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ATTRACTIVE QUALITIES OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN VISITOR'S PERCEPTION

The article explores the qualities of public buildings in the perception of visitors. Analyzing their reviews on public buildings, the study examines how architectural design contributes to both improving the use of public spaces and strengthening social interaction, creating integrated and inclusive spaces that contribute to the well-being of the community.

Keywords: visitor perception, architectural environment, spatial experience, urban design

Statement of the problem

Public buildings serve as essential components of the urban environment, integrating various social, cultural, and functional elements that shape public life. These structures ranging from libraries and museums to community centers and government offices are not only service-oriented but also act as hubs of interaction, fostering engagement among diverse user groups. A critical element in defining the architectural and social significance of public buildings is their recreational communication space, which functions as the connective tissue between different programmatic areas, encouraging accessibility, movement, and social exchange.

In recent years, shifting perspectives on public buildings among users, designers, and policymakers have reshaped their architectural and functional paradigms. The multi-use spaces have challenged the traditional role of public buildings, pushing architects and urban planners to explore new design strategies that ensure their continued relevance.

As public buildings evolve, their design increasingly incorporates social functions, cultural influences, and connections to the regional context, alongside their primary institutional or civic roles. This shift highlights the importance of integrating public buildings into the broader urban fabric, fostering engagement, and enhancing their role as centers of community life.

The growing recognition of non-commercial qualities in public buildings calls for a structured classification of these attributes to assess their relative importance in shaping user perception and influencing architectural design.

Analysis of recent research and publications

A number of theoretical works on public buildings describe important aspects that form the basis of the present study:

Contemporary challenges in the design and function of public buildings, as well as the search for new architectural and spatial strategies to enhance their relevance, have been explored by R. Banham [1], C. Alexander [2], F. Tibbalds [3], S. Goldsmith [4] and others.

The role of user experience and social engagement in shaping the appeal and effectiveness of public spaces has been studied by C. Montgomery [5], J. Gehl [6], W. Whyte [7] and others, emphasizing the importance of accessibility, comfort, and interaction.

Classifications of different qualitative characteristics of public buildings related to their social and functional value have been proposed by K.Lynch [8], G. Broadbent [9], A.Madanipour [10] and others.

Theories of placemaking and human-centered design, which highlight the role of public buildings in fostering community interaction and urban vitality, have been advanced by J.Jacobs [11], R. Gratz [12], W. Mitchell [13], and the "Project for Public Spaces" initiative .

The methodological framework for understanding "place" in the context of public architecture has been shaped by E. Relph [14], Yi-Fu Tuan [15], D. Canter [16], and S. Smolenska [17].

To conclude, the evolving role of public buildings highlights the increasing significance of social, experiential, and environmental qualities alongside their traditional functions. While existing research explores various aspects of placemaking, spatial organization, and user engagement, a gap remains in connecting these dimensions within a unified methodological framework.

Formulation of the goal of the article

The primary objective of the research discussed in this article is to determine the system of public building attractiveness that would be pertinent given the contemporary shifts in how people view these structures. Such a system of traits can be especially helpful in characterizing and distinguishing, from the perspective

of its visitors, the atmosphere of public buildings of diverse spatial forms. For this purpose, the following research assignments were established:

1. Create a set of appealing attributes for public buildings in the eyes of visitors that are connected to the idea of "place."

2. Use the analysis of publicly accessible information (public building reviews) to determine whether the suggested set of criteria offers a helpful distinction for various spatial forms of public buildings.

Presentation of the main material

In order to evaluate the attractive qualities of architectural objects in visitor's perception, a corresponding tool is needed. Such tool can be found in the concept of place, as presented in the studies of D. Canter [16], S. Smolenska [17] and used in this regard in the work of A. Borysenko [18]. This concept can be used for the description of subjective, qualitative perception of architectural environment, while allowing connection to objective qualities of architectural structures.

