the P5 booklet. Vincent Blankenspoor
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feeding public life in South Chicago
complex projects - south works
THE PROJECT BOOKLET

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The American system of urban sprawl was not able to provide with places of coming together or conflict wherein people interact and participate to form a collective that feels responsibility. It is lacking social space.
Designing social life is the architect’s job

The way people move, what they see, feel and experience, the way they act and how they interact in space is one of the most interesting things in architecture and spatial design. The places where practice this interaction are in the public space, in social space. In these social spaces people can meet and thereby socialize, cooperate and participate in a healthy society, as part of a healthy city. It is in these places where social life takes place. Where social life is malfunctioning, problems occur automatically. Is it possible for architects design spaces that can host social life and thereby are an answer to those problems?

When social space is lacking...

I want to give an example of a place of malfunctioning social life. South Chicago, a neighborhood in the south of the third largest city of the United States, is a neighborhood facing many spatial and social problems. It is a low-class neighborhood in all possible factors; income, education, crime, etc. The neighborhood is dominated by gang-crimes and drug addictions, as well as by objective crimes, like school-closings, other governmental neglect and racism. The situation has evolved from a great dependency on one single employer that offered steel-production factory work. After the employer's bankruptcy in the 1970’s, the place got neglected and ignored. As a result the neighborhood is very isolated, in spatial, as well as in social sense. Vacancies and empty plots leave a scattered field of housing without any spatial coherence
wherein nobody takes responsibility for their surroundings. The American system of urban sprawl was not able to provide with places of coming together or conflict wherein people interact and participate to form a collective that feels responsibility. It is lacking social space.

By trying to come up with an approach towards these issues, a research by architect and city planner Oscar Newman was consulted. His paper, published in 1996, dealt with other American neighborhoods facing similar problems as the neighborhood discussed above (Newman, 1996, p. 9). It shows strategies of how to enable the residents of these neighborhoods to take control over their surroundings and to reduce crime as a result of that. He looks at the way people behave, in and around different building typologies and the way people behave differently in private, semi-public and public space.

**No social life without the public realm**

Newman concludes that the way people behave in certain space has to do with a way of feeling for, caring about or identifying with this space (Newman, 1996, p. 11). His solution is one that was shocking to me: design without public areas. Don’t make interior public spaces anymore and even outside spaces should be made private, as those private spaces function better in these neighborhoods (Newman, 1996, p. 13). In general, the more people share a territory, the less each individual feel rights to it. The less someone feels he/she owns or can participate in a space, the less he/she identifies with it and will therefore neglect this place. This results in a lack of social interaction, sense of (social) control of the space and a lack of care and maintenance. Newman’s schemes and drawings show a direct relation with to what extent the space is public. The more public the space, the less social interaction, control and care, and the more private the space, the more these elements are present (Newman, 1996, pp. 14-29). The author shows case-studies in which his approach has worked well. In all of these case-studies public space is kept to the absolute minimum. He underpins his success by focusing on a decrease of crime rates. This, to me, is ingenuous, as it does not address most of the points of concern defined for the specific neighborhood. It only solves one. The problem is that in Newman’s approach as well as in the neighborhood of South Chicago, no places for social life where designed. Without quality public space, where do people meet, interact, encounter, cooperate? ‘It is at those places where we invariably end up.’ (Hertzberger, 2009, p. 93)

I’d like to state the following hypothesis: architectural solutions for social life can only be found within the domain of the public realm. Can public space provide the earlier, by Newman, defined properties of interaction, control and care (identity) as well? In his article Collective Space, Social Use, published in 2002, Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger, from whom I borrowed the term social space, is optimistic about this and opts for the use of this social space in the public realm (Hertzberger, 2009, p. 93). Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa supports my hypothesis as well. He suggests, in his article ‘Inhabiting Space and Time – the Loss and Recovery of Public Space’, from 2007, that the personal relationship between human beings and their surroundings should be defined not only on the private level of a dwelling, but also on the public level of the urban environment. A lack of the good qualities of this public realm makes inhabitants become outsiders rather than participants in the public sphere (Avermaete, Havik, & Teerds, 2009, p. 114).

