VISUAL BOUNDARIES IN PUBLIC PLACE

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ABSTRACT

Geometrically simplified urban spaces could be understood as compositions of horizontal and vertical surfaces, which create volumes of vacancy. Obviously vertical limiting elements is important for space, influencing its shape and character, but nowadays open plan is more valued, so does contemporary urban square can function well without clearly defined boundary?

In this thesis I analyze certain problematic public squares and approached the answer how much the enclosure is important for well functioning urban place.

These are main questions that I tried to answer writing my thesis:

- Does strong architectural frame improve space qualities?
- How much important are boundaries to the space and what is relation is between space and surrounding architecture?
- Do we really need a frame to understand the content?

My analysis material was freely chosen projects of architecture students that had task to reform three different, but in many aspects similar squares: Glories in Barcelona, Alexanderplatz in Berlin and Tahrir in Cairo.

There were very distinct propositions among students’ works, but I chose a project of Jonatan Reyes Cerezuela, because the way he looked to the issues of these squares and the focal points matched with my general idea of the thesis.

Major part of students noticed that one of the issues of GAT (Glories, Alexanderplatz and Tahrir) is poorly defined space, which lacks human scale and most of them attempted to change that proposing element which draw clearer line of the boundary. Jonatan introduced stronger limits in squares, but respectively adopted different solutions to each of them. While discussing the project, be both benefited from our conversations (at least I certainly did) finding out different points of view of the same subject.

Analyzing issues and possible solution for GAT I learned that contemporary public space needs defined visual character, which majorly bases on architectural elements participating in space. Although visual, not physical enclose is preferred and spatial transparency, clear urban connections are desired while creating well functioning public place.

I believe it’s important because I see public space as outdoor room, which should be understood and taken as place orientated to humans.

Are boundaries of such places important? I believe that yes, they are. Is not that we always need to outline all existent objects to recognize them, as in animated cartoons, but boundaries definitely help do that and they can take various forms.
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INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT

The node is more defined if it has a sharp, closed boundary and does not trail off uncertainly on every side; more remarkable if provided with one or two objects which are foci of attention. But if it can have coherent special form, it will be irresistible. (K. Lynch 1960:102)

Clear but, not limiting (in many senses) visual boundary is important element of public space. Visual connections are as well important as limits in the city.

STRATEGY

My intentions of this thesis is to investigate and compare cases and problems of three different squares – Tahrir square in Cairo, Glories square in Barcelona and Alexanderplatz in Berlin. With this research I try to answer some questions that occurred to me analyzing these three public places and projects that were proposed trying to resolve urban design problems. The material that I am using is a design proposition from architecture student Jonatan Reyes Cerezuela.

When I started to look closer into the current state of these three squares – I noticed that among various features, some of them are common. And even though they are thousands of kilometers apart and are in different climate conditions, have different sizes and surroundings – all three squares have badly functioning infrastructure, unsolved public facilities and lack of character.

Another common feature is that even in the premises of these squares are some characteristic and locally important buildings, the limits of these spaces are poorly expressed. There is no doubt that many factors influence the bad state of these squares, but what I became curious about is ‘does square need to own strong physical boundaries to function well as a public place? How much sharp limits are important and what do they provide to the space?

Fig.1., 2. and 3. Sergio Belinchón. These photographs show how little sometimes is needed to perfectly understand and use a space. Simple lines on the ground indicates limit and function.
MAIN POINTS

There are three aspects that I review in my thesis. These are:

Physical boundaries;

Visual boundaries;

Urban perspectives and spatial connections;

On the second part we get know Alexanderplatz and basing my theory on the proposition I surveyed types of visual boundaries and the way spaces could be defined by continuous and fragmental contour as well.

The third part is about Tahrir and after project’s analysis I try to define the importance of spatial links and the value of open spaces in contemporary city. In the first part of my work I introduce Glories and student’s project for this square. I took project as my reference point and attempted to highlight the differences between physical and visual boundaries and talk about how boundary could create clear shape of the space.
1. GLORIES: SHARP BOUNDARIES IN PUBLIC SPACE

1.1. GLORIES SQUARE

The place is not actually a public square – it is a big crossing of three principal streets of Barcelona. Obviously traffic is a big problem of the spot, that’s why it was decided to construct a circular viaduct above ground floor roundabout. The solution was chosen mainly focusing on infrastructure problems, not paying enough attention to the public space and human scale. The development of the territory has not been fluent and the pretentious status of “plaza” doesn’t reflect the reality. This mistake was intended to be fixed putting a small round park in the center of huge roundabout, but currently it is closed for public and seems abandoned. Surrounding traffic lanes and wire fences make it poorly accessible and cause difficulties for passerby to move from one corner of the area to another.

