

# Retrofitting Placemaking Practices in Social Housing Spaces

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## Abstract

Developing a relation to shape the integration of placemaking practices in social housing spaces is the main issue of this paper; where social housing is meant to be based on fulfilling the human needs of people in their places, while placemaking represents the suitable diverse, variable and multi-scaled approach to root the social housing patterns in the urban context.

This paper aims to extract a draft code to measure the applicability of placemaking characteristics of great places in social housing places in order to reach to a reasonable criteria for successful social housing places, through following a qualitative and quantitative methods to deduct a formula to shape the relation between social housing and placemaking; analysing human needs theories to deduct social housing dimensions, integrating placemaking principles and identifying the concerned parties and their roles to apply the draft code.

Based on this, the research concludes a formula to empower the implementation of placemaking practices in social housing spaces and interpreting this in the reasonable criteria represented in a proposed draft code of 3 levels as in 1) basic measurements of social housing dimensions and placemaking characteristics, 2) secondary requirements and finally 3) standard indicators. The research suggests that this draft code should be investigated and activated through a set of questions to experts, shareholders and stakeholders and parties involved in the process of establishing and remaking successful places of the social housing spaces.

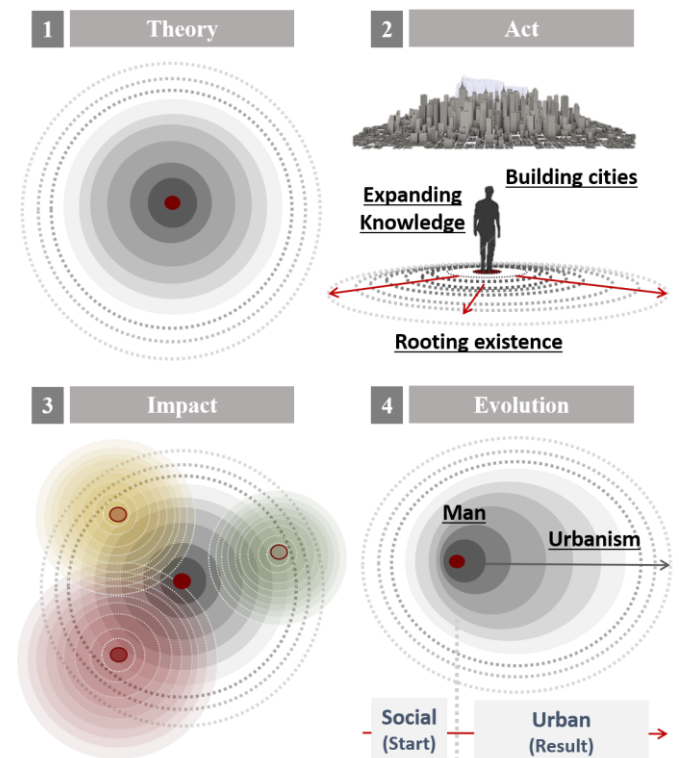
**Keywords:** Placemaking practices; Social housing; Great liveable places, Social interaction; Sociability; Responsive urbanism.

## INTRODUCTION

The relation between man and urbanism can be interpreted in means of socio-urban practices; where these practices represent the act of human activities in the urban environment as an example of throwing a stone in water to make a multiple ripple of impact.

Therefore, if this impact is made without damaging the environmental assets then it will lead to a positive ripple, and making this impact continuous in different environments would increase the spread of the impact and consequently its evolution to strengthen and root the attachment of both the influencer and

influenced, as in fig.(1)



**Figure 1:** The intervention of people in places  
 (Source: the researchers)

The social act of people is represented in the human activities that appear in the urban form; where these activities are an interpretation of their needs, requirements and aspirations.

### 1. Human needs as a basis of social housing

By considering the theories of human needs as the origin of any human activity in an urban environment; then reviewing such theories can lead to a better understanding of the factors of social practices in the urban context, which is represented in the social housing patterns.

The researchers came to an analysis of 6 consequence human theories; where each theory had a different basis of classifying the human needs and behaviours, as in fig.(2) starting from the following: 1) Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (1943) which categorizes them into 5 classifications, that include physical and psychological needs. 2) The three needs theory (1960s) by David McLelland that stated that our needs are

determined according to our behaviours, and are achievement, affiliation and power; which included both individuals and groups. 3) The ERG theory (1969) by Clayton P. Alderfer that suggested to rethink Maslow's pyramid according to 3 categories as in existence, relatedness and growth, showing levels of needs as in basic needs and complementary requirements, (Jouneja 2015).

4) The theory of basic human needs(1979) by John W. Burton which is based on the human needs, values and interests; recognized by Burton as non-negotiable needs beginning with physical, biological and ending with identity and recognition; which shows both categories of physical, mental and Individual, collective, (Azam 2018).

5) The Max Neef model of human-scale development (1980s) that is based on a classification of needs and satisfiers which interact in one system, classified to fundamental needs defined

by the being (Qualities), the having (Things), the doing (Actions) and the interacting (Settings), (Manfred. A. 1991).

Then we get to 6) The theory of universal human needs (2005) by Simon Hertnon who classified human needs to survival and betterment which he illustrated in a nautilus diagram that consists of 9 needs divided into 4 categories that represent intended goals (Hertnon 2005); showing a comprehensive model of levels of needs (Basic, Complementary), Types of needs (Physical, Mental), Target groups (individuals, Species), as in fig.(3).

Thus, this research will focus on Simon Hertnon's theory for correlating human needs in urban practices to deduct the dimensions of social housing that stems up from the people's needs.

