Class and Urban Public Space Consumption:

A Typology in Isfahan, Iran[*]

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Abstract

This paper, adopting an interpretive approach, focuses on the spatiality of class to describe how social class represents itself through public space consumption. The paper presupposes public space consumption as a lived experience by class and explores it through analyzing the narratives of citizens in the city of Isfahan, Iran. According to Bourdieu's notion of social space, four different economic-cultural positions are purposefully selected as under-studied social categories. Cultural (occupation, professional skills and education) and economic attributes (income, house ownership and the neighborhood where they live) are considered for the categorization. Applying a qualitative content analysis, this paper uses semi-structured in-depth interviews as the basis of a thematic analysis. Comparing the identified themes for the four social categories, this study formulates four consumption patterns, comprising *transient, purposeful, fluid and aggressive* consumption. A class- specific typology of public space consumption is thus proposed which encompasses the four studied social categories in Isfahan.

Keywords: *Social Class, Public Space, Consumption, Bourdieu, Isfahan, Iran*

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[*] Note: We regret that some accent symbols are not displayed properly due limitations of our font family.

Introduction

This paper, focusing on the concept of *social class*, examined the spatiality of *social class* and the ways that it is lived through *public space* consumption. By the term public space here we mean those open spaces of city which are free to access for all and are potential to function as a site for different social groups to confront. This study is in part inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* to make sense of the embodied culture of social categories, here *social class*. Bourdieu's habitus offers a theoretical framework for understanding individuals' social position as a set of collective internalized possibilities that enable a person to orient him/herself in the social world (Rooke, 2007:231). This paper aimed to identify how different social classes, here economic-cultural positions, in Isfahan understand and posit themselves in relation to public spaces.

As the third largest city of Iran – with a population of approximately 2 million – behind Tehran and Mashad- Isfahan is an important city of Iran for two main reasons: First, since the city retains much of its past glory as the capital of Iran *(Persia)* under the *Safavid* dynasty (16th -17th A.D.), it is one of the most important tourist attractions of Iran. Second, as one of the contemporary main industrial centers of Iran, it has been a significant destination of internal migration. At the time of the first census of the cities of Iran (1939 – 1941), Isfahan had a population of 205,000 (Encyclopedia Iranica). According to the 2010 census, the city had a population of 2,300,000 (Isfahan Municipality, 2010). The rapid pace of city growth and population increase, in the span of 70 years, has caused socio-spatial consequences like distinctions between the various neighborhoods of the city. The terms such "uptown/downtown" and "this/that side of the river" demonstrate a socio-spatial distinction in citizens' everyday language. Nevertheless, we can identify an interconnected and fairly pedestrian-friendly main structure (Figure 1) of public spaces – mostly historical public spaces replete with collective memories – as well as mixed-use activity hubs like *Bazar*, main streets and a few shopping centers in the heart of Isfahan. The structure, comprising common destinations for all Isfahan citizens, prepares a scene for a variety of social categories to encounter and experience the *"others."* According to Ghasemi et al. (2017), the public spaces included in the above-mentioned structure are among the most favorable destinations for Isfahan citizens.