From the architectural point of view – there are few standout buildings in the area. Probably the most expressive is Torre Agbar, designed by Jean Nouvel and constructed in 2004. Its singular shape converted the building into one of the icons of the city, but it doesn’t generate any public activities or movements in the Glories square.

Other outstanding piece of architecture is recently finished building of museum DHUB (catalan - Disseny Hub Barcelona). The volume of building is reacting to the existing viaduct with a console collocated just above it. The metro and tram stops are just in front of the museum, and originally designed site of the museum attracts some people. While museum with its territory is still under construction, it already has converted to one of the busiest corners of Glories square.

Another very important spot of area is Els Encants market – one of the biggest and oldest in Barcelona and known as a flea market. This authentic place is very active and attracts many people during opening hours. Els Encants doesn’t own any architectural wholeness or design solutions, sellers work in shacks or simply expose their objects on the ground. The doubtful architectural value and unhygienic conditions challenges the authenticity and strong character of the market.

Recently the city government decided to give a new roof (literally) for Els Encants and the new attention grabbing construction finishes appearing in the area of Glories square, not far from current site. The dramatic architecture doesn’t quite fit with relaxed old Els Encants spirit, but undoubtedly will be present visually even when the market is closed.
1.2. PROJECT ANALYSIS; CREATING A SHAPE

Reorganizing the Glories square in Barcelona, Jonatan Reyes Cerezuela decision was to use geometrical scheme and collocate new buildings in the manner that would create very clear shape of the square. He tried to avoid demolishing and rearranged place combining currently existing architecture and new elements. Although, author respected a governmental plan to tear down the viaduct and collocated street Gran Via under the square, thus liberating ground space from heavy traffic.

Schematically analyzing the proposal, we see various geometric schemes merged together. The shape of square respects squared grid of Ensanche, occupying four of Cerda’s quadrates (fig.8.).

The square is physically and visually closed by framing buildings, which have filled currently empty gaps. One of the buildings steps out especially strong. It is a 200m long mixed use building, marking one entire side of open Glories square. Its collocation creates a relation with perpendicularly to it standing volume of DHUB. Correspondent squared pattern has been used in the pavements and other elements of the square, such as pergola, trees or benches, which provide very solid design to the place.

Another geometry that has been used is respecting the perspectives of the streets that cross the square (fig.9.). Jonatan Reyes Cerezuela leaves only Avenida Diagonal with its traffic continuing through Glories, puts Gran Via in underground tunnel and leaves visual continuity of Avenida Meridiana, which traffic dissolves just before entering the square. The situation of the tunnel is reflected in the surface of open space, by pavement, trees and cycle way.

In the proposal Glories square still maintains big scale and is divided in two parts of different characters. It propose Avenida Diagonal as dividing axe, creating park space in the northern and open area in the southern side of avenue (fig.10.).

Fig.7. Scheme of Glories square by J. Reyes

Fig.8. Scheme of Ensanche grid taken as base pattern for proposition of Glories square. New square appearing in territory of 4 blocks.

Fig.9. Scheme showing tree street axes physically and visually crossing space of square.

Fig.10. Scheme showing axe that divide square into two parts: vegetation and open.
1.3. STRONG BOUNDARY, CLEAR SHAPE

Relation between density and open spaces;

Nowadays population in the cities is growing and so is the density of construction. As well grows the necessity for the public spaces.

Open spaces that can be found in areas of high building density create stronger contrast between built and unbuilt (fig.10.). All open spaces are especially important even more, when there is lack of them. This contrast is much less expressed in the territories of low density (fig.11.). The shape and limits of spaces are more firm in the areas that are intensely built, because of the architecture that frames these spaces. This clear boundary is harder to achieve in the parts of the city that are open. In these cases other reference elements are needed, such as pavement, trees, infrastructure or even art pieces.

