

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PLACEMAKING EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

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ABSTRACT. Placemaking assessment frameworks (PAFs) are vital for guiding the design and evaluation of public urban spaces, yet their direct applicability varies significantly across diverse contexts, posing a challenge for consistent global application. This study addresses this problem by conducting a comparative analysis of three prominent international frameworks: Inclusive Healthy Places (IHP) from Denmark, The Place Diagram (PPS) from the USA, and the Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST) from Australia. This research systematically examines the objectives, structural dimensions, evaluation methodologies, and scoring systems of each framework with a particular emphasis on assessing how they address place values and qualities. The comparison rigorously highlights significant variations in their emphasis on functional, social, environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions, reflecting the distinct priorities embedded in their origins and intents. Based on this analysis, findings indicate that while all frameworks share common indicators, their emphasis varies considerably across placemaking dimensions. PPS emerges as the most comprehensive, covering a broad spectrum including environmental, cultural, and economic aspects, beyond typical functional and social considerations. The study concludes that the observed regional disparities and varied emphases underscore the inherent need for context-sensitive assessment. The insights gained provide a robust foundation for developing a tailored evaluation tool for Egyptian public urban spaces, aiming to integrate relevant designfocused indicators and balance all five dimensions to effectively enhance local public space quality, inclusivity, and sustainability.

KEYWORDS: Placemaking; Public Urban Spaces; Evaluation Frameworks; Design Criteria; Placemaking Assessment Tools; Comparative Review.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public urban spaces are crucial for enhancing individual well-being and contributing to positive economic, and environmental social, values. Assessment tools have been developed to evaluate the quality of public spaces by identifying indicators that meet user needs (Lorenzo, M., et al., 2023). This study uses Carmona's place values as an analytical lens to understand and assess the multifaceted quality of urban places. However, the inherent diversity and inconsistencies among these global tools can complicate their effective application and selection, particularly in unique socio-cultural contexts like Egypt (Elsayed, D.S.I., 2022).

This highlights a critical gap in understanding the strengths and limitations of existing international frameworks when applied to specific local realities. To address this problem, this study undertakes a comprehensive comparative analysis of three internationally recognized placemaking frameworks: the Inclusive Healthy Places Framework (IHP), the Place Diagram by Project for Public Spaces (PPS), and the Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST). The primary objective is to systematically examine how each framework defines and evaluates its dimensions, specifically through the lens of Carmona's place values, and identify their respective methodological strengths and limitations.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic methodological approach employed for the comparative analysis of selected international placemaking frameworks, outlining the research design, framework selection, data collection, and analytical procedures.

2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study utilized a qualitative, comparative research design. This approach systematically examines similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations across distinct placemaking frameworks, providing a nuanced understanding of their characteristics and applicability to the research problem.

2.2. SELECTION OF PLACEMAKING FRAMEWORKS

Three internationally recognized placemaking assessment frameworks were purposively selected for their prominence and diverse conceptual approaches:

- Inclusive Healthy Places Framework (IHP): Chosen for its focus on health equity and inclusivity.
- The Place Diagram by Project for Public Spaces (PPS): Selected as a foundational and influential user-centered tool.
- Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST): Included for its comprehensive guidance on creating successful public spaces.

2.3. DATA COLLECTION

Information for each framework was primarily gathered through a systematic review of their authoritative sources. This included official documentation, guidebooks, reports, reputable online resources, and relevant peer-reviewed academic literature. Data collection focuses on extracting details regarding each framework's objectives, structure, methodology, and evaluation metrics.

3. VALUES DERIVED BY PLACE QUALITY

High quality place is one which returns the greatest value to its users regarding meeting and sustaining them in healthy, socially rich and economically productive lifestyles that touch lightly on the environment. They may not be particularly unique, innovative or remarkable in any way, but day-to-day they successfully influence positive health, social, economic and environmental outcomes. (Higgins, D., et al., 2024, Rapanta, C., et al., 2021).

