

## VIEWPOINT

### **Making public space. About the same or about difference?**

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*Architecture restructures the basic elements of being, physically, into places, spaces and their complexes; the human habitat...<sup>1</sup>*

*[It] builds and rebuilds ideas and ideals of the world and human and the world...ideas of house, city, place; the human landscape...ideas of the world as it is... and ideals of the world as it should be...<sup>2</sup>*

This text is about making public space out of and within the omnipresent entirety of space which is the defining circumstance of the macrocosm that holds us and that we inhabit. It begins with a propositional discourse on how that omnipresent space differentiates into public space and further articulates into human places. It concludes with a comparative précis of eight actual projects for public space as programmed, designed, realised and adopted for different purposes in the different socio-cultural and geo-locational situations of five established cities. The focus is on similarity and difference, or how social demands, human aspirations and design rationales for public space might depend on their originating context. It is also more about socio-cultural constants from which design approaches or, better, attitudes arise than the socio-political, economic or otherwise practical variables of procurement and implementation of public space, which are fleeting and fluctuate by time, government, and popular opinion.

The text is organised in sections, which form a collage of things that matter in making public space in the contemporary world which is essentially defined by the contemporary urban condition where global interconnectedness—networks and inclusiveness—negotiates with site-specific differentiation—otherness and exclusiveness. The order of the text is from general to particular, abstract to concrete, so as to set the subject matter in the context of the larger whole it belongs to.

The problematics of similarity and difference in attitudes and practices of making public space are complex rather than just being an immediately lucid simplex which can be de- and reconstructed from set pieces. Rather than polar opposites, the problematics constitute a flux of incremental transformation of the degrees of different-ness and sameness between the two. The very definition of 'public space' is not a unanimous one amongst its makers, at least—what actually counts as public space, and how does the notion of 'place', or 'public place' fit into the equation?

*Statistics project that two thirds of the world's total population will live in cities by 2050. Concentrations and densities of urbanites will conceivably vary for varied reasons, but at least 80% of people in North America and Europe, and 90% in Japan and Scandinavia are by then expected to be classified 'urban'.<sup>3</sup>*

An increasing number of urban residents suggests increasing mobility, interaction and variability of action, which all suggests increasing requirement for public space in cities. In parallel, an increasing number of urban people suggests increasing requirements for housing. But the availability of any land for any purpose is a set, geographic quantity, the acquisition of land for public purposes further inhibited by any prioritisation of private rather than public function, and the potential to increase the public diminished by any horizontal densification of the built fabric by appropriating 'voids', or unbuilt land between buildings for something perhaps less democratic than urban public space. If, then, potential land for public purposes in the physical world is shrinking, thus delimiting opportunities for public space to fulfil its urban roles, do we need the cyberspace to compensate? Can some functions shift from physicality to make true public space of virtuality and so extend the concept and reality of public presence there, that is, make the virtual also tangibly actual?

### **City-ness | Urban-ness**

The notion of public space and the actuality of its historically near-self-appointed presence in human settlements are definitely urban phenomena. There is an innate need for order in human beings as a structuring mechanism for life in groups. In the case of urbanity, the ultimate form of group living, this surfaces as a desire to arrange city space in a fit manner for structural, civic and civil purposes; fundamentally, to control the city and the citizen; and so display the authority from which the control sparks in the city's morphology to remind everyone of its power.

In settlements outside cities, there is no real rationale for such prescribed order. Outside urbanity, life follows different cycles. Conceivably, there is spatial order to serve human needs, but one which originates externally in interdependent, self-generating patterns of nature and production rather than being internal to the human mind. Self-evolving landscape attributes instead of formal space create the public context, and landscape management rather than urban design measures take priority in fostering the public good.

*...a structural perspective of space identifies "urban" as the product of social structures and relationships that typify urbanization....<sup>4</sup>*

A cultural artefact and social construct, public space inseparable from cities since their ancestry. This is exemplified in the layouts for Uruk, Athens, and Becan<sup>5</sup>, from 5<sup>th</sup>C BCA and the first cities we know, which are all structured around a sophisticated public spaces system dimensioned to accommodate specified city functions; governance, ceremony, announcements and public gathering; and arranged around concentrations of associated public buildings. Rather than a nondescript thoroughfare or a separator of built forms, public space was from the start conceived of as a multipurpose civic feature with socio-political and cultural meaning and a sense of hierarchy communicated in a spatial language.

*Civic space is created by a set of universally-accepted rules, which allow people to organise, participate and communicate with each other freely and without hindrance... [It is] a concept central to any open and democratic society and means that states have a duty to protect people while respecting and facilitating the fundamental right to associate, assemble peacefully and express views and opinions.<sup>6</sup>*

Materially, the being-nature of public-cum-civic space as a fundamental part of a city implies that a city without such space cannot readily be imagined, possibly except for manufactured 'villages' for prescribed demographics such as gated neighbourhoods, where 'public space' of any type allows only elite access by residence or permission and, hence, can factually be classified as only semi-, or pseudo-public. Conceptually, though, a city with no public space outside of buildings can be envisaged (and also physically made): If voids voids-cum-public spaces between building walls compress to zero and building walls meet or merge, external space will disappear. But since logically nothing restricts public space to the outdoors only, it can—and conceivably will—re-emerge indoors in new configurations that still fulfil the criteria of being 'public' and of being 'urban', so again: no city, not even the most unlikely one, is left without an innate, inbuilt public space.

### **Definitionless-ness**

In professional terminology, the concept of 'public space' appears remarkably ambiguous in any precise definition. This is quite remarkable, considering the length of the socio-cultural history of public space and its multiple, time-conscious, morphing role in the daily physical and social frame of urbanites. What is the entity we refer to, when we speak of 'public space'? Can we even make intelligent discussion, or valid propositions about the subject on a level platform without confidence that we have a like understanding of it and actually are discussing the one, same thing? Firstly, do we speak about 'public space' or 'public spaces'—or, perhaps, 'urban space'?

In sociological science, definitions of 'public space', used parallel to 'urban space' and sometimes 'civic space', rotate around the notion that the term primarily, if not exclusively, refers to 'social space' for public interaction, that is, for citizens to gather, meet and socialise. Public space is 'meant' for mutual interaction of its users and public life in general, including public displays of opinion and talent by means of demonstrations, street preaching, performances, street art, *exempli gratia*.

*[In open civic-cum-public space]... citizens and civil society organisations are able to organise, participate and communicate without hindrance... to claim their rights and influence the political and social structures around them.<sup>7</sup>*

In geographic science, the focus of the definition is on the idea of 'place' rather than 'space'. This notion attaches human emotion to the definition equation in nominating a particular part of the infinite, non-defined, thus abstract, spatial whole as 'place' distinguishable from other localities and the remainder of 'general' space by emotional attachment, or a sense of belonging to it; its *genius loci*, or 'sense of place'.

*...place is a personal connection with activities and functions which are geographically located. It exists at the level of the individual and is at the same time shared to the extent that lived experiences relate.*<sup>8</sup>

*Place is defined as location and meaning. Each place has a different meaning to different people and is therefore highly personal, experiential and subjective...A sense of place then refers to those meanings which are associated with a place.*<sup>9</sup>

The notion of placemaking (also: place-making, place making), originates in the 1960s-era writings of American-based planning professionals Jane Jacobs and William H Whyte, and has since been adopted by considerable numbers of the urban planning community particularly in the new western world including Australia and the United States. Like geographers, the propounded placemaking philosophy and terminology speak of 'place' instead of 'space', or 'urban space', and of the importance of an emotional attachment; 'ownership'; and social life instead of mere functional utility in developing the public environment. It is also detectable from writings that the term 'place' is less strictly urban, or 'made' than 'space' and, hence, useable more freely in non-urban cases, as long as emotional attachment exists.

The practice of placemaking has also introduced 'place governance' and 'place management' into the equation in emphasising that for successful results, the design of temporal processes, programs and participation is as important as is that of any physical frame:

*Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. Place-making is both a process and a philosophy.*<sup>10</sup>

*...most importantly—good place-making demands that we consider the end-users by inviting them into the conversation...as an important part of the design process.*<sup>11</sup>

Global age architecture and urban design theorists avoid literal definitions. Instead, they rely on analogy, allegory, and (or) metaphor, conceptualising 'public/urban space' as an incarnation—or a special case—of something else, or they apply concepts borrowed from the study of aesthetics<sup>12</sup>, with the entire city and each its part regarded as an artefact<sup>13</sup>. The drawing of parallels between (urban) public space and its object of reference in the thinking of these theorists includes qualifying 'public space' through its (i) perceived symbolic, signifying, and (or) 'meaning' aspect: For some, it is (ii) a 'stage'<sup>14</sup>, or (iii) a set of 'patterns'<sup>15</sup>, semiotic 'events'<sup>16</sup>, ephemeral situations<sup>17</sup>, or signifying 'programs'<sup>18</sup>, or (iv) a 'meeting space'<sup>19</sup>, 'interaction space'<sup>20</sup>, (v) a 'symbol-space'<sup>21</sup>, or, in planning terminology, (vi) a planned-for-a-purpose, manufactured-by-social-subscription 'place'<sup>22</sup>. Further, many theorists speak of 'urban' space rather 'public' space but, but this a somewhat mute point, since, in essence, any free, open-to-all urban space is, by default, always public. Theoretically taken, it is both a 'subject' and 'object' of physical, cultural, social and individual-emotional appropriation.

*The city is the locus of the collective memory...of its people...and like memory it is associated with objects and places. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the*

city's predominant image...  
...we are compelled to designate all types of space between buildings in towns and other localities as urban space...it is a continuous flow of negative volume between buildings...geometrically bounded by a variety of elevations.  
Every building must create coherent and well-shaped public space next to it...pedestrian space, gardens, streets, and parking spaces...[must be] formed by the buildings, not vice-versa.  
If architecture is both concept and experience, space and use, structure and superficial image (non-hierarchically), then architecture should cease to separate these categories and...merge them into unprecedented combinations of programmes and spaces.  
Live streets and piazzas create the outer frame for the social activities...Inherent in them is the quality that people are enabled to meet.  
We shall emphasize image—image over process or form—in asserting that architecture depends in its perception and creation on past experience and emotional association.  
Symbol dominates space. Architecture is not enough...[it] becomes symbol in space rather than form in space.

