Transforming the Concept of Public Space and Its Impact on Space Experience in the City of Esfahan

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Abstract

Urban planning and new management practices have transformed the use of public spaces in many countries. However, disillusions and failure to provide local values highly affect the forms of these areas. This article considers the dynamism and user's preferences of such spaces, studying the transformation of public spaces, new business centers, and their impacts on the experience of space users. Esfahan is considered as a city with a rapidly expanding economy, although public spaces thereof have largely failed to meet the people's requirements. This study seeks to answer the questions regarding the concepts of public spaces, criticisms on the emergence of public spaces, and their effects on the experience of the citizens. Accordingly, modernist and capitalist-inspired approaches have created meaningless and unfriendly spaces with no role in the experience of space users. Based on the literature review, and the in-depth interviews conducted in 4 urban spaces in Esfahan, this study considered the elements of space domination, space ownership, (with public and private boundaries), use of space and agency in space, and provided a proper understanding of the role of urban design in enhancing the collective experience of space users, which could help public spaces encounter various challenges. According to this study, a leading urban design approach is to be pursued, if the public spaces are to meet the requirements of the citizens and remain in the collective experience of users.

Keywords: Public Space; Urban Experience; User Experience; Commercial Spaces, Esfahan.

1. Introduction

The role of cities in the national and international economies, as well as their organized forms, have been evolved due to structural changes in the technological and economic arrangements. Different developments have changed the spatial and social relationship of urban areas. Financial changes have modified the manner of the life and work of the urban population. Thus, environmental deteriorations need further actions in this respect. Changes have directly affected different particulars of public space including the social, environmental, and economic issues by fascinating the population and providing the interactions between individuals.

Madanipour (2019), According to Habermas (1989) and Arendt (1998), the political, economic, and cultural significances of the public space were recognized in the past eras. As Agora in Athens is often mentioned as the prototype of the democratic public space, although spaces for some form of collective communication can be found in all cultures. There is almost always a reference to this prototype in the literature as the ideal model towards which the modern public space should aspire, even if the scale and size of our cities mean that these processes take place in many different forums and no longer in a single central place. Democracy has long been based on the idea of an active public sphere, in which citizens can participate, communicate freely, and develop opinions about the affairs of their society, enabling them to make informed decisions in democratic governance. Regarding the physical and institutional bases, public space has gained a much more extensive significance. "A gap, therefore, exists between the idealized image of an integrated society with public spaces at its heart, such as the agora in polis, the ancient city-state, and the modern global urban conditions, with completely different scales and forums." (Madanipour, 2019). The literature regarding the public space proceeds sentimentally to utilize the old images to judge different conditions.

The execution of current decisions regarding the spatial planning and management activities that arrange the urban growth as well as the social and economic activities in that respect has prompted radical moves about public

areas in numerous urban spaces. In this regard, Mandeli (2019) states that "As happened in cities of the developed world, public urban spaces within emerging economies have radically changed through fluctuating political, economic and cultural situations altering their organization and functions." He continues that "Framing the socio-spatial condition of meta-public space since the appearance of modern shopping centers, the relationship between conception (planning, implementation, and management) and experience (perception and everyday life routines and actions) has been central to the urban discourse. Particularly relevant, in the literature on the recent development of cities, is the growing standing of spaces of consumption in social, spatial, cultural and legal fields." According to Carmona (2015), "A more balanced view of public space is required, one that recognizes the multiple complex types, roles, and audiences for public spaces in cities today." The importance of this study is developed where the experts such as Madanipour raises the questions in his article "What are the reasons for a new emphasis on the public space? By examining our contemporary urban spaces and how we approach them, can we open a window into our current society?" (Madanpour, 2019).

Esfahan among other cities in Iran was considered as a case study for changing the features of public areas. There seem to be contradictions regarding the design, planning as well as management deficiencies brought up in the newly constructed areas. These areas have altered the spatial and the social factors and changed the cultural attitudes of the urban area, and disposed of the feeling of urban experience. Moreover, they have established futile areas and brought up the sense regarding how the requirements of the citizens are met.

This study aimed to assess the public areas to find the explanation regarding the recognition of the idea for the concepts of public urban areas.

This article also deals with the daily utilized public spaces based on the scale of Esfahan City, including the existing commercial areas and "private" public spaces including the shopping malls. This shows how public spaces in Esfahan have changed drastically in recent decades and how this reflects wider changes in Iran(Similar studies in Iran"s urban space Sattarzadeh (2018), Pakzad (2017)).

This article is about the theoretical discussions regarding the concepts of public space and its complexities in Esfahan, based on the following issues.

1) What concepts have the nature of public spaces in the cities?
2) In what areas is the decline or criticism of contemporary urban spaces?
3) To what extent did emerging public spaces in Esfahan act as an example of an Iranian city that met the needs, and expectations of its residents?
4) How do citizens experience the emerging commercial spaces in the city? Can a specific form of urban experience be mentioned?

This study deals with the concepts of public space and its impact on urban experience and the quality of life in Esfahan, as a city in the rapidly growing economy.

Moreover, it is argued that public space provision should go beyond functional functionalism and urban spaces should be created to affect the shared experiences for space users. A qualitative approach was conducted through the in-depth interviews to discover the urban experiences while evaluating the collective perceptions of key stakeholders on the quality of space provision in Esfahan. The interviews took place in 4 selected urban spaces, 2 of which are commercial public spaces (Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. and Imam Ali Sq.) and the other 2 spaces (Arg-Jahan Nama and City Center spaces), as the pseudo-public spaces, according to the primary assumptions. These selected areas for covering a more complete spectrum of the users in diverse urban spaces were analyzed to identify the experience of people in urban spaces, and the extracted codes were used to identify the new and effective concepts in the experience. The comparison of the urban experience in these 4 spaces and 4 types of bodies is beyond the scope of this study.

2. Theoretical Principle

Industrial Revolution changed the shape of old towns in the Western cities and also altered the nature of the social environment, people's experience of the public domains, and all the aspects of their lives. Alterations grew larger cities with heterogeneous populations and broke down the spatial and social aspects in the urban areas (Mandeli, 2019). According to a study by Gehl & Svarre (2013), different approaches to housing constructions and transportation management were considered after the Second World War, establishing extensive changes in the urban landscapes and the public realm. Thus, due to no proper potentials in facilitating the social interactions and functions, the public spaces underwent changes, which led to the loss of historic roles of the urban areas (Mandeli, 2019 quotes Hall, 2002). The other cause of deteriorating the situations of public areas was improper financial conditions, inappropriate management, and lack of sufficient power to deal with the enlargement of the cities and increased urban residents. Improper management deteriorated social life and depleted the urban type of living. In this respect, Carmona (2010) indicated that the public areas with fewer social activities could bring indifference towards social life.

According to Kirby and Glavac (2012), the financial crisis in the 1970s, insufficient income of the local or national authorities, lack of proper planning, and inappropriate urban facilities caused the privatization of public organizations, which led to the deterioration of welfare and improper access to public goods. According to Banerjee and Loukaitou-Sideris (1992), the enhanced capacity of the private sector since the 1980s in the urban administration of most North American cities has caused more collaborations between private and public sectors. (Mandeli 2019; Banerjee, 2001) Globalization led to extensive increments in urban populaces since 2000, which brought profound modifications like public spaces towards de-industrialization and unification with a worldwide economy. It is to note that financial

development is somewhat regarded before the environmental and social-cultural concerns.

Based on Madanipour (2014), the urban design focuses on the advancement of the quality of urban space to help retailing and tourism purposes. Urban living spaces have changed for the new urban situations and retaining productive interests in city improvements. According to Friedmann (2002), most of the urban areas can be considered for new investments and gaining financial profits (Mandeli, 2019 quotes Friedmann, 2002)

According to the now popularized theory advanced by British sociologist Anthony Giddens, what characterizes modernity, and perhaps more accurately late modernity in his terminology is the separation of space from a place (Jacobsen 2001 quoted by Giddens 1990).

