

RETHINKING PUBLIC SQUARES  
ATHENS • BERLIN • COPENHAGEN





*Superkilen, Copenhagen*





RETHINKING PUBLIC SQUARES  
ATHENS BERLIN COPENHAGEN

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## ABSTRACT

Since ancient times, public squares have played a significant role in the social and political life of towns and cities. They were designed as open spaces for public use, allowing people to meet, communicate, and demonstrate, and as centers for commercial and civic culture that reflected historical transformations.

However, nowadays, public squares are often nearly abandoned urban voids, rather than centers of social interaction and fermentation. Capitalistic development, the rapidly increasing privatization and individualism, the continuous densification of the built environment, and the lack of co-presence have weakened the use of open public space. As a result, urban squares are often used as open parking lots by individuals, metro stations, extension-spaces for food service, or they mainly keep a symbolic, past-mongering character. Monumental fountains and sculptures, unsustainable materials, rough surfaces, lack of trees, poor lighting, and other problematic elements create an old-fashioned and unfriendly experience for users of public space. This project presents the redesign of three public squares in Athens, Berlin, and Copenhagen. The redesigns were informed by extensive critical analysis, typological categorizations, and observations of historical public squares in the aforementioned European cities. Participatory planning methods, such as questionnaires and interviews, were also used in the design process to encourage the social aspects of urban planning.

The central intention of the project is to holistically reconsider the design of public squares and suggest a socially sustainable planning approach that takes into account people's common needs, as well as different design requirements based on site-specific characteristics such as cultural identity, surrounding functions, microclimate, topography, etc.

## CONTENTS

**Introduction** 11

### **Part I:**

**From Public Space to Public Square: a Collection of Theories & Quotes** 13

Public Space: Definitions 15

Public Space and Public Sphere 18

Historical Evolution of Public Space 22

Public Open Space: Definition & Significance 27

Social Aspects and Important Qualities of Public Space 30

    Introduction 30

    Social Contact, Interactions and Activities 32

    Appropriation 39

    Heterogeneity 41

    Co-presence and Space-commoning 43

    Porosity – Permeability 47

    Insecurity vs Safety 50

    Collective Memory and Public Space 54

    Conclusion 55

Public Squares: Etymological Definition 57

Historical Evolution and Significance of Public Squares in European Culture 59

Public Squares: Categorizations based on Function and Form 66

    Introduction 66

    Categorizations of Public Squares based on Function 68

    Categorizations of Public Squares based on Form 70

The Decline in Public Squares 77

Re-Considering Public Squares 83

**Part 2:**

**Athens, Berlin, Copenhagen: Observations on Public Squares 95**

Athens 99

Exarcheia Square 100

Vathis Square 103

Viktoria Square 106

Monastiraki Square 109

Varnava Square 112

Omonoia Square 115

Berlin 121

Pariser Platz 122

Potsdamer Platz 126

Leipziger Platz 130

Potsdamer Platz & Leipziger Platz: Further Observations and Critique 132

Arkonaplatz 135

John F. Kennedy Platz 138

Teodor-Heuss-Platz 141

Copenhagen 145

The King's New Square 146

Gammeltorv 150

Nytorv 152

Karen Blixens Plads 157

Ofelia Plads 162

Tåsinge Plads 166

**Part 3:**

**Participatory Design Attempt 169**

Participatory Design: What is it about? 170

Participatory Design References 172

Participatory Design Principles 174

Participatory Design Attempt on Public Squares: A Survey 178

**Part 4:**

**Redesign Sites 198**

Redesign Sites 201

Vathis Square, Athens 204

John F. Kennedy Square, Berlin 233

Gammeltorv-Nytorv, Copenhagen 262

**Bibliography 296**

**Internet Sources 301**

**List of Figures 303**



## INTRODUCTION

In the present Thesis, diachronic issues of public space are analyzed, with a focus on European public squares in Athens, Berlin and Copenhagen. Various inquiries shaped the corpus of this Thesis, such as:

- *What is the definition of public space?*
- *How is public life performed within the public space?*
- *What are the definitions of public squares?*
- *What are the criteria, methods and tools for the design of public squares?*
- *How important is the role of public squares at public spaces and public life?*
- *To what extent could the experiences and suggestions of public users contribute to a reconsidered design of public squares?*

Based on the questions above, this Thesis derived from research, observation studies, critical reflections and redesign attempts of public squares. It is structured and presented in four parts:

1. Regarding the first part, a theoretical background related to public space and public squares is presented.

2. In the second part, some interesting examples of public squares from three European capital cities: *Athens, Berlin and Copenhagen*, are historically and typologically analyzed.