Originally public squares appeared in meetings of few streets and served as representative places, market sites, bullrings, army parading venues or other. But then - equal as now – they maintain function of social space and community gathering spot. Although today is lesser liked creating spaces for single purpose – the modern conception is promoting idea of multifunctional space.

A public space is essential element of well functioning modern city. Design of parks as well as of squares is less attached to the supposed function and is more flexible to all kind of activities. The shape of space and surrounding have less importance than in the past and the designers and architects concentrate much more on the square itself. Although, the simple shape and clear boundaries are still appreciable, because of the versatility that they provide.
Clear shape of a square;

People prefer places and things that can be easily read. Simple, recognizable shapes give a feeling of security and prevent of getting lost.

*Obviously a clear image enables one to move about easily and quickly: to find a friend’s house or a policeman or a button store. But an ordered environment can do more than this; it may serve as abroad frame of reference, an organizer of activity or belief or knowledge. ...* (K.Lynch 1960:4)

Clear shape of space has very tight relation with its perimeter. If the outline is sharp and continuous — it is easier to outline the shape (fig.13.).

*The traditional European town square is an urban space surrounded by an almost continuous wall of buildings, with small entrances and exits leading in and out, creating the feeling of an outdoor salon or ballroom. Most of the surrounding buildings are what we now call mixed-use shop/houses. They are complemented by important civic and religious edifices that are frequently, though not always, part of the contiguous urban fabric of the square, and emphasize its significance as the most important place in the city. In many Polish cities (Poznan, Krakow, Chewmno, Tarnow), and some Czech cities (Olomouc) the importance of city hall is further accentuated by its placement at the center of the square.*

*The placement of buildings around the perimeter transforms the square into a three dimensional composition; more imposing buildings, spires and campanile articulate the vertical axis, increasing dramatic effects.*[Crowhurst Lennard 2004]

Geometrically clear shapes historically often appeared as parts of building complexes, with the solid architectural frame around them. The solidity of design reinforces the clearness of space. The elements that outline the space, shapes its volume. These are buildings, fences or infrastructure structures. Strong architectural limits are related with clear shape of the place. This is especially obvious in baroque squares like Piazza San Pietro in Vatican (fig.14.) or Plaza Mayor in Madrid. They look like inner yards of big architectural complexes, because the frame consists of homogeneous architecture, with often accentuated principal building on one of the sides (St. Peter’s Basilica and Casa de la Panadería respectively). This architectural wholeness shows that the space was created as a unit, that proportions of space and buildings were thought as a solid design and that there were no accidental decisions that could lead to spatial vagueness.
Many other spaces appeared “deleting” pieces of urban grid and creating openings in places of previously existing buildings or entire blocks, such as Rambla de Raval (fig.15.) or Plaza George Orwell in Barcelona. Latter was constructed only in 1996 after throwing down a small triangular block of dwelling-houses. By this method, even some facades of former streets are kept, becoming facades of newly made square.

Many architecture critics tried to categorize historic squares, mostly assorting them by shapes, as Spiro Kostof or Paul Zucker.

As could be noted from the presentations and exhibits, there is no simple formula for a successful square, and every square is unique. Squares are fan shaped (Siena), trapezoidal (Venice’s Piazza San Marco), rectangular (Ascoli Piceno), triangular (Tübingen), funnel shaped (Telc), elliptical (Vigevano), oval (Verona), square (Salamanca), doughnut shaped (square – Krakow, or triangular - Olomouc), or broadened streets visually closed at each end (Landshut). [Crowhurst Lennard 2004]

Nevertheless, very often a square containing elements of very diverse architecture doesn’t maintain strong image. On the other hand uneven boundaries provide changing perspectives and discovery opportunities for the passerby.

The limits in previously analyzed square of Glories are scattered and don’t shape the space of the square. The project of J. Reyes offers to create the outline collocating buildings around and accentuating the boundary with the help of new facades. The square keeps open, with many streets entering, but the square territory is kept unbuilt, this way making a contrast to geometric position of the architectural elements. This contraposition is accentuated with single building that forms façade of whole side of the square, reminding powerful composition of Pompidou center and empty space in front of it (fig.16.).

