

Appendix C

Introduction

Designing for 'the public' is an almost impossible assignment. First of all, 'the public' can not really be defined as a specific user, since by definition the public is too divers to do so. This variety of people has more wishes than can be coped with in a building. Creating a generic place in which nobody would be pushed away, would on the other hand lead to a lack of identity, a lack of participation of the public; a lack of use. A public place in the end needs a specific identity, but should still be able to cope with several 'publics'. This is one of the ambiguities one needs to deal with. Another ambiguity is the fact that a design gives a solution for a certain moment in time, where a public place, especially one that is filled with many different groups and individuals, should be able to develop over time. This amount of change is probably different for different moments. A public place can change in the course of a day for the purpose of an event. But a public place can also change over longer time by the changing of society as a whole, its local citizens, or its direct physical environment. The more public (in terms of diversity in people and lacking in social cohesion) a place is, the more important it is to cope with this ambiguity of designing for a specific moment and change over time. This makes it almost impossible to create an architectural pearl, an object that is so pure that nothing can be added or taken away without diminishing the whole.

This reflection shows in what ways the design is related to these ambiguities and other concepts coming from the research. Similar to the research, it is divided into three parts: 1) the way in which the design copes with the gathering of people, 2) the way topic is influenced, and 3) the way the architecture stimulates public conversation.

This design is can best be perceived as an academic study on how we can influence public space in regard of these questions. The result is not even a specific singular design, but a groundwork with clear options for change. Several of these possible options for change are already presented, but it should be clear that the design is not limited to these.

1. Gathering the public

The location that was chosen for the project is the area around the train station of Holland Spoor. This

location is, even without intervention, already a very public place; people from very different ethnic and social groups visit the area on a regular basis. Firstly, The Haagse Hogeschool is a dominant factor. Many students from various ethnic backgrounds and completely different studies visit the place and have found housing in the direct neighbourhood. Apart from that, the neighbourhood is filled with first or second generation immigrants (sixty-one percent) from various backgrounds. The area has a large minority of people from Suriname (eleven percent), Morocco (ten percent), The Dutch Antilles (eight percent), Turkey (six percent), and several other countries (twenty-six percent together). There is a great mixture in terms of education level (forty-five percent higher education, thirty-three percent secondary education, and fifteen percent lower education). The diversity in people is even further enforced by the fact that the Stationsbuurt has got a moving rate of twenty percent (every year twenty percent of the households move), which stops eventual social cohesion. Lastly, there is the element of the train station, which has an international connection to Brussels and Paris. This train station gathers people from all layers of society. Coming from the train they usually spread either on foot (the city centre is about five hundred meters away), by bike or by tram (eight tram lines have a stop next to the station), making this a dominant station not just for the neighbourhood, but also for The Hague as a whole. This creates an extremely diverse mixture of people and goals.

To deal with this one would need a mixture of functions to facilitate all these different potential users. None of the literature that was used during the research gave a clear indication of what the ultimate building function of Habermasian public space should be. What was given, were conditions to which this building function should conform. This on the other hand, does not mean that the function of a public building is unimportant to the functioning of the space in regard to

Habermasian theory. Jane Jacobs (Jacobs, 1961) states that a variety of functions is needed to get a variety in people and use of both time and space. Jacobs was not at all claiming that this variety in function should take place under one roof, nor does she deny that this can be a serious solution. William H. Whyte (Whyte, 1980/1988) does take a firm stand against