—*Regarding the case studies, the aforementioned European capital cities were chosen due to my personal familiarity to their urban space.*—

3. The third part presents Participatory Design methods that were used as main drivers for the design part. Interviews, discussions with citizens, as well as an extensive survey —*regarding the preferable qualities on public squares*— were included in the research. Results and conclusions were used for the design proposals.

4. The last part of this Thesis suggests a redesign proposition for three existing public squares, one from each of the chosen European cities. The selected public squares for potential transformation are: Vathis Square (Athens), John-F.-Kennedy square (Berlin) and Gammeltorv-Nytorv (Copenhagen). The reasons that led to the selection of the aforementioned public squares will be analyzed in the subsequent section.

**Part 1:**  
**From Public Space to Public Square:**  
**a Collection of Theories & Quotes**



## PUBLIC SPACE: DEFINITIONS

Public space is a complicated and unclearly defined concept, since it is shaped by multifactorial terms and situations.

*“By “public space” we mean the range of social locations offered by the street, the park, the media, [...] national governments, and local neighborhoods. [...] It is also not a homogenous arena: The dimensions and extent of its publicness are highly differentiated from instance to instance. [...] Stretching back to Greek antiquity onward, public space is almost by definition urban space, and in many current treatments of public space the urban remains the privileged scale of analysis and cities the privileged site. [...] Public space includes very recognizable geographies of daily movement, which may be local, regional, or global, but they also include electronic and institutional “spaces” that are every bit as palpable, if experienced quite differently, in daily life.”<sup>1</sup>*

In financial terms, it can be claimed that public space is a *public good* that is formed in order to accomplish *common needs*, at least for the majority of the society. As public good, public space is characterized by two main pillars: it is impossible to apply exclusion principle on it and furthermore, the use and “consumption” of it is indivisible.

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<sup>1</sup> Setha Low and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space*, (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), pg. 3-4

In political and social terms, public space is often identified with state apparatus, governance, state property, citizens and their “public” discussions. Although *public space* has to be open to all, it still “belongs” to the state, hence it is differentiated from the “private” property (e.g. ownership of a private house). There are also distinctions between what is called “public open space”, “public building” as well as various approaches by several theorists who described the boundaries of public space.

Regarding the connections between the term “public” and state property, Habermas mentions that:

*“We call events and occasions “public” when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs—as when we speak of public places or public houses. But as an expression “public building”, the term need not refer to general accessibility; the building does not even have to be open to public traffic. “Public buildings” simply house state institutions and as such are “public”. The state is the “public authority”. It owes this attribute to its task of promoting the public or common welfare of its rightful members.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989), pg. 1-2



Figure 2: Strøget, Copenhagen's main street, before pedestrianization.

## PUBLIC SPACE AND PUBLIC SPHERE

Public space, either enclosed or open, can be interpreted as a domain of life where open discussions / “public opinion” can be formed. This interconnection between public space and public opinion, co-create the public sphere.

Hannah Arendt in her work “The Human Condition” correlates public realm to ancient Greek “Polis”. She mentions the paradigm of Athens in 5th century B.C., where Polis was identified as a community of public life [“dimosios bios”] and not just a territory. Regarding the term “public”, Arendt mentions that public

*“signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it”.*

It can be claimed that for H. Arendt, the term “public” holistically reflects society, and, peoples’ symbiosis in society constitutes the public sphere.

Consequently, public space is inseparably connected to public life.