The following is the position that I’d like to take in this paper: it is necessary that architects shape the environment of the public realm, and design public places that provide social space wherein people can partici-
pace and thereby provide interaction, social control and an identity.

**How do architects approach the public realm?**

To support this position, I will look at the way respected, experienced architects or experts approach this topic. In general, three main positions towards the role of the architect in designing social life are found. The first position is that of the architects who agree on my position and commend to reshape the current public realm by cleverly using known architectural elements and believe it is the architect’s job to do so. The second group of architects agrees on my position as well and tries to come up with different definitions of social space and the public realm and strive for new typologies. The last position is taken by a group that opposes my position, saying that the role of the architect in social life is relative.

Designing social life is the architect’s job

According to Juhani Pallasmaa public space pre-eminently “is a space for human and social interaction, a rich spatial instrument to see and be seen, to participate and to withdraw, and be the actor or the spectator in the theatre of social interactions at one’s will.” He worries about the state of urban spaces in the modern city as they project a sense of isolation, separateness and solitude and do therefore not promote experiences of belonging and togetherness. The way architects deal with this notion worries him even more. The disappearance of measures and scales, varying levels of ground, stairways and terraces are pointed out as a lack of the architect’s vocabulary to create a stimulating environment. He agrees on the importance of public space as he sees it as a social space, a space of interaction. Social interaction, Pallasmaa states, is one of the essences of the human mind. His strategy towards solving this problem lies in designing spaces that trigger all senses and that moves people to interact with the city itself. One should really not experience a place by vision only, but experience it with all senses. Therefore he critiques that most city spaces are about movement from one place to another, while they should be about really occupying and inhabiting space. These spaces of speed result in outsideness and detachment, while lingering gives rise to identification and belonging in public space (Pallasmaa, 2009, pp. 125-131,133).

Left: typical American suburb based on car-use (Complex projects research book), right: ideogram of desired urban design by European humanist architects from 1971 (Logan, 1989, p. 6)
This is, especially the case in the American urban grid structure which is based on this movement from one place to another. They are mostly designed as traffic plans, as the American way of thinking was focused on rapid transit, instead of designing enrichment (Logan, 1989, pp. 33-34), triggering senses and stimulating interaction. Architects should be the ones to do so.

As said, Hertzberger opts for social spaces in the public realm. Opposing Newman, he says: “We must keep striving with architectural and urbanistic means to uphold the openness of the private bastions and the continuity of the street so that the collective doesn’t get reduced in the interest of consolidating the private.” Thereby he agrees that the architect plays an important role. “Whenever architects and planners through the ages have occupied themselves with space it has almost always concerned buildings for social life, where a sense of the collective is expressed and where large numbers of people converge.” (Hertzberger, 2009, p. 93)

Whereas Pallasmaa focusses on the experience of the individual city dweller, Hertzberger’s way of achieving social life is by designing space forms which offer greater opportunities and cause for social contact. From the existing building typologies, the spatial settings of squares, cafés and lobbies have a catalytic effect on social contact, rather than churches, theaters, auditoriums and stadiums. They are not just targeted on one activity, but everyone can behave according to their own intentions. Like Pallasmaa, also Hertzberger proposes to design space that promote seeing and being seen as thereby the sense of the collective is expressed (Hertzberger, 2009, pp. 94-95).

The personal public realm

Interestingly, already in 1967, Peter and Alison Smithson address the similar problems, considering the public realm (in Europe), as found in the neighborhood of South Chicago. In their article ‘Where to Walk and where to Ride in our Bouncy New Clothes and in our Shiny New Cars’ they address the fact that we are losing ties between location and way of living (Avermaete et al., 2009, p. 50). Through serial production and new living standards, we cannot really identify with the public space any longer. People are not sure how to act in these places as we do not experience the city as a continuous thing anymore. As a solution they propose ‘livable-around-groups’, dwelling groups with collective space which are large enough to be life-style sustaining within its own boundaries. Collective public space should give the inhabitants of the dwellings something to identify with. If the city fails, at least we have made somewhere livable, is their motto (Smithson, 2009, pp. 55,57). Instead of trying to reshape public space, and make it function as social space again, the Smithson create boundaries in which their buildings will function, independent of the surrounding of the city. While this approach, by that time, was reviewed as a new approach towards this topic, I can now state that their approach shows great similarities with the plans of Oscar Newman, which I opposed to. The real public space is not addressed, leaving out places to ‘meet, interact, encounter and cooperate’.
Architects have no power over the city’s social life

