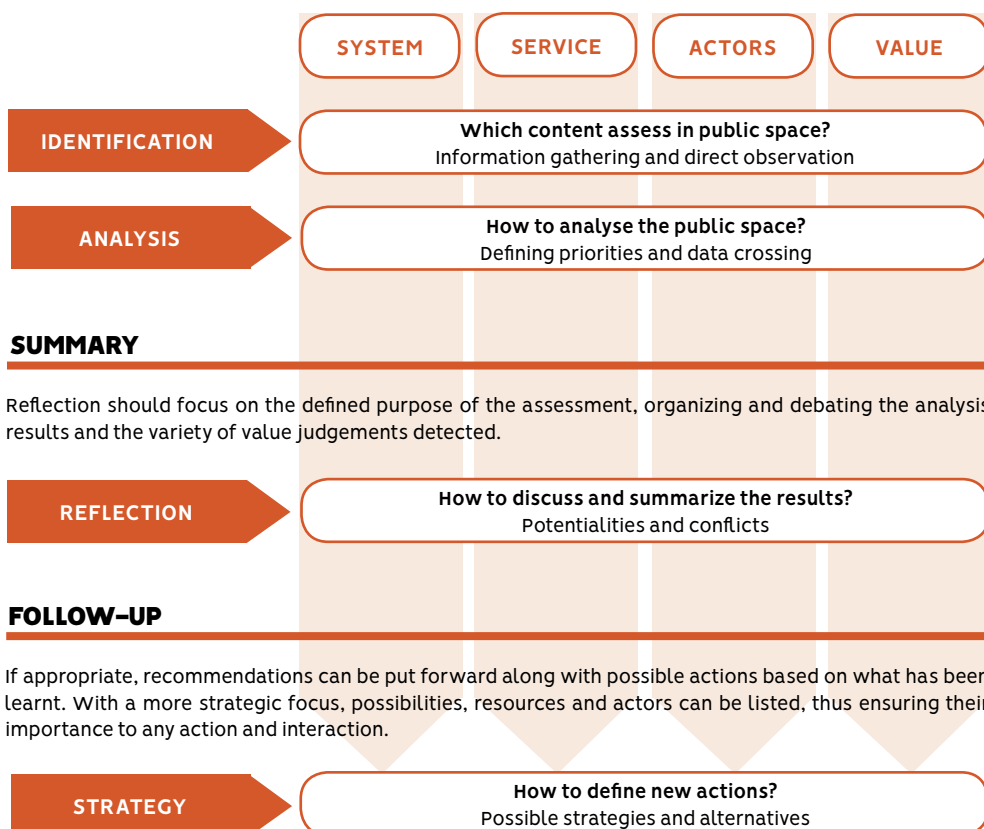
## ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

The public space assessment begins with four questions that refer to the main themes:

1. HOW DOES THIS PUBLIC SPACE RELATE TO ITS SURROUNDINGS?
2. WHAT IS THIS PUBLIC SPACE FOR?
3. WHO ARE THE ACTORS IN THIS PUBLIC SPACE?
4. WHAT TYPES OF VALUE CAN WE FIND IN THIS PUBLIC SPACE?

SYSTEM  
SERVICE  
ACTORS  
VALUE

To each question there is a matching set of specific guidelines, from which information can be gathered for identification and analysis in a cumulative process carried out in as in-depth a manner as possible.



# STARTING POINT

## STRUCTURING

The structuring of the assessment process organizes issues which call for an initial definition, setting up assumptions and helping to decide who to include in the assessment and which are the existing resources and prior information. Throughout the process, it is only natural that initial considerations have to be reassessed and that the gathered information may raise new questions.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **What will we assess?**  
Identify the public space subject to assessment. It can be a public space in use or a non-formalized space in which action is desired.
- **What is the purpose of the assessment?**  
To identify the assessment framework, indicating its needs and possible relationship with other actions or initiatives in progress. To achieve the assessment purpose in a clear way, considering the concerns of those who take part in it. The definition of the assessment purpose and its target space, determine the type of assessment to be carried out.
- **What do we already know about this public space?**  
Existing information can be integrated into the assessment process and, together with new data to be gathered, be processed to produce new results.
- **Who carries out, draws up and takes part in the assessment process?**  
Identify the source of the initiative for the assessment process and the responsibility for its realization. Identify the main actors of the space under assessment, based on Table 1, and define who to involve, and how, within the process considering their relevance.
- **How do the actors participate?**  
Identify the ways of communication during the assessment, not only among the participants, but also in consultations with other relevant actors, and in the final dissemination of the results.
- **What are the means, resources and conditions for carrying out the assessment?**  
The conditions and resources available will condition the scope and/or detail of the assessment (especially in terms of information gathering and available time).

TABLE 1 – TYPES OF ACTORS RELATED TO THE PUBLIC SPACE

USERS	PRODUCERS	REGULATORS
Residents, traders, workers	Promoters/investors	City councils
Customers (commerce and services)	Designers/other technicians	Parish councils
Visitors and tourists	Contractors/builders	CCDRs (Regional Coordination and Development Commissions), DGT (General Directorate for Territory), municipal companies, SRUs (Urban Regeneration Companies), public institutes
Associations (residents, sports, religious, environmental, heritage, commercial, civic, professional, disabled, NGO)	Property owners	Civil Protection and police authorities
Equipment, infrastructure and service managers	Real estate agents	Private administrators of collective spaces
Motorists, pedestrians, cyclists	Politicians, political party organizations	...
Age or gender groups	Public/collective services (transport, parking, water, sanitation, energy, communications, waste)	
Media	...	
...		



## FRAMEWORK AND PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

### DUQUE DE ÁVILA AVENUE, LISBON

*Duque de Ávila* avenue was one of the first redesign projects from the current municipal public space valorisation strategy. Despite a long process of transformation, with a negative effect on local activities, leading to the disappearance of some commerce, the new design of the avenue has incorporated adjacent spaces, generated new uses and allowed a differentiation of their character. Today there is, on the one hand, the recognition of an upgraded public space, which generates own usage dynamics and, on the other, the realization that this success and attractiveness brings with it incompatibilities and issues to be solved regarding the sharing of space by various users and varied functions.

An **assessment goal** was established to identify the conflicts and tensions arising from the intense use of the avenue, since the diverse uses and attractiveness of several of its elements can be easily recognized.

The *Técnico* university institute's close proximity provided the opportunity to arrange several fieldwork sessions involving systematic recording of space usage, observation supported by photography, informal conversations with different types of users, and an interview with one of the space regulators actors (*Avenidas Novas* Parish Council).



AD

**Metro entrance next to the Arco do Cego garden**  
Meeting point for various users of the area



AD

**New public space design**  
Different uses have dedicated spaces

# DEVELOPMENT

## 1. SYSTEM IDENTIFICATION

### HOW DOES THIS PUBLIC SPACE RELATE TO ITS SURROUNDINGS?

The assessment development starts from the public space system identification. This identification phase enables an approach to the system concept and is also important for the organization of supporting information.

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **What is the urban context?**

Notes on its evolution over time, changes in uses or dynamics (economic, social, etc.) and urban functions and current trends.