Nothing could be more transparent than the 'Plateau Beaubourg' in front of the Centre Pompidou. Architect Renzo Piano made it nothing more than a bare rectangle, but with the Centre’s opening the square became an instant happening, and it’s still usually the liveliest place in town. What’s the difference? Much of the Plateau’s charm comes from Paris’s traditional performance riff-raff, the bicycle swallowers, street mimes, fire-eaters, snake charmers and five minute portraitists. Parisian do not come just to see the bicycle swallowers. They like the Plateau so much that, even though Mr. Piano forgot to provide any benches, they find a themselves a piece of cardboard and sit right on the ground.[Pauls 021]
Urban geometry

Urban grid patterns appeared in ancient times, often with main squares integrated into the schemes. Rigid pattern dictated shapes of urban particles, thus leaving difficult to differently interpret the geometry of it. The uncontrolled net of streets is also very common in many old towns and often has irregularly shaped squares in it. Still very often squares were intended to obtain regular shapes and were designed following the axes of main streets, ignoring the smaller ones. Grids most often are quadratic and facades of square blocks create perpendicular angles, which automatically provides strong physical and visual boundary to the open space that touches them (fig.17.).

Fleshed out with historical context, the study of shapes is certainly a legitimate pursuit. We need to recognize, first of all, that the public places of geometrically ordered city plans and city extensions will be on a regular design, while “organic” cities will accommodate open space as they are able to in the improvised fabric of their history. [Spiro Kostof 1992:149]

Not respecting the grid or the axes of streets create odd spaces and the control of architectural boundary becomes complicated (fig 18.). The space that appeared in Glories square had clear intentional shape which was oval, but the attention of urbanists clearly was focused on the infrastructure, not on space for people, so area have not been functioning as public square until nowadays. J. Reyes took the grid of Ensanche as supporting element for his design and based the geometry of square on the one of Cerdà. The new square occupies four blocks. The pavements, as well as other elements correspond to the directions of the perpendicular axes of Ensanche.
2. ALEXANDERPLATZ: VISUAL BOUNDARIES

2.1. ALEXANDERPLATZ

Alexanderplatz is a square situated next to the TV tower of Berlin. Square is surrounded by various buildings from different epochs of 20th century. Alexanderplatz serves as an interaction point of infrastructure. Transport systems, such as metro and U-Bahn line, tram and important street lanes cross the area and stops of public transport can be found all around the place. This accumulation of infrastructure makes square quite busy, the hotel and shopping centers attracts people, but in general Alexanderplatz lacks defined architectural character and serves more as a bus stop than a public space.

The general plan is poorly developed and a current view is a mix of decisions made throughout the century. While limits of square are more or less understandable, the lack of design makes it chaotic. The most conspicuous buildings are U-Bahn station, which was build at the end of 19th century, the hotel Park Inn, which is one of the biggest hotel buildings in Europe and Alexanderhaus with Berolinahaus, which were the only two buildings that were erected according to the 1929 developed master plan of Peter Behrens.

Curiously Alexanderplatz never lacks visitors and is considered one of the principal squares of Berlin. Low density of surroundings makes this square to ‘compete’ with other open spaces that can be found around.
2.2. PROJECT ANALYSIS: ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT AS A REFERENT POINT

In Alexanderplatz Jonatan Reyes Cerezuela eliminated two currently existing buildings and created two new ones, slightly changing the shape of the square. One of the disappearing buildings is Berolinahaus, which is visually covering the 19th century train station and forming odd narrow passing between them. After elimination of Berolinahaus, Alexanderplatz has opened up to the park that surrounds television tower, because passages crossing the ground floor of the U-Bahn station (fig. 23.) have been established by author.

Another removal is of the multiuse Hines building, which influences the shape of the square, but lacks visual intensity to strongly perform in the definition of space. In place of it J. Reyes puts a high rise building, which by its position and height mimics the tower of Park-Inn hotel. This new vertical firmly marks the corner of the site, indicates the street crossing and finishes spatial enclosure of the volume of the square. The lower piece of this high rise creates an opening that links Alexanderplatz and Haus des Lehrers, which stands on the other side of Grunstrasse (fig. 23.). Jonatan designs another new volume in the center of the square, which is a pavilion type entrance to underground spaces. This element creates new concentration point of people moving paths and marks the center of Alexanderplatz (fig. 24.).

Three verticals (the television tower, the hotel Park-Inn and the new tower) stand as visual reference points which create new volume of the empty of the square (fig. 25.).

