Importance of Urban Squares as Public Space in Social Life

A New Design of Fisktorget in Karlskrona City

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Abstract

Nowadays, the impact of technological growth on people’s life and our society is remarkable, inevitable and also worrying. The excessive influence of technology in individuals’ lives has caused our community to change towards more privatisation and secluded life. At this point, the role of urban public spaces in social life has become more prominent and significant. Issues of social life in public spaces and the relations with creating a vibrant and dynamic city has not been given too much attention in urban planning and design. This thesis raises the question of considering public spaces and how urban public spaces (especially squares) can encourage/persuade citizens to increase social interaction. Initially, it describes a clear definition of public spaces and urban squares. Thereafter, the study addresses effectual factors from the human perspective which can help to achieve the successful design of an urban public square. The aim of the work is to comprehend how it might be possible to improve social life and behaviour in public spaces (squares) and consequently to attain a framework in order to design. Ultimately, a design is proposed for Fisktorget (Fish Square), which is one of most important public places in the Karlskrona city in Sweden. The proposed design is based on studies and analyses that have been done throughout this thesis.
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preface

Public spaces play a greatest role as a catalyst for social change and provide a place for gathering different community groups. Public spaces are places that let us to share with unknown persons, who are not our relatives, friends or colleagues, and are spaces for politics, religion, trade, sports, spaces for peaceful coexistence and impersonal encounters. In particular, a square is a significant public space in each area. These squares are mainly located in the centre of the surrounding area. In numerous ceremonies such as religious occasions, funerals, holidays and political meetings, the square is a place to gather. Old squares that were previously the spot to interact with individuals and play performances but have now become a place for passing vehicles. “Square in modernism of age moved to the transition in the round of the identity” (Hajmirsadeghi, 2012, p. 49).

“In a society becoming steadily more privatized with private homes, cars, computers, offices and shopping centers, the public component of our lives is disappearing. It is more and more important to make the cities inviting, so we can meet our fellow citizens face to face and experience directly through our senses. Public life in good quality public spaces is an important part of a democratic life and a full life.” (Jan Gehl, cited in www.pps.org).

There is a developing range of evidence that public spaces can convey a range of benefits across economic, social and environmental spheres. These spaces shape the social personality of a territory, are a piece of its special character, and give a feeling of spot to local communities. One of the advantages of a great public space is its potential as a venue for social events. Squares, in particular, can present the sort of civil society that has been lost in an excess of urban communities (Woolley et al., 2004). According to Mattson (1999), citizens have made it clear that they require spaces where they can interact with fellow citizens and try to persuade others of their perspectives.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims to study the significance of cohesive urban public spaces (squares) in social life through evaluating the relation between urban environment and social behaviour from a human perspective. Furthermore, the influential elements in improving this relationship is investigated to achieve a framework and criteria for designing and planning an urban public space to encourage more citizens to attend in the urban square so that as result, social interaction and communication increase in city. It is an important factor due to public participation to improve the quality of social life and also creation of a vibrant and dynamic city. A sustainable community needs social interaction, participation and social networks and contains a pride in sense of place.

1.3 Research Question

The thesis seeks to address these questions:

1. Which factors can improve the quality of social interaction in urban squares?
2. In which way can urban squares encourage/persuade social interactions?

The objectives are:

• Through the literature review analyse how people perceive a public space (square) and what is important in order to design a public space.
• To investigate attitudes and methods to persuade people to interact with urban environment and following that, with urban squares.
• To gain an image of citizens’ needs in Karlskrona.
• To develop a series of factors to encourage people of Karlskrona to participate in the public space.
• To present a proposal design based on literature study, analyse a case study and project location.

1.4 Limitation and Delimitation

There are several concerns and conflicts in the issues of society in which people play the major role. This is because of the importance of these subjects and their impact on individuals’ life and society. Subsequently, planning and designing a public space (square), is no exception and the reason is different fields of study such as economical, political and social or cultural. This thesis focuses on social issues, its effective factors and attitudes in order to plan and design public spaces (squares).

To find answer to the question that is mentioned above, the study investigates the meaning of the urban square as a public space through exploring in several article and books. It highlights the social aspect of urban squares through a comparison several literatures. Through studying human behaviour and reactions in the place it also indicates the place identity which makes sense of place and impacts on our social behaviour. The research seeks to address social life based on people’s environment role and their participation in places.

There was a limitation in that all documents related to Fisktorget (Fish Square) and also a large number of relevant references about Stortorget (Main Square in Karlskrona) were in the Swedish language. Therefore, the author had to use some programs for translation.

1.5 Structure

As mentioned above, the first chapter (1) of the thesis discusses the background of studies, the purpose of the research and it also contains research questions. The methodology of the research in chapter two (2) defines the modes of procedure and the combination of different methods used to conduct the research. At the end of this chapter, the literature review illustrates the definitions about public space and urban squares and also describes the social issues that are related to social interaction in public spaces (squares). The third chapter (3) indicates relevant theories that have been used throughout the design process. This chapter is divided into three main sections; sociability in public spaces, environmental psychology and activities as social characteristics. Chapter four (4) is related to a case study of Stortorget (Main Square) in Karlskrona that has been chosen in order to understand important and influential factors about social communication in an urban square. Chapter (5) depicts characteristics of a place (Fisktorget) by site analysis. The last chapter (6) represents a proposal design for Fisktorget, which is located in Kaerlskrona city based on the issues that are mentioned throughout this thesis. This chapter commences with a concept of design and will end with design suggestions.
2 Research Methodology

2.1 Choice of Methods

This issue needs to extract a clear definition and a clear framework, therefore I have employed a qualitative investigative study as a way to determine the research design. This investigative research has relied on reviewing the available literature, a case study, site analysis and also empirical studies. The following gives a brief description of each and every category.

2.1.1 Literature Review

At the beginning of the project, I used several pieces of literature, which include books and articles, in order to express a clear notion of public spaces and urban squares, the importance of urban squares in society and also influential features of public spaces. Furthermore, this method has been used to investigate and explore an answer to the questions that are mentioned as ‘Research questions’. The literature embraces relevant studies from different disciplines; the diversity of the studies helped to gain the most information regarding this topic.

2.1.2 Case Study

Each urban public space has a specific context to impact on its users and also gives a different reaction and perципience about the place, consequently I decided to choose a square for analysing as a case study which has different characteristics. The purpose of analysing Stortorget (Main Square) was to find out impressive strengths and destructive weaknesses due to their impact on social interaction and subsequently on quality of social life. In other words, this is an attempt to identify the development factors of social life in the community.

2.1.3 Site Analysis

In order to propose a successful design, the first step is perception of space and also understanding existing potential in locations. Yet, the importance of this issue is manifold about the design of a public space where many social relations are formed. This method is employed to mention weaknesses and deficiencies that there are in a site, in addition to depicting strengths and the existing conditions that can help to achieve a better identification in order to investigate and design. Using several pictures and diagrams is the most prominent and significant feature of this method that provides a perspicuous explanation and a comprehensive image of the location.

2.1.4 Empirical Study

2.1.4.1 Observation

Observation as an important empirical method can be used to realize the unique characteristics of a space. By observing the segments of the spaces, an author or researcher can have a clear perception of spatial form, and how the space is utilized. In addition, considering the quality of activities occurring in the squares is another significant issue which can be examined in this way. During the use of this method, the author took a lot of location photographs. This method makes it possible that we can establish a closer connection with the space and environment. As a matter of fact, understanding the sense of space is quite tangible with the use of this method. Attendance at a space makes it possible to achieve serious new ideas that have not been mentioned in the past.
2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Introduction

One of the most important features of urban life today is complex social relationships. Part of
the relationships are in the work environment, but much of them take place in the form of social
interaction in the urban space concept. So, urban space plays an important role in the social
development of citizens. Social interactions are formed in these places. A social zone is defined
and also the mechanisms of collective life are experienced. Thus the absence of a suitable urban space can
cause social ills in cities. Squares are one of the most important urban areas and have long been the
context of formation of social life.

The impacts of quick changing monetary and social conditions have progressively become
notable on how individuals use and shape their surroundings. The urban populace has been drastically
expanding overall and hence physical structure of the urban areas changes always, for the most part in
negative ways. As the populace expands, the interest for infrastructure and equipment becomes greater.
Privatization and decentralization are the two noteworthy worries on the eventual fate of the urban
areas and open spaces. “Increasing mobility, communication technologies and globalization leads to
expansion of urban areas causing life style changes, thus use of public spaces” (Memluk, 2013, p. 1).

2.2.2 Conceptual Cognition of Public Space

2.2.2.1 Understanding Public Spaces

Studies have demonstrated that a decent quality open domain can be advantageous to local
economies, urge people to expend more time in shops and organizations, and raise house costs. Public
spaces are viewed as just on the grounds that everyone can utilize them: places that logically at any
rate, permit "community" to exist and prosper. Public space is “our open-air living room, our outdoor
leisure Centre” (Lipton, 2002, Foreword). How spaces are comprehended and utilized may likewise
rely on upon individual and gathering attributes. For instance, the sociology of childhood recognizes
public spaces as spots where children and youth can build a type of protection in their own particular
places, far from the familial control and observation of home.

