Analysis on the Publicness of Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Square and Cheonggye Plaza for Future-Oriented Urban Governance

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Abstract

Urbanites’ improved quality of life has led to a critical view towards urban governance. The network of central government, local governments, public agencies, companies, and civic groups created a new urban paradigm, shifting from physical form to intangible value. Urban people, based on experience, recognized that happiness is closely related to the public aspects of life. Such results induced the government to build Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Square, and Cheonggye Plaza. Different from plazas of Europe with accumulated histories, the aforementioned public areas were established by either demolishing or transforming existing infrastructure such as a road, traffic island or overpass, into a void public space. Is it the voidness or the multi-purpose of these spaces which determines their publicness? This study, to raise this question and offer a direction, provides basic information on urban governance by identifying the current status and operations of plazas in downtown Seoul. The study first reviews previous literature on publicness, cities, and humanities, and then compares the operation methods and relevant organizations of plazas in downtown Seoul to understand their publicness. Through a comprehensive analysis, the paper aims to diagnose the operation methods and relevant organizations of plazas in downtown Seoul, and to provide a public value.

Keywords: Public; Seoul Plaza; Gwanghwamun Square; Cheonggye Plaza; Urban Governance

1. Introduction

Mega cities around the world have stopped indiscreet development and are now focusing on securing intangible value. For this purpose, countries along with their local governments and relevant organizations are pursuing various policies and strategies to both preserve the accumulated layers and at the same time have the new tracks achieve harmony within the contemporary city. Such mega trend of new urbanism is forecasted to continue on for the next ten years.

Different from the Western world, where modernism developed gradually, South Korea, in order to make

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up for the loss resulting from invasions by and suppressions from other countries, was obsessed with becoming a developed country through construction and infrastructure. As a measure to solve consequent problems, South Korea legislated and revised the [Urban Planning Act] in 1981 to promote land utilization, development and conservation. Afterwards, Seoul set forth [Basic Seoul Urban Plan for the 2000s] in 1990, [Basic Seoul Urban Plan for 2011] in 1997, [Basic Seoul Urban Plan for 2020] in 2006, and [2030 Seoul Plan] in 2014 before it finally developed the concept of “integrated design”. Various plans and guidelines established in 2007, including [Seoul Metropolitan Government's Basic Landscape Plan], [Design Seoul Guideline], [Seoul Symbolic Color Guideline] were starting points for defining “publicness” of public spaces, public buildings, public facilities, public visual material, and outdoor signboards, and this affected municipal strategies of not only Seoul but also other local governments.

As the need for defining publicness is growing, this study aims to define the concept and range of publicness, which is currently used as a vague concept, to review the factors of future-oriented urban governance. Relevant experts were inquired on how they perceived the publicness of Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Square and Cheonggye Plaza, and their views were used as the basis for this research.

2. Theoretical Consideration

2.1. Concept of Publicness throughout History

Literature review on publicness both in and outside Korea covered a wide spectrum. This is due to the polysemy character of publicness. As publicness is defined based on the value deemed appropriate by the members of the society during that specific period, the concept itself cannot easily be defined.

In the West, agora of ancient Greece was a central spot used for political gatherings, discussions, festivals, social and cultural events, and also as markets. Forums of the Roman Empire functioned initially as a marketplace but afterwards were used for political and religious purposes, and in the Middle Ages, public spaces for marketplace and religious gatherings were separated. During the Renaissance, various types of public spaces were established through large-scale plans, and among them, residential squares which were developed by private developers were places where residents could come and go. After the industrial revolution, pleasure gardens were provided for new capitalists and working class which sharply increased, and public parks were made for laborers. In modern times, public spaces became shopping malls in the form of atrium due to economic development and increase in the number of cars.

South Korea, due to both social and cultural reasons, was unable to develop public spaces as much as the Western world, and such public space was used for limited purposes such as commercial activities, religious ceremonies, and consignment. Korean traditional markets, Sajikdan(a Korean Neo-Confucian altar), Seonangdang(village guardian shrine), Eupsu(city parks) are some examples of public spaces in South Korea. In the modern era, the country lacked the environment to realize public spaces. Due to the historical experience as a colonial state, South Korea identified publicness with dominant power, and then went on to perceive publicness with a red complex as an aftereffect of the Korean War, leading Koreans to believe that publicness was the icon of resistance as the military rule of the country placed publicness in confrontation with government authority. Today, South Korea recognizes the importance of publicness to achieve efficient municipal policy and social equality. Nevertheless, the reason why South Korea is so focusing on visual projects such as [Signage Improvement Project], [Mural Painting Project], [Wall Removal Project] is because of the citizens’ indifference and the building owners’ egoism, rather than the government’s effort to enhance administrative convenience.