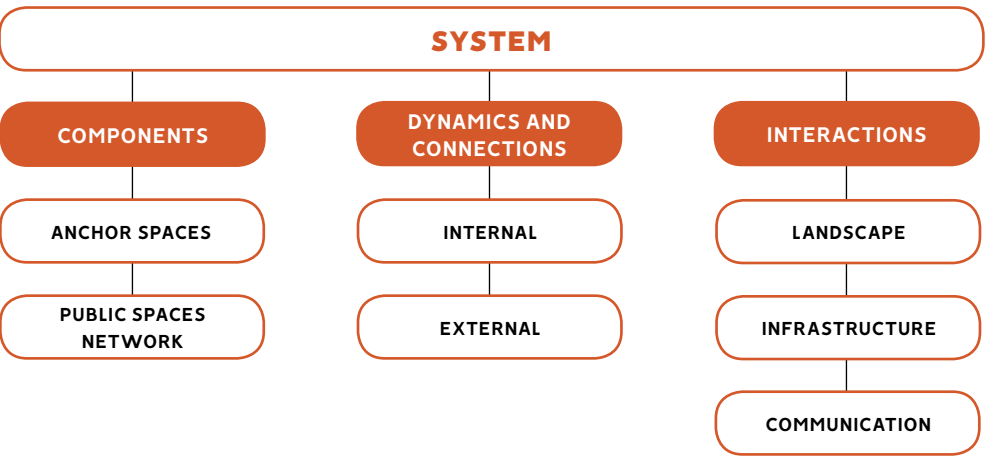
- **What is the public space system and how does it work?**

Identify and characterize the public space system that is the assessment focus. The system definition results from a particular perspective on the public space, related to the intended purpose — this is an identification which is instrumental to what is to be assessed.

It is important to describe how the various components are organized and related, since a system is made of relations, of dynamics between the parts that maintain urban functioning. Therefore, the system includes hardware and software – the structure and that which gives it content.

The system identification and description should follow the criteria identified in Table 2 and be accompanied by an iterative graphic record: the criteria may overlap until, together, they define a system which represents the public space and the intended purpose of the assessment.

TABLE 2 – CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING THE PUBLIC SPACE SYSTEM



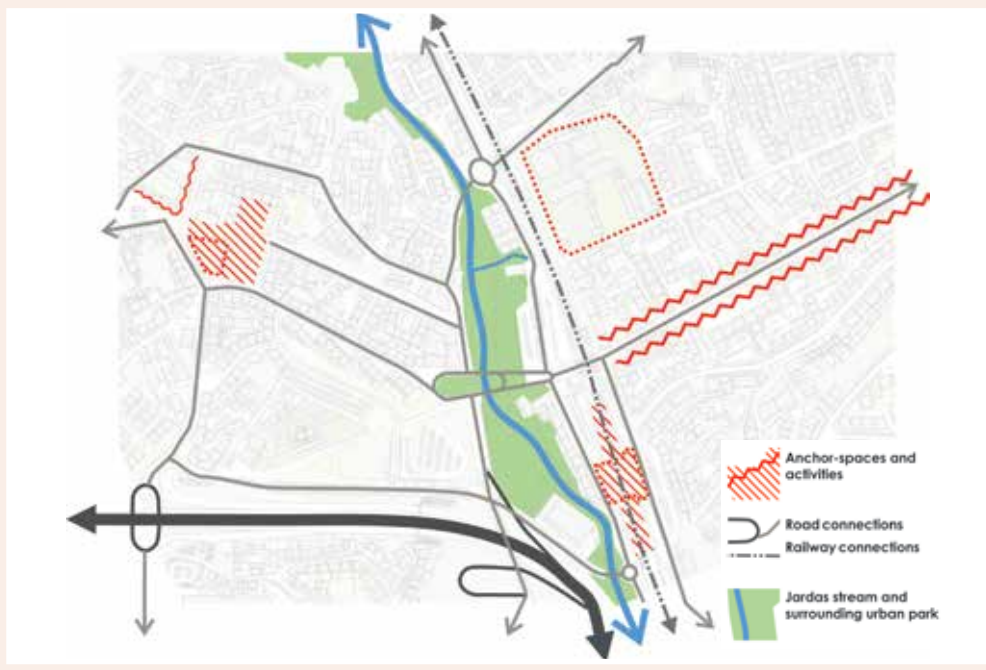
## COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN URBAN SYSTEMS

### CENTRAL AREA OF AGUALVA-CACÉM, SINTRA

The public spaces system was largely reconfigured as a result of the POLIS Cacém programme. Today the **anchor spaces** include both public spaces and differentiated areas of activity – the urban park, the transport interface, the Market and Citizen's Shop and street shopping areas – responsible for the main **dynamics** of use and movement within these spaces and with the ability to attract publics from outside. These attraction poles are interconnected by a **network of public spaces** that includes the main road circulation axes and other pedestrian areas, small green spaces, playgrounds and small squares, and parking areas.

This set of public spaces also shows the compatibility between different urban systems: whether it is the integration of the natural system within the network of public spaces, allowing the recovery of its ecological components and their daily use, or the linking of different forms of mobility and the re-establishment of continuities from (and despite) transportation infrastructures.

This **relationship between urban systems** is evident in the scale of proximity and everyday uses, but also on a wider scale: whether from the infrastructural (road and rail) or ecological-environmental (ecological corridors along water courses or environmental continuum) components or the urban system itself (due to the relevance of *Agualva-Cacém* in Lisbon-Sintra axis).



Schematic representation of system components, dynamics and interactions

## SYSTEM COMPONENTS

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The public space system can be composed of heterogeneous spaces, with different types and functions, which are connected and interact with each other and can be organized into subsystems.

### ANCHOR SPACES

Strategic focal points, with greater intensity of activities or references within the urban space. They are important for the links they establish, functions they play, as well as for the social and economic dynamics they promote.

- Spaces and buildings that act as urban attraction poles.

### PUBLIC SPACES NETWORK

Set of public spaces which support activities, provide a diversity of uses, continuity and visual, functional and ecological connection.

- Public spaces of different types that make up the network.

## DYNAMICS AND CONNECTIONS

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In addition to its form and its elements, it is important to know how the system works, both in its internal relations between the different elements, as well as in the relations with the urban surroundings.

### INTERNAL

Main relations within the system, not only physical but also functional and symbolic.

- Most important connections/flows.
- Anchor spaces of the internal system.
- Subsets of activities.

### EXTERNAL

Relations with other surrounding spaces, not only physical connections but also usage dynamics.

- Connections or interface spaces in addition to the system in question.
- Anchor spaces that promote attraction outside the system.

## INTERACTIONS

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The systemic notion applied to the public space reinforces the interaction potential between various interconnected urban systems, i.e., which can act for convergent purposes.

### LANDSCAPE

Ecological networks and relations supported by nature, with a productive potential and leisure activities.

- Natural elements and continuums (water courses, green structures, flora and fauna, agricultural land...).

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure networks and services that support urban occupation and enable mobility.

- Sectoral networks and urban services (road, transportation, sanitation, drainage, energy, communications...).

### COMMUNICATION

Communicative elements or meanings that contribute to the symbolism present within the space.

- Thematic itineraries (historical, religious, artistic, gastronomic...).