2.2.2.2 What is a Public Space?

In urban planning, public space has generally been characterized as “open space”, which means
the streets, parks and amusement regions, squares and other freely possessed and oversaw outside
spaces, in contrast with the private area of lodging and work (Tonnelat, 2010). Despite that, the late
advancements of the types of urban settlement and the increasing number and assortment of semi-open
spaces oversaw by private-open or totally private organizations addresses this thought acquired from
a legitimate point of view. Nowadays, public spaces should be understood as not quite the same as
people in the general area of the state and its subdivisions, but instead as a space available to the general
population. The urban project thus establishes a formal hierarchy between the avenues, boulevards,
streets, alleyways, passages and squares that constitute a basic vocabulary of urban design (Mangin,
David and Panerai, 1999).
2.2.3 Public Space and Society

2.2.3.1 Public Space for Community Interaction

Public spaces are assumed to be a key part in the urban structure and city life, turning into an advantaged component keeping in mind the end goal to advance regional attachment. It in this way that is conceivable to consider open space as a component ready to advance progression and requests from the region, additionally with a characteristic capacity to make and keep up coherent local centrality, ecological quality, financial intensity and feeling of citizenship (Borja and Muxi, 2003). Public spaces permit individuals to meet on apparently impartial ground in arranged and impromptu routes, to communicate with others inside of the entire society. These incorporate family relationships (for instance, multi-era family shopping campaigns), social groupings (for instance, youth bunches), nearby social associations (for instance, risk or arranged gatherings with companions, neighbours and work partners) and gatherings meeting through basic enthusiasm (for instance, strolling gatherings). By encouraging this blending, public spaces can add to the attachment of groups.

The general population perceptible of various types of individuals is supported by their vicinity public spaces, and individuals' comprehension of their group is to a limited extent shaped by who and what they find in the general population area. Observations demonstrate that numerous people use public spaces as open doors for authorized people-viewing. Guests and inhabitants from diverse parts of the town, including people from distinctive ethnic and financial gatherings and individuals of distinctive ages and capacities, can be in the same spot in the meantime, permitting people to assess and reassess the qualities of space and their own particular association with it. Particular public spaces like squares operate as their daytime social spaces and meeting places. These favoured spaces are seen to offer some privacy or isolation alongside a level of security and connectedness with the town.

2.2.3.2 Managing Public Spaces

There is an accord between statutory authorities, town and the overall population that security is a noteworthy factor in the public spaces. Individuals are attracted to, and tend to stay longer, in public spaces that offer opportunities for hobbies and/or a level of solace. Study and information scrutiny demonstrate that people acknowledge and search for extraordinary occasions and exercises public spaces, both locally and in the town focus. One of a kind and unique occasions, including unconstrained ‘street entertainment’, likewise get the consideration and characterize places as intriguing. Public spaces were utilized distinctively as indicated by the extent to which they were mainly basic (undifferentiated) or complex (with diverse and differentiated parts). In an extensive open space a great many people tend to skirt the space’s edges unless there is an activity being held (Holland et al., 2007).

2.2.3.3 Inviting Public Life

The life or dormancy of open spaces depends very much on their nature and whether they are inviting to likely clients, to walk, stay, sit or generally appreciate the spaces. Overviews of existing city ranges, and new towns and new city regions and advancements, have indicated striking contrasts concerning life and inertia. Everything focuses on the quality issues being of substantial importance. Furthermore, the confirmation in like manner focuses on the requirement for a more methodical and watchful treatment of the general population domain so as to secure great quality and to guarantee spaces are inviting to clients (Gehl, n.d.). The global finding is that at whatever point quality is given individuals will come.
Access to other people, to potential outcomes for experience and entertainment among others are sought after, and these open doors have vital parts for maintaining or reinforcing the general approaches for benevolence, others conscious, majority rule and safe social order.

More new towns and new improvements are arranged with the expressly expressed point of making an energetic, appealing and safe city or locale. It must be discovered that life in present-day open spaces is exceptionally delicate. Only if conditions are correct will strolling and waiting be ordinary. Consequently, the planning of public spaces must be done exceptionally precisely. The tools have been created. It should be possible: a few remarkable examples like Aker Brygge, Oslo, Skarpnäck, Stockholm and Almere, Holland, can be found by the numerous disappointments (Gehl, n.d.).

2.2.3.4 Social Interactions

Out in open spaces, small children can find out about social behaviour by watching what outsiders look like and how they act, how their careers communicate with outsiders, and how to keep the peace in broad daylight. Arranged activities to encourage incorporated public spaces need to incorporate the needs of families and children so they can be incorporated into the general population life of the town. Created open spaces have been portrayed as overwhelmingly adult spaces (Valentine, 1996), where adults’ viewpoints and mores win while the discernment and needs of kids and youths are infrequently highlighted.

2.2.3.5 Social Status and Marginality

While youths and adults of numerous social gatherings routinely utilize the centre areas of town, contrasts could be seen in how people from diverse social classes used the spaces. For instance, more established individuals depicted by onlookers as ‘better dressed’ will probably use coffee shops in the malls and are considerably less liable to sit at the seats in Market Square. Discovering approaches to keep the focal area public and open to all requires development and creative ability, social incitement, acknowledgment of assorted qualities of clients, and in addition access to assets to give progressing upkeep of the infrastructure. Participation is required between those duties of overseeing open zones.

Urban commentators generally believe that a strong relationship exists between urban public space and civic culture. Urbanists have long insisted on the opinion that the physical and social mobility of public spaces play a central role in the formation of publics and public culture (Amin, 2006 cited in www.publicspace.org). History shows that urban planning is one of the endeavours to manage public spaces in ways that create sociality and civic engagement. Many theorists of urban modernity believe that if public spaces organize and design properly, they would offer the potential for social communion by allowing us to lift our gaze from the daily grind, and also as a result, these spaces can increase our inclination towards the other (Amin, 2006, cited in www.publicspace.org). As we see these days, the authorities are making great efforts to engineer social interaction in public spaces. For example, these attempts include holding street theatre, multicultural festivals and food celebrations.

Public spaces have an important role in shaping public behaviour or indeed even a sense of the commons. Many people have only symbolic visualizations of public spaces such as squares and parks in their mind but in my opinion, this is contrary to the role of public spaces in solidarity and to create a kind of public commitment. Many efforts have been made to create social cohesion and social culture understanding by urban policy through interventions directed of inter-personal interaction. These measures have been done to bring together people from different backgrounds in common spaces. One
of the achievements of public space is that it offers this meaning that human can participate as fully
fledged social people in civic life (Amin, 2006).

2.2.4 Defining Urban Squares

Urban squares are also part of the public spaces; these spaces are a subset of a larger space
and more general which is known as urban space (Zeka, 2011, p.17).

2.2.4.1 Urban Space

Many scholars have identified urban spaces with a number of different perspectives (Krier, 1979, p.15). Also having a physical approach of urban space, identifies space as the form (without
imposing aesthetic criteria). Subsequently, Krier characterizes urban space as the “external space”, “all
types of space between buildings in towns and other localities.” The concept of urban space needs to
take into consideration the physical, social and symbolic aspects at the same time. Urban spaces are
important segment of daily lives (Francis, 1987, p. 23). Such activities of daily life take place both in
public spheres and private spheres.

2.2.4.2 Public Space

Public spaces also depict a crucial and essential part of the ‘democratic’ community life,
particularly urban squares, a public property that serves as a site with the expectation of complimentary
discourse and free judgment of chose authorities in full perspective of others. Public spaces are
important components of daily lives. The public space concept covers an extensive variety of roles and
capacities in a variety of physical setting such as streets, squares, plazas, market places and parks. This
study aims to focus on the public urban spaces such as squares.

2.2.4.3 Urban Square

Every society has its own particulars for such urban public open spaces, every one of these
terms addresses a typical point which is: ‘the open space for public use’ concept of urban square. In
this respect urban squares have a social angle in appreciation of its public dimension and a spatial facet
because of its physical organization. Urban square frequently has been an image of social
communication and majority rules system.

According to Lynch, an urban square is the “activity focus” in the centre of dense urban areas.
He states that “. . . it will be paved, enclosed by high density structures, and surrounded by streets, or
in contact with them. It contains features meant to attract groups of people and to facilitate meetings”
(Lynch, 1981, p. 443). As a result, I think that an urban square is one sort of urban open public space
that focuses on the public space system, providing a forum for interchange, both social and financial,
and a focus for civic pride and community expression.
2.2.5 History of Urban Squares

The first city emerged 6000 years ago and city squares were established at the crossroads of consequential trade routes. An established earliest example of today’s public squares is the Greek “agora”. Democracy played a significant role in shaping Greek cities. The agora was an open place in the downtown area where political, social and financial activities took place. Greek “agoras” were public spaces for a wide range of social events, for example, political meetings, athletic and musical amusements, theatre exhibitions and business activities (Hölscher, 2007). The geometrical type of the agora was generally square or rectangle (Zeka, n.d).