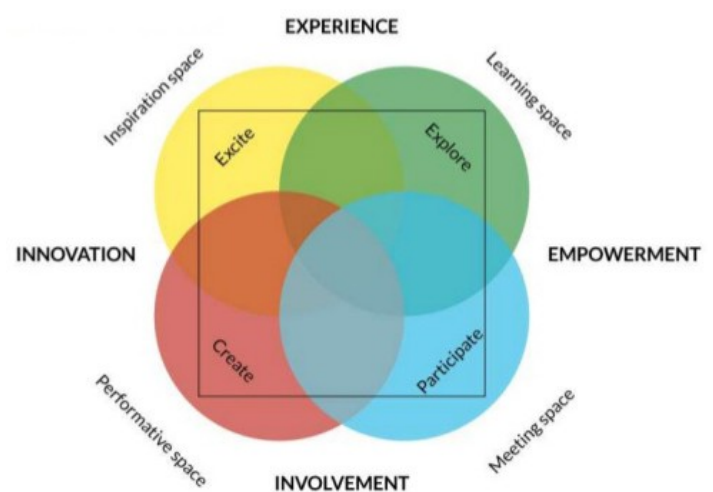


Figure 15: The four spaces

buildings that are cities within themselves for the reason that the examples he had in his near surroundings were locked off cities within buildings, buildings with no connection to the rest of the city. His harsh statement against against these buildings can therefore be neglected when one would design a building with several functions under one roof, while still maintaining connections to the rest of the city. Yet, just a combination of functions which uses vary in regard of time and users, does not automatically lead up to a scenery which would form the basis of Habermasian public sphere. This is visible in many examples of malls and shopping centres, where the selling of clothes often goes hand in hand with the selling of food and drinks. Here one can often notice a certain lack of participation in public space, for instance due to the strict regulations of sale aesthetics, but more importantly a type of function that stimulates brainless consumerism instead of inspiration, meeting and performing for instance. The triangulation effect (Whyte, 1980/1988) (Shaftoe, 2008) focuses on meeting due to inspiration. Since people are the most interesting element to watch (Whyte 1980/1988) (Gehl 2011) (Shaftoe, 2011) (Jacobs, 1961) (Carr et al., 1992), creating a building function that stimulates a certain open performing atmosphere can therefore be considered a type that makes people claim space and stimulate triangulation, thus enforcing the public sphere. Since a few years the concept of the library 2.0 has arisen. The library 2.0 is a building type derived from the existing known library, which, unlike its predecessor, is not based on books, but on the model of four spaces¹ (see image 15), which theoretically shows that a series of public functions could combine nicely and become more due to their mutual existence. This is a model, and therefore eventually a building type, upon which one could base a Habermasian public space, which does not imply that this is the only one, nor that every space based on this model will stimulate a Habermasian public sphere. Of this model the least important element could be considered the learning space, since this in itself does not necessarily lead directly to public dialogue. On the other hand can we consider that it might do this indirectly, since communication is quite often the exchange of 'new' knowledge. Apart from that, we should not forget that the

1 It is for this reason that the name 'library 2.0' is rather unfortunate. 'Library' derives from the Latin '*libri*', books, with which it does not necessarily need a connection. The obvious reference to WEB 2.0 shows that this name has arisen in Internet pop-culture and has no scientific background. Yet, since the word has become more mainstream and a better existing word is lacking, I will use it nevertheless. Further, since the book has not died at this moment and might never completely do so, the book could always still be an important element of the library, even though it is not necessarily the heart of it. One could pose the the option of 'Mousaion' as name for the concept, since the historical Mousiaon of Alexandria would be rather similar in concept (Paula Young Lee, 1997). This was a place with several functions gathered in one complex with a library as core, where a main overall goal of the complex was to create conversation between its visitors and through that new information. The problem with the term 'Mousaion' (or 'Museum', or 'Museum' that derived therefrom) on the other hand, is that the word 'museum' has started to lead a life of its own that has a second origin apart from the Alexandrian 'Musaeum' that leads away from the original building and meaning of the word. Library 2.0 has a better associative meaning, although it would have been better if a different word would have been used from the start.

Habermasian ideal of the public sphere in the eighteenth-century derived from the reading bourgeoisie that wanted to exchange their thoughts on literature (Habermas, 1989). Even later, when public dialogue already widely existed, public conversation often rose due to a literal source, be that a newspaper, pamphlet, essay, etcetera. The choice for a library 2.0 is therefore not only relevant for task it needs to fulfill in regard of social stimuli and participation within public space, but it also clearly refers to the historical background upon which the Habermasian ideal is based in the first place.

