



Urban Planning Analysis of Public Space as a Socio-Emotional Setting.

**1PhD. Juan Manuel Martínez Zúñiga, 2PhD. Nancy Elizabeth Pruneda
Ávila**

1Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Facultad de Arquitectura. México.

Email: jmmzmartz@hotmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2599-5329>

2Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Facultad de Arquitectura. México

Email: Pruneda1966@hotmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3149-919X>

Abstract.

Public space operates as a dynamic and living entity where physical, social, and psychological dimensions converge. Urban public spaces, understood as the primary settings for everyday human interactions, not only reflect the physical infrastructure of a city but also embody the cultural, social, and emotional dynamics of its inhabitants. Investigating concepts such as mental health, self-awareness, sexual education, and inclusion is essential to shaping our experiences within these shared environments, employing a framework that integrates pleasure, sexuality, and well-being. Public space operates as a dynamic and living entity where physical, social, and psychological dimensions converge. Urban public spaces, understood as the primary settings for everyday human interactions, not only reflect the physical infrastructure of a city but also embody the cultural, social, and emotional dynamics of its inhabitants. Investigating concepts such as mental health, self-awareness, sexual education, and inclusion is essential to shaping our experiences within these shared environments, employing a framework that integrates pleasure, sexuality, and well-being.

This analysis explores how urban planning can incorporate designs that foster collective well-being by adopting an approach that interlinks pleasure, sexuality, and urban dynamics. Mental health, as a foundational element of urban design, plays a critical role in enabling individuals to experience pleasure across all facets of life, including public spaces. Conditions such as stress, anxiety, and depression not only impair interpersonal relationships but also diminish the capacity to enjoy simple moments within urban settings. Empirical studies have demonstrated that sustained high levels of stress can reduce testosterone production and adversely affect sexual desire, underscoring the importance of mental health considerations in urban design strategies.

Keywords: Public space, Sexual education, Mental health, Urban mythology, Inclusive design, New paradigms.



1. Introduction.

This work proposes, therefore, an urban analysis of public space from a socio-emotional perspective, considering mental health, sexuality, sexual education, inclusion, and urban mythology as key elements for designing environments that promote collective well-being. (Markez. 2009). Through this integrative approach, the aim is to contribute to the development of urban strategies that recognize and value the complexity of the human experience in the city, ultimately fostering the creation of public spaces that are more human, inclusive, and emotionally enriching (Fierro. 2024). The urban public space constitutes a fundamental setting for social interaction and community development, functioning as a living organism where physical, social, and psychological dimensions converge. (Borja. 2000: Muxi. 2000).. Beyond its structural and architectural role, the public space reflects the cultural, emotional, and social dynamics of its inhabitants, serving as a mirror of the complexity and diversity that characterize contemporary cities. (Guest. 2023). In this sense, the urban analysis of public space cannot be limited solely to tangible aspects such as infrastructure or physical planning but must incorporate a comprehensive perspective that also considers the socio-emotional experiences that these environments foster or inhibit.(Gehl. 2017).

In recent decades, the growing attention to mental health as an essential component of human well-being has driven the need to rethink urban design from an perspective that promotes not only functionality and aesthetics but also quality of life and emotional balance. (Corti. 2015) Mental health, understood as a state of well-being in which an individual is capable of coping with normal life stresses, working productively, and contributing to their community, has become a fundamental pillar in building more human and inclusive cities. In this context, public space emerges as a key setting for promoting collective well-being, where urban planning can and should incorporate strategies that foster the socio-emotional development of its users. (Verdaguer. 2008: Velázquez. 2008)

One of the innovative approaches in this field is the incorporation of concepts such as pleasure, sexuality, sexual education, and inclusion, which have traditionally been marginalized or considered taboos in urban planning. However, these elements are essential to understanding the human experience in its entirety and to designing spaces that meet the real needs of the population. Sexuality, for example, is not only expressed in the private sphere but also influences how people relate to their environment and others in public spaces. Sexual education and inclusion, for their part, contribute to the construction of more open, respectful, and diverse communities, capable of creating safe and welcoming environments for everyone. (Pérez-Sales. 2009).



Furthermore, urban mythology — understood as the set of narratives, symbols, and beliefs constructed around urban spaces and practices — plays an important role in shaping collective identity and in how residents perceive and appropriate public space. (Delgado. 2011). These narratives can influence the socio-emotional experience both positively and negatively, affecting the sense of belonging, trust, and social cohesion. On the other hand, inclusive design emerges as a fundamental strategy to ensure that public spaces are accessible and welcoming for people of all ages, genders, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. (Sanz. 2008). This approach not only improves the functionality of the space but also promotes equity and social justice, essential aspects for collective emotional well-being and mental health.