This article draws from and seeks to contribute to the spatiality of class by examining how different economic-cultural categories in Isfahan orient themselves, in their narratives, in relation to public spaces. In the next section we start with a brief literature review of class and public space relation. It seems that, as Dowling (2009:834) states, the influence of frameworks that have long dominated the intellectual landscape of class, in particular, the writings of Weber, Marx and more recently, Bourdieu, remain important touchstones. Adopting an interpretive approach, we then turn to the lived experiences of citizens in Isfahan. The research presupposes class and public space consumption as lived experience and discuss it comparatively based on four different social categories which are purposefully selected according to Bourdieu's notion of habitus and social space.
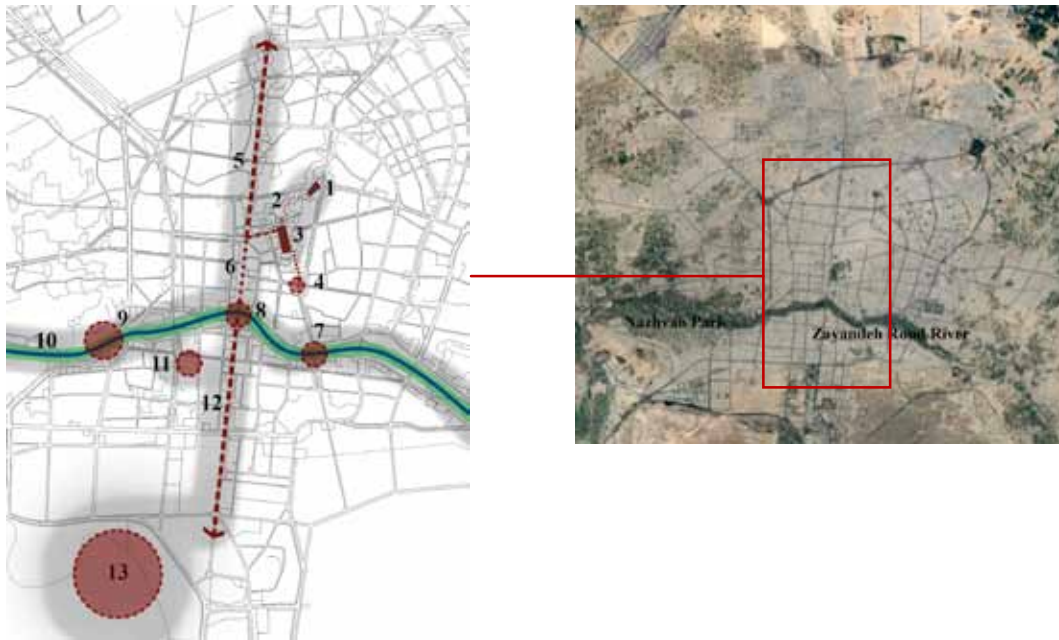
Figure 1. The interconnected structure of the main public spaces of Isfahan; 1) Sabzeh Maydan (Imam Ali Square); 2) Grand Bazar; 3) Naghsh-e Jahan Square; 4) Hassan Abbad area; 5) Chahar Bagh-e Paeen Street; 6) pedestrian Chahar Bagh Street; 7) Khajou Bridge; 8) Si-O-Se Pol bridge; 9) Nazhvan Park; 10) Zayandeh Roud river and linear riverbank park; 11) Jolfa (the Armenian quarter); 12) Chahar Bagh-e Bala Street; 13) Sofeh Mountain Park.

Social Class and Public Space

The literature, in relation to the spatiality of social class and its imprint on the urban landscape, appears to be dominated mostly by the Weberian and Marxist definition of *class* as the social standing of individuals in various status hierarchies. *Class*, as an economic entity, is defined in Marxism by the relations of production. For example, in this context, Atkinson (2006:820) argued that the possibilities for socio-spatial withdrawal by the affluent have grown and a "culture of fear" drives the desire of high-income groups for segregation to manage contact with socially different or "risky" low-income groups (see also: de Holanda, 2000; Fernandes, 2004; Mallick, 2018). Bourdieu (1986) defined social *class* based on both cultural and economic capitals which place individuals in social relationship networks (e.g. family, friends, societies, etc.). Groups with similar cultural-economic circumstances can potentially become a social category. Thus the concept of *class* in Bourdieu's understanding is of a relational nature. Each social category corresponds to a *habitus* or *taste* that is in line with its cultural-economic circumstances, and each of these tastes in turn embodies the inequalities between social classes (Veenstra, 2007:16). *Habitus* creates a unified and internalized system of values and characteristics or, in other words, the lifestyle of a class (Bourdieu, 1998:8). In this context, Burrows and Gane (2006:808) discussed that there is a spatialization of class that binds individuals together in imaginary ways according to the *micro-territories* they inhabit; people prefer to live with those who they perceive to be similar to themselves (see also: Pereira, 2018; Ljunggren & Andersen, 2015; Kelly & Lusis, 2006; Riely, 2019).

However, Dowling (2009:834) stressed that contemporary theorizations of class, unlike many of their predecessors (Weber, Marx and Bourdieu), are less concerned with class as a form of socio-economic classification, and more with the ways class as an identity is forged and experienced i.e. *experiences of class* are conceived in emotional and moral terms. We can trace this approach through the terms like *sense of respectability* (Sayer, 2005; Watt, 2003; 2006; 2008), *managing to cope* and *struggling to cope* (Vincent et al., 2008) which refer to the emotional and moral experience of class (Sayer, 2005). Reay (2005:913) referred to the notion of *psychic landscape* of class in concert with the socio-economic one, the former being the more mobile and affective aspect (see also: Kraus et al., 2009). Bayón & Saravi (2018:292) examined the spatiality of *class experience* in wealthy and deprived areas of Mexico City. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews, they analyzed the contribution of place and class in shaping symbolic and spatial dimensions of urban segregation. Three main issues were explored in their study: *sense of place, sense of being-in/out-of-place,* and the process of *othering* in urban encounters between social categories. According to their research findings, negative images dominate the sense of place and narratives of the poor about their neighborhoods and neighbors, in a process of self-contempt and internalization of poverty stigmatization. The poor and the rich reject and distance each other, developing contrasting senses of belonging, producing a naturalized process of self-exclusion and social distancing, i.e. a *sense of being-in-place* and *being-out-of-place.* While individuals with different social positions may live close to each other, share some specific areas of the city, or have some casual encounters in public spaces, they produce social and cultural boundaries through the process of *othering*, as a strategy of symbolic and moral exclusion (ibid:302).