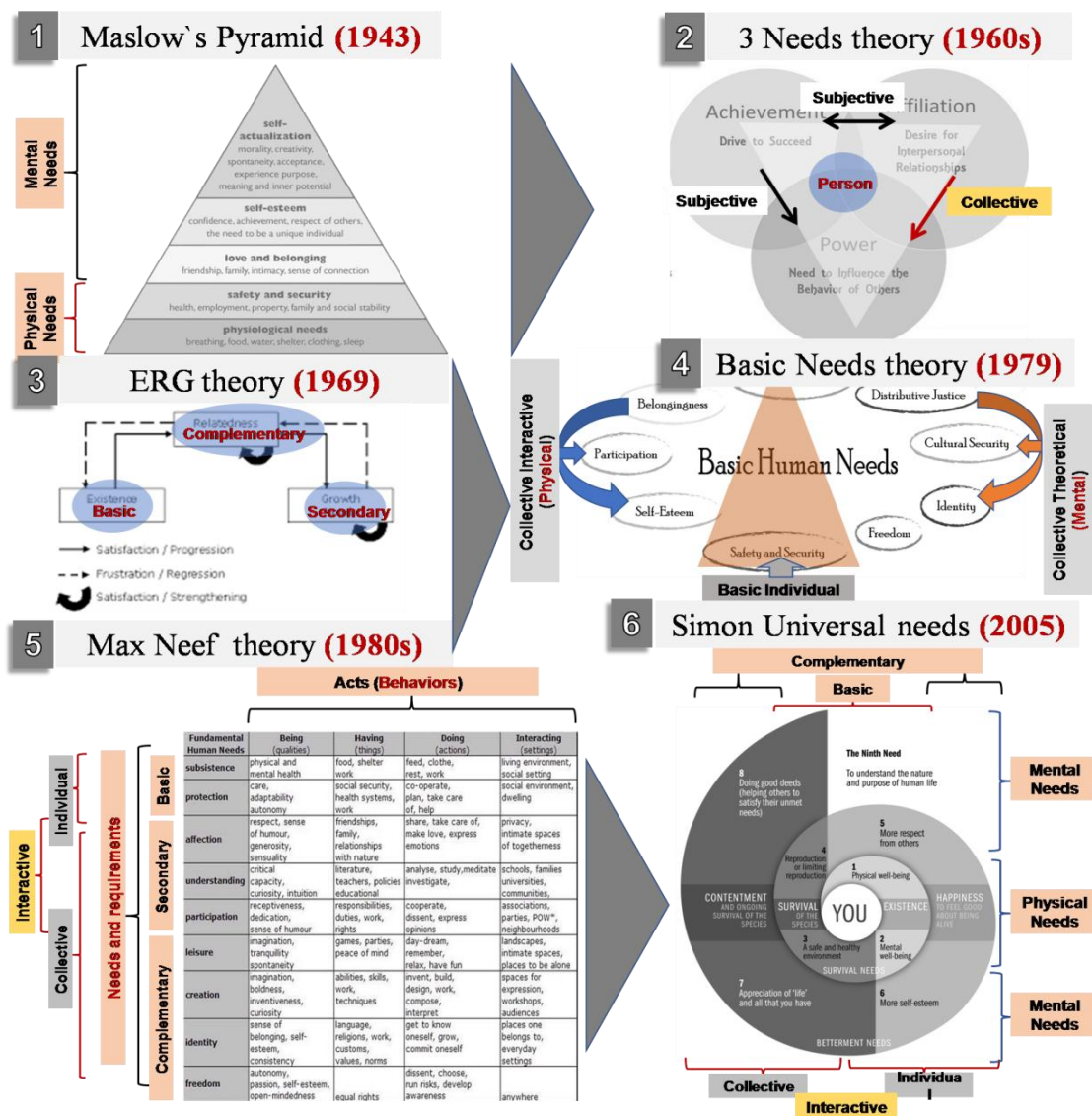
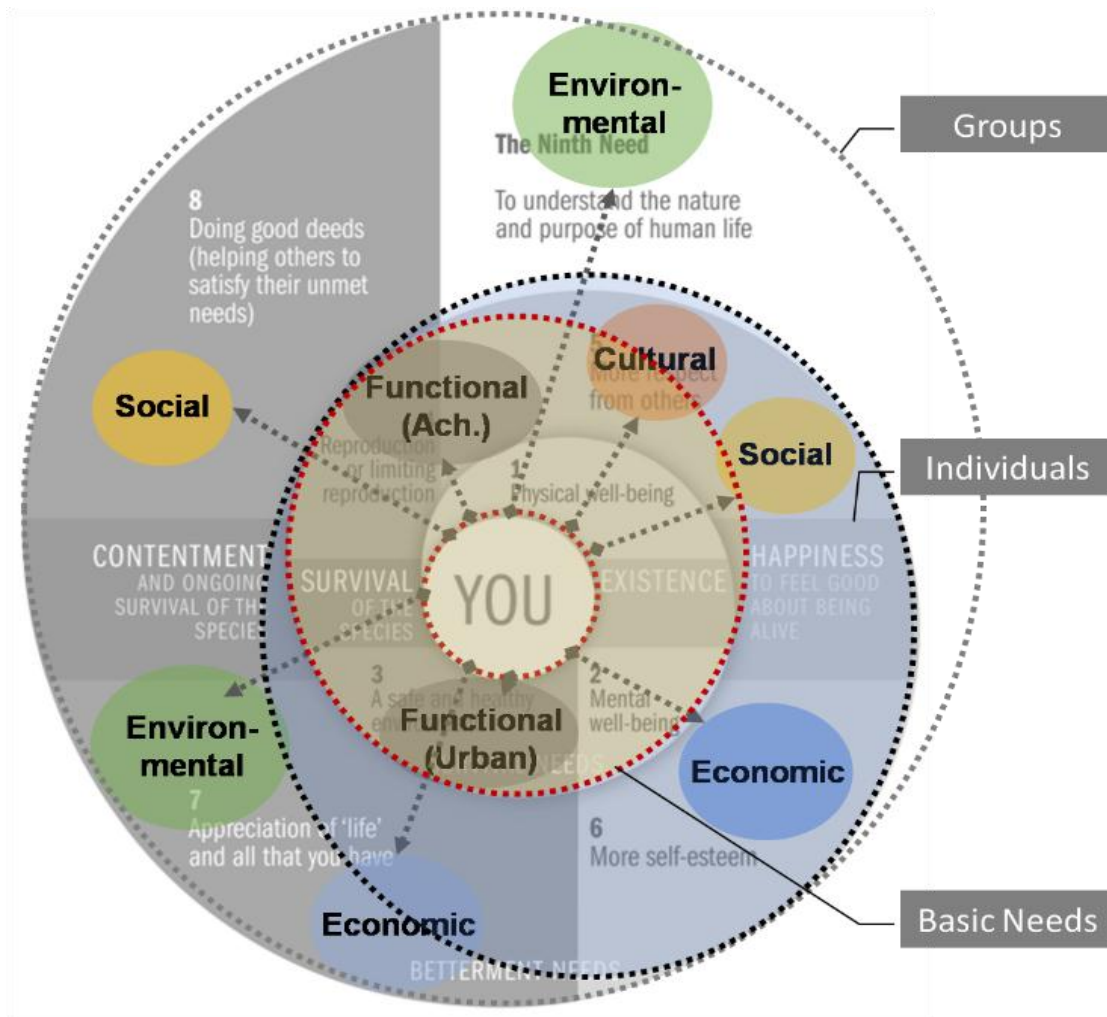