In sum, we do have a body of theory and methodology for the spatial analysis and design of cities, but not really any 'grand unified theory' that would bring together thought to define public space in an unambiguous, useful way for contemporary design and discussion purposes. Yet, from the perspective of architecture, the concept and reality of 'public space' involves much more than merely locational and functional attributes, which is obvious when considering the extent of space-ness of non-conventional concepts of public surroundings such as virtual ones. Obviously, we are dealing with a very complex, intervolving entity.

### **Virtual-ness**

Electronic culture; the immediate connectivity-at-will and the ensuing virtual communities-at-will extend our conception of the 'public'. Is virtual space also public space in like ways to the actual? Apart from being carried by detectable electronic particles and (or) waves, it has no tangible physicality, hence no configurable form or measurable dimension.

Everything within it happens in 'real time', but 'time' as definite points and durations is irrelevant, since everything entered into virtuality becomes suspended in a non-temporal vacuum with zero gravity or any definite directionality.

In virtual space, we can make our own 'reality' as a model of what we might like it to be<sup>23</sup>, project our self-manufactured self, or rather, its *alter ego*, into a self-made space framed and filled with self-selected things, and have a permanent presence in (cyber)space through electronic tracks of our travels. Hence, virtual space is equally 'designable' as physical space, if not more, but can it in any conceivable way replace the plural being-nature of the actual as public space? Can we even dare to consider it as a postmodern re-interpretation of public space, or an extension of it, or a new type or subset of that space?

Virtual space is entirely made (of) and determined by technology and associated promises for advancement, change, transformation, and speed, but near equally so is any material public space that incorporates, or is 'made of' multimedia, hence in a constant time-space transformation in singular, but endless combinations. Virtual space operates by visual and aural cues, intuition and probability, near-negating our (inner) interactive sensibility and any

(outer) contextuality, all ambience-evoking facets of material space, public or otherwise—which, of course, only exists by virtue of and relative to its context.

Despite its intangible being-nature and the paradox of the intangible being space where the tangible travel, virtual space can be regarded as public space: it is an open, free citizens' forum as well as a site and a medium for anyone to project information and opinion to the world. But can this radical permutation of public space also classify as essentially 'urban' in the same sense as the conventional, actual one, that is, does it in any similar way structure and control cities and citizens, and display the society's official order?

As a phenomenon, virtual space clearly belongs to an urban society and upholds an urban culture, which both are dense and fast moving. As a physicality, it only exists by virtue of electronic units filling it with constant motion rather than dimension, which condition fails to build any corporeal structure—void nor solid—and so can only metaphorically form any tangible urban architecture. And virtual space does not want to be confined to any physicality, but rather be an all-encompassing, omnipresent, global entity which is accessible to everyone regardless of their earthly space-time location. Might the entire earth, then, become 'the city', internally structured, and (or) articulated, by its virtually organising space?

### **And the 'public sphere'?**

Considering proposed definitions in social theory, 'public space' in virtuality parallels the 'public sphere' of actuality: A 'sphere' is not necessarily a 'space', but in socio-theoretical discourse, these two terms appear intermittently, and loosely, in texts as each other's synonyms, plausibly through their similarity of having assigned a social role as locations for people's mutual interaction.

*[The public sphere]...is a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and...to reach a common judgment about them.<sup>24</sup>*

*The traditional idea of public sphere...is centred mainly in face to face interactions...[but] modern society is characterized by a new form of "mediated publicness"...*

*[it is] de-spatialized...non dialogical...[with] wider and more diverse audiences...<sup>25</sup>*

*This mediated publicness has altered the power relations in a way in which not only the many are visible to the few but the few can also now see the many...<sup>26</sup>*

From this perspective, the public sphere could easily extend into virtuality in which both could become each other's special case or, para-thinking in set theory, each become a subset of the other.

### **Aside: experimental space?**

Considering creative industries, virtuality is a design space for making models of the world and of ourselves and 'things' in and 'made out' of the world in whichever guise we require or desire in each case. So, considering its latent potential to allow us to manufacture infinite, pan-directional changes to parametric processes in 'cyber-space-time' which allow glimpses towards otherwise unknowable futures and pasts, virtuality is also an experimental space for actuality. Infinitely programmable, malleable, manipulate-able, and

calculation-proof, it is verifiable to science and plausible enough for testing spatial matters for the purposes of public architecture.

### **Conceptualisation. Internal context – human - language - relation**

Language—an aggregate of words with designated values—is highly conditioning of the human conceptualisation process, that is, how we grasp the meaning of words and terms and the ideas they represent. It is the basis and expression of our world view, which by extension, is the basis and expression of our attitude towards the world, its beings and its phenomena.

Our interpretation of the meaning content of a word or term shapes our regard for and interactions with the object it signifies. Regarding 'public space', for example, to envision it to be a 'stage' for something to occur or be displayed upon evokes a completely different image from envisioning it as a 'symbol system', which is a representation of something outer, or a 'meeting place', which notion implies social action, reaction and interaction. Design-wise, this conditioning influences our design attitude or, in other words, from which angle and with which weightings we approach and negotiate a design task, at least beyond the fundamental functionality required to be achieved by design. While any public space fulfils multiple purposes, a stage, symbol system and meeting place are hardly identical as design objects, nor can their design solutions really be.

Generally, regarding the exchange of Information and opinion, unambiguous communication of messages about them cannot happen without a collective understanding of the meaning content of the words we use for concepts or objects we discuss. Here a consistent semiotic terminology will ensure we have a degree of common understanding, and all discuss the same, not something actually different.

As for public space, if we cannot define it, we cannot design it either, at least not in any satisfactory, role-fulfilling way—instead, we near *de facto* deny its very being as any discernible, identifiable, designable object.

*[And]...what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.*<sup>27</sup>

### **External context. Human-habitat-relation**

Context—the positioning of human beings across the earth and its phenomena—parallels and complements language as a powerful conditioner of human processes, attitudes; in general, how we regard our surroundings.

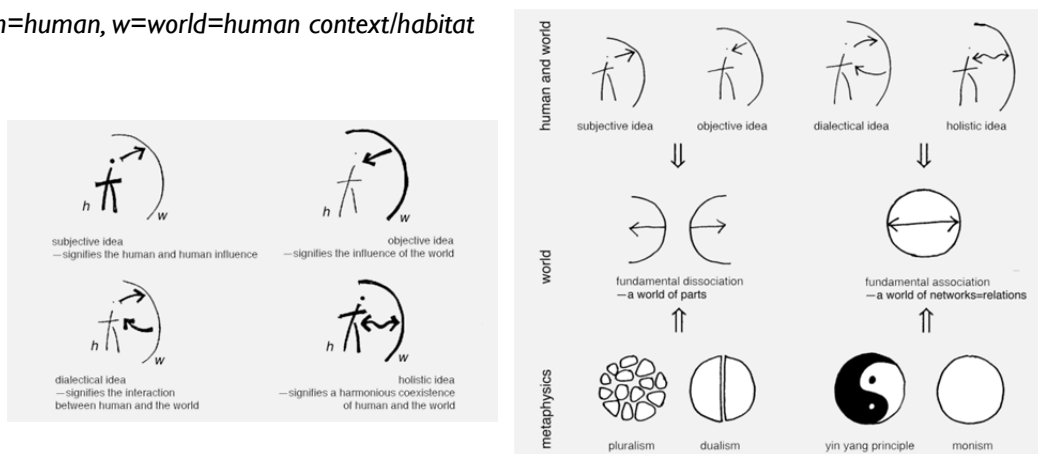
People are social beings who choose to live together in communal, cultural, socio-political, geographic and climatic contexts across the world. Regardless of the commonality of humanness, any difference in each individual's context, or habitat, results in different individual relationship(s) between us and our habitat and, therefrom, produces different attitudes in how we value it and interact with it—thus contributing to our living ethos and adding substance to our world view.

*...the acts and thoughts of human beings are the final ground for judging quality. These apparently ephemeral phenomena become repetitive and significant in at least three situations: in the persistent structure of ideas which is culture, in the enduring relationships people which are social institutions, and in the standing relations of people with place...*<sup>28</sup>

Living things exist by virtue of their contextual relationships, hence have a fundamental interdependent relationship with it to sustain life; human and her habitat, or environment, are both subjects and objects of that reciprocal connection and interaction. Philosophically, with the human as the subject, this translates into how our habitat-context - a composite of the parallel physical, cultural, socio-political and media-information frames of human life - influences our experience, use, mental imagery, images and associative memory of it. With the human as the object, it influences how we treat that context, by design or otherwise, ultimately determining the degree to which the entropy and (potential) atrophy caused by our manipulation and wear affects its evolution.

Metaphysically, public space is a creation of the human mind to interpret and influence its surroundings, which is the (urban) human context. For making public space, contextual influences by geography join linguistic ones by culture as complementary parables of the design equation which, due to the way they are born and albeit sharing aspects and philosophies, make for variables of difference in different design situations.

*h=human, w=world=human context/habitat*



*Four types of idea of human and the world*

*Relationships of the fundamental types of idea of the world and human and the world*

*Figure 1. Typology of possible human–context /habitat relations and their correlation with public behaviour, conduct, and design attitudes.<sup>29</sup>*

### Behaviour | conduct | attitude

Public life happens in public space(s), since public space in all its guises generates, accommodates, and adapts itself to it. ‘Public space’, then, implies ‘public presence’ which, in turn, implies ‘public behaviour’. This differs from behaviour in private, perhaps less so in contemporary circumstances than prior ones with stricter rules of ‘properness’, but still different enough to be specific to people’s presentation of themselves in public.