Regarding the term “public sphere”, Jürgen Habermas explains:

*“The line between state and society, [...] divided the public sphere from the private realm. The public sphere was coextensive with public authority, and we consider the court part of it. Included in the private realm was the authentic “public sphere”, for it was a public sphere constituted by private people. Within the realm that was the preserve of private people we therefore distinguish again between private and public spheres. The private sphere comprised civil society in the*



*narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor; imbedded in it was the family with its interior domain [...]. The public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society.”<sup>3</sup>*

Speaking about socio-political hierarchies, limitations and elitism in the history of public sphere, Nancy Fraser questions:

*“Should we conclude that the very concept of the public sphere is a piece of bourgeois masculinist ideology, so thoroughly compromised that it can no shed no genuinely critical light on the limits of actually existing democracy? Or, should we conclude, rather, that the public sphere was a good idea that unfortunately was not realized in practice but that retains some emancipatory force? In short, is the idea of the public sphere an instrument of domination or a utopian ideal? Well, perhaps both. But actually neither.”<sup>4</sup>*

In Fraser’s point of view, one of the greatest disadvantages in the concept of the public sphere is its unitary focus. Regarding how public sphere reinforces existing power hierarchies and structures, Fraser mentions that:

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pg. 30-31

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990). pg. 62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466240>.

*“where there is only a single, comprehensive public sphere [...] members of subordinated groups would have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies.”<sup>5</sup> Instead, society should be arranged in a way to “accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics” in order to “better promote the ideal of participatory parity.”<sup>6</sup> As an example, Fraser points out “U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublic, with its variegated array of journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meeting places.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“Public spaces are open to all, and as such represent a democratic forum for citizens and society. They can bring communities together, provide meeting places and foster social ties of a kind that have been disappearing in many urban areas. These spaces shape the cultural identity of an area, are part of its unique character, and provide a sense of place for local communities. [...] According to Mattson (1999) citizens have made it clear that they need spaces where they can interact with fellow citizens and try to persuade others of their viewpoints. Lack of public space is an insidious expression of a lack of democracy. In the past, public squares were invested with symbolic power that could evoke pride and public interaction. A crucial role of architecture and urban design in a*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg. 66.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pg. 67.

*democracy is the creation of public spaces that encourage civic interaction and discourse.”<sup>8</sup>*



Figure 3: Demonstration. Stockholm, May 1, 1902

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<sup>8</sup> Bob Giddings, James Charlton, Margaret Horne, “Public squares in European city centres”, *URBAN DESIGN International Journal*, v.16, issue 3, (2011), pg. 202-212., <https://doi.org/10.1057/udi.2011.6>.

## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SPACE

Since spatial transformations reflect socio-political changes, it is necessary to analyze and investigate the historical transformations of public spaces over time —*with a focus on European public spaces for the present Thesis*—, in order to further understand the form and function of public space. Social and cultural alterations are connected to private, semi-private and public life, hence the form and use of urban public space are consequently affected.

During medieval times in Europe, private and public space were spatially and socially correlated. In terms of functions and form, buildings were organically developed and connected to the outdoor environment, while household and occupations co-existed in common spatial units —*e.g. trade, cottage industry*—. Social structure was organized by “orders”; hence the space of medieval town was not distinguished by social classes. The main structure of the town was based on various “urban cells” characterized by different occupations as well as by homogeneity of social orders. The medieval city center was of small scale, complexed and quite dense.

Lewis Mumford mentions that regarding medieval life;

*“the closed corporation prevailed. But compared to modern life, the medieval urban family was a very open unit; for it included, as part of the normal household, not only relatives by blood but a group of industrial workers as well as domestics whose relation was that of secondary members of the family. [...] The workshop was a family; likewise the merchant's counting house. The members are together at the same table, worked in the same rooms, slept in the same or common hall,*

*converted at night into dormitories, joined in the family prayers, participated in the common amusements.”<sup>9</sup>*

In baroque times, capital and trade development led to the formation of social classes —*middle class, bourgeoisie*— hence there was a clear differentiation between private and public space.