Many researchers discussed place quality in the built environment including Carmona (2019) who concludes: "Place quality is not a mysterious and luxurious aspiration only to be considered when things are good or only for the wealthy. Instead, as the evidence collected ... shows, it is a basic necessity of urban life with profound and far-reaching impacts on the lives of citizens today and tomorrow. It is so important to our basic well-being that it should be the expectation of all." (Carmona, M., 2019).

Public urban spaces may serve as a democratic forum for residents and their society, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, or views (Low, Setha & Smith, Neil., 2005). To work efficiently, they must be well planned, accessible, re-investable as required, and well maintained. If they are to be universally accessible, they must be developed, funded, and regulated accordingly. However, many public urban spaces do not meet this condition: physical and institutional design do not coincide. So, institutions have sprung up to safeguard the benefits of public urban spaces. Inevitably, the consequence is less than public: spaces are enclosed and paid for, limiting use to that required by the design and accompanying amenities (Madanipour, 2010; Rapanta, C., et al., 2021; Sorkin, 1992).

Matthew Carmona, a prominent scholar in urban design and planning, extensively discusses "place value" as a multifaceted concept that extends beyond purely economic considerations (Carmona, M., 2021). While his comprehensive understanding of place quality highlights five key "place values" that contribute to a successful urban environment as follows:

- -Functional value emphasizes that a high-quality place must operate efficiently for its users, ensuring accessibility, connectivity, walkability, proximity, continuity, visibility, readability, vitality and sittable.
- -Environmental value pertains to a place's relationship with the natural world, encompassing hygiene, biodiversity and nature, and sustainability.
- -Social value focuses on how places are welcoming and inclusive, social interaction, safety and security, comfort and stewardship.
- -**Cultural value** underscores a place's sense of identity and pride, cultural exchange, and celebratory.
- -Economic value relates to a place's capacity to generate business growth and enhance nearby properties value.

4. PLACEMAKING ASSESSMENT

Evaluating the effectiveness of public urban spaces through placemaking lens is essential for identifying the key principles of high-quality urban design (Carmona, 2021; Gehl, 2011). This process supports informed decision-making among urban designers, architects, and stakeholders while also enhancing crucial community participation (Sanoff, 2000; Tallon, 2013).

Evaluation frameworks recognize that urban spaces are profoundly shaped by unique cultural, historical,

and social contexts, and therefore must meet the diverse needs of communities (Madanipour, 2010; Mehta, 2014). Placemaking Assessment Frameworks (PAFs) are critical in ensuring inclusivity, aiming to make public spaces welcoming and usable for all demographics, irrespective of background or ability (Thompson, 2012). Furthermore, these tools promote the best practices, evidence-based planning, and stakeholder engagement. Consistent robust evaluation practices are vital for improving transparency, accountability, and the context-specific application of urban design principles, leading to more resilient and responsive urban environments (Hes & Hernandez-Santin, 2020; Forester, 1999).

4.1. OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTED PLACEMAKING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS (GPAFS)

This section introduces the three internationally recognized placemaking assessment frameworks chosen for this study: the Inclusive Healthy Places Framework (IHP), the Place Diagram (PPS), and the Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST). Selected for their global prominence and diverse approaches, these frameworks represent leading methodologies in the field (Mehta, 2014; Carmona, 2014). Table 1 summarizes their core features, including year of significant development or publication, country of origin, general assessment scope, and typical scale of application.

Table 1. Core features of the selected PAFs

PAF	Year	Country	Assessment Scope	Scale
IHP	2018	Denmark (DK)	Global	Site
PPS	2020	America (USA)	Global	Site
GPST	2021	Australia (AU)	Local	Site

4.1.1. Rating Techniques

Each framework exhibits distinct methodological approaches, procedural steps, and result communication (Carmona, 2014). Key differences exist in their data collection methods (e.g., observations, user surveys), stakeholder engagement strategies, and scoring mechanisms (e.g., binary assessments vs. multi-point rating scales) (Mehta, 2014; Gehl, 2011). These variations directly influence each framework's applicability and the type of insights it can yield regarding place quality.

