

PSSS – Public Space's Service System: An Integrated Assessment Methodology

Summary

City's public investment and PS (Public Space) production have been growing with new typologies, uses, territorial scopes and also a new awareness of its quality. Today monitoring briefing's management, design, use and maintenance requires a stronger and systemic evaluation focused on service and return value: duration, social interaction, economic viability, sustainability over time. So it is necessary to consider PS as a network of places and a shared set of properties of continuity, interdependence and integration, linked to other urban systems - landscape, infrastructure, communication, etc.. Recent European funding of PS projects is already an example of these dimensions and the need for broader perspectives to assess their return value in a more transversal and less sectorised outlook.

A systemic perspective, fostering functional and morphological continuity is relevant for addressing service values generated or induced by PS, in a parallel to ecosystem services concept (RSG2010).

Such theoretical and practice advancement must include other notions beyond qualities of each PS alone (from quality standards criteria - visual, physical, identity), that existing assessment methods allow (PB et al 2002). This requires new frameworks for service value evaluation, PS assessment methods and procedures regarding its systemic characteristics of continuity, interdependence and integration.

The cost and benefit analysis of PS system is no longer restricted to local scale or canonic spaces (street, square or garden) but also other spaces, being landscapes (a beach) or infrastructures (an interchange) with larger objectives and municipal or metropolitan scales and providing services such as connection, activity, intangible meaning.

Potential value optimization of integrated resources in PS systems, thus requires new concepts and operational assessment tools, which are not available. This is the problem to be solved.

The output practical question is how to diagnose and identify systemic problems of PS and develop their service potential: the need for new PS, how to improve their use, diversity or quality, or to reestablish its continuity. This implies values generated in urban design to be recognized as the subject of services. The complexity of PS, as an adaptive system imposes the use of disciplinary interaction. The method we propose to reach this goal is based on monitoring systemic factors (such as attractiveness, usability, meaning, adaptation, vocation, potential...) to base decisions of spatial, economic and social nature.

What is the overall objective of the project?

- To develop the concepts of "system" and "service" as standard integrators of diversity and compatibility of PS common or collective uses (JG&BS2013), be them temporary, permanent, incidental, optional or necessary.
- To clarify relation of this with other urban systems to expand optimization and adaptability options (compatible mobility, social and environmental cohesion, attractiveness, identification and co'ownership).
- To develop a framework for PS cost and benefit rational, that includes a multi-dimensional perspective (morphologic, aesthetic, functional, infrastructural, technologic, social, economic, symbolic and cultural).

Research's strategy and methodology will address the PS production process, their uses and values in different times, including stakeholders and user's perspectives. A general reference survey will cover steps for the evaluation's "framework" of PS service value:

- Production process of urban space – services identification discussed with stakeholders.
- Basic definition of PS types (PB2008), focusing on systemic potential value.
- Tools' choice: services mapping, system properties, assessment components.

Team ensures interdisciplinary experience on PS issues. The two central team components, in Lisbon (IST-CERIS) and Barcelona (CRPolis) have previous research joint experience (funded by MEC, Spain). Action with official bodies for which PS is incorporated as a mission topic, while well-placed advisors overlook projected output.

Output project products are directed at professionals and institutional players:

- Case studies on value and return performance (4-8 PS systems in Portugal and Barcelona), including a life cycle review assessment.
- Production of a recommendations guide (guidelines, procedural relations, governance) and assessment tools for service values of PS.
- Dissemination: workshops with public targets, conferences participation, application by PhD and master thesis;



Project Reference

PTDC/ECM-URB/2162/2014

Leading Institution

IST-ID – Associação do Instituto Superior Técnico para a Investigação e Desenvolvimento (Portugal)

Partners

UB – University of Barcelona (Spain)

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CERIS

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Project Website

psss.tecnico.ulisboa.pt/en

schools joint exercise; guidelines publication;
resource website, final conference.

- Project's impact results from construction,
demonstration and dissemination of

concepts and tools, with systemic service
references of social, economic and
environmental viability.