As mentioned previously, the square has played a main role in urban life since Ancient Rome and this was much before formation of the modern street. Regardless of whether the square permeated eastern towns from western towns or vice versa, it is important to recognize that in today's world as a prerequisite for the realization of any phenomenon, it's the concept. In the urban culture book by Robert Cowan (2005), a square is defined foot space and a green space as a closed rectangle that all or part of is surrounded by buildings. So the importance of the walking role and social gatherings is the most important characteristic of a square. “In all probability the square was the first way man discovered of using urban space” (Kerir, 1979, p.17).

2.2.6 Roles of an Urban Square

This part of the study concentrates on the roles and functions of contemporary urban squares. It gives brief data about reasons of using a square and identifies the utilities that squares provide. Urban squares have a diversity of roles and functions since they are the important and necessary forms of public spaces that attract vast number of individuals with a wide assortment of activities. It is a place where people have positive social interactions, meet each other, have lunch, hold a friendly chat, watch the world pass by, read something, rest for a while or shop around.

According to Lynch (1992), a public space performs as a place where people can express, confront difficulties and take risks, all of which may create a condition of tension or relaxation – both of them needed for metal and psychological wellbeing of humans. They are the places where one can meet other individuals, experience diverse methods for conduct, or simply put, they are the places for "social interaction".

In fact, public spaces such as squares are the space in which diverse groups of people, with regard to their class and ethnicity, gender and age, are brought together, with the possibility for interaction and communication (Madanipour, 1996). In other words, the key element of public spaces is to motivate and make conceivable: "the formation of the richest quality of a multi-class, multi-cultural, heterogeneous society" (Carr et al., 1992). However, we should not forget the conventional role of squares, that is, their purpose to stimulate commercial activities. Indeed, even today, there is a strong relation between the commercial activities and open spaces with plan to utilize the advantages from their essence of places filled with individuals. Moreover, public spaces can positively affect the economic value of the urban land that encompasses them. In today’s world, public spaces, with their role as economic generators, are considered as added value and multiplying factors of the speculative development (Thompson, 1998).

Urban squares are closely associated with the public image of the cities to which they belong, often with special significance for the city itself. Related to this, Loukaito-Sideris (1993) would say that, by their symbolic meaning, public spaces contribute to the sense of continuity of one group or society, which connects individual members of the group or society together (Lynch, 1992; Moughtin,
2003). On the other hand, public spaces, as places in which public art is exhibited, take the function of “beautifiers” of the city (Carr et al., 1992). Besides, you can see the oldest and most common forms of public art such as monuments and statues, contemporary public art unites an extensive variety of methodologies, forms and contents.

### 2.2.7 Social Interactions in Urban Squares

A square is one of public spaces that it could be a superior incarnation of the informative role of a public space. It is a location for encountering conversation and discussion about furthermore a position of political social occasions, demonstration and protest march. A square is a place individuals can be in a well-known environment, open to green spaces, streets, buildings and managed by social standards. Squares have had different uses regarding the needs of the time and place of formation in the history of urban development. It has been identified by its functions of the spaces around and within. In the past, most economic activity and various religious activities, social and governmental have been done in this open space. Nowadays, the square is more for walking, refreshment, eating, drinking, shopping and watching surrounding but in both periods, the most important issue is the role of human and the priority of human’s presence as life and is the beating heart of this space.

You cannot expect a square to have the various functions as before but two important functions are still urgently needed in today’s society. On the one hand a square is a place to pause and comfort among the commotion of street and on the other hand it is one of the most important urban spaces that leads to the formation of social encounters. Social humans need a place with experienced mechanisms of collective life. Otherwise, many of the social ills that we see nowadays in the big cities will be inevitable. The role of squares in terms of educational, and also cultural and historical background, and identification of cities and regions is obvious and significant. “The measure of any great civilization is its cities and a measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares” (John Ruskin. Cited by www.urbandesign.com).

Great public spaces are the living room of the city – the place where people come together to enjoy the city and each other. Public spaces make high quality life in the city possible – they form the stage and backdrop to the drama of life. Public spaces range from grand central plazas and squares, to small, local neighbourhood parks. The combination of beautiful architecture with great public space creates the most beautiful places to live – places that express a life of richness and tradition, and act as a setting for life to happen. consequently, a way to merge together the communicative and the spatial aspect of public sphere is not only through contentious uses of space but through a consideration to public space as a public service that can be thought of as a collective project by residents and authorities alike. (Dewey, 1954).

### 2.2.8 Increasing Concerns of Urban Square

This section of the literature review concentrates on the recent interest on urban squares and presents the reasons relevant to it.

Akkar Ercan (2007) summarizes the recent increasing interest on public spaces, including urban squares, with reference to a variety of reasons ranging from new urbanism approaches, demand on outdoor facilities, social polarization and privatization trend, and in a general sense, globalization. With respect to new urbanism approaches, Tibbalds (2001) and Akkar Ercan (2007, p. 119) stress the recently emerged approaches in urbanism that are against the Modernist approaches in ‘architecture and planning’, focusing on the “traditional features” of towns and cities (Tibbalds, 2001, p.12). At this point, Tibbalds indicates that “the concern is once again for the scale of people walking, for attractive,
intricate places and for complexity of uses and activities. The object has now become the public realm” (Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007, p. 9).

Another reason, the ‘demand on outdoor facilities’ is related to the growing interest in such activities as outdoor eating, walking, cycling, street vending and street performing, together with the sportive young, middle-class ‘urbanites’ call for the provision of public spaces that are easily accessible from their houses or works (Francis, 1987; Carr et al., 1992 cited in Akkar Ercan, 2007, p. 119).

2.2.8.1 Why Public Spaces (Squares) are Important

In the urban design and urban planning discourse, one of the key questions that should be considered is precisely the question of importance of public spaces / squares and their contribution regarding preservation and development of social, economic and environmental fabric of the city (Pencic, n.d). This can be summarized as:

- Provision of appealing living, working and playing environment
- Encourage people to have healthy lifestyle and well-being through active and passive pastime (leisure), in a type of organized activities, walking and social interaction.
- Destination for visitors and tourists
- High quality public space attracts trade and investment
- Commitment to scene and visual convenience
- Opportunity for informal learning
- Central location for events and activities
- Opportunity for community preservation and participation, increased public awareness and upgrading.

2.2.9 Urban Square Design Criteria

The success of public spaces is in a direct relation with the existence of public (people); therefore, in order to maintain the achievement, public spaces should provide ‘what people want in an attractive and safe environment’ (Carmona et al., 2003, p. 100). There are a number of studies dealing with the success of urban places, some have a physical approach, and some others have a psychological approach. Furthermore, on the other hand, there are studies that give an approach that is a compound of both physical and psychological approaches. Within an approach that covers both physical and psychological aspects, Montgomery (1998) and Punter (1991) emphasize ‘form’ and ‘activity’, besides ‘image’ and ‘meaning’ (those mainly dealing with people, their perceptions, values and meanings) in terms of place making.

2.2.9.1 How to Make Great Public Squares

According to the description that is mentioned in the previous sections, we continue to address the issue of how to create these spaces and which measures and indicators to use to evaluate their effectiveness, open a huge field for assessment, discussions and action. Considering the substantial role of these spaces, not only in terms of what they are expected to prepare citizens and society as a whole, this type of spaces can be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Sociability
- Activities
- Accessibility
- Comfort
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- Appearance
- Degree of satisfaction by users

Appraising thousands of public spaces around the world, divulges that considerable places have four key qualities: 1) accessibility: the space is accessible, 2) action: people are involved in the local activities, 3) comfort: the space is comfortable and attractive (it looks good), and finally, 4) sociability: it encourages social communication (www.pps.org).

2.3 Conclusion

Public spaces embrace a wide arrangement of spaces, from old notable focuses to rural improvements. Their structure, uses and support bring up a large group of critical issues with respect to urban planning from the neighbourhood to the metropolitan scale. These spaces are viewed today as resources for urban reestablishment and new improvements – financial incentive, general wellbeing and prosperity, picture of the city, mobility, sociability – our feeling is that the need and the accomplishment of open spaces is before whatever else predestined by its capacity to unite two fundamental and vital quality whereupon all the rest depends: availability and communication. Today as public spaces decrease, worries for liveliness and live capability for the urban communities become greater. People are the primary elements of the city and without public spaces it is difficult to build up a physical and mental association in the middle of public and urban environment. Internet has turned into a noteworthy segment of our everyday lives. Other than its sparing, instructive and efficient advantages, it has likewise significantly changed public life. The Internet has made virtual situations where individuals want to invest their energy as opposed to going out. Social relations are essential for the union of groups, and local and national identity.