4.1.2. Comparative Evaluation

This comparative evaluation systematically analyzes the selected frameworks through the lens of Carmona's place values (functional, social, environmental, cultural, and economic) (Carmona, 2021). The objective is to identify which frameworks or criteria are comprehensive for informing the selection and effective adaptation of existing tools to enhance public space quality within the Egyptian context, aligning with the study's overall aim (Madanipour, 2010).

5. THE INCLUSIVE HEALTHY PLACES FRAMEWORK (IHP, 2018) INCLUSIVE HEALTHY PLACES FRAMEWORK

Developed by the former Gehl Institute in 2016, the Inclusive Healthy Places (IHP) Framework is a data-driven tool specifically designed to address health equity in public space planning. The framework seeks to bridge the gap between inclusivity and health equity within the public realm, emphasizing the critical relationship between public space planning and equitable health opportunities. As shown in Fig. 1, the IHP focuses on four key pillarsdesign, and sustained context. process, programming-as foundational elements for shaping environments that support holistic well-being and social inclusion (Gehl Institute, 2018).



Fig. 1. Conceptual Structure of the Inclusive Healthy Places Model, Denmark, 2018 Source: Gehl Institute, 2018

The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework (IHP) centers around these four core components context, process, design, and long-term sustainability—to support the creation of equitable and health-promoting environments.

- **Principle 1: Context** focuses on gaining a deep understanding of the community's demographic profile, existing health conditions, systemic barriers to inclusion, and available local assets. This foundational knowledge is essential for setting informed and inclusive development goals, ensuring interventions are culturally relevant and responsive to specific community needs.
- **Principle 2: Process** addresses the social dynamics that help build public trust and civic participation. It underlines the importance of inclusive community engagement, fostering social capital, and encouraging frequent participation in public life to enhance collective identity and cooperation.
- **Principle 3: Design and Programming** offers practical guidance for planners and designers in shaping communal areas. It highlights critical aspects such as spatial quality, ease of access, diversity of users, and perceived safety—key factors that profoundly influence overall public health and inclusivity.
- Sustaining -Principle 4: Outcomes encourages the development of resilient by promoting long-term communities involvement of local stakeholders. It emphasizes preparedness for socio-economic shifts, inclusive governance, sustained partnerships, and ongoing investment in public space improvements to ensure enduring positive impacts.

5.1. ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The IHP employs a robust evaluation matrix consisting of four principles, 16 thematic drivers, and 52 measurable indicators—each supported by multiple metrics. The framework utilizes a wide range of data collection techniques to assess both social and physical aspects of public space. These techniques include observational mapping, behavior tracking (e.g., cyclist counts, bench usage), and qualitative interviews, reflecting a comprehensive approach to understanding human activity in urban environments (Gehl Institute, 2018).

6. THE PLACE DIAGRAM (PPS, 2020)

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a non-profit, interdisciplinary organization based in the United States, founded in 1975. Its core mission is to empower communities to shape and sustain vibrant public spaces that strengthen social connections and foster a sense of place (PPS, 2007; Yaralioglu, I., & Kara, C., 2025). Drawing significant inspiration from the pioneering work of urbanist William H. Whyte (1980), particularly his seminal research on human behavior in urban settings, PPS developed the "Place Diagram." This visual and conceptual tool is widely used to evaluate and design high-quality public spaces (Whyte, 1980; PPS, 2007).

6.1. FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

Rooted in William H. Whyte's (1980) influential research on the social life of urban spaces, the Place Diagram offers a structured, adaptable approach to understanding public space success (Whyte, 1980; Santos Nouri, A., & Costa, J.P. (2017). This visual and conceptual tool identifies four primary attributes crucial for a space's overall effectiveness and vitality: Access & Linkages, Comfort & Image, Uses & Activities, and Sociability. These attributes guide the evaluation and design of high-quality public places (PPS, 2007; Yaralioglu, I., & Kara, C., 2025) (Fig. 2):

- Access & Linkages: This attribute emphasizes the ease of access to and circulation within space, including its connections to surrounding areas, pedestrian permeability, and public transport accessibility
- **Comfort & Image:** This focuses on the physical and psychological comfort of a space, encompassing its sense of safety and security, cleanliness, overall aesthetic appeal, and the provision of amenities like seating and shade (PPS, 2007; Carmona, 2021).
- Uses & Activities: This critical attribute refers to the range, quality, and diversity of activities that attract and engage users, indicating space's ability to host various functions throughout the day and week.
- **Sociability:** This dimension assesses the degree to which a space fosters positive social interaction, encourages community cohesion, and allows people to connect with others, contributing to a vibrant public life (PPS, 2007; Low & Smith, 2006).