Citizens were indifferent to social commons and public sphere was conducted by the Court. Therefore, public space was monumentally designed and transformed into a “scenery of parade” in order to support and represent royal power. There are several examples of monumental design of public spaces —*including the concept of public square*— in Europe at that time, such as Paris and London. As R. Sennet mentions:

*“After the great fire in 1666 in London and in the 1680's in Paris, the massing of population in both cities began to take on a new form. Burnt or fallow land was not simply filled in. It was reorganized on a new principle, that of the square, a square radically unlike the squares of medieval towns both in appearance and in function. The principles of square design in London broke with the medieval past in quite a different way than the squares of Paris did. But these two contrary revolts against the past led to the same social end. The square building which began in Paris in the 1680's was conditioned by two prior events. The first was the work of Bernini in Rome, the second the work of Louis XIV and his architects at Versailles. Bernini's*

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961), pg. 281

*Piazza Obliqua in front of St. Peter's in Rome was a challenge to the whole thrust of planned square building in the Renaissance. Bernini wanted to use the square to suggest the vastness of space through formal design, rather than its enclosure and taming, as the Renaissance had sought.”<sup>10</sup>*

—Regarding public space and square design, in the present Thesis will be later shown that Parisian baroque philosophy deeply inspired European cities, such as Berlin and Athens.—

18<sup>TH</sup> - 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: During 18<sup>th</sup> century, it could be claimed that the terms *private* and *public* reflect a more complicated socio-political situation, in which private domain controls public life. The continuously increasing privatization of those times, shaped an inseparable bond between owners, merchandisers and “public” life; This is clearly outlined by R. Sennett in *The Fall of Public Man*:

*“As the cities grew, and developed networks of sociability independent of direct royal control, places where strangers might regularly meet grew up. This was the era of the building of massive urban parks, of the first attempts at making streets fit for the special purpose of pedestrian strolling as a form of relaxation. It was the era in which coffeehouses, then cafes and coaching inns, became social centers; in which the theater and opera houses became open to a wide public through the open sale of tickets rather than the older practice whereby*

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, (London: Penguin Books, 2002), pg. 53

*aristocratic patrons distributed places. Urban amenities were diffused out from a small elite circle to a broader spectrum of society, so that even the laboring classes began to adopt some of the habits of sociability, like promenades in parks, which were formerly the exclusive province of the elite, walking in their private gardens or "giving" an evening at the theater."*<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, new ways of communication and trade were invented, such as stock exchange, banks and press. Although public life was depended on private domain, cities developed new ways of creating social spaces, that diversified the new era from the aristocratic past of baroque times.

During 19<sup>th</sup> century, people were more active regarding their participation in socio-political commons. Private sphere was more exposed to public sphere and public space, and especially public squares, were transformed into places of interaction, dialogue and exchange.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to the development of bigger city centers and capitalism, private and public life were completely polarized. Streetscapes and public squares were occupied by a "tyrannic traffic noise"; privatization and increase of vehicles gradually led to the weakening of public space.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pg. 17



Figure 4: Traffic at Potsdamer Platz with traffic tower, 1933.



## PUBLIC OPEN SPACE: DEFINITION & SIGNIFICANCE

Regarding the architectural design of public space, it can be defined as *enclosed public space* and *open or outdoor public space*. Enclosed public spaces are distinguished by their specific function (e.g. schools, public hospitals or libraries etc.), hence their use is defined by law. On the other hand, public sphere and public life are mostly related to the open / outdoor space (e.g. streets, parks, public squares etc.).

According to the Council of Europe (1986):

*“Not only is open space a fundamental part of the urban heritage and a strong element in the architectural and aesthetic form of the built environment of a town but it also has a number of significant functions and values. It has an important educational role, facilitating through its use an understanding of and identification with the city; it is ecologically significant, not just in maintaining or bringing vegetation into urban areas but also in encouraging wild life and promoting understanding of nature; it is important for social interaction, the well-being of individuals, and plays a significant role in the development of a community and in the creation of community pride, and so helps reduce the inherent tension and conflict in deprived parts of urban areas in Europe; it has an important role in providing the recreational and leisure needs of a community and has, finally, an economic value in that environmental enhancement,*

*in which the improvement of open space plays a major part, assists the economic revival of cities [...].”<sup>12</sup>*

R. Krier mentions that if the concept of urban space is about to be defined without imposing aesthetic criteria, then

*“we are compelled to designate all types of space between buildings in towns and other localities as urban space. This space is geometrically bounded by a variety of elevations. It is only the clear legibility of its geometrical characteristics and aesthetic qualities which allows us consciously to perceive external space as urban space.”<sup>13</sup>*

Regarding the polarity of internal-external space, R. Krier claims that

*“both obey very similar laws not only in function but also in form. Internal space, shielded from weather and environment is an effective symbol of privacy; external space is seen as open, unobstructed space for movement in the open air, with public, semi-public and private zones.”<sup>14</sup>*

Hence outdoor space can be defined as a subset of urban space and considered either as an opposite or related spatial unity to private space.