## SYSTEM FROM MEANINGS

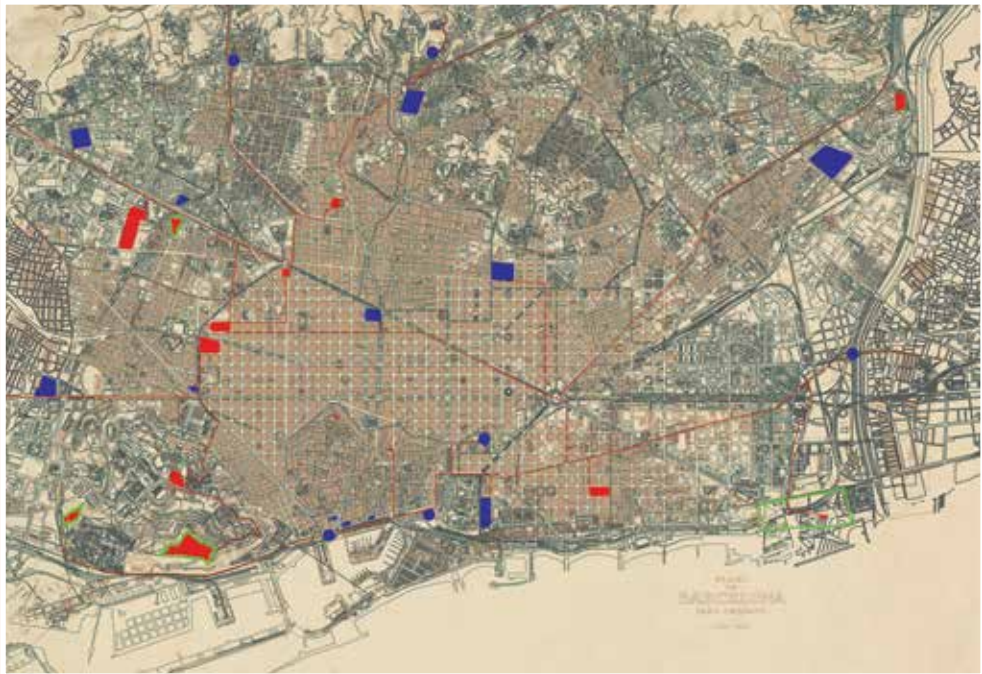
### SPACES OF MEMORY, BARCELONA

Between 1939 and 1978, there were multiple configurations and stages (post-war, development, transition) involved in the spaces of Francoist repression. These places were strategically distributed throughout the territory, taking advantage of the use of buildings or places and creating other *ex-novo*, according to criteria such as: the state and capacity of the facilities (some for many people); connectivity (road, port or rail) and location near the perimeter or dispersed within the city.

From this group, three spaces stand out due to the brutality of the acts practised there: *El Castillo de Montjuic*, the *Modelo* prison and, above all, the *Campo de la Bota*. Other places include prisons and concentration camps, detention centres distributed throughout the city, barracks and checkpoints in and out of the city.

In this sense, we can consider spaces of repression as **anchor spaces**, nodes of a network connected within the territory, in which the connection routes are highlighted when making violence visible, making use of the (real and symbolic) potential of the **internal and external relations of the network**. Thus, the specific places of repression operated as a basis for a strategy of comprehensive control of the whole of society.

The current discussion on these spaces may give rise to projects involving memorialisation, which are linked in the same systemic way. The already re-signified spaces are atomized in the city – either as effective spaces of memory, or with different territorial marks that signal citizen claims or institutional signals.



#### Spaces of memory system

The representation of the system in a 1944 letter about the current plan view (spaces of control in blue, spaces of repression in red, spaces with signs or projects for memorials in green, red lines identifying the main connecting pathways)

DEVELOPMENT

2. SERVICE IDENTIFICATION

WHAT IS THIS PUBLIC SPACE FOR?

Starting from the nature of the public service, that is, how the public space “serves”, allows us to classify the diversity of services present in various functions and activities and the way in which the space is appropriated. This identification is carried out from the description and mapping of the services that exist in the public space, gathering information about their daily use, through a direct observation of the uses of spaces and their dynamics.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

• Which are the public space services?

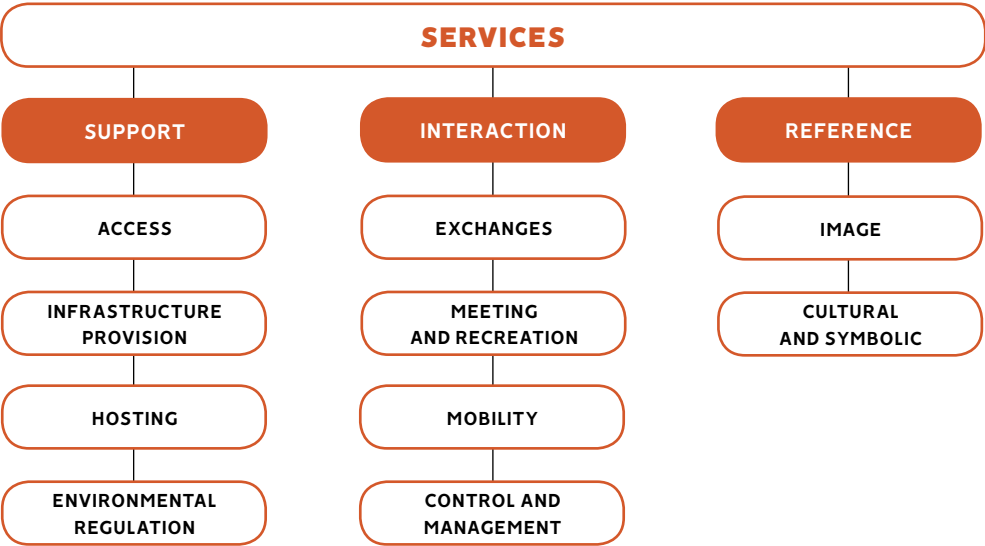
Identify the various services that are provided by the public space, with the support of Table 3, mapping them with graphic records, accompanied by data collection and various information.

• Characterize the identified services.

Complement the gathered information for each service, by answering the following questions:

- **Where?** In which location is the service provided?
- **How?** In which way is the service provided, utilizing which physical elements?
- **When?** Is it a permanent service or is it temporarily available?
- **Who?** Which users enjoy a service or make it evident?
- **How many?** How many people (or how intensely do they) make use of a certain service?

TABLE 3 – PUBLIC SPACE SERVICES MATRIX



## SUPPORT SERVICES

### DISPERSED URBAN AREA, BURGÃES AND REBORDÕES (SANTO TIRSO)

This territory is marked by structures with a rural matrix supported by an extensive network of roads, more recently becoming infrastructure, along with the introduction of industrial activities and an urban practice based on private allotments. The public space is the result of these various processes, guaranteeing support for the activities that take place there, within a diffuse occupation, often presenting a basic configuration and the absence of a developed design.



**National Road 105, Rebordões**

Main **access** axis, whether for external connection, crossing or as an internal distributor



**Padroeiro street, Burgães**

**Infrastructure provision** accompanies the road network, with a reduction in the level of service upon moving away from the main roadways, with few integrated designed solutions



**Gatim street, Burgães**

The existence of biophysical structures facilitates **environmental regulation** and ensures the **hosting** of natural elements (fauna and flora) and certain human activities

## SUPPORT SERVICES

These services frame and support urban life and the most basic needs of the population. They are ensured by natural or built physical structures – the hardware.

### ACCESS

This ensures access to the public space itself and to other built or not built spaces. Essential service and a requirement for others to exist. It can be recognized in entrances to built spaces, streets and other connections...

### INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

Public space is the vehicle for the setting up of supply and collection infrastructure networks: it provides physical space and operating conditions.

It can be recognized by the existence of energy distribution networks, communications, water supply, drainage, waste collection...

### HOSTING

The public space provides the physical environment (natural or artificial), the resources and conditions to receive and shelter natural and human elements.

It can be recognized in structures providing protection or shelter (natural or built), in natural habitats (flora and fauna: community gardens, trees, presence of animals, etc.)...

### ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

Benefits that derive from the capacity for environmental regulation provided by the natural or artificial structures within the public space, which can contribute to risk mitigation and climate regulation.

It can be recognized by the presence of vegetation, water courses, solutions for water retention, diversion or infiltration...



The natural and physical structure of public space supporting urban life activities, Viana do Castelo



## INTERACTION SERVICES

BAIXA-CHIADO, LISBON

The central character and the different functions located in *Baixa-Chiado* attract several types of users. Here there is a great diversity of interactive services related to

commercial uses and tourism and leisure activities, fed by different forms of mobility and displacement and supported by management and maintenance mechanisms.



### Chiado square

The varied **modes of public transport** available also corresponds to discouraging car use and appreciating the spaces dedicated to pedestrians

### Augusta street

The street as a space for commercial **exchanges**: in the adjacent constructed spaces – shops, restaurants... – and in public space – terraces, street vendors, street performers...



