City Space Architecture

Discovering and Mapping Aspects of Spatial Publicness.
Observations from an Undergraduate Architecture Studio in Cyprus

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Abstract

The value of public spaces and their social function in cities has been the source of numerous writings. The questions posed in our undergraduate architecture studio at the University of Cyprus are: "What core design aspects create successful public places, and how do they constitute conscious design processes?" and "What are core values that create successful public places and how are they consciously integrated in a design process?". This paper will attempt to address the topic of spatial publicness within a framework of translating observations of the above into design strategies and tools. These aspects have formulated the basis for recent design briefs, tested within an architectural studio context from 2nd year coursework, while at the same time being translated into transferable values, such as diagnostic and synthetic tools, appropriate for an undergraduate architectural studio. They formulate the basis of an ongoing research project tested within the studio context and utilizing case studies from the output of students' work to draw conclusions that guide the pedagogical approach.

Introduction

The premise of the studio, the discovering and mapping of aspects of spatial publicness as a primer for collaborative design of shared collective space in the public domain, as this is framed by individual interventions based on a group masterplan by students of the first semester, second year students at the Department of Architecture of the University of Cyprus, emanates from a number of readings and references that set the pedagogical framework for this design exercise. One such reference comes from Jane Jacobs' description of the qualities of living in lively cities and she is basing those observations from her personal experience living in Greenwich Village in New York City. Her observation that "cities were no longer being built as agglomerations of city space and buildings, but rather, as individual buildings," (Jacobs, 1961) finds resonance with our pedagogical mandate that quality public collective space can be the result of happenstance, but also the result of deliberately executing a masterplan where individual building proposals are also subordinated by the collective design of the space between the buildings.

Another important reference comes from Jan Gehl – a few years after Jacobs' writings – who noted (Gehl, 2010) that as we approach the turn of the century and with the majority of the global population becoming increasingly urbanized, great focus needs to be placed on the needs of urban dwellers in terms of strengthening the social function of urban spaces as places of increased physical and also social sustainability. This is a view strongly supported as well by Richard Rogers, who in his forward to Jan Gehl's latest edition of "Cities for People" also notes that cities are places where people "meet to socialize and to relax, to exchange ideas and to be creative, to work and to trade" (Gehl, 2010). Both designers and theoreticians are therefore in agreement that the urban domain is a strong catalyst for collective pastimes and activities.

Moreover, these two researchers are proponents of the concept of a compact city, which sees the integration of nodes and corridors related to urban mobility as a key and viable ingredient to the creation of socially, environmentally, economically and even culturally sustainable city form. However, for this urban compactness to be achieved, the city must offer urban spaces of a significant quantity and of a substantial quality for people to use as the outlet for collective activities juxtaposed to the expected high densities of architectural program occupying living and working spaces. It is these spaces that enable compact cities to act as proponents of public life and to encourage and accommodate diverse public activities and functions that range "from the quiet and contemplative to the noisy and busy," while at the same time they remain respectful of health, safety and the human scale of the individual city dweller.

Submitting a premise for investigation in the architectural studio context

Given this premise, the studio in question examined a number of sub-themes that were then incorporated into the design narrative that was given to the students. These sub-themes were examined through relevant literature review and they were further informed by the approaches to the formulation of studio briefs, as these were attempted in similar, but also in different cultural and geographical contexts in other undergraduate architecture studio frameworks, and they are as follows:

- Spatial publicness as a consequence of public life
- Public life reconstituted
- The streets as connectors of nodes of public life

- Beyond public life and urban mobility – the healthy city
- Accommodating "the flâneur" as the opportunistic user
- Addressing the socioeconomic prerequisites to public life

Each of these sub-themes that constituted the investigative backbone of the studio brief are presented below, matched to methodological prompts from selected approaches proposed or adopted by instructors elsewhere, dealing with comparable pedagogical challenges and opportunities. In this way hopefully students may start tackling quasi-real-world challenges in the design of public space for public life and to augment their confidence in being able to sift through more complex design issues both in transdisciplinary teams but also at the same time with a higher degree of autonomy as well.

Constructing a theoretical and methodological framework:
Outlining prongs of investigation and learning from others

In constructing a theoretical and methodological framework for structuring the investigation of the design of public in an undergraduate architectural studio context it is important to recognize that in all public life there is a dynamic between public and private activities. Although the public-private balance is unique to each culture, it will shift under the influence of cultural exchange, technology, changing political and economic systems prevalent at the time (Carr et.al., 1992). It is therefore important to supplement and enrich the theoretical framework informed by reviewing the literature with knowledge produced by others tackling similar issues in a broad range of geographical contexts.

Spatial publicness as a consequence of public life
Early in the 18th century, Canaletto's pictures of Venice portray spaces filled with life, with energy and with a sense of enjoyment of spending time in a public setting. "This panoramic view conveys a picture of public life in this space of Venice, one in which everyone seems to have a place with ample room to engage in the varied activities that are captured by the artist. It is the public life that enriches the scene as well as the beautiful space in which it takes place" a quality also noted by Brighenti (2010) in his treatise of the publicness of public space. Moreover, according to Whyte (1988), "Public life enables the transmission of important messages for the people of a community", which may range from the symbolic messages of the power of the state to social commentary and gossip emanating from the neighbourhood.

In the "new world", this kind of group life was found in the barn-raising and house-building activities that were seen as public responsibilities of a community, as well as in the formation of marketplaces to sell produce and products (Low, 2000) and which led to the typology of the commons. Elsewhere in non-western cultures Qian (2014) delves on the design of public spaces and the ways in which this influences the practices of publicness in that context and the notion of socio-spatial entanglement in collective spaces. In the case of Cyprus, collective spaces, such as public parks, were influenced by nineteenth century European planning principles in the form of British colonial practices regarding town planning, in order to bring more congenial settings to people inhabiting the growing Cypriot cities. Subsequent emphasis was also placed on play settings for children followed by the spread of small community green areas that were supposed to serve the growing social and recreational needs at the scale of the neighbourhood.