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<sup>12</sup> *European cultural heritage - Volume I, Intergovernmental co-operation: collected texts*, (Council of Europe, 2002), pg. 220

<sup>13</sup> Robert Krier, *Urban Space*, (London: Academy Editions, 1991), pg. 15

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 15



Figure 5: Public open space. Berlin, Spittelmarkt.

## SOCIAL ASPECTS AND IMPORTANT QUALITIES OF PUBLIC SPACE

### INTRODUCTION

The social substance of public space is often mentioned by researchers as the most important qualitative pillar of public space. N. Larco when referring to urban public space, suggests that it is not primarily defined by morphological qualities, since form and typologies are of secondary importance:

*“Often, architects or urban designers will define the urban condition by its physical attributes. Attempting to tread on familiar ground, they suppose that form is what is important. This, however, is not the case. [...] In sociological terms, it is the concentration of potential and forced interactions that makes a place urban.”*<sup>15</sup>

Public space as social “topos” is a space of socialization where activities related to collective life take place.

*“The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organized. Its peculiarity is that, unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it*

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<sup>15</sup> Nico Larco, “What is Urban”, *Places Journal*, v.15, no.2, (2003), pg. 42

*does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men—as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed—but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.”<sup>16</sup>*

Figure 6: Harvard Plaza, designed for programming throughout all 4 seasons



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<sup>16</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pg. 199

## SOCIAL CONTACT, INTERACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

According to J. Gehl, outdoor space allows users to participate in different types of activities, that

*“can be divided into three categories, each of which places very different demands on the physical environment: necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities. [...] Social activities are all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces. Social activities include children at play, greeting and conversations, communal activities of various kinds, and finally [...] passive contacts, that is, simply seeing and hearing other people.”<sup>17</sup>*

Jan Gehl explains social interaction through the need of contact and various degrees of contact intensity. He mentions that

*“Opportunities for meetings and daily activities in the public spaces of a city or residential area enable one to be among, to see, and to hear others, to experience other people functioning in various situations.*

*These modest “see and hear contacts” must be considered in relation to other forms of contact and as part of the whole range of social activities, from very simple and noncommittal contacts to complex and emotionally involved connections.*

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<sup>17</sup> Jan Gehl, *Life between buildings, Using Public Space*, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1987), pg. 11, 14

*The concept of varying degrees of contact intensity is the basis of the following simplified outline of various contact forms.: From High Intensity to Low Intensity contacts (Close friendships > Friends > Acquaintances > Chance contacts > Passive contacts).*

*In terms of this outline life between buildings represents primarily the low-intensity contacts located at the bottom of the scale. Compared with the other contact forms, these contacts appear insignificant, yet they are valuable both as independent contact forms and as prerequisites for other, more complex interactions. Opportunities related to merely being able to meet, see, and hear others include: contact at a modest level, a possible starting point for contact at other levels, a possibility for maintaining already established contacts, a source of information about the social world outside, a source of inspiration, an offer of stimulating experience.”<sup>18</sup>*

Concisely, it can be claimed that social contacts of various intensities shape common activities. Those common activities represent forms of social interaction, a fundamental factor of public life, which primarily takes place at public open space. Public life consists of political, financial, cultural, social life, according to various forms of common activities in-between the participants. Important principles that co-create public life include social cohesion, active or passive participation, as well as social interactions of different intensity that differentiate public from private life.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pg. 17

These two poles of public space and public life are essentially connected to the public sphere, since social activities and discussions that shape the public sphere, eventually form the functions of public space and life.