Fig. 2. PPS Diagram Developed by Project for Public Spaces, 2022 Source: Kent, F., 2022; Yaralioglu, I., & Kara, C., 2025.

7. GREAT PUBLIC SPACES TOOLKIT, AUSTRALIA (GPST, 2021)

The Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST) was officially launched in 2021 by the New South Wales (NSW) Government in Australia. It serves as a comprehensive resource for a wide range of stakeholders involved in the design, management, and enhancement of public spaces (NSW Government, 2021b). The toolkit is specifically intended for use by urban planners, designers, local authorities, and community groups to facilitate the creation of more inclusive, dynamic, and userfriendly public environments across NSW (NSW Great Public Spaces, 2021; Carmona, 2021).

7.1. FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

As shown in Fig. 3, the GPST organizes its evaluation through four guiding questions, designed to prompt a holistic assessment of a public space's quality: - Can I get there?

Focuses on accessibility, connectivity, and ease of movement.

- Can I play and participate?
 - Addresses the diversity and quality of uses and activities, and opportunities for engagement.
- Can I stay?

Pertains to comfort, safety, image, and the amenities that encourage lingering.

- Can I connect?

Relates to sociability, opportunities for interaction, and fostering a sense of community.

Each question includes a specific set of placequality indicators, totaling 31 across the framework, which collectively assesses performance in terms of accessibility, usability, inclusivity, and social connection (NSW Great Public Spaces, 2021).



Fig. 3. Great Public Spaces Toolkit Conceptual Framework, Australia, 2021 Source: NSW Great Public Spaces, 2021

7.2. METHODOLOGY FOR EVALUATION

GPST employs a multi-step assessment approach to gather comprehensive data on public space performance. This methodology typically includes observation, on-site photographic documentation, user interviews, pedestrian counts, and the completion of structured evaluation forms. Indicators are assessed using a six-point Likert scale, allowing evaluators to express varying levels of agreement or satisfaction, which provides a nuanced understanding of performance levels (Robson & McCartan, 2017). Final scores are computed as averages across indicators under each guiding question, with equal weighting applied to all indicators. This ensures a balanced and standardized evaluation public space of performance, supporting evidence-based decisionmaking for future improvements (NSW Great Public Spaces, 2021).

8. **Results and findings**

Table (2) illustrates that while the three Global Placemaking Assessment Frameworks (GPAFs)—IHP, PPS, and GPST—share numerous common indicators, they exhibit distinct priorities across functional, environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions.

The Place Diagram (PPS), with 20 indicators, emerges as the most comprehensive, covering a broader range of environmental, cultural, and economic criteria alongside its emphasis on functional and social aspects.

The Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST), comprising 15 indicators, also prioritizes functional and social elements, reflecting a strong focus on usability and community interaction; it notably includes functional indicators like 'Visibility' not present in PPS.

In contrast, the Inclusive Healthy Places (IHP) framework, with 10 indicators, concentrates on functional and social dimensions, and includes an economic indicator, but distinctly lacks cultural emphasis within this common indicator set. These variations underscore each framework's differing strengths in addressing essential elements of public space quality, providing an invaluable breakdown for understanding their inherent characteristics and informing the development of a context-sensitive assessment tool for Egyptian public spaces.