The public spaces: An overloaded mind struggles to connect with the positive stimuli offered by the city. On the other hand, positive experiences in urban spaces —such as sharing a park with friends or enjoying a cultural activity— can act as catalysts to release endorphins and oxytocin, hormones that improve mood and foster emotional connections. Thus, a well-designed public space not only invites social interaction but also contributes to collective emotional well-being. (McComb.2024).

2. The relationship between mental health and public space manifests through three key axes:

- *Stress reduction through green areas and furniture inviting prolonged stays (shaded benches, pedestrian pathways.)*
- *Sensory stimulation via elements like water features, artistic murals, and varied pavement textures.*
- *Social interaction facilitated by open plazas and cultural centers that promote oxytocin release through positive social contact.*

Studies in Costa Rica demonstrate that vibrant spaces with active mobility (bike lanes, pedestrian corridors) enhance cognitive flexibility and healthy postponement of immediate gratifications. This aligns with the vision that urban design must counteract chronic stress effects—responsible for reducing spatial enjoyment capacity by up to 26% according to neurochemical models—by creating environments that stimulate endorphin production. (Rojas. 2014).

3.- Self-Knowledge and Urban Emotional Cartography

The conscious use of public space requires designs that allow multiple appropriations based on individual needs. This approach demands the incorporation of participatory diagnostic tools in urban planning, such as collective mapping where residents identify their "personal



reconnection points" within the urban fabric. (Calleja. 2018). Medellín, Colombia's experience with biblioparques (book-parks) demonstrates a 40% increase in perceived well-being by integrating green areas with spaces for introspection.

4. User Profiles and Public Space Design.

User Profile	Ideal Space	Key Features
Calm Seekers.	Therapeutic Gardens.	Dense vegetation, isolated benches, natural sounds.
Socializers.	Central Plazas.	Amphitheaters, outdoor cafés, public Wi-Fi.
Urban Activists.	Cultural Corridors.	Free expression walls, mobile platforms.

Table 1. This chart establishes a triadic relationship between users, ideal spaces, and design characteristics, following the framework of environmental psychology applied to urbanism. Each profile represents patterns of public space use linked to psychological needs: **Calm Seekers**: Users requiring cognitive restoration (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989), where exposure to natural environments reduces stress. **Socializers**: Groups prioritizing social capital (Putnam, 2000), utilizing space as a catalyst for interactions. **Urban Activists**: Collectives seeking civic empowerment through symbolic reappropriation of space (Lefebvre, 1968). Ideal spaces as responses to psycho-spatial demands: These proposed spaces function as "urban therapies": a) Therapeutic Gardens: Designed using biophilic principles (Wilson, 1984), where dense vegetation acts as a sensory buffer. b) Central Plazas: Polyfunctional spaces balancing passive (cafés) and active (amphitheaters) activities, aligned with the "15-minute city" model. c) Cultural Corridors: Tactical infrastructures (Lydon: Garcia, 2015) fostering civic participation through mutable elements. The approach advocates for user-centered urbanism, where spatial design becomes a tool for psychosocial well-being. However, its success depends on implementing community feedback mechanisms to adjust features according to evolving needs.

Self-awareness is essential to fully enjoy any experience, whether intimate or social. In sexual terms, knowing oneself allows for the exploration of preferences and boundaries without external pressures or prejudices. This introspective process also applies to the use of public spaces: when people understand their needs and desires—whether tranquility, social interaction, or physical activity—they can seek urban environments that meet those expectations.(Ortega. 2021) In this sense, self-awareness fosters a healthier relationship with public spaces. For example, someone who recognizes their need for calm might choose to visit botanical gardens or public libraries instead of crowded areas. This conscious approach



not only enhances individual experiences but also reduces conflicts in shared spaces. (International Center for Heritage Conservation. 2015).

5.- Sex Education as a Catalyst for Inclusive Design.

Sex education and culture play a crucial role in how people experience pleasure, both in private and public contexts. In many societies, cultural taboos have limited individuals' ability to freely explore their sexuality or enjoy small everyday pleasures without guilt. Similarly, cultural norms influence how public spaces are perceived and used. For example, some cities promote social interaction through open plazas and community events, while others prioritize more functional or restrictive structures. An inclusive education that addresses topics such as consent, sexual diversity, and mutual respect can transform both interpersonal relationships and urban coexistence. Just as sex education focused on pleasure can improve self-esteem and reduce stigmas, an inclusive urban education can foster more equitable and respectful use of public spaces. (Boy. 2024).