In her book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, published 1961, Jane Jacobs already painted a picture of the decline of the American city’s suburbanized neighborhoods. According to Jacobs designing a new public realm, new social space in of a place of malfunctioning social life by the use of design, the use of architectural elements is not helpful either, ‘flimsy’. It will probably work in middle-class and high-class neighborhoods, but will fail inevitably in low-class neighborhoods. Instead Jacobs proposes a strategy of city planning based on diversity. Mixed-use functions, walkability in the urban design, diverse (ages of) architecture, and a high density of people are parameters of diversity for successful city life (Jacobs, 2009, pp. 157-205).

In his article ‘Generic City’, Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas claims that the architects role in the design of the outside public spaces is played out (Avermaete et al., 2009, p. 52). Public space is dying, since identity is disappearing. At some point, the past will become too small to be inhabited by humans and the contemporary made cannot contribute to new identity. Koolhaas’ city is organized by needs and abilities instead of places. He sketches that the city is no longer held together by the public realm, as is the case in the previous to groups, but by the ‘residual’. There are only roads, building and nature (Koolhaas, 2009, pp. 63-68). His opinion differs in the approach towards the interior or semi-interior spaces. He examples by the way he looks at the public interior space of the airport in his generic city. “Airports now are among the most singular, characteristic elements of the Generic City.” (Koolhaas, 2009, p. 66). Its places like these that will replace the city in the future.

The interior social space

These places, as the airport Koolhaas describes, are described as ‘non-places’ by the French anthropologist Marc Augé. “They are lacking any historical significance and strong symbolism.” “If a place can be defined as relational, historical or concerned with identity, then a place that cannot be defined as relational, historical or concerned with identity therefore is a non-place” He states that these non-places of modern travel do not promote a public experience while the city’s traditional public spaces bring people together. (Avermaete et al., 2009, p. 18). Globalization has caused places of modern travel to look similar all over
the world, causing detachment to the place. Schiphol airport might just as well have been in Singapore. Non-places, also, are designed to control, in many ways. Augé addresses that this is not only a negative given. The familiarity with these non-places ensures a person to be able to function in the space. Even if in a place you are unfamiliar with, you, as a well-trained citizen, are able to find your way in the globalized non-place, or the globalized city. This, however, as Augé also points out causes a large sense of individualism. Non-places offer “a kind of anonymous space that cannot be owned, that cannot be invested in emotionally” (Buchanan, 1999, pp. 396-398). Therefore non-places are lacking social life and social space and I disagree with the point Koolhaas tries to make concerning non-places. They, as in the way they exist now, cannot take over the public realm of the city. Augé agrees with me and as a solution he opts for the adduction new experiences of space (Buchanan, 1999, p. 395). The designing of these experiences should be the job of the architect.

Conclusion

I stated it as problem that many places in social decline, were or have become places without sufficient space for social life. From the examined experts many agree on the fact that social life is the essence of the city, the essence of human mind even. Many agree on the fact that the lack of quality (public) social space is a problem and affects our way of living, acting, functioning. The way they try to solve the problems in the problems that occur form a lack of social life it is very divergent. In my hypothesis I stated that solutions for creating social life have to be found within the public realm. On this fact positions differ. Whereas Hertzberger and Pallasmaa agree, Newman and Jacobs disagree and the Smithsons, Koolhaas and Augé agree as well but approach it differently by proposing clustered or interior public spaces. The latter, to me, could only work in combination with a strategy towards the surrounding traditional outside public space as well. To repeat, and quote Hertzberger: “It is at those places where we invariably end up.”