Urban squares are undoubtedly the fundamental component that unifies urban formal and informal activities of many citizens, and are the principal procedures of city life, affecting social, economic and environmental processes of the city. Historically, they cannot be separated from the city, as all most important events that merit to be remembered have taken (and are taking yet) place at the squares. Then again, squares are the most magnificent and most pleasant spaces of cities, and travels around the world and cities cannot be imagined without visiting the main city squares.
3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Sociability in Public Spaces

3.1.1 Introduction

Creating and reproducing sociability public spaces as a place of social interaction event in order to create sustainable urban environments, is one of the goals that has been highly regarded in recent decades. However, due to various reasons such as tendency to mechanized life, the widespread presence of various means of transportation and the change of cities’ image due to the dominance of vehicles in urban districts, increasing speed of movement and neglect of social values has led some urban spaces to lose importance and their role in different urban scales.

These existing spaces are not often properly responsive to the needs man as a social being and people look at urban areas only as a way for passing. Public spaces due to the absence of citizens, over time, lose their social dimension. In fact, these spaces encourage people to pass by rather than invite people to pause, attend and social communications. Consequently, experience of dealing with others, the sense of belonging to the community, meeting face-to-face and social interactions do not happen correctly. This is despite the fact that the use of public spaces is an important part of everyday life and public spaces operate as meeting places for people (Gehl, 2004). The main function of public space is providing and strengthening the presence of people. Therefore, social and cultural dimensions of public places have a special significance (Rafiian, 2009).

Humans as the most important factor in the dynamics of urban spaces require appropriate and effective participation in public spaces. Responding to humans’ social needs and providing the necessary opportunities in the field of their social experience, requires a space where public spaces have an enormous capacity in response to this aspect of human life in urban communities. Accordingly, the creation of public spaces at various urban scales that are available publicly and also can respond to the needs of all groups, is highly regarded by sociologists, planners and urban designers in recent years (Daneshpur and Chirkhchyan, 2007). Because these spaces are the first place to establish a human relationship with their community they can provide opportunities for social interaction and thus create a sense of a social cohesion (Madanipour, 2008, p. 166).

Numerous studies been conducted regarding public space that a large number of these studies have focused on the positive features of public spaces. As a result of this research, sociability and social characteristics of public spaces are considered one of the most important factors. In connection with the sociability as a main component, 'diversity' has been proposed as an intangible criterion and also the number of children, women and the elderly is mentioned as a measure (www.pps.org).

3.1.2 Sociability

Using keywords such as sociable and unsociable represent qualities of spaces where bring together people or makes them apart from each other. Sociability can be achieved with making social interaction and communication between people who use of shared and public architecture spaces (Frgas, 2000, p. 12). Public places with sociability characteristic are important in the socialization of individuals. In addition, sociability of public spaces promotes a spirit of solidarity, personal growth for all citizens, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or social and economic level (Efroymson, et al., 2009, p. 16; Kurniawati, 2012, p. 477).
A public space is defined as a place that is accessible to all groups and provides freedom, property and temporary right (Francis et al., 2012, p. 402). These spaces are those places where citizens and visitors can enter with equal rights and there are also fewer restrictions than other spaces. Moreover, many of spontaneous and not planned events happen in them. People communicate with each other, they move through the place or they sit and also they watch others. They are spaces where to exchange ideas and information also a place for the formation of a social network and daily life (Daneshpur and Chrkhchyan, 2007, p. 20). Users of these spaces experience an unexpected surprise and delight; playing, strolling, conversing and communicating, also taking a rest. There is no clear distinction between observers and providers. All of them are on the scene and they are a part of audiences (Shojaee, 2014). These spaces include streets, sidewalks, squares, plazas, parks, playgrounds, city hall, shopping centres, beaches and sides and also other forms of aggregation spaces.

According to Jon Lang (2005), activities such as interacting with others and observing people’s activities by providing social activities and socialization helps people’s personal growth. On the other hand, the social duties and obligations are clearer, supporting people by each other is increased and as result a sense of alienation from society is reduced in places where there is significant social interaction between residents.

Gehl (1996) believes that the design of a physical environment can be affected by the number of events, number of people who use public spaces and also the amount of time it takes for an activity and as well as being influenced by the type of activity. He believes that the creation of activities in public under the influence of some factors and the built environment is one of them. He also notes that the physical framework has no direct impact on the quality, content and intensity of social communication. But planners and designers are able to affect the possibility of meeting, seeing and hearing that this provides a background for other forms of communication. In addition to the importance of the number of people and activities in a space and also the importance of continuity of activities, the duration of time which people are in attendance at space is important. It is not sufficient just to create space where people come and go without hesitating a moment in the place, but also there should be favourable conditions to roam and linger on place. This is where that the quality of each individual part of the external environment is important, as well as the design of every single space, details and the smallest components are determinant factors in this regards.

According to Jan Gehl (1996), the number of activities can be considered as the basic activity in public spaces that is applied as important preparation by people to other activities. These activities include walking, standing, sitting, seeing, hearing and communicating which in fact, they must have an inviting state. He notes three qualities in public spaces regarding this issue that are as follows: protection, comfort and pleasure. Gehl has mentioned that ideal urban spaces provide a variety of activities and experiences for different groups of users. Experience of pausing in urban spaces and also using of these places continuously or sporadically are both important points.

Stephen Car argues that public areas must be equally meaningful and democratic (so that people are able to make strong relations between the place of their personal life and vast world, all the rights of groups are observed, to be available to all and also it provides freedom of action for all). It is necessary that design and manage of space will be responsive to the needs of its users (Car et al., 1992).
3.1.3 Factors Affecting the Creation and Promotion of Sociability

- Social interaction:

Recreation is defined as basic human needs, which include taking a rest and social communications. These different needs can be met by interaction in space (Efroymson et al., 2009, p. 31). Thus social interaction is considered to be a human need and also social interaction is dependent on sociability space to cover this need.

- Durability:

Long-term use or a long stay in public space which leads to the continuation of public space.

- Familiarity:

A feeling of familiarity with the surroundings.

- Freedom to hesitate:

Utilizing public space may include a specific activity such as shopping whereas sometimes getting into a space and using the place is without any particular reason. At this point this factor plays an important role.

- Facilities:

Existence of facilities and services in public spaces has a direct impact on social vitality. Lack of facilities can sometimes limit interactions. Facilities and services provide a comfortable space for public use. The existence of some elements such as benches and rubbish bins, effective lighting and also defined paths and entrances can make a situation that underlies social interactions. The issue should be considered because only leaving the house is not enough but it is also important to keep people outdoors. For example, walking requires the possibility of pausing in the space so that it needs to provide services and facilities where it is cited (Lokaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998).

- Accessibility:

Inviting public spaces and easy access to these spaces has a significant impact on people's presence in spaces. Access to public spaces is in the sense of openness towards a social presence in itself.

- Movement:

The emphasis on pedestrian movement is an important factor in the socialization of public spaces. Removing the movement of pedestrians is a destructive step in the human experience of the city. Certainly, people should be sitting or standing or walking in order to have noteworthy social relations.

- Activity:

Given the fact that public spaces can lead to the occurrence of both individual and group activities, creating necessary background for the presence and activity of people from different social groups can provide different behaviours in urban spaces.

Ignoring the relationship between citizens and public spaces neglects social and cultural values hidden in the urban public spaces certainly. Indeed, considering the sociability of urban spaces is attention to social life. In this regard, “the identification of the creation and promotion of sociability in public spaces is necessary to prevent the falling off public spaces at different scales” (BAGH-I-NAZAR,
In recent decades, the creation of public spaces has been an attempt to meet the needs of the human community (BAGH-I-NAZAR, 2015).

3.2 Environmental Psychology

Planning a vibrant and sociable public space, which can promote social behaviour and interaction, is a multidisciplinary task. Since this study addresses the importance of public spaces in social life, environmental psychology could be a substantial factor in order to plan and design a public space. Social psychological studies refer to the links between lifestyle and happiness and also behavioural studies show us that the environment influences our behaviour, which in turn influences the environment.

3.2.1 Environmental Perception and Spatial Cognition

Environmental perception varies considerably with regard to personal and cultural differences; people often see and illuminate the same scene differently. Now if this process occurs in an urban public space where people can socialize and interact with each other, citizens would observe how far it can help a community with intellectual development. Consequently, studying the relationship between human behaviour and the socio-physical environment has an important role in environmental psychology, which leads to recognition of people’s reaction to the environment and interaction with each other in public spaces/squares. Canter (1977) emphasizes the perception and cognition process in order to be aware of the stimuli in surrounding. So, in the following, the psychology of public spaces will be addressed particularly due to considering the effective aspects of this issue can help us to achieve a better understanding of public space and people’s perception of the environment.