*Public space is for negotiating the interface between our homes, our businesses, our institutions, and the broader world. Public space is how we get to work, how we do our errands, and how we get back home. Public space is where nearly half of violent crimes happen. Public space is where policing ensures safety for some but not others. Public space is for buying and selling, or for meeting, playing, and bumping into one another. Public space is for conveying our*



*outrage and our highest aspirations, as well as for laying the most mundane utilities and infrastructure. And when we let it, public space can be a medium for creativity, expression, and experimentation.*<sup>30</sup>

In public spaces, formal laws and by-laws regulate and sanction, but it is the non-formal, unwritten-still-adopted civil etiquette which actually compels us to act in specific ways in public situations and geographies. In cities, the etiquette directs how we negotiate pedestrian traffic, board public transport, select a street side seat, deal with small wheel traffic, graffiti, aural stimuli, mundane street life and anarchy—in all, how we share our public space with others. Remarkably, perhaps, considering all that happens by incident and accident, there generally exists a sense of tolerance and decency of people in the seeming mayhem of urban public space—a heightened awareness of and self-preservation from others, certainly, and a desire to present the self favourably to other members of the public as fellow social beings, anonymous or otherwise.

Behaviour in public space is regardable as a specific manifestation of the relationship of city people with their urban context. It stems, as defined above, from the broader, fundamental connection of humans with their habitat and, by that virtue, gives rise to related experience and action. The experience and action may tend towards what is deemed positive or negative by law, or even more importantly, by people's mindset, depending on the degree and type of value they perceive the subject space deserves. Public space is a 'designable'; a 'made' space rather than a self-generating object; so the first properties to affect behaviour are its manufactured attributes. It is the design, not the circumstance *per se*, which can radically influence human behaviour in the (urban) public, including social and cultural attitude. These, when practiced, will become absorbed in public ambience of space and, through the interactive human-context process, proceed to participate in any kind of future influence on people coinciding with affected space. Design matters.

*While architecture may not always be...politically expressive...[it] has social meaning beyond cultural expression. Physical space, as [British ex-premier Winston] Churchill reminded us... affects its present occupants.*<sup>31</sup>

### **'Space' | 'place'**

By dictionary definition, from the universal to the particular and in the context of architectural thought and terminology, and humanity, 'space', physically, refers to—the dimensioned, but unmeasurable infinite:

*'the unlimited three-dimensional realm or expanse in which all material objects are located and all events occur', an extent or expanse of a (two-dimensional) surface or three-dimensional area [or] the portion or extent of this in a given instance, and 'the absence of objects; a wide and open area; the area available for use'*<sup>32</sup>.

And metaphysically, in the context of the democratic aspect of public space, it refers to—the ego:

*[the] sufficient freedom from external pressure to develop or explore one's needs, interests, and individuality; freedom or opportunity to express oneself, fulfil one's needs, have privacy...*<sup>33</sup>

As for 'place', does 'space' equal 'place' in architectural thought and terminology, and, by extension, does 'public place' equal 'public space' in the context of city structure and operation, and the urban social order<sup>34</sup>? Again, in dictionary terms, 'place' (originating in a merge of the meanings of old French 'place': open space and Greek 'platei': broad street) refers to 'a particular position or point in space'<sup>35</sup> which, structure-wise, may be:

*'an area with definite or indefinite boundaries; a portion of space...of definite or indefinite extent'... 'a particular portion of space allocated to a person or thing'... [or] a building or an area set aside for a specified purpose.'*<sup>36</sup>

More site-specifically, in a geo-morphological, -locational or -typological sense, 'place' refers to a portion of a larger three-dimensional entity; a container, as it were, to hold practically anything within:

*'an open space or square in a city or town...a short street or court.....a particular geographic area; a locality, such as a town or city... [or] an area of habitation, as a city, town, or village'*<sup>37</sup>.

And, if 'position' as a definer of 'place' is interpreted as 'status', 'place' will also refer to a physicality which exhibits:

*'a proper or designated role or function'*<sup>38</sup>; *'a particular situation or circumstance... a specified type or...holding [of] a specified position in a sequence or hierarchy'*<sup>39</sup>.

In sum, a 'place', then, would be a measurable part of space—a portion of space with boundaries—with a distinct locality, identity and purpose which differentiate it from the surrounding remainder of 'general' space. In the public environment, a 'place' would appear as part of the wider public space which, applying placemaking philosophy<sup>40</sup>, fosters social interaction and instils a sense of community, pride and belonging of people in a shared contextual frame—the community's physical and social surrounds the it conceptually represents.

The above-quoted last point of the dictionary definition is, perhaps, the most revealing in any differentiation between 'space' and 'place': It brings an intangible, conceptual dimension to the so far material equation, arising from the human psyche. Designating human and social values as contributors to understanding 'place-ness' implies 'significance', which allows a comparative ordering of different spatial portions systematically into a hierarchy and so both rationalises and justifies a greater attachment to one portion than another. Imbuing a spatial portion with 'place-ness', that is, an identity and associated 'sense of place', or *genius loci*, qualifies it by common definition as a distinct 'place' with distinctiveness and human purpose.

In the case of 'place', 'significance', indeed, implies 'purpose' but even more importantly, it implies 'meaning', that is, the possession of a relative, comparative role in human and social perception, emotion-horizon and the entire human value system.

It could be argued that the introduction of significance-by-purpose and the human value-horizon into the notion of 'place' re-creates it as a true point of reference to its

associated people, that is, the ones who feel towards it a sense of 'ownership'. By that virtue, and considering the crucial role context plays in human life, might people's relationships with their surrounding context, including attitude, behaviour, and ordering of experience transform? 'Place' begins to point at 'rightfulness', that is, towards being a portion of space which legitimately ought to be.

In sum, in this arm of definitions, while 'space' merely exists as a dimensionally undefinable cosmologic being of material reality, or matter, 'place' is a set spatial quantity with special meaning. Ephemeral or constant, it is defined by being manufactured in and of material reality by wilful human action and (or) in the human mind by associative relations with its surrounds.

### **Place: typology and constitution**

For the purpose of this text, a 'place' is now typologically regardable as a phenotype of the genotype of 'space': 'Space' is raw, unplanned, ambiguous, and limitless. 'Place' is processed—manufactured, determinate, delimited, and designated for a purpose, be that general or personal, or both. Understanding public space this way shifts design thinking from the general to the particular—universal to delimited, abstract to actual, global-ness to local-ness, ambiguity to authority, constant-ness to spontaneity, modern to postmodern-contemporary—in sum, from design by the mechanical machine paradigm to design by the human, social parable.

Moreover, while we really cannot name 'space', we can name a 'place' in space (*'Place de l'Étoile'*, not really *'Espace de l'Étoile'*, for example), and we do, for identity and orientation, but also to commemorate a place's history, enrich our collective memory, and locate us in the continuum of human culture.

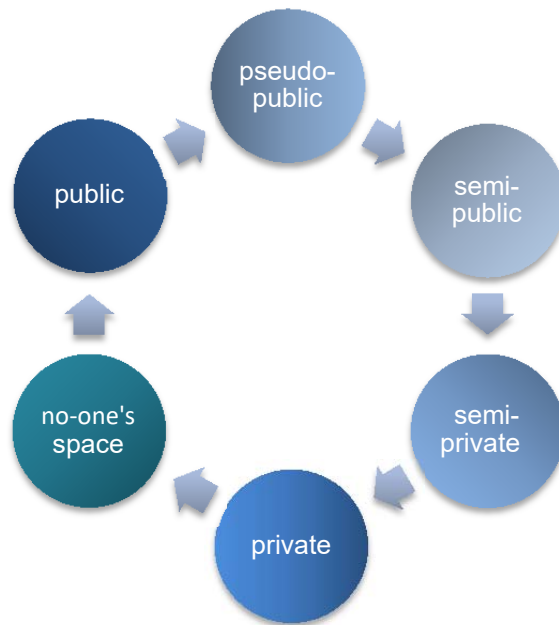
Public space is made (out) of space and public places (out) of that (made) public space: We might allegorise that design densifies the initial *wabi-sabi* quality<sup>41</sup> of naked space. It metaphorically compresses non-differential space-matter into concentrations of material objects, people, other living beings, and action within the uniform 'nothing-ness' of all of space. Since all the concentrations exist in each other's contexts—in fact, they constitute that context—everything compressed and thus concentrated is available to all and, by that virtue, is public.

Converting the emerging public whole into a design object, if we introduce hierarchy to the whole by a valuation of its concentrations and their (degrees of) interconnectivity, adaptability and self-generation by significance (that is, rank their status, positioning and dynamism relative to each other), we get the beginnings of a public spaces web or framework.

### **Public-ness | private-ness**

What, then, counts as 'public' space and, as such, is designable and usable for public purposes? At first thought, 'public' and 'private' seem like polar opposites. On closer observation, though, they instead establish the two extremes of a sliding scale of degrees of public-ness, where overlaps rather than strict boundaries mark transition zones. The categories of 'pseudo-public space' and 'no-one's space=everyone's space' above are not actually static divisional units, but instead dynamically dimensionable stretches of surface which constitute the very transition zones in which the scalar sliding happens. The

concept of 'no-one's space=everyone's space' implies inherent potential for transformation into 'public space' in a myriad of forms. Hence, in this figurative elaboration of public-ness to private-ness, the transition process becomes an *ad infinitum* loop of change instead of a pre-set linear progression between two points.