Figure 2: The reading of human needs theories (Source: Edited by the researchers)



**Figure 3:** Analysis of Simon Hertnon`s nautilus diagram (Source: Edited by the researchers)

Therefore, this analysis refers to 5 main classification of needs divided into social, environmental, economic, cultural and functional needs; where functional needs can represent here the needs related to the function of the space with both its urban and architectural features.

*A. Social housing dimensions:*

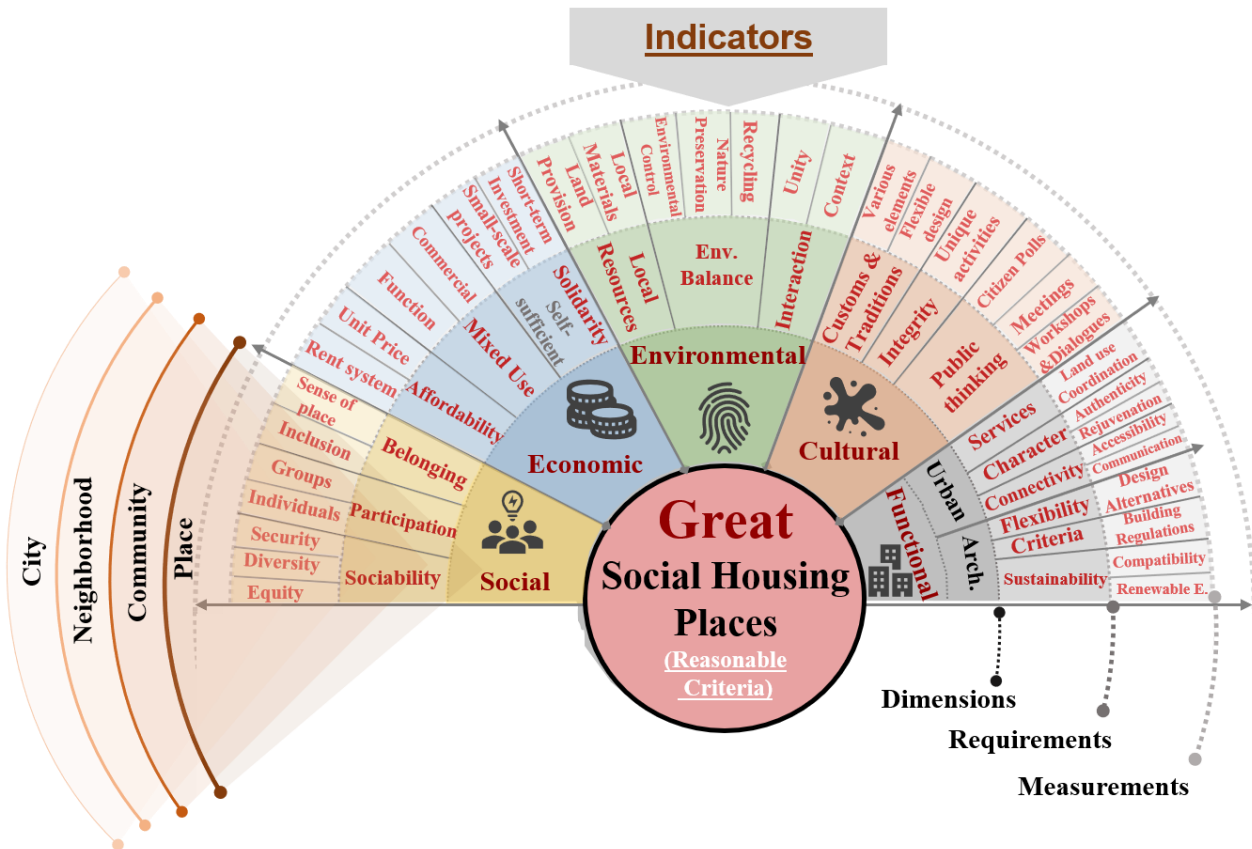
Social housing dimensions can be inferred to from the previous analysis as follows:

- Social dimensions: which refer to the features of equality, social interaction and sharing responsibility of the place.
- Environmental dimensions: which refer to the social role to preserve the environmental assets of the place; making full use of local resources to achieve the environmental balance and integrating the place elements as one comprehensive asset.
- Economic dimensions: which is related to the issues of affordability according to the share of services including open and green public spaces related to the housing unit, the share of investment to the households due to economic activities in the space and also the type of investment proposed.

- Cultural dimensions: which refer to the features developed from the cultures and traditions of the people using the place that shall integrate creative and various activities to make them communicate efficiently in the place.
- Functional dimensions: which includes both urban features that represent the type and level of services provided to enrich the interaction between people and the physical form of the space elements, as well as the architectural features that represent how flexible the place design can be to adapt to the continuous changes.

*B. Social housing Criteria:*

According to the dimensions of social housing that is based on the human needs a reasonable criteria to re-right the relation between people and places in social housing projects according to sustainable standards; all social, economic, environmental, cultural and functional factors should be reconsidered, and a human-based criteria of 3 levels that include 1) Basic dimensions, 2) Secondary requirements and 3) Standard indicators can be deducted as in fig.(4); this criteria is considered as the first part of the proposed draft code that can be applied and employed to create human-centred, human-responsive and human-led social housing places.



