HOMO-SACERS OF PUBLIC SPHERE:
Analyzing Public Space by Investigating Transgressive Practices of the Excluded

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PREFACE

As the central point of my research is based on inclusion/exclusion and how public sphere could be analyzed in an inclusive way without excluding certain groups or practices, I tried to approach to the topic in an inclusive way in every stage of the study. Thus, my main goal was to find all-embracing methods of research & design as well as finding a position for myself as a professional in the architectural discourse.

That is why, I tried to reduce my subjective opinions in the position paper by answering personal questions directed in the assignment in the preface, yet, I believe that the sections of the paper are interconnected and should not be understood independently from one and other. Although it may seem the paper is following the pre-given structure of the assignment, the questions may be answered in different sections.

Finally, because of the fact that I studied exclusion of Refugees and power forces acted upon them previously and currently studying on exclusion of individuals in Bogota in my studio, I find myself highly interested in the extensive literature of Social Practices and Territories which reinforces the ideas & concepts that I already involved in. By using this compiled literature, I am creating a feedback loop between what I learnt, what I researched/ am currently researching on and what I am designing which eventually help me come up with a comprehensive study on the topic.

INTRODUCTION

Architecture is a discipline that accommodates multiple approaches and deals with humans/ nonhumans/objects/environment through canonical knowledge of the architecture profession. That is why architects explore ideas by borrowing terms and theories from other fields and transforming them. This creates an overarching study of "everything", from built environment to practices takes place inside by the individuals. On the other hand, having this flexibility and boundlessness of architecture profession results in ill-defined definitions of the discipline and the shifting role of the architect. Simple questions like how? why? and who? becomes important topics to discuss before starting the analysis & design processes which, I believe, I am able to answer clearly in this paper.

As Grosz asks similar questions in her essays on Virtual and Real Space, she mentions that they are the driving forces in the course of architecture that should not be answered in certainty: "These are a questions that thus cannot and should not be answered but continually posed, rigorously raised in such a way as to defy answers, whenever architecture sinks comfortably into routine, into formulas and accepted terms".[1] Moreover, these questions also bring different answers according to where you position yourself in the practice. Avermaete in his paper "The Architect and the Public" elaborates more on this by explaining how different definitions, in this case the definition of "public", lead to different approaches and solutions towards same issue.[2]

That is why as a strategy, I tried to establish terms and definitions before starting my studies on investigating transgressive practices of the excluded. As I search how excluded individuals use the public sphere and see how they interact with it independently from the rules dictated by the built environment, I continue to borrow terms and methods from people in many fields which I will elaborate more on following sections.
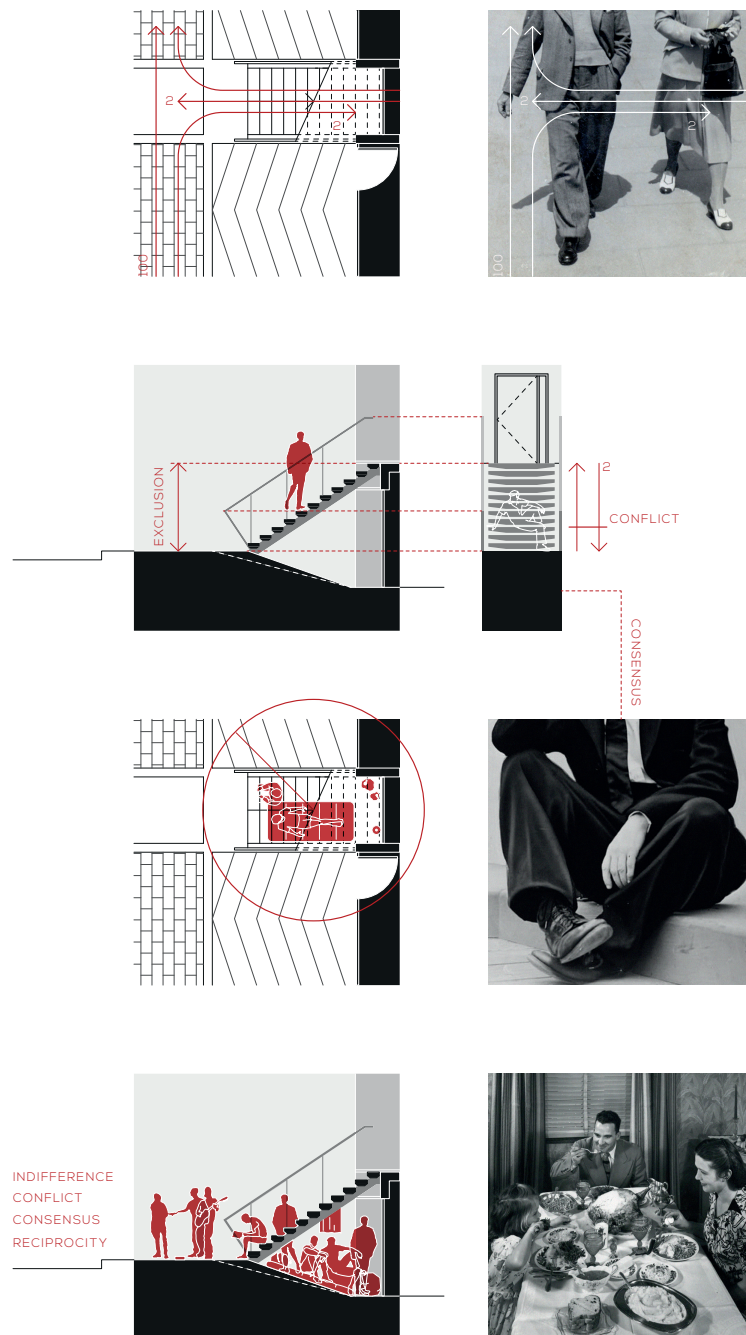