**public space:** factually free, government-owned, open to all at all times  
 ~city streets, squares, waterways, parks, gardens, and recreation areas

**pseudo-public space:** perceptually and factually free to all, **but** only during operating hours  
 ~shopping malls, sponsored museums, and gated parks

**semi-public space:** perceptually free to all, **but** factually only free for those who pay for the privilege and only during operating hours  
 ~commercial cafés, exhibitions, theatres, cinemas, performance spaces, and their like on public or private premises, and also most of public transport

**semi-private space:** factually exclusive of any public access **but**, by its public location, grants visual and (or) aural 'ownership' to passing people  
 ~streetside buildings, façade and window verges, front gardens and in-block courtyards)

**private space:** factually exclusive of any public access; occupation only by invitation  
 ~individually owned, occupied and managed houses+gardens, work+recreation spaces, proprietary company, and like establishments

**no-one's space=everyone's space:** the wilderness outside private ownership which is perceptually free and so belongs to everyone  
 ~the sky, earth's atmosphere, oceans, the geographic landscape

Figure 2. Applied classification: the 'public-ness-private-ness' axis-loop of urban space by perception, sense of ownership / appropriation, and freedom of access

In the global context, though, regardless of attempts to classify, there really cannot be a single scale of public-ness to private-ness. The concepts of ownership and privacy are too different in different world cultures, geographies and legal frames. But the model with its

sliding scale transition principle can still remain a valid reference tool for analysing and making space by type in public circumstances.

### **‘Shared space’?**

Designers regard ‘shared space’ as a physicality, hence a ‘designable’, but encyclopaedic definition dismisses this notion by referring to it as more of a ‘design approach than a design type characterised by standard features’<sup>42</sup>. Essentially, this designation makes ‘shared space’ the philosophical foundation of a management strategy for a piece of urban infrastructure to facilitate different, parallel modes of traffic in a single movement corridor and, ultimately, a legal epithet which sets the objectives and parameters for safety, amenity and personal security for all who use the corridor. But, in design terms, a ‘shared space’ remains a piece of the physical urban fabric which is capable of being modified for specific public space needs to fulfil objectives or, perhaps, an overlay of the fabric as its specific case. Either way, in this ‘designable’ guise it can legitimately be manipulated in its own right on its own terms of existence to have suitable physical qualities for its designated purpose.

Arguably, the concept and reality of ‘shared space’ belong to densely populated busy cities which generate unpredictability of movement patterns. Roads outside cities—perhaps excepting highly regulated freeways—conceivably do not need specific ‘shared space’ allocation, nor associated legislation as they always are the only real, or decent travel option.

### **Everyman’s right | no-man’s right**

Globally thinking, to extend the concept of ‘public space’, a small group of countries in North Europe share an ancient, unquestionable, now legal right of the ‘freedom to roam’, also referred to as ‘everyman’s right’. Based on the principles of sharing and joint responsibility of care for the land, it recognises the significance of nature as a life-supporting element in an often-inauspicious climate for human habitation, guarantees free, open public access to wilderness including forests, waterways and their native produce as public assets that must be equally, anytime and at will at everybody’s reach. Apart from Australian aboriginal culture—and, conceivably, also other ancient cultures preceding any private ownership of land elsewhere in the world—by which the natural environment belongs to no-one and thus to everyone, ‘everyman’s right’ is the most generous and lasting interpretation of public-ness in human culture:

*In Scotland...Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden...Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania...Austria, Czech Republic and Switzerland, the freedom to roam takes the form of general public rights which are sometimes codified in law. The access is ancient in parts of North Europe...[and so] sufficiently basic that it was not formalised in law until modern times.*<sup>43</sup>

*...everyman’s right gives everyone the chance to enjoy outdoor pursuits...forests and fells...lakes and rivers, with few restrictions...With the freedom...comes the obligation to leave the environment undisturbed and preserve Finland’s rich natural heritage for future generations...*<sup>44</sup>

The legal principles and clauses are much alike in all participating countries. Paraphrasing the Finnish adaptation, ‘everyman’s right’ applies to anyone living or staying in the country, cannot be prevented without just cause, and is always free of charge. It is not affected by land ownership, nor requires any formal permit or permission to enjoy. The only areas out of public bounds are the immediate surrounding yards of private houses, the cultivated fields during growing seasons, and areas reserved for special use by planning or defence legislation. In parallel laws, any disturbance to private homes, their immediate surrounds, public places of assembly or defence and, by extension, private citizens in public places, is prohibited by the legal notions of ‘domestic peace’ and ‘public peace’:

*Intentional invasion of domestic privacy is prohibited...[and there] is no public right of way through other people’s yards.<sup>45</sup>*

In counterpoint, countries that hold privacy and property as first priorities, Australia included, reserve no legal right for anyone to freely access any part of someone else’s land regardless of distance to any home. Responsibility for land is exclusive and private to its owner, as well as the liability for any damage to others legally or illegally within its boundaries. Fences demarcate land boundaries and control access to protect the owner’s privacy and the legally stipulated management of property.

### **‘Nothing’ to ‘something’**

Semantic definitions and hierarchical classifications aside, public space remains a designable quantity; it is a real, factual design object. Making public space essentially means making space public, that is, fit for public purposes and for the acceptance-and-appropriation by the public.

While the conditioning of the human mind, *per se*, is a constant of the human-with-context, or human-with-habitat interrelationship, the resultant influences on thought patterns and, hence, design attitudes in making public space are variables of the geo-locational, cultural and socio-political definers of the human context, which differ in content and focus depending on their combined state in each case. Consequently, to put it simply, while design imperatives, principles and propositions for public space will always reflect public needs and social situations as they arise, design habits and processes for it cannot but differ as per situation, since situations do not self-repeat. In short, at different space-time situations, different eyes see different things and things differently.

hb=human being; w=world; ws=world-state;  
c=culture-projection; e=environment-projection

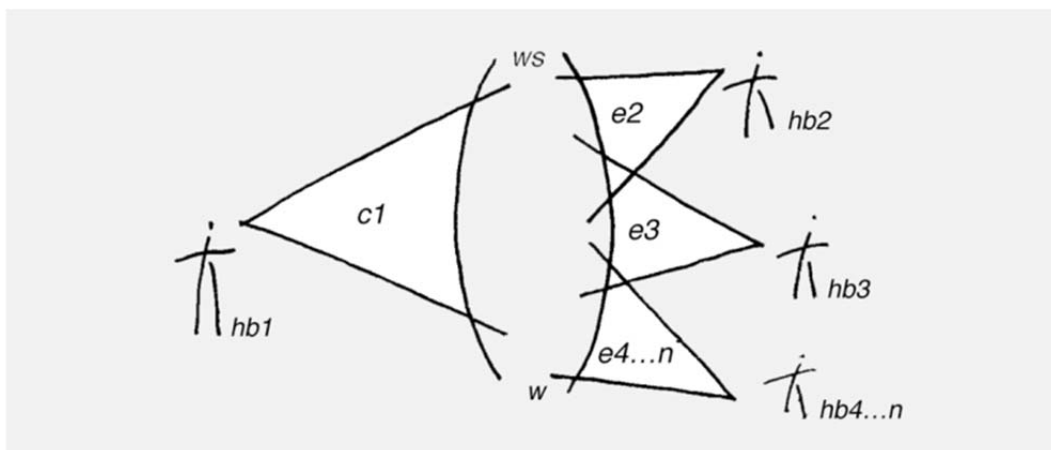


Fig. 3. Human culture - projections (physical and conceptual artefacts) into the world affect the world - state and so affect all 'later' or 'remoter' contextual/environmental projections of each world - state (e) into human beings, with implications to human experiences, actions and reactions.<sup>46</sup>

### On variables...

An inherent global difference; a kind of 'otherness'; is a fundamental feature of the variations that exist in any social subscriptions<sup>47</sup> for public space, including design aspirations and attitudes, design objectives and typologies, design morale and ethics and, ultimately, design results and their acceptance, that is, the eventual 'ownership'; by the public for whom the space was subscribed and made. Contemporary people in a postmodern world are mobile, some displaced. Yet, due to humankind's inherent cultural inertia, we cannot completely transcend any initial geographic separation or cultural differentiation of transplanted people (including designers) from their contextual origins—not even by any universal tolerance of people's difference, regardless of our aspirations for global unity and social understanding of the 'other'.

Planning history is a major determinant of (and apology for) the typology, morphology, form-function logic, and cultural status of public space in cities: The initial urban layout and its modification through time sets the frame within which a public space system can develop. The system's inferred form-function logic and aesthetic idiosyncrasy house the potential for it to become charged with significance and relevance to city people.

The nature of the public space system in a strategic, planned city is quite different from that of an originally unplanned, spontaneous one: The formal, regulatory system of the former allocates function and articulates the city form in a purposeful way to provide fit-for-purpose, measured room for the multiplicity of urban activity. The informal, spontaneous system, except for main street concentrations, has evolved—or not—*extempore*, as if by incident or accident, out of leftover land or exists as a loosely zoned network of 'reserves' for public utility rather than urban-focused public space.

In this differentiated circumstance of urban origins and evolution, design imperatives and aspirations for public space are, again, differentiated: Originally planned cities prioritise comprehensive land use economy, destinational distance, urban mobility, mass housing, and their consequences. Their public space may be limited in size, but in counterbalance, it is near-unlimited in its potential for use, re-use and identifying character. Originally unplanned cities prioritise the utility of land allocation for functional and (or) economic

demands as they arise, and the availability of suitable land in suitable locations for the arisen purpose. Their public space may be near-limitless, but due to its composition from leftover land, it is limited in any potential for conscious programming for even temporary non-utilitarian public use or spontaneous opportunity.

As for completely non-planned types of built concentration, slums, refugee camps and self-generating, opportunistic towns at the conceptual and physical fringes of the city are definitively purpose-built; they are urban hybrids made by and (or) for people in anticipant transition from one life phase to another—but their very genesis and resultant physical make-up leave no space for anything beyond a shelter and an access way.

Paradoxically, near-everything is near-exposed near-all-the-time and so (in) public, but not in any public capacity or public space, since obviously, none exists. The intention of these settlements is being temporary, but are they actually such? We see quite a few around the world outlive their 'transitory' residents. To risk overextending the scope of public space in human settlements to where it might not be 'legit', is there a case for a mechanism of public spatial logic in these poorest contexts?