Through social participation, people exchange ideas, information, cultural behaviors, either actively or passively. This exchange is also possible through events of cultural, political and collective character that take place in public spaces.

Taking into account possible ways of social participation, another important aspect is the “individual use” of public space or “clusters” of people who interact with each other through sharing common ideas and interests. Such social interactions, according to N. Larco, are distinguished in two categories: potential and forced interactions.

*“Potential interactions are those that are sought after, but which only become possible within an agglomeration of people. Examples might include finding a group of like-minded people who collect Nigerian dolls, or who enjoy and study architecture and urbanism. Forced interactions, by contrast, are encounters that may not be directly so sought, but arise anyway. In general terms, these may be thought to range from positive to negative. A positive encounter might involve a chance meeting with a friend on the street; a truly negative one might involve being robbed. Most interactions in the urban environment float somewhere between these examples. Nevertheless, they are rich in the sense of the unexpected that we expect from an urban setting.”<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>19</sup> Nico Larco, *Ibid.*, pg. 42



Interactions and urbanity of public environment are qualitatively correlated. Urbanity is characterized by density and variety regarding human presence and activities. As long as interactions in-between public users are intensified, urbanity tends to increase. Public squares as spaces that reflect urbanity, are identified as successfully designed in case they are used by a variety of people and provide several activity options for users.

*“Public spaces are platforms where people can be a part of the public realm, which is different from the settings of their home, workplace or place of study. It is in the public spaces that people can physically become a part of the larger community. Mossop (2001) suggested that public culture and urban values are expressed in public spaces that encourage people to gather and socialize. Livable cities should accommodate diverse activities for the people by offering more desirable and attractive spaces. Vitality and sociability in public space means that people can carry out their activities in relative comfort and safety while interacting, engaging in spectacles and ceremonies, or just simply sitting or waiting (Das, 2008; Jalaladdini & Oktay, 2012; Lynch, 1981; Mossop, 2001; Tibbalds, 2001). In the context of this study, sociability is defined as the ability for the public to become attracted to a space that allows them to conduct social and leisure activities, whether individually or as a group.”<sup>20</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> Khalilah Zakariya, Nor Zalina Harun, and Mazlina Mansor, “Spatial Characteristics of Urban Square and Sociability: A Review of the City Square, Melbourne,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 153 (2014): 678–88, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.099>.



Figure 7: New York. Sunday bench sitters in front of the Central Park Zoo restaurant.

The high quality public open space can make people stay longer there and participate in a wider range of activities. The quality of public space is related to the usability of it. If the design of public space is not based on people's needs, then it becomes useless and unsuccessful. One of the benefits of high quality public spaces is their potential to act as a venue for social events. Well-managed festivals and other occasions can have a very positive effect on urban environment; they can bring economic, social and environmental benefits. Quality of life in urban area is the outcome of people's interaction within the urban environment. Several studies show how urban public space relates to physical and psychological health, social interaction and cohesion. For instance, the research carried out by Cattell and others shows that a wide range of everyday activities in public space was perceived as having a positive influence on both individual well-being and community life.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Asma Mehan, "Investigating the Role of Historical Public Squares on Promotion of Citizens' Quality of Life," *Procedia Engineering* 161 (2016): 1768–73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2016.08.774>.



Figure 8: Students in a chain passing cobble stones for the barricades, Gay Lussac Street, 5th arrondissement. Paris, France. May 10, 1968.

## APPROPRIATION

Regarding appropriation, it is shaped in-between individuals and public spaces in many ways. A person, in order to use a space, primarily needs to give an identity to it. People define a space by different characteristics that make this space familiar to them. Identification and appropriation methods vary and are usually related to boundaries, which may be either physical or imaginary. Physical boundaries often involve the demarcation of an area, while imaginary ones may refer to an increase in the density of interesting objects and functions of the place. Discussions with friends, picnic on a park, theatrical play on a stage, demonstrations on public squares and much more actions that take place on public space, enhance familiarity and connection between spaces and people who are involved in such actions.



Figure 9: Workers from the Nanterre Citroen car factory take part in the demonstration organized by the CGT French workers union on May 29, 1968.