Figure 1 - Diagram of transgressive practices in the initial analysis

RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

Research, as I believe, is a process that transforms itself over the period from start to end, especially in architectural study, where ideas and perceptions change overtime by the new inputs to the research. It is a process where the research finds him/herself in the feedback loop between context (site, built-environment, temporalities etc.) and theory (socio-economic and politic). Thus, every input to the process effects the following. This way, the study could develop both theoretically and contextually simultaneously.

At the start of the studio, the methods of documentation is pre-given by the studio instructors, thus, as students, we documented Bogota by walking and thinking through domestic objects. It is no doubt that both are impactful ways to analyze the context; walking helps to perceive daily practices or helps to develop more subjective analysis of cities in an more artistic way similar to Jan Rothuizen's walking diagrams[3], meanwhile thinking through objects stimulate an inclusive perception from the eyes of the domestic dweller.

However, these methods are very subjective and based on individual experiences and strongly bounded on the knowledge and perception of the observer, making them not suitable for this specific research topic. Nonetheless, these methods helped me to document the practices of excluded in depth because they are related with daily life of citizens. Although this brings up the debate about whether the documentation and analysis can be objective or not, it is another topic that has to be discussed deeply later.

As it has been said, the topic inherently demands an objective and all-inclusive research on excluded individuals. Without the objective methods, the study is doomed to be in the target of criticism of limited understanding of the exclusion from a position that is considered to be privileged. Thus, it is essential to reduce the the individuality of the observer/researcher by realistic suppositions & assumptions rather than using personal experiences and subjective methods of analysis. Nevertheless, questions like who, how and why is still relevant.

To be able to answer the question of "who?" without any exclusion, I borrowed the term "Homo-Sacer" from Giorgio Agamben, a definition for the excluded individuals which have been used by many other scholars like Foucault and Deleuze to explain the power relations and control mechanisms of modern institutions. Briefly, for Agamben, Homo-Sacer is a life reduced to its bare form *-zoe* by its exclusion from the society in polis. He also suggests that the sovereignty has the power to take one's political life *-bios* inside polis and reduce it to bare life without human rights.[4] Therefore, the idea of Homo-Sacer contains the knowledge of the mechanisms of exclusion/inclusion without addressing each one directly. As a result of this, using the term in research broadens the scope of exclusion to every individual that is excluded & yet to be excluded while narrowing down and establishing a groundwork to study the practices of transgression.

On the other hand, the term *Homo-Sacer* does not inherit the relation between the individual and public sphere in spite of the fact that it asserts total exclusion in state of exception. Although it is convincing to consider homeless, drug addicts, sex workers and insane people on the street as Homo-Sacers that are expelled from the public sphere, they are still occupying the public space and are indirectly related with the public sphere. In fact, they are the constant users of the public space, yet the public decides to ignore their existence or even worse, sees them as "problems" rather than actual human beings.

That is why, to be able to address the dialogue between Homo-Sacers and the public sphere, I investigated how Bernard Tschumi analyzed the space, the events (practices) and the movement separately in Manhattan Transcripts. He believes that these concepts are ultimately independent from each other, yet they are interconnected with relations such as indifference, reciprocity and conflict.[5] All in all, Tschumi's way of analyzing the concepts independently seems appropriate to be applied to Homo-Sacers when their total isolation is considered.