2.2. Value of Publicness

All buildings and facilities are no longer an individual’s asset once the construction is completed. The outer layer of the building must not aggravate the level of fatigue felt by pedestrians and drivers due to excessive reflectivity, and unless there are special security needs, the entrance must enable convenient entry and exit of individuals. Also, public buildings and facilities should not hinder natural ventilation by blocking the wind path which as a result reduces the rate of heat transfer, nor should it have pedestrians walk in dark shadows casted by high-rise buildings during daytime. Public facilities must have clear and refined purposes, be elderly-friendly, and consider how to maintain the artistic balance of the city while realizing their social functions. As such, the value of publicness of a given era is basically perceived as consideration and communication. Thus, publicness is a concept relevant to social sharing, environmental integration, and behavioral comfort.
2.3. Cities and Plazas of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century

Then what are the implications of plazas in contemporary society?

Public areas are categorized into roads, plazas, open spaces, parks, privately-owned public open spaces, and sub-areas of the city. With the exception of roads, which support necessary activities, all other categories of public areas are for social activities. Open space is a potential area connecting roads, plazas, parks, and etc. However, plazas are vital public areas where optional activities and social activities are systematically completed. Since the industrial revolution, parks developed for citizens gradually changed along with the times. In case of privately-owned public open spaces, usage rights for certain areas are provided to citizens. Meanwhile, sub-areas of the city such as overpass, pier, etc. have been recently raised as important issues for urban regeneration. As such, plazas differ from other public areas as they are physically void but are connected to the urban context throughout the human history. South Korea, since 2011, adopted a more flexible approach by changing the previous permit system to a reporting system. This is also an index demonstrating the contemporary status of plazas in Seoul.

3. Case Study

3.1. Selection of Plazas and Overview

Seoul, which was the capital of Baekje from 18 BC to 475 BC, became the capital of the Joseon Dynasty in 1394 and for the next 600 years served as the capital throughout the Joseon Dynasty, the Korean Empire, and the Republic of Korea, which located its central government, enabling Seoul to take on a pivotal role in politics, economy, society and culture of the country. The central business district, which is located inside the four great gates of Seoul, is approximately 7.2km\(^2\), which is a mere 1.2% of total area of Seoul. The study focuses on understanding the current status and operation of Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Square and Cheonggye Plaza which are located in Jung District and Jongno District.

Seoul Plaza, which was originally a traffic square with a fountain, was renovated into an elliptical-shaped plaza designed after the full moon and daechongmaru(main hall of Korean traditional houses) and opened to the public on May 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2004. The site is symbolic for South Korea's modern history as the March 1\textsuperscript{st} Independence Movement, April Revolution, and June Democracy Movement were held, and it was the venue for communication among citizens as Korean soccer fans gathered to cheer the 2002 World Cup Games. Total area of Seoul Plaza is 13,207 m\(^2\) with grass area of 6,294 m\(^2\), and the water floor fountain of the plaza is an attraction to citizens as the direction and height of water columns are controlled and is decorated with 48 lights installed around the grass square.

Gwanghwamun Square, a public open space in Sejongno which stretches from Sejongno intersection to Cheonggye Plaza, is 557m long and 34m wide amounting to a total area of 19,000 m\(^2\) and opened on August 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2009. Restoration across a total of 210 meters was carried out, thus restoring Yukjo Street(the main street of old Seoul), Woldae(a stone base), and many others. Also, on east and west sides of the square, “Waterways of History”, which is 365m long and 1m wide, was built. On the east side, there are 617 stone tiles along the bottom of the waterway engraved with key historical events that have occurred since the foundation of Joseon Dynasty to 2008. The stone floor of the west waterway remains blank for future events. Gwanghwamun Square also functions as a connecter between Sejongno Intersection and Cheonggye Plaza for pedestrians, an urban landscape surrounding the statue of Admiral Yi Sun-Shin, and a sunken garden which connects the square to Gwanghwamun subway station.