3.2.2 The Psychology of Public Spaces

Public spaces serve various practical functions in providing a space for trading, meeting, conversing, resting and so on. Nevertheless, there is an additional feature to these places that can fulfil certain psychological needs as well as purely physical ones. ‘Psychology’ in this context affects people’s behaviour and feelings in their life.

In recent years, there has been substantial interest and study of the relationship between human behaviour and urban form by researchers and experts. Hence it has been found that this has had considerable influence on the design and management of urban spaces. “In terms of designing good public spaces, it helps to understand how people are likely to respond and relate to the space available and how they make spaces work for them” (Shaftoe, 2008, p. 51). Accordingly, researchers have stated that considering some factors have important role in satisfying the needs of citizens to use of a public space due to relating to basic human behavioural characteristics. The following will discuss the significant aspects:

3.2.3 Place Identity and Place Attachment

The identity of an urban environment is defined by the environment's elements and activities or events taking place within that environment. Moreover, urban places play a crucial role in preserving and developing identity of city and citizens. Where daily life is going. So, understanding the meaning of ‘place identity’ is one of the important priorities that planners and designers should consider. In the sense of place identity is illustrated how and why the individuals incorporate in spot as component of locale. Indeed, this concept indicates our memories, symbols, meanings and interpretation about a place. In psychological terms, place identity alludes to “the symbolic importance of place as a repository for emotions and relationships that give meaning and purpose to life, reflects a sense of belonging and important to a person's well-being” (Proshansky et al., 1995, Ujang and Zakariya, 2014,
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Kevin Lynch (1960) “defines the identity of a place as that which provides its individuality on distinction from other places and serves as the basic for its recognition as separable entity” (p. 8).

Furthermore, each person has an individual character that influences his feeling about the place and his perspective to seek a place. Consequently, this process makes a sense which is ‘place attachment’. Place identity is identifying ourselves with the place that we belong to; by the relationship between us and environment that called ‘place attachment’ (Gifford 2002). Individuals need to express a sense of belonging to a collective entity or place, and of individual identity, that may be achieved by physical separation or distinctiveness, and sense of entering into a particular area (Carmona et al., 2003, p. 97). Place attachment is defined as an important factor that affects the development of effective relation or link between individuals and specific places.

### 3.2.4 Intimate Places

It is essential to know and understand the characteristics of an appropriate environment in order to memorize a place and to have sense of attachment. Such places are being supported by interaction between people and different experiences of individuals called ‘intimate places’ (Karimnia, 2012). Tuan has pointed out the significance of our “senses” in the organization of human space and in our awareness of an environment (Tuan, 1977, p. 16). Intimate places have characteristics such as:

**Legibility:** Kevin Lynch believes that a good public place should be ‘legible’ meaning its parts can be recognized and organized into a coherent pattern (Shaftoe, 2008, p. 54). Indeed, a legible setting helps a place to be read and to be memorized. As Lynch indicates to the power of the image that to legibility as identified powerful structured image of the environment; where objects are not only able to be seen (includes visibility), but are presented intensely to the senses (Karimnia, 2012). The image depicts all aspects of city that are most represented.

**Sense of safety and security:** It is one of the consequential environment factors that people pay attention to because of its impact on our interaction within an environment. This means that this feature will significantly determine whether or not inhabitants choose to linger in a place. They will gauge how safe a place appears to be by studying the people occupying that place and also looking at physical attributes (such as the amount of light, potential hiding places and entrapment spots). For the most part, “people will feel more at ease when they see people similar to them already occupying that space in a relaxed way” (Shaftoe, 2008, p. 55). This issue has specific implications for the facilities and management of public spaces, as there is a risk a group of people (such as elderly, women and disabled people) will feel nervous and doubt about using of public space. Therefore, the place is better to design with visible and clear setting but on the other hand, another group of people prefer to be supported with a physical element and dislike to be watched while they are waiting. Consequently, at this moment, an architect or urban designer or urban planner will be faced with a challenge because they must satisfy all requirements of both groups.

**Crowding:** generally, public spaces are large enough to allow a variety of users to share it comfortably. Moreover, researchers believe that the tendency to be in the presence of other people appears to be based on several psychological needs. As humans are social creatures and therefore feel at home with other people around.

Suzanne Lennard and Henry Lennard (1995) stated that:
“Human beings require and depend on contact with other human beings. It is self-evident that to be in the presence of other human beings is reassuring! Perceiving their presence through looking, hearing and touching enables all to experience themselves as less alone” (Shaftoe, 2008, p. 55).

For various reasons, including social learning and social interactions we enjoy observing other people going about their business and leisure. A known example of this people watching enthusiasm is the popularity of pavement cafes where are place for social interaction. The reality is that well used public spaces with provision for endlessly watching the world go by at no cost. So, belief in “people attracting people” can be confirmed definitely.

Another reason why people attract people is their need to be together for safety. This need to feel safe in public spaces is notably salient for young people who are the population most at risk of becoming victims of street crime.

3.2.5 Interpersonal Distance

Quality and quantity of distance between individuals in a public space influence our judgment and decision in order to use of that place. Thus this factor should be considered to keep appropriate distance or proximity according to relationship. In many Environmental Psychology studies, this issue has been noted that if there is choice of sitting and lingering places and some are unoccupied in a public space, people prefer to sit on or stay in a vacant space with some distance from others rather than sitting right next to a stranger. Indeed, people who sit right next to strangers, where there is no opportunity to do otherwise, are treated with discomfort by those already occupying the space. Meanwhile, if the space becomes more congested, individuals have to accommodate themselves gradually more closely to each other, but always in relation to certain of unwritten law about ‘reasonable distance’.

3.2.6 Microclimate and Place

In the last few years some researchers have regarded climate as a dimension that is always present in the study of environment and behaviour. As they have mentioned the urban microclimate has an important role for the use of urban space. Climate is one of the fundamental aspects with a nested physical structure in places that influence the way we experience and remember a place (Knez 2003). Consequently, climate may have significant impact on concepts of people attitude to places. Thereafter, it affects emotional bonds of people towards places. Furthermore, both cases mentioned are directly related to attract people to attend urban public spaces. Subsequently, it is essential to consider this subject in order create social activity in public spaces. Hence some of these activities are influence by the quality of physical condition which means that the existence of some elements such as shades and shelters for sun and wind, make public spaces more suitable for different purposes.

“The characteristic microclimate is a property of an urban space that has a considerable impact on the range of possible activities and the actual use of it” (Ulla et al., 2003, p. 2).

As a consequence, considering the climate in order to provide a comfort environment is related to individuals’ behaviour and how they experience the urban setting (Karimnia, 2012). In other words, microclimate in a particular place can be considered as factor which reflects the quality of activities or social interactions that taking place in public spaces.
3.3 Activities as Social Characteristics

“… conversations can start when people are at ease, in particular when they are occupied with the same thing, such as standing or sitting side by side, or while engaging in the same activity together” (Gehl 1996, p.170).

Jan Gehl (1996) has mentioned that outdoor activities can be classified into three categories: The ‘necessary activities’ which are executed by people despite any physical framework or social situation. In other words, these activities are independent of the exterior environment and will occur under almost all conditions, such as going to work, school, shopping or waiting for bus. The prominent role of walking is the main subscription among these activities of this group compared with two others. ‘Optional activities’ is the second group that are carried out by desire and there is no pressure to do them. Moreover, exterior physical condition plays an important role for such activities to happen. It means that these activities will occur only when exterior conditions are enjoyable, when weather and place are favourable. They are in the scope of taking a walk to get a breath of fresh air, standing around enjoying life, or sitting and sunbathing. ‘Social activities’ include all activities that depend on the presence of other people in public spaces. Jan Gehl (1996) believes that the category embraced a various kind of activity such as meeting, conversations and children play and also passive contact as seeing and hearing other individuals. Proper physical features of space prolong these kinds of activities.

Squares as public spaces create an appropriate condition for combination of all activities, especially for social and optional one. As such, spaces become meaningful and attractive when all activities of all types occur in combination (Gehl cited in www.pps.org) . Diverse and essential activities that happen in public spaces can make an intimate place (Tuan, 1977). The activities in squares can be different, ranging from temporary and seasonal to permanent activities. The variety of activities have an effective role to make communication and social interaction between citizens and also encouraging them to stay longer. ‘Optional activities’ such as walking and sitting are possible to happen at the urban squares when the proper exterior physical conditions are provided. Subsequently, these activities stimulate people’s senses to attend the places and also attract more people there. Thus they have possibility to affect social activity. “What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people” (Whyte, 1980, p. 19).