Yet, although the historical reference of a building type to the reading public is tempting to form as the basis of the building, the library 2.0, in its short history, has used other functions that stimulate social contact better than the written word, of which a public theatre and makerspace could be considered most provoking and were therefore both placed on the ground floor. In this case, the theatre is a rather informal space. It is directly connected to the rest of the space and therefore in general unsuited for formal theatre play. It is however suited for lectures, documentary showing at lunch hours, etcetera, which are activities for which it is more common to walk in and out. This creates an atmosphere in which people can easily stumble upon an organised public discussion without being afraid of joining. This whole informality is enforced by the seating space. In this case, as is often the case in the library 2.0, the seating space of the theatre is located upon a grand staircase, which can function like this during organised events, but also more informal such as seating space for lunch or dinner, or for reading a book. An event happening here, be it organised or something that happened to stumble into existence, will give a sudden, dominant change of atmosphere, making it likely to create immediate conversation with another bystander. A function like this, when placed in such an informal way so that it is stumbled upon, might be considered to not just inspire, as the four-spaces model would suggest, but even confront. And it is in this confrontation that we can find the creation of the desired triangulation (Shaftoe, 2008)(Whyte, 1980/1988).

The other mentioned ground floor function is the makerspace. It is a function like this that defies the brainless consumerism. People are challenged to create in the public space, to add instead of to accept, which forces opinions and therefore eventually conversation. The makerspace is an often used new function in the library 2.0 for this specific reason. In the design, this is shown by the division of a fablab and general makerspace. The fablab is in the middle of the space of the ground floor, open, accessible by all and therefore very public. The fablab uses tools like 3D-printers and lasercutters that make very limited noise, and leave limited dust, which makes it possible to place such a function in an unenclosed space. The makerspace does not have that luxury. Wood, plastic, and metal need to be

worked with, which does make too much noise and gives too much heat, dust and thrash to be placed in an open space. To keep this function public, glass boxes are placed within the open space of the ground floor, in order to create a stage or showcase, which hopefully would function as a triangulation element. Nevertheless, the opening up of such creative functions to the public, must have a certain inspiring effect, which if not directly, will probably indirectly still lead to conversation, especially because not just the making is shown, but also the end products of previous makers in the form of an ever changing exhibition.

Architecturally similar to this, band rehearsal spaces are located on the ground floor in these showcases, which offer visitors the possibility to listen to the bands playing through a headphone set.

The research made it clear that the ground floor is by far the most important floor in regard of people influencing by buildings, since this is where you get a facade that can be touched, more direct visual input, smells that are more dominant, and other sensual stimulation (Jan Gehl et al., 2006). To enforce this fact, the building is stretched over several floors in such a way that it creates an equivalent of several stacked 'ground floors'. Every higher floor has its own outside space with green and a food and drink supply function based around the facade. The green therefore not only functions as a general attraction point in a brick dominated city, but also, due to its natural order, creates a new 'ground floor' on a higher level. This combination of appointed green and food and drink supply is not only a general attractive element, but also an important factor in regard of smell. Since smell is the sense that creates the deepest memories, it can easiest create a lasting memory of the specific place. Differing in types of plants and types of food, both in exact location as over time, can create a lively, defined, unique space that manages to create lasting memories. This addition of ground floors is used only upwards and not downwards, which would have resulted in a better integration of trams and the rest of the square. This is done so, because creating lowered squares often results in empty, lifeless squares (Whyte, 1980/1988). This is why there is always a certain distance between above and below ground level. This is slightly diminished by the use of huge holes that provide sight between the levels. The trees that are put in connect the levels, but always limited to a certain extend.