### **...and parameters**

Such phenomena as urbanisation, displacement and re-placement of people, resilience and sustainability of the environment, the finiteness of natural resources, hostility and urban terrorism, the multiculture—panculture pendulum, and religious singularity *versus* secular and (or) spiritual plurality have been in factual existence far longer than in any global consciousness or public recognition. These are aspects of contemporary humanity in its world-context, with implications to how and what we choose to contribute to that context. Regarding making public space which, in abstract, models prevailing relationships between human and her world-context, they conceivably belong to the group of urgent foci to consider, interpret and address in any design intervention—perhaps moving from the singularly aesthetic, scholarly and formal towards the multiply narrative, counterbalancing and re-conditioning, so as to strengthen people's bonds with their surroundings and, thereby, their continual process to re-position themselves in their ever-morphing world.

The problematics of the resilience, sustainability and finiteness of the human biotope—the living human context—point at a renewed typology of 'made' urban ecosystems and biotypes. Hostility and urban terrorism-in-waiting point at renewed conceptions of safety-in-togetherness in public. The multiculture—panculture pendulum that arises from a restless cross-movement of urban people and is exacerbated by yet unprecedented forms of spiritual singularity and plurality point at least at a renewed symbol-content of public space to communicate the morphing urban condition relative to citizens. Patently, to be relevant at all, this symbol-language must be construed to capture every citizen in their specific way of reading signs which, of course, is a derivative of their originating background culture. Quite obviously, relevance of symbol-content gives relevance to associated public spaces and significance to the experience of being there.

In conclusion, we cannot consider making public space as clever problem-solving only, nor, however elegantly composed, is the space a polemic piece of art to express its artist-designer's mind. With people in the space being both the subjects and elemental parts of



the made and experienced design object, public space wants to be a joint creation of all its co-creators including people referenced in its resolution.

### Comparative collage

Having so far probed what might philosophically and theoretically underlie different approaches to making public space in different design instances across cities in different geographies and cultures around the globe, this text now turns to specific practice. Below is a comparative collage of eight actual cases of making public space in three categories of project—place, program and strategy, which together seek to establish whether design approaches tend towards similarity or difference across inherently different locations across the world. The projects represent three climatically and socio-culturally distinct circumstances and are drawn from this author's portfolio and associated knowledge. The latter fact admittedly limits the scope of the discussion, but the range of project type and origin still allows for legitimate conclusions by author and, independently, by the reading audience for whom the questions are left open.

### Place

*Hyväntoivonpuisto* (Park of Good Hope): Helsinki City Centre•Finland<sup>48</sup>



**Type:** new city centre park.

**Classification:** public.<sup>49</sup>

**Shape:** curvilinear undulating corridor.

**Size:** five hectares; 88m x 550m.

**Urban context:** (i) component of a new residential and mixed use redevelopment on decommissioned harbour land; (ii) physically and visually contained by a uniform edge of medium-rise building façades in a linear arrangement.

**Urban role:** (i) recreational space offering multiple purpose-built activity nodes for residents and workers with different recreational aspirations; (ii) green seafront-to-city-centre pedestrian and bicycle link; (iii) a physically and visually articulating element of the urban fabric; (iv) representative of a new urban ecotype.

**Functional objectives:** (i) inviting, safe, thoroughly accessible for all abilities; (ii) lastingly robust for easy and economical maintenance and management; (iii) multi-allocation of path intersections as urban squares and event nodes.

**Spatio-experiential objectives:** (i) completely new green landscape where there was none such before; (ii) timeless contemporary image; (iii) pleasant, functional series of landscape spaces that combine into a harmonious whole; (iv) well-articulated view structure; (v) integrated landscape art drawn from local features and history.

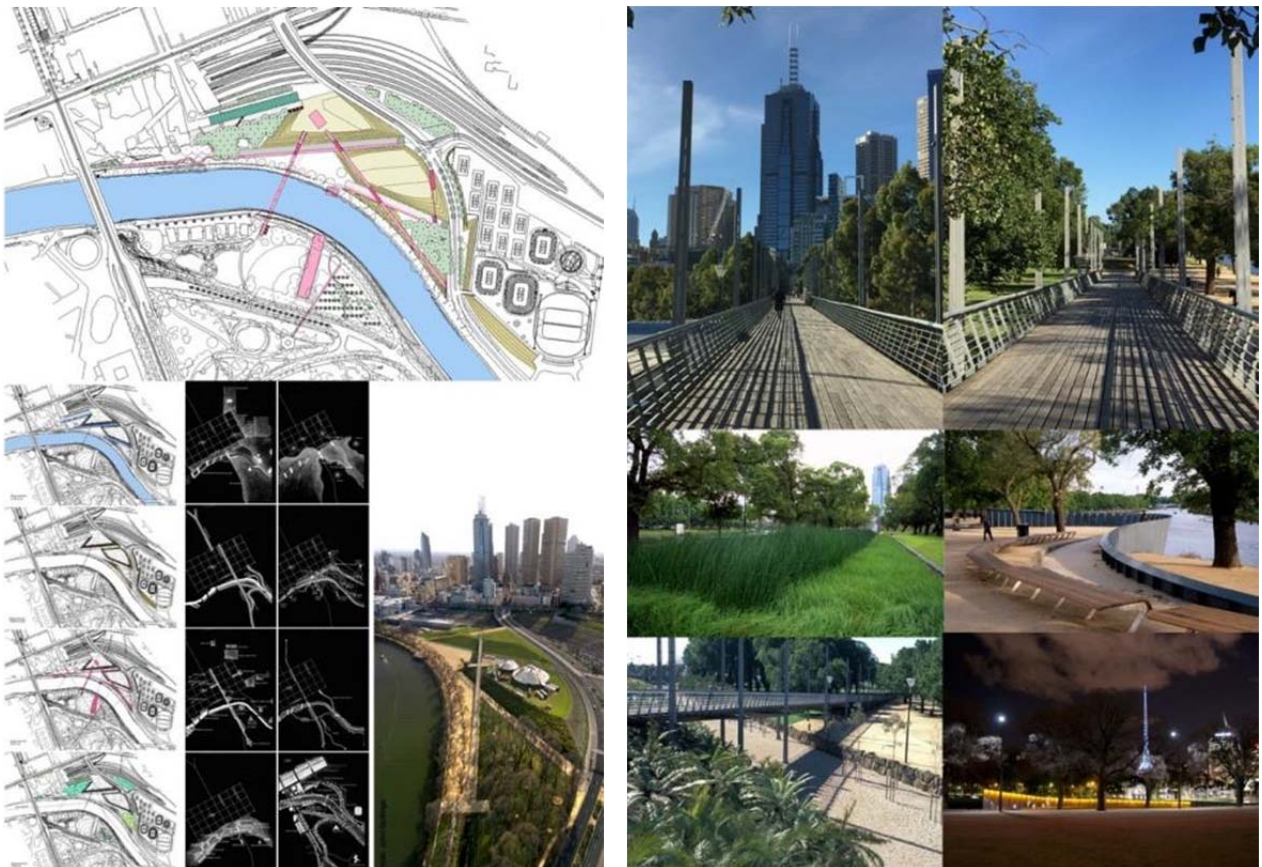
**Design ethos:** contemporary milieu; temporal and environmental sustainability, high quality, non-intensive maintenance; microclimatic control, wind minimisation, application of eco-technology in environmental and waste management.

**Critical parameters:** (i) generally—implications of a cold maritime climate @ 60°N, 25°E, long dark winters, deep ground frost, freezing sea surface, short growing season, and slow plant growth to construction and landscape development; (ii) on site—repercussions of industrial harbour landfill remediation, soil stabilisation, stability of groundwater levels, and non-tidal but high seawater levels on structures and plant growth.

**Process:** Council-led with input from MARK—the Finnish Institute of Landscape Architects. International ideas competition: 2005. Initial commission: WES LA, Germany. Design development and documentation: specialist local consultants. Zoning and detailed development plan: endorsed post-approval of the final design concept by Council as per legal protocol. Community input via public exhibitions and public comment on drafts as per legal protocol (official documents) and adopted practice (freedom of information).

**Schedule:** First stage: 2019. Full completion: 2027.

### Birrarung Marr: Melbourne CBD•Victoria•Australia<sup>50</sup>



**Type:** re-purposed former railyards ->new city centre park.

**Classification:** public.

**Shape:** inclined triangle with substantial level differences.

**Size:** eight hectares; 50m-200m deep,  $\cong$ 750m long; non-tidal, so no width fluctuation.

**Name:** Birrarung Marr='River of Mists' in the original local *wurundjeri* language.

**Urban context:** (i) component of an urban river corridor at the edge of Melbourne's CBD grid; (ii) framed by primarily free-standing cultural and sporting institutions and entertainment venues of distinctive volume and form, including Federation Square; (iii) distinctive views to surrounding landmark buildings.

**Urban role and objectives:** *Strategically* (i) connect the city to Yarra River; (ii) provide the 'missing link' between surrounding historic parks and the CBD; (iii) extend the use pattern of its sister project, the Federation Square arts-events-entertainment complex to the outdoors; (iv) create a new landscape context for the complex; and (v) add to the Yarra River events precinct extending from Melbourne's Exhibition Centre in South Bank to the city's famous sports and entertainment precinct in Jolimont. *Functionally*, (i) make the most of the rare opportunity to create significant new public space at the city centre for the day-to-day use by urban citizens.

