



Evaluating How the Concept of Identity Influences Urban Furniture Design: A Case Study

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Abstract

The extent to which public spaces—shared areas of communal use—facilitate interaction between users and the city plays a critical role in enabling a place to be embraced by its inhabitants, thereby attaining the status of an "urban space" and fostering a sense of belonging among its users. Individuals maintain human activities within urban spaces, including socio-cultural relations, traditions, and interactions concerning shared values. In this regard, cities' functional structures and amenities contribute significantly to cultivating urban consciousness among their communities. Individuals' relationships with the city are paramount for developing a sense of ownership and fostering urban identity.

At this juncture, the concept of identity emerges as a pivotal analytical instrument for scrutinizing both individuals and social groups, facilitating an understanding of individual and collective formations, and assessing these findings within the framework of urban and spatial design methodologies. Consequently, it is imperative to accurately comprehend how identity is structured within social groups and the broader societal dynamics. This study explores the processes of formation and differentiation of identity and subgroups through the lens of Tajfel and Turner's "Social Identity Theory"—a foundational framework in this domain. The research examines how identity influences the design processes of urban elements, particularly urban furnishings, and how these influences manifest in practice. The data collected for this investigation comprises responses from officials in relevant departments across selected cities, with whom interviews were conducted. In conclusion, the findings about the impact of identity on the design processes of urban furnishings as components of urban space are assessed.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between urban environments and design has increasingly emerged as a significant area of academic inquiry, particularly as urban spaces develop into more systematic clusters, crafted in inclusive and need-oriented forms. The concept of "place" is no longer confined to a physical area that solely satisfies basic physiological requirements such as shelter and nourishment; instead, it continues to evolve into distinct constructs shaped by the meanings and codes ascribed to them by the individuals who inhabit these spaces. Consequently, this ongoing transformation fosters connections between individuals and urban areas, which are enriched by various concepts, including identity, needs, discourse, tradition, historical context, and collective memory. In contemporary society, frequently referred to as modern, the urban context is increasingly characterized as a construct that embodies inclusivity, affirms identity, and responds effectively to the identification of needs, while simultaneously providing a platform for action-oriented solutions. The conceptual expression of these individual and space interactions is spatial perception. Spatial perception refers to the transformation of abstract and concrete elements that an individual acquires during his/her connection with the physical environment in which he/she lives into a perceptible form in the individual (Özen, 2006). Spatial perception also directs the individual's attitudes and behaviors within the physical environment in which he/she lives. This positions urban spaces and cities on a larger scale as arenas necessitating collaboration, interdisciplinary expertise, and participatory problem-solving approaches. Within the hierarchy of needs delineated by contemporary social structures, various stakeholders assume roles contributing to urban space and society. These roles may encompass

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the articulation of discourses regarding the city, which, at times, concentrate on spatial organization, and at other times, focus on the relationship between individuals and the broader societal framework. Such discourses have established urban studies as an interdisciplinary field rooted in normative, pragmatic, and positivist intellectual traditions (Cömertler, 2003).

However, in the ensuing postmodern era, individuality has emerged as the central subject of social structure. Concurrently, the evolving and transformative nature of cities and societies has influenced the trajectory of design as a practice. The allegiance to authority, which was prominent in the early modern period, has gradually yielded to a more inclusive model, wherein individual influence is increasingly reflected in urban decision-making processes. Consequently, contemporary urban design can be characterized as a participatory act. The designer, who is responsible for the act of designing in the design process, must analyze the codes of the individual and society in a proper way and carry them to the world of objects, as he undertakes a mission to convey the discourse between the past and the future of life. In this respect, the designer's analysis of all permanent and temporary values and accumulations of the individual or social groups plays a role in shedding light on the act of designing (Loos, 2012).

The presence of multiple components within urban spaces—including dynamics of local authorities, individual identities, city character, material structures, and traditions—necessitates a participatory approach. Each of these subcomponents possesses specific requirements and problem-solving frameworks. Centrally defined problems and top-down solutions frequently prove insufficient in producing coherent outcomes within urban contexts. Consequently, collaboration between institutional authorities and individual participants is deemed necessary. Although participatory approaches are often perceived as essential in interventions targeting urban areas, they are frequently disregarded. Numerous sources within the academic literature support this argument.

The fundamental premise of this study is to examine the interplay between urban environments, identity, and objects through empirical data. Within this framework, the study presents the following research questions:

- Is the concept of identity considered a design criterion in the creation of urban products?
- If identity is regarded as a fundamental design criterion in urban products, in which contexts and in what manner does this manifest?

In this context, one of the significant components of urban space—urban furnishings—is assessed in terms of identity and subcategories (e.g., cultural, national, and traditional). The dataset was derived from these assessments.

In the literature review phase, various key texts were examined to comprehend the production and nature of urban space. Works such as Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (2014) and Smith's *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (2008) elucidate the process underlying space formation. Simultaneously, Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1999) and Lefebvre's *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (2007) investigate the everyday practices of urban residents and the significance of social interactions within urban environments. Key texts that address the influence of urban authorities on space, including Foucault's *Subject and Power* (2014), Castells' *The City and the Grassroots* (1997), and Brenner's *For the People, Not for Profit* (2014), enrich the literature by discussing these issues from sociological and philosophical perspectives. These sources chiefly concentrate on the sociological reflections regarding the interaction among cities, authority, and individuals within urban space.

Beyond these sociological insights, this study seeks to evaluate identity and its associated subcategories (e.g., cultural, national, and traditional identities) through the perspective of user-object interaction. The analysis concentrates on urban products—specifically urban furnishings—as fundamental components of urban space. Consequently, this study employs a micro-scale approach to the intricate concept of urban space. It aims to investigate the implications of the interaction between identity and objects within this context. In this scenario, the interactions among urban residents, pertinent urban authorities, and design processes are assessed regarding identity and its subcategories (such as traditional, cultural, national, and modern identity). The objective is to explore how urban furnishings—as essential elements of urban

space—are influenced by these interactions and to deliberate on the degree to which the resultant urban products reflect and encapsulate identity-related constructs.