In this context the work by Ozmehmet and Alakavuk (2016) on the integration of processes introduced in theoretical courses and then transferred to undergraduate design studios was very useful to the formulation of coursework at UCy, especially discussions of studio-based design learning systems and curriculum development. As presented in that case, coursework from the second year dealing with subjects in social engagement gave support and enriched studio deliberations by tapping onto both theoretical as well as practical parameters of spatial analysis and synthesis of the theme of spatial publicness as a consequence of designing for public life.

Public life reconstituted
In the past couple of centuries, cities and their inhabitants have developed networks of sociability which demanded the establishment of public amenities with regards to socialization and leisure in the public space. Broader patterns of social interaction, which were suited to exchange between strangers, also came into being wherein according to Sennett (1977) the new "cosmopolis" – derived from the words "cosmos" (as in people) and from "polis" (as in city) "defines the line drawn between public and private, and on which the claims of civility – epitomized by cosmopolitan, public behaviour – were balanced against the claims of nature – epitomized by the family." He goes on to note that since the 19th century one may come to understand the crisis of public life in terms of four psychological conditions: "the involuntary disclosure of character; the superimposition of public and private imagery; defence through withdrawal; and silence."

In the public sphere, cosmopolitan public behaviour as described by Sennett above used to be directly connected to the public life of the ancient agora and its more contemporary translation of a city's plaza. Thompson (2011) continues the debate in his mention of shifting boundaries in the public sphere and how this is manifested in a demarcation of public and private life in the city. However, as Chidister (1988) contends, the use of such public spaces may not constitute a continuing and recurring interest in public life as in times past, but merely an "event" in the established patterns of private life of most of its users. Still, the interest in such places may well be an indication of a renewed interest in public life. What may be questioned with regards to the traditional character of public life in the ancient agora or the contemporary plaza, is the fact that many of the traditional activities of commerce and leisure and exchange that occurred there are now occurring in places designed and built specifically in order to house these activities (Cooper Marcus & Francis, 1998). By doing so they oftentimes reconstitute public life by reversing public space from outdoor un-programmed space that may be appropriated for a variety of uses, to specific indoor and controlled programmed space. This subsequently may cause the contextual relationship between built and open space in the city – the buildings and the space between the buildings, which in itself constitutes the continuity in an urban fabric to offer possibilities for interaction and exchange – to be weakened or even to be lost.

Consequently, as a concept, a 'life between buildings' strategy should include all of the very different activities people engage in when they use common city space: walks from place to place, promenades, shorter and longer stays, conversations and meetings, play and entertainment. But most importantly at its core should be the facilitation of communication between people who share public space as a framework for interaction (Gehl, 2011; Lefebvre, 1996/1968), a common characteristic of life in city space between

buildings, wherein versatility and complexity of the activities allows for a much greater diversity in the uses and functions for which it may be appropriated. Such appropriations and their effect on the socio-spatial qualities of public urban space are also referenced and critiqued by Wang (2018) in the debate of the publicness of related functions in the urban space. Such functions may be: waiting for the bus on the way to work or school; accessing services and delivering goods; or functions of leisure, such as promenading or sightseeing.

The work of Natu (2020) helped to further explore the issue of the reconstitution of public life in the undergraduate studio context. In this case what was deemed important was the integration of behavioural research in undergraduate architecture education, and more specifically in the design of inclusive environments, in an attempt to bridge the gap between user needs and design decisions that cater to those needs. As in that case, students at UCy explored their sites of intervention at different times and by examining diverse groups of inhabitants in the area investigated. It is hoped that this approach helps make studio participants more sensitive to social inclusion as a prerequisite for the reconstitution of public life, with the development of a framework for introducing inclusive design strategies.

The streets as connectors of nodes of public life

Nodes of public life may exist in enclaved or even isolated conditions, but their contribution in constituting a sociable and healthy community is increased if they form part of an interconnected and synergistic network of such venues, wherein the streets as extensions of public life in the city act as connectors of these nodes of public life. In the 20th century, the way cities were planned in terms of accommodating mobility and connections amongst major trip generators kept pace with urban growth and city development as it adhered to modernist ideologies. Modernism introduced a vision of the city as a machine and planning professionals with traffic planners leading the way, tried to ensure the best conditions for managing car traffic (Rivlin, 1987) and its associated higher speeds, which oftentimes clashed with the more modest and moderate speeds of the pedestrian or the cyclist. In conventional land use planning, the design of streets was dictated by traffic flow and parking standards and treated mainly as a part of the circulation element of a city's' area plan (Appleyard, 1981) rather than also doubling up as a connector of nodes of public life or as the venue of public life in and of itself.

This situation came to a head for many crowded cities in the 20th century (Gehl, 2010), as in an effort to cope with rising car traffic, substantial city space was typically appropriated for vehicular traffic and parking and led to diminishing attention being paid to the culmination or intersection of rights of ways at key locations of increased socialization and public life. Street quality, street life and street centrality in the cases of diverse urbanities and especially in the potential for increased socialization in the main commercial thoroughfares – many of which become increasingly pedestrianized in city centres – is also mentioned by Remali et.al. (2015) in the context of contemporary traffic pressures and the spatial relationship between suburbs and the central business districts. These early attempts to relieve traffic pressure by building more roads and parking garages generated more traffic and more congestion, proving that the volume of car traffic has a close correlation to available transportation infrastructure (Loukaidou-Sideris & Banerjee, 1998). In reversing this trend, urban designers, such as Gehl (2011)

note that in the 21st century cities such as London and Copenhagen have taken great strides in converting highways to city streets and city streets to pedestrian ways and bicycle lanes thereby prompting conviviality in public spaces and the spontaneity of public life.

By changing such regulatory practices, the City of London in 2002 introduced road pricing for access to the city centre and the immediate effect of the new "congestion charge" was an 18% reduction in the 24km² central city zone, thereby revisiting the reconstitution of the advantages offered by both the condition of increased centrality and the key supporting advantages offered when this is coupled to better networked urban streets (Crucitti et.al., 2006)Further developing on these ideas, in 2017 Zaha Hadid Architects (2017) initiated a project called 'Walkable London' proposing an expansive network of pedestrian routes across the capital, in order to achieve a measurable difference in the quality of life in the city centre. Consequently, a large pedestrian network was prioritized as an integral part of the city's transport infrastructure, thereby coupling the perceived value of public space with tangible aspects of urban connectivity, accessibility and walkability as an added responsibility in planning not only for liveable cities with respect to socialization and public life but also liveable cities with respect to public health. Similarly in Copenhagen, the city began restructuring its street network by removing driving lanes and parking places and by timing traffic signals at crossings (Gehl, 2010), deliberately creating safer conditions for bicycle and pedestrian traffic, which by 2008 accounted to 37% of all personal transport in the city to and from work to be carried out by bicycle.