Given the issue that squares can both affect and being engaged by urban fabric and surrounded activities, therefore the edges and corners of squares are as active and popular zones where people linger in, remain and start to conversation, eventually involve squares in social life (Whyte, 1980 cited in Karimnia, 2012). This type of engagement often takes place next to the pedestrian meanwhile design features also provide possibility for sitting on benches and watching people who walking along edges or at the square. Social activities that involve individuals’ sense, cause pause in their movement and moreover if appropriate zoon is dedicated to popular activities, it can even change people’s direction and destination.

It should be noted that a sociable urban square should not only emphasize popular activities to encourage and persuade people to attend but also should provide proper situation and place for walking and sitting. Walking throughout square and watching beautiful scenery can be very enjoyable for citizens if there is a path with respect to this goal. Furthermore, sitting is a significant optional activity that allows us to stay for long time for waiting for someone or enjoying the environment (Gehl, 2010).
Where people choose to sit in public spaces is often based on available choices for people-watching and provides opportunities for related activities such as social and cultural interactions (Carmona, 2010, p. 201). Whyte (1980) believes that there is close relationship between the appropriate places for sitting and popularity of squares.

Whyte’s investigation about people’s behaviour in urban setting indicates that people prefer to sit close together even though there are a lot of empty spaces. This behaviour reflects the fact that grouped benches are more popular than individual ones. In the following of his studies, this issue is highlighted that choosing a place to sit is important thus movable chairs are one of the greatest choices for sitting. Whyte (1980) is of the opinion that individuals also enjoy the freedom to sprawl. Another noteworthy and consequential aspect that is expressed is that a comfortable and colourful bench that is affixed to the ground may give a defined and neat appearance to the square from the perspective of an architect, but its static placement is unappealing to people who actually use the space (Whyte, 1980 cited in Karimnia, 2012).
4 **Case Study**

4.1 The City of Karlskrona

Karlskrona is one of the most historic places in Blekinge County and also it is the capital of this province which is located in the south-east of Sweden. According to the latest statistics which relate to 2010, the city has about 35,212 inhabitants and is located by the Baltic Sea. Karlskrona is spread along the coast as an archipelago (www.visitkarlskrona.se).

4.2 Stortorget

4.2.1 Backgrounds (Geographical Location and History)

The great square is located in the centre of Karlskrona, Trossö, on its highest point. The square is surrounded by monumental buildings as well as services and culture. The monumental square with its public buildings is recognized as one of northern Europe's largest squares – together with the very wide streets characteristic of the city. The Main Square has two buildings dating from the Baroque period. Holly Trinity Church / German Church in 1709 and Frederick Church 1720–1740, were both designed by Nicodemus Tessin the Younger. Both churches are active church activities and events. The cultural monuments are protected and are included in the World Heritage naval port of Karlskrona. Today the buildings function both as churches and visitor centre exhibits and information about the World Heritage Site. On the west side, the town hall is of neoclassical style fitted stylistically into the ensemble, although it erected later (1798). Today, the district court premises are in the building. The water tower in the square was built in 1863 in the archaic Norman style, and then worked as a water reservoir for the population of Trossö. Even the town hall and water tower surround the Main Square and are included in the World Heritage naval port of Karlskrona (Karlskrona Municipality, 2014; World Heritage Council Karlskrona, 2009). The sculpture of Karl XI is created by John Börjessons in the middle of the square in 1897.

![Figure 4-1 Holy Trinity church by Oscar Halldin, 1903 (Source: www.flickr.com)](image1)

![Figure 4-2 Frederick church, 1930 (Source: www.wikimedia.org)](image2)
4.3 Analysis of City Square with a Critical View

In this section, the city square has been analysed with the aim of promoting social interaction. In addition, the strengths and weaknesses of the public sphere are addressed in order to develop and enhance the public place to create more social communications.

4.3.1 The Square Characteristics

In the square, the spatial boundary is clearly defined, with wide openings and views in all directions while the buildings in the south do not form a closed wall and are not in line with each other. A public place is a general and common room for meetings and open discussions between people. Subsequently, as stated before, this square has great potential to become a prominent public space.

Figure 4-5 Stortorget (Source: www.visitkarlskrona.com)

Figure 4-6 Surrounding buildings (Source: Author)
4.3.2 Traffic and Location of Car Parks

Today, the square gives a chaotic appearance without much concern about human needs. There is no a definite path for traffic. Cars can move across the square often leading to conflict between cars and pedestrians. This problem makes it a dangerous and unsafe situation for passersby and cyclists, especially for old people, children and parents with babies in prams.

Figure 4-7 Chaotic traffic (Source: Author)
The car parks in middle of the city square and around the sculpture decrease the attraction of the square and also cause the square to seem crowded. Furthermore, they are an obstacle to enjoyment of the beautiful landscape of the city square.

4.3.3 Opportunities and Facilities
4.3.3.1 Pavement and Paving
In the Main Square, there is a mix of paving stones and cobblestones designed to control pedestrian paths across the square. This is based on the idea that where cars and pedestrians traverse over the same surface the pedestrian path should be controlled carefully to prevent accidents. Unfortunately, we cannot see a specific way for pedestrians. Therefore, people and cyclists follow their own logic, namely, “to traverse the shortest distance to reach their goal”.

Figure 4-8 Car parking (Source: Author)

Figure 4-9 There is no bike way (Source: Author)
The material used for paving of the square is inadequate. The surfacing is largely made up of cobblestones, which are a major obstacle for the elderly, disabled, wheelchair users and prams, as well as a real accident risk. Smoother paving is laid in certain paths, but it has an inappropriate extent and does not fulfil its objective.

4.3.3.2 Furniture in the Square

A monumental place should have a well-adjusted furnishing, which emphasizes the square’s status as a special place in the city. Today, a quite inadequate selection of street furnishing has been used on the Main Square so that there is no overall coordination of location and quality. The number of benches is sufficient but not adapted to the environment or to sit on for a long time. The lighting is not appropriate for the historic environment, or to contribute to a beautiful experience of the place in the evening, because it consists of ordinary luminaires for general illumination.
The central lawn with a sculpture and flowers also seems slightly out of place in this great urban space. The lack of trees and other sun protection means that it is not possible to choose between a shaded and sunny seat in the same part of the square. On the whole, it appears that the city square has been furnished in order to be characterized by fragmented efforts without mutual respect and a special focus on their place in the city.

4.3.4 Aesthetic Quality

Around the statue of Charles XI is a beautiful planting that people cannot enjoy from watching it because the plants are near to car parks and also there is usually a retail shop very close. Other flowers on the square are planted in pots. The only trees that remain standing are in front of old city hall, which today is residential. The available urban furniture on the site is not appropriate for the historical space.

4.3.5 Activity

The square is utilized to organize some activities during the year such as the traditional market (Lövmarknade), concerts, election information, etc. Each type of play occurs in principle not at all due to few features and insecurity traffic. There are some open-air markets in summer and when the weather is sunny, but otherwise, the square is mostly exploited by necessary activities. Two pictures below from two different centuries demonstrate this issue clearly.
4.3.6 Human Scale
A city square is built to serve as a parade site and to demonstrate the importance of the city as well as the sign of power. Therefore, the location and the monuments are on an extremely large scale for the size of the city and eventually the square has never been a primary place for meetings, discussions and the formation of public opinion. So, it makes people unable to find defined places to stay in the city square with pleasure.

4.4 Conclusion
The dominance of cars over pedestrians in city square is the most obvious issue in this public space. This problem has caused people to unable to enjoy attending the historical city square since they have a feeling of anxiety and insecurity in the place. Another point that makes it a less interesting place for social interaction is a lack of all sorts of attractive and social activities. In other words, the design of this urban space has prioritised vehicular traffic over pedestrians and their needs that are relevant to improving social life. Therefore, people prefer to meet, play, talk, stroll and enjoy city life in other places in the city rather than on the Main Square. To set the conditions that more people are tempted to use the Main Square, the urban space must be developed and redesigned based on inhabitants’ needs and also more attention should be given to pedestrians.

4.5 Solutions and Improvements
In this section according to the potential of this public place, some solutions are proposed to improve the city square.

- Making and designing a defined circulation pattern for car traffic and pedestrians in order to provide a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The parking places should be eliminated from the middle of the square and a new place for parking should be considered as it is much needed and it should be close to the city square.
- The conditions to experience the historical and monumental character should be strengthened and a distinctive centre should be created to utilize a variety of activities and events.
- The surface of the square needs to be renewed. Furthermore, the footpath should be covered with comfortable and appropriate materials are better to be different with the road for cars.
- Utilizing adequate urban furniture in the public square leads people to enjoy attending the place. Urban furniture should be designed according to the space.
- Using several type of lights with different (Lux)\(^1\) to illuminate each part of city square.
- Design a specific landscape with more greenery space. The new seating landscape means improved conditions for people to meet and converse.
- More attention to visibility of the sculpture of Karl XI that is an identity sign related to history of Karlskrona. Moreover, adding some small sculptures on different sides of square and close to main statue which can reflect history and culture of the city.
- Creating new activities to make attractive public space and providing enough places to hold social activity in square.
- According to the size of square that it has extremely large scale, this square needs some defined and purposeful places where people can gather to communicate with each other.