Although places create responsibility and a sense of belonging in people, non-places develop individualism.

The emergence of a new form of urban space dominated by large-scale analytical spaces, spaces termed anti-space, pseudo-spaces, and displacements, etc. have influenced the concepts of public space and the form of people's experience in these spaces. These aspects are included in what we have encountered in the city of Esfahan as an emerging phenomenon. The most recent advancement of the commercial areas considered in this study has contributed to the required expansions as compared to the past: the segmentation of public space and the polarization of social infrastructure in fragmented locales either produced through tabula rasa urban renewal processes or unrelenting growths of unbounded fabrics of disjointed domesticities. Several studies in this regard have focused on the effects on public life and everyday practices.

2.1. Nature of public spaces

Several social attempts are done to show the concept of "public", which indicates "everyone" in theory. However, it practically has tended towards a definition, without considering the decent variety of community and requirements of the individuals. According to the researchers, changed organization the urban area can specify changes in the social and economic issues (Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1991 According to Madanipour (2019), The public space has become a subject of growing academic, professional, and public interest, as reflected in a growing literature (Madanipour ,2019 quotes Carmona et al. 2008; De Souza et al. 2012; Hou 2010; Low and Smith 2006; Orum and Zachary 2010; Parkinson 2012; Sadeh 2010; Watson 2006). Creating new, and upgrading the existing public spaces has been broadly considered by various strategists and civil engineering experts, who have agreements about the considered advantages. According to Madanipour (2019), urban design is greatly related to the public space.

Urban areas in the preindustrial era provided encouragement for commercial activities, required interactions, and friendliness allocated to every urban area (mandeli 2017 quoted from Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992). They argue that present urbanization, i.e.

impartation of urban characteristics demonstrates rigorous changes to the public areas after the Industrial Revolution in the developing as well as the developed nations.

Hannah Arendt (1958: 50-52) states that the human condition showed how public space reveals socialism and expressed that two important features exist for the public areas, the first of which is includes whatever that can be heard, seen, or accessed by everyone, in so that one could claim that the public universe is potentially a good place for the alleviation of injustice and inequality. The second feature indicates that the public world is a social world that we share with others which is distinguishable from the private world(Manfredini,2017 quotes Arendt)

According to the review of literature, there is agreement on the advantages of the public areas, causing it a prosperous subject for the urban designers and other specialists, and it was quoted in the New Urban Agenda at the Habitat III Conference in Quito (October 2016) that public spaces are considered as the central elements of the social and economic developments of the cities (Mehaffy, Elmlund, & Farrell, 2019).

In his study, Madanipour (2019) investigated different transitional processes, including political, economic and cultural transformation, and the gaps between rhetoric and reality in feature of public spaces. He considered four reasons of interest in the public areas, consisting of the changing balance between the public and private sectors, structural economic changes that cause the urban transformations, technological changes that disperse the space of cities, and the diversification of the urban population. Studies on the physiological and social features indicate their advantages over other public facilities. "Quality" is considered in the public realm by the experts. In this regard, Carmona, de-Magalhaes and Hammond (2008) suggest several qualities of the public spaces, which include tangibility (e.g. better maintenance), intangibility (e.g. environments encouraging diverse user groups), and desirability (Mandeli, 2019).

The reasons for more popularity of some urban areas indicate accessibility as the key feature for the public space. According to a study, the more accessible a place, the more public it becomes. Access is not abstract and universal, but an expression of relationships between people, between power and control over territory, an interplay of inclusion and exclusion. So, it always takes different forms and levels, and that is why a city is full of shades of public–private relations, from the most public to the most private places. The boundaries that separate the public and private spheres from one another, manage this access, and in doing so they characterize a society (Madanipour, 2019). According to Heffernan, Heffernan, and Pan (2014), attracting points of public areas include: accessibility, activity, comfort, liveliness and sociability.

Carmona (2019) states that "Planning authorities should not only consider the number of public spaces they create, but also the unique requirements of different places, avoiding a one-size-fits-all policy."

It is argued that the success of a public urban space depends on the comprehensive attitude for the urban

quality and not to consider the simplified arrangements and standards (Gehl & Svarre, 2013). Public space dynamism requires multidimensional approaches and the effective qualities taken in that regard (Banerjee, 2001; Lang, 2017). Accordingly, the elements that form and affect the urban design should be thoroughly considered. Identification, distinction, naming, recognition, connection and ownership of places are the elements to be considered. This threatens traditional developments of collective forms of interpretation, elaboration and development of experiences of places that constitute identity and a sense of belonging, substantiating personal and communal biographies and narratives.

Jon Goss has described these places as dreamhouses of the collectivity: repositories of cultural images of utopia that mirror a regime in which "the collective dream of authentic life is not expressed in the political process but is distorted by ideology and harnessed to commodity consumption." (Nas, 2012) Social dimensions in the case of public spaces are quite important for which the expanded as well as virtual realities maintain individual interactions in concurrent or non-concurrent manners.

The explicit point about the digital era is the transformation of the shopping malls in scale as well as quality to provide the requirements of the public. This idea has become possible by establishing hypermarkets with required features. Hyper-intervened conditions make phenomenal spatial assortment, and the increased type of Foucauldian heterotopias of juxtaposition.

These places are made into conventional spatial-fleeting streams through conceiving and access from times and places, causing another peculiar type of Foucault's different spot, i.e. the heterotopia of imaginations. This is the spot wherein standardization leaves space to its inverse: disruption, heterogeneity and abundance.

2.2. *Changing nature of public spaces*

The dominant hypothesis and paradigm regarding the emergence of new spaces is that according to Jacobsen (2001: 30) "When non-places proliferate and hereby cause a simultaneous decline in public places, people tend to develop antisocial attitudes and when places turn into empty spaces and non-places. In this way, non-places erode places potentially utilized by people in order to gather, to interact and to communicate in a face-to-face manner and creates insurmountable barriers and obstacles for human intimacy and proximity." In another part of his book, Jacobsen states, "In real public places you can enter freely and leave whenever you feel like it, but in heterotopic[1] non-places are the ones that require permissions" (Jacobsen 2001: 44).

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[1] The new supermodern non-places are therefore not utopias as the modernist urban spaces strived to be, but more aptly described as so-called heterotopias. Foucault described such places from five principles governing their spatial as well as symbolic characteristics and particularly the fifth of these is very informative in this connection. He said that "in general, the heterotopic sites is not freely accessible like a public place…To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures" (Jacobsen 2001: 44)

All types of public areas have faced transformations in forming the important components of developing the urban plans. This has enhanced the public area quality in absorbing numerous new users. Improving plans have recovered conventional spaces, making new ones intended to get new speculation by means of the travel industry by drawing in private instead of open organizations (Carmona, 2019; Madanipour, 2019). Developments in the market are subject to the space requirements, which is considered as the inseparable part of economic sector. Mandeli (2019) According to Cuthbert (2003: 6), "This measure will underwrite the shape of the urban environment in the developed world well into the foreseeable future."

Considering that urban areas can increase the required values and potentials, urban authorities have insisted on the new high qualities to develop competitive promoting urban images. According to a study by Manfredini (2017), "Towards ambiguous territorialities, interpreting the meta-publicness of the new civic megamall as a combination of the ambivalences in socioeconomic (augmented presumption) and socio-spatial (augmented transduction) relations, the question of the effectiveness of its political agency arises. The core of the question is whether this condition has an impact on the quality of life for all, improving the limits of accessibility and inclusion that have characterized the pseudo-interaction of the quasi-publicness of the other mall types. A peculiar characteristic of meta-publicness is its openness and capacity to make permeable and productive the boundaries between the territories controlled by various actors. The openness of territories recombines the forms of their identification, appropriation and association, disempowering the dominating external forces and empowering the locale. In Lefebvrian terms, this new condition strengthens differential and distinctive forces over the abstractive and homogenizing ones, making difference emerge.