In both instances, the fees gathered from these tolls are put into the improvement not only of the connectors – the rights of way that connect key trips between key urban destinations and services – but also in all associated public spaces and public venues that are the incubators of urban public life. Yet in Cyprus on the other hand, planning regulations governing the requirements for private parking keep increasing. Every housing unit exceeding 150 sq. m. should provide for two parking spaces within, something which increases and encourages the use of private means of transportation. García's work (2017) in examining neighbourhood identity through the lens of mobility, as this is manifested in a definition of streets not only as rights of way but as quintessential public places, expanded the outlook of them as connectors of nodes of public life and community engagement. Design skills were matched to the aim of developing an understanding of the cultural, the social, the economic and the environmental forces that contribute to the evolution of neighbourhood identity. By engaging a diverse group of stakeholders in the initial contextual site analysis the students used on-site observations as part of an evidence-based approach to identify nodes of public life in the city and to understand the crucial role of the mobility corridors that (inter)connect them. These corridors were examined through the lens of the health, safety and welfare of the community residents, and how with the further implementation of community participatory practices, these could be associated as enablers in forging a neighbourhood sense of place and giving an identity to spaces of public use.

Beyond public life and urban mobility – the healthy city
The evidence above, points also to mobility and the associated rights-of-way having a significant correlation to the notion of an expanded public domain, which includes these

mobility corridors. There is also evidence that if vehicular traffic is reduced in these corridors and that space is appropriated by pedestrians and bicyclists through new patterns of use there may exist benefits associated with public health that addresses both human physiology and also human psychology. Indeed, by designing urban spaces of a public and collective nature for the "fit city" an active lifestyle with positive repercussions on public health in the cities may be possible by a (re)instrumentalization of urban space (Herrick, 2009). With this. in mind, sidewalks may be expanded, trees planted and new pedestrian and bicycle ways incorporated in the expanded public zone and to ensure an extend timeframe of use into the evening hours, lighting design may also be incorporated in the design to ensure safe occupation and navigation in this connected network of open spaces and the streets that connect them even at nighttime. To this point, the office of Jan Gehl (2010) had conducted surveys in the City of Melbourne in 1994 and 2004, which indicated that there is an increased desire to locate housing and workplace developments in conjunction said network of these urban improvement strategies. Oftentimes such mandates have been the result of co-creation process between urban designers who put substance to community aspirations for a more sustainable urban metabolism and urban transformations that lead to healthier cities (Fróes and Lasthein, 2020). The potential influx of new residents would necessitate the incorporation of new squares and promenades that connect them that in turn serve urban mobility and act as centres of collective activity and socialization, while also tripling the activity level on ordinary workdays and offering the possibility of an extended stay in the area.

The study of these researchers also noted the current and potential residents' perception that occupying these public spaces and also walking and biking from one to the other for leisure or for work, as a natural part of the pattern of daily activities, satisfied their perceptions and expectations of living not only in a more sociable city but also in a healthier one. These observations are in agreement with statistics compiled by public authorities that demonstrate a growth in public health problems resulting from large numbers of urban dwellers leading sedentary and inactive lives and relying extensively on the use of their car (Gehl, 2010). Consequently, the option and opportunity to walk and bike between nodes of public life as a natural and integrated element of one's daily routine should constitute an important and integrated part in of any strategies integrating public health and the strengthening of public life.

A city that invites people to walk must by definition have a reasonably cohesive structure that offers manageable distances between venues of public life, connecting corridors of high spatial quality addressing user comfort and the feeling of security in and on the way to these venues (Mitchell, 2003). Lastly spatial excitement and functional heterogeneity – in conjunction with increased density – will help to ensure diverse public encounters in the urban fabric.

Similar to the work of other undergraduate studio educators mentioned above, the work of Hong and Chong (2023) in designing publicness through social architecture approaches, also found its way into UCy second year studio curricula, in looking beyond public life to the conditions associated with the creation or enhancement of healthy cities. Their work provided a reflective review of how to organize and draft aspects an architectural design studio curriculum, so as to utilize the framework of social architectural design approaches to create human-centred and context-based designs for urban public spaces. In the site analysis and architectural programming phase of their

studio project, the students were asked to employ both behavioural tracing and activity mapping as part of an architectural ethnography approach, to identify issues related to a broad definition of what constitutes a health city in the context of the vale of public space to not only design new but also to improve the quality of existing public spaces. The soundscape design strategies were categorized into three groups: the introduction of desirable sounds, the reinforcement of desired sounds, and the reduction in unwanted sounds. This is hoped to enable students to better comprehend the socio-behavioural aspects involved in architectural synthesis so as to help design more comprehensive, healthy and enjoyable spaces for public life.