**Figure 4:** Social housing places proposed criteria  
 (Source: the researchers)

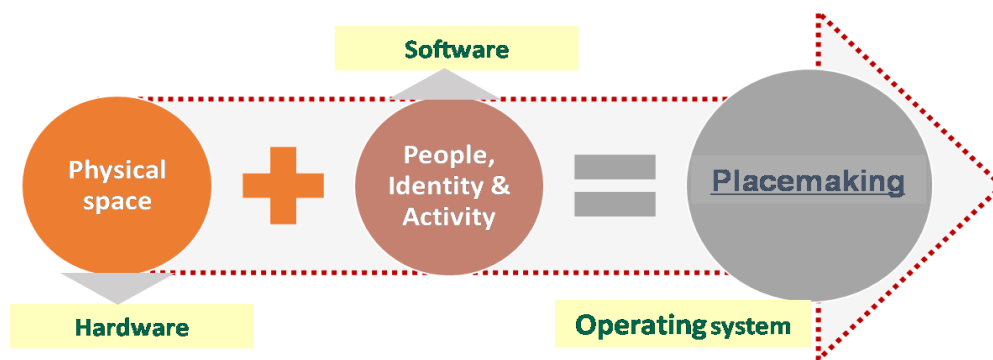
**2. Introducing the placemaking philosophy:**

Placemaking can be identified through a collaborative vision that brings together people to places; where the residents are able to formulate their public spaces focusing on both the built environment in addition to their cultural and social identity, and strengthen the relation between them and the places they share (What is placemaking? 2007).

This proves that placemaking is a dynamic process based on

promoting the sociability and flexibility of the community as well as its members.

In short, the placemaking process is more like a formula of integration between the physical built environment as the hardware, and the culture and tradition of people as the software; where in this case placemaking would be the operating system for them both, as in fig.(5).



**Figure 5:** The placemaking process  
 (Source: the researchers)



A. *Characteristics of great places:*

Project for Public Spaces(PPS) determines 4 main characteristic that defines the good and successful places that contribute to the comfort of people and stands out the urban character of the place (Kent 2018), these characteristics are as follows:

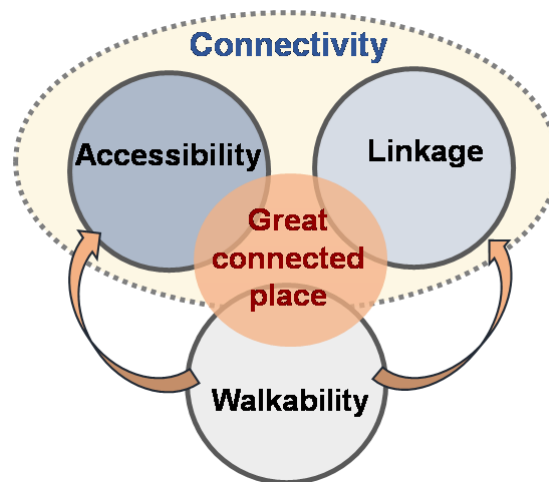
(1) Accessibility and linkage:

By providing a clear entrance to the place to make it easy to

identify its components; where linking the attached and close places together improves the continuity of human activities in these places, as in fig.(6).

Hence, “A successful place can be easy to get to, easy to communicate in and easy to experience” (What is placemaking? 2007).

Therefore, accessibility can be achieved through the following points, in Table (1).

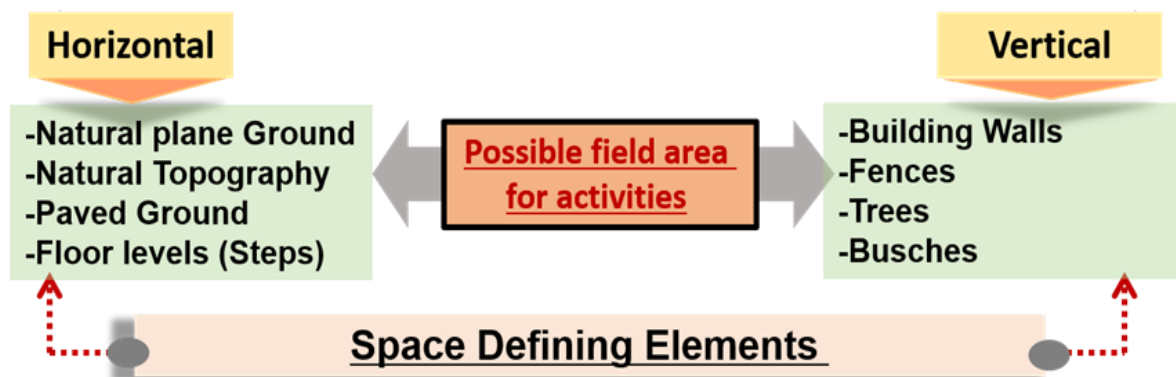


**Figure 6:** Accessibility and linkage connections  
 (Source: the researchers)

**Table 1:** Accessibility and linkage requirements in quality places

Accessibility	Linkage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clarity of space physical components, as in fig.(7).</li> <li>- Attractiveness of design elements.</li> <li>- Multiple destinations and portals to reach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connectivity through physical and visual images.</li> <li>- Near distances and ability for walkability .</li> <li>- Availability of transit options.</li> </ul>

(Source: the researchers)



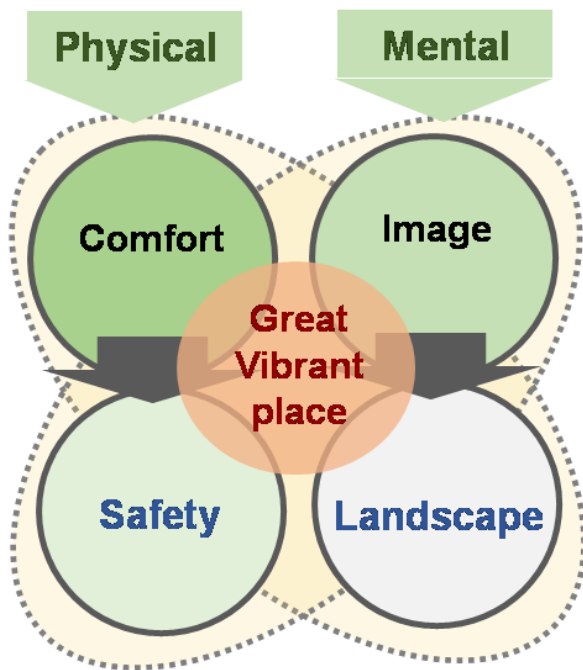
**Figure 7:** Physical features of a place (Source: the researchers)

(2) Comfort and image:

By providing variety of options to serve people in a place invites and encourages them to visit it again and again; because the well-organized sitting areas and simple structures also act as an attraction magnet for people to enjoy their visits in quality places (What is placemaking? 2007).