This article considered *class* as experience to sketch out a more complex picture of public space consumption in the context of Isfahan. Analyzing the interviewees' narratives, this paper discusses how individuals with different social positions describe their understanding of themselves in relation to public spaces and others. To do so, this research needed to presuppose a categorization for social class; it adopts Bourdieu's model (1984[1979]; 1996) in which the social space is divided into four cultural- economic sections (see Figure 2). Peoples with similar cultural-economic circumstances take close positions in the model and have similar habitus. In this article we considered each section of the model as a social category and tried to understand the type of public space consumption by individuals in each category - i.e. category A, B, C and D – in Isfahan.

Methodology

This article is the result of collaboration between authors on a qualitative study conducted in 2017–18. To understand and identify a typology of class lived spatiality, this research applied *qualitative content analysis methodology*. The analysis is presented here draws on semi-structured in-depth interviews (28 in total) and observation (by the authors) in the city of Isfahan. Contact with the interviewees was achieved through a snowball sampling technique. The aim of these interviews was to understand how the interviewees, through their narratives, posit themselves in relation to Isfahan public spaces and others. The interviews focused both on the

individual's biographical information (family, education, work, place and duration of residence) and their perceptions of the public spaces (of their neighborhood and the city, expectations and feelings they have when they are among others in public spaces). Regarding ethical consideration, this study followed the *Declaration of Helsinki* (2013) principles.

The research followed a thematic analyzing and systematically reduced the descriptive data into concepts and themes. Based on Bourdieu's model of social space (1984[1979], 1996), as mentioned before, four different cultural-economic positions were hypothesized in Isfahan as four studied social categories. In accordance with a typology of sampling designs introduced by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), this research followed a parallel sampling, used subgroup sampling to compare the voices of the studied social categories. Cultural attributes – including occupation, professional skills and education level – and economic attributes - including income, house ownership and the neighborhood where they live – were the criteria for the categorization (see Figure 2) as follows:

Category A: The interviewees (2 female and 4 male) with high-level economic status (merchant, broker and landowner) and low cultural capital. They are affluent, living in luxurious neighborhoods, and less integrated with social networks. Since this group is so private about their lifestyle, it was very difficult to find persons interested in participating in the research.

Category B: The interviewees (5 female and 2 male) with high-income (musician, lawyer, doctor, university professor and company manager), who live in luxurious neighborhoods, and are highly educated, interested in cultural issues and more integrated with social networks.

Category C: The interviewees (4 female and 2 male) with low or middle economic status (editor, translator, officer), living in relatively inexpensive neighborhoods, highly educated, mostly interested in cultural activities and integrated significantly in different social networks.

Category D: The interviewees (5 female and 4 male) with low incomes (housewife, worker, geriatric nurse, housemaid, chambermaid) living in neighborhoods with low-prices, with little education or integration in social networks.

Regarding usual terms for class, the individuals in categories A and B can be considered as upper and upper-middle classes, the individuals in category C as middle class, and the individuals in category D as low-class. All the interviewees were 20 to 50 years old and having lived for more than four years in Isfahan. Sampling was continued until the themes were saturated, i.e. no new relevant data seemed to be appearing and relationships between themes were well formulated.
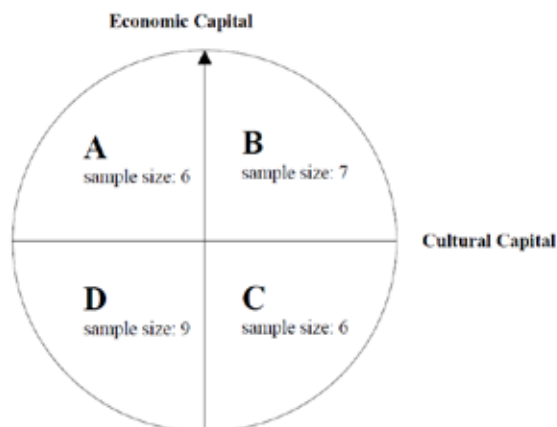
Figure 2. Distribution of the four studied social categories (cultural-economic positions) according to Bourdieu's model.