Accommodating "the flâneur" as the opportunistic user
According to Oldenburg (1989), another important aspect of a successful public space is for it to "allow the user to look, to gaze and to watch as part of normal stimulus-seeking behaviour". In this he agrees with Gehl in that cultural and social context of this behaviour has received attention in the relevant literature, touching upon aspects focusing on the relationship between the observer and the environment and how the built form and the way it is shaped addresses its use by the opportunistic user, the flâneur, a person with no programmed or scheduled activity but rather concerned with flânerie, "the activity of strolling and looking" (Tester, 1994). For this to happen then nodes of public life and their connectors may be thought of and perhaps be reconstituted as stage sets for impromptu theatre of everyday urban public life and its irresistible attraction to the "neo- neo-flâneur amongst other urban dwellers (Laviolette, 2014).
This concept may be applied to reconstituted places of public life in the form of a stage set that can be easily appropriated and configured to accommodate spontaneous events or other such temporary activities (Schuster, 2001). Traditionally, planners have associated public life with such places and many principles of land use planning and urban design are based on this premise. Yet, increasingly public life is also occurring in private places being given to public usage (Holston, 1996), across small businesses such as coffee shops, bookstores and other similar locales or even in the public lobbies of private office buildings, which may be of use to the opportunistic user, the flâneur. The city administrators and the city dwellers might therefore be motivated to reinvent underutilized and residual urban spaces and voids and to convert underperforming corridors as viable destinations for and between venues of public life, and to look beyond enabling efficient urban mobility to planning cities for people and places (Cervero et.al., 2017)In the bigger framework of prioritizing these public works, entities may make use of such mechanisms as linkage fees to provide funding for the renovation of public spaces and the public life that occurs therein. Although many developers see linkage fees as a form of exaction, increasingly they have accepted them as the cost of doing business and they incorporate them creatively in their development strategies, as for example the contribution of a percentage of project costs toward public art or for the redevelopment of local streets and parks.
The creative incorporation of design qualities that accommodate "the flâneur" as an opportunistic user has been addressed in the work of Nguyen (2019) that looks at the social life of an esplanade as a dual identity of a pedestrian thoroughfare and a public space. This approach is also introduced in the development of second year architectural studio curricula at UCy to examine ways of supporting a wide range of public users and

uses in designated public spaces. The parameters of surveillance and control are examined through participant observation and interviews, to investigate a range of users that have defined and established a series of informal social norms for the support of public life in the city. The students are encouraged to accommodate the opportunistic city user by transforming such places of transit into meaningful public spaces that possess a vibrant social life and help in the development of informally formed public spaces.

Addressing the socioeconomic prerequisites to public life
Although the range of social and economic activities taking place in outdoor urban areas may be more limited than it was in the past, as a result of a number of these activities having moved indoors is what are specially programmed buildings (Carr et.al., 1992), the transformation at the neighbourhood level of chunks of the contemporary city into pedestrian precincts with walking streets is seen more often than in the past. Within these streets and the spaces between buildings are used by the urban dwellers to relax and to socialize, but also to conduct business and to deliver goods, while sharing the same right-of-way and resulting in a corridor of mixed uses and integrated activities that address both social interaction and also economic production. In achieving a more "socially integrative city" it is important not to overlook the need for increased and augmented urban liveability in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods and programs such as that of the German paradigm, as described by Altrock (2022), offer viable alternatives. To achieving this, urban design practitioners and policy makers note that it is important to approach this process of transformation incrementally, so as to make highest and best use of, strengthen and / or reconstitute existing networks of the social and economic aspects that public life depends upon.

With this in mind, researchers and practitioners such as Carr (1992) and Boeing et.al. (2014), note that a number of qualities should be incorporated for the socioeconomic viability of public places so that whenever possible these should be evaluated for their liveability potential, as perhaps indicated by the use of such rankings as LEED-ND©. Moreover, these should: be located where they are easily accessible to and can be easily seen by potential users; convey the fact that they are accessible and available for use for all city dwellers and all social groups; engage both the outdoors and the indoors; be fairly easily appropriated and equipped appropriately so as to be spatially flexible to support frequent and popular activities; be safe for their programmed functions and their potential users; offer relief from urban stress and enhance the health and wellbeing of their users; offer an environment that is physiologically and psychologically comfortable regarding environmental design parameters and user comfort; be easily and economically maintained within the limits of what is normally expected; and last but not least to be designed with attention so as to be perceived and experienced as prime settings for public life.

Like Carr, Krstikj (2021) looks at socioeconomic innovation in the formulation of undergraduate architecture studio curricula as an alternative method for defining socially constructed problems and their solutions in the context of public space production. She proposes a collaborative educational method based on a conceptual framework of social "extrapreneurs'" platforms of exploration, experimentation and execution for problem-based learning. The benefit was foreseen as one that may improve social processes in the production of public space production, augmenting

socioeconomic resilience and democratizing public place design, thereby rendering it more socioeconomically equitable. Adoption of this approach in UCy undergraduate architectural studio curricula hopes to enable students to develop critical thinking, to base their design proposals on socioeconomic justice, and to introduce to them the role of "agent for social change" and providing a paradigm shift in architectural education from an object-driven to a socioeconomically-driven in support of people and their pursuit of public life.

The right to inhabit public space in the city – reporting from Nicosia
For all the potential encounters described above to succeed, then the right to inhabit the city has to be actively pursued, as the place where diversity occurs, where people with a different outlook and with different ambitions struggle to shape their terms of access and their rights of citizenship in civil society. Out of this collective effort new modes of experiencing and inhabiting the city are invented and these rights are manifested in the predominant right to appropriate public space for collective use in the service of public life. Though this simply may not be sufficient to guarantee a right to inhabit the city, it is a necessary step toward guaranteeing that right (Lefebvre, 1996/1968). The right to inhabit has the potential of re-engaging the urban dwellers with the public life of their city, which as a consequence has the potential to infuse life to the public milieu and which is therefore fundamental to and a product of social justice (Smith, 1994). This connection between the quality of city space and the scope of public life has been clearly documented and makes the case for the design integration between revamped and sustainable urban mobility and with city life based on both traditional and proven but also on the potential of new and untested patterns of city space use in the service of public life.

At undergraduate design studios at CalPoly dealing with the ability of urban design to discover and raise awareness about just such new patterns of city space that may be used to support public life, Evans and colleagues (2018) report favourable results in introducing students to processes that lead to the creation of people-friendly environments. Introduction of such goals at the undergraduate stage of architectural training helps students to transition into more complex deliberations when entering graduate curricula. This is seen as the best way to support Cal Poly's learn-by-doing pedagogical approach, by allowing students in the studio coursework to engage in realistic project proposals on real sites in urban spaces in cities and in dealing with a diverse group of stakeholders and communities as clients and also guest critics in review sessions and pinups, thus helping them to become better informed and better prepared for professional practice.

At the same time an additional goal in this kind of training is to push students to become more autonomous and more confident to engage in the design of public space for public life within a transdisciplinary environment featuring a diverse group of actors and stakeholders as agents for positive change. Al Maani's work (2022) in revisiting and assessing learning styles and autonomy in the undergraduate architectural design studio, provides evidence of the significant impact of studio-based learning on both autonomy and confidence in devising a methodological approach for investigation by the students. This approach was later used by the students to identify how their findings in terms of

devising appropriate design variables and strategies relate to one another and allow them to approach the design of public place in a holistic framework.