2. METHOD

According to a recent study conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2023, the top ten most livable cities in the world are ranked as follows: Vienna (Austria), Copenhagen (Denmark), Melbourne (Australia), Sydney (Australia), Vancouver (Canada), Zurich (Switzerland), Calgary (Canada), Geneva (Switzerland), Toronto (Canada), and Osaka (Japan). This ranking is based on several indicators, including educational attainment, quality of life, healthcare services, relations with local governments, and urban infrastructure. From this perspective, it is evident that European countries, which demonstrate above-average performance in these indicators, are positioned as urban centers that primarily meet the criteria for urbanization. Therefore, commencing with European cities, urban centers that have attained a certain level of urban development systems, possess historical continuity, and exhibit mature urban and social structures have been incorporated into this study, based on their capacity to satisfy the prerequisites above.

Particularly in research domains such as urban studies, characterized by dynamic and transformative structures, it is imperative to develop a methodology that neither constrains design research nor impedes data collection. Consequently, qualitative research methods offer a flexible and dynamic framework for researchers. Accordingly, the research methodology employed in this study has been constructed based on qualitative research methods within the defined parameters.

This study concentrates on urban furnishing elements within the framework of urban design. The variability among working groups, the potential increase in the variety of types, and the inherently dynamic nature of urban space necessitate a flexible and exploratory methodological framework. In this regard, particularly in design studies focusing on the interplay between the city, space, and users, the adaptability of the method to the research process and its revisability in response to emerging variables significantly enhance the effectiveness of the research.

This research has been derived from a doctoral dissertation conducted within the same framework. Following the identification of the study group, the next step in the research process involved the design of data collection tools. To construct these tools, the official websites of local government offices in the selected cities were reviewed to ascertain the presence of sub-departments related to urban planning and design. Based on the findings, the local government departments of the cities listed in Table 1—such as the Urban Affairs Department, Urban Design Office, Urban Furniture Unit, City Planning Department, Engineering and Design Office, City Council, and Regional Planning Office—were contacted via email. The content of this correspondence included an explanatory note regarding the research topic, the doctoral study from which it was derived, and the data collection process.

In developing the research methodology and the content for online survey study, a thorough review of the literature about urban studies was conducted, with particular emphasis on prominent scholars and their key focus areas. A notable contributor to this field is Kevin Lynch, who presents a comprehensive perspective on the interaction between urban environments, spatial dynamics, and their inhabitants. In his seminal work, *The Image of the City* (1960), Lynch employed cognitive mapping techniques across three cities to elucidate the components of what he termed the "urban image" or "social image." Based on his research outcomes, he highlighted three essential elements of an effective urban image: structure, identity, and meaning. By Lynch's framework, this study concentrates on the contextual and formal consequences of the interaction between urban furnishing elements, regarded as objects within urban space, and the notion of identity.

The rationale for primarily utilizing open-ended questions was to enable the pertinent departments to articulate their processes regarding designing and producing urban furnishing elements in their terminology. These qualitative responses can subsequently be analyzed to investigate the relationship between design and identity. Consequently, the questions were constructed to examine the pathways

adopted in the selection of urban furniture, the methods by which local governments communicate and exchange ideas with the public throughout this process, whether design professionals or mass production firms are engaged in furnishing decisions, whether identity serves as a design criterion in the selection of urban furniture, and how identity and urban furniture are conceptually interrelated. To enhance response rates and facilitate quicker responses from local departments, follow-up questions were devised as multiple-choice items utilizing Google Docs.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN SPACE AND DESIGN

Cities, which are established by communities to sustain their existence within a particular order and which play a significant role in framing these actions, also contribute to cultural accumulation by guiding interpersonal relations within a defined structure. Within this relational system, tangible elements—namely, material components—serve a decisive role alongside the abstract building blocks of cities. These components include buildings, roads, and urban furnishings that constitute the physical infrastructure of cities. When all these elements coalesce into a coherent and consistent whole, such places begin to be recognized as "cities."

In his definition of the city, Lynch (2010) articulates that it constitutes a framework where "clarified areas, distinct streets, or recognizable markers can be easily distinguished or readily organized into a comprehensive model." According to Lynch, a location inhabited by communities can be recognized as a city if it exhibits a systematic unity. An essential prerequisite for formulating such a definition is that the "place" must be legible and possess a fabric formed by symbols that enable it to be identified from an external viewpoint. Consequently, discussing a unified fabric comprising legible, coherent, and continuous units from outside its boundaries is feasible.

The extent to which public spaces—defined as shared-use areas—facilitate interaction is paramount for a locale to be adopted by its inhabitants, attain the designation of "urban space," and cultivate a sense of belonging among its residents. Individuals maintain social and cultural interactions, traditions, and engagements with shared values within urban environments. In this context, the functional structure and furnishings provided by cities for their users play a crucial role in developing urban consciousness within communities. Individuals' interactions with the municipality significantly enhance a sense of ownership and urban awareness. As "places" progressively urbanize and experience heightened population density, the necessity for diverse forms of public infrastructure has arisen. Consequently, it is posited that these public amenities, which constitute part of the city's physical attributes, have begun to impact the legibility, form, and recognizability of space.

When referencing the units contributing to legibility, one can comprehend meaningful compositions that arise through specific regulations and physical interventions defined by a system of rules, contemporary technological capabilities, and societal requirements. Legibility and continuity emerge from problem-driven processes formulated within a distinct framework. These challenges, over time, require systematic thinking and persistent problem-solving. At the heart of design methodologies lies a process in which a particular situation and systematically developed solutions intersect. In this context, cities represent a large-scale domain within the overarching framework of design challenges. Transformations and social movements have influenced the material components of urban areas by evolving needs, occasionally leading to their alteration or reconfiguration.