By applying similar methods used on the Manhattan Transcripts and creating similar sequence diagrams that connects the events (represented by photos) and space (illustrated by drawings of built environment) through the transgressive acts of Homo-Sacer (diagrams), I was able to address the issues of exclusion and how the forces of exclusion allows new understanding of the public sphere and appropriation of the space (fig 1).

Although it may seem flawed to put a subject into the center of a research which demands total inclusion, this extensive definition without the presence of an observer creates an objective view on the topic. On the other hand, this framework only explores the dialogue between excluded individuals and the public sphere from one side by putting the subject *"Homo-Sacer"* on the focus and dealing with its relation with public sphere in one way. This criticism will be addressed in the following section of the paper.

RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

As it discussed before, the terminology and methodology used in the research have been used many times by scholars in different fields throughout the History. Therefore, the framework of the research is based on well established definitions that has been proven to function, especially in architectural discourse and related fields. Agamben, described "Homo-Sacer" to re/construct the idea of the "camp" in the state of exception, Foucault implicitly referred to similar terms to dismantle the power relations of contemporary society and condemn modern medicine & biology for the "Beastilization of Man" with the division between normal & abnormal.[6] Foucault's ideas developed further by Deleuze whose concepts of fold and smooth space, later on used by architects to debate about neoliberal space and "Univer-city" under the name of "Deleuzian Architecture".[7]

In the same way, Tschumi's work is also well-known and appreciated by many. The way he operates the diagrams however, is very unique than other's like Peter Eisenman or any other contemporary architect who use diagrams to justify their concepts. The crucial difference between "diagrammatic architecture" and Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts is that his diagrams proposes a two-way relation, a dialogue between the entities while the others depict factors affecting the space in one-way relation. All in all, although it is not inaccurate to assert that the methodology is the same, the positions have essential differences that had been considered before applying to the research.

In summary, the research combines Agamben's *"Homo-Sacer"* definition with Tschumi's methods of analysis of space and events which, in the end, leads to a new synthesized understanding of excluded individuals and their practices in the public space.

On the other hand, one can criticize my research of "borrowing" definitions and methods from various sources just to justify each step with different approaches. However, as I said before, the term Homo-Sacer and the methods of Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts are relevant and coherent, especially in this specific topic. For instance, Bülent Diken, a danish philosopher, uses a similar connection between borrowed definitions to illustrate how bio-politics has effect on society, starting from refugee camps to

gated communities by the powers of inclusion and state of exception.[8] All in all, because of the fact that the study is borrowing the terms directly without altering them and without fitting them into new definitions, the criticism of the definitions is irrelevant. However, the way they are connected to each other in their specific position in the study or their good fit can be reflected upon.

That is why, in the further development towards more comprehensive research, it is crucial to consider the positioning of the object and subject, in this case, "public sphere" and "Homo-Sacer". If I loop back to having an ultimate inclusive study, having these stands inverted could be a solution to the exclusion of relation caused by the positioning of concepts.

However, promising current approaches like object oriented ontology (styled as OOO) which treats subjects as objects, have the potential to solve this issue as well. This relatively new school of philosophy puts objects and subjects, from inanimate objects to human beings in the equal level of consideration without any exceptions. It separates "the being" from the perception of human mind and considers it as it is in reality, without undermine or overmine its relation within the complex system.[9] Mark Foster Gage, also supports this movement and explains why many architects started to adopt it to the architectural practices: " The reason why OOO is being explored by architects is that it functions as an antidote not only to the Deleuzian emphasis on becoming over being, but extension, to architecture being justified not by its own qualities, but by its relations - its process, its internal complexity, its contextual relations…"[10]