### Ribeira das Naus

The riverfront is a space that favours **meeting** and **recreation**, both for going there, relaxing, as well as for more active practices such as sports



### Carmo street

The presence of different users and uses imposes a more demanding **control** and **management** of the public space – cleaning and maintenance, security and regulation

## INTERACTION SERVICES

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They contextualize different forms of interaction between users and themselves with the opportunities provided by the physical support of the public space.

### EXCHANGES

Public space, through its visibility and the possibility of contact with many people, is a place which enhances trade and the distribution of goods and services.

This can be recognized in trade and commercial activities, whether permanent or temporary (terraces and store entrances, street vendors, fairs, etc.) and in the distribution of food or leaflets...

### MEETING AND RECREATION

Public space provides spaces and occasions for socializing, recreation and leisure, expression, demonstrations, meetings, confrontations or simply being there, whether individually or collectively.

This can be recognized in the existence of benches, terraces, playgrounds, sports fields, events, protests...

### MOBILITY

It is in the public space where the circulation of people and goods takes place. This service is influenced by different modes of transport and travel interests.

This can be recognized on motorways, cycle routes, pavements and walkways, by the provision of public transport, parking, interfaces...

### CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT

Public space usage requires security and conditions of suitability and usability, benefiting from the management, maintenance and regulation of the activities that take place within it.

This can be recognized by the presence of policing or other forms of security, signs and rules of conduct, informal surveillance, maintenance and space cleaning...

## REFERENCE SERVICES

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They contextualize different forms of public space serving a reference for its users. These include important intangible aspects and a perception which allow us to establish symbolic relationships, involving identification and affectivity which transform and have implications for the uses of the space.

### IMAGE

It is from the public space that we recognize the image of the city, based on its permanent physical structure, building a sense of belonging and orientation.

This can be recognized in landscapes and landmarks (viewpoints, public art, etc.), communication devices (traffic signs or information, advertising, etc.)...

### CULTURAL AND SYMBOLIC

Public space enables the transmission and manifestation of meanings and symbolisms, which contribute to the identity and memory of places and populations.

This can be recognized in ways of naming and memory (toponymy, heritage, memorial, etc.), by access to spiritual (sanctuary, cemetery, etc.), or cultural values...

## REFERENCE SERVICES

### SPACES OF MEMORY, BARCELONA

Memories and meanings, conflictual or consensual, are intangible elements of urban systems, which can be organized and communicated within the public space and reflected in monuments, rituals and toponyms. In Barcelona, in the set of spaces involving fascist repression, it is possible to find issues relating to memory, from its cultural, symbolic and image perspective. As far as the past memory of the conflict is concerned, as in the way it is constructed in the present, memory is recovered through citizen conquests and the implementation of new meanings.

Memory transmission can be carried out by different devices: rites (events, anniversaries, homages), repetition of signs or narratives (signage, roadmaps) and various physical marks (toponymy, patrimony, monuments). Virtual and digital means of communication constitute new forms of disclosure from accessible databases, digital applications and geo-referenced supports.



#### *Fossar de la Pedrera*

Memorial space dedicated to the victims of Francoist repression, where there is a transmission of **cultural** and **symbolic** meanings



#### **Signalling elements for the memory system**

A space of Francoist repression, the *Presó de Dones de les Corts* was closed and demolished, without any physical traces of its existence remaining. Several actions to recover its memory were undertaken which marked the place through **image** as a vehicle for the transmission of meanings

<sup>5</sup> Image kindly provided by the *Plataforma Futur Monument Presó de Dones de les Corts* (PFMPDC).

## DEVELOPMENT

### 3. ACTOR IDENTIFICATION

#### WHO ARE THE ACTORS IN THIS PUBLIC SPACE?

The identification of the actors related to public space allows linking the process not only with the judgements and criteria of relevance of the assessment team, but also with other actors — whether users or not — that have ties or relations with the space itself. This identification ensures that diverse points of view are covered regarding the public space, making the process more complex but also closer to the multiplicity of perspectives which occur in reality.

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Who are the actors in this public space?**

Identify the actors who are important within the public space, considering its current and future use, based on Table 1 of the structuring phase.

- **Characterize the actors identified.**

Supplement the survey carried out with a deeper characterization of each actor, following the issues identified below. Consider possible changes over time.

- What types of actors are present?
- What are their interests and motivations?
- What is their point of view concerning the public space?



Different types of actors in the public space: recreational and leisure users, street vendors, business people, regulatory stakeholders, Lisbon, Antofagasta (Chile), Vila Nova de Gaia and Agualva-Cacém



## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN ACTORS

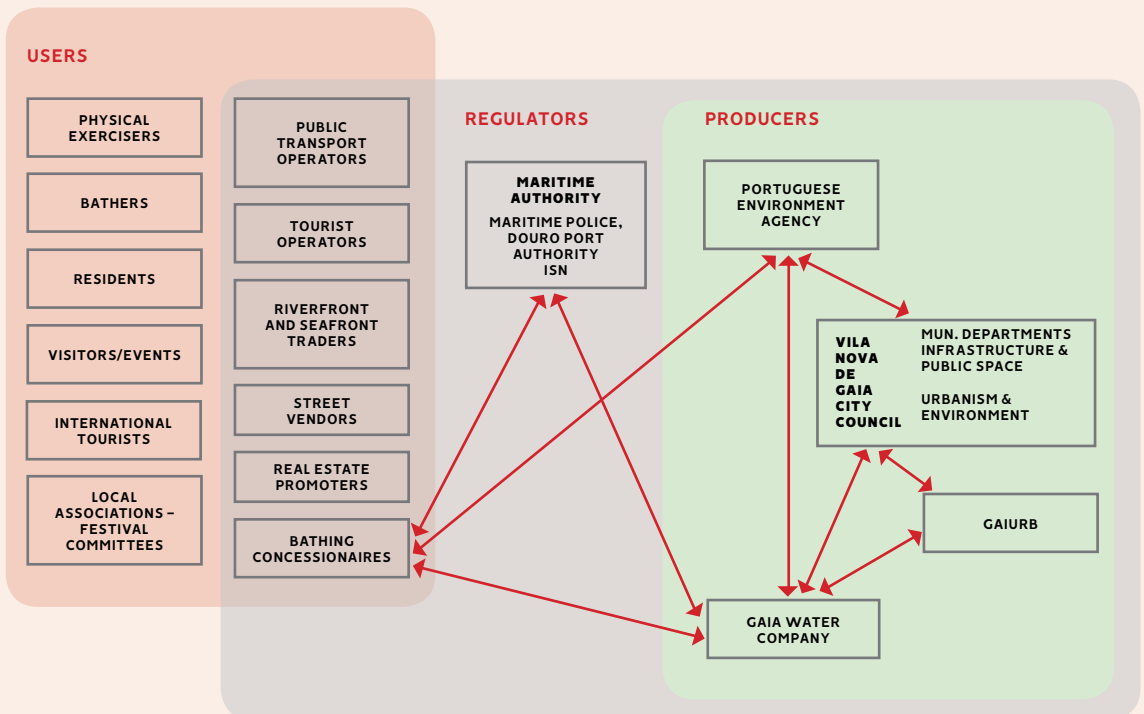
### WATERFRONTS, VILA NOVA DE GAIA

The coastline and water courses of Gaia illustrate how a system of public spaces may originate from a set of diversified actors and involve others in their use and management.

In this context, the actors who are the **producers** and **regulators** of the public space have a prominent position – for example the City Council, municipal enterprises and other public actors such as the Portuguese Environment Agency and the National Maritime Authority – demonstrating various hierarchical and dependency relations with respect to the competencies and areas of action of each one.

On the **users'** side, the multiple activities that take place in these spaces also correspond to various user profiles: those undertaking physical exercise, users of the beach, tourists, visitors or those attending events or residents of different nuclei, including more traditional uses – fishing and the use of the public washhouse, in *Afurada*.