So, comfortability is associated with safety and security while the good image is associated with diverse amenities and soft/hardscapes; which work together to make this place welcoming and vibrant as in fig.(8).

Therefore, comfort and image can be achieved through the following points, as in Table (2).



**Figure 8:** Comfortability and image connections (Source: the researchers)

**Table 2:** Comfort and linkage requirements in quality places

Comfort ability	Image
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Places for activities.</li> <li>- Site elements (sitting areas, shades, borders, lightings,....)</li> <li>- Communication units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arts integration.</li> <li>- Landscapes.</li> <li>- Culture and identity.</li> </ul>

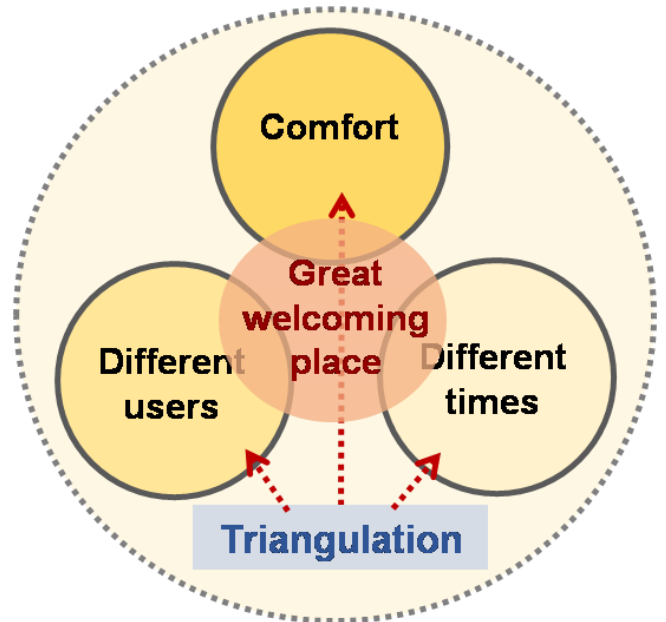
(Source: the researchers)

(3) Uses and activities:

Human activities are considered as the main engine in a place, as you can notice a place is noted by how much it attracts and draws people to it. What is remarkable is how can you gather

as much users as you can by fulfilling their needs at different times of the day and to manage a set of different uses successfully to create synergy (What is placemaking? 2007).

So, uses and activities are both associated with the types of users and the suitability of those activities over time, as in fig.(9).



**Figure 9:** Uses and activities connections (Source: the researchers)

Therefore, uses and activities can be achieved as follows, as in Table (3).

**Table 3:** Uses and activities requirements in quality places

Uses and activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Triangulate activities to draw a bigger share of society.(children, youth and elders)</li> <li>- Integrate daily life needs.</li> <li>- Make a role for everybody.</li> <li>- Merge different activities to connect people together in one place.</li> </ul>

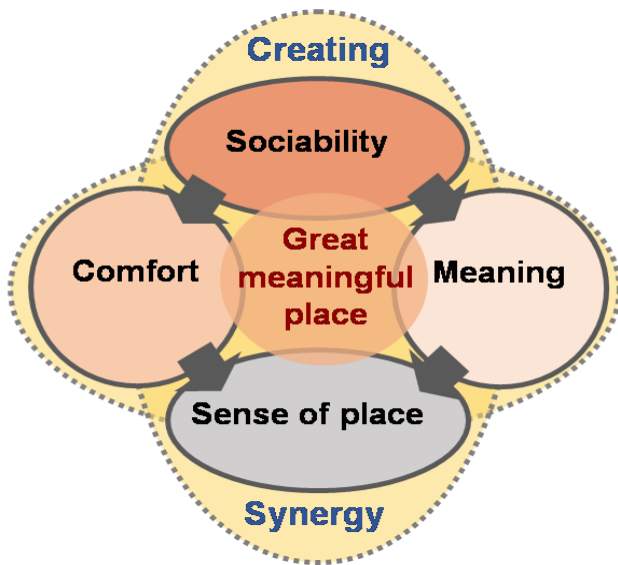
(Source: the researchers)

(4) Sociability:

The most wanted, yet difficult thing is to bring people together on one purpose. This is a very important quality of a wanted great place and has a critical role in rooting the sense of place in people`s minds and hearts (What is placemaking? 2007).

So, in order to achieve sociability, the place need to be characterized by openness and connectivity, creativity and

meaning, as in fig.(10).



**Figure 10:** Sociability connections (Source: the researchers)

Therefore, sociability can be achieved by the following points to create a social character to the place, as in Table (4).