Socio-Spatial Background

The city of Isfahan is the capital of Isfahan Province, the capital of Isfahan Sub-province, and the center of the Isfahan comprehensive regional planning complex. According to *Isfahan Atlas* (Isfahan Municipality, 2010), the city of Isfahan consists of 15 municipal districts and a total of 199 neighborhoods with different population density (Figure 2). Until 1920, the main core of the city corresponded to the municipal districts of 1 and 3 which still can be considered as the heart of the city, comprising of *Bazar* and major historical public spaces and areas (see figure 1). From 1960s, with the development of the industrial role of the city,[1] specifically in iron foundry, the city expanded and included rural nuclei (Ibid:210). According to the 2010 census, one-third of Isfahan's population was not born in the city. The most important motivation for migrating to this city (almost 50% of the migrant population) was following the household, seeking jobs and better living conditions (Ibid:98-104). The excessive industrialization and urbanization of Isfahan has contributed to proximity and entanglement of a variety of conventional neighborhoods, neighborhoods with more affluent residents and wicked neighborhoods with plenty of social problems, specifically informal settlements (Rabani & Rabiei, 2010; Assari & Mahesh, 2011; Dehghani, 2019). Besides, we can identify an interconnected network of public spaces, mostly in historical center of the city, which are significant destinations for all Isfahan citizens. This article will go to discuss the four studied social categories' position in relation to public spaces of Isfahan.

Four Patterns of Public Space Consumption

Through comparing the identified themes (see table in figure 3), within and between the four studied categories, a typology of public space consumption was formulated. According to the interviews, the individuals in both *Category A* and

D experienced a bold social border between themselves and the public outside their own class. The first category utilized its facilities to accentuate this border, while the second, feeling abandoned by the city, attempted to remind the public of its presence and to force its presence upon the modern city's main features. For people in *Category A,* the nature of public space and that of its own class, which requires privacy, were at odds. They prioritized their own aims and considered others inferior. In practice, they tried to stay in distance with the public, attended public space in a temporary way and sought more exclusionary spaces or separated territories. The concept of *transient consumption* described their position in relation to public space. On the other hand, for the interviewees in *Category D,* who felt excluded and ignored, attending those public spaces that bring different social categories together was an opportunity to manifest and locate themselves close to upper classes and have visual experience of luxurious lifestyles. The *aggressive consumption* conceptualized their relation to public spaces.
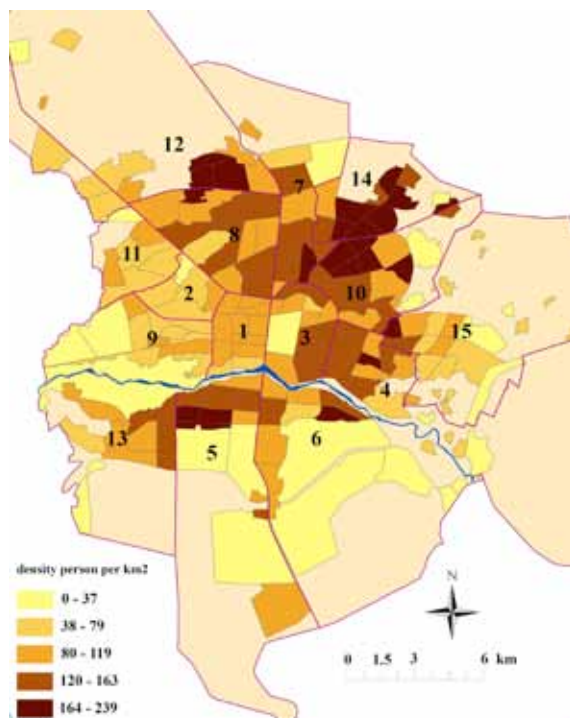

Figure 2. Fifteen municipality districts of Isfahan and population density of neighborhoods (Source: Isfahan Municipality, 2010:81).

In the middle of these two extremes of perceived social borders – *Category A* and *D* – lie the individuals of *Category B* and *C* who both had a more interactive and reflexive approach to public spaces. The interviewees in *Category B,* due to their cultural-economic resources, felt more powerful to maintain their privacy while attending public spaces. The individuals in *Category B* sought for tranquility and privacy - like *Category A*- but did not necessarily find this at odds with selective

mingling in a public space. In practice, they approached to attend public spaces for emotional and nostalgic aims. This manner is conceptualized as *purposeful consumption*. In a different way, the interviewees in *Category C* exhibited the greatest degree of flexibility in comparison with other categories. They tend to tolerate themselves flexibly and fluidly to make sense the diversity of modern city. They encountered public space beyond social borders and sought pleasure from presence in the dynamic everyday life of the city. The concept of *fluid consumption* conceptualized this category in relation to public space.

As follows, the above-mentioned formulated patterns of consumption, regarding the four social categories, are described separately. The identified themes demonstrated three main aspects for each pattern: First, the interviewees' position in relation to the city and its public spaces; second, their position in relation to other social classes and third, the strategies they apply to approach in public spaces.