The category of "place" include physical, activity, and semantic components that define how their varied attributes are reflected most dominantly in human perception. Determining the qualities of an attractive public building environment is impossible without taking into account people's preferences and needs. This concept will provide a structure for evaluating, comparing and contrasting reviews. This would require us to distinguish a number of semantic themes that would differentiate different qualities related to different attributes of place. For this purpose, existing classifications of characteristics related to the attractiveness of public buildings for visitors were considered. Modern studies generally emphasize the role of subjective, qualitative factors, grouped around categories such as atmosphere, experience, and sense of belonging. These factors describe the results of a person's perception of the environment through phenomenological qualities and highlight their impact on the overall experience of public spaces. A general trend supported by these findings is the increasing emphasis on multi-functional and community-oriented features in public buildings.

Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to formulate a system for evaluating the qualities of public buildings, taking into account methodological tools for describing "place" as part of urban life in people's perception while also providing a connection with the spatial organizational typology of public buildings.

While the functional qualities, like general physical comfort and convenience of access are important for public buildings as well as for any other type, the experiential qualities have a special significance for such spaces for fostering social engagement and enhancing

public life. The combination of functional and experiential qualities enriches the social, cultural, and psychological context of these spaces, transforming them into more than just utilitarian structures, and making visits to them meaningful experiences for the public.

This proposed classification of attractive qualities of public buildings is grounded in the theoretical concept of "place" and the peculiarities of its perception, as outlined by D. Canter [8], who related them to three levels: physical attributes, activities, and associated meanings. Accordingly, the following categories of attractive qualities for public buildings are distinguished as "comfortability," "promotion of diverse activities," and "aesthetic articulation of the place" (Fig. 1).
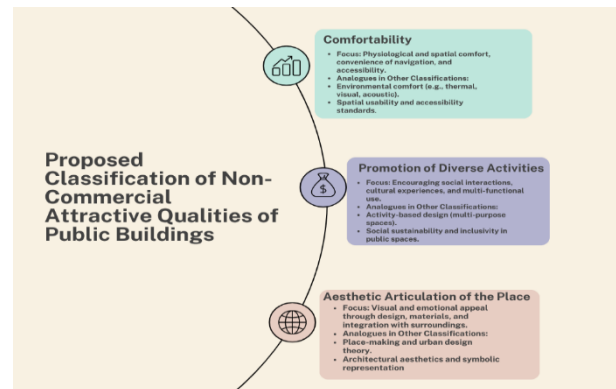

Fig. 1 – Proposed Classification of Non-Commercial Attractive Qualities of Public Buildings (cultural center)

Based on this classification, a content analysis was conducted. It was based on the material of reviews on 15 successful public buildings (100 reviews per building) from English-speaking countries (USA, Great Britain, Canada, Australia), that can serve as prominent examples of their type. The general methodology of content analysis is similar to the one used in the research by A. Borysenko [18] and is reproduced in order to test its application for evaluating visitor's perception in connection to different type of buildings.

Furthermore, the three categories of Comfortability, Promotion of Diverse Activities, and Aesthetic Articulation of the Place are composed of five distinct qualities that provide a more precise understanding of what makes public buildings attractive. Aesthetic Articulation of the Place consists of Cultural Significance and Architectural Excellence that distinguish between a building's historical, cultural, and symbolic value and its visual appeal, design innovation, and integration into the urban landscape. Comfortability includes Accessibility & Urban Integration and Spatial & Social Connectivity to separate functional aspects such as ease of movement, inclusivity, and urban connectivity from the broader idea of how spaces promote comfort, interaction, and social cohesion. Lastly, Promotion of Diverse Activities includes Public Engagement, emphasizing how public

buildings foster community participation, support multifunctional uses, and encourage social interaction. This refined classification ensures a more holistic evaluation of public buildings, balancing cultural, architectural, functional, and social aspects to create spaces that are both meaningful and engaging.

Following public buildings were selected for analysis (Fig. 2):

The Louvre Museum, Paris, France – A globally iconic museum renowned for its aesthetic and historical significance, attracting millions of visitors annually. It is widely regarded as a model of how cultural institutions can foster a sense of place.

The British Library, London, UK – Known for its massive collection of literature and historical artifacts, the British Library stands as an example of how libraries can become a central, multifunctional part of the urban fabric.

Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Australia – An architectural marvel and a cultural symbol of Australia, frequently analyzed for its integration of performance arts and urban space.

Berlin Hauptbahnhof (Berlin Central Station), Berlin, Germany – One of Europe's largest and most modern railway stations, celebrated for its innovative design and high level of connectivity to urban space.
The National Gallery, Washington D.C., USA – A cornerstone of American art and culture, offering insight into how public art museums contribute to a sense of national identity.

The United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA – A unique diplomatic space, considered essential for global cooperation, featuring architectural design that symbolizes international unity.

The Palace of Justice, The Hague, Netherlands – A monumental structure with a focus on international law and human rights, known for its integration of security and openness.

The Vatican Museums, Vatican City – A blend of religion and culture, these museums are a testament to how spiritual institutions contribute to urban tourism and global culture.

The Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA – Known for its innovative architecture by Frank Lloyd Wright and its transformative impact on the museum concept in the 20th century.

The Shard, London, UK – A modern skyscraper offering a mix of commercial, residential, and public spaces, renowned for its contribution to the city's skyline and social spaces.

The Reichstag Building, Berlin, Germany – A symbol of Germany's democratic rebirth, it combines historic and modern elements, serving as the seat of the Bundestag.

The Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, USA – A model for public access to culture, offering free exhibitions, performances, and a mix of civic and cultural uses.

The National Library of France, Paris, France – A landmark institution for knowledge and scholarship, noted for its modern design and the integration of digital and physical library spaces.

Los Angeles Central Library, Los Angeles, USA – A vital cultural and public resource offering a blend of art, history, and community programming in a historic building.

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA – An influential art institution with a strong architectural identity and programming that blends modernity with tradition.

Fig. 2 – Color-Coding of Analyzed Public Buildings

In assessing the significance of public buildings, Cultural Significance emerges as the most influential factor, accounting for 24% of overall importance. This highlights the deep connection between these structures and historical or societal values. Architectural Excellence follows closely at 22.5%, emphasizing the role of innovative and aesthetically striking design in public perception. Spatial & Social Connectivity contributes 23.2%, underlining the importance of well-integrated spaces that foster interaction and engagement. Public Engagement represents 21.2%, showcasing the role of public buildings in promoting community participation and inclusivity. Lastly, Accessibility & Urban Integration holds 19.8%, demonstrating the necessity for well-connected and easily accessible structures within the urban environment. These findings indicate a balanced distribution of priorities, where both aesthetic and functional aspects play crucial roles in determining a public building's value (Fig. 3).
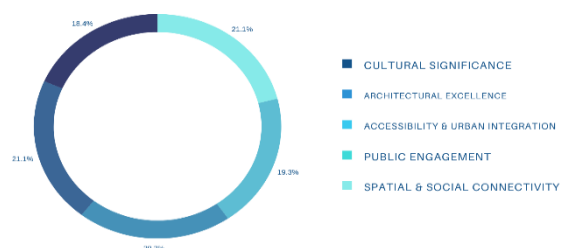

Fig. 3 – Range of mentions of different categories of public building attractiveness in reviews

Patterns in preference distribution by category have also been examined in greater depth in relation to the subgroup of cultural centers (Fig. 4). Studies indicate common patterns in how people perceive these structures based on their spatial organization and functional role within the urban fabric. One key finding is the high level of attention given to the "accessibility and urbam integration" category for integrated public buildings. This trend can be attributed to the role of such buildings as essential elements of a city's cultural, civic, or infrastructural ecosystem. As integral parts of the urban landscape, these buildings—such as libraries, museums, and cultural centers—are expected to enhance public accessibility, foster community engagement, and contribute to the quality of shared spaces. Their design often incorporates elements that support walkability, public transport connectivity, and multifunctionality, reinforcing their role as hubs of interaction within the city. This alignment with urban infrastructure and the prioritization of user-friendly spaces highlight the broader impact of public buildings in shaping both physical and social dimensions of urban life.