Table 2. Comparative analysis based on Carmona (2021)						
	Indictors	IHP	PPS	GPST		
		DK	USA	AU		
Functional	Accessibility	•	•	•		
	Connectivity	•	•	•		
	Walkability	•	•	•		
	Proximity		•	•		
	Continuity		•			
	Visibility			•		
	Readability		•	•		
	Vitality	•	•	•		
	Sittable		•	•		
	Total no. of functional values	4	8	8		
vironmental	Hygiene		•	•		
	Biodiversity and Nature	•	•			
	Sustainability		•			
	Total no. of environmental values	1	3	1		
En						
	Welcoming and Inclusive	•	•	•		
	Social Interaction	•	•	•		
ial	Safety and security	•	•	•		
300	Comfort		•	•		
01	Stewardship	•	•	•		
	Total no. of social values	4	5	5		
Cultural	Identity and pride		•	•		
	Intercultural Exchange					
	Celebratory		•			
	Total no. of cultural values	0	2	1		
conomic	Local Business	•	•			
	Property Values		•			
	Total no. of economic values	1	2	0		
<u> </u>	Total no. of all values	10	20	15		

Table (3) illustrates the proportional focus of three GPAFs: IHP, PPS, and GPST, across five placemaking dimensions. The Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST) from Australia primarily emphasizes functionality (53.3%), with no economic focus. The Inclusive Healthy Places (IHP) from Denmark equally prioritizes functional (40%) and social (40%) aspects, with limited environmental (10%) and economic (10%) attention, and no cultural emphasis. The Place Diagram (PPS) from the USA provides the most balanced coverage, with significant functional (40%) and social (25%) focus, and comparatively higher environmental (15%), cultural (10%), and economic (10%) considerations than the others. As shown in figure (4), this highlights distinct strengths and weaknesses across the frameworks' approaches to public space quality.

Table 3.	The ratio dimensio	o of covered pla ons for each pla assessment too	cemaking cemaking bl
Dim.	IHP	PPS	GPST
	DK	USA	AU
Functional	40%	40%	53.3%
Environmental	10%	15%	6.7%
Social	40%	25%	33.3%
Cultural	0%	10%	6.7%
Economic	10%	10%	0%
Total %	100%	100%	100%



Fig. 4. The ratio of covering place values for each PAF

Fig. 5. Source: Author

9. DISCUSSION

This study's comparative analysis of Assessment Frameworks Placemaking (PAFs) directly addresses the research problem of their varying applicability across contexts by revealing their distinct emphases across key placemaking dimensions. The observed differences underscore that each framework possesses unique focuses and objectives, which significantly impacts their suitability for diverse urban environments.

For instance, the Great Public Spaces Toolkit (GPST) from Australia primarily prioritizes functionality. Conversely, the Inclusive Healthy Places (IHP) framework from Denmark concentrates significantly on social aspects, while notably lacking cultural considerations within this comparative set. Both IHP and The Place Diagram (PPS) from the USA exhibit a shared emphasis on economic dimensions, collectively highlighting the diverse methodologies and priorities observed in global placemaking approaches.

A critical challenge identified, which forms a core component of the research problem, is the significant regional disparity among existing placemaking evaluation frameworks. These inherent variations complicate the establishment of a consistent global framework, primarily due to differing standards, regulations, and priorities that are deeply influenced by local cultural, social, economic, and environmental contexts.

The study's findings consistently indicate that while Global Placemaking Assessment Frameworks (GPAFs) predominantly focus on functional and social performance, they frequently overlook comprehensive economic and cultural dimensions. Addressing this oversight, particularly incorporating cultural aspects, is vital for developing inclusive residential neighborhoods, as it acknowledges and respects the community's diverse values, beliefs, and practices, thus ensuring more contextually appropriate urban interventions.

10. CONCLUSIONS

Placemaking assessment frameworks play a crucial role in guiding the design and evaluation of public urban spaces, yet their direct applicability inherently varies across different contexts, which was the central problem addressed by this study. This research directly fulfills its aim by highlighting key differences and complementarities among three prominent international frameworks (IHP, PPS, and GPST), thereby providing a robust foundation for developing a contextually tailored evaluation tool specifically designed for Egyptian public urban spaces. By judiciously integrating the most relevant design-focused indicators and ensuring a balanced consideration of functional, social, environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions, planners and stakeholders in Egypt can effectively assess and significantly enhance the quality, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability of their local public spaces, thereby addressing the identified applicability gaps of existing global frameworks.

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