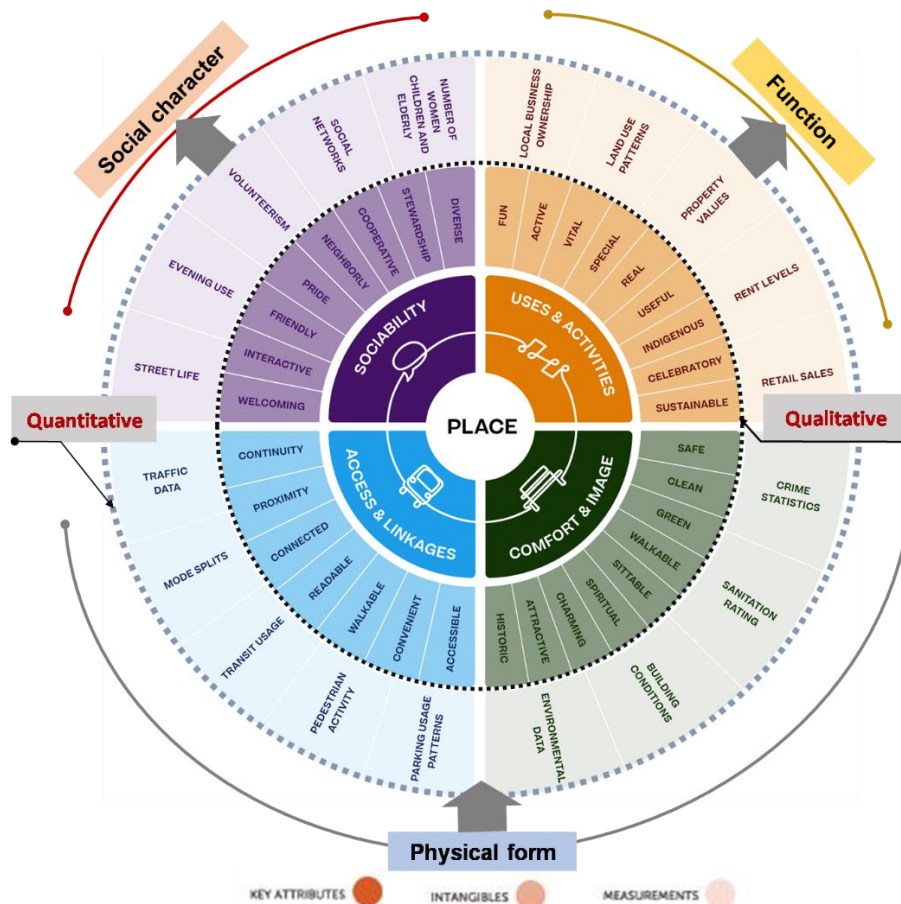
**Table 4:** Sociability requirements in quality places

Sociability
- Ensure good physical form
- Make a meaning out of the place.
- Interactions between people to create favorite spots.
- Gather different groups in social events.
- Always take comments and improve.
- Make back up plans to suit the future changes.

(Source: the researchers)

**B. How to measure great quality places:**

Project for Public Spaces(PPS) set a place measurement diagram based on the previous characteristics as the key attributes to the place, followed by a set of qualitative and quantitative measurements that could be applied to any procedure on a place , neighbourhood or a city; which is called the place diagram (What is placemaking? 2007), as in fig.(11).



**Figure 11:** Great place measuring diagram (Source: (What is placemaking? 2007))

C. *Creating people-place formula:*

Concluding that the inevitable fusion between people and place is the basis of establishing a sound, healthy and good life in any place; the formula of consequent people-place vocabularies can lead to a better understanding of the importance of how feeling related and attached to your place can differ in our minds.

As, if we assume that the physical form of a place is a

representation of our level of attachment, the activity we share in this place would be the status we feel, and if this activity acts compatible to the local culture and economy of the users then the benefit increases with how good the status is, and accordingly the response towards the status would rise; therefore in sequence the sense of place will thrive as strong as the success of all the previous, as in fig.(12).

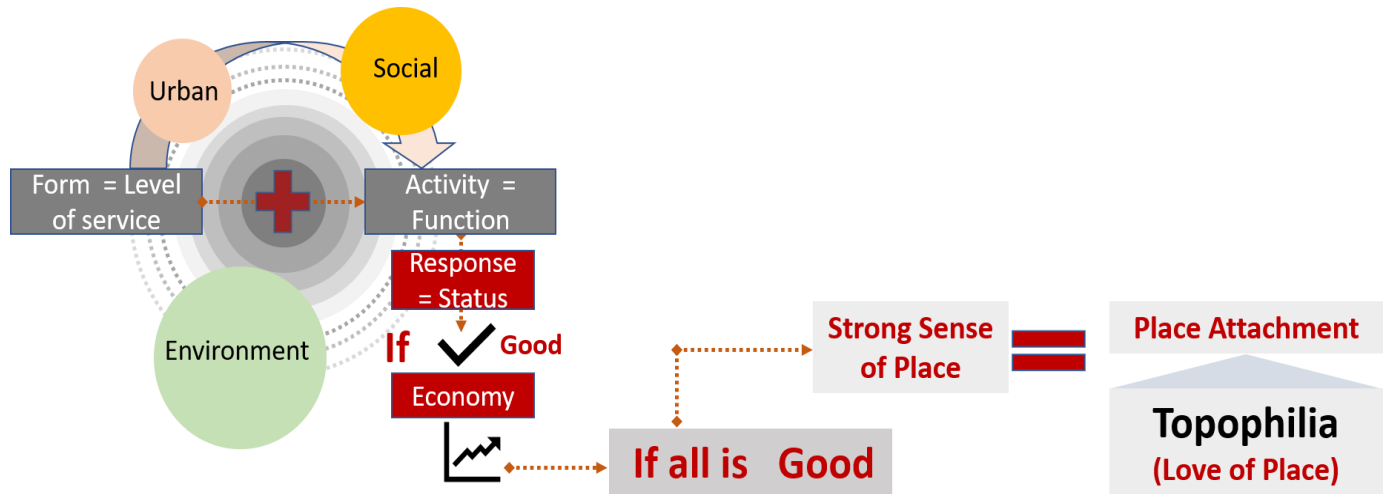


Figure 12: The developed place formula (Source: the researchers)

Applying this formula on social housing places including the 5 social housing dimensions can lead to a configuration of a common criteria to create great successful social housing places.

3. *Rooting community-led placemaking in social housing places:*

Unused spaces can be considered as existing misused resources that could make a different image in social housing projects, if well managed; In order to accomplish a successful public open space it takes concerns about the type of activity and also studying the resident's behaviours to create vibrant community spaces.

In order to get the maximum benefit from these untapped opportunities; a systematic sequential steps must be taken to relocate the basis of the problem, the parties concerned with it and the role of each party, to develop a plan to improve those places by involving all parties in a unified vision.

A. *Theorizing the placemaking of social housing spaces vision:*

The impact of the social interventions in the built environment can take many forms; where these forms shape the relation between people and places; thus this relationship is a result of overlapping the levels of this impact in order to reconfigure a

bottom-up vision to transform social housing spaces into liveable and vibrant places.