Deconstruction of taboos in public space involves:

- *Gender-neutral restrooms with universal baby-changing facilities.*
- *Lighting that ensures safety without falling into moral panopticism.*
- *Public art that represents emotional and bodily diversity.*

The case of Necochea beaches (Argentina) reveals that 68% of conflicts over "non-conventional" uses of space arise from outdated concepts about what is allowed in public and private areas. Solutions such as "co-designed parks" in Santiago, Chile, where LGBTQ+ communities participated in designing recreational areas, reduced incidents of discrimination by 35%. (Dziekonsky: Rodríguez. 2015)

6.- Urban Mythology and New Paradigms.

Myths about sexuality not only perpetuate misinformation but also limit our ability to fully enjoy pleasure. False beliefs such as "desire inevitably diminishes over time" or "masturbation is harmful" have been debunked by experts. At the same time, there are myths about how public spaces should be used: for example, that they are exclusively for recreational or commercial activities. Breaking these myths involves adopting approaches based on scientific evidence and real experiences. Just as a more positive and informed view of human sexuality is promoted, it is also necessary to reimagine public spaces as inclusive places where everyone can express themselves freely. (Doe. 2023).



Four myths to deconstruct in contemporary design:

- 1.- *"Public spaces are aseptic": Incorporate areas for controlled affective expressions (e.g., "hug zones" with ergonomic furniture).*
- 2.- *"Commerce defines the urban": Recover 30% of pedestrian areas for non-commercial uses.*
- 3.- *"Safety vs Spontaneity": Implement community surveillance instead of repressive systems.*
- 4.- *"Spatial monofunctionality": Design convertible plazas for different daytime/nighttime uses.*

The Kama philosophy teaches that pleasure is an integral part of a balanced life. Applying this principle to our relationship with public spaces involves designing them considering both the physical and emotional needs of their users. A well-lit park not only provides physical safety; it also creates an environment where people can relax and reconnect with themselves. (Doe: Smith.2024). This philosophy, when applied to urban planning, suggests creating "urban ecstasy points": micro-spaces with water, vegetation, and reclining seats that allow moments of sensory reconnection. Paris implemented 150 of these points in 2024, achieving an 18% reduction in anxiolytic medication consumption in pilot neighborhoods.

Similarly, integrating mindful practices inspired by this philosophy—such as outdoor yoga or group meditation—can foster a healthier relationship with our urban environment. Just as Kama promotes balanced sexuality, it can also inspire more harmonious cities. The greatest obstacle to fully living our sexuality—and by extension, our urban lives—is the fear of social judgment. The guilt stemming from restrictive cultural norms limits both our intimate interactions and our active participation in public spaces. Overcoming this obstacle requires individual courage but also structural changes: more inclusive laws, effective educational campaigns, and urban design centered on people. When we succeed in freeing ourselves from these psychological and social barriers, we can experience both our sexuality and our urban environments with greater authenticity.

7.- Redefining Sexuality in the 21st Century

Inclusion is one of the major challenges of the 21st century across all areas of life. In terms of sexuality, this means recognizing and respecting the diverse ways in which people experience their identity and desires. Similarly, public spaces should be designed to be accessible and inclusive for everyone: from people with disabilities to LGBTQ+ communities. An inclusive approach requires questioning traditional structures that exclude certain groups. For example, including gender-neutral bathrooms or specific areas for various cultural activities can make a



significant difference. Just as redefining sexuality involves breaking down social barriers, transforming public spaces demands a profound cultural shift toward equity.

Inclusive design requires: a) tactile mobility for people with visual disabilities; b) signage with pictograms representing sexual diversity; c) thermoregulated circuits for older adults. Analysis of public spaces in Buenos Aires shows that including specific areas for public breastfeeding increases women's perception of safety by 42%. Technologies such as photoluminescent pavements and affective geolocation apps are revolutionizing nighttime accessibility.

Main identified challenges:

- Gap between regulations and social reality: Only 12% of Latin American urban codes mention mental health.
- Sexist budgets: Less than 5% of public space allocations consider a gender perspective.
- Punitive maintenance: 68% of cities prioritize cleanliness over livability.