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\(^1\) The lux (symbol: lx) is the SI unit of illuminance and luminous emittance, measuring luminous flux per unit area. It is equal to one lumen per square metre. In photometry, this is used as a measure of the intensity, as perceived by the human eye, of light that hits or passes through a surface (www.wikipedia.com).
5 Site Analysis

5.1 History

For more than 300 years, the area around of Fish Market had great importance for the city's port, trade, markets and food imports. As the name suggests, Fisktorget square has been a significant place for fish trade in Karlskrona. Before the Fisktorget was built in the 1870s, a large amount of Karlskrona trade was along Borgmästarekajen where fishermen and farmers moored and sold their goods directly from the boats (Berup and Ström 2005, p.102).

Figure 5-1 Fisktorget in the 1930s (Source: Berup and Ström 2005, p. 107)

Figure 5-2 Fisktorget in 1895 (Source: Berup and Ström 2005, p. 107)

During the 1850s, a series of infrastructure investments in Karlskrona were made, including the construction of a beach road along the existing Fisktorget. In the 1870s, the city's need increased for a larger and more appropriate fish market. Therefore, intensive work started to build a new fish market. A bazaar was built in adjacent to the Fisktorget to provide a space for small shops which started a new retail culture in Karlskrona (Berup and Ström 2005, pp. 102–104). Fisktorget came to be an important place for trading in Karlskrona with a daily throng of people who passed to and from work, housing and trade.
5.2 Current Situation

Fish Square is located on the island of Trossö in Karlskrona Archipelago. Trossö constitutes the centre of Karlskrona and in 2008 measured the population of Trossö, including Salto, Ekholmen, Björkholmen and Stumholmen, around 11 000 inhabitants, which them corresponded to 17% of the total municipal population (Karlskrona kommun, 2010, p. 36). In the current situation, Fisktorget has now became the focal centre of interest for the Karlskrona archipelago tours and passenger ferry operations (Visitkarlskrona.se/sv).

Fish Square is located just west of downtown Trossö city center, about 350 metres from the Main Square, right next Borgmästarefjorden street. The square occupies an area of about 4000 square metres and is surrounded by homes with small businesses on the ground floor, Scandic Hotel and Blekinge Museum (www.Eniro.com). Since 2010, Scandic Hotel has replaced the parking spaces that were previously on location.
5.3 Identity
As mentioned earlier, the history of Fish Square has a clear identity as a venue for fish sales and social communication. The history is preserved by the surrounding buildings and the square design but there are no specific and prominent features. The exception at the Fish Square, is a statue of an old woman who is selling fish. The “Fiskargumman” (Fisherman’s wife) statue by Erik Höglund is a reminder of the time when the women would row in from the islands and sell their fish to the town residents. She is asking all passersby with her gesture if they want to "buy some fish today?" This element partially can remind people the site’s historic character and identity.

Looking at Fish Square structural composition, there is an absence of a clear form of space that existence of it can help to strengthen readability of the square and presence in the city. Scandic Hotel can be seen as an important component of the square’s current identity because the hotel building has defined and created in this area. It may seem that the ferry operations building in front of hotel is an obstacle to create a character and identity for this square but the main reason is the lack of specific activities.

Figure 5-6 Different views of the square (Source: author)
5.4 Analysis of the Site

Analysis is designed for an organization to easily create a systematic picture of its role and potential in relation to the environment, but it is also appropriate to develop a structured surface that provide valuable guidance in the planning of a place or city (National Housing Board, 2006). The analysis is in the process of redesign proposal used as a tool to get a comprehensive picture of the square. This site analysis intends to highlight the problems and strengths that there are at Fish Square in the current situation and propose potential improvement opportunities that can be the basis for preparation of design proposal.

5.4.1 Urban Location

The Fish Market is located on Trossö, which is the central district of the medium-sized city of Karlskrona. Urban design experts believe that the best locations to design public spaces are where they attract a variety of users. The proximity of Fish Square location to the city centre can play an important role to conduct city life to this public space. In other words, the significant factor can be exploited in order to strengthen the presence of people in the square, and thereby it increases social interaction. Subsequently, it should be mentioned that there are some functional spaces surrounding Fish Square which can have noticeable effect on the development and enhancement of social communications in a public space. Fisktorget is one of five important and strategic locations in Trossö.

![City locations for activities](Drawn by author)
5.4.2 Form

An urban square’s form is affected by the surrounding environment. Although the word “square” points out a form itself, an urban square can be in any form such as rectangle, square, circle, triangle or amorphous. The form of Fisktorget is dominated by two factors that affect it. One of them is the sea, which has given it a characteristic in the northern part. This element has been associated with the identity and history of this place for many years. The other factor is Skeppsgossegatan Street, which has important role in connecting functional surrounding buildings.

5.4.3 Size

Size is another feature of urban public squares that can be influenced on using of public space. Visual perception and human scale should be taken into account by designers and planners, hence they give serious consideration to determine the size of urban square. In this regard, several researchers have identified the ideal size of public squares. For instance, Lynch suggests 12 to 24 metres along each side and also 100 metres for larger squares (Memluk, 2013), while Gehl proposed a dimension of 30–35 metres for the optimum size of a square with a view to people being able to recognize other people in the place from one side to the other (Gehl, 1996). Moreover, Gehl has indicated a maximum measurement of 70–100 metres because this is the maximum distance that inhabitants are able to see events.

In Fisktorget the most distance on horizontal line and vertical line are respectively 130 metres and 53 metres. In consequence, there is appropriate visual space in the middle of the square.

Figure 5-8 The size of the square (Drawn by author)
5.4.4 Accessibility

In Fish Square you can see a defined traffic connection, however these relationships, particularly in relation to pedestrians, are not distinguished around Fish Square. There are a few pedestrian paths that have been thoughtfully designed in order to connect Fish Square. Moreover, accessibility on the square itself can also be criticized since uneven paving makes it complicated to access and walk on for the disabled, elderly, children and cyclists. A significant accessibility network of high quality is important as it absolutely impacts on people utilization of places.

According to the observations, motor vehicle traffic on Borgmästarekajen Street and Skeppgossegatan Street is relatively high and there is some heavy traffic. So, it is completely clear that using a car has priority over pedestrians and cycling paths in and around this public space.
5.4.5 Function

Fisktorget is surrounded by a relatively functional mixed environment. Its proximity to workplaces, services and residential area has created a fantastic potential to attend people and enjoy a high level of social life.

In the west is Scandic Hotel and conference business, residential district, commercial activities on the ground floors are in the south and the east is Blekinge museum. There are some barriers such as parking spaces or car road between square and these places except Scandic Hotel. In other words, all places except for Scandic Hotel have been connected to the square indirectly.

Fisktorget is just used for events that have been planned already or some temporary activities that need a large space, whereas the square is a relatively attractive location with proximity to both the sea and the city centre. The movement pattern of the place is characterized by people who take a short cut across the square on their way to or from downtown and nearby neighbourhoods. Indeed, there are a few citizens who choose the place to stop and stay at the site.

There are two spaces that can be seen as a highlight point within the site. One of them is Scandic Hotel and the other one is the archipelago traffic kiosk, which is related to ferry operations and the harbour bus. There is a huge contrast between the two places’ facades.
5.4.6 Visual Quality and Environmental Facilities

Attention to detail including visual and environmental aspects is essential because this consideration makes it a pleasant place for social communications in the city. Furthermore, inhabitants will find that their satisfaction is very important, so they will be persuaded and encouraged to use that public space.

As indicated earlier, historical Karlskrona and the urban environment have provided a great potential for more city life but it seems that the city is adapted to more driving than walking. There is a strong relationship between visual quality and a walkway, which is why the existence of path for walking improves visual elements.

The eastern part of the square has a monument in the form of a sculpture of a “fisherman’s wife” created by Erik Höglund. Around the statue there are benches and stone vases.

In the northeast, at the edge of the water two spots have been designed for meeting and leisure. One of them is built in wood where is called “Sun Deck”. Another part is made with granite that is also an entry square to Scandic Hotel. At the wooden deck is a sculpture in black granite and glass by the artist Pål Svensson, named “Doldrum”.

In front of the Scandic building and western part, there is Blekinge traffic kiosk to sell harbour bus tickets. Its location and structure has a negative effect for visual interaction on the square.

Figure 5-13 Visual quality and environmental facilities (Source: Author)
In the south and east, the promenade at Skeppsgossegatan and Borgmästarekajen Street is an asphalt belt that is divided into a bicycle path and walkway.

*Figure 5-14 Bicycle path and walkway (Source: Author)*

It is clearly evident that the lack of facilities such as suitable and comfortable benches and thoughtful greenery design has spoiled opportunities for use for inhabitants. The surface of the square is covered by cobblestones which helps to define the urban space, although this kind of paving makes it difficult for walking. Green spaces including trees and flowers are a few on the site. In consequence, these features give Fisktorget a hard character among urban spaces. In the evening and at night the square is dark and inhospitable due to inadequate lighting.