The difference, as continuous proliferation and transformation of territories is granted by presuming transduction augmentations that give form to modern heterotopias of juxtaposition and illusion. The difference emerges from effectively engaged people in multiple socio-spatially networked contexts supported by spatial embodiments of the digital public sphere through mediations and interconnections of material and virtual platforms and communication flows" (Manfredini, 2017).

Based on various studies, functional and entertaining areas, as for the urbanization point of view, play an important and widespread role for the public spaces. Urban considerations insist on this potential to have a competitive role among the urban residents for revitalization of the community. It is also acting as a connecting tool between the private areas (Fainstein and Gladstone, 1997; Hill, 2000; Low and Smith, 2006; Smyth, 1994)(Carmona, 2015).

Based on the review of literature, a scope of repeated scrutinizes argue different views about the public space, which are outlined in other studies and are not within the scope of this article (Carmona, 2010a, 2010b; see likewise

Table 1). Shifting boundaries are perhaps the primary reason for the rising concern for public spaces lies in the changing relationship between the public and private spheres; that urban spaces are increasingly produced and managed by private agents for private use. As a critical response, it has been argued that public spaces should be produced and managed by the public authorities (Madanipour 2003). Spatial fragmentation and dispersion are considered as the third important reason for giving prominence to public spaces is the problem of urban spatial fragmentation and dispersion, which has had social and environmental consequences (Madanipour , 2019).

The fourth dimension regarding the social critiques of the present rhetoric aspects for the public areas is whether the provision of public spaces takes into account and responds to the problems of inequality, vulnerability and exclusion, or it contributes to them by becoming a vehicle of gentrification and a barrier to access. The rhetoric of the public space as a space of interaction has remained, but it has become increasingly an instrument of attraction, at the service of unequally distributed economic interests. If there are strong social and economic reasons for paying attention to the public space (Madanipour, 2019).

According to the above, there are three principles in the transformation of urban areas, as follows (Carmona, 2010; Landman, 2016; Madanipour, 2019):

1) Fragmentation of urban area and deterioration of the public space;
2) Privatization of the public space;
3) Renaissance of such spaces.

Criticisms have been made for the design, progress, and management of the present-day public areas, regarding the indication of the following items (table 1):

- Neglected space: neglecting public space, both physically and in the face of market forces
- Invaded space: sacrificing public space to the needs of the car, effectively allowing movement needs to usurp social ones
- Exclusionary space: allowing physical and psychological barriers (fear of "the other") to dominate public space design and management strategies
- Consumption space: failing to address the relentless commodification of public space
- Privatised space: allowing public space to be privatised, with knock-on impacts on political debate and social exclusion
- Segregated space: reflecting the desire of affluent groups in many societies to separate themselves from the rest of society, reflecting a fear of crime or simply the desire to be exclusive
- Insular space: failing to halt a more general retreat from public space into domestic and virtual realms
- Invented space: condoning the spread of a placeless, formula-driven entertainment space
- Scary space: where crime, and more often fear of crime, are allowed to dominate the design management and perceptions of place
- Homogenised space: generally presiding over a homogenisation of the public built environment in the face of the relentless forces of globalisation, over-regulation and the claims culture (Carmona, 2015)

Table 1
The Critiques for public space in the literature

Critique	Discussed in
Neglected space	Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Loukaitou-Sideris 1996; Roberts and Turner 2005; Trancik 1986; Tibbalds 2001; Worpole and Knox 2007; Worpole 1999
Invaded space	Buchanan 1988; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000; Ford 2000; Garreau 1991; Gehl and Gemzoe 2000; Graham and Marvin 2001; Lefebvre 1991; Llewelyn-Davies 2000
Exclusionary space	Engwicht 1999; Gehl 1996; Whyte 1980, 1988; Hall and Imrie 1999; Imrie and Hall 2001; Johns 2001; Lofland 1998; Lang 1994; Malone 2002
Consumption space	Boyer 1994; Carmona et al. 2003; Hajer and Reijndorp 2001; Mattson 1999; Sorkin 1992
Privatised space	Boyer 1993; Ellin 1999; Kohn 2004; Low and Smith 2005; Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998; Mandanipour 2003; Minton 2006; Nemeth and Schmidt 2011
Segregated space	Boddy 1992; Blakely and Snyder 1997; Bentley 1999; Low and Smith 2005; Miethe, 1995; Oc and Tiesdell 1997; Sennett 1977; Webster 2001
Insular space	Aurigi 2005; Banerjee 2001; Castells 1996; Ellin 1996; Graham and Marvin 1999; Mitchell 1995; Oldenburg, 1999; Sassen 1994
Invented space	Crang 1998; New Economics Foundation 2004; Sircus 2001; Wilson 1995; Yang 2006; Zukin 1995
Scary space	Atkinson 2003; Davies 1992; Ellickson 1996; Fyfe 1998; Jacobs 1961; Kilian 1998; Kohn 2004; Lynch and Carr 1991; Mitchell 1995; Murphy 2001; Minton 2009; Welsh and Farrington 2002
Homogenised space	Beck 1992; Boyer 1994; Bentley 1999; CABE 2007; Carmona 2001; Fainstein 2001; Goldsteen and Elliott 1994; Light and Smith 1998; Sennett 1990

Source: Carmona, 2015

Further involvements includes linking of private public areas to shopping centers, chambers, squares, roads, films, sections through private structures, diversion settings, private advancements and office parks (Landman, 2016). Although most developers and architects resent Municipality control, open areas within sites provide attractive backdrops for business and commercial spaces above public amenities. Owners want environments that shoppers and patrons find visually pleasant and well-structured, while providing a comfortable commercial atmosphere (Mandeli, 2019). Shopping centers are utilized as public areas that are owned by the private sector and large shopping centers are used as recreational spaces that replace markets. Public areas have been transformed to indoor, regulated, and accessible areas, which the public spaces used to lack.

2.3. Conceptual framework

A critical study was conducted to analyze the theoretical frameworks for the production and administration of public spaces. Books, articles and previous research and extracted the main implications of public spaces and urban experiences are used in this study.
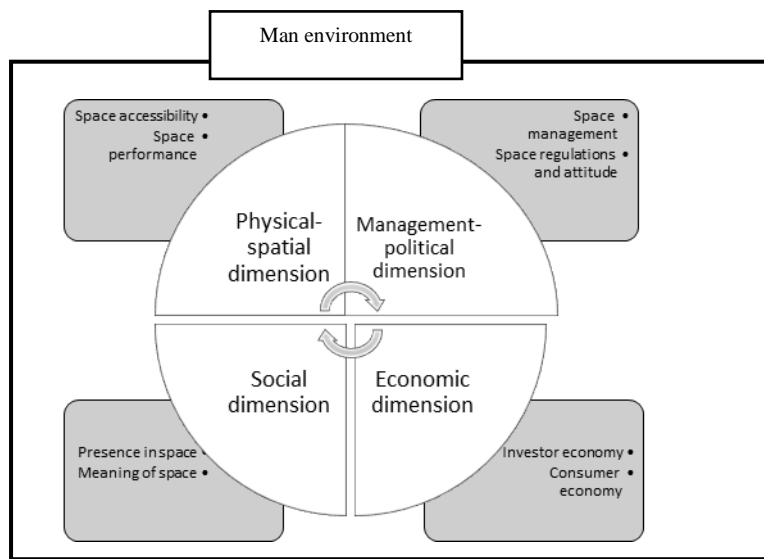

Fig. 1. First level of the effective dimensions on the public space experience
(Source: Author based on a summary of the literature)

Moreover, the literature regarding the public area confirms that the challenged idea of contemporary public area is influenced by the complex social and economic as well as political aspects, by which it is formed(See Figure 1 as a summary of the studies.) Albeit a significant part of the consideration focuses on a uniformity in the experience of public areas to its physical diminishing and to privatization, commercialization and exclusion, it can be said that the required literature is derived from the studies fulfilled on the narrow types of public spaces (significantly the shopping centers), but it does not consider the contemporary urban areas or political economies existing in the cities all over the world. Moreover, this study was to recognize different situations, including the failure or success of the urban spaces, as well as in-depth perception by the partners and the contexts considered at first place for the required urban center constructions. The new markets have undergone the differentiation process of urban structures, everyday interactions, social relations and ordinary acts of neighborhood networks, supporting the dynamic disintegration of open space and the tenacious privatization of the urban views.