Fig. 22. Scheme of Alexanderplatz proposal by J. Reyes

Fig. 23. Scheme of newly made connections with surrounding city spaces and Alexanderplatz

Fig. 24. Scheme showing how new entrance to underground spaces could accumulate visitors movements in area

Fig. 25. Scheme that marks three verticals and the compact volume that appear between them, that could be perceived as space of a square.

Fig. 26. A sketch of perspective showing how new vertical creating duo with building of Park Inn hotel.
2.3. VISUAL BOUNDARIES
Variety of visual boundaries in city context;

Safety is an important part of comfort that one expects to feel in public space. I would guess that architects think about that while creating spaces and intent provide that feeling by their designs. Enclosure of place can be helping feature, because one visually “controls” his surroundings. On other hand small closed spaces in urban environment can provoke opposite feeling – fear of not knowing what’s behind the boundary. Thus transparency is valuable element, which can bound, but provide visibility.

Physical boundaries close spaces tangibly, but not necessarily visually. Often limits are functioning more as fences and borders than space definition elements. We could find one example in square of Glories – the circular center of roundabout is designed as park, but is framed by fences. Visually the park is present, but practically it is inaccessible. Visual boundaries not necessarily have to close the space; they can serve as reference points or elements of the site. They can be architectural, structural, infrastructural, more rigid, thus creating sharper boundary, clear contrast between space and volume (fig.27.). Natural elements also can be used to delimitate the area, such as vegetation, water or topography. The nature of these is much softer and materiality doesn’t create such sharp outline. The pavement usually appears as a part of design of place, but it can also serve as mark of space (fig.29.). The edge between different pavements can become a linear contour of place as it appears in Superkilen in Copenhagen, where colorful pavement marks the area (fig.30.).

Urban designer Jan Gehl in his books accentuate ‘soft edges’ that he believes that are essential in public spaces:

*The hard edges are easy to define. If you have a blank wall or just glass, maybe black glass or whatever, you can, as a human being, do nothing and there’s no interest. The words “soft edge” mean a façade where a lot of things happen. It could be many doors, niches, or the vegetable seller putting out his tomatoes on the street. Soft edges could be the front yard where the kids are playing and grandma is sitting knitting just behind the hedge. We have found, of course, the ground floor is where the communication between building inside and outside occurs. That’s what you see. So if the ground floor is rich, the city is rich and it doesn’t matter what you do further up. [*Green]*

Fig.27. Scheme of rigid frame, clearly outlining space in between

Fig.28. Natural, soft frame, which gives notion of limits, but not literally outlining them

Fig.29. Scheme showing how different pavement can mark a territory in open space.

Fig.30. Aerial view of Superkilen in Copenhagen, by BIG. Colourful pavement clearly indicates area of the zone.
Outstanding elements that give a notion of a space;

Sometimes it’s enough to have one or few buildings to give a shape to a square. This is evident in the spaces that appear in front of cultural, religious or political buildings. Usually function of building is so potent that it requires strong architectural expression which often is accompanied by open space in front of it, for example - cathedral of Milan or MACBA in Barcelona (fig.31.). That gives an impression, that façade that occupies entire side of square – owns the space. The architecture needs that openness and the square depends on the building. One is extension of another and that makes sense, because usually those buildings are public and the relation between two is very strong. The façade stays as visual boundary of space, but the actual limit appears much further than it seems (fig.32.).

The most dramatic change of environment we experience architecturally is the transition from outside to inside. Much tension is created between these two spaces because of the extreme change in scale, temperature, and lighting. Peter Zumthor describes this transition as “an incredible sense of place, an unbelievable feeling of concentration. We suddenly become aware of being enclosed, of something enveloping us, keeping us together, [and] holding us.” Crossing the threshold from outside to inside brings the sudden feeling of being confined. Some thresholds offer a slow transition while others may seem abrupt and insensitive to the surroundings. Buildings that create an in-between space, a place where the boundaries between outside and inside are blurred, have an effective way of easing people into this transition. [Carlisle]

We understand the space through our experiences and senses and the apparent boundaries often are more psychological, than physical. Although to perceive the space, its size, shape and volume, we use visual reference points which not always create continuous limit.

In current Alexanderplatz visual boundaries are poorly expressed and square without them lacks definition. J. Reyes designs a tower in corner of square and it appears surrounded by three verticals. He also marks the area of Alexanderplatz by square pavement.