*Figure 5-15 Inadequate facilities (Source: Author)*

### 5.4.7 Microclimate

Karlskrona is a city on the water and often with strong winds that are not controlled on their way through the streets. Congested winds in streets and urban spaces are cold and annoying, which reduces the sense of the pleasure of being outdoors (Karlskrona Strategy, n.d.). Fish Square has an open design in connection to the sea, so it makes the place particularly vulnerable to the weather. In the following, the other important point about Fish Square is the dominant wind direction, which blows from southwest.
5.5 Conclusion

According to illustrations of site analysis and background of Fisktorget depicted in the last part, there are different opportunities for development and also instructions to redesign it in order to strengthen the identity of the square. In consequence, in this part it is noted how to use the potential for making it an ideal public place in order to attract people to the square and also to improve social interaction in city life.

5.6 Using of Potential for Development

5.6.1 Identity
This place has an identity and history of the city. Aesthetic values of Fisktorget and also its history can attract people to visit the place. Therefore:

- These features should be known to others by utilizing and emphasizing the history of the square.
- Considering the strength of readability aesthetic values.

5.6.2 Urban Location
Fisktorget is an appropriate location due to the proximity of the square to the city centre where inhabitants are in motion. The square has the potential to be more prominent. So:

- The connection between the centre and Fisktorget should be strengthened.
- fisktorget should bF integrated into urban life that is going on in the downtown streets.

5.6.3 Accessibility
An essential parameter for successful development of the square is a suppression of traffic policy at this location.

- Bormståtarekajen Street should be converted into an ordinary city street with two lanes.
- Leading traffic to the site by streets should be substantially simplified in order to get an attractive walkways to the water.
- The surroundings of Fisktorget should be have more pedestrian areas created and a high quality cycling path (specifically, between the city centre and Fisktorget).
- Use of clear signs in cycling paths and for pedestrians will make it easier for people to orient themselves to Fisktorget.

5.6.4 Function
The square’s area has a significant development potential that can be developed with its special character. Fisktorget is a natural gathering place for a variety of functions – marina, restaurants, archipelago traffic, harbour bus, retail shop, Blekinge Museum. A development of the existing features and adding new ones is crucial for successful transformation into a lively urban space.

- Creating various types of activities in the surrounding area for different groups of inhabitant in all seasons and times of day.
- Business activities around of square should be connected to activities in the square to increase people attendance in Fisktorget.
5.6.5 Visual Quality and Environmental Facilities
Definitely, giving specific attention to these factors can provide one place in order to achieve a strong and lively harbour environment that attracts visitors.

- The current mix of pedestrians and cyclists is not suitable. A real harbour walk should be created, separate from the bicycle path, with a quality coating.
- Pavement of Fisktorget should be reviewed in order to improve accessibility through the square because everyone should be able to move freely across the square (using paving with a smooth surface).
- The location of Blekinge traffic kiosk should be changed and redesigned based on a special architecture.
- Making more greenery space as an independent section is designed.
- Paying particular attention to urban furniture design and using them more, for instance benches.
- To increase the feeling of security Fisktorget’s lighting needs to be reviewed and improved.
- Providing a high quality harbour bus service to a number of islands will have a significant positive effect.

5.6.6 Microclimate
Weather is always one important factor that causes people to enjoy public spaces. To counteract the negative effects of weather, which includes annoying winds from the southwest site, some form of protection for the square should be provided.

- The use of suitable vegetation that will be green more time in south and southwest of the site.
- Design a protective cover for sitting places.

5.7 Use of Potential for Creating

5.7.1 Activity
There is no reason which people should stay in the square and also no one has designed a space to invite people to attend this public space. Fisktorget experiences a vitality around lunchtime, while it is very quiet during the rest of the day. Therefore, it shows the lack of activities that can present to people as a meeting place in the square.

- The square should provide different types of activities that can attract different user groups in all seasons and times of day.

5.7.2 Spatial Boundaries and Legibility
A public space must be perceived as a distinct place and also it must be visible and functionally accessible to passersby. Indeed, Fisktorget needs to have defined boundaries while it gives an inviting feeling.

- Designing a distinctive boundary while the identity of the space is defined clearly.
5.7.3 Circulation Patterns

A “circulation pattern” exists as an important factor in urban squares, helping people to achieve a more tangible comprehension of a square’s space in order to enjoy the place. Nowadays, the principle has been used in different aspects by urban designers and architects within urban squares. In Fisktorget, the absence of this factor is felt strongly in the following fields:

- Walking
- Pausing
- Sitting

In fact, considering these three aspects can increase the level of citizens’ satisfaction from the square’s space as a meeting place.
6 Design Proposal

6.1 Conceptual Design

As indicated previously, urban squares are one of most important public spaces where a lot of social communications and social interactions can be formed. Unquestionably, these places are the heart of the city that can inspire people to achieve the great sense of vitality in their life. Consequently, an urban square is the best place in order to promote a concept and also for involving citizens while the people think about it and enjoy it simultaneously.

6.2 Concept of Design

This design is inspired by a scene of water droplets after falling on a surface. Water has always been known as a symbol of innocence and purity. A drop is a component of a whole which has the same properties as water. In point of fact, in this design every drop is a symbol of a citizen that the sum of makes a society. In other words, this proposal invites people to have more empathy and social interaction in order to create a dynamic and vibrant community.

6.3 Design Suggestions for Fisktorget

In these studies, and investigations there was an attempt to reach an appropriate answer for the research questions. Subsequently, a design has been proposed with respect to the subjects which are mentioned throughout the thesis; literature review, theory framework and also regarding site analysis.

This section of the thesis indicates the main points that are depicted as design suggestions for the development of this urban square (Fisktorget) and creating an intimate and lively atmosphere in the place.

These features are respectively:
- Creating a diversity of activities for different group of people in order to invite them to enter the place
  - Design of a swimming pool (in summer) and ice rink (in winter) for small children.
  - Building a restaurant with tent structure and intimate space due to indicating the issue that some percentages are allocated to charity.
  - Making a station for “jet ski”.
  - Providing a place for canoeing.
- A design of place considering the three elements:
  1. Walking
  2. Sitting
  3. Pausing (waiting)

**Walking:**
- To define a walkway throughout the square.
- Use a variety of paving in connection with space function.
- Provide different walkways throughout the square and avoid a boring and steady path.
- To set a walkway next to the sculpture to emphasize the aesthetic visual.
- Making sense of curiosity on walkways for users.

**Sitting:**
- The use of diverse benches to sit on.
- Considering the view of people while they are sitting on benches.
- Making a suitable distance between benches for improving social communication in the place.
- Use of adequate lighting in the square.
- Set the benches down on the edges of the square and close to the pavement to observe people, subsequently the use of this theory ‘people attract people’.

**Pausing (waiting)**
- Utilizing greenery space that is near the sea makes pleasurable scenery for pedestrians to wait and enjoy the space.
- Considering urban planning and design issues:
  - To separate the walkway and bikeway from roadway by greenery line.
  - Create a bikeway for cyclists with special and distinct material.
  - Maintain the historical paving in the shoreline.
  - Allocate a space for bicycle parking.
- Pay attention to architectural issues
  - Design of an ‘archipelago traffic kiosk’ with regard to the function space.
  - Design of two rooms with different structures at either side of the swimming pool.
  - Design of a canopy to define a distinct space for people who are waiting to go on a boat.
Importance of Urban Squares as Public Space in Social Life

Figure 6-2 Function map (Designed by author)


Figure 6-3 Design proposal (Designed by author)
Importance of Urban Squares as Public Space in Social Life

Figure 6-4 Design proposal (Designed by author)

Figure 6-5 Design proposal (Designed by author)
Importance of Urban Squares as Public Space in Social Life

Figure 6-6 Design proposal (Designed by author)

Figure 6-7 Design proposal (Designed by author)
Importance of Urban Squares as Public Space in Social Life

Figure 6-8 Design proposal (Designed by author)

Figure 6-9 Design proposal (Designed by author)
A Final Word

Public squares have consequential social and cultural roles, providing people with places to meet, rest or stop and talk. These activities apparently take place where outdoor areas are of suitable quality. They likewise give substantial focal points, which show that visitors have found the heart of the city. Historic or otherwise momentous buildings need a theme, and squares can be an expression of civic pride, historic power and importance (Chesterton, 1997). The focal thought is that individuals need spaces in which they can think about themselves as citizens focused on political civil argument and influence; and as neighbours with common instructive and social needs. Without these spaces, citizenship fades (Mattson, 1999). As one of the noteworthy public spaces, urban squares are major city components in democratic and tolerable cities. Accordingly, it is expected to make and design urban squares to liven up public life and develop social unity.
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