The close connection between people's use of city space, the quality of public space and the degree of concern for the human dimension is a general pattern that can be shown at all scales of the city (Gehl, 2010) and it has been this premise that cities can again be more rigorous in attracting public life that has formulated the framework through which the following research was conducted at the University of Cyprus between the years 2011-2017. The research explores the latent potential for re-stitching the urban fabric by exploring disconnected and underutilized spatial conditions at a variety of scales. The Urban fabric is re-read through the identification, translation and re-synthesis of core spatial and social Values, which within the studio context, begin to catalyse a design process addressing topics of publicness, conviviality, scale, co-design and dynamic exchange.

In setting the tone for the investigation and in addition to the theoretical framework for as noted in the review of literature, and as referenced in the work and product of the relevant yet diverse studio works of other studio instructors, as seen in the context of the preceding subheadings above, three other linkages were made help ensure contextual relevance for the students' proposals. These are: to the LSE Cities Group – https://www.lse.ac.uk/cities – wherein the studio participants were exposed to methodologies related to architectural ethnography that would be useful in profiling both uses and users and formulating appropriate architectural programs for their proposals; to the HLS Case Studies Group – http://casestudies.law.harvard.edu/ – so that students could engage in role play in negotiation exercises that may begin to approach the dynamic processes of co-creation of urban planning and design studies, as formulated in the deliberation and decision framework adopted by; the Planning Council of the Department of Town Planning and Housing – https://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/tph/council.nsf/ – members of which were invited to pinup and intermediate studio reviews to ensure a certain degree of relevance in the application of real life institutional statues and ordinances.

The studio is an early design studio (first semester, year two) which although it is building oriented within the studio sequence, it poses questions which are beyond the scope of the 2nd year. It addresses the complex relationship between the structured and open space, human scale and urban fabric, and a tectonic and socio- political analysis of the program in the urban context. The students are asked to reconnect the fragmented city's fabric, transforming residual spaces into dynamic public spaces which enrich the urban life of the neighbourhood and its citizens. Through this process, the work attempts to integrate the contained potential within the city centre, which includes both buildings and the space between buildings.

The selected sites are undefined residual spaces connecting streets and alleyways, flanked by a dense urban fabric within the historic neighbourhoods of Nicosia and Paphos. The continuous urban fabric consisting of mixed-use buildings built between 1920 and 1960, has seen the sporadic imposed planning setbacks and anarchic demolitions, leaving difficult edges, urban voids (used as parking lots) and planning inconsistencies alongside the continuous and harmonious sandstone facades. The untapped potential in these urban cracks, lies in their disconnection, leaps in scale and heterogeneous edge conditions, as shown in figure 1.
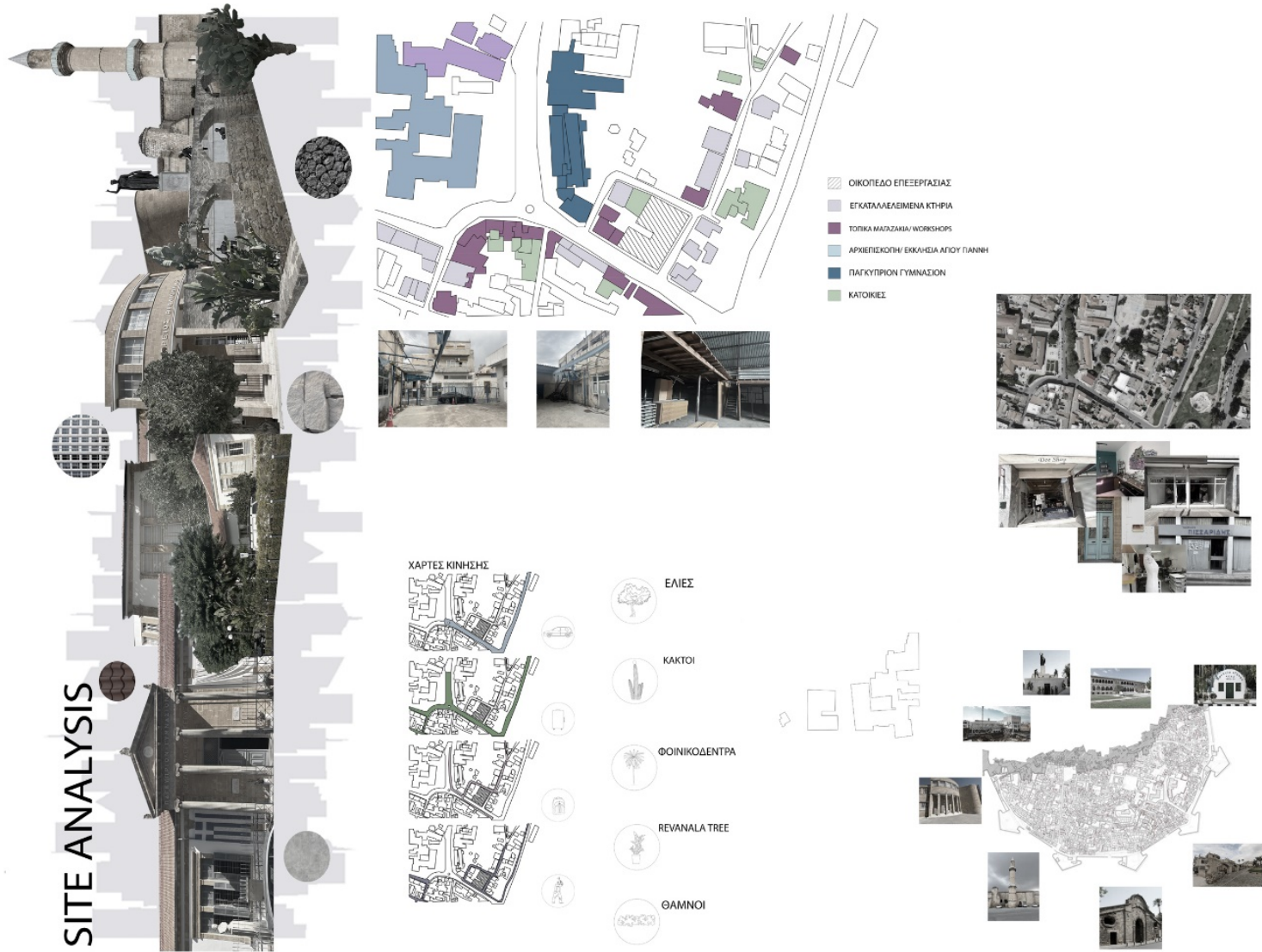
SITE ANALYSIS

Figure 1. Site analysis shows selected sites to be undefined residual spaces connecting streets and alleyways, flanked by a dense urban fabric. The untapped potential in these urban cracks, which lies in their disconnection, leaps in scale and heterogeneous edge conditions, and is thereafter noted and tackled by the students.