In the realm of urban environments and design, particularly concerning the research process that focuses on urban furnishing elements, the diversity of working groups, the expanding array of potential variables, and the dynamic nature of urban space as an area of inquiry necessitate a flexible and exploratory methodological framework. Consequently, a methodological model developed within this framework serves as an essential means for diversifying and enriching research data through novel findings, presenting a valuable approach in examining relatively underexplored or challenging-to-access topics (Bengtsson, 2016). As a result, in design research that investigates the relationship between the city, space, and its users, the method's capability to adapt to the research process and be modified in response to variables facilitates a more effective and responsive study execution.

3.1. The Role of the Industrial Designer in Urban Design Processes

Urban areas have consistently evolved from their initial forms to contemporary urban structures, adhering to a continuous trajectory of modification. Throughout this historical progression, settlements have been associated with concepts such as site, polis, commune, and city; these changing terminologies illustrate socio-cultural and economic transitions that have mutually influenced each other (Kavruk, 2002). Such transformations have profoundly affected cities' cultural and physical aspects, resulting in urban spaces being reinterpreted and reshaped throughout history.

All entities in the universe, whether living or non-living, possess a form that evolves. This phenomenon has instilled in humans the impulse to interpret, adapt, and reshape forms according to needs. Shifting needs and societal transformations have reconfigured every object or structure, and these changes have naturally influenced cities (Şentürer, 1995). As such, the demands of each era, along with its technological and economic conditions, have compelled individuals to engage in a continuous cycle of interpreting, evaluating, critically assessing, and reshaping the physical environment. As a reflection of this cycle, the products, structures, and physical spaces designed over time have gradually acquired their present forms. This systematic approach has led societies to pursue improved, more functional, and ideal forms—an aspiration reflected in shaping structures and products (Şentürer, 1995).

Considering that the individual and society are primary fields of interaction within the design discipline, analyzing identity from psychological and sociological perspectives is essential to ensure consistency between the designed object and its user or context. When design processes are executed without thoroughly examining individual or collective behavior, the resulting product, upon introduction to the market or integration within a space, may become an object lacking in meaning or clarity, ultimately evolving into something unrecognizable or alien to its environment.

Urban theorist Kevin Lynch (1960) addresses the interpretation and transformation of urban space through legibility. He argues that the successful design of physical environments hinges on the capacity to establish systematic urban textures that contribute to a coherent and intelligible whole. Lynch draws a parallel between cities and organisms, proposing that, akin to a cell's necessity to function harmoniously with its surrounding structures to sustain its existence, urban structures and their internal components must engage in a similarly interdependent relationship.

According to this approach, material elements must be conceived harmoniously with their urban context and reinterpreted in response to urban transformations. This process does not merely imply change for its own sake; rather, it encompasses the maintenance and preservation of existing structures by the requirements of the space, enabling them to retain their relevance and functionality. Consequently, legible structures hold significant importance from the perspective of city users. The user- the urban dweller—must possess the capacity to perceive, interpret, and internalize the built environment with which they engage. A sense of belonging materializes through this interaction and harmony, reinforcing the meaningful relationship between the product and its urban space.

As a subject of the design process, the individual contributes to design through various underlying elements and values. Chief among these are memory, which encompasses personal data; identity, which serves as a reflection of memory; and collective values, which arise from these interactions on a societal level. The designer is responsible for shaping a product's formal and functional aspects per these foundational codes, ensuring a proper connection between the user and the product. Consequently, the concept of identity is of great significance in the design literature, as it facilitates an accurate analysis of the subject who will engage with the object and aids in interpreting their underlying components. Initiating discussions regarding identity—an element that profoundly influences the relationship between form and meaning—within the design process presents the opportunity to contribute to creating a coherent realm of designed objects.

4. THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY AS A COMPONENT IN URBAN FURNITURE DESIGN

Cities serve as prominent arenas where modern societies become profoundly evident, acting as the primary locations for experiencing the transformations intensified by industrialization. These transformations significantly shape the identities of cities and differentiate them through their distinctive characteristics. The comprehensive concept known as urban identity encompasses the elements that set a city apart from others, foster its unique qualities, and influence the formation and evolution of these features. Each city embodies attributes that render it distinctive from its natural, artificial, and socio-cultural components (Le Bon, 2009). Urban identity reflects how societies coexist and engage with their environment within physical space. This identity manifests as an expression of individual and collective relationships and interactions. It constitutes a dynamic structure continuously reproduced according to temporal variations and evolving social, economic, political, and cultural contexts (Tajfel, 1979).

Numerous factors contribute to the formation of urban identity, including the city's historical, architectural, and artificial elements, its natural beauty, local traditions and customs, and the spatial and symbolic values ascribed to it by its inhabitants. These components transform the city into a unique space and enhance its value based on its inherent characteristics. Consequently, urban identities are products of thoughts, experiences, interpretations, and actions (Tajfel, 1981). These identities emerge as reflections of individual and collective interactions and are dynamic constructs reproduced in response to prevailing conditions. In this context, the city and space are in constant motion and renewal. Both encompass elements that mutually bring each other into existence. Space possesses specific qualities that shape its users while simultaneously being shaped by them. The most significant attributes are identity formations and reflections on the natural and built environment.

4.1. Identity as a Design Code

Although the concept of identity represents one of the fundamental subjects of sociological research, it also serves as an indispensable component of objects and products due to its direct impact on the user. In this context, it is imperative to accurately comprehend how identity is structured within social groups and societal dynamics. Among the studies that examine identity formation and its subdivision into subgroups, Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory is regarded as essential for understanding the structural formation of identity and its subcategories. This theory elucidates how individuals' group memberships influence their self-perception and behaviors. According to the theory, individuals construct their social identities by categorizing themselves and others within their social environment. These categories encompass affiliations such as religion, culture, nationality, and race. Social identity is formulated through an individual's self-definition as a member of a specific group and the emotional significance they attribute to this membership (Turner, 1982). Social classification enables individuals to differentiate between social groups and determine their membership in one or several. These memberships become integral to the individual's self-concept and delineate their societal position. This process further allows individuals to recognize their own group's distinct characteristics and make comparisons between groups.