*The design is for an active, urban space, more like a beachside promenade than the older public gardens elsewhere in Melbourne. It is a robust setting for mass events such as Circus Oz and the Moomba Waterfest, changing sculpture exhibitions, and community festivals while providing an attractive setting for passive recreation at other times, as well as walking and cycle access between the CBD, the neighbouring sports precinct and the Yarra River Trail.<sup>51</sup>*

*The new park will be a new type of open space beyond the traditional notion of city parks...*

*An urban space that embraces society and civic life and celebrates public activity as a source of interest in its own right.*

*A social space, where many different activities can occur and that is interesting and accessible to people at all times, and playful, to appeal to the interests and imagination of children and adults.*

*A creative engagement with traditions of landscape design and Australian senses of place...<sup>52</sup>*

## Design ethos

Overall concept—focus on the views, the river and the railways:

*... the design fuses three concepts abstracted from the site.*

*[It is] framed around a series of view-lines to city landmarks. Construction of...[the] pedestrian circulation system and arrangement of...major structures along these lines provide visual and physical connections with the surrounding city.*

*...the design responds to its context by abstracting the concept of the river as a land-shaping process. A contemporary interpretation of this principle of landscape formation evokes the former river alignment and billabongs on the new park site.*

*...the design responds to the railways as an important historical and civic aspect of the site.*

*They generate linear forms in plan and offer a range of models for spaces and structures in the park...<sup>53</sup>*

Internal structure—design for site-specificity, spatial potential and programmatic robustness:

*...the design is composed of four layers of structural elements [canals, terraces, paths and bridges, (single-native-species) tree grids and building canopies]. Each...encompasses references to the role of the park, views to city landmarks, the geomorphology of the river and qualities of*

*the railways. The design as a whole builds relationships between these elements and the existing site features; the park grows out of its site.*<sup>54</sup>

*... the park as a whole is a series of spaces, but individual spaces were not designed with prescribed uses or single-purpose facilities, offering freedom of choice for people in their use of the park and future evolution of the park's use... [but] have different characteristics that make them suitable for particular types of activity.*<sup>55</sup>

*... the characteristics and locations of spaces... suggest where spontaneous activity will occur, and create opportunities for programmed events... the varying robustness of different zones of the park will withstand and encourage activities with different degrees of intensity.*<sup>56</sup>

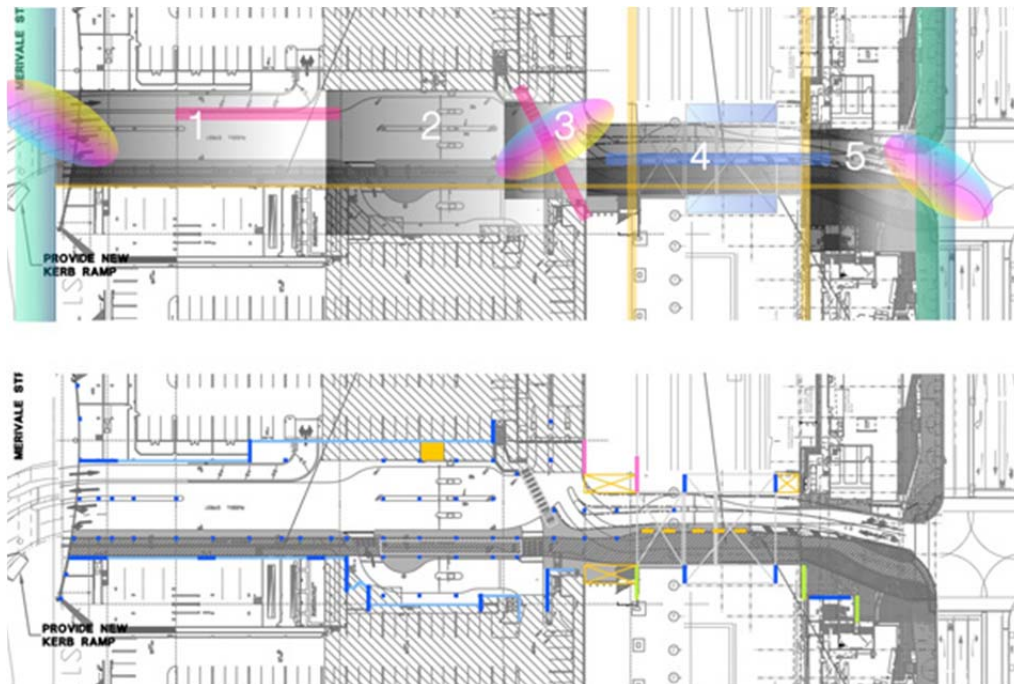
**Critical parameters:** (i) *topographically*—a seven-metre level difference from the river's edge to the CBD grid boundary; (ii) *structurally*—the geotechnical stabilisation of large, geometrically shaped terraces; (iii) *financially*—limited initial budget necessitating staged development; (iv) *functionally*—demands for additional cross access to expanding sports facilities, and (v) *politically*—pressures to (a) respond to short term expectations with conventional fixed solutions and paraphernalia already available in adjacent parks, (b) minimise any overshadowing via deferring the planting of projected, stylised urban forests, and (c) prioritise quick crowd access expectations of the sports industry over more complex public amenity and ambience of the park for everyone.

**Process:** Joint initiative by the City of Melbourne and the State of Victoria: 1997 onwards in conjunction with the Federation Square international design competition and ensuing development. Input from the Federation Square design team LAB, United Kingdom, and AILA: Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. Design brief and concept plan: Council. Design development and documentation: specialist consultants from select panel as per adopted Council practice. Art installations via competition-based commissions and donations; Heritage Commission input. Community and stakeholder consultation via public exhibition and comment. Several industry awards: 2003, 2004.

**Schedule:** First stage and official opening: 2002. Implementation and related design modifications continue in stages as per need and budget allocations.

**Latest addition:** Tanderrum Bridge to Melbourne Park events: 2017.



Russell Walk: South Bank•Central Brisbane•Queensland•Australia<sup>57</sup>

**Type:** reconfigured and extended pedestrian path through carpark. **Classification:** semi-public to pseudo-public.

**Shape:** linear flat corridor.

**Size:** 640sqm; 3.5m x 200m; clear height circa 2m.

**Urban context:** (i) component of Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre; (ii) internally and visually contained by building walls and open carpark space with exposed services.

**Urban role:** (i) pedestrian and bicycle link from West End and South Brisbane to South Bank and its cluster of public-orientated venues; (ii) pedestrian access to the recently extended Convention and Exhibition Centre.

**Functional objectives:** (i) to convert an existing, purely utilitarian carpark access tunnel into an exciting, programmed, safe, shared, and accessible urban thoroughfare-cum-public space; (ii) to design for robustness in adverse climatic situations and environmental events.

**Spatio-experiential objectives:** to use digital art, sound, and messaging to make for an ever-changing through journey with elements of surprise and sensory stimulation.

**Design ethos:** a new type of dynamic, experiential concept of urban thoroughfare with integrated, curated art—a gallery through the building; (ii) a sophisticated but innovative architectural image in keeping with the new building extension; (iii) demonstrated sustainability by design, procurement, and management practice, in keeping with South Bank Corporation's ethos.

**Critical parameters:** (i) *contextually*—climatically determined, hence inevitable but otherwise unpredictable river flooding events with associated construction and accessibility dilemmas; (ii) *internally*—(a) very low floor to ceiling heights due to above-head services at non-negotiable locations, (b) multimodal safety, (c) personal security; and (iii) *design-and-procurement-wise*—positive negotiation with multiple stakeholders with varied interests.

*Making public space*

**Process:** Statutory Authority-led: Design Brief, Creative Arts Brief, and Procurement Strategy: South Bank Corporation in consultation and collaboration with the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre: 2010. State Government-led Project Steering Committee. Approvals by Corporation Board.

**Schedule:** First stage completion: 2012 in association with Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre extension works. Expansion to full concept subject to political will and any associated funding opportunities.

**Uber-Hip-And-Uber-Cool  
Place-Making—Place-Program-Strategy**

High Line: Westside Lower Manhattan • New York • NY • USA<sup>58</sup>



**Type:** re-purposed historic rail corridor and viaduct -> new city centre park.

**Classification:** public.

**Shape:** elevated weaving flat-ground steel structure with long straight sections between and through buildings.

**Size:**  $\cong$  2,500m long; width corresponds to underneath street reserve.

**Urban context:** (i) established, manufacturing turned mixed use medium to high rise development with original air-rights to buildings; (ii) formally contained by building façades on each side; (iii) through movement and local views directed by the alignment and edge conditions of the rail corridor, distant views by the skyscraper backdrop characteristic to the locality.

**Urban role:** Public landscape and 'greenway'.<sup>59</sup>

**Local objective:** to preserve and re-purpose a disused piece of infrastructure as a public green space.<sup>60</sup>

**Global objective:** to inspire people worldwide of how cities can reuse industrial spaces to create beautiful, hybrid spaces<sup>61</sup>—or perhaps 'places': the High Line has, indeed, been referred to outside the USA as 'a popular poster child for Creative Placemaking'<sup>62</sup>.

**Design ethos:**

Planting:

*The High Line design is inspired by the self-seeded landscape that grew on the out-of-use elevated rail tracks during the 25 years after trains stopped running... The species of perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees were chosen for their hardiness, sustainability, and textural and color variation... These grasses and trees inspired the planting designer Piet Oudolf to "keep it wild."*

*Many of the species that originally grew on the High Line's rail bed are incorporated into the park's landscape [and] ... Nearly half... are native to the United States. The design ... also emphasizes year-round interest and bloom.*<sup>63</sup>

Sustainability:

*The High Line is inherently a green structure... [its] landscape functions essentially like a green roof... [the] porous pathways contain open joints, so water can drain between planks and water adjacent planting beds... to allow the plants to retain as much water as possible...*<sup>64</sup>

Programming:

*High Line Art produces and curates a wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions... [It] invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.*<sup>65</sup>

**Critical parameters:** (i) *structure*—initial disrepair and consequent calls for demolition; the iron frame was eventually deemed structurally sound, ergo salvageable; (ii) *politics*—wave of discontent and lack of adaptive ownership amongst public housing tenants regarding prohibition of popular uses in the new public space, and the perceived basis of these restrictions; (iii) *scepticism*—regarding negative effects on property values; *de facto*, the new public space, conversely, became a catalyst for local urban renewal; (iv) *behaviour*—fears of heightened criminal behaviour, which have been alleviated by observed low crime rates, conceivably due to (a) the immediate proximity of buildings and large visitor volumes at different times, hence practically constant passive surveillance, and to (b) the overall quality of public space management and control.<sup>66 67</sup> **Process:** Open ideas competition: 'Designing the High Line', 2002–2003. Design commission: collaborative between specialist consultants: James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio+Renfro, and



## Making public space

Piet Oudolf, USA. Zoning amendments: as per Council protocol. Owner: the City of New York. Maintenance, operation, programming, and associated fundraising (98%): non-profit organisation 'Friends of the High Line'<sup>68</sup> in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and with support from volunteers. Presenting Green Sponsor 2017: TD Bank.