The fact that the bars and restaurants are placed on the edges of the building gives the possibility for the creation of public figures. If these functions are occupied by the same people (almost) every day, and if they are seen both inside and outside, chances are that they will become the 'mayors' of their

squares, which means they will take care for them, fight against trash, educating people in decent behaviour, and provide other services that are not directly related to their jobs (Jacobs, 1961)(Whyte, 1980/1988). This directly gives a certain management strategy for the building. The building should probably not be managed as a whole, or just to a certain extend, but instead be influenced by these public figures, that can thereby shape their immediate surroundings thus, that it enforces their own mayorship, that it becomes their own. The grid already gives structure to the building as a whole. Individual places can therefore be altered quite drastically, without destroying the harmony of the building as a whole. If the building would be managed with an island like system, this possibility would be enforced. A similar aspect on an urban level can be found in American cities (Jacobs, 1961), where the grid is rigid, but allows almost complete freedom in regard of scale, material, and function, all within the given limits of the grid itself.

An interesting reflection can be made in regard of the type of functions and the whole of possibilities according to either Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone on the one hand and Jan Gehl on the other. Carr et al. divide the whole of public function in comfort(1), relaxation (2), passive engagement with the environment(3), active engagement with the environment(4), and discovery(5) (Carr et al., 1992). The building responds to all these public needs. Comfort is found in the availability of food and drink, resting places, and sheltering from the elements, be they wind, rain, or sun. Relaxation is a state of body and mind at ease. The various roof gardens create places where one can get away, even though one is never alone and never unwatched. Passive engagement with the environment is described as either landscape watching or people watching. The different levels are free to be changed over time, creating the possibility for radical differences, creating the possibility to create a beautiful, unique picture on every level, making an interesting passive engagement on every single floor. The fact that all these floors are stacked in such a way that you can always look down on another level to passively engage with the people below. This is possible from the edges, but also through the holes that can be found in all configurations from outside and inside through which one can look down and see the people and landscape below. Active engagement with the environment can also be interpreted as both with landscape and people. With people this active engagement is created when passive engagement becomes to confronting to remain passive. This happens when people behave outside of their expected behaviour, which can be an act, someone tripping, someone 'inappropriately' dressed, etcetera. The active engagement with the environment defies the border between landscape and people with the use

of screens. These screens can be used as a physical manifestation of an online forum. People can send messages to the forum with the use of their mobile phones and other people can react to it. Since the screens dominate the individual squares as well as the complex as a whole, people that are present at the location will be stimulated to engage directly with other people active on the forum. The discovery element is taken care of with the use of different platforms on different levels. One can see that these different platforms exist when one enters the square, but one cannot overview several at the same time. This means there is always another place that one can discover, of which a part of the content of the place might already be shown through the railing.

Although all the elements proposed by Carr et al. are used, the same is not true for the Gehlian distinction. He divides public life in (1)necessary activities, (2)optional activities, and (3)social activities (Gehl, 2011). Where the second and third are covered as previously described, the necessary activities are not extensively available. Although necessary activities are less important for the goal of the project, the creation of a Habermasian public sphere, this does not mean that it has no function in it. The availability of necessary activities makes a place used without doubt. This is slightly covered by the input of houses on top of the building. Residents are common in the place, which is an attractive element in itself, since people attract people (Whyte 1980/1988) (Gehl 2011)(Shaftoe, 2011) (Jacobs, 1961) (Carr et al., 1992). If this was to be fully exploited the balance between dwellings and public space would need to be different, leaning more toward the dwellings. There is a disadvantage in doing this though. If a place would become lively by the people directly involved around it, the atmosphere would become more parochial than public. However, one could wonder how bad it is to get a slightly more parochial atmosphere in the neighbourhood of a train station and The Haagse Hogeschool, since they will in themselves always create a very public atmosphere. Adding a supermarket in the building could liven up the building as well. The grid of the building would allow such a function in the building without much adaption. This supermarket should preferably not be on the ground or first level, since it would steal visitors from the library and makerspace function. Put on a higher level however, would create a flow of people passing and therefore probably entering the library and thus benefiting the place as a whole.