4.2. The Classification of the Concept of Identity

Social Identity Theory offers a crucial framework for comprehending intergroup relations and the behaviors that emerge from individuals' group affiliations. It elucidates how individuals may cultivate prejudices due to group memberships and how intra-group solidarity can be established. Le Bon's examination of crowd psychology investigates how individuals act within crowds and how their identities may become diluted. According to Le Bon, individuals encounter a sense of anonymity within crowds, significantly influencing their behavior. Drawing inspiration from Le Bon's research on crowd psychology, the works of Tajfel and Turner thoroughly explore how group memberships impact personal identity, perception, and cognitive reasoning capabilities.

Social Identity Theory serves as a fundamental framework for understanding the influence of group memberships on individuals' self-perception and behavior. This theory examines the actions of individuals within social environments and the impact of group dynamics on individual behaviors

(Demirtaş, 2003). Ultimately, Social Identity Theory provides a significant perspective for analyzing individual behavior in social contexts and illustrates how group affiliations shape personal identity. It underpins numerous studies in social psychology and functions as a tool for examining individual behavior within group dynamics. Within the context of Tajfel and Turner's *Social Identity Theory* and the ensuing literature on identity, it is possible to delineate subcategories of identity—such as individual identity, cultural identity, national identity, traditional identity, religious identity, modern identity, and postmodern identity—as outcomes of social interactions that shape both individual and collective identities. From this viewpoint, identities are formed within historical processes and societal structures, and are not easily altered at the discretion of the individual. Identity is intrinsically historical and encompasses dimensions related to personal subjectivity. The individual can be regarded as a historically situated entity; therefore, identity cannot be comprehended in isolation from the broader social and historical context in which the individual exists.

Interactions with society influence the construction of individual identity. According to Berger, just as society is a product of human activity, the individual is likewise a product of society. This dialectical relationship illustrates that identity is formed and sustained within a social context. This interaction shapes identity and indirectly affects the environment and its components through individual choices and preconceptions. Individuals begin to mold their surroundings and material elements through the social groups or communities they belong to, whether through implicit assumptions or conscious preferences. Over time, this interaction manifests itself in both space and objects. One of the most significant indicators of this phenomenon is the emergence of distinguishable, legible, or recognizable spaces that do not simply replicate one another. In this context, examining the concept of identity about urban products, within the scope of this study, seeks to discuss how social identity formation and its subcategories influence objects and the built environment.

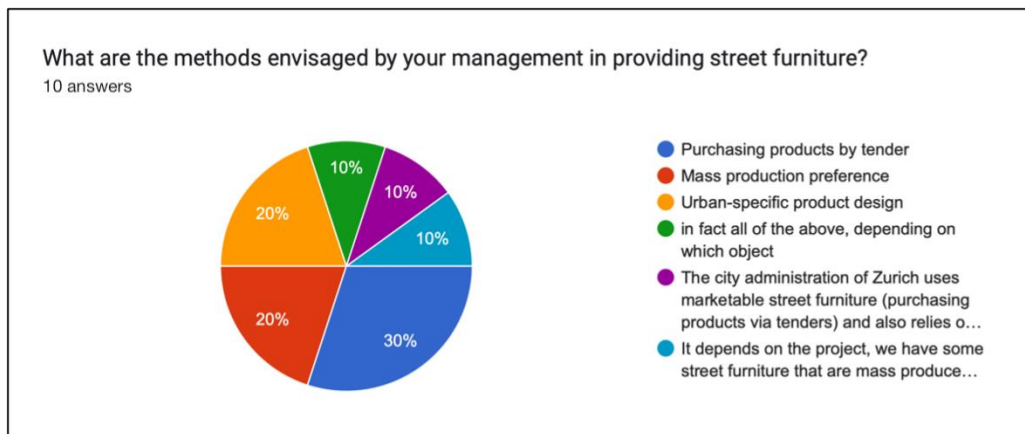
5. COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF DATA OBTAINED FROM THE CITIES COMPRISING THE STUDY GROUP

The inquiries that constitute the primary framework of this study and generally delineate the research parameters elucidate the transformations in the product design process within the realms of identity and object in this design research, which will be conducted within the confines of the city, user, and product. This evaluation, which examines urban-related studies from an industrial design perspective, will explore the interaction of urban furniture—products pertinent to the city—with the urban space, the methodologies through which local authorities articulate this interaction, the roles of individuals and designers in this process, and the impact of identity codes on the design or selection of urban furniture, all through their relationship with the city and urban furniture. In this manner, the contexts and forms in which identity codes manifest in urban products will illuminate the study's contribution to the design research literature.

Table 1. Cities and relevant authorities forming the working group

Which city are you answering questions on behalf of?	The Authority of Urban Design Unit
1-Vilnius, Lithuania	Indra Bieliūnaitė
2-Riga, Latvia	Evelina Ozola
3-Melbourne City Council, Australia	Andrew Roche
4-Seoul, South Korea	Linda H. Yoh
5-Prague, Czech Republic	Kristina Ullmannova
6-Rotterdam, Holland	Judith Marcellis
7-Stadt Zürich (Tiefbauamt), Switzerland	Carina Habelt
8-Warsaw, Poland	Anna Paz
9-City of Helsinki, Finland	Pia Rantanen
10-Ljubljana, Slovenia	Mojca Gabric

In response to the feedback obtained from the contacted municipalities throughout the process, design unit officials from the cities of Zurich, Rotterdam, Helsinki, Prague, Warsaw, Seoul, Vilnius, Melbourne, Ljubljana, and Riga engaged in semi-structured interviews. The research dataset was compiled based on the responses provided by the officials of the urban design offices in these cities. Among the primary objectives of these design units are: the formulation of design guidelines for urban products, the delineation of the framework governing the relationship between the city and buildings, the establishment of requirements for public products via tenders, the organization of product design activities and competitions, the analysis of the needs of urban spaces, and the assurance of the provision of material elements within the city by public demands.