**Schedule:** Constructed and opened to the public in stages: *Section 1* (Gansevoort Street to West 20th Street): June 9, 2009; *Section 2* (West 20th Street to West 30th Street): June 8, 2011; *Section 3* (northernmost Rail Yards section): September 21, 2014.

## Program

Joensuu Arboretum: Joensuu City Fringe • East Finland<sup>69</sup>



**Type:** re-purposed natural forest—>new city fringe park.

**Classification:** public. Shape: elongated flat bandeau with a steep hill and varying width.

Size: 71 hectares;  $\cong 200\text{m} - 1,000\text{m} \times \cong 2,600\text{m}$ .



**Urban context:** *city-wide*, a physical and visual component of the mediating green zone between the city centre grid and its surrounding suburban-cum-semirural zones; *locally*, a landscape transition zone between clusters of semi-urban, single-storey, single-house blocks and a natural lakes system; *formally*, a major scale determinant of urban geography with clear physical and visual boundaries to the surrounding built areas.

**Urban role:** dual-purpose area—integrated arboretum and open space which acts as (i) a dendrological research and education object for the local university and (ii) a passive recreational area and visitor destination for the city.

**Objectives:** (i) *synchronicity*—to achieve a functional and spatial whole where (i) the physical arrangement of space into subareas and plant communities, (ii) the alignment of circulation paths, and (iii) the placement of tree species synchronise with (iv) the conceptual reading of the whole by visitors into articulated sub-milieus, view corridors and landscape imagery; (ii) *aesthetics*—to recognise that due to unique colour, shape and size palettes, tree species placement strongly influences both the internal image of the arboretum landscape and the external views towards it; (iii) *harmony*—to take advantage of this fact to create a serene, impressive, large scale vegetation entity, which simultaneously provides surprising small scale views, a sense of the forest, and experiences of the macro-microlandscape; (iv) *mobility*—to make circulation path intersections into milestones via typological differentiation and both unifying and differentiating detail which, considered together, create associative overlays of interlinks and patterns for orientation both in fact and concept.

**Design ethos:** (i) a new type of arboretum arrangement according to the intrinsic ecological and experiential potential of the local landscape and its natural forest (bio)types rather than the conventional, systematic and scientific arrangement of dendrological collections so far by genus or species group; (ii) in parallel with research and education use, a true, living forest park by design where layers of exploration, discovery, learning and interpretation fuse into memorable experiences to complement urban living; (iii) overall, a site-specific, adaptive new urban ecology based on long term self-sustained and self-managed natural processes rather than intensive external intervention.

*The detailed experiential milieu of the arboretum park will develop gradually during its long-term development, planting phases, and growth cycles. The majority of the park now and in the future will be a spatially enclosed, volumetric forest. Hence, the central urban concept throughout the design process has been to shape the paths system as a continuous internal series of spaces across and around the park. The degree of openness of the spatial components will depend each moment by the stage of growth their plantings will have reached.<sup>70</sup>*

**Critical parameters:** (i) *generally*—implications of a cold continental climate @ 62°N, 29°E, long dark winters, deep ground frost, freezing lake surface, short growing season, and slow plant growth to construction and landscape development; (ii) *on site*—(a) implications of a river delta-lakefront terrain and ecotype to spatial planning, (b) identifying suitable eco-niches for desired arboretum species from outside the available ecotypes, and (c) achieving a self-regulating forest succession within the limitations of climatic conditions and thin, nutrient-poor natural soil; (iii) *context-reliant management*—implications of (a) maintaining town water supply from the adjacent lake to on-site ground water levels which affect forest growth including managing the long term after-effects of prior lake

## Making public space

draining, (b) eco-management of zones with remaining high groundwater levels, potential flood events and postglacial rebound, this meaning the still ongoing rising of the ground around the Arctic region dating back to the Ice Age.

**Process:** Joint initiative by the City of Joensuu and Joensuu University. Principal landscape architect consultant: *Rakennus-ja ympäristösuunnittelu Piha&Sakkinen* (Building and Milieu Design Piha&Sakkinen), Helsinki, with multi-disciplinary subconsultant team for dendrological, ecological, and horticultural detail. Public comment by exhibition as per local protocol.

**Schedule:** First three-step cycle of forest succession: 1988 onwards. Continues to proceed for programmed completion in 2050, after which the cycle re-begins.

St Kilda Foreshore—>St Kilda's Edge—>St Kilda Promenade: South Melbourne, City Of Port Phillip•Victoria•Australia<sup>71</sup>



**Type:** refurbished city park, beach and promenade.

**Classification:** public with public-to-private leisure and entertainment venues. **Shape:** linear, undulating dune and beach with moderate level differences and tidal variation.

**Size:** 100m-750m x  $\cong$  2,000m; varies with marine sand movement and replenishment as required to maintain the beach.

**Identity:** an iconic, historic, multifunctional urban foreshore with colourful, part notorious history and an array of associated remnant items of heritage significance.

**Urban context:** *functionally*, distinctly seaside urban mixed use pattern comprising permanent and ephemeral residential blocks, entertainment venues, cafés and restaurants, vertical mixed use, and water-based recreation; *geographically*, (i) a composite of lineally organised landscape zones—the sea, beach, back dune and promontory; (ii) a culturally modified environment with extensive exotic planting—notably palms—alternating with native, sand-binding vegetation; *structurally*, composed of four basic elements—a regular street grid, dense pattern of blocks and, two sweeping main seashore avenues, and a visually open foreshore with pavilion-like buildings make for objects in space; *formally*, (i) open public space set against a tightly built, private building backdrop; (ii) an established, interconnected network of streets, squares, parklands and the beach. *height-wise*, largely two to four stories regardless of use, which makes for a distinctly horizontal, linear image reflective of the linear organisation and three-dimensional structure of the natural foreshore.

**Urban role:** *In the Capital City context*, a (i) leisure destination, where people come to socialise, absorb the ambience and interact with the sea; (ii) place of residence for people who ‘do not wish to part with it, but rather be its part’; (iii) busy thoroughfare and truck route between Melbourne City and its southern suburb—throughout history vehicular access through St Kilda Foreshore has been characteristic of its use. *In the local context*, a (i) significant and accessible public space component of the circa twenty-kilometre long string of beaches and parklands from Webb Dock in the north to Sandringham in the south; (ii) playground for urban people of any denomination; (iii) mediating structural element between built city areas and Port Phillip Bay; and (iv) embodiment and container of local urban memory and heritage, particularly that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Project objectives:** (i) to achieve a major, image-conscious renewal of the iconic St Kilda residential, leisure and entertainment precinct on Port Phillip Bay; (ii) to guide seafront development towards the new millennium and mitigate the effects of increasing use in the context of cultural objectives, community values, and popular attraction.

**Project vision:** to recapture and reinforce the Foreshore’s ‘St Kildaness’ and make a high quality public space which is an ecologically sustainable, wear-resistant natural environment in the context of a diverse and environmentally aware community.

**Thematic objectives:** (i) *culture and heritage*—to maintain the cultural heritage of St Kilda; (ii) *built form*—to respect and enhance the ‘St Kildaness’ of the Foreshore—its sense of place; (iii) *public open space*—to enhance the quality of public space; (iv) *movement networks*—to improve pedestrian circulation and promote integrated transport; (v) *environmental sustainability*—to protect, celebrate and enhance the environmental integrity of St Kilda Harbour and Foreshore.

**Design ethos:** an integrated, analytical resolution for guiding the future development of St Kilda Foreshore as a specific and contextual entity, deriving directly from its physical and historic qualities, community values and imagery while recognising current planning policies as the context for any physical interventions; focus on improving the public domain and the interface of the public domain and private realm.

*The opportunities and proposals identified in this Framework have a total value of around \$130 million in 2002, including public works in the order of \$40 million. ...a successful implementation of the Framework vision will require the coordination and commitment of State Government, Council, the community, and the private sector. A whole-of-government approach is paramount.*<sup>72</sup>

**Critical parameters:** Consistent, long-term adherence by now and future local and state governments to the legally endorsed (i) objectives and strategies for developing and improving the St Kilda Foreshore and (ii) their correlated urban design principles and actions, together with (iii) a synergetic capitalisation of identified development opportunities, particularly involving critically located key sites—significantly, all available opportunities within the St Kilda Foreshore Urban Design Framework area affect each other in multiple ways and so need to be considered relative to one another.