Categories	Formulated Meanings	Thematic Clusters	Emergent Themes
A	Prioritizing privacy regarding place and leisure pattern/ seeking for public spaces with social limits/preserving distance with the public/ sense of being different and distinguished/ sense of threatened privacy in public spaces.	Contradiction between public spaces and the private realm of class	Transient Consumption
	Prioritizing places conforming to their taste/ necessity for changing people and spaces of lower classes/ improving people and places of lower class.	Considering other lifestyles inferior	
	Feeling empowered to select any place and activity/ wealth superiority/ exclusivity of the place according to their lifestyle/ feeling superior and having the right to change places.	Feeling empowered to choose and change the space	
B	Choosing cozy, tranquil and socially neutral spaces/ avoiding cultural interference/ careful presence in public spaces.	Public space as a specific formal experience	Purposeful Consumption
	Abstract imaging of the society and comparison with idealized society/ cultural growth for improving the urban environment and lower classes/ planning for cultural infrastructure.	Holistic approach toward city and its social issues	
	Attending public spaces of pleasant past memories/ recreational wandering out of class to experience things not available in their class.	Nostalgic tendencies to experience public spaces outside the class	
C	Criticizing the inequality in facilities of modern city/ a lifestyle which moves out of class and enjoys variety of tastes in modern city/ dynamism and variety of lifestyles in middle class / fluidity and need for change.	Living on the border of their class	Fluid Consumption
	Awareness of differences/ feel free to know or experience the leisure spots of affluent classes while no identification with them / availability of leisure spots of lower classes while no identification with them/ constant analysis of upper- and lower-class places.	Simultaneous experience of places of higher and lower classes	
	Presence for leisure in any time and place/ prioritizing pleasure of modern lifestyle/ flexibility with others and the public spaces.	Pleasure of presence regardless of the type and quality of the place	
D	Feeling impoverished and backward in comparison with better neighborhoods/ need for equality of culture and prestige with other neighborhoods/ emphasizing the necessity of improving lower-class neighborhoods for the city	Feeling marginalized and ignored	Aggressive Consumption
	Presence in higher-class places for visual pleasure and information on strange lifestyle and for gaining social prestige.	Sense of ownership of an exotic luxurious matter	
	Going to landmarks symbolizing the city/ leisure presence in places with a lower cost/ integration of leisure and business.	Cost-efficiency approach to places-events	

Figure 3. Table depicting the thematic analysis.

Category A: Transient Consumption

The interviewees in *Category A* preserved distance with people outside their class and looked inward to their own class in their relationship with the city. Since they considered their needs to be different from those of other classes, they avoided the integrating potential of public space and considered it a disturbance to their privacy. In abstract words, they felt a *"contradiction between public spaces and the private realm of their class."* Since they aimed to improve their lives through a presence in spaces far from the madding crowd of the city, they prioritized places that are somehow exclusive to their class. Socializing with and even proximity to other people was unimaginable for them and this exclusivity engenders their strict privacy in relation to the public. For example a young person preferred to attend private screenings instead of going to cinemas. Another said: "I don't like to go out when everywhere is crowded at all. I prefer to stay home or go to places that are surely frequented by people similar to me, who observe the rules and don't disturb my calm."

The interviewees evaluated the quality of urban public spaces according to their own needs for utility and aesthetics. For this class, "the beauty of a street is very important because makes one feels good." These individuals obviously differentiated between themselves and the other social classes in a value-laden way, i.e. they prioritized their own aims. They preferred those public spaces with a planned order which are clean, decorated and well maintained. One said, "I really love the flower gardens in Isfahan because the municipality looks after them and they give very positive vibes…." The interviewees considered it a requirement for the city, spaces and people to meet a certain standard of excellence. They believed that "the living environment of the lower classes should change so that people's behavior also changes." As a young woman stressed that there should be more modern spaces like luxurious shopping malls in Isfahan. The theme *"considering other lifestyles inferior"* described how this class imagines about the lower classes. A woman said:

> I think it's very important that you have plans and a goal for spending your entertainment time so that you have fun and learn something… Of course these are the things that people should learn and cannot be dictated, but learned in childhood.

The theme *"feeling empowered to choose and change the space"* described how individuals in *Category A* felt they could maintain their territory in distance with the rest of the city or separate their territory within the public realm. Since the interviewees in *Category A* were wealthy and did not feel limited in choosing places, they selected places and activities based on their lifestyle. For example, since they sought those pleasures that are special and "different," they felt they could add any new leisure equipment to their private spaces of house, garden, etc. Considering themselves superior, they also demanded the elimination of or changes to public spaces that did not necessarily belong to them. As an interviewee loved the city center because of its great facilities – to have your separated territory while you are within the city: "there, if you pay more, you can change the rules as you like," referring to luxurious and expensive restaurants in the city center.