Finally, the economic opportunities present in these spaces justify the presence of actors who use the space commercially – traders on the coastline and in tourist areas, bathing concessionaires or tourist operators – who also regulate the use of space, taking advantage of economic benefits that come from it.



Schematic representation of the different actors and their relationships

## CATEGORIES OF ACTORS

It is possible to organize the actors associated with the public space using different groups, given their role and their character, considering that the same actor may exercise more than one function and that may be linked to different sectors.

### BY FUNCTION

<b>USERS</b> Those who use public space. They live, work, have fun, visit or provide services in it or their surroundings. In general, they are the ones who know best and benefit most, directly or indirectly, from the resulting benefits.	<b>PRODUCERS</b> Those who play a role in the (physical) production of public space. They include participants in its construction and those who can influence public opinion and decision making.	<b>REGULATORS</b> Those who play a role in the control and regulation of public space, intervening in its planning, licensing, supervision and/or management.
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### BY SECTOR

<b>PUBLIC</b> They include several public entities that have competencies or act in public space.	<b>PRIVATE</b> Private actors acting in public space or indirect beneficiaries of its service.	<b>COLLECTIVE</b> Associations or entities representing groups of actors or collective interests.
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## INTERESTS

The benefit or utility that each actor takes from the public space or their motivations for being involved in a given space. The interests of each actor can mean the benefits or gains which come from the public space but may also be expressed as claims. Such interests may be individual or, on the contrary, represent collective motivations. In many cases interests may be sectoral; for example, economic, political or even functional interests.

## POINTS OF VIEW

All actors have their own perceptions and points of view concerning the public space. Often related to their own experience, whether as direct users or not, viewpoints help to characterize actors and collect their interpretation of the space. This may include more factual aspects (data, information, reports) or more interpretive or even opinionated aspects.

## STAKEHOLDER POINTS OF VIEW AND INTERESTS

DUQUE DE ÁVILA AVENUE, LISBON

Many actors are involved in the production, management and use of this public space, highlighting particular interests and perspectives.

As regards production and regulation, the public sector stands out – City Council and municipal companies, Parish councils or police forces – which act functionally by considering the public interest.

The property owners have a functional, as well as economic, interest, who recognize the valorisation of their property through this space, and the traders who also take advantage of it, for example, through terraces or kiosks.

It is also possible to distinguish the **needs** and **interests** of other users – residents, local workers or students, motorists, pedestrians and cyclists – who, being different and often claiming the same space, can generate dissatisfaction or conflict.

Conversations with various actors concerning the Arco do Cego garden clearly showed disparities in their **points of view** in the use of that space: if some take over the garden in a freer and more carefree way, others see this as a limit to their own use. On certain days of the week, the excessive influx of younger users inhibits and drives away other types of users.



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### Different times of the day in the Arco do Cego garden

In the morning there is low intensity use, especially by older residents, and cleaning and maintenance activities.

There is increased frequency throughout the day, with a greater mix of users and uses: residents, local workers on their lunch breaks and young students carrying out leisure activities.

In the afternoon there is a greater influx of younger users, who make it a space for socialization, frequently associated with the consumption of beverages

AD

## DEVELOPMENT

### 4. VALUE IDENTIFICATION

#### WHAT TYPES OF VALUE CAN WE FIND IN THIS PUBLIC SPACE?

The identification of existing values is an essential part of public space assessment. Varying between contexts and perspectives, value is dependent on the recognition or attribution of importance by someone – not only resulting from physical qualities, but from the way spaces are perceived. Therefore, it is common that different contradictory or conflicting values can be found in a space.

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **What are the existing values in this space?**

Identify which types of value can be found in the system (see Table 4). Characterize the components of the space that are linked to this.

- **Who recognizes the identified values?**

The identified values can be recognized by the actors or, more often, only by a few. Relate the identified values with those who attach importance to them and recognize their interest.



Values can be more evident or inclusive, but they are always there, Lisbon and Barcelona



## FROM OBSOLESCENCE TO REGENERATION: A PROCESS CREATING VALUE?

BAIXA-CHIADO, LISBON

In a process of change, the perception of values is affected by changes in progress and by the positions of the actors involved, which is highly dependent on the context. From the outset, the urban regeneration of the *Baixa* and *Chiado* can be associated with **economic valorisation**, not only in terms of investment and real estate value, but also through the increase in tourist activities and a growing presence of more globalized commerce. The social practices and uses of spaces are more intense, attracting a variety of users – **use value** is increasing, although not permanently.

The **image value** and that which is **cultural** are important resources, also boosted around leisure and tourism activities, for example, the memory of pre-Pombaline Lisbon and the history of reconstruction, the presence of patrimonial elements or important visual and landscape references.

Thus, the dominance of leisure, commerce and catering may exclude other functions (not generating economic value), giving rise to conflicts or the segregation of certain users (residents or visitors) and distancing other activities (traditional commerce and certain services).



Portuguese paving stones and the Pombaline facade

The repetition of certain urban elements contributes to the formation of a characteristic image



Garrett street

The dynamics and intensity of use in a street with significant commerce

**TABLE 4 – TYPES OF VALUE AND EXAMPLES OF THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE PUBLIC SPACE****ECONOMIC VALUE**

Actions in the public space can involve important investments and generate economic returns, capital gains and competitiveness for agents.

With the public space itself not being an object of exchange, the return (or advantage) of the investment can be translated into the attraction for users or investment in the surroundings, or result in eventual conflicts or lack of service (privatization, gentrification, etc.).

**USE VALUE**

Public space's ability to satisfy the needs of its users and its appropriateness for the functioning of the city.

This shows itself in the ability to accommodate uses and functions (formal and informal) and to serve and welcome users with different needs. The suitability (utility) of the public space for the enjoyment of its users may correspond to a higher use value, while conflict will decrease this.

**SOCIAL VALUE**

This refers to the benefits or contributions of the public space towards the welfare, the satisfaction of collective needs or the development of communities.

Although socialization does not depend exclusively on the surrounding buildings, the public space is the backdrop where this takes place. Here opportunities for positive, active or passive social interaction can be established, creating or reinforcing local identity and the appropriation of spaces.

**ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE**

This refers to public space contribution for the environment, especially that related to nature and impact reduction.

Public space supports interaction with nature through various functions, from the aesthetic importance of cities to the reduction of pollution. Its configuration can encourage the adoption of environmentally sustainable behaviour, promoting public health benefits and urban sustainability.

**CULTURAL VALUE**

It expresses, both relationally and physically, public space contributions in the expression and construction of identity and in the promotion of a culture shared by a community.

The open and interactive nature of the public space enhances the expression of local culture and community: uses, practices, ideas and representations, with a distinctive character — identity — reflecting interpretations of the past — inheritance, heritage — or of the future — aspirations, projects.

**IMAGE VALUE**

This expresses how public space contributes to the transmission of a message associated with prestige, which is recognizable, distinctive, memorable and understandable.

Public space is a place for communication and expression, where various meanings can be a representation (image) of a value (aesthetic and other ideals) contributing to stimulating identity and a sense of pride; or transformed into commoditization processes (branding).

## VALUES IN THE PUBLIC SPACE: COMPLEMENTARY OR CONFLICTUAL?

### WATERFRONTS, VILA NOVA DE GAIA

As a tourist space, with considerable specific environmental aspects, this is an area where several values can be identified that coexist within the public space and that can complement or conflict with each other.

Environmental protection and enhancement actions have made it possible to harmonize **environmental and use values**, minimizing the negative impacts that could result from the increasing use of these public spaces. This is reflected in the diversity of uses, which include low intensity use in environmentally sensitive spaces whereas other cases are suitable for more intense loads.

The holding of events and the existence of places for meetings and social encounters are expressions of **social value** along the waterfronts. However, the increasing attractiveness of the spaces can have different effects on **use value**: if, on the one hand, some residents or users avoid the maritime coastline when there are a lot of people, on the other hand, the more intense use of the Douro's riverside areas does not negate the socialization which takes place in the traditional nuclei.