Thus the rationale of applying placemaking practices in social housing unused spaces can be translated as the act of social activities that can have an impact in the urban environment on different levels, by detailing these levels we can reach to a practical level of configuring a reasonable criteria that integrates them, as in fig.(13).

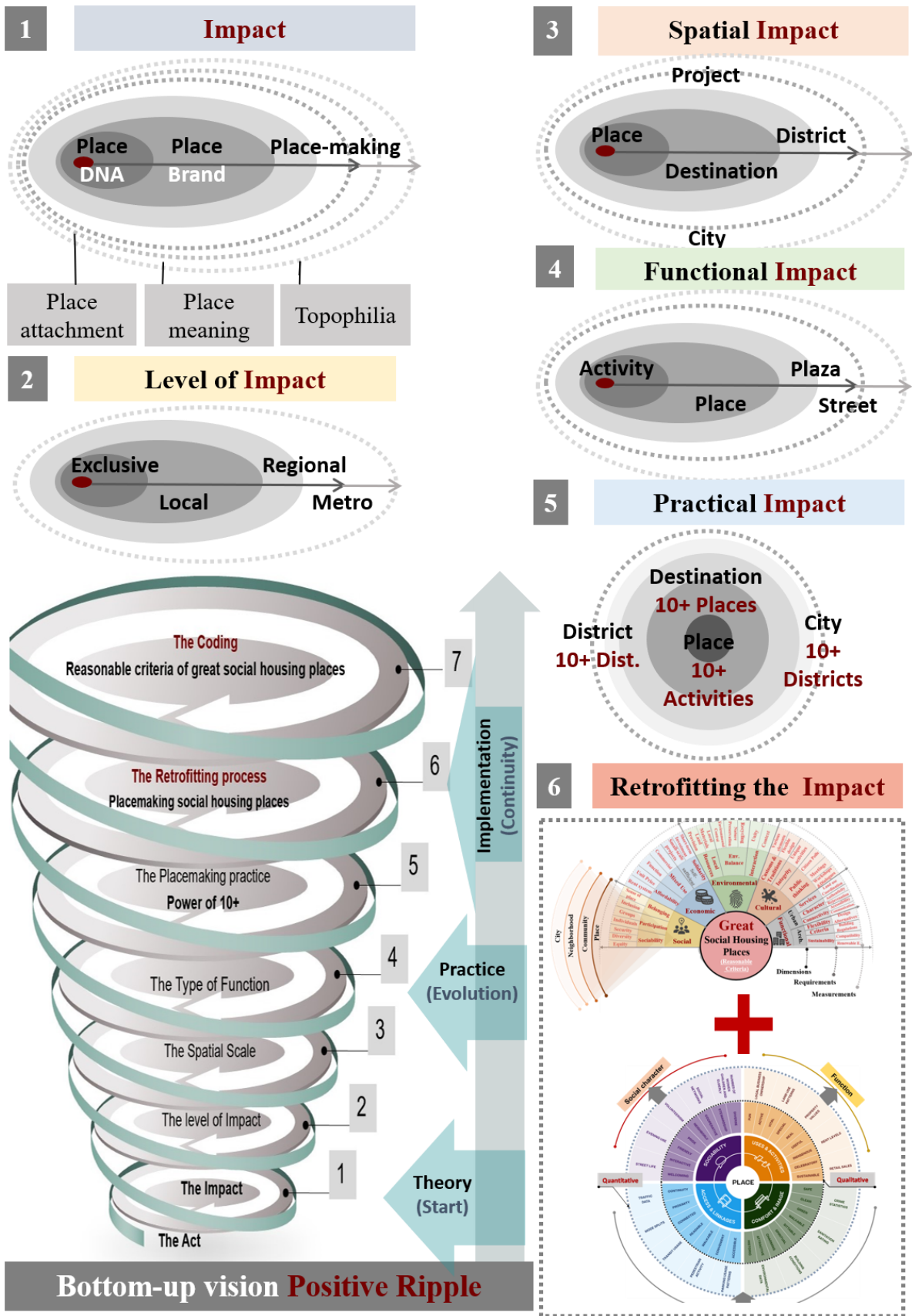
B. *Drafting code of social housing vibrant places:*

A set of measurements, intangibles and indicators on both terms of social housing dimensions and great placemaking places were derived, and can be represented in a sequential wheel chart.