Since the changes of physical and spatial dimensions affect the metamorphosis of the public space and required experiences and also because of the limitations of this article, we shall investigate the effects of another three dimensions "political dimension of space management, economic dimension, and socio-cultural dimension" (See Figure 2 as a summary of the factors affecting urban space. In this study, the individual factors of users are not considered)**.**
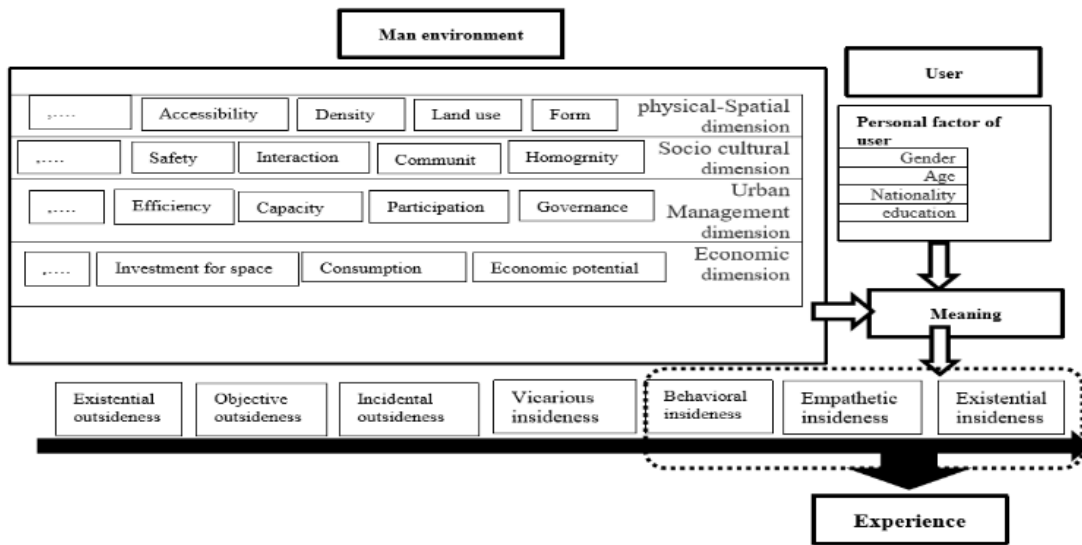
Fig. 2.The research conceptual framework for the second level of the effective dimensions and components, regarding the factors of public space experience. (Source: Author based on a summary of the literature)

- **Political dimension of space management :**The matter has changed from the relationship between the public and private institutions to a metamorphosis of the public institutions. The outcome would therefore be a transfiguration of the public space that would be produced (Madanipour,2019). Current argument on the required policies approve that design concepts as well as the state of creation, safeguarding, and maintaining of the public spaces by the related authorities are effective on the success of such areas (Mehaffy et al., 2019). According to Jan Lang (2017), the focus should be on how spaces should be designed and the integration of design quality within implementation strategies. Based on the merging the urban design and the governmental policies,Mandeli,2019 says; Hall (2008) highlighted the importance of a proactive urban design approach in connecting spatial fragments, creating better development outcomes and ensuring design quality.Political systems have always been shaped by the interplay between the public and private spheres, even though their meanings differ in different times and places. These lines, however, are increasingly blurred, as the public authorities adopt private sector approaches and enter partnerships with the private developers. Publicness, even when produced and managed by the public authorities, becomes a relative concept. The early concerns about privatization of the public space, therefore, have been compounded by concerns about the character of the public institutions, which has direct implications for the public spaces that they produce and manage. (Madanipour,2019).

To improve the physical quality, planning authorities should express spatial planning policy and detailed guidance for developers. Global experience indicates that the quantity of published policies and the extent of their prescription have created good architectural quality while promoting numerous public realms (Hall 2011, 91).

Proactive urban design adds value by creating better and more attractive spaces, thereby enhancing urban functionality. This provides a clearer understanding of the influences that impact on how urban spaces are used, providing more accurate predictions of its appropriateness for users and its broader context, and establishing guidelines and policies to transform public realms (Mandali,2019 quotes ICCPP, 2016).

According to what has been actually achieved regarding the metamorphosis of urban arrangements via technical and economic changes, it has been argued that assurance of public interest should be fully addressed by open space provisions – especially these produced by the private sector – produced and managed by public authorities (Madanipour, 2019) and Mandeli 2019 quotes Punter (2010) says that authorities have to lead the process of upgrading and public amenity delivery such as open space provision. Lang (2017, 40) argues that the processes of urban governance and the generic legal processes, laws and codes must all significantly shape the quality of the built environment for the public interest.

- **Socio-cultural dimension :**The scrutinizes are condemning of the public space in the contemporary period, most of which are about urban design as a specific type investing urbanism (Hubbard, 1996), paying special attention to the market in the neoliberal world (Gunder, 2011) in shape and also providing public services. Nevertheless, some experts emphasize the misrepresentation aspects in this domain. Carmona(2015) says Jackson (1998, 176), for example, observes that "in lamenting the privatization of public space in the modern city, some observers have tended to romanticize its history", celebrating an openness and accessibility that never was. Banerjee (2001) recognizes that the sense of loss associated with the perceived decline of public space assumes that effective

public life is linked to a public realm where the affairs of the public are discussed and debated, whilst the desire for relaxation, social contact, entertainment, leisure, and simply having a good time may be equally as important. Lees (1994) argues that contemporary public spaces still contain important aspects of urban life, and although many primarily commercial public spaces lack wider civic functions, we should remember that commercial space has always been built into public space and vice versa(Carmona,2015)Most of the critiques of public space are predicated on a normative notion of the public realm as an open and inclusive stage for social interaction, political action and cultural exchange. Although each of these qualities has distinct historical antecedents (Carmona, de Magalhaes, and Hammond, 2008), it is also true to say that public space has rarely, if ever, achieved such a utopian state. Not least, this is because the "public" in public space is not a coherent, unified group but a fragmented society of different socio-economic (and, today, often cultural) groups, further divided by age and gender. Each part of this fragmented society will relate to pubic space (and to each other) in different and complex ways. (Carmona, 2015)

- **Economic dimension:** As earlier stated, Reinventing cities a second reason for the emerging interest in public spaces is their perceived contribution to economic outcomes by being used as a means of attracting attention and investment. As economic considerations become a primary motive for public authorities (Madanipour, 2019). Economic development also draws on investment, which is hoped to be partly attracted through public investment in public spaces, making cities attractive and competitive. The economic role of the public space is also evident in its support for leisure and retail activities, which drive the urban economy in many cities. The consumption of goods and services, now so thriving through globalization, is a major driver for the global economy; the more we consume goods and services the faster the wheels of the global economy, so consumption becomes a goal in itself (Madanipour, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Thematic analysis

This study uses thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns in the qualitative data. This model is derived from the conceptual order of the extracted data, and is a process for analyzing textual data to convert scattered and varied data into the detailed data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The reliability of the qualitative study has been based on the rate of agreement between the two coders.