**Coordination and commitment measures:**

*Adopt the St Kilda Foreshore Urban Design Framework as an approved Coastal Action Plan by the Minister of Environment and Conservation.  
Ensure coordinated approaches between Council, Government agencies and key stakeholders that have a responsibility for St Kilda Foreshore.  
Ensure a commitment from responsible authorities to funding and implementing Framework proposals.*

**Planning and design measures:**

*Establish statutory controls that provide a level of certainty about the future use and improvements of the Foreshore within the parameters defined by the Framework.  
Establish mechanisms that can help achieve quality design outcomes in keeping with the context and parameters set by the Framework.*

**Management measures:**

*Arrange long term leases for Crown land that assist in long-term planning and investment.  
Consider opportunities for Council management of sites where this would be appropriate  
Consider opportunities for Council management of sites where this would be appropriate and advantageous for the community and area.  
Maximise improvement opportunities arising from leases coming up for renewal.*

**Funding measures:**

*Provide the opportunity to forge Government and private partnerships to fund improvements to fund improvements to the public realm.*

**Monitoring measures:**

*Ensure that the progress of improvements to St Kilda Foreshore is monitored and that the Urban Design Framework is regularly reviewed.*

**Process and schedule:** Stage 1: Urban Design Framework: 2002: Council-led in close consultation with the State Government, local community, specialist consultants—urban design, strategic planning, traffic planning, engineering and economic planning—and other

key stakeholders. *Steering Committee:* Joint Working Group with membership from Council, State Government—Department of Industry, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, VicRoads, Central Coastal Board, Parks Victoria—and key Victorian Universities. *Funding:* Council budget and recipient of State Government’s ‘Pride of Place’ grant. *Timeline:* (i) completion of St Kilda Foreshore Planning and Design Framework discussion document: 2000; (ii) preparation and public display of the St Kilda Foreshore 20–20 Vision. Community Reference Panel set up to inform preparation of a Draft Urban Design Framework: 2001; (iii) public exhibition and comment of the Draft Final St Kilda Urban Design Framework: 2002. Government endorsement and inclusion in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme: 2002. *Stage 2:* St Kilda Foreshore Area Policy as per Victorian planning legislation: 2009. The well-received Framework plan and vision also inspired key amendments to the Port Phillip Planning Scheme, such as new policy directions, new built form and height controls, and revised planning controls along St Kilda Foreshore. *Stage 3:* Foreshore Promenade / St Kilda’s Edge: 2004–2011: Council-led initiative to scope a key Framework opportunity, expanding on the Framework concept to contemporise the Foreshore’s public image and functionality. *Timeline:* (i) Council-invited proposals from a group of specialist consultants for the design development of the Foreshore Promenade and boardwalk space towards prospective implementation; (ii) winners Jackson Clemens Burrows proposed a wider and more dynamic promenade-cum-boardwalk and extended beach to encourage multiple, diverse activities: 2011; (iii) completion of the St Kilda Pier and St Kilda Harbour Masterplan: 2015; (iv) public space upgrades along the Foreshore Promenade: 2017. Works continue as per Council resources and budget.

### Hobart Waterfront: Central Hobart • Tasmania • Australia<sup>73</sup>



**Type:** re - purposed and reconfigured working harbour—>new cultural city precinct.

**Classification:** public with semi - public to possibly pseudo - public cultural venues.

**Shape and Size:** *contextually*, the city centre grid and its fronting docks; *focally*, the docks and three axially aligned blocks within the grid.

**Urban context:** *Locally*, (i) centres on Sullivan's Cove; (ii) faces River Derwent to the east, docks to the north and south, and the city centre grid to the west; (iii) two busy through roads between the eastern perimeter of the city centre grid and the docks delimit physical and conceptual connections between the two; (iv) framed by a string of urban parks, cultural institutions, medical establishments, and dining venues; (v) visually contained by the Hobart's mountain backdrop rather than its relatively low-rise skyline. *Remotely*, the traditional point of departure for Antarctic expeditions and research since the early 1900s, and now houses the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies with related structures and programmed activities with potential implications to urban thematic, activity programs and local imagery.

**Urban role:** multiple: paired with Hobart's existing commercial spine the proposed civic axis *structurally*, (i) creates a double urban axis between the city centre and waterfront providing a new civic context for existing and future cultural spaces and their public use; and (ii) defines and articulates the physical urban fabric; *functionally*, constructs points of obvious access to the water and related activities; *spatially*, extends and consolidates meaningful public space; and *visually*, directs attention beyond the city centre boundaries and so makes for an entry-exit corridor.

**Design objectives:** (i) to re-energise the Hobart waterfront and former working harbour as a major cultural focus with connectivity to the adjacent retail core; (ii) to attract activity across Sullivan Cove, still embracing and interpreting local cultural and environmental heritage.

**Design ethos:** a multi-layered, contextual urban design vision to capitalise upon the waterfront's latent urban quality, collective memory, and local value system.

**Critical parameters:** The universal problematics of urban renewal and transformation, such as (i) re-distribution and re-purposing of land and assets, (ii) related socio-economic implications, (iii) goals and prioritisation, (iv) the gauge of radical-to-conservative interventions, (v) government foci vis-a-vis public opinion, (v) 'best practice', and the question of (vi) the 'greatest common good'.

**Process:** Led by Sullivan's Cove Waterfront Authority. (i) Urban Design Framework: 2004; (ii) International Design Competition; 2006; (iii) Review Panel, specialist workshops and modelling to establish directions, priorities, and programs: 2007; (iv) The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA): Vision for the redevelopment of Macquarie Point: Fender Katsalidis and Rush Wright: 2016.<sup>74</sup>



## Strategy

### City-related Harbour Areas: Central Aarhus•Jutland Peninsula•Denmark<sup>75</sup>



**Type:** large re-purposed and reconfigured part of working harbour—>new common city space.

**Classification:** public with anticipated semi-public to pseudo-public components.

**Shape and size:** *contextually*, the city centre, its fronting docklands and surrounding public parks; *focally*, north dock, south dock and adjoining city edge strip.

**Urban context:** defined by six form/use elements of downtown Aarhus: (i) the city centre, (ii) the (Kattegat) sea, (iii) the (Aarhus) river, (iv) the perimeter city blocks that contain the seafront—the ‘wall’, (v) the common spaces, public grounds, and institutions that surround the city centre—the ‘commons’ and (vi) the harbour that continues to dominate much of the city’s function and visual image.

**Urban role:** the interface between the city and the sea in active transition from industrial docklands to mixed urban use, skyline, and image.

**Design objectives:** (i) to recognise the potential of the six form/use elements for forging mutually reinforcing relationships in the future design resolutions for the city and its waterfront via focused design themes and mechanisms:

The city centre–sea relationship  
*implies the need to interface through the creation of an urban-marine use mix at the seafront.*

The city–city wall–sea relationship  
*implies the need to transcend the visual barriers between the city and the sea through creating a transparent, translucent water's edge.*

The city–river relationship  
*implies the need to interlink...through the creation of a continuous interconnecting river-seaside walk.*

The city–commons relationship  
*implies the need to transcribe the essence and image of the cultural and natural spaces through their interpretation in the form/use resolution of the seafront.*

The city–harbour relationship  
*implies the need to qualify the nature of their scale, grain and architecture through mediation at the waterfront.*

The city–harbour–sea relationship  
*implies the need to recognise and signify the nature of the relationship through the resolution of the city structure and creation of an open city bay that integrates all elements.<sup>76</sup>*

(ii) to rearrange the city/harbour transport pattern to free the seafront for flexible, complex urban use and recreate the intrinsic, open character of water, beginning with (a) the undergrounding of the rail line between the city and the sea and (b) the redirection of the harbour road across the bay to lessen the traffic load on the seafront and enable its transformation into an urban common space [with] (c) the existing former gas works site and structures as a related cultural place.<sup>77</sup>

**Design ethos:** an integrated, interdependent, and interpretational form/use system by design and programming which is a new addition to Aarhus's existing typology of public space.

**Critical parameters:** (i) *politically*—the willingness of each government for radical engagement and decision-making towards a lasting, positive, and progressive comparative status of Aarhus in the context of the European Union; (ii) *practically*—universal issues related to urban renewal processes regarding (a) the ownership and proportional distribution, designation and differentiation of land portions for public and private uses, and (b) the negotiation of ensuing, necessarily substantial, infrastructure problematics including economics of cost and long term sustainability; (iii) *design-wise*—devising mechanisms to introduce change and refine imagery in such ways and towards such outcomes that the public can identify with and adopt as reflective of its evolving aspirations.

**Process:** Government-led with an ambitious, forward-looking agenda befitting the open-minded Danish spirit. (i) initial international ideas competition 'City-related Harbour Areas



in Århus, Ideas Competition on Urban Planning': 1999; (ii) subsequent, specific design competitions to find resolutions for the entirety of the project area, its contributing component spaces, and image-and-activity-generating new edifices—these are a common practice to locate ideas in the design-conscious Scandinavia.

## Conclusion

It begins to appear that as long as human bio-ecological and socio-cultural needs and sources of emotions remain 'human', there might be more universal similarity than local difference in what the public expects from public space and the way it is made, including design attitudes and rationales. At least, nothing lucidly perceptible in the theory or practice of making public space so far points at any other direction.

Perhaps all and any detected 'difference' is only superficial, coloured by the context in which it is observed, or the language in which it is spoken of? Or, perhaps it is subtle, hinting at some kind of inner source rather than a learned custom, habit, or mode of action that might reveal intent? 'Plus ça change plus c'est pareil' (as in the Canadian Parliament's rephrasing of philosopher Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr's original epigram 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose' while discussing Afghan detainees, of all things<sup>78</sup>)—a true global condition for global citizens.

Returning to the title of this exposé, is, then, making public space about the same or about difference? We might imagine 'humanity' as a genotype of specific existence and each human as its phenotype. Or 'space' as a genotype of universal existence and 'public space' as its phenotype. While, contextually, 'same-ness' concerns the innate public-ness—the social nature and need for a frame of reference—of human phenotypes, 'difference' concerns individual reactions to each one's particular frame—the direction and degree to which 'context' moulds reactions. And while, ethically, in human culture, 'same-ness' concerns the universal concept of the 'greatest public good'—the common benefit of human interventions—'difference' concerns individual local needs for that and the differential potential of any public space to fulfil demand.

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## NOTES

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- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.civisanalytics.com/>
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- <sup>12</sup> Here refers to 'the sphere of the aesthetic as a specific manifestation of man's value relationship to the world and the sphere of man's artistic activity', as per: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/aesthetics>.
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- 47 Here in the sense of a request or instruction for something to fill a social need, as distinct from 'social order', which term is sometimes used as an alternative.
- 48 Image credits—top row: WES LA competition entry submission; middle and bottom row: City of Helsinki.
- 49 All classifications: refer to discussion above under subheading 'Public-ness | Private-ness'.
- 50 Image credits—aerial photograph: John Gollings; other photographs: Helena Piha, Ron Jones, Ben Wrigley; drawings: City of Melbourne: New riverside park draft concept plan report.
- 51 Piha Helena&Sakkinen Petri, 4D Form project sheet, 'Birrarung Marr'.
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