This significance underscores the public's recognition of these buildings as symbols of cultural heritage and architectural distinction, reinforcing their enduring value within the urban landscape. Furthermore, the "Accessibility and Urban Integration" category remains essential, highlighting the necessity for inclusive, well-connected spaces that encourage interaction and community participation. These attributes solidify the role of public buildings as more than just functional structures—they become active centers of civic life, much like historic public forums that served as focal points for cultural and societal exchange.
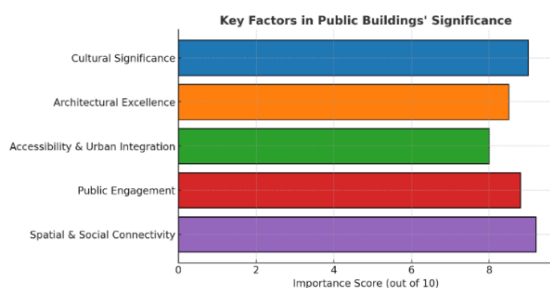

Fig. 4 – Essential Attributes Defining the Impact of Cultural Buildings

The highest-rated category, "Cultural Significance", emphasizes the role of public buildings in preserving heritage and fostering a collective identity. "Architectural Excellence" follows closely, highlighting the impact of design and aesthetic appeal on public perception. "Accessibility & Urban Integration" reflects the importance of how well these buildings connect with the surrounding urban environment, ensuring ease of access and functionality. "Public Engagement" scores highly, demonstrating the value of these spaces as hubs

for community interaction and civic activities. Lastly, "Spatial & Social Connectivity" underscores the need for public buildings to serve as interactive and inclusive spaces that enhance urban life. Overall, the chart reveals a balanced distribution of importance, with an emphasis on both aesthetic and functional aspects.

The sequence of features that each contribute to the overall assessment to differing degrees based on the purpose and context of the building can be defined in order to examine how public buildings are perceived. Public buildings must have a few basic characteristics in order to be considered good. These attributes include cultural and spatial & social connectivity , which are seen to be essential for making sure the building satisfies the fundamental needs of its users. Since individuals often take these crucial elements for granted, failing to achieve these requirements can lead to serious unfavorable evaluations and more examination of the category.

The assessment of five critical urban design factors: Cultural Significance, Architectural Excellence, Accessibility & Urban Integration, Public Engagement, and Spatial & Social Connectivity has been conducted for public buildings (Fig. 5). Each factor is color-coded and measured on a scale from 0 to 10. The chart indicates that Spatial & Social Connectivity has the highest rating, followed closely by Public Engagement and Accessibility & Urban Integration. Architectural Excellence and Cultural Significance have relatively lower ratings in comparison.
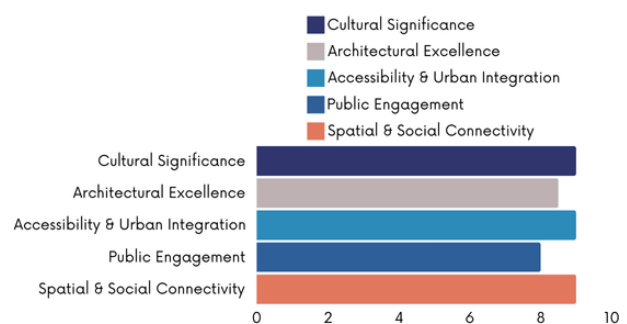

Fig. 5 – Assessment of Urban Design Priorities of Public buildings

Community interaction and urban accessibility are well-developed, cultural and architectural aspects might require further enhancement. The high ratings for Spatial & Social Connectivity and Public Engagement indicate strong urban cohesion and community participation. However, the moderate rating for Cultural Significance may imply that historical or cultural elements could be better integrated into the urban landscape. The chart provides valuable insight into the strengths and potential areas of improvement in urban planning and design.

For example, in heritage buildings, Cultural and Historical Significance plays a defining role in visitor perception, while in civic centers or community hubs,

Public Engagement and Activity is more crucial. Understanding these patterns can help prioritize improvements and highlight key qualities that enhance the perception and success of public buildings.