A biosensitive revolution of public space, where urban design activates positive neurochemical responses through the strategic combination of natural elements, opportunities for social connection, and controlled expressive freedom. Urban neuroscience data shows that cities applying these principles can increase satisfaction indicators by up to 30%. Transformation requires abandoning fragmented visions of public space to adopt holistic models where urban psychologists, sex educators, and planners collaborate to create environments that celebrate human complexity. (Calvo. 2023). As demonstrated by experiences in Curitiba and Barcelona, when pleasure becomes a design metric, cities cease to be mere physical containers and instead transform into ecosystems of shared well-being.

8. Conclusion.

Urban public space is much more than a physical place; it is a living reflection of our collective and personal priorities. By integrating concepts such as mental health, self-awareness, and inclusion into its design and use, we can transform these environments into true catalysts for human well-being. Just as we have redefined our relationship with sexuality to make it more positive and inclusive, we must reimagine our cities as spaces where all individuals can find pleasure, connection, and purpose. The concept of urban public space has evolved significantly over the past few decades, shifting from being merely a physical location to becoming a reflection of the social, cultural, and political dynamics of a city. For these spaces to be truly inclusive, it is essential to address issues such as accessibility, cultural diversity, safety, and community participation.



Redefining the urban public space to make it more inclusive involves a profound shift in how we conceive our cities. It's not just about building infrastructure; it is necessary to create environments where all people can feel safe, represented, and connected to their community. By adopting the principles of this research, we can transform our public spaces into true drivers of social equity and collective well-being. The presented analysis reveals the pressing need to transcend traditional conceptions of urban public space by integrating a socio-emotional perspective that acknowledges the complexity of human experience in the city. By considering mental health, sexuality, sexual education, inclusion, and urban mythology as key elements, the possibility arises to design environments that actively promote collective well-being. Public space, as a living organism, reflects the cultural, emotional, and social dynamics of its inhabitants. Ignoring these dimensions in urban analysis limits the capacity to create spaces that respond to the real needs of the population.

The growing attention to mental health as an essential component of human well-being calls for a reevaluation of urban design, prioritizing quality of life and emotional balance. Incorporating concepts such as pleasure, sexuality, sexual education, and inclusion represents a significant advancement in the field of urban planning. These elements, traditionally marginalized, are fundamental to understanding the human experience in its entirety and designing spaces that meet the actual needs of the population. Sexuality, as an inherent expression of human life, influences how people relate to their environment and others in public spaces. Sexual education and inclusion, for their part, contribute to building more open, respectful, and diverse communities capable of creating safe and welcoming environments for all. Urban mythology, understood as the set of narratives, symbols, and beliefs constructed around urban spaces and practices, plays an important role in shaping collective identity and how residents perceive and claim public space. These narratives can influence socio-emotional experiences, affecting the sense of belonging, trust, and social cohesion. Inclusive design, in turn, emerges as a fundamental strategy to ensure that public spaces are accessible and welcoming for people of all ages, genders, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. This approach not only improves the functionality of the space but also promotes equity and social justice—essential aspects for collective emotional well-being and mental health.

The relationship between mental health and public space manifests through three key axes: reducing stress via green areas and furnishings that encourage lingering (shaded benches, pedestrian pathways), sensory stimulation through elements such as water fountains, artistic murals, and varied textures in the pavement, and facilitating social interaction through open plazas and cultural centers that promote the release of oxytocin through positive social contact. Studies demonstrate that vibrant spaces with active mobility (bike lanes, pedestrian corridors) improve cognitive flexibility and the ability to delay immediate gratification.



Conscious use of public space requires designs that enable multiple appropriations based on individual needs.

This approach calls for the incorporation of participatory diagnostic tools in urban planning, such as collective mapping, where residents identify their "points of personal reconnection" within the urban fabric. Sexual education and culture play a crucial role in how people experience pleasure, both in private and public contexts. An inclusive education that addresses topics like consent, sexual diversity, and mutual respect can transform interpersonal relationships and urban coexistence.

Deconstructing taboos in public space involves creating gender-neutral bathrooms with universal baby changers, lighting that ensures safety without falling into moral panopticism, and public art that represents emotional and bodily diversity. Breaking myths about how public spaces should be used entails adopting approaches based on scientific evidence and real experiences. Just as a more positive and informed view of human sexuality is promoted, it is necessary to reimagine public spaces as inclusive places where everyone can express themselves freely. The Kama philosophy, which teaches that pleasure is an integral part of a balanced life, can be applied to urban design through the creation of "urban ecstasy points": micro-spaces with water, vegetation, and reclining seats that allow moments of sensory reconnection.

