

# **PUBLIC SPACE QUALITIES THAT ENHANCE URBAN LIFE: THE CASE OF ADDIS ABABA, AN ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT**

**Darik Zebenigus Wuhib**

*PhD Candidate in Building and Town Planning*

*E-mail: darikz@yahoo.com, darik.zebenigus@eiabc.edu.et, dwuhib@ulb.ac.be*

## **ABSTRACT**

Public spaces are considered the platforms for most human beings' day-to-day activities. They are able to deliver a range of benefits across economic, social and environmental spheres enhancing the urban life. This important role they play has both a global similarity and local individuality making each of these spaces unique places. This article, therefore, looks at public spaces in Addis Ababa to identify qualities that are attached to these spaces in an effort to find out what is a "*working public space*" in the Ethiopian context.

This is achieved by looking at the global level and understanding the qualities Public spaces have through the concept of sense of place; Activity, Image, Form and Management. This is, then, reviewed at a local level in order to assemble a framework and do case study analysis to understand the context.

In the case studies selection, an acupuncture approach using the principle of hierarchy of space was adopted where four use & scale dependant levels were recognized. This was due to the extensive size of what public spaces is in the city. Accordingly, The study identified four cases namely: Meskel Square, Sholla Market, Lideta Church and Beherawi Area in the capital city Addis Ababa.

The study concluded that Necessary activities like education & work are as important as Optional activities such as seating, playgrounds & sporting activities for the success of a place. Also, third spaces like Cafe's and internet cafe's are an important integral part of the public spaces. In addition, the management aspect including the up keep quality of a place is highly affected by ownership where corporate ownership is welcomed and works effectively.

***Key Words:*** *Public Spaces, Sense of Place, Quality of Public Spaces*