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The public realm: part of a balanced city

Clur, Gavin

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1959
8225 Hollywood Blvd
141 South Carolwood
The Beverly Hills
Garden of Allah, Traders and Mocombo are all Parking Lots now
Carrie
Beverly Hills
Fisher
High School
The Palm Tree which changed the life of Richard Dreyfuss
508 N. Palm Dr
The Beverly Wilshire
Bugsy Siegel's 810 Linden Dr
Lara Bow's
Chateau Marmont
Chateau Marmont
F. Scott Fitzgerald
1403 North Laurel
Hollywood Studio Club
Hollygrove Orphan Society
Belalagosi's
R.I.P. S.A.L. MINEO
The Telephone Pole
The Marx Brothers
Hillcrest Country Club
Round Table
Coast Highway
theory
HOLLYWOOD CONFIDENTIAL

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEORY

To aid design an understanding of the relationships that cause cities or parts of cities is needed as is an understanding of the relationships that cause the public realm and make it a vital place.
The theories follow.

INTRODUCTION 1 : CITIES - THE GLOBAL NEED

Before going into detail on the network of mutual support an introduction follows that deals with the need for cities. This is followed by a look at the city as a result of exchange.

Wates and Knevitt of ' Community Architecture ' have the following to say on the state of and need for cities, and how participation can help meet that need.

" The challenge posed by the necessity to create human settlements is awesome. According to United Nation estimates, one billion people around the world lack adequate shelter, water supplies, sanitation and services. At least 100 million are thought to be literally homeless. Quite apart from coping with the decay and recent mismanagement of our existing cities there is a staggering demand for expansion. An extra 600 million homes are likely to be needed world wide in the next thirty-five years, a total that will amount to the creation of 3,500 new cities of a million people. Just three hundred such cities currently exist. Unless the development industry can put its house in order relatively quickly, misformned, wasteful and socially divisive human settlements are likely to become the major problem in the twenty-first century. "

Wates & Knevitt (1987 : 156)

" Community architecture is developing the spatial infrastructure required for the new order. It is providing a means for creating the homes, neighbourhoods and cities in which other necessary changes - in lifestyle, work patterns, transportation and so on - can take place. The failure of the development industry to respond more quickly to societies' new needs has been a major factor in the frustration faced by innovations in other areas and thus in the decline of Britain and many other industrial nations. In this respect community architecture provides thew missing link; it provides a means for people to give form to their rapidly changing lives and cultures."

Wates & Knevitt (1987 : 156)

10 % of new cities will be in the developed countries , 90 % will be in less developed countries. The greater need for expertise is in less developed countries. These countries are going to be hard pressed to meet needs of fuel, food, health, education and economic advancement. It is in the public realm that this is or can be done. Food and fuel procuring and through this economic advancement take place in the part of the urban realm that is public space designed with economic advancement as its intention. Social activity follows hand in hand with economic activity making for well used enjoyable spaces in the city. The public realm has a major role in structuring the city. The public realm structuring device is based on movement systems.

The quotes above make us aware of the need for cities with quality environments, not " misformed, wasteful ... socially divisive human settlements ". The urgency for these in the face of exploding populations is immense. One of the ways of ensuring a better quality of city environment is through urban design.

INTRODUCTION 2 : THE CITY AS A PLACE OF EXCHANGE AND THE REALMS WHERE EXCHANGE OCCURS.

- The city is a place of exchange
- Exchange is of goods and ideas
- For the exchange of goods the city is a market place
- For the exchange of ideas the city is a theatre or a hall or a cafe, places where ideas are exchanged or conveyed
- Cities are places where people come together for economic and social opportunity
- Economic and social activity evidences aspects of urbanism
- Life in cities is related to the interaction and activity that results from opportunity
- It can be economic or social activity, with social spin offs from economic activity and economic spin offs from social activity
- In ancient Greece the Agora was the place of exchange both of goods and ideas and buildings aggregated around and in this place
- Exchange has its public and private sides. Public exchanges occur in the open and private exchanges behind closed doors
- This introduces the physical realm. That part which houses the activity. Public activities are housed in the public realm.
  Private activities are housed in the private realm.
- In the urban fabric, public realm spaces can be regarded as the Voids, and private realm spaces as the Solid.
- Voids are currently in the hands of local government funded by taxes from the private sector
- Solids are in the hands of private enterprise funded by private capital.

- This sets the scene, everything seems to fit into place.

However if we look around us in the city we see,

1. public life as envisioned is present on a small scale
2. private life, though invisible, is present on a large scale
3. public property is present on a scale that is not consistent with the degree of public life

Evidence of activity, people actually living in the public realm, is minimal.

Balance is called for in the following issues relating to the urban environment,

1. balance in the benefits of the urban environment.
2. balance in the control of the urban environment.
3. a balance in the contribution of various parts of the environment to the economy.

As to the question: If so much public space exists, why is so little public life evident?

A look at Johannesburg shows very few outside (void) spaces that are actually designed for human activity other than for walking from one point to another ie. streets and pavements.

Where the spaces have been designed into the fabric and where they are located near places of concentration and along routes of high flow we find these places very well used. A climate such as ours lends itself to outdoor living.

Public life goes beyond walking from one place to another (except in the case of public marches), it is about the public exchange of goods and ideas (not just the delivery of them). Places for these activities should be provided in the public realm of the city. It is these places that are missing and it is these that urban design should seek to introduce into the city. It is also here that informal traders find their foothold in the urban economy.

Informal trade springs up at points of interchange of transport mode, especially at points where trains stop and pedestrian traffic takes over. These are essentially public areas where people meet, discuss, buy and then move on. The major routes from the station into town become spines along which traders congregate. These routes become the major retail zones in the city ie. Eloff Street, the major retail street in the city has train stations at each end of it. A route can generate a city part. We will go on to look at routes and patterns of use in the city. The routes when overlayed result in a network of use. It is this network that helps structure the public realm.

Author Clur G
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