One of the major problems of public buildings is the fact that walls create a symbolical barrier between inside and outside, making the inside less public than the outside space (Alexander et al., 1977) (Rudofsky, 1964). In the design this problem is tackled through several solutions. First, there are a lot

of sliding doors, creating a continuous space as soon as one would walk by. This continuous space is accentuated by the continuous use of the same material, the Eterno Unico composite stones, that are placed both on the outside as the inside. Further, the placement of bars and a restaurant on the edge of the building, gives a function type that is often used both outside and inside. People are therefore stimulated to remove the symbolic barrier of the wall. The same is tried with the other functions, creating an exhibition for instance that continuous both outside and inside. Lastly, placing (in)formal seating spaces near the doors also breaks down the barrier (Alexander et al., 1977). These seating spaces are often formed around the foot of a column, thus earthing the column and defining the seating space.

One of the key elements of the general function of the library 2.0 is that the building should be able to cope with the changes in society without losing its concept of the 'four spaces'. The building should therefore be flexible and able to change functions over time when needed without much effort. To do this, a grid is used that can sustain these changes. Columns are placed in a grid of five meters by six meters, which allows a variety of functions to occupy the space. The columns themselves are oversized, so that heavier functions can be filled in within the building when needed. Something similar is the case with the beams. A double concrete beam is used, which allows heavier objects to be placed on the floor. When a hole is made, the hole is made in the floor and not in the beams. This solution allows new holes to be made, and old holes to be filled, without changing much about the bearing construction. As previously mentioned, the fact that a rigid grid is used, allows for radical changes within the limitations of the grid, without destroying the harmony as a whole. The grid is emphasised throughout the whole complex with the use of specific tiles that hint where a column would be placed in the future if times require these changes. This does not only emphasise the fact that the building is based on a rigid grid, but also stimulates eventual adaptations to do the same. In this way, parts of the building can be added, taken away, or otherwise adapted, without need for a completely new design. The tiles themselves are small art objects, displaying different motives, which therefore define different spaces.

2. Topic

The research pointed out that a specific topic should not be the main concern when stimulating Habermasian public sphere, even though the end goal of this public sphere explicitly is a check on

governmental (mis)use of power. It was assumed that public conversation must first become more common, before specific 'hard' topics like politics become an issue. Yet, the dominant use of screens in the design, makes it possible to have a huge impact on conversation topic. The screens can be used as a physical manifestation of an online forum, but can also pose confrontational statements on which people can react. As such, the screens can have huge impact on conversation topics. A similar concept is the dominant exhibition that comes out of the building. Through this exhibition discussion can be stimulated into a certain direction. With the exhibition, in contrast to the screens, it is completely up to the organising party to influence the topic. With the screens, the topic can be influenced by the people themselves, creating a purer public discussion.

3. Social stimuli

In regard of the actual stimulating of conversation, the research offered six different strategies; (1)organised event, (2)open persons, (3)open places, (4)social distance, (5)triangulation, (6)belonging to minorities. All these strategies are used with the exception of open places.

Organised events (Goffman, 1963) can happen at several places. There is an informal theatre inside and there are two stages on the outside with big screens with which public discussion can benefit. Further, all the different platforms can house smaller, informal discussion meetings, but apart from the size there is no further architectural element to support that; it would be more of a management issue.

Open persons (Goffman, 1963)are available when the library is managed accordingly. There are several jobs, of which most of them involve a bar/restaurant, that combine inside work and outside work. These people could become public, open, figures, but it is not a given that they will so just by the proper use of architecture. They need to be frequently present and have a sense of responsibility for their surroundings. And when that is present, they will only become public figures by a sense of trust, which is not really an architectural problem anymore.

Using open places (Goffman, 1963) is not relevant for conversation stimulation in a public stimulation, since this method uses a non-public setting, where the stranger can be talked to just for the reason he is a stranger. In a public setting, this could never happen, since there would be to many strangers and not enough familiar persons to create such a setting.