Category B: Purposeful Consumption
The interviewees who belonged to *Category B* tended to be present in public spaces, but in a selective way to preserve their privacy. They considered attending *"public space as a specific formal experience"* within the city, while they sought to maintain their privacy. For example, people in this category preferred being in "cozy and calm" and socially neutral places in which they would not be under the gaze of strange others, specifically lower classes. A young woman said: "Walking alongside *Zayandeh-Roud River* always makes me calm. Sometimes the social atmosphere is not good, but I think it's worth it." Sometimes they took measures to ensure their privacy in places where more social intermingling occurs. For example, to attend some crowded symbolic public spaces - like *Naqsh-e Jahan Square* and *Si-o-se-pol Bridge* – which were significant leisure spots for them, they kept their social distance since they wanted to enjoy the place's very form. A woman said: "I like to go to Naqsh-e Jahan late into the night because it's less crowded and more untouched then. I don't like it crowded. I want to experience the beauty and that isn't possible in the crowds."

The interviewees of *Category B* were reflexive to society and lower classes but from an outsider viewpoint. They had a *"holistic approach toward the city and social issues"* i.e. their criticisms of the city and its denizens was generalized and come from an outsider perspective. They compared today, including the situation of lower classes, with a rosy and abstract image of an ideal society which has acceptable cultural characteristics to build better environments. They believed that, to support cultural improvements, the government should increase the quantity and quality of its cultural infrastructure, like "creating cultural public centers and holding cultural events in poorer neighborhoods."

While being reflexive to the city and society, the interviewees from this category tended to present in public, but mostly with *"nostalgic tendencies to experience public spaces outside their class."* They sometimes favored places or activities that were not within the established realm of their own lifestyle. Most of these places either carried nostalgic meanings of the past - for example "to eat the typical foods of Isfahan, I go to downtown places" - or were attractive to them because they cannot experience such features in their own class spaces- as one said "sometimes poorer neighborhoods are more attractive." A woman said: "I love *Amadgah* and *Darvazeh Dolat*. I'm far from them, but sometimes I like to walk in these places and reminisce about past memories. My school was there and that neighborhood is filled with positive vibes for me."

Category C: Fluid Consumption
The taste of the interviewees in *Category C* in terms of public spaces was one of dynamism and flexibility. These people constantly situated or imagined themselves in different layers of the city and evaluated the situations of themselves and the society. Attending public spaces of the city helped these individuals for *"living on the border of their class."* They had a tendency to experience the variety and specific atmosphere of a modern city, so they consciously eschewed economic-cultural limits of their own class. They selectively compared their own facilities

with those needed to experience the multi-layered modern city and the atmosphere they would like to be present in public spaces. In this comparison, mostly due to economic status, the interviewees in *Category C* were critically aware of the inequality that has monopolized the most social facilities for the wealthy classes. Although they felt they had suffered under social inequalities, this was not accompanied by any sense of cultural inferiority in terms of being present in public spaces. Instead they critically analyzed how the city should be facilitated for all: "all the great malls are established uptown. If they redistribute them and bring new shopping centers downtown, people will be happier that they have these good things around them." Therefore demanding equality in access to the facilities and landmarks of the modern city was a characteristic of this class. As for example, to enjoy some Isfahan landmarks and its modern life they stressed the necessity of access to certain facilities, as a young woman said: "If you don't have a car, you're in trouble. Even if you can remain late into the night in *Naqsh-e Jahan,* how can you get back without a car?"

They were also reflexive and aware about their class dynamism and tendency for change to achieve what they consider as a possible. In other words, they tended to imagine themselves in different social positions. As an interviewee said:

> For example, I'd love it if our house was in Chaharbagh Khajou. There, the nights are vibrant and brilliant. All the shops are open and cars pass by. If the weather is nice, many will go walking. We have enough money to move there, but my father says here is fine and doesn't let go of this neighborhood.

The interviewees of *Category C* imagined themselves fluid, seeking *"simultaneous experience of places of higher and lower class."* They knew that they were different in behavior from the affluent class, having no access to their places, and unable to afford the cost of expensive leisure activities. However, while they were alienated from many luxurious leisure spots, these feelings were not of enthusiasm for experiencing these places. Instead, they approached the state of affairs analytically. A young man said: "Once we went to a pool club. Although we spent a lot of money, they looked at us strangely. Then we understood we don't belong in these places. We will have more fun renting a gym and playing football." On the other hand, these people felt they had easy access to places associated with lower classes, as there is nothing limiting them; and they had some routines and rituals similar to those of the lower classes. However, they pointed out the "low-class" nature of spaces dominated by poor people and considered themselves somehow superior. Even though being presence in these places was common or even an everyday routine for them, they did not identify with these places and analyzed their experiences of difference. A young woman said:

> For example, whenever I go to Sabz-e Meydan to get something done, I feel I've entered a city of chaos; everyone does anything they want... But I think this is natural, because lots of people from all places come to Sabz-e Meydan, this is normal.