**Figure 1.** Graphical representation of the answer to the relevant question

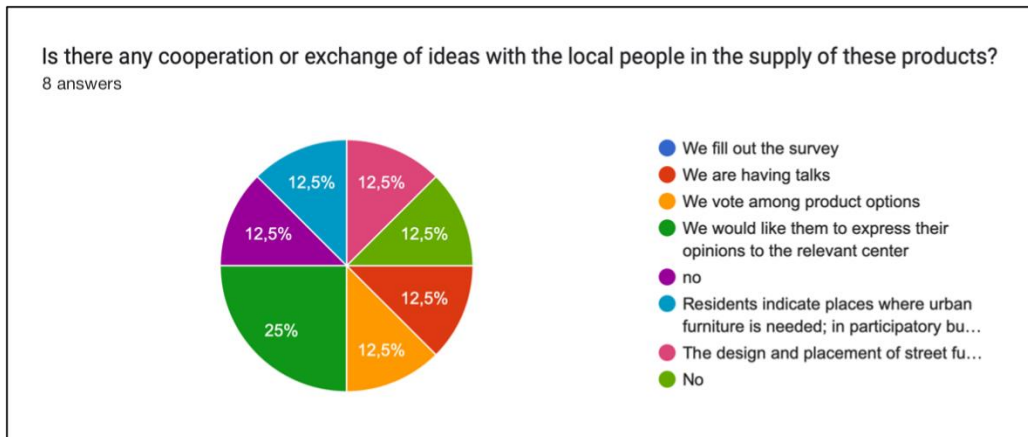


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the answer to the relevant question

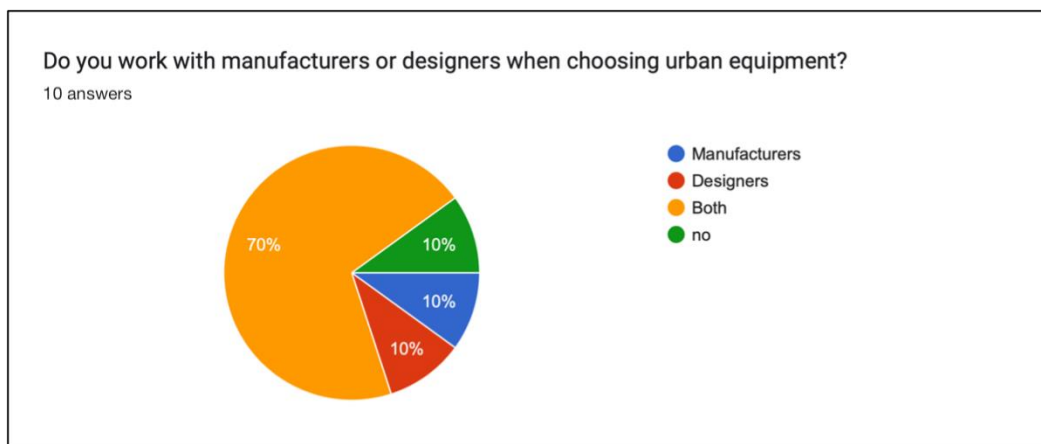


Figure 3. Graphical representation of the answer to the relevant question

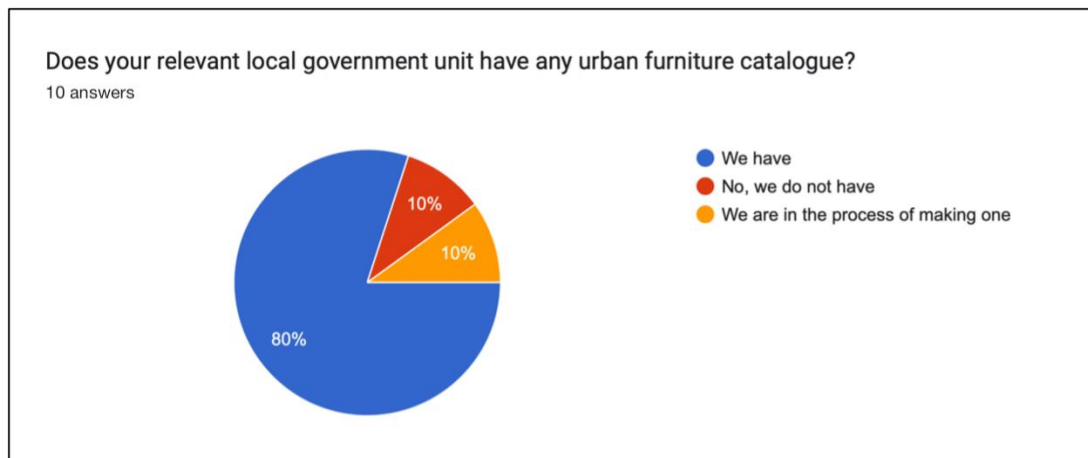
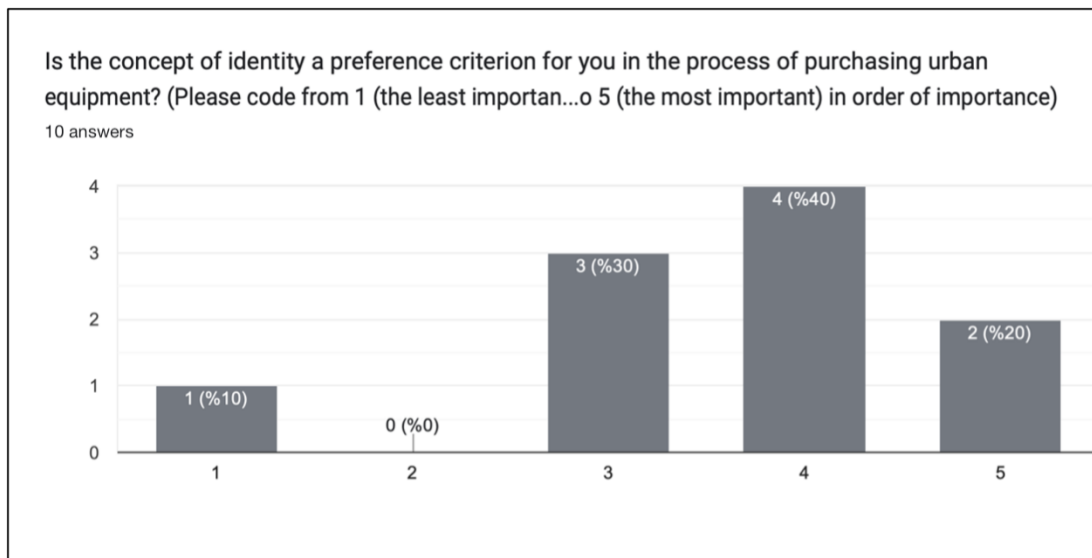