Social distance is a method that works on several layers. Firstly, the research showed that social

squares are usually not bigger than about twenty-four meters (Lynch, 1962) (Gehl, 2011) (Whyte, 1980/1988) (Alexander et al., 1977), since this is the distance up to where one can distinguish facial expressions and overhear loud conversation. This is one of the reasons why the big square is divided into several smaller squares placed upon the various platforms. One's sense of being in relation to the big square is never lost though. The big square in itself gives a possibility for demonstration, which can be considered an essential element for public debate, since demonstration is quite often the technique through which the people express their aversion of governmental policy. It is therefore essential to have both of these elements present, both the big square as the small squares. Conversation itself usually starts at the much smaller distance, between one-and-a-half foot (45 centimeters) and seven feet (2,13 meters) (Hall, 1977), which is exactly the distance for people to stay in that is stimulated by the grid. The grid has a distance of five meters by six meters. Placement of an object in the middle of that divides the space in such a way that it is almost impossible not to get into that distance of one another.

This distance is an essential part of the triangulation concept. Triangulation is possible in several ways. First of all, since other people often are most interesting to look at, the concept of using platforms from which people can look down on other people, who are in themselves again looking down can give a good triangulation effect, as Forecourt Fountain (see Image 16) shows. Triangulation can happen in a different manner: confrontational display of art. This is not much of an architectonic matter *in se*, but the free grid offers the possibility of an ever changing exposition



Figure 16: Forecourt fountain, Portland, Oregon

that can be used in a confrontational matter. A lot has to do with sudden sight lines that need to be created, apart of the confrontational object that needs to be shown. Triangulation can also emerge from the makerspaces, the band rehearsals, and the informal theatre, as has been mentioned before.

Lastly, the strategy of belonging to minorities is taken care of in several ways. Firstly, the chosen location provides a mixture of several ethnic minorities, which creates the necessity for people

to acknowledge to others that they do belong to a certain group. This is further emphasised by the use of different functions, to which different groups of people will feel attracted. The use of one function, might then lead to the use of another, but in anyway always lead to mingling of people, thereby destroying symbolic barriers of functions and creating a more public atmosphere, in which, as said before, it is important to acknowledge ones similarities.

Conclusion

With the exception of adding enough necessary activities, the research is quite literally implemented in the design. Most of the concepts have different types of implementations. The design also makes clear that a lot of public conversation stimulation has to do with the practical implementations that have to be made after the building is already built, making them less of an architectural and more of a managerial problem. This is best shown in the use of exhibitions. An exhibition is an excellent tool for the triangulation concept. The problem here is that a consistent exhibition loses its power over time. Once people know what to expect at a certain place, they are not not bewildered of a certain sight anymore. As an extreme, one could put a huge pink, Playboy bunny covered swastika in the middle of the square, which would almost certainly make people talk, due to confrontational element of it. Yet, when times goes by and the swastika manages to stay put, it will remain a symbol of horrible taste and doubtful ethical standards, but loses its shocking element and therefore the stimulation of people talking. In order to shock and confront, one has to be given new conversation stimulation regularly. This stimulation needs to be both new in content and in representation. Here we find the limitations of merely architecture in the realisation of a Habermasian public sphere. Architecture can in general provide the basis upon which people act, but is limited in the direct stimulation of it. This is why adaptability is so utterly important.

Bibliography extension

- Lee, P. (1997). The Musaeum of Alexandria and the Formation of the Museum in Eighteenth-Century France. *The Art Bulletin*, 79(3), p.385.

Images

- Image 15: Jochemsen, H., Rasmussen, C.H., Skot-Hansen, D. (2012). The Four Spaces – a New Model for the Public Library. *New Library world*, 113(11/12), p. 586
- Image 16: Kekez, C. J. (2012), Forecourt Fountain, <http://halprinconservancy.org/visit-the-sequence/> (last visit: 12-11-2015)

Section A
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