People in this category approached public spaces in terms of leisure, which means that every place holds the potential of leisure for them. Since they sought the en-

joyment of the city's lively everyday atmosphere, the *"pleasure of presence regardless of the type and quality of the place"* conceptualizes their strategy of consumption. An interviewee said: "There is no difference in places for shopping or fun or culture or whatever. You do all of these things for leisure. For example you go to cinema for fun, not to learn script writing." Or another said: "In every corner of the city there is something you can have fun with. For example you go for roaming, then drink a juice in front of a cafe and refresh yourself."

Category D: Aggressive Consumption

According to the interviewees' narratives, individuals in *Category D* consumed public spaces in a way that emphasized or reminded the public of their presence. Since people in this category felt ignored, they wanted to highlight, in their narratives, their demands in relation to the city and public spaces. They pursued and underscored their demands through their presence in the city from which they were *"feeling marginalized and ignored."* The interviewees emphasized their social, economic, and cultural distance in relation to the city. They felt alienated from the city because the public spaces available to their class were of low quality and lack facilities in comparison with spaces enjoyed by other classes. What they wanted to do was to move to better neighborhoods. For example, a woman said: "This neighborhood isn't good at all. My child has no entertainment facility here; there is just a wasteland where they have installed a slide. But even there fills up with addicts." They felt they were intentionally excluded and ignored by the rest of the city. A young man said: "If they wanted to, they have enough budget to take care of downtown as much as uptown. But there is no benefit in it for them, so they don't do it."

The interviewees in *Category D* sometimes attended public spaces that were beyond their means in terms of cost, distance, taste and lifestyle. They were motivated by goals such as visual pleasure, getting acquainted with places beyond their class and feeling the need to experience supra-class situations, i.e. the need for a *"sense of ownership of an exotic luxurious matter."* A young woman said: "I don't have enough ill-gotten money to buy things in expensive places. But you have to go to luxurious spaces and see. This way I'll mingle with them." The individuals felt they gain prestige by being present within upper social classes in public spaces to "feel more chic than your peers." They experienced a level of pleasure and space consumption through this presence. Such pleasure was rooted in temporarily practicing the lifestyle of the higher classes.

As a strategy for consumption, this class had a *"cost- efficiency approach to places and events."* This approach led to a multi-purpose use of major public spaces for shopping and leisure alongside the enjoyment of free amenities. For example, a woman said: "We go to *Jomeh Mosque* a lot. We shop there if needed, then sit down for a ceremony, pray and eat donated food. Then walk a little there and return home. It's so much fun." People from this category were usually present at symbolic landmarks with city-wide importance, in order to feel part of the city life in addition to leisure. One said "When they used to hold *Friday Prayers* in *Imam Square* we'd

go there, take lunch with us, the children played and we'd return after sunset." According to the interviewees, they tried to entertain themselves and complete their everyday tasks and group activities simultaneously to minimize the costs of entertainment.

Applying the Typology for the *Jolfa Quarter*

To assist in illustrating the discussion, we applied the typology for the *Jolfa Quarter* in Isfahan to analyze how the four identified patterns were represented in the Christmas 2020 ceremony in *Jolfa* (specifically around the *Vank Church*). The following description was formulated through direct observations by the authors.

In 1605, after the great immigration of Armenians to Iran, Shah Abbas I (king of Iran in *Safavid* era) settled a number of Armenians in an area known as the *Jolfa Quarter* - near the city of Isfahan. As a result of the city growth during the last 50 years, *Jolfa* is now in the heart of the city and is considered one of the most prosperous areas. In its proximity are a large number of churches, cafes, restaurants and open spaces for walking, sitting and chatting making *Jolfa* an attractive destination not only for tourists, but also for citizens and especifically young people. *Vank Church* and the public spaces and spots in its vicinity are one of the most significant parts of Jolfa with high spatial potentials to attract different social groups. A number of luxurious shops, cafes and restaurants as well as the *Jolfa Hotel* and public parking next to the church serve as attractions for the upper and upper-middle classes. While these are in combination with small squares, cheap clothing shops and fast foods venues along *Nazar-e Miyani Street* are attractions for the lower-middle and low classes).