The **economic value** is manifested in the growing presence of consumption spaces and in the real estate dynamics around the beach and leisure activities, which take advantage of the natural and scenic features as **image value** and tourist attraction.



**Ribeira do Espírito Santo pedestrian path**

The construction of the walkway has enabled the enhancement of the river for recreational use



**Walkway for the beaches of Vila Nova de Gaia**

The safeguarding of the environmental value of the dune system and the regulation of its use along the entire coast



**Seafront at Pedras Amarelas Beach**

Major use of the seafront for its attractiveness and diversity of uses and activities

## DEVELOPMENT

### 5. ANALYSIS

Through identifying the four themes – system, service, actors and value types – it is possible to focus the assessment on the essential and most important aspects to be interpreted, establishing the specific analytical framework for the case in question. This phase consists of defining the most important aspects to be addressed. The four essential assessment topics are dealt with at the same time, trying to interpret the relationships and implications between them.

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **What is important to assess in this situation?**

Identify and describe the most important aspects resulting from an effort to understand the most important features of the public space system in question, considering:

- Purpose of the assessment: how the purpose of the assessment can be put into criteria for analysis.
- Expectations and priorities defined by the actors: which aspects were highlighted by the actors and deserve a more detailed analysis.

- **Analyse the collected information on system, services, actors and values.**

The interpretation of the public space is developed considering issues such as important faults (for example, whether there are barriers in the system or non-existent basic services) or dominant themes (e.g., main uses of the public space, more vocal user groups). The analysis should also respond to specific criteria (suggested in Table 5) adjusted to the specific situation (more detailed, if more important, or eliminated, if irrelevant). If possible, the analysis should include both graphic and descriptive elements.

- **How are the different issues identified related?**

Establish relationships between the public space system, services, actors and their values. This work will naturally result from the analysis process or will require a dedicated task, which may occur in a non-organized (for example, informal discussion) or more structured (for example, cross-impact matrices) manner.



## SUSTAINABLE CRITERIA FOR A CENTRAL URBAN PARK

### CENTRAL AREA OF AGUALVA-CACÉM, SINTRA

The implementation of the POLIS project, as well as other associated actions, provided reinforcement to the desired central area. Places such as *Bons Amigos* avenue, the Market and the Citizen Store or the collective transport interface, are now references for the city and its inhabitants given the actions they have undergone, their differentiating functions and **scale of attraction**.

At the border between the *Agualva* and *Cacém* nuclei, the linear urban park is one of the main connection elements and provides **connectivity** between public, ecological, landscape and infrastructure systems. As an axis for the crossing and distribution of flows, it establishes continuity within the landscape through the river and urban continuity through the pedestrian paths. With considerable capacity for attraction, it is a place for the practice of sports and other leisure activities, hanging out and meeting, and as a space for **interaction** and social **diversity**, it is capable of bringing together various publics and generations due to the multiplicity of uses that it provides. The park also fulfils the service of ecological protection against climate risk and floods.

As a reference space, views on it are consensual, although different actors express unequal opinions regarding its (non) use. For example, while traders and others who are not users of the park identify the lack of safety as a problem in this public space, its regular users do not recognize the importance of this issue.



**Bons Amigos avenue**  
Commercial and services reference axis, generates important crossing and passage flows



**Urban linear park**  
The city's "green space" welcomes several activities and generations

**TABLE 5 – CRITERIA FOR ANALYSIS**

<b>DIVERSITY</b>	<p>Understand the presence of urban elements, public space services or its users: logic of mixing or inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal variations – in constructed spaces or open spaces.</li><li>• Multifunctionality – existence of a mix of uses and activities.</li><li>• Presence of different user profiles – ages, social strata, cultures, etc.</li><li>• Temporal variety – events, moments or cycles, in which the space has other meanings.</li></ul>
<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>	<p>Understand the links between the components, activities and actors of a public space system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuity (physical, visual, functional) Connections between system components and between services provided (e.g., services where continuity is the most pressing); system connection components – infrastructure networks, landscape.</li><li>• Discontinuities or obstacles Barriers, physical fragmentation or of access (e.g., conditional access, exclusive functions, social differentiation, etc.). Consider different types of users.</li></ul>
<b>DIFFERENT FORMS OF INTERACTION</b>	<p>Understand the dynamic relationships between components, activities and actors of a public space system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Synergy or complementarity Different services contribute to the best performance for all, with alliances between actors which are mutually beneficial.</li><li>• Conflicts or dominances The existence of one or more services prevents or conditions the provision of other system services; areas of agreement and disagreement between actors.</li><li>• Influence Power of influence or action dependency relations.</li></ul>
<b>SCALES (OF ATTRACTION/ INFLUENCE)</b>	<p>Understand the spatial influence of the different components of the system, the attractiveness (for users) of the different services and the actors' influence in the territory and between them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Services and components capable of attracting users:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• through proximity (local) or distance (metropolitan);</li><li>• within the system/outside the system.</li></ul></li><li>• Concentrations of people and social interaction spaces:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• which user types, origin, motivation.</li></ul></li><li>• Influence on urban transformation dynamics:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• attraction of new services and uses;</li><li>• new real estate investments.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>INTELLIGIBILITY</b>	<p>Understand the clarity with which a given system is readable and comprehensible, including its shape, its services and the way identified actors do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal coherence of the design and linking of spaces.</li><li>• Coherence between the spaces and their associated services.</li><li>• Recognition by the actors of their own use systems.</li></ul>

## CONCERNING DIVERSITY: USES AND CONFLICTS

DUQUE DE ÁVILA AVENUE, LISBON

**Diversity** is an attraction for the area of *Duque de Ávila* avenue, both for the services it ensures and for the users who benefit from them, but this can also be a problem.

The interests and needs of the actors involved are diverse and may have a positive or negative influence on the experience of certain users.

In the specific case of the *Arco do Cego* garden, we can find social values and conflicting use, since certain users have some reservations or even avoid using it due to the presence of others. Nevertheless, a certain "commitment" in the use of this space was observed, with different uses at different times of the day, enabling greater compatibility.

In a similar way, the pedestrian space along the avenue is competed for by different users and uses: the spaces occupied by the terraces – along the avenue there are at least 16 terraces – benefit the traders and enable socialization, consumption and hanging out in the street but they reduce the free space available and interfere with the circulation of pedestrians, with certain cases proving to be obstacles.



### Conflicts observed in the avenue

The coexistence of different modes of transport can result in improper uses of the cycle and pedestrian ways, dangerous crossings and difficult loads and discharges. Signs, street furniture and excessive occupancy of the terraces interfere with pedestrian circulation

## SUMMARY

### REFLECTION

The results of the analysis are presented and discussed considering the response to the initially defined purposes. The possible results can include: better understanding how the space works for different users, identifying areas of conflict to be improved and enhancements to be developed, among others.

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Summarize the most important questions from the analysis.**

The summary work should produce objective-oriented interpretations, as integrated as possible, referring to how they incorporate the system, services, actors and values, identifying:

- Which conflicts and problems were encountered?
- What are the aspects to improve and what is the potential to be developed?
- Which values are generated? For whom?
- Has the assessment met its purpose?



Some public spaces demand a reflection on their potential future, *Ribeira Grande*



## HOW IS THE PUBLIC SPACE IN DISPERSED URBAN AREAS?

### DISPERSED URBAN AREA, BURGÃES AND REBORDÕES (SANTO TIRSO)

The public spaces in these territories with dispersed occupancy do not correspond directly to typologies nor to a canonical organization. On the contrary, the network of spaces is the result of a set of structures of different origins, linked by the road system or the ecological system, but often non-contiguous, with an atomized and diffused provision of services:

- the road system domain as an aggregator of functions, guaranteeing local access and external connections and support for commercial activities and services on the main roads, which is the space for the car, without concerns for pedestrian compatibility;
  - the importance of commercial, religious and recreational activities, as generators of spaces and occasions for meeting and recreation, socialization and events;
  - the presence of rural elements, such as rural roads, fountains and old washhouses;
- “exceptional” and reference spaces such as *Sara Moreira* urban park, designed and equipped on a scale of attraction at the district level and beyond, with unique and differentiating characteristics;
  - “anonymous” spaces generated by allotment operations, in most cases without development elements or significant character.