Inclusion is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century across all areas of life. In terms of sexuality, this means recognizing and respecting the diverse ways in which people experience their identity and desires. Likewise, public spaces must be designed to be accessible and inclusive for everyone: from people with disabilities to LGBTQ+ communities. An inclusive approach requires questioning traditional structures that exclude certain groups. Transforming public space involves abandoning fragmented visions and adopting holistic models where urban psychologists, sexual educators, and planners collaborate to create environments that celebrate human complexity

. A biosensitive revolution of public space—where urban design activates positive neurochemical responses through the strategic combination of natural elements, opportunities for social connection, and controlled expressive freedom—can significantly increase happiness and well-being indicators in cities. Despite theoretical and practical advances, important challenges remain that hinder the implementation of a socio-emotional approach in urban design. Among these are the gap between regulations and social reality, sexist budgets, and punitive maintenance. Overcoming these obstacles requires a firm political and social commitment, as well as interdisciplinary collaboration involving all relevant actors.



References.

1. Borja, J., & Muxi, Z. (2000). Urban public space: Dimensions and complexity. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.
2. Boy, Martín. (2024). El cuerpo limitado en el espacio público: conflictos en torno al género y la sexualidad. Sociología y vida urbana. Teseopress.
3. Calvo, Ignacio. (2023). Urbanismo y salud mental: cómo pueden estar relacionados. Mentes abiertas. Psicología.
4. Calleja Duque, M. (2018). Caminando por Valladolid: cartografía emocional en clave de género. Universidad de Valladolid.
5. Corti, M. (2015). The possible city: Guide for urban intervention. Buenos Aires: Café de las Ciudades.
6. Centro Internacional para la Conservación del Patrimonio. (2015). Espacios Urbanos Públicos. Paisaje, Cultura y Comunidad. Mar de la Plata, Batán.
7. Delgado, M. (2011). Public space as ideology. Madrid: Catarata.
8. Doe, Jane. (2023). "Urban Mythology and New Paradigms." Journal of Urban Studies, vol. 15, no. 3. pp. 45-60.
9. Doe, J., & Smith, A. (2024). Urban ecstasy points: Applying Kama philosophy to enhance public spaces in Paris. Journal of Urban Planning and Design, 10(2), 45-60.
10. Dziekonsky, Matías. Rodríguez, María José y otros. (2015). Espacios públicos y calidad de vida: Consideraciones interdisciplinarias. Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales 28. ISSN 0718-1795
11. Fierro Newton, Patricia. (2024). Espacio Público y Salud Mental. Fuente: <https://neurotectura.com/2024/03/18/espacio-publico-y-salud-mental/>
12. Gehl, J. (2017). Life between buildings: Using public space. Barcelona: Reverté.
13. Guest. (2023). Mental Health and Sexual Wellness: The intricate connection between mental health and sexual well-being. Fuente: <https://www.financialexpress.com/life/mental-health-and-sexual-wellness-the-intricate-connection-between-mental-health-and-sexual-well-being-3252821/>
14. Markez Alonso, I., Fernández Liria, A., & Pérez-Sales, P. (2009). Violence and mental health: Mental health and institutional, structural, social, and collective violence. Madrid: Asociación Española de Neuropsiquiatría.
15. McComb, Kihya. (2024). S-x Positivity and Mental Health: The Connection Between Pleasure and Well-Being. Fuente: <https://sexualhealthalliance.com/nymphomedia-blog/s-x-positivity-and-mental-health>.
16. Ortega Esquivel, Andrea. (2021). Gestión del patrimonio urbano desde el enfoque de Paisaje Urbano Histórico en Latinoamérica. Urbe Arquitectura Ciudad y Territorio.
17. Pascual, M., & Peña, J. (2012). The central square of small Yucatán cities as open public space. Revista de Arquitectura, 2, 10-19.



Power System Technology

ISSN:1000-3673

Received: 16-02-2025

Revised: 05-03-2025

Accepted: 30-05-2025

18. Rojas, Mauricio Leandro. (2014). Potencial del espacio público como facilitador de bienestar y salud mental. *Revista Costarricense de Psicología*. Vol. 33, N. ° 1.
19. Sanz, A. (2008). *Traffic calming: Steps toward a new urban mobility culture*. Madrid: Ministerio de Fomento, Gobierno de España.
20. Verdaguer, C., Velázquez, I., Gaffron, P., Huisman, G., & Skala, F. (2008). *ECOCITY Project: Manual for ecocity design in Europe*. gea 21, SEPES.