Figure 4. Graphical representation of the answer to the relevant question

Table 2. Representation of the answer to the relevant question

If you have such a catalogue, how were the products in this catalog chosen?
1- This part has not been answered.
2-The products were chosen considering the quality and price range of products, their availability in Latvia and suitability to the climate, as well as matching the styles of the products already in use in the cityscape.
3-Developed by industrial designers in consultation with various stakeholders.
4-Not that of(because of urban-specific products design, we do not have catalog).
5-It is one of many. It is important to have a visually appropriate and specific design, on the other hand many other criterions must be met: ergonomics, economy of investment and maintenance, durability etc.
6-Products that make the catalogue must meet our requirements regarding design, sustainability, accessibility, solidity etcetera. Before entering the catalog they are tested through carefully monitored pilots.
7-The standards and the associated catalog of elements (Elementkatalog) promote integral solutions in the city. Design, function, maintenance and costs are equally important criteria when selecting street furniture. Further requirements (maximum dimensions, colors, materials, etc.) are defined in the urban space standards.
8-Urban Architecture & Spatial Planning Department, or other city units, order individual projects of furniture like benches, waste bins, drinking fountains, etc. in variants adapted to the architectural environment.
9-Own city design and furniture by tender.
10-Some of the proudct were already in use, some of them were choseen on public tenders and some of them were design for some specific project and became part of the catalouge.

**Figure 5.** Graphical representation of the answer to the relevant question

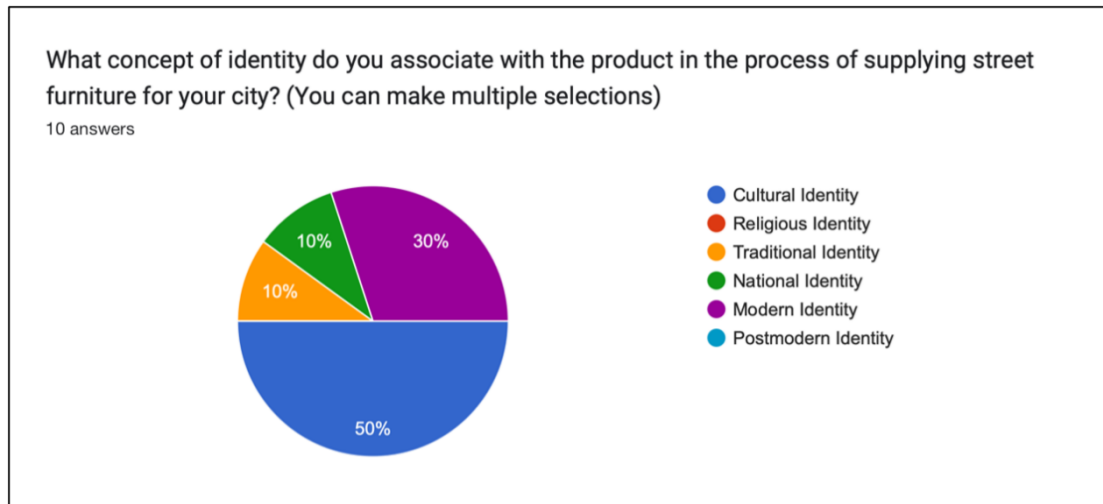


Figure 6. Graphical representation of the answer to the relevant question

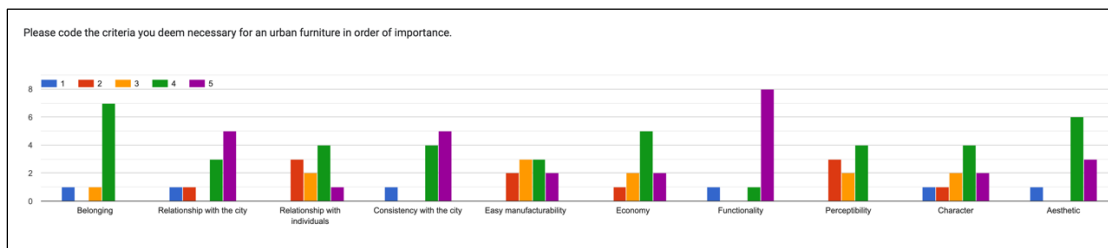


Figure 7. Graphical representation of the answer to the relevant question

Table 3. Table showing the answers given to the relevant question

How do you interpret the relationship between street furniture and the city?
1-it is important that furniture correspond to the character of the city
2-Street furniture is one of the ingredients that define the character of the city and it accommodates safe and comfortable being outdoors
3-Street furniture plays a vital role in urban environments by enhancing functionality, safety, and accessibility. It adds aesthetic appeal, encourages social interaction, and can boost local economies.
4-Seoul city's vibrant images and appealing fun nature which represent the city's identity – past, present and future.
5-It should be clarified what is the meaning of “the city” in this case. If I define the city as an spatial entity populated by people, I would state that the furniture is an equipment of this space serving the needs of its people.
6-Like in a house furniture is necessary to make people feel welcome and at home. Moreover street furniture makes urban life livable: we need wastebins and lampposts to have a functional city
7-The relationship between street furniture and the city is important. Zurich attaches great importance to a uniform cityscape (identity-creating). The standards and the catalog of elements (Elementkatalog) promote integral solutions in the city. The element catalog provides a standard element for each relevant functional and urban space requirement, in some cases also in variants. The significance level and spatial type determine which elements can be used where. The significance plan (Bedeutungsplan) (another instrument for urban space design) specifies the importance of a public place in the city.
8-Most street furniture is based on designs developed especially for Warsaw. It is important for us.
9-They are a part of the identity of the city
10-Design of the public space including street furniture is the mirror of the city.