Cheonggye Plaza, developed along with the Cheonggyecheon Stream Restoration Project, opened in March 2005 and is located at the starting point of Cheonggye Stream, which is in front of the Dong-A Ilbo building. Attractions include the Candle Fountain, which features three different lightings, and the Palseokdam wishing wells, which are located along the two sides of the two-tiered waterfall and symbolizes the country's eight provinces.
Fig.1. Spatial Range of the Study

3.2. Analysis Framework
For analysis, factors determining publicness were extracted from literature review. Detailed items for each factor were identified by referring to relevant systems and reports, and selected based on frequency to apply as comprehensive items. Similar items were integrated and items with low frequency were excluded.

IBM SPSS V22.0 program was used to process data collected via survey. For quantitative analysis, five-point Likert scale was used. Before conducting a full-scale survey, a pilot test was carried out on the general public to verify reliability and check consistency and accuracy of the survey. Based on the result, the survey questionnaire was revised, and a total of forty detailed items were grouped into three factors and nine items for publicness.

| Table 1. Factor Analysis of Assessment for Publicness |
|---|---|---|
| Factors | Items | Cronbach Coefficient | Alpha |
| Sharing | Community | -friendliness | .835 |
| | | -solidarity | |
| | | -possibility of diverse activities through connecting with neighboring public space | |
| | | -importance perceived by community people | |
| | | -to consider natural characteristics in the region | |
| | | -to meet the identity of the region | |
| | | -to preserve and use history and cultures relation to the region | |
| Sustainability | -use of eco-friendly materials | .890 |
| | -continuous maintenance | |
| | -whether requirements of the community people are properly accepted | |
| | -whether wind corridors were will formed | |
| Integration | Accessibility | -access by mass-transportation | .769 |
| | | -proper parking place | |
| | | -facilities for bike-riders | |
| | | -exact signboards | |
| | | -convenient space path and arrangement | |
| Functionality | -appropriateness of size and area, arrangement | .817 |
| | | -efficient structure durable | |
| | | -finish materials | |
| Safety | -safe and pleasant pedestrian space | .910 |
safe and convenient usability for the mobility handicapped
safe pedestrian space from vehicles
naturally monitored and open space without visually closed space

Utility
-plans to deal with weather change
-organic networks with existing buildings, open space and streets with neighboring conditions
-synergy effects through connected programs
-diverse activities and flexible uses of spaces diverse
-support facilities

Amenity

Aestheticism
-proper size and design of lights
-types and size to meet surrounding landscape
-material and colors to meet surrounding landscape
-simple and harmonious design
-design with visual pleasure

Aesthetic visual quality
-to give less stress to users
-to provide nice and harmonious view
-to consider water front such as sea, rivers and lakes

Clean
-clean management of space
-comfortable and good image
-clean and cozy
-convenience facilities

3.3. Case Study on Publicness
This study was conducted for five days from February 22rd, 2016 by distributing 50 survey questionnaires to relevant experts, and 42 completed questionnaires with valid answers were analyzed. Among the three factors, Sharing received the highest score while Amenity scored the lowest. Seoul Plaza was perceived positively in terms of Sustainability, and Gwanghwamun Square had scores evenly distributed across items, and Cheonggye Plaza, situated beside the stream, had high scores for items in Amenity. Also, the following items showed strong correlation; Community and Safety, Sustainability and Aesthetic Visual Quality. Especially, Aestheticism and Community were perceived as significant factors for the publicness of plazas.

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results of the Publicness in the Plaza

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4. Conclusion
This research can be summarized as the following.
First, the concept of publicness cannot be defined within a determined range as it continuously changes with the values of the time. The value of publicness of today is based on consideration and communication, and is relevant to social sharing, environmental integration and behavioral comfort which originates from human behavior.

Second, Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Square, and Cheonggye Plaza displayed complex characters as they embraced the values and actions of modern day citizens. In order to investigate the publicness of the three plazas, factors such as Sharing, Integration and Amenity were extracted through literature review.

Third, the analysis result showed reliability of at least 0.6 for all items, verifying the reliability of the statistics. Among the items, Aestheticism had the highest level of reliability. Based on the survey conducted on experts from relevant fields, Aestheticism and Community were significant items in publicness of plazas.
As such, in order to achieve future-oriented governance in plazas located in Seoul, the cooperation and programs of various members of the society must be respected. Although the scope of research is limited as it was conducted on three plazas, the study itself may serve as the starting point for basic research for urban governance as it proposes detailed items of publicness.

This paper examines the square based on the viewpoints of the major public in mega cities. This study is very important because we expect it to continue for the future-oriented metropolis.

References