In the debate on the role of the architect, positions differ as well. Jacobs blames designers, for the decline of the American city, who were influenced by modernist architects who tried new things in city planning. Jacobs on the other hand, in her own strategy, looked at what worked well in a city and did not try to reinvent the wheel. What she proposes are good recommendations, but I still see a big role for the designer in the execution of her ideas. In fact both Hertzberger and Pallasmaa wield the same strategy in their articles towards the public realm. By looking at what elements proved to work in the past, they form their theory and with that their designs. Spatial typologies and sensory experiences are examples. Although they have very different standing points in the debate, the Smithsons, Koolhaas and Augé, instead of looking back at what proved itself in the past, all strived for new ways of doing. In the case of Koolhaas and Augé, these places have actually proved themselves not to work as social space by now. It has to be the role of a good designer to strive for new ways of doing again and provide for social-life in non-place typology buildings as well. Augé, the Smithson, Hertzberger and Pallasmaa all believe in the role of the architect as a designer of social life.
THE STORYLINE  SouthWorks: A need for common

Shootings, crime, school dropouts, domestic- and gang violence, drug- and alcohol addiction; The Southside of Chicago today is notorious for its unsafe, empty and neglected neighbourhoods as in big contrast to the glorious days of the steel industry. The withdrawal of the Southworks Steel Company in the 1970’s left the area only with the footmarks of what once was a vibrant and productive community.

The area around the site is in total isolation. In social sense, because of the cutting off of the neighbourhood from proper education, healthy food, health care and safety. In physical sense, because of the borders created by infrastructure that divided the area in different social classes and ethnicity and because of the lack of proper public transportation from and to the South-side. The vacancies and empty plots are a reason the area is scattered and fragmented. The neighbourhood screams for an intervention that can provide it with proper access to jobs, education and health care.

The Southworks-site must distinguish itself again in the region and maybe the country as an example of a self-sufficient and sustainable community. The United States consumes almost twice the amount of their resources. Together with a shrinking bio-capacity per capita and a constant consumption level, the country is running out of sources. Cooperation on a small and large scale is necessary to provide a liveable society.

Chicago’s regional position in the Midwest can reconnect the area with the rest of the country again. As it
was before on the field of steel-production, this time it will act as the pioneer in sustainable and agricultural technology. The existing infrastructure over water, air and land can be used again and complemented with future and faster ways of transport.

The fragmented condition of the South-side of Chicago on a social, spatial, environmental, economic and political level demands a binding factor: Common ground as diverse experiences of coming together or conflict. The perception of encounter forms the collective knowledge in which people share information, thoughts and opinion. Therefore common ground can act as a moment of confrontation, connection, recognition, and engagement of individuals and groups within a city.

The injections are strategic points on the site that offer education and work as a starting point of future development at one side and at the other side as independent entities that can survive on their own. A framework for a sustainable and flexible growth must ensure the spatial and sustainable quality of the future site. Growth can only occur under strict conditions.

By proposing common ground as a concept for the site we are aiming for a reconnection with reality. Injecting the Southworks site with basic needs as schools, industry and agriculture, the neighbourhood can profit from education, work and healthy food. A direct interaction on the site between the production and consumption of food and energy will provide an example of how much land is needed to provide for a community: the disambiguation of life within a city!
THE LOCATION
The former steel factory
The current situation, the abandoned neighborhood
The Chicago South Works neighborhood is separated from the surrounding areas by the Metra line, Lake Michigan and Lake Shore Drive. Due to the impermeable character of the Metra line, the width of Lake Shore Drive and the disappearance of local-bus-connections became the site spatially isolated.

The Chicago South Works neighborhood faces a lack of basic needs, such as education, healthy food, health care and work.
Food desserts are defined as urban neighborhoods without ready access to fresh healthy, and affordable food within a 1 mile radius. More than 500,000 residents of Chicago (mostly African-Americans) live in food desserts.