Architecture and public memory; square as a room;

The sense of inclusion”, the feeling that one is a member of the neighborhood, or of the city, is subtly reinforced by the square’s visual enclosure. Being "inside" the square, surrounded by continuous building walls, with the sky as a ceiling, makes one feel temporarily "at home", and nurtures the citizen’s sense of belonging. The space formed by the buildings feels like a well-proportioned room or a grand hall. [Crowhurst Lennard. 2004]

Limits, boundaries are like walls of the room – square in this case. I consider square as a ‘public room’. Even designing a square is
similar to interior design, of course without forgetting the connections with other spaces, perspectives and directions of flows.

Let’s imagine a square as an exterior room: ground would be floor, buildings would be walls, openings and entrances of the streets would be windows and doors and architectural elements – furniture. We can even find real furniture in many public squares. If we would analyze architecture of this small space – room, probably its shape, arrangement of furniture and windows would play the biggest role in perception of the space. As well as the height of the ceiling and size of this room. But eventually it is not difficult to understand, to feel such a small space as a room. Interior spaces usually have human scale distances and there’s little probability to get lost in them. If thinking in a bigger scale - public square could be equivalent to a room. So, if it is proper sized, well distributed and with clear function – it is easier to use it and is more attractive to any visitor.

Architecture represents city spaces and squares are one of the most representative urban elements. Looking to touristic maps of the cities, we see many tricks to help user to orientate in the city. Not only streets are marked, but also buildings and touristic attractive objects. Often these objects are drawn on the map, provoking an image of the city based on associations. What seems curious for me is how one chooses which buildings are worth enough to be marked in these maps. Usually we found there the ones that own outstanding design, strong image or the importance of function. I believe it is an egg and chicken situation: maybe places create maps, or maybe marketing strategies of tourism forms crooked portrait of a city.

Often we associate open city spaces with the buildings that stand in them, because usually these objects are much more memorable than the spaces itself. The design of facades is shared between these buildings and outside spaces.

I have searched for some of touristic maps with aim to check how GAT is represented in them. In the area of Glories, we see Agbar tower, created by Jean Nouvel. This building doesn’t affect organization of the square, but has become one of the symbols of modern Barcelona (fig.35.). In Alexanderplatz the boldest building is Television tower, which is also one of the symbols of Berlin and is the tallest structure in Germany. Actually it doesn’t stand in the Alexanderplatz, but its presence is strong in it (fig.36.). In Tahrir square probably most important and representing building is internationally famous Egyptian museum. Its importance is more moral and cultural than visual, thus its design doesn’t serve as much as representative image (fig.37.).

We can see how the information of place is misshapen concentrating attention to the objects. Of course it is necessary saving space and still trying to provide enough information that would help orientate. In these examples places have architecture as their advocates.
3. TAHIRIR: CONNECTING SPACES

3.1. TAHIRIR SQUARE

Tahrir square in Cairo is a big center-located territory that for centuries hasn’t had developed firm shape. The traffic roundabout and enormous unbuilt areas makes it hard to perceive and it is clearly lacking human scale. The square is located next to the river Nile and is surrounded by some nationally important buildings, such as various party headquarters, Mogamma government building, Arab league building, Nile Hilton hotel and Egyptian museum. The connections between these important points are poorly developed and the exact Tahrir square is considered around the traffic rotunda, which often serves as a spot of anti-government demonstrations and protests.

Certainly Tahrir square has a big historical, cultural, political and social importance to the city of Cairo. In recent years it became a symbol of Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and through years is known as a display of people’s voice. The Egyptian museum is probably one of the most important historical museums in the world. S

Sadly all these potent features are not used well to develop a good public space: square seems unfinished and abandoned, lacks human scale and even basic facilities. The immensity of area is not controlled and the space lacks architectural character. History, location and institutions situated in the square provide Tahrir full potential to become internationally important urban center.
3.2. PROJECT ANALYSIS: CONNECTING DIVIDED

J. Reyes divided huge open Tahrir territory into two smaller public spaces, giving green park type character for one of them and the open square space to another. The element that roughly separates them is a long multifunctional building going parallel to Meret Basha Street and stretching from the Egyptian Museum towards Mogamma building. This elongated volume separates and limits the park zone from the busy traffic street. Following the same axe the path leading towards entrance of museum appears.