## HETEROGENEITY

Furthermore, heterogeneity is a common quality in urban centers, outdoor environment, people, functions and activities. Heterogeneity and presence of “xenos”<sup>22</sup> shape public life in open spaces and as social factors, are necessary for crowding and creation of various activities and types of interaction. When more heterogenous people meet in outdoor space, there are higher possibilities for creating a wider variety of interactions and diverse activities.

Regarding urban development, J. Jacobs warmly supports the concept of “mixed-uses”. According to this concept, evolution of cities is based on the variety of buildings, residencies, and several functions that are open to people of different age, beliefs, nationality etc. These functions have to be approachable by everyone, in anytime of the day, in order to enhance twenty-four hours urban vitality. For J. Jacobs cities and, consequently, open space, have to be organic, spontaneous and “messy” in order to encourage urban development in socio-political and financial terms.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, unexpected actions are legitimate and covetable in “urban experience”. Variability and fluidity differentiate open public space from private and as qualities are of highest importance for social sustainability in public life. R. Sennett correlates urban environments to strangers, mentioning that;

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<sup>22</sup> ξένος (in Greek) = stranger, foreigner, unfamiliar person (regarding for example their origin, cultural identity, beliefs etc.)

<sup>23</sup> More at: Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pg. 152-177

*"By the time the word "public" had taken on its modern meaning, therefore, it meant not only a region of social life located apart from the realm of family and close friends, but also that this public realm of acquaintances and strangers included a relatively wide diversity of people."*<sup>24</sup>

He claims that cities are

*"a milieu in which strangers are likely to meet. However, "the stranger" can be a figure of two very different sorts. Italians may regard Chinese who move into their neighborhood as strangers, but they know how to think about these intruders; by skin color, the eyes, language, food habits, an Italian can recognize and place a Chinese as unlike himself. In this case, the stranger is synonymous with the outsider, and appears in a landscape where people have enough sense of their own identities to form rules of who belongs and who does not. There is another sense of stranger in which these rules do not apply: the stranger as an unknown, rather than an alien. A stranger can be experienced on these terms by someone who does have rules for his own identity [...]."*<sup>25</sup>

In terms of social sustainability, "strangers" and "outsiders" are more than welcome in urban environment and their presence co-creates a diverse and open public space. In addition, homogeneity in every sense is more related to closed, illiberal and totalitarian regimes.

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Sennet, *The Fall of Public Man*, (London: Penguin Books, 2002), pg. 17

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 48



## CO-PRESENCE AND SPACE-COMMONING

*“Co-presence is a sociological concept brought up by sociologist Emile Durkheim in his theory about different forms of social solidarity (Durkheim, 1984), which, according to Hillier and Hanson, is one of few sociological theories with truly spatial foundations and implications (Marcus, 2015). Randall Collins is the sociologist who in recent decades most distinctly has continued the Durkheimian’s micro-sociological tradition. [...] “Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not” (Collins, 2004, p. 48).”<sup>26</sup>*

*“Co-presence is seen as a vital prerequisite for the development of different social solidarities (Giddens, 1984; Collins, 2004) and also has potential to create so called weak or strong ties among people and different types of societal processes of bridging and bonding.”<sup>27</sup>*

Through co-presence and essential interactions based on common needs, public spaces could be potentially turned into common spaces and consequently enhance people’s initiatives instead of prioritizing authorities’ decisions and guidelines. Regarding common spaces, S. Stavrides gives an

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<sup>26</sup> Kailun Sun, “Making Squares, A Study of Urban Form and Co-presence”, (Master’s Thesis in Architecture, Chalmers University of Technology, Autumn 2016), pg. 17

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pg. 17

extensive analysis in his book *“Common Space: The City as Commons”*, mentioning that

*“as distinct from public as well as from private spaces, ‘common spaces’ emerge in the contemporary metropolis as sites open to public use in which, however, rules and forms of use do not depend upon and are not controlled by a prevailing authority. It is through practices of commoning, practices which define and produce goods and services to be shared, that certain city spaces are created as common spaces.”*<sup>28</sup> *“Common space, defined through acts of spatial enclosure, may end up either as ‘collectively private’ space (as, for example, the outdoor space of a gated community) or as ‘public space’ managed by authorities which act in the name of a community (as, for example, the space of a municipal park or a town square). Both these forms of closed common space tend to ‘corrupt the common’ and to block the liberating potentialities of commoning practices.”*<sup>29</sup>