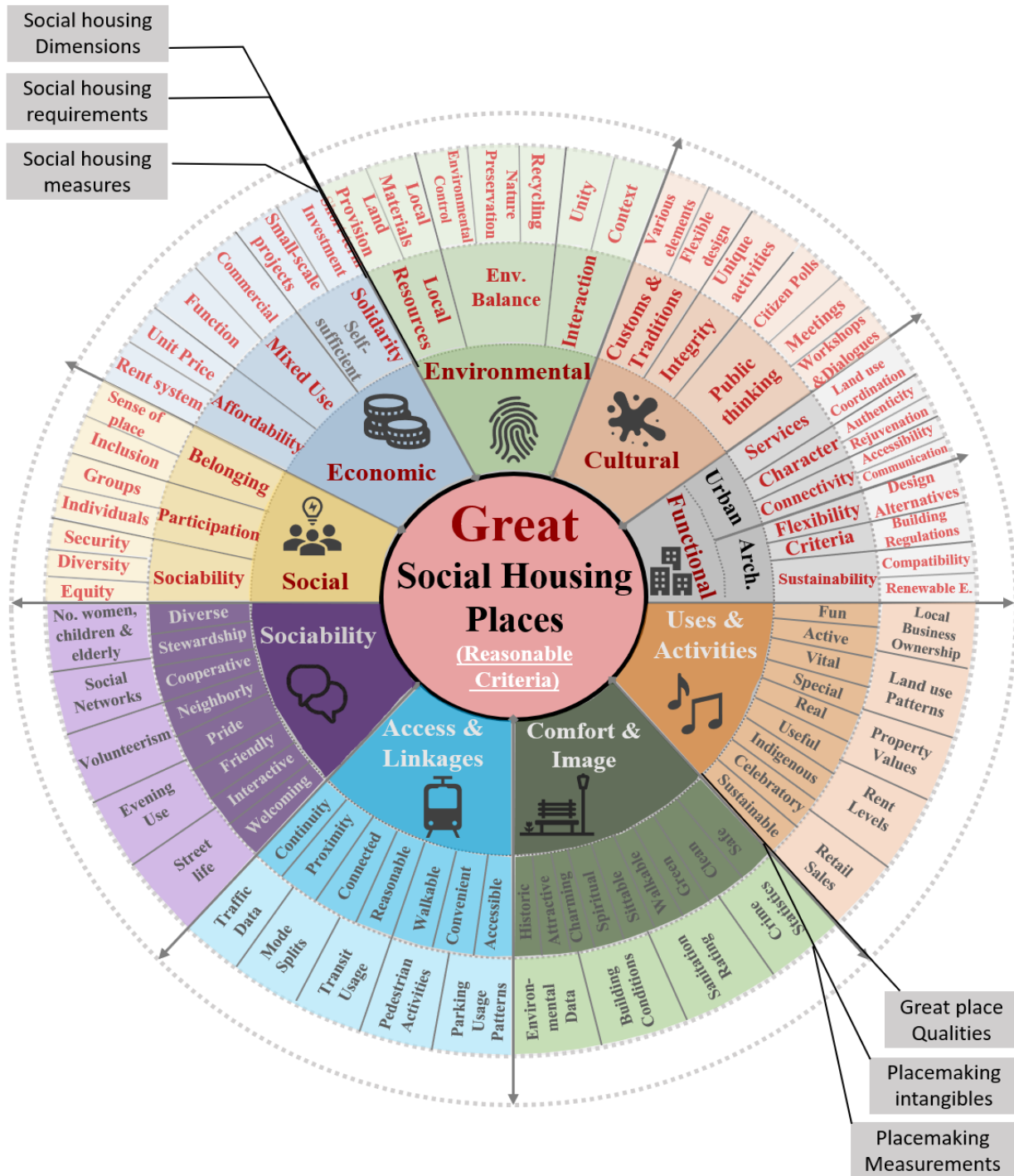
This wheel chart is composed of 2 main halves, the upper represents the sequence of social housing dimensions, measurements and indicators, and the lower represents the qualities, intangibles and measurements of great quality places, as in fig.(14).

Adding to this formulation the scale of measurements starting from the exclusive ( the place), to the intermediate ( the neighbourhood) till the inclusive (the project /city). In addition to introducing the acts related to each scale; a multidimensional comprehensive matrix can be deduced.





**Figure 13:** The developed place formula  
 (Source: the researchers)



**Figure 14:** Matrix of social housing places according to placemaking characteristics

(Source: the researchers)

From this point on a reasonable criteria represented in the previous matrix draft code is to be taken into consideration whenever working on social housing places; depending on both the theory and application of placemaking.

Further studies can modify and update other approaches rather than placemaking; taking into account what is suitable and relevant to both the people and urban context of the selected space and also the implementation scale.

## DISCUSSION

It is clear that there is an unbreakable relation between people and their places; where Social interaction between community members themselves as well as achieving harmony between them and their favourable places requires a framework that highlights the importance of the social role in upgrading the urban environment.

This gives a head start for engaging modern approaches that works as a creative intervention in the production of a strong bond between social, cultural, economic and urban forms of the city; such as placemaking practices to promote and integrate people into their community places.

Also, this all proves that Sustainable social housing is the suitable tool to fulfil the needs of the population in their communities with the guarantee of achieving social justice and equity as well as providing suitable and affordable housing within the environmental considerations.

Therefore, Social housing projects need to focus on the social interaction between residents themselves as well as integrating into the place.

Thus, this indicates the need to expand the scope in the social housing system as a theory and application to accommodate the changes and requirements of both the building and the urban environment and to integrate practical practices to include the needs, requirements and aspirations of people in the environment in which they want to live.

## RESULTS

- 1- The integration of the social housing system depends on the extent to which it responds to the human needs of the population, where human needs can be considered as the theoretical basis, while the common dimensions are the legislative pillar, while measurements and indicators become the practical and operational pillar.
- 2- Access to a set of operational indicators that translate, organize and consolidate the relationship between man and place acts as a guide for designing and improving social housing spaces and resulting in a state of social integration in urbanization, which is called place attachment.
- 3- The concept of social housing is not limited to a specific type of environment or categories, as it is based on social justice for everyone alike. Therefore, the correct definition of social housing can be viewed as both a theoretical basis and a brief practical guide for social housing projects.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Social housing patterns should be seen as an important component of the city, very much known to the public realm, being a common factor between theory and practice and revolves around the genesis of an integration between the built environment and open spaces.
- In order to re-right the relation between people and places in social housing places in Egypt according to sustainable standards; all social, economic, environmental, cultural and functional factors should be reconsidered, and a human-based criteria of 3 levels includes 1) Basic dimensions, 2) Secondary requirements and 3) Standard indicators should be activated.

- Establishing a plan to restructure urban spaces in existing social housing projects in existing cities and creating new urban spaces through re-exploitation of Non spaces, under-utilized spaces, parking lots, etc.
- Develop a vision to adopt the idea of the power of the 10+ in enriching social housing projects based on the multiple ascending sequence of activities in places, places in destinations, destinations in regions, areas in the neighbourhood and neighbourhoods in the project or city.
- Local Governments and planning authorities should work to derive a mechanism that combines human needs with creative ideas and long term investments to achieve quality of urban life through a community-led action plan in order to stimulate the relationship between man and urbanism in the form of social housing gathering/ activities places.
- Forming creative visions that include practical practices for placemaking and developing collective activities in all architectural and urban applications to enrich the levels of attachment to the place, root and consolidate the sense of belonging to the place in the minds of the users.
- Urban planners, designers and local governments should all aim for the communication between all categories in the society, to create an urban environment on the basis of a socio-economic intervention that seeks to preserve the environment; in an attempt to achieve the equation of sustainability especially social sustainability since the human factor is the leading party in the process.

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