Thematic analysis is an induction-based analysis, in which the researcher achieves an analytical ontology through data classification and intra-data and extra-modeling. In another definition, thematic analysis is the act of encoding and analyzing data. This type of analysis seeks to model the data in the first place. When a data pattern is obtained, the thematic support must be provided. In other words, the themes are derived from the data (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Gabriium, 1998) (Mohammadpour, 2013, 2: 67). The criterion model in this study is a thematic analysis with the social field analysis of Luffland and Luffland (1995) model. This model has several stages, the first of which is as follows:

1) Stage 1: Data formatting: The main purpose of this strategy is to formulate general theorems that regulate and aggregate much of the data. In this regard, they have listed eight forms of theorems:

1- Type: For example, X exists.
2- Frequencies: X occurs in units of Y at locations 1, 2, and 3, and in time period Z.
3- Size: X ... equals Y; indicates strength or intensity.
4- Structures: X is built in terms of to 1, 2 and 3.
5- Processes: X represents a process with steps 1, 2 and 3.
6- Causes: X is caused by factors 1, 2 and 3.
7- Consequences: X has consequences 1, 2 and 3.
8- Factor: In X people use strategies, tactics 1, 2 and 3 (Mohammadpour, 2013, 2: 70).

Based on the main questions in this article, indicating whether the concept and quality of public urban spaces are changed with the emergence of emerging economies and emerging commercial spaces. The other question is how the key stakeholders experience urban spaces. We have chosen Esfahan as an example of cities facing emerging economies in most emerging commercial spaces.

According to the concepts in the preceding section (as in Fig. 2), the questions of the interviewers in the in-depth interview process are formulated as follows:

1) Influence of physical environment and quality of public spaces on users' activities (physical-spatial component)
2) The behavior and role of different users in the production, construction and administration of public spaces. (Socio-cultural component)
3) The role of urban management in the management, maintenance and control of space (urban management component)
4) Opportunities and benefits offered by the public space and restrictions on the use of these spaces for stakeholders (economic component)

Table 2
Themes and questions of the in-depth interviews.

Dimension	Theme	Goal of Question	Question
Spatial-physical environment	• Space access • Space function	Opportunities provided by public spaces and constraints on their use	1. Where do you go for recreational purpose when going out?
			2. Do you agree that the intensity of the traffic in this neighborhood is annoying?
			3. What are the most significant problems facing users concerning of public spaces in Esfahan?
			4. What do you think of public space and recreational areas in Esfahan?
			5. What are the important preferences for public space provision?
Socio-cultural components	• Preference of the beneficiaries for the space • Meaning of space	Impact of the physical environment and quality of public spaces on socio-cultural activities	6. What do you think of the socially mixed nature of this public space?
			7. What do you think of the quality of this public space?
			8. Do you enjoy walking in this public space?
			9. Do you think that public space in Isfahan encourage (sutebale) socio-cultural activities?
			10. How satisfied are you with public spaces in Esfahan?
			11. What are the most limiting factors for activity in the public open space such as Local Park in your neighborhood?
Urban management political component	• Role of urban management • Role of city rules	• The roles of different actors (regulators, planners, designers, and users) in the production, construction and governance of public spaces • Some possible concepts to establish design guidelines for institutional and legal frameworks promoting future public space provision.	12. What do you think of the provision of public space carried out by the Municipality?
			13. Do you have any idea about the strategies or programs and policies that the municipality carries out in relation to public spaces?
			14. Do you think privately operated programs for the management and maintenance public spaces and places might be better than government operated ones?
			15. Do you think the involvement of resident in the management of public spaces would improve the existing situation?

Economic component	• Interests of investors	• What is the role of people in economic boom of the areas?	16. How much do you purchase in these areas?
	• Interests of users	• To what extent do areas utilize people for the productivity as a subject?	17. How much does it cost you to be in these areas?
			18. Which group of goods is compatible with the economic potential of these spaces?

n this respect, a qualitative analysis was done in Esfahan within May and June 2019, with morphological surveys and in-depth interviews. Various documents about Esfahan and its commercial areas were used including drawings, aerial maps, photos, data from local publications, information from residents and experts, and also, we participated in various workshops and conferences regarding the emergence of commercial places.

In light of the above themes, 18 inquiries were considered for the semi-organized interviews, e.g. about the provided facilities for the public areas by the Municipality (Table 2).

The interviews permitted the participants to have more, either formal or informal, enquiries. The participants were ensured about the confidentiality of their responses. The interviews were done in four different commercial public spaces. The collected data were divided into themes and formed a scheme for the required analyses.

There were 60 participants, 32 of whom were male and 28 the inclusion criteria for the interviews. Small sample size could be sufficient in order to prevent repeated information. Some writers (e.g. Creswell, 2008) indicate that sample sizes should range from 20 to 30, while others suggest 30–50 interviews could be sufficient, although the saturation point in this regard seems to be important (Mandeli, 2019 quotes Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After recording the interviews, they were categorized in different themes, which were classified in order to show the obtained results.

3.2. The study area

The city of Esfahan is the largest city within the province and the third largest city in the country. Its population has increased from about 30,000 in 1932 to almost 2 million in 2016.

This study was carried out in four urban areas of Esfahan with 60 in-depth interviews. The inclusion criteria for the spaces were their scale of operation in the city and using the Delphi method and 4 urban areas were considered for their performance and commercial function (Imam Ali Square, naghshe jahan Square, City Center Mall, Arg of Jahan Nama Mall) to minimize the viewpoints.

Table 3
The Study public space in Esfahan

	Arg of Jahan Nama	City Center	Imam Ali Square	Naghsh-e Jahan Square
Typology	Mega Mall	Mega Mall	Public-open space	**Public-open space**
Location in the city	City center (historical context)	Suburbs	City center (historical context)	**City center (historical context)**
picture				
Dimensions of space	Area of 17,000 M2And 85,000 M2 of construction area	The commercial space of this mega belongs to 425000 M2	The area of the main square is equal to 22,500 M2	**The area of the main square is equal to 80800 M2 (505 meters long and 160 meters wide)**

4. Findings: Participants' attitudes towards public spaces in Isfahan

Our research investigates urban changes, by considering the satisfaction of the stakeholders about the public areas. This section explores the relationship between the modern design and implementation approaches and the quality of public areas. According to the themes in the study, our results could be categorized into four different groups:

1) Interaction form of public space and spatial aspects through the with socio-cultural dimensions
2) Interaction of the socio-cultural aspects of public spaces with economic dimensions
3) Interaction of the economic dimensions of public spaces with management on public space
4) Interaction of the form of public space and spatial measures with management on public space

4.1. Interaction form of public space and spatial aspects through socio-cultural dimension

The physical aspect as the first human-made factor plays an important role in the urban space experience, including the quality that people referred to in the interviews; e.g.:

The interviewee 009 in City Center: "In terms of its structure and engineering, the space is good", and considering Arg Jahan Nama, the interviewee stated: "People feel different in Arg Jahan Nama." Also, the interviewee 089 said, "…., people don't pay attention!"

Or, the interviewee 086 at Arg Jahan Nama: "Look here (showing the floor mosaics being torn down). This material should have done much better. The building is not as big as this!"

The interviewee 105 in Imam Ali Square: "The space of this Square has a lifeless body and is very quiet and has no identity. Usually I feel a strong wind here."

The other point that was mentioned in terms of physical-functional factors was the multi functionality of space; e.g.:

The interviewee 250 in City Center Esfahan: "See this space is fun. We buy. We eat."

According to the interviewee 012 in this space, "It is a good place, and I think everything is close to Eden. For example, the food court, amusement park, the hyper market. The title indicated a place for fun with friends."

Another discussion of physical and social issues in space was creating a sense of comfort in space, which was much cited in interviews at City Center; e.g.:

Based on the interviewee 007, "I am both comfortable and now I leave my wheelchair. I could walk on the ground."

Another experience of space is the sense of readability or non-readability mentioned in the interviews; based on the interviewee 012, "I find space confusing. I get lost and have to ask questions every time I go there."

4.2. Interaction of the socio-cultural aspects of public spaces with economic dimensions

The public space feature with its commercialized supports controlled by large corporations is a point to be considered, although it may be admitted by the stakeholders.