I believe that exploring this anti-anti-anthropocentric school of thought and its ultimate inclusion, even for the objects, will help me develop my research further. In this way, it is possible to develop an analysis of the actual reality without being the observer from a privileged position. By studying Homo-Sacer as whole inside the public sphere, without reducing it to its relations or its internal intricacy, it is possible to develop a comprehensive study without the positioning oneself. Therefore, the subject of the study is also the object as it is, or a tool to understand the relationship, rather than an individual or group of people.
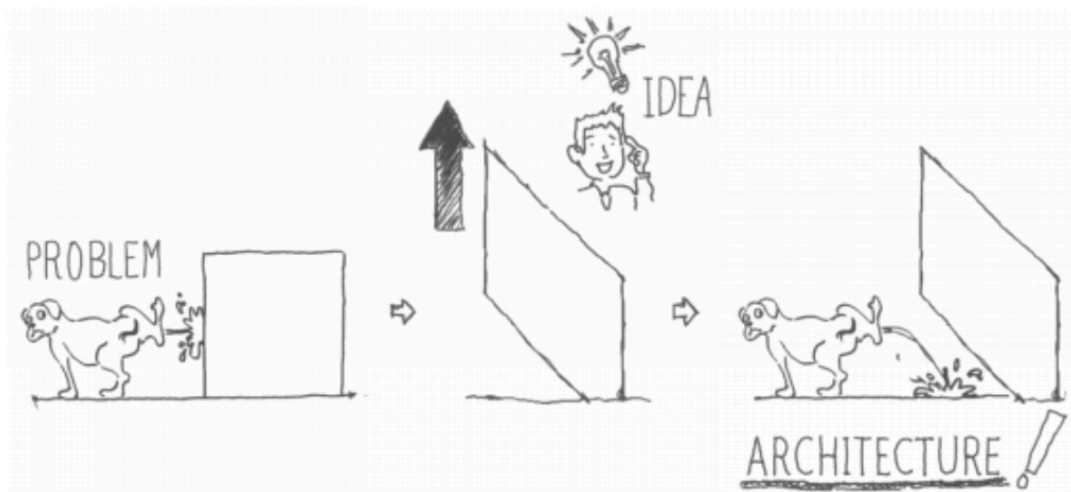

Figure 2 - Arrow Diagram by Mark Foster Gage that depicts his criticism toward "Diagramatic Architecture"[11]

POSITIONING

In summary, my study focuses on excluded individuals of the public sphere by investigating transgressive practices of the Homo-Sacer. However, to be able to address the exclusion/inclusion in complete, I used methods and definitions that drives the study towards an all-inclusive end. Although I practiced subjective methods of documenting in site, I moved on to more objective methods of analysis later on. Furthermore, exploring relatively new movement OOO brought new ideas and concepts on already well-established frameworks of Foucault, Agamben and Tschumi, starting a dialogue between different perspectives.

On the other hand, one can argue that my position as an architect in architectural education directs me to specific ways of understanding and developing ideas, thus, making it difficult to produce an objective view on the topic. That is why, Tom Avermeate's paper "The Architect and the Public" interested me the most. As he mentions in the paper, the Position of the architect is a current issue in the discourse; the shift in the power relations of architect gives new responsibilities, new boundaries and drives him/her to be the actor[12]. Although it is an indisputable fact that current architecture discourse becoming more democratic with broader and extensive roles, the world is in a transition to "post-truth" era where objective facts are less influential in shaping the public than appeals to personal belief and emotions.[13] Therefore, architects should be aware of being objective and all-inclusive in their course to better world wether they position themselves as activist, populists or facilitators.

If one asks to position myself and my research in these categories of Avermaete, I would say that my standpoint is closer to activists fighting for social and spatial justice in spite of the fact that the things the research supports does not coincide with their findings and resolutions. On the other hand, similar to syndicalists, the study depicts an approach occupied by everyday life of "common people" and does not interfere with public from a prestigious view from outside of the public sphere. In any way, Tom Avermate illustrates different approaches rises from various definitions of public, similar to what this research defines excluded individuals which could potentially leads to a new approach. However, questions like "how inclusive architecture can be?" , "Could architecture for the abnormal exist beside normal?" , "how can an architect think with/as/for excluded people?" or "How can the architecture respond the needs of the excluded if it designed from a relatively advantageous and included standpoint?" are still relevant and they are the driving force in exploration of the topic in the field of architecture. These questions does not have definite answers and they are are not meant to be answered but continually posed.

Furthermore, these questions are also significant in Methods and Analysis chair's general approach. Especially, Bogota Studio based on concepts of meaningfulness, appropriation and integration so I believe that the research on inclusion/exclusion and the general approach of the studio will reciprocally develop one and other. However, what I consider as "integration" is different than the general use of the term in the Studio. Integration is only a solution to an already existing division of people, however, it is more appropriate to address the power relations that causes the division in the first place, even before exclusion takes place. In this way, one can prevent the duality of normal and abnormal and the exclusion caused from it. I believe that it is a better "solution" to address this than trying to integrate what is already being excluded and yet to be excluded.

That is why, my research on public sphere through the practices of the Homo-Sacer does not aim to solve the exclusion by integration but to "solve" it by expanding the attention of the discourse and bringing exclusion to "presence".

END NOTES

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