The brief contains a collaborative aspect, within which the students, in teams of four, co-design the paths and public spaces within their shared site. They are asked to examine a difficult urban context and enter a co-design process of master planning and redefining the site and its internal fluid boundaries in the process. The complexity of this brief generated opportunities for questioning the boundaries of the individual in respect to the collective. Students simultaneously work on a shared plot, their proposal and the newly created in-between open spaces, as shown in figure 2.
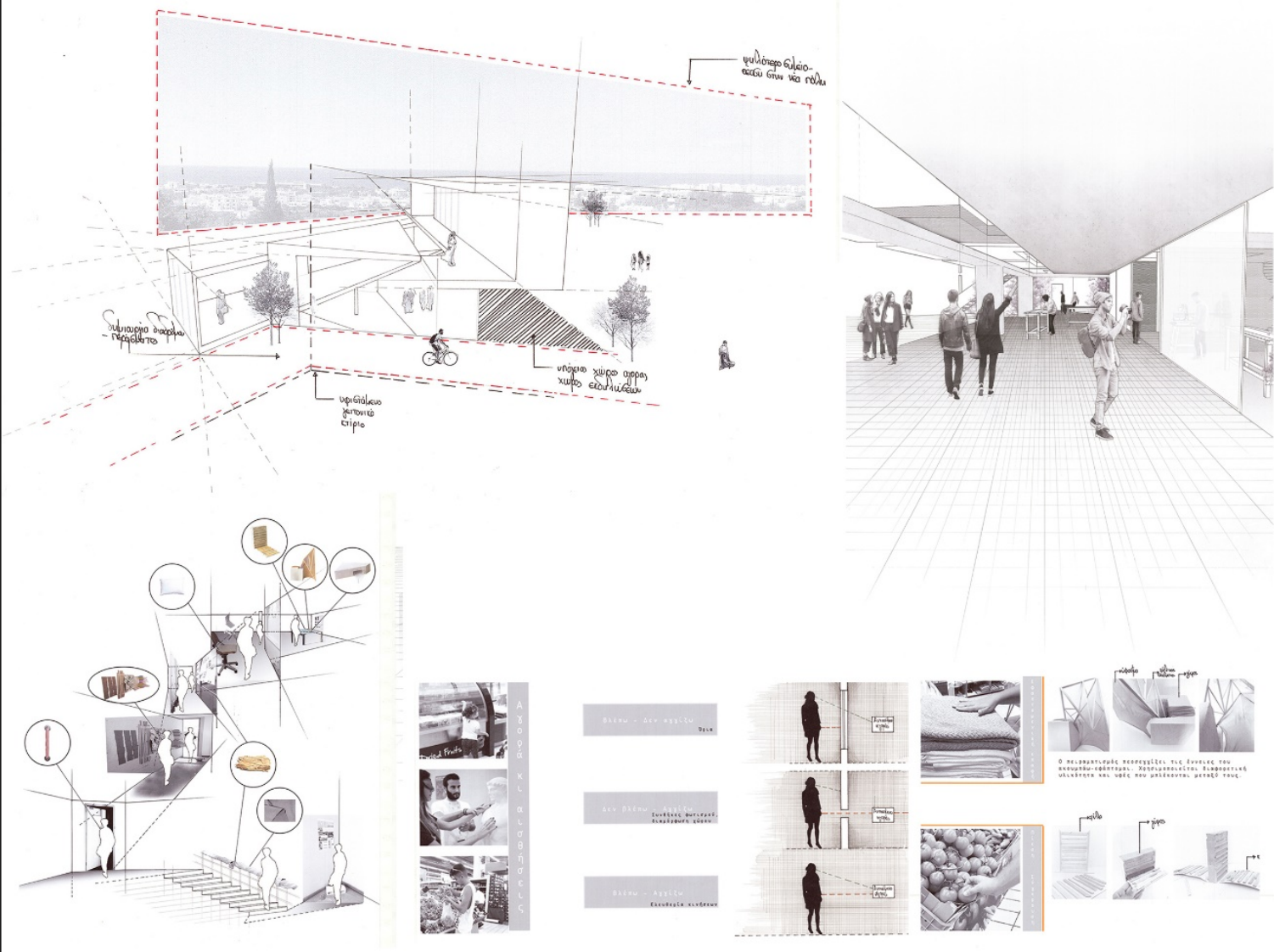
Figure_02_fluid boundaries

Fig. 2. The studio includes a collaborative component, within which the students, in teams of four, co-design the paths and public spaces within their shared site and they then proceed to redefine the site and its internal fluid boundaries.

Publicness is addressed through the multiple identities that entail many characteristics, a space which affects and is affected by its components. The dynamic boundaries require the students to be conscious and in direct engagement in the definition of the shared space and how it affects and can be affected by their intervention both on a small scale, but also on a neighbourhood scale. Thus, the resulting spaces possess properties of two (or more) actors, while connecting organically to a wider urban context, as shown in figure 3.