Obesity is a consequence of unattainable healthy food in South Works. Besides that, obesity is also a cultural problem. The cultural food problem is that people in the United States eat fast food and unhealthy food as part of their cultural standard. Due to this, obesity is a big problem.
South Chicago is a scattered field of housing with a lot of vacancy in which social space, where the inhabitants can socialize and participate in their surroundings, is rare. Most spaces do not function as common grounds leading to frustration expressed through violence which ensures a bad identity to South Chicago.

The beautiful character of South Chicago is swept away by the collective memory of violence and poverty, spread by the media. The high violence rate is part of the undeveloped living condition of the inhabitants of South Chicago. A lack of education and poverty creates a lifestyle in which natural making of money out of labor is hard to realize. The absence of school tracks education and therefore the chance on a job is small. The violent behavior determines the negative identity of South Chicago.
The system of property taxes ensures a negative loop with no prospect of coming out of this negative situation. Turning this negative loop into a positive loop requires investments to attract businesses and improve neighborhoods that are in need of new infrastructure, homes and public amenities. Middle-class people from the North, or elsewhere, should move to the area of South Chicago to reverse this situation.

People are not moving to South Chicago, because of the bad identity, even though they actually have never been there to experience the real character and positive points of the site.
THE MANIFESTO
7 problems - 7 spatial layers
unsustainable future

ecological independency

(physical) isolation

connectivity
the failed system

power of the collective
THE MASTERPLAN
THE THEORY
we need common ground.

Life in the streets has a far better crime-preventive effect than creating defensible space. A mix of functions and walkability is a prerequisite for well functioning cities for people - Jacobs

“Closeness, trust and mutual consideration versus walls, gates and police” - Gehl
The American system of urban sprawl was not able to provide with places of coming together or conflict wherein people interact and participate to form a collective that feels responsibility. It is lacking social space. bring back social life by designing social space
Intensifying optional activities

making people stay just a little bit longer

shaping the right conditions for people staying longer and intensify optional activities:

Social activities: “as levels of optional activities rise, the level of social activities usually increases substantially” - Gehl
1. designing at the right scale and the right speed

“most city spaces are about movement from one place to another, while they should be about really occupying and inhabiting space. These spaces of speed result in outsideness and detachment, while lingering gives rise to identification and belonging in public space” - Pallasmaa
2. triggering the senses

“We have to design spaces that trigger all senses and that moves people to interact with the city itself.” - Pallasmaa

2.2 of which sight is the most important

seeing and being seen

“We need to design space that promote seeing and being seen as thereby the sense of the collective is expressed” - Hertzberger

“People are where people are. People and human activity are the greatest object of attention and interest. Even the modest form of contact of merely seeing and hearing or being near others is apparently more rewarding and more in demand than the majority of other attractions offered in public spaces.” – Gehl.
“From the existing building typologies, the spatial settings of squares, cafés and lobbies have a catalytic effect on social contact. They are not just targeted on one activity, but everyone can behave according to their own intentions” - Hertzberger

3. offering opportunities to act as well - walking, standing, sitting, talking, listening and self-expression
space for social activities does not sustain big dependence on necessary activities in South Chicago
THE PROGRAM
the reference project
Durham college Centre for Food

- kitchen
- special courses laboratory
- study space
- productive land
- classroom
- special courses laboratory
- faculty office administration boardroom
- fooddepot and distribution
- changing rooms
The type of education is vocational education, after high school and is based on the principle also used in the tv-program jamies kitchen. Herein chef Jamie Oliver trains disadvantaged youth to be a chef and lets them work in his restaurant. 