Compared to other public spaces of Isfahan, the Christian climate of *Jolfa* supports more tolerance to attract young people who seek to meet the opposite sex in a public space. For the youth of the lower classes, walking in a luxurious atmosphere and being close to girls and families of upper classes allows them to be seen and recognized in this urban public space. At the same time, peoples of upper classes can sit in luxurious cafes or restaurants like *Hermes* and *Simon* or in the restaurant of *Jolfa Hotel* to have a meal with high quality and enjoy the company of family or friends. Young middle-class people can sit in more casual cafes to have an intellectual chat with friends or the opposite sex while they have just a cup of coffee. Meanwhile, public open spaces like *Jolfa Square* facilitate teenagers and young people of lower classes without the need to spend money. They can sit on the stairs and ledges for smoking and watching others, while ogling girls of the upper classes or chatting with a girl of the same class. Sometimes these young people of the lower classes transit through these public spaces on motorbikes and sometimes in groups to attract attention while producing "noise" and tension – an ideal type of *aggressive consumption* of public space.

In 2020, during the Christmas ceremony nights, the vicinity of *Vank Church* brought different social classes together (Figure 5). At night, while people – conceptualized in the four studied social categories - were attending the area displaying their routines within separated or overlapping territories. Each category gradually approached to its ideal type of consumption since the population density and class proximity were increasing. For example, a *Peugeot Pars* car - a cheap car which is

typical for youth of the lower classes - diagonally blocked the street next to the church, with its four doors open and the occupants were dancing around the car while its stereo system played loud music. This scene was the culmination of the *aggressive consumption* at that moment. The audience from other categories also acted in their own way; the middle class (category C) were watching and recording the scene with their cellphone cameras - *fluid consumption*; the individuals with *purposeful consumption* (category B) left the scene; and those with *transient consumption* (category A) were having dinner inside the restaurants and hotel in a safe atmosphere.

Figure 5. *Jolfa Quarter.* Christmas 2020 nights in the vicinity of *Vank Church* (source: https://fararu.com).

Conclusion

Aiming to achieve a comparative understanding of how the spatiality of class manifests through public space consumption, this research adopted Bourdieu's model of social space to examine four social categories in Isfahan. According to literature review, most of the relevant studies have focused on spatiality of a specific social class. This research adopted not only a comparative but also a perceptual approach to expand the concept of class spatiality as a lived experience into the field of urban public space. The literature review indicated that class boundaries produce and are re-produced through a complicated segregation/proximity dialectic that is not simply manifested through a physical footprint in the urban landscape, but also through a perceptual or emotional one. The concepts of *spatial and social withdrawal* (Atkinson, 2006) and *micro-territories* (Burrows & Gane, 2006) explain the socio-spatial segregation/proximity of class in behavioral and physical terms. These concepts are conceptualized in the perceptual approach of Bayón and Saravi (2018) through the terminology of *sense of being-in/out-of-place* and *othering* as predominantly emotional characteristics of class. The latter concepts indicate to a sense of belonging/not belonging to a people or places, and explain the internalized processes of self-exclusion and production of social boundaries by class. These concepts are also confirmed and expanded by the findings of the present research in the field of public space consumption. The formulated

typology of consumption, comprising the *transient, purposeful, fluid* and *aggressive,* expanded upon the concept of *othering* (Bayón & Saravi, 2018) in relation to the four studied social categories. The individuals who belong to each studied cultural-economic categories consume public spaces in a way that is affected by their understanding of their position in relation to the *public*. The *public*, for people of upper class, is an unknown ignorable whole, *out-of* their social world and contradictory to its privacy-seeking lifestyle. They keep distance with the public and pass the public space in a transient way (Category A). The individuals of upper-middle class, in a purposeful and more sentimental manner, tend to imagine themselves *being-in* those main public spaces of the city that are dominated by a *public* that is *out-of* their own social world (Category B). The individuals of middle class, in the absence of determining socio-spatial boundaries for themselves, are interested in constantly and reflexively re-defining the *others* and the *being-in/out* boundaries. For them, the *public* is a dynamic and mosaic fluctuating entity, and public space is a site to experience and enjoy such dynamism (Category C). The low class people feel themselves *out-of* and ignored by the *public*. In other words, in their experience of public spaces, those with low cultural- economic position not only demand no determined socio-spatial boundaries, but also try to place themselves close to the *public* in an aggressive way (Category D).

This article, through a comparative analysis in the city of Isfahan, tried to contribute a more complex understanding of how different social categories struggle for public space, as a conflictual entity, through their specific way of consumption. This article focused more on analyzing the interviewees' narratives to propose a typology, within a city-wide scope of analysis. Moreover, we discussed the class and public space consumption, intentionally, in an absence of economic and political structures or the aims of city authorities. To illustrate the spatiality and embodiment of class through public space consumption, we suggest the necessity of those studies in the class discourse which examine social proximity and conflicts in specific public spaces within a more detailed scope of critical analysis.

Endnotes

1   In 2010 there were 24 Industrial Parks within a radius of 50 km from the city of Isfahan (Isfahan Municipality, 2010: 312).

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