***Sara Moreira* urban park (Rabada park)**

Hosts multiple uses: hanging out, recreational and leisure activities and events



**Crossroad in Rebordões**

Small sidewalk enlargements are opportunities for interaction and reference services

## FOLLOW-UP STRATEGY

This phase takes advantage of the results obtained to follow up with recommendations. The recommendations can be broadened and give rise to a strategic rationale, in line with the definition of actions, through identifying goals for future alternatives. For the new initiatives to be followed up, it is vital that the network of stakeholders is maintained, and progress is shared.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Which recommendations can be made for the future?**

List the recommendations based on the learning process which took place during the assessment.

- **What strategies can be developed from the learning process?**

Identify new goals and possible alternatives.

Identify existing resources and means.

- **How do the new goals relate to:**

- The existing public space system?
- Public space services?

- **What answers are there to the interests and values of the different actors?**



CrPOLIS, UB

The participation of various actors in the construction of a strategy, within the scope of the *Proyecto Cartografías de la Mina*, 2002–2007, Barcelona

## QUESTIONS OR UNCERTAINTIES FOR A CENTRAL AREA STRATEGY

### CENTRAL AREA OF AGUALVA-CACÉM, SINTRA

Analysis of the actions in *Agualva-Cacém* showed a reinforcement of the urban structure, with an increase in developed spaces. Despite these positive effects, it was found that the creation of a new central area fell short of the objectives set (and the expectations created): the idea of "incomplete central area" was evident in the political speeches involving proximity and users, especially regarding the expectant spaces. However, it remains open whether the completion of the project would benefit and resolve the current problems.

At present, the actions underway focus on the delineation of an Urban Rehabilitation Area in part of the study area, with strategic action areas and the identification of relevant partners, and on the improvement of external links between urban parks, within the ecological system, to facilitate easy mobility connections. Could these rehabilitation actions generate positive effects which would enable what is lacking?

The possibility of new actions – the completion of the planned project or new proposals – requires a focus on the management of expectations and the pooling of means and resources.

On the one hand, temporary solutions have difficulty in becoming definitive due to future expectations, concerning which there are different ambitions and perspectives. On the other hand, it is necessary to combine political availability and public investment by local authorities with attractiveness and interest from private investment (and associated demand).



**Car park**

The non-completion of a part of the project led to the adoption of a temporary solution for the use of this space



**D. Maria II street**

After the expropriation and demolition of buildings to carry out the project, the lack of private investment has left these spaces empty and expectant



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The diverse space, the diverse use, the use by all: the construction of spaces with value, Barcelona

## PRODUCING PUBLIC SPACES WITH VALUE

The PSSS method shows the contributions that the public space system has in urban spaces, reinforcing its role as a structuring network, an organization of services provided in a common space, for all users and actors, that can be interpreted in this way, with different purposes, accessible to all.

With this methodology, it is not intended to draw up an exhaustive list of criteria, nor a form to be filled, but it offers a sequence of questions and topics that can help the diverse actors think and discuss. Adaptations to each case should be made, either through practical criteria, availability of resources and time, or by pragmatism regarding the focus of assessment, giving priority to its purpose and context.



Given the openness and reflexivity of the PSSS, relevant impacts from its application can occur, included with processes interpreting the public space service, such as:

- diagnose the real systemic services of the public space and/or their potential benefits, in different contexts, responding to the needs and aspirations of communities;
- support strategic decisions and joint actions concerning the public space, in the management and planning and programming of investments;
- rationalize the production of the public space and practise ex-post assessment of its goals, expectations and results, to generate feedback;
- improve governance by integrating the shared visions of actors in relation to which there are implications for public values;
- support a roadmap for urban policies focusing on the values and services of the public space, in its defence and its visibility.

Transparency, accessibility and dissemination of results should be guaranteed to all stakeholders, and not limited to those who were directly involved in the assessment process. This can be promoted through different means of communication and in a more direct way, creating occasions for joint reflection (meetings, workshops, forums, social networks...).

Responding to the increasing challenges that the public space poses to us, both in daily practices and in strategic actions, policies, practices and the use of public space are increasingly moving away from a segregated vision towards a more integrated and interdisciplinary urban environment. The PSSS encourages all actors in the public space, whether producers, managers or users, to participate in the process of interpreting and assessing a space that, by definition, belongs to everyone. The process will itself generate knowledge and value.



Place for urban life, the public space welcomes the participation of all, Bologna



MADRID

# PSSS REFERENCES

## PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

During the research work, several experimental actions were carried out on the instruments for interpreting and assessing the public space, which contributed to the final form of the PSSS method.

The first experiments took place in the second half of 2017:

- the identification of the public space service in an exercise analysing and diagnosing actions in the public space in the neighbourhoods of *Baró de Viver* and *Bon Pastor* in Barcelona by a class group of the Master's in Urban Design at the University of Barcelona;
- an *in situ* analysis based on the concepts and criteria which had been developed – notions of service, system, value – also based on activities and functions within the space involving the riverside walk in Coimbra;
- the application of the tool in a South American context in Antofagasta (Chile), reflecting on the relevance of the assessment concepts and their adaptation to different realities.



**Services interpretation  
of the Mondego park's spaces system, Coimbra**  
Based on the assessment of continuity and  
relations between this and other systems

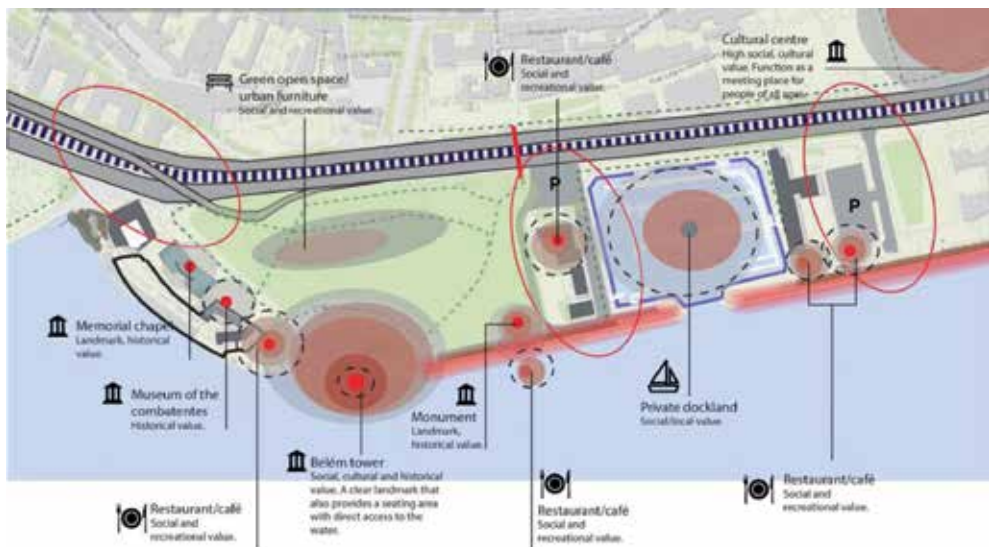


At the start of the 2017/2018 academic year, practical exercises were launched for parts of the methodology under development:

- Architecture (IST) students explored the transformation of the public space at *Duque de Ávila* avenue (Lisbon) from the perspectives of its users, trying to identify how the redesign generated new flows and service offers;
- Environmental Engineering (IST) students applied the concept of public space service in an evaluation of the environmental impact of the works carried out at *Cais do Sodré* (Lisbon);
- Master's in Urbanism and Spatial Planning (IST) students tested the construction of performance evaluation metrics for the public space system on the riverfront at *Belém* (Lisbon);
- Master's in Sustainable Urbanism and Spatial Planning (UNL) students developed an analysis and diagnosis exercise around the axis of the South Tagus Metro in Almada, based on concepts and criteria which had been developed.