Im striving for the same principle where students will learn how to deal with healthy food, how to make high quality meals and finally leave the well-educated and with a chance of finding a place on the job market. Students will be able to obtain affordable education by doing their chores, working in the food court in feeding hours and thereby expressing themselves by showing their skills to the inhabitants of the neighborhood they’re from, making money for the school at the same time. “Displaying their work and skills to the outside can create the conditions for a greater sense of responsibility”
the public space

the culinary school

the harvest

greenhouses-changing rooms

classroom-study squares-special courses laboratories-faculty office-boardroom-administration-lecture theater

kitchen-foodcourt-fooddepot and distribution-services-tram-stop-public workspace-rooms for public rent- fruits vegetables and supply shop
THE FRAGMENT
The building is right at the beginning of the two strips, while at the same time it is right in the middle of the neighborhood and it is key to the statement of dealing with physical isolation.

besides the two strips, to which the basic needs are located, there is also the commercial avenue, the former hart of the neighborhood which ends right at the site. It’s a great place for the new centre of the neighborhood
On the south of the plot there is a park that runs along the south strip and it was laid upon the old train tracks that were running through the area, right through the neighborhood. It is part of the ecological independency we proposed with the master plan, as the productive land is quite far away. It will continue straight into the neighborhood over the old train tracks along Baker avenue and thereby connect the northern part of the neighborhood to here by following the park strip. The park consists out of urban agriculture, as well as wetlands for water purification and a city park for leisure activities.
Here we tackle the physical isolation of the people in the neighborhood. The masterplan proposed a new city center to be independent of the loop, it starts with the basic need, and people no longer need to leave to the loop to obtain them. The strategy is to connect the people to the south works site very well, and this happens to start at my site, at the place where the metra train line stops as well, making the design location a public transportation hub. It's the new place where people converge.
The building is layed out in such a way it shapes the square.
Preconditions
In general, there are four zones, fast traffic, slow pedestrian traffic, park and a zone for staying. The square, surrounded by pedestrian movement offers a place of stasis while it is at the same time protected by the building from a densified traffic route along 83th street.
“We need to build public transport stops as ‘tiny centers of public life’. Build them as part of the gateways into the neighborhoods, work communities, parts of town. Locate them so that they work together with several other activities, at least a newsstand, maps, outdoor shelter, seats and in various combinations, corner groceries, smoke shops, coffee bars, tree places, special road crossings, public bathrooms, squares....”

“the smell of the food is out in the streets”, they are “concentrated at road crossings” and “it is possible to expect them at certain kinds of intersections” - Alexander
serve public space with the social element in the program - the kitchen

shaping the foodcourt
THE FOODCOURT the american foodcourt
Second Floor Plan - Food Court/Offices

Mall foodcourt floorplan (example)
THE FOODCOURT the american food hall/public market
THE FOODCOURT the european market hall
Mercado San Miquel, Madrid, Spain
THE FOODCOURT the european market hall
Great Central Market, Budapest, Hungary
THE FOODCOURT  the european market hall
Mercado Santa Catherina, Barcelona, Spain
THE FLOORPLANS
the public level

kitchen-foodcourt-fooddepot and
distribution-services-tramstop-public
workspace-rooms for public rent-
fruits vegetables and supply shop
the greenhouse  greenhouses-changing rooms
STUDY OF CONFIGURATION
A1 (strip) 1 stramien

A2 (tram/comm. ave.)
A3 (vouw, plein)

A3.2
B1 (richting metra, haaks strip) 1 stramien

B2 (vouw: tram/comm. ave.)
C1 (83th street, plein) 1 stramien

C2 (tram/comm. ave.)
D1 (comm. ave., tram) 1 stramien

D2 (strip)
THE JUNCTION

variant #1

Pro
- Hierarchy of the knot
- Element from the trainstation

Con
- Consistence of the square walls
- Consistency of the school-plans
- Breaking building's with beuk-structure
- The third element
- Underpass is big, dark.
variant #2

Pro
- Natural clash of the two different beuk-angles
- Little square near the train station.

Con
- Hierachy of the knot
variant #2
THE REPETITIVE ELEMENT
**THE ENDINGS**

variant #1

Pro
- Smooth facade along street adapts to the speed of the street.

Con
- Lower facade breaks the beuk-pattern of the building
variant #2
variant #2
variant #2
variant #2
public stairs
public stairs
THE FACADE AND THE MATERIALS
THE BUILDING PROCESS/CONSTRUCTION
the construction
THE CLIMATE