New volume separates two zones visually, but not physically: various passages cross the building, extending perspectives of some of the streets that end perpendicularly to the new façade (fig.42.). The oblong volume ends with the tower, which marks the meeting point of two public spaces. It works like a symbolic joint between them (fig.44.). The vertical volume also marks the crossing of two streets and gives some definition to the new open square as well.

The spatial composition resembles the joint of Piazza San Marco and Piazzetta in Venice, which as well has asymmetric organization and the tower that powerfully marks the meeting point of the spaces (Fig.45.).

... And yet, the combination of Piazza, Piazzetta, and the third smaller square at the northwest [sic, northeast] corner of St. Mark’s fuse into one of the greatest space impressions of all time, comparable in their symphonic effect only to the Imperial Fora in Rome. [Zucker, 113-115]

Fig.41. A scheme of Tahrir proposal by J. Reyes

Fig.42 Scheme showing streets and their axes with a visual continuity through a volume of a new building

Fig.43. Axe of street that was chosen by author as dividing territory into two different character spaces.

Fig.44. Scheme showing how new high rise building connects two parts of divided area.

Fig.45. Piazza San Marco in Venice with a bell tower standing in the joining point of two pieces of the square.
3.3. URBAN PERSPECTIVES AND CONNECTIONS

Value of openness and transparency;

We try to avoid rules, but it does seem that in almost all cases an urban public space requires transparency—literally; people must be able to see through it. The matchless urban observer William Whyte noticed this with Bryant Park behind the New York Public Library. A 30’s remodeling had enclosed it, and in the 60’s it became a drug supermarket. When the city remodeled the park, the problem was solved. [Pauls 021]

Clear closed form of space usually appears visually stronger, but doesn’t quite match with the contemporary idea of public space. Word public means open and accessible to all. Closed square is an urban element that have been formed in past. We turn to openness and concept of accessible, but it’s difficult to create a square in area of high density that wouldn’t be more or less delimited. Nevertheless the focus shouldn’t be put on shape or physical boundary; we can achieve openness while solving questions of the connections and urban flows.

Many historical central squares appeared on the meeting of two or more trade-routes, so originally was a point of junction, meeting, sharing or changing direction. That is the essence of the square – be a social meeting point, and not to be closed or limited. Although authors of book “Public places. Urban spaces” highlighted a discussion about the boundaries of public spaces:

..., Bentley argues that while Sitte considered a sense of enclosure to be the most important quality of public space and stressed the medieval street system’s spatial enclosure, its more valuable quality was actually its ‘integrated continuity’. In this respect, Cullen made a valuable distinction between ‘enclosure’ and ‘closure’. Enclosure, he argued, provided a complete ‘private world’ that is inward-looking, static and self-sufficient. By contrast, closure involved the division of the urban environment into a series of visually digestible and coherent ‘episodes’ retaining a sense of progression. Each episode is effectively – sometimes surprisingly – linked to others, making progress on foot more interesting. The conclusion is that a degree of, rather than complete, enclosure is requires. A balance must also be struck between achieving enclosure, and considerations such as permeability and legibility, which importantly influence how well the space is used.

[M. Carmona 2003:140]
Temporal boundaries

While talking about urban spaces we usually refer to static elements that shape places. But nowadays everything is more temporal, architecture too. The philosophy of multiuse provoked our attempts to achieve constructions that could be easily transformed and their purpose, size or aesthetics easily changed. Temporal architecture creates temporal spaces. The success of such places is discussable – I enjoy approaches to offer different solutions for one place and opportunities to see its diversity, but I believe that temporal architecture is too often object and not space orientated. Temporal buildings or installations play the major part in the situation and the space becomes (questionably) conditioned. Another thought: if object fits space— why it’s temporal then? Of course it’s not always the case, and often we enjoy architecture that gives new perspective to the place. Until now I talked about architecture in general, but it conditions the space, its programme and shape, sometimes providing new boundaries because of shifting elements in it.

One of examples of not as much temporal as periodical spaces would be markets. As in the case of market of Trat, Thailand (Fig.47-49) we see how open space appears and disappears depending on the time of day. Shape of square doesn’t change, but the physical and visual limits changes for the passerby.

Many of market places are closed while market doesn’t work, which what happens in Old Encants market just close to Glories square. This market is important element of zone, attracting many people and while open in a kind o way increases the territory of square, providing its ground accessible for visitor of the area.