In the 2017/2018 academic year intensive workshops were also organized with students:

- As part of the Athens Programme, organized by IST for students of various nationalities, interdisciplinary reflection was encouraged regarding how the public space can be part of the process of change in a case study involving *Marvila* in Lisbon;
- Organized by the University of Porto, students of the Master's in Architecture carried out a test of the methodology prototype in three distinct areas: the Porto Metro, the seafront and the riverbanks in Vila Nova de Gaia and the diffuse settlement in *Burgães* (Santo Tirso).

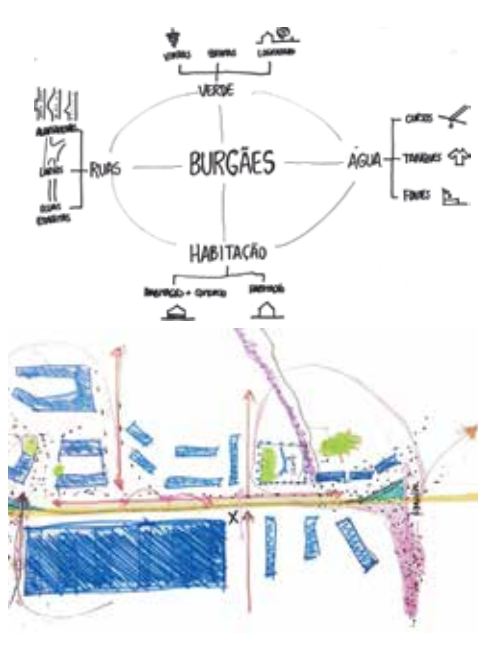


Map analysing the surroundings of *Belém* Tower (Lisbon) by students of the master's in Urbanism and Spatial Planning (IST)





Visit and discussion of Athens Programme workshop



Analysis schemes of *Burgães* and *Porto Metro* by students of the Master's in Architecture of the University of Porto

Actions were also undertaken involving those concerned in the theme of the project, the results of which led to more in-depth reflection on the assessment methodology.

At the start of the project, a panel of stakeholders was set up, composed of experts, technicians and representatives of local authorities, and interests and opinions on the main goal of the research were collected. This panel was later extended to other actors (designers, users and representatives of public entities and associations), and a session to test the research concepts was held, where the utility of the assessment tool was also discussed.

An online survey was also launched, open to the whole community, with the aim of gathering opinions from stakeholders on the project involving different perspectives concerning the public space.



The street as the main axis of urban experience and structure, Lisbon

## EPISTEMOLOGY AND EPISODES IN PUBLIC SPACE SOURCES

The thinking about public space is still a narrative with a recent history. Observations on the public space still lack a rigorous in-depth approach to an integrated and interdisciplinary discussion regarding the “revision” of the processes involved in the production of space, their economic, social, morphological and ideological aspects, capable of interpreting the benefits and values of the rate of return of public space.

From attempts outside the field of Architecture in the twentieth century (progressive pre-Second War sociologists in Chicago) to the approaches of the 1950s (with the theoretical post-war crisis of Modern Architecture, in the final International Congresses of Modern Architecture), the theme of urban central areas gave rise to the concept of Urban Design (Sert and Giedion, 1952). In the 1960s, the new critical generation of the Team 10 group showed that opportunities for urban design would come through criticism of the Modern Movement and not just “haggling” over the disciplinary boundaries between architects, landscape designers and planners.

Knowledge of urban life centres on experience within the external space, of Kevin Lynch (1960) and Jane Jacobs (1961), was applied in practice by Alexander (1965), Gehl (1971), Leslie Martin (1972) and Whyte (1980), who were pioneers which would lead to a revalorisation of the “street”, paying attention to its perception and life, as part of the urban structure. Within this endeavour, different theoretical inspirations reacted to the Modern Movement and a new diversity came to light: on the one hand, new psychological concerns (E. T. Hall, 1969), on the other hand, environmental concerns (McHarg, 1969), reflecting a new interest in natural and constructed spatial contexts (Norberg-Schulz, 1980); furthermore, there was the taking up of historical references once again in Architecture in Europe (Rossi, 1966; Krier, 1984) and others with more political agendas (participatory processes from 1960-70) or nostalgic agendas (from the “New Urbanism”), influencing the awareness of public values for the urban space.

If we wish to consider the state of play of knowledge of Urban Design, which Luis Sert coined with his link between theory and practice, the reflections on the economic, environmental and social contradictions of public space, promoted on the basis of humanistic theory, followed structural lines of thought: *Production de l'Espace* by Lefebvre (1974), *The Informational City* by Castells (1989) or *Métapolis* by Ascher (1995). The critical theory of urban globalization originating from the USA, involving Harvey (1990), Sennet (1992), Zukin (1995), among others, has given a structuring meaning to the theory of the public space, from the political economy of urban value, with influence in government actions, with urban policies, as shown by Barcelona's transformation for the 1992 Olympics (Bohigas, 1985; Borja, 2003) or Urban Renaissance (under the coordination of Rogers) and CABE (1999-2006) in the United Kingdom.



Public space transformation as part of urban regeneration, Barcelona

## PUBLIC SPACE PRODUCTION AS THE CITY BEAUTIFUL?

We can ask: are the perceptions of the quality of spaces identical in the criteria of all the actors, so that we can establish real, mature knowledge within them?

The fact is that twenty years after publishing *The Image of the City* (1960), Kevin Lynch did something rare in urban theory, questioning the concept of “perception of spatial quality” which he himself had laid out twenty years earlier based on certain notions about the perception of space (of E.T. Hall) and the importance of their collective experience. Admitting that the survey sample on which it was based was insufficient... and questioning:

1. “What was not foreseen, however, was that this study, whose principal aim was to urge on designers the necessity of consulting those who live in a place, had at first a diametrical opposite result. (...), professionals were imposing their own views and values on those they served. (...)”
2. The method had no sense of development dynamics in it... on how perceptions may change in the future based on experience or city modification. That fed the designers’ illusion: “that a building or a city is something that is created in one act, then to endure forever” mistaken as a matter of value.
3. “Interesting as this work is, it labors under the difficulty that places are not languages: their primary function is not the communication of meaning, (...)” If they can be considered not only as a silent discourse on the past ... in their own nature ... their meaning could bring forth richer results.
4. “Last, perhaps I would criticize our original studies because they have proved so difficult to apply to actual public policy (...) to change the way in which cities were shaped (...). True city design — dealing directly (...) in collaboration with the people who sense it — hardly exists today.”

Interpretation from Lynch’s text, 1984

More than thirty years afterwards (to this day), this honest intellectual reflection remains more or less incognito, while the growing interest in global production of public spaces has widened without assessment being carried out focused on its public matrix.

Today, the attributes of spatial quality and “vibrant” urban environments for public spaces are dominant representations of a uniform lifestyle (even for the United Nations — UN Habitat Toolkit, 2015). They have standard attributes (leisure, tourism, culture, image, etc.) and management increasingly based on commodity models, translated into global images of quality of life, a representation of “colonized” values that, from a distance, recalls the *City Beautiful*, which from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries was affirmed as part of the outbreak of the “new worlds”.



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## PROJECT FILE

### PSSS – PUBLIC SPACE'S SERVICE VALUE AS AN URBAN SYSTEM. AN INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

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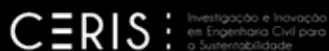




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