The "space between" is an organic part of the designed space. Students are encouraged to develop this space in models and mixed media, creating sectional and diagonal connections with the proposed and existing urban fabric. Paths, stops and connections become part of a wider program negotiating public space in an increasingly privatized urban fabric, as demonstrated in figures 4 and 5 below:
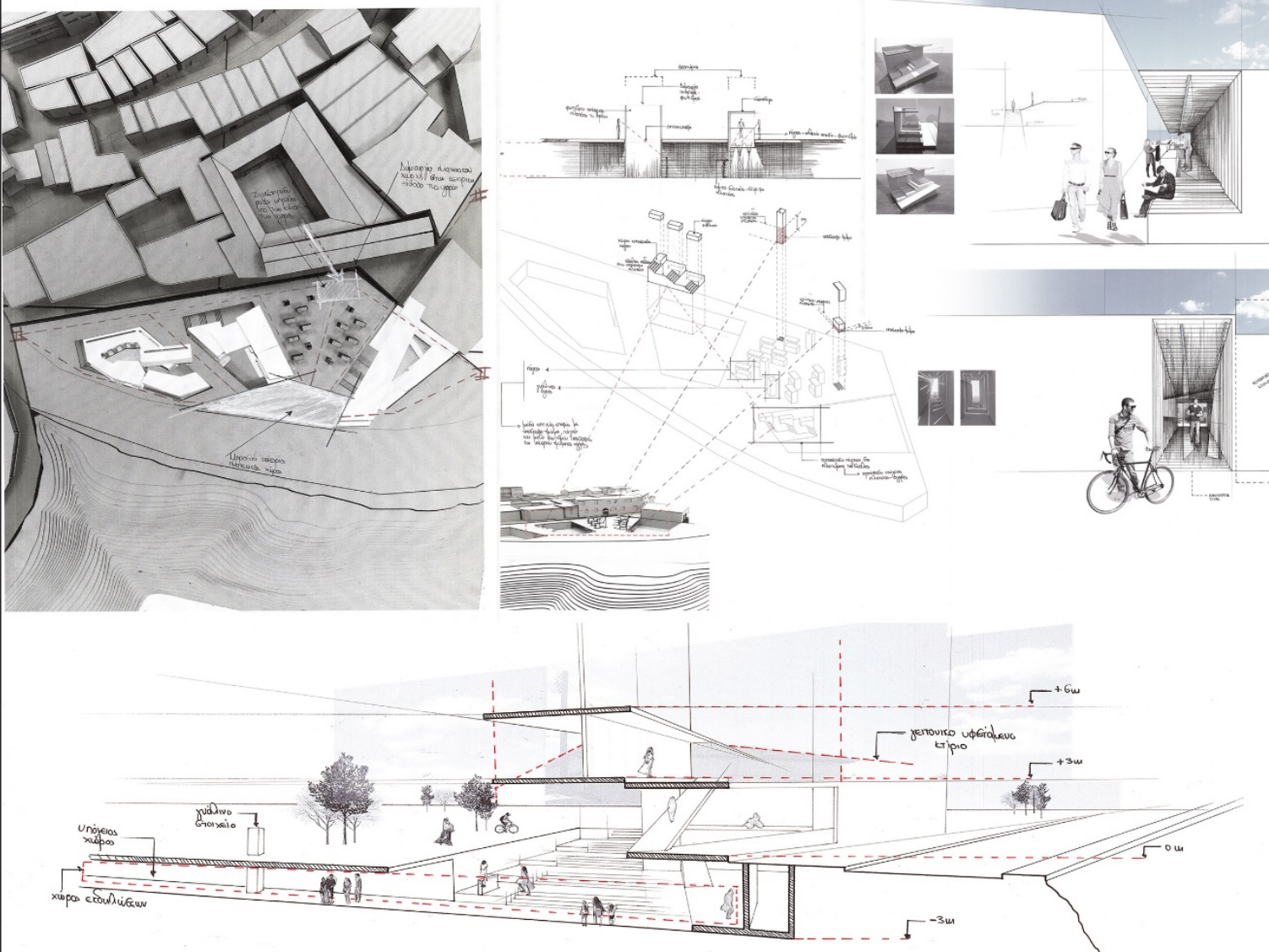

Figure_03_the shared space

Fig. 3. Publicness is addressed through the multiple identities that entail many characteristics. These dynamic boundaries require the students to be conscious and in direct engagement in the definition of the shared space. The resulting spaces possess properties of two (or more) actors, while connecting organically to a wider urban context.