Table 4. Table showing the answers given to the relevant question

How do you interpret the relationship between identity and urban furniture?
1-The aesthetics of urban furniture along with architecture, surfaces and greenery define the identity of a place.
2-It contributes to the visual identity of public spaces, making them distinctive and memorable.
3-Seoul is the city of dynamic space and vibrant brand. Seoul city government design policy 2.0 all for citizens as inclusive, active design - and evoke feeling of Love, WoW, Fun nature which represent city's brand identity "SEOUL MY SOUL".
4-Our goal is that the city has a set of high quality street furniture, that provides sufficient range of design to serve in different kinds of environments and circumstances within the city, but is at the same time limited in number to be sustainably serviced and managed.
5-Urban furniture can emphasize the identity and character of a city
6-Identity of street furniture is important. Contextualized furnishing is possible for important locations in the city, for example the important square 'Sechseläutenplatz' with mobile chairs.
7-Residents often report necessity of equipment in their local environment and the city usually responds to these requests. We think this situation is related to local identity and expectations.
8-It is important that each place find its place in the identity of the people and the city.
9- This part has not been answered.
10- This part has not been answered.

Table 5. Table showing the answers given to the relevant question

If you have different criteria in urban furniture production and preferences, please explain briefly.
1-The selection process of urban furniture for various city parts is very complicated - we have to follow the rules of public procurement, balance our needs and resources with the possibilities of the product design industry and insure continuity, quality and a unified image in the cityscape. Not every solution is available to every city.
2-The furniture shall be long-lasting, safe, visually appealing
3-Not that of
4-The city aims to own the licences for the designs. However the city is still at the beginning of the journey to fulfil this goal. We have a document with recommendation for various street elements, including the furniture
5-We also have a high ranking for sustainability and accessibility; we feel that Rotterdam should be an inclusive city.
6-design, obstacle-free construction, materials and colors, sustainability and circular economy, urban compatibility (robustness, function, etc.)
7-The most important tool for society's influence on how city funds are spent is Participatory budgeting. Many ideas submitted in that process concern furniture.
8-Durability. Our climate has four seasons from hot summers to freezing winters.
9- This part has not been answered.
10- This part has not been answered.

Table 6. Table showing the answers given to the relevant question

Can you briefly talk about what makes the city you live in unique to you?
1-architecture, compact, green spaces, nature
2-The rich combination of historical architecture and nature.
3-Our city is unique because of its vibrant cultural diversity, rich history, and dynamic blend of modern and historic architecture.
4-Seoul has its uniqueness in many ways. Seoul has its vibrant atmosphere, easily open access to public space and transportation that you feel comfortable and safe. Moreover, the city has its past, present, and future look & feel. Not only old palaces nearby the high-rise, high tech buildings but also streets and alleys that provide active way-find system that guide you to Han river and Mountains. These are the reason I love to live in Seoul. I bet you visit Seoul, you will definitely love the city! Thank you!

5-Rotterdam is a modern city with a special kind of robustness that I haven't seen yet in other cities. At the same time the robustness is softened by beautiful architecture and more green every year.
6-The Zurich urban space appears calm, open and clear. Clear, elegant forms derived from the function characterize the space and the elements used. The color spectrum is restrained. The urban space is geared towards the needs of the users and is accessible to all people without barriers. It is inviting, safe and comfortable to use. People can spend time in the urban space, relax, move around and engage in various activities. Depending on the location, the possible uses are weighted differently. Spending time in an urban space means sitting, eating, waiting, resting, meeting, communicating and playing, among other things. All of this is possible in Zurich.
7-Situation at the sea, nature, climate.
8- This part has not been answered.
9- This part has not been answered.
10- This part has not been answered.

In examining the relationship between identity codes and urban furniture, which constitutes the primary focus of this research, the processes through which products emerge were explored collaboratively from the perspectives of local authorities and designers, representing the two distinct facets of the product design and procurement process. The responses to the open-ended questions frequently reflect the rationale and methodologies employed in urban interventions as perceived by city authorities, while incorporating political implications. This dynamic arises from the fact that urban policies can be influenced by global transformations and shaped by concerns regarding alignment with contemporary movements. Lang (2002) ascribes these phenomena to designers operating under market-driven considerations and local governments striving to adhere to the “modern construction fashion.” While this explanation holds validity within practical approaches, it is imperative to emphasize that physical interventions in urban environments must be conducted based on data derived from individual and societal codes synthesis.

The holistic interaction of numerous components, including architectural structures, landscape arrangements, and the configuration of public spaces, plays a pivotal role in shaping the process through which modern cities acquire their identity. In this context, urban furniture not only functions as utilitarian objects but also mirrors the character of urban spaces, influences user experience, and significantly contributes to the formation of urban identity. The international responses to the inquiries underscore the multifaceted relationship between urban furniture and the city and their roles concerning identity. For example, the trends illustrated in the graphs between Figures 2 and 5, derived from responses to questions about preferences for urban furniture in public areas, reveal the criteria cities prioritize when selecting spatial elements. Notably, while local authorities engage with design experts, the procurement of products is primarily executed through tender processes, favoring mass-produced elements. Notably, Figures 4 and 5 underscore that democratic mechanisms such as participatory design and public procurement significantly influence the provision and design of urban furniture. This indicates that urban furniture transcends being merely a physical object; it also embodies the governance approach of the city and reflects the level of civic participation. In light of this, the impact of participatory methods and the perspectives of users (urban dwellers), which are frequently emphasized in urban studies, are manifestly significant in urban furniture design. Tajfel also emphasizes that urban identities emerge as products of thoughts, experiences, interpretations, and actions, asserting that the city and its space can only be comprehensively understood through interaction with all the structural elements that constitute them (Tajfel, 1981). Consequently, it is recommended that individual and societal experiences be given due consideration in the procurement or design of urban space elements to maintain a consistent identity.