Examples of interviews that highlight the importance of space consumption and the relationship between social and economic elements in urban space experiences include the interviewee 0028 in City Center Esfahan, "Usually wealthy people use this place (why?). They make it easier to buy, even if the prices are high."

Or, the interviewee 0015 in this space: "I feel like most people are rich. Most people are middle to high. The habits here are usually expensive. Because all the accessories are together, sometimes a person makes a large purchase without having to." The interviewee 0014 in City Center Esfahan: "Here, because you have to spend a lot and it is a good place in the city and closer to high-income people."

Conversely, in some places people leave the space as soon as they need it. For example, in Arg Jahan Nama, the interviewee states: "When we go out shopping, we go out fast. For example, I go elsewhere."

Or, "I use the space of Imam Ali Square very little. It uses much more space around it, but to the extent it passes. Imam Ali Square uses it almost every two months."

The interviewee 105 in Imam Ali Square and Interviewee 091 state that: "No one goes there for fun to Imam Ali Square, but for people go there when it is holiday. People go to Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. But nobody goes to Imam Ali Square."

In contrast to the specific use of space in the previous two examples in Naghsh-e Jahan Sq., a different type of space usage was mentioned, as the interviewee 025 says, "A person with a good income uses luxury restaurants. A person with a low income uses outdoor and simple meals." Also, the interviewee 0102 states that: "There is a good memory of walking or having fun there, just like markets and mosques."

4.3. Interaction of the economic dimensions of public spaces with management on public space

One of the orthodoxies in urban design advocates clear boundaries between the two realms. Harsh and strict boundaries, however, suggest unequal societies, where fear and threat of violence rule. Highly articulate, soft and porous boundaries, in contrast, show a more peaceful and sophisticated encounter, and a more urbane society. The boundaries between public and private spheres are never fixed, dividing the urban world into a sharp dualism. Instead, it is always evolving and interdependent. While in legal and institutional terms the ownership and control of space may be clear, in practice and in managing the spaces of the city, elaborate interfaces between the two realms would add to the cultural richness of the city life. The blurred boundaries between public and private realms in institutions and in spaces are not necessarily the same.

Examples of interviews that highlight the importance of ownership issues in urban spaces include: Interview 0014 in City Center Esfahan: "We feel here is our home. We are proud of ourselves. It is an honor to say we have a space. On the contrary, in interviews such as the citadel, in the interviews they said: "A bad building. Like a prison. Do you know what I'm saying? It doesn't have much light. It doesn't have much light. Or, "You see I'm here right now because of a friend of mine who was trying to make a purchase, and I made a purchase here."

This sense of space ownership reaches its peak in the space of the infringement of the world so that people regard it as a trust that, in addition to the sense of ownership, also evokes a sense of preservation of space, for example the 025 "interview we have turned to. We also have to take care of it so that we can transfer it so beautifully to the next generation.

4.4. Interaction of the form of public space and spatial measures with management on public space

Anthony Giddens (1990) made us aware, that one of the pivotal features of modernity and also late modernity, and to an even greater extent super-modernity, is the rise of surveillance and supervision of citizens by the authorities (Jacobsen 2001). Mandeli(2019) quotes Adams and Tiesdell (2013) declares that strong regulatory mechanisms for public space provision can produce better development outcomes. Carmona (2019) points out that delivering better public spaces is strongly influenced by planning authorities which play a critical role in creating and shaping them, protecting key qualities and public interests through legal tools and policies. Two major roles can be identified: the initiation or regeneration of public space projects and approval or refusal of designs delivered by the private sector through plans, ordinances, frameworks, briefs and policies.

Examples of interviews that emphasize the importance of space control and the relationship between management dimensions and physical and security experiences in urban spaces include: Interviewee 0014 in City Center Esfahan: "There are a lot of policemen and sellers here that make me feel safe. Or, other restrictions that exist in the spaces of Iranian cities and which are less commonly seen in commercial centers as public spaces, so some interviewees have identified it as a security factor, such as the interviewee 0024 in City Center Esfahan. "Very good. There is nothing wrong with the veil."

In contrast, in successful urban spaces such as the role of the world, insecurity was mentioned, such as interview 0020 "I wouldn't feel safe if I was there at noon. Because of the young boys there. I don't feel safe, but in the evening, it makes me feel safe.Or, "A space like the Imam Ali square they say in interviews It looks like space is very masculine. They bother me. They have a lot of privacy. (Interview 0107)"

4.5. Results of the thematic analysis

The thematic analysis was done based on interviews conducted and using the Luffland and Luffland (1995) method, and by omitting the very detailed tables, only the thematic analyses of the four categories of the interviews are presented in four different spaces to identify the statements, codes, and themes, according to which the most important codes and themes are identified (fig 3-6).
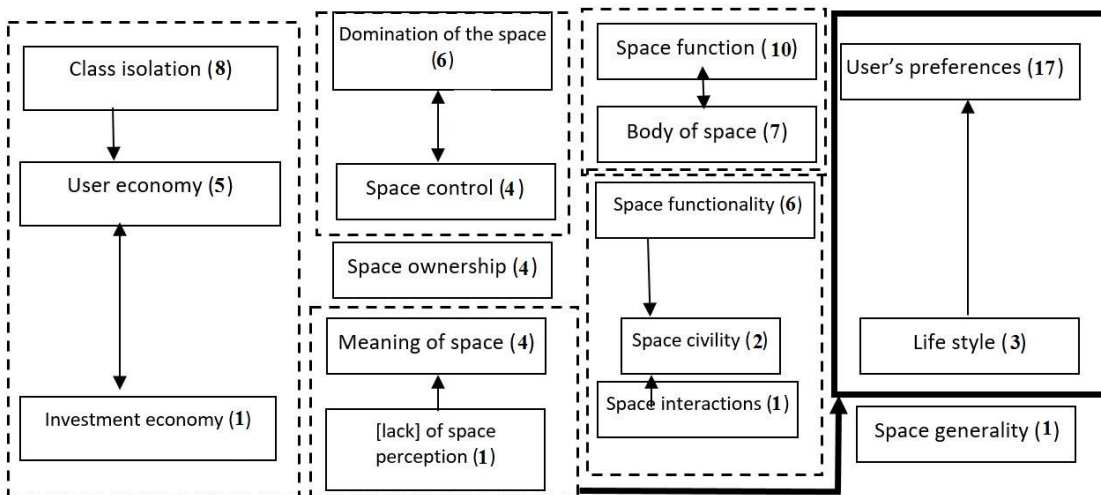