Fig. 47, 48 and 49. Photographies of market of Trat, Thailand in different times of a day: morning market, empty space after it and view of starting of late evening market at the same day.
In the interwar period in Eastern Europe urbanists while reconstructing cities followed the idea of a green horizon visible at the end of every central street. The background also matter, it influences and contribute in creating a space as well as adjacent elements. Perspectives and visual links are not less important. Spaces that have clear visual links with other spaces appear to seem more open and more accessible. For example, views of city that appear standing in the open space in front of Cathedral of Porto visually define the space, also providing wide perspective of the city and giving sense of direction all together.

Crossing the old town of any European town, one would find the most representing architectural monuments situated next to parks and squares. To observe architecture one needs space to get a perspective view (Fig.50.).

In Tahrir square J. Reyes plays with axes of city street pattern and creates visual extensions for some of them, also forms new axe, which leads to the Egyptian museum, connecting it with the open space that appears in front of the Mogamma building.

Fig.50. Photography of people posing in front of tower of Pisa, Italy.

Fig.51. Versions of appearing perspectives of streets in different enclosed spaces

Fig.52. Place d’Etoile in Paris – square that has clear shape, but many openings.

Fig.53. Photography showing an infinite perspective of one of New York streets.
Spatial relations

City is a network of spatial compositions. The relations and connections that appear among public spaces create an essence of the city, forming people’s paths and directions of movement.

There are numerous methods by which links between squares may be formed. A public square may be of complex shape so that it consists of two or more overlapping or interpenetrating spaces: quite clearly defined spaces may open onto each other; a series of spaces may be physically connected by streets or alleyways; one or two major public buildings may be surrounded by a series of spaces which use the walls of buildings for definition; great civic squares have been designed to unfold along a predetermined axis; and finally, spaces may be related by an external reference point, a dominant element such as tower.[C. Moughtin 1992:112]

Such examples as Piazza San Marco in Venice or Piazza Spagna (Fig.54.) in Rome are perfect illustrations of connected open spaces. In proposal of J.Reyes for Tahrir square, where two spaces of distinct characters are joined by new vertical architectural element, which marks the end of one of the busy streets and signal the location of the square in the perspective of another, continuously passing street. The spaces joining spot becomes essential point of these spaces.

Three or more spaces can interact, as in the case of Modena city, which is described and the importance of accumulating object pointed by Michael Pauls in his project called ‘Recivilization’.

The cathedral was Modena’s most important building, and in this plan its carved marble walls are able to embellish and define three distinct spaces, three ‘rooms’ of the city. Piazza della Legna (I), incorporating the cathedral façade, was used for ceremonies of a religious nature. Piazza Grande (II), the largest of the three, served as the stage for civic assemblies and other political events; the speaker’s platform used by orators in the time when Modena was a free republic survives today (you can see it directly to the right of the cathedral’s apse; the building behind it is the city hall) Piazza Torre (III) was a marketplace. At the centre of everything stands the church, the symbol of the community’s faith. The mundane activities of city life clutch at her skirts all around. A design such as this allows us to truly see a community. Through art, the ephemeral and the enduring, the city of men and the city of stone, become one. [Pauls 021]
The facade is not a direct expression of the construction system, but absorbs, reflects and refracts its surroundings. The buildings reflect each other and thereby cut a void in the cultural space of the city. Through the eyes of Hays, Mies van der Rohe makes a ‘clearing’ in the space between his buildings – an open spot, a silence in the nervous and chaotic metropolis.[van Raaij]

Analyzing GAT and project of J. Reyes Cerezuela, I found various aspects of definition of open spaces, and not necessarily closing them from surroundings. Issues of analyzed squares probably reflect many similar cases in the cities all around the world. Through dialogue with architect I learned new point of view looking at city space. I analyzed every square apart, matching with my chosen analysis directions, but finally I see that in all of them we can find solutions that provide stronger physical or visual boundary and in every project we see links with other city spaces.

Public spaces are one of the most important elements in the city design. I couldn’t not agree that enclosure is necessarily for the well functioning, attractive space, it’s situation, function, flexibility are more important things, but the visual boundary stays important as well. I believe that creating new public places, we should think about ‘open but bounded spaces’, defined, but not limited. As any human created element square should have its shape, not ignoring the necessity for openness and spatial links.
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