The graphs illustrated in Figures 6 to 8 depict the relationship between urban furniture and the notions of city and identity from the perspectives of cultural and contemporary identity. The responses distinctly underscore functionality that addresses issues of belonging and spatial considerations. The elevated values in these graphs indicate that urban furniture assumes symbolic roles in addition to its functional attributes and plays a significant part in the emotional connections that urban residents form with their cities. As highlighted by Wirth, a leading researcher in urban studies, space is a construct that can influence individuals' lifestyles and cultural significance (Wirth, 2002). Consequently, it is not merely a

location that offers employment and residence; rather, it constitutes a multidimensional and holistic framework that evolves with cultural and social codes, encompasses individuals within a social group, provides a new identity, or facilitates the acquisition of one. The findings indicate that the selection of urban furniture considers not only aesthetic considerations but also factors such as sustainability, durability, and accessibility. Customized designs are favored according to the climatic conditions, user demographics, and spatial requirements of cities. For instance, climatic durability is emphasized in cities characterized by significant seasonal variations (such as those in the Baltic region). Conversely, in cities exhibiting high cultural diversity (such as Toronto or Zurich), designs are anticipated to be inclusive and reflect multicultural frameworks. This diversity underscores the initiatives of each city to reinforce its distinct identity values (traditional, national, cultural, etc.) and the inclination to perceive public spaces as platforms for reflecting these identities.

The relationship between urban furniture and the concept of identity has been evaluated from aesthetic and functional perspectives across various countries. Urban furniture, particularly street furniture, is anticipated not only to fulfill fundamental needs such as livability, safety, and accessibility but also to enhance urban aesthetics and visual coherence. For example, cities such as Zurich and Rotterdam emphasize that urban furniture serves as a “mirror of the city” and assert that these design elements must harmonize with comprehensive urban planning. Similarly, the local authority in Seoul highlights the “Seoul My Soul” branding strategy, positioning street furniture as emotional and cultural representations contributing to the city’s identity. Furthermore, pilot furniture testing in certain cities illustrates that decisions are data-driven and that urban identity is shaped through experimental initiatives. Likewise, as indicated in Table 3, nearly all participants assert that urban furniture plays a pivotal role in defining a city's character. For instance, Zurich’s “Elementkatalog” application facilitates the establishment of furniture standards that preserve the unique identity of each urban space. This underscores that identity is not solely constructed culturally or historically but is also produced physically and spatially.

6. CONCLUSION

Within the parameters of this study, the correlation between various types of identity and urban furniture is assessed through the design process decisions made by local authorities, informed by the experiences of urban residents and the methods of product procurement. In the semi-structured interview study, representatives from participating municipalities indicated that resident feedback informs the product design process at specific stages. This reveals that the sense of belonging to the urban environment and the sub-identity concepts associated with the city (including cultural, traditional, or national identity) manifest through public participation and influence the official transformation of urban products. Significantly, the observation that participatory design processes shape micro-scale yet consequential design decisions, such as those about urban furniture, emphasizes, based on the responses gathered, that the democratization of urban governance is a critical indicator of the acknowledgment of local identity that references traditional and national identity concepts.

In the context of urban space and character;

- Urban spaces are characterized as multi-faceted structures shaped concurrently by individual and societal preferences, alongside the perspectives of local authorities, sustaining their existence through a state of persistent dynamism.
- The responses indicate that these components significantly influence cities' cultural capacities and material characteristics, which begin to materialize in observable forms. This phenomenon occurs due to the transformative effects of evolving social movements that reshape the requirements of urban structures.
- Within this ongoing dynamism, it is unrealistic to anticipate urban spaces remaining static or unresponsive to the transformations around them. Therefore, as Scott and Rowe (2008) contend, comprehending the potentials and needs of urban spaces—and by extension, entire cities—necessitates their evaluation within the context of the social transformations unique to the socio-historical realities to which they are connected.

In the context of the impact of the local authorities on urban furnitures design process;

- The findings of this study reveal that local authorities adopt a variable stance in their decision-making processes concerning product procurement. Occasionally, objects are utilized solely to address specific issues and are classified as urban elements.
- Conversely, design decisions that cater to user needs and emerge from spatial exigencies take precedence in other instances.
- Consequently, in constructing a coherent and intelligible space, establishing systematic procedures executed within a planned framework, rather than relying on arbitrary decisions, will facilitate the creation of spaces and objects well-positioned to acquire a distinct identity.

In evaluations about the notion of authenticity—cited by local authorities about the cultural and traditional identities of cities—the principal themes that influence the configuration of objects within urban environments encompass harmony with the city's natural and environmental context, the existence of historical strata that convey remnants of the past into the present, the coexistence of contemporary structures designed according to current needs, and opportunities for social interaction.

These evaluations corroborate Lynch's (1960) assertion regarding the significance of identity as an essential component for transforming urban space into a coherent and delineable form. Urban infrastructure, which enhances the elements above, is positioned as an instrument that supports these authentic characteristics.

In the context of the impact of the identity on urban space and furnitures;

- Urban furnishing elements constitute essential components of urban aesthetics and are crucial carriers of urban identity.
- While these elements are designed to fulfill functional requirements, they are fundamental components that infuse meaning into space and enhance the relationship between individuals, memory, and place.
- These international evaluations illuminate the multi-layered semantic landscape of urban furniture and underscore the significance of such elements in the design of urban spaces.

The transformation of urban areas in alignment with both their users and historical context amplifies the distinctiveness of cities. It fosters a sense of spatial belonging by allowing residents to express their environments uniquely. Urban furnishing elements developed through more participatory, contextually coherent, legible, and identity-oriented approaches will substantially enhance the quality of urban life and cultivate a robust sense of belonging among city dwellers and the spaces they inhabit.

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