Fig. 3. Thematic diagram obtained from coding the principle statements of the interviews in the City Center Complex
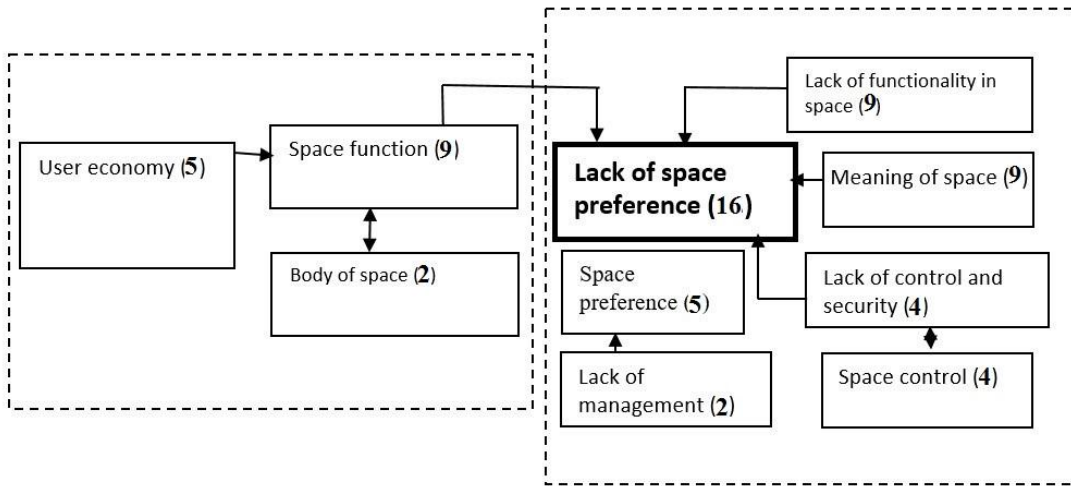
Fig. 4. Thematic diagram obtained from coding the principle statements of the interviews in Arg Jahan Nama
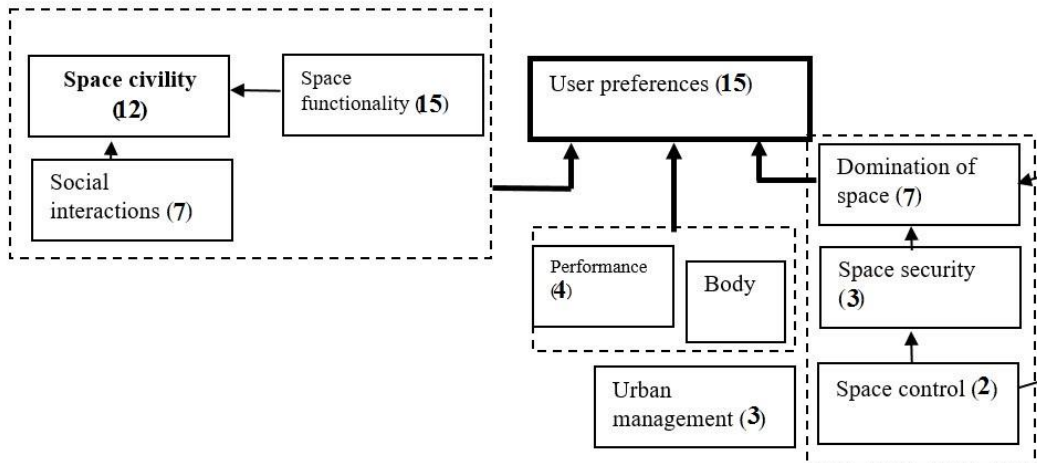

Fig. 5. Thematic diagram obtained from coding the principle statements of the interviews in Naghsh-e Jahan Square
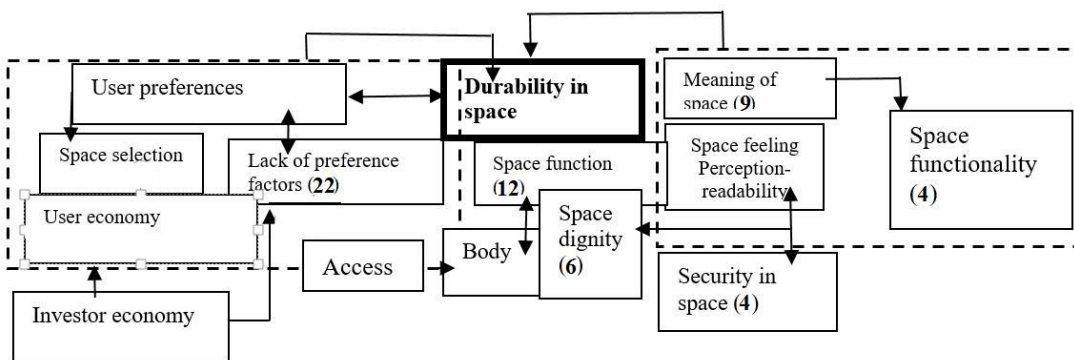

Fig. 6.Thematic diagram obtained from coding the principle statements of the interviews in Imam Ali Square

5. Discussion

The new public space generation takes into account the categorization of urban structures, social relations and regular activities of nearby societies, and deals with the dynamic disintegration of the public areas space and the continual privatization of the urban views.

Shopping malls were what was identified the great crisis of public spaces in the second half of last century.

The private spaces of these municipal shopping centers have changed the socio-spatial relationality public situation of huge part of the populace living in their commercial areas. They have become essential parts of the social communication in the exceptionally disengaging urban situations of decentered post-idealistic cities. [8]. These new city components give spatial anchoring differentiating the interactions, giving rise to the aspect of public provisions and publicness. It is to note that meta-public situations are due to opening the boundaries of semi-public areas causing easier public access.

Two categories of space have been examined in this study by the thematic examination for the experiences of users of Esfahan urban spaces, i.e. the traditional commercial spaces (Imam Ali Square and Naghsh-e Jahan Square) and modern commercial spaces (Arg Jahan Nama and City Center complex). Both of these spaces have been influenced by emerging economies and, consequently, by emerging behaviors. In this research, we seek to discover emerging experiences in the public sphere.
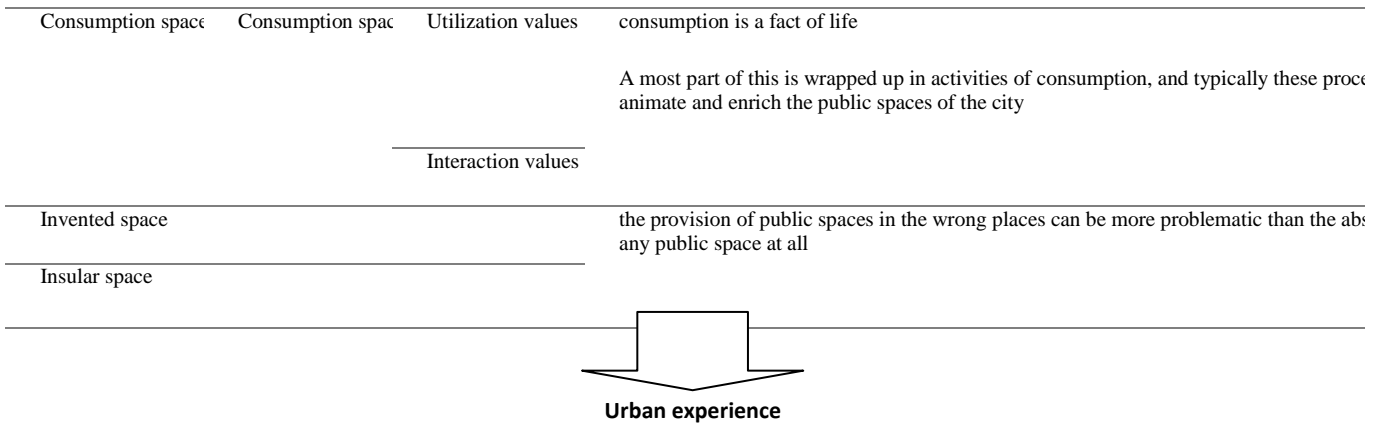
Considering the socio-spatial effects of the new condition of publicness, this article deals with the changes of the daily urban relational life in relation with two processes:

1- Man-made dimensions and components in the urban space
2- Individual dimensions and components in the urban space

The interaction of both factors in an urban presence process can provide effective dimensions of urban experience .These are socio-spatial processes that have recently become nodal in the discourse on consumption (Manfredini, 2017). The problems of the decay of the public realm originally ascribed to the consumerist distribution factories 26 that originated in the 19th century department store, 27 have been recognized in their exacerbation in the major modern centers of shopping where the society of the spectacle28 had its main expression. There, highly innovative spatial experiments had de-differentiated the forms of consumption and inhibited the traditional forms of production and interaction of the individual in public space. These places resulted from an extreme rationalization process to maximize efficiency, control, predictability and calculability of commercial operations while encouraging consumers' everyday spending behaviors with impressive fairground spectacles.