Conclusions

The research has led to the following conclusions:

1. The attractiveness of public buildings is shaped by a combination of functionality, aesthetics, and visitor experience. While accessibility and usability are essential, architectural design, cultural significance, and engagement opportunities significantly influence how people perceive these spaces.

2. Analyzing visitor feedback highlights that architectural appeal and historical value often have the strongest positive impact. On the other hand, issues related to functionality, such as poor accessibility or maintenance problems, tend to generate negative perceptions.

3. Understanding these factors provides valuable insights for architects, urban planners, and policymakers. By integrating comfort, diverse activities, and aesthetic appeal, future public buildings can be designed to be more engaging, inclusive, and culturally meaningful spaces.

Public building attractiveness is influenced by function, aesthetics, and experience. This study shows that accessibility and usability are key, but design, cultural value, and engagement shape perception. Visitor reviews highlight architectural appeal and history as major positives, while functional issues often lead to criticism.

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ПРИВАБЛИВІ ЯКОСТІ ГРОМАДСЬКИХ СПОРУД У СПРИЙНЯТТІ ВІДВІДУВАЧІВ

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У статті досліджено привабливі якості громадських будівель у сприйнятті відвідувачами. В сучасному архітектурному дискурсі сприйняття громадських будівель виходить за рамки простих функціональних і структурних аспектів, включаючи чуттєві, емоційні та емпіричні виміри. Ці якості відіграють вирішальну роль у визначенні успіху громадської будівлі, впливаючи на її зручність у використанні, залучення уваги та загальне сприйняття. Розуміння привабливих якостей громадських будівель має важливе значення для архітекторів і містобудівників, які прагнуть створити простори, які резонують з користувачами на багатьох рівнях.

Дослідження пропонує комплексну класифікацію привабливих якостей, засновану на трьох основних вимірах людського сприйняття, сформульованих Д. Кантером і С. Смоленською: фізичне середовище, діяльність користувача та змісти. Ці параметри формують три ключові категорії привабливості: «комфортність» (пов'язані з фізичним середовищем), «сприяння різноманітності активностей» (пов'язана з діяльністю користувачів) і «естетична артикуляція місця» (вкорінена в змістах, які приписуються простору). Кожна категорія висвітлює важливі аспекти, які сприяють загальному сприйняттю привабливості громадської будівлі.

Щоб перевірити цю класифікацію, було проведено контент-аналіз відгуків відвідувачів 15 громадських будівель у різних країнах, включаючи США, Великобританію, Канаду та Австралію. Отримані дані були співвіднесені з різними типологіями громадських будівель, включаючи культурні установи, транспортні вузли та адміністративні центри, щоб визначити закономірності сприйняття відвідувачів. Результати підтвердили, що різні категорії привабливості мають різний ступінь важливості залежно від типу будівлі. Так, заклади культури більше асоціювалися з «естетичною артикуляцією місця», а транспортні вузли — «комфортністю».

Крім того, дослідження показало, що такі фактори, як міський контекст, історичне походження та екологічна стійкість, також впливають на сприйняття громадськістю. Будівлі в історичних районах, як правило, отримують вищі оцінки за культурну значущість, тоді як сучасні багатофункціональні центри надають пріоритет доступності, інтеграції в місто та залученню громадськості. Крім того, такі елементи, як природне освітлення, стійкі матеріали та ергономічний дизайн, сприяють позитивному досвіду відвідувачів. Ці висновки підкреслюють необхідність збалансованого підходу до проектування, який поєднує естетику, функціональність і соціальну взаємодію, гарантуючи, що громадські будівлі ефективно служать як практичним, так і практичним цілям.

Результати дослідження роблять внесок в сферу знань і засобів архітектурного дизайну, надаючи засноване на фактах розуміння структури сприйняття відвідувачів, допомагаючи архітекторам створювати більш привабливі, змістовні та зручні адресно спрямовані громадські простори.

Ключові слова: *громадські споруди, сприйняття відвідувачів, архітектурне середовище, просторовий досвід, урбаністичний дизайн.*