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Figure_04_space between
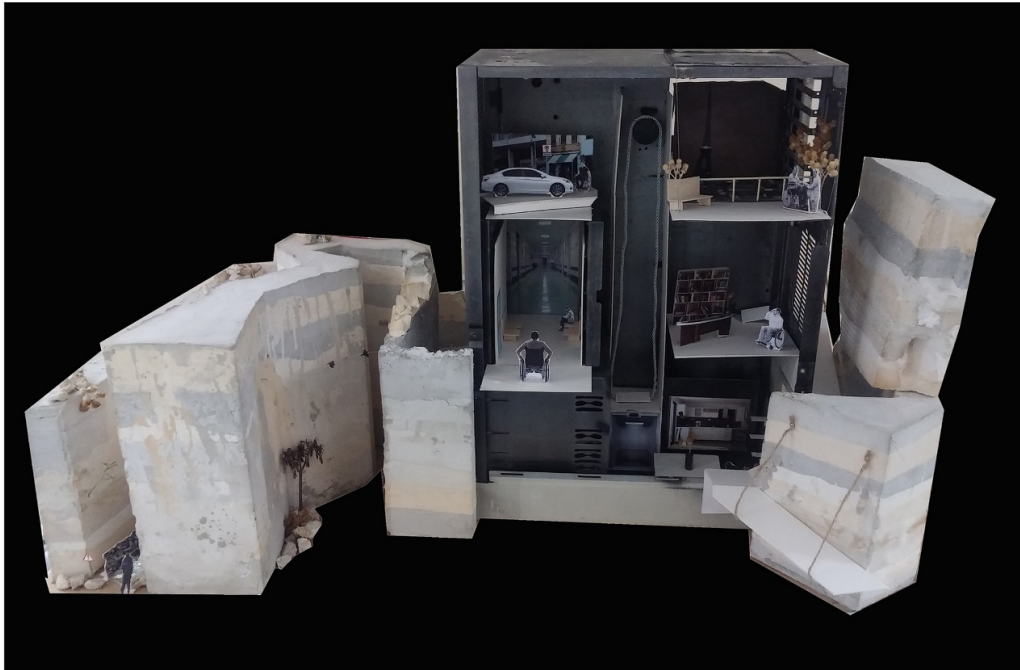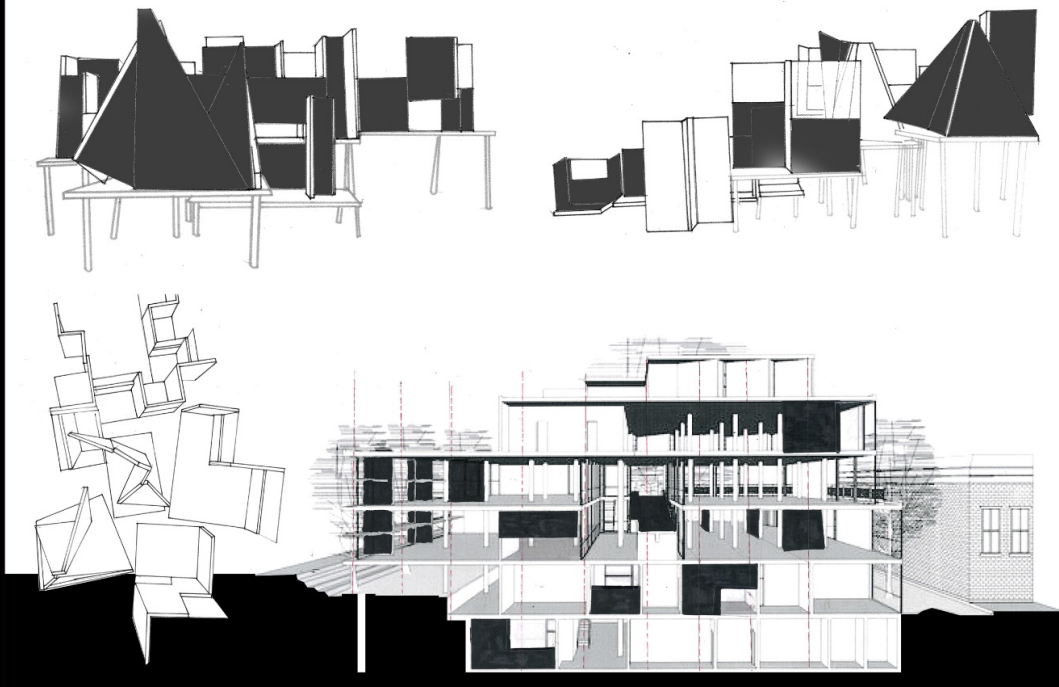

Figure_05_space between

Fig. 4 and 5. The "space between" is an organic part of the designed space. Students are encouraged to develop this space in models and mixed media, creating sectional and diagonal connections with the proposed and existing urban fabric.

Concluding thoughts

Reclaiming and appropriating city space for public life in the practice of city planning means a reengagement with the human dimension which demands direct connections between improvements for people in city spaces and visions for achieving lively, safe and healthy cities. Compared with other social investments – particularly healthcare costs and automobile infrastructure – the cost of including the human dimension as part of a sustainable redevelopment strategy is modest and investments in this area will be key and the benefits significant.

It is these marked benefits to a city's ability to host public life, not to mention the benefits to the economy and the environment, which lend this theme as a very appropriate subject for studio coursework for second year students in the Department of Architecture at the University of Cyprus. The questions posed in this undergraduate studio were: "What core design aspects create successful public places, and how do they constitute conscious design processes?" and "What are core values that create successful public places and how are they consciously integrated in a design process?"

This paper attempted to address the topic of spatial publicness within a framework of investigations as outlined by the subthemes introduced above and which formed interrelated investigative prongs. The analytical design strategies and tools that would become equally affective tools for architectural design synthesis in subsequent sections of the brief, benefited from a number of investigative decisions, such as:

- organizing the students in teams of 2-3 persons each, giving them individual assignments with regards to an ethnographic and evidence-based investigation as a primer for site analysis and architectural programming for individual interventions;
- introducing role playing negotiation exercises that had the double benefit of replicating co-design participatory processes as one may encounter in visioning exercises held with diverse groups of stakeholders in real life, but which were also useful in promoting teamwork and gelling the students' individual investigations into a collective project proposal; and,
- alternating between individual design tasks addressed by each student on various aspects of the mutually agreed architectural program, and collective team deliberations – as indicated by processes followed by urban planners and designers of the Planning Council team – in coming up with comprehensive proposals dealing with the design of public spaces that promote public life.

In looking at relevant examples as primers for student projects, precedents chosen to profile and demonstrate the behaviour that may have characterized public spaces such as streets and open areas in the past and also after the advent of the automobile in the 20th century also proved to be very useful tools. Students also looked at recent efforts to reverse this state of affairs and case studies were presented of cities attempting to recover public urban spaces and the corridors that connect them and to relate them to new and existing neighbourhoods of potentially high density and intensive use. Life between and through buildings and along streets and pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists spelled the importance of structuring architectural studio coursework around designing urban public spaces with the fundamental desires of people seeking to engage public life as guiding principles.

The student investigations as indicated by the sample work and analysis provided have shown that essential elements that contribute to people's enjoyment of spaces in the public realm have remained remarkably constant and their observations of public life has shown its potential of bringing diverse groups together so that they engage in creative exchange and significant cultural production.

Further work could certainly be done in the organizational framework of an undergraduate architectural studio that attempts to further integrate two important aspects that would augment a holistic approach to this type of coursework. In the first instance the effects of a strong and deliberate horizontal integration of additional coursework in technology, history, theory, criticism, representation, etc. should be further examined and their effect on interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration measured. In the second instance actual implementation in the form of community design resource projects in a framework of diverse stakeholders and goals may be coupled to integrated coursework as described above to deal with concurrent tracks of academic and practical education and project implementation. As such programs have already been in existence, and more are appearing, it would be interesting to see a comparative study of these different organizational approaches.

This is shown to be especially true where spatial flexibility for appropriation has been programmed into the structure of both space and functional program and a strong correlation is indicated between these two parameters. Lastly, the investigation has also attempted to show that public places afford city dwellers the casual encounters in the course of daily life that can bind people together and that by engaging all stakeholders, student designers and seasoned professionals are able to make significant contributions to the challenges they encounter so as to better understand the broader aspects of the public life of cities.

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