Table 4

Additional dimensions and Components affecting the transforming factors of public space concepts

Criticism of public space	Additional dimensions affect the public space	Components affecting the transforming factors of public space concepts	Description
Neglected space	Dominance of spa	Space control	Relating to a host of local contextual factors.
Invaded space			Spaces will have different needs in terms of safety and security'
Scary space		Security	The rights and responsibilities associated with spaces are far more important than who manages them (How, not who, is key).
			How to control space (tangible-intangible)
Exclusionary space	agency in space	Social interactions	public space is form of inclusion rather than exclusion
Homogenized spac			recognize the diversity of lifestyles and preferences amongst urban populations
Segregated space		Civility in space	Public space should offer something for everyone in the right locations.
			It requires that enough space is given to pedestrians for movement and socialization.
Privatized space	Space ownership	Utilization values	In fact, the spaces of the city are owned and managed through multiple complex arrang many of which are not clearly public or clearly private, whilst restrictions on use apply spaces, regardless of ownership.
		Legal ownership	

Consumption space	Consumption space	Utilization values	consumption is a fact of life
			A most part of this is wrapped up in activities of consumption, and typically these proce animate and enrich the public spaces of the city
		Interaction values	
Invented space			the provision of public spaces in the wrong places can be more problematic than the abs any public space at all
Insular space			

Urban experience

The experience that a space provides in any conditions for the users is the most important point to consider in urban spaces

This case study and the similar ones verify that the public spaces are full of multifaceted forms and inconsistencies that challenge any prohibitive views that public areas should have. These studies emphasize that public spaces are not public and open or private and closed; rather, public spaces in Esfahan are designed and formed regularly through due to wide range of intricate inspirations. Case studies indicate that people going to public areas are looking for dynamic and safe places, which are sometimes owned by private sector. A kind of public space is developed in Esfahan that considers preferences (e.g. Arg Jahan Nama).
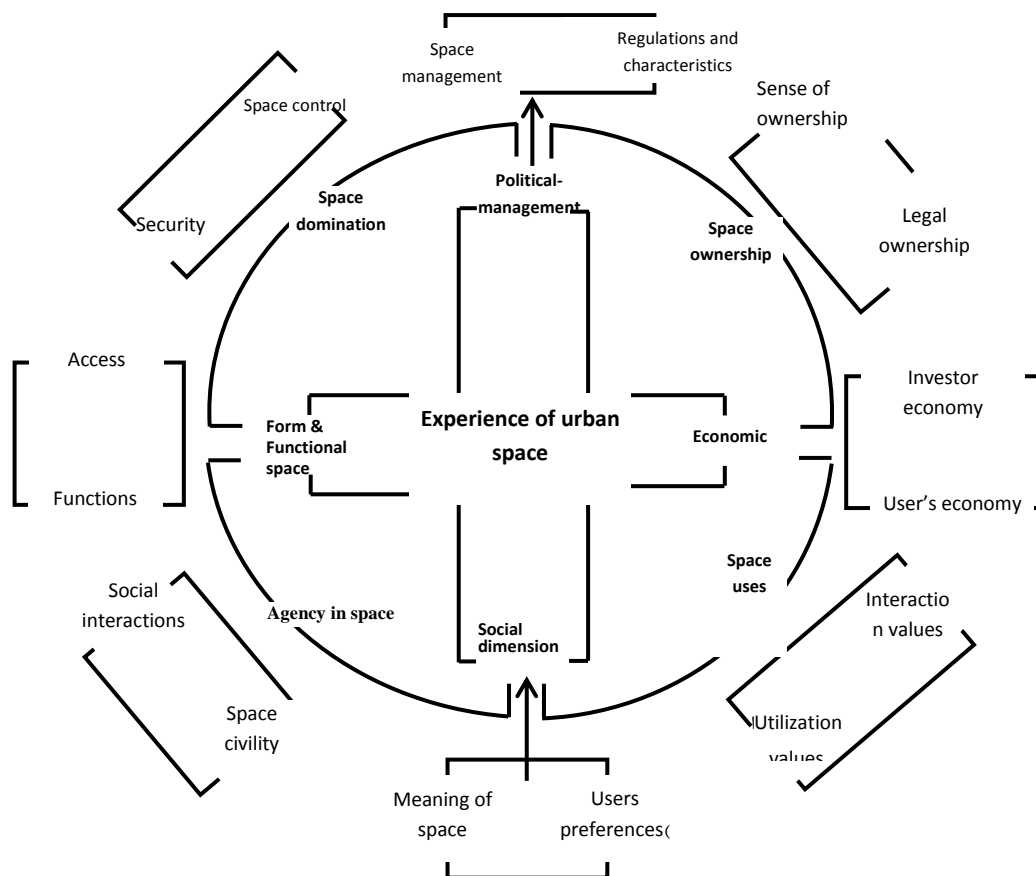

Fig. 7. First level dimensions and components affecting public space experience (The final model of research)

15

This study focused on in-depth interviews (with different spectrum of ownership, body, etc.) in Esfahan and extracted the thematic subjective illustration about the considered 4 spaces. Four new concepts that were effective on the citizens' experiences were identified. The extracting themes and codes, identifying the concept of "space ownership", "space usage", "agency in space", "occupation and domination of space" alongside the dimensions of urban space ("political-management", "physical-spatial dimension", "social dimension" and "economic dimension"), which form the final model of the factors influencing urban experience, based on the most commonly used themes (fig 7).

6. Conclusion And Recommendations

The expansion of public space is accompanied by the simultaneous shrinking and eventual erosion of them. The expansion of public space we are currently witnessing is merely an expansion of private space and therefore it becomes devoid of public meaning.An idea cannot be general for the public space, and hence, it can be interpreted into local circumstances in that respect. Public space description indicates the concept of decreased publicness originating from the notions of privatization, homogenization, and commercialization. However, the study regarding Esfahan shows that it is not the whole or the dominant case.

Experience of urbanization demonstrates that modifications of public spaces have originated from basic changes in the course of the most recent fifty years. Albeit Western methodologies have improved methods for living and expanded social desires for modernization, they have neglected to create urban situations reflecting nearby qualities that all in all shape private and open spots. By taking Isfahan so as to show the change of open spaces in urban communities of rising economies, we have discovered likenesses in the manner in which open spaces are changed across urban communities globally. Urban organizers and architects should face urban change through a multi-dimensional and proactive system that upgrades the open domain. As worried in the writing (Carmona, 2019; Lang and Marshall, 2016; Madanipour, 2019; Punter, 2010), improving spots requires political duty to advancement of the open domain.

Construction of more successful public spaces requires attention to concepts affecting the urban experience that is essential for promoting the urban spaces. Focusing on the in-depth interviews fulfilled in the traditional and new urban spaces and based on the subjective thematic illustration of the users that extracted from four different spaces, four new concepts influencing citizens' experiences were identified: the concept of "space ownership", "space uses", " Space agenc", "occupation and domination of space", which along with the dimensions of the model urban space form the effective factors that influence urban experience.

Considering the new explanations and the experimental studies about Esfahan and what this suggests about the idea of public spaces in urban areas, several principles and regulations have been drawn that can help to reconceptualize the idea of public areas.It is with this increasingly logical and positive, less obstinate and polemicized arrangement of thoughts that the study concludes reworking of every one of the investigated public areas. Space advances through its life cycle as it is reshaped through the procedures of structure, improvement, use, and the management.

The principle of "cities for all" is fundamental, yet it is also important to acknowledge that not every space will, or should, appeal equally to every citizen. This is a form of inclusion rather than exclusion: it recognizes the diversity of lifestyles and preferences amongst urban populations and that cities should offer something for everyone in the right locations, rather than everything for everyone everywhere, which may all too easily lead to lowest common-denominator design and to nothing appealing to anyone anywhere. Regarding the issue of the proactive urban planning and design approaches in Esfahan and other Iranian cities to develop the urban quality and also considering the effective experiences of the space users, it should be acknowledged that the issue of the spaces, which are not explicitly private or public, has been properly documented. It should, however, be contemplated that the provisions of public areas in wrong places can be a troublesome issue as compared to the non-existence of such spaces.

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