*“Whereas public space necessarily has the mark of an identity, is (which means belongs to an authority), common space tends to be constantly redefined: common space happens and common space is shaped through collective action. Common space is thus space created and recreated constantly by a community which is organized through processes of participation of its members, considered as equals. This*

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<sup>28</sup> Stavros Stavrides, *Common Space: The City as Commons*, (London: Zed books, 2016), pg. 17

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 19

*therefore has to be a community in movement: a community created in a society in movement through the catalytic activities of social urban movements. A community in movement is a community which is not oriented towards practices that create and defend a secluded microcosm, even if this microcosm presents itself as a 'liberated' stronghold.*

*A community in movement, thus, is characterized by an 'always alert and always generous disposition towards the common' (Zibechi 2010: 136). Alert indeed, because keeping the process of commoning alive means fighting against any accumulation of power."*<sup>30</sup>

*"Public spaces are primarily created by a certain authority (local, regional or state) which controls them and establishes the rules under which people may use them. Private spaces belong to and are controlled by specific individuals or economic entities that have the right to establish the conditions under which others may use them. Common space can be considered as a relation between a social group and its effort to define a world that is shared between its members."*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pg. 121-122

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pg. 69



Figures 10, 11: Navarinou Park, a self-managed Park, Athens.

## POROSITY – PERMEABILITY

*“Porosity characterizes above all the relationship between private and public space, as well as the relationship between indoor and outdoor space. For Benjamin, porosity is not limited to spatial experience. Urban life is not only located in spaces that communicate through passages (‘pores’), but life is performed at a tempo that fails to completely separate acts or events. A temporal porosity is experienced while eating in the street, taking a nap in a shady corner or drinking a quick espresso standing in a Neapolitan café. It is as if acts are both separated and connected through temporal passages that represent the precarious, fleeting experience of occasion. Everyday occasions thus seem to shift and rearrange rhythms and itineraries of use (De Certeau 1984: xix).*

*Porosity may therefore be considered as an experience of habitation, which articulates urban life while it also loosens the borders which are erected to preserve a strict spatial and temporal social order. In our need to suppose a founding act for architecture, we usually imagine humans delimiting a territory by marking boundaries. In the rich complexity of city life, however, architecture becomes above all the art of creating passages. Georg Simmel, the well-known dissector of early modern metropolitan experience, points out that ‘the human being is the bordering creature who has no border’ (Simmel 1997: 69). For Simmel, the bridge and the door become the archetypal artefacts that concretize an essentially human act,*

*the act of separating and connecting simultaneously. As the door presupposes a separation between inner and outer space only to transcend it, so the bridge defines the banks of a river as separated and not merely apart in order to concretize the possibility of crossing.*

*This interconnectedness of an act and a will of separation with an act and a will of connection can be taken to epitomize the double nature of a porous border: a borderline, transformed to a porous membrane, separates while connecting bordering areas (as well as bordering acts or events)."<sup>32</sup>*

It can be claimed that porosity and permeability of public space can be explored from a philosophical and socio-political point of view, since co-presence and solidarity, or individualism and exclusion on the other hand, affect how porous and permeable a space is, how open is to "strangers" etc. Nonetheless, porosity and permeability of open public space have also a "natural"/pragmatic substance, related to architectural guidelines (e.g. low or high or thick vegetation, massive / built elements etc.) that create hard or soft "barriers".

Concerning the "natural" or created boundaries (eg. topography, trees, stairs etc.) that shape public space, R. Scruton describes an "ideal situation" of such boundaries, mentioning that:

*"space is made public by the nature of its boundary. It is a space into which anyone may enter, and from which anyone*

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pg. 83-84

*may depart, without the consent of strangers, and without any declaration-however tacit-of a justifying purpose. The boundary which creates a public space is both permeable and open to our public uses. A truly public architecture is one which attempts to record and symbolize the condition of civil life, by reminding us at every juncture of our freedom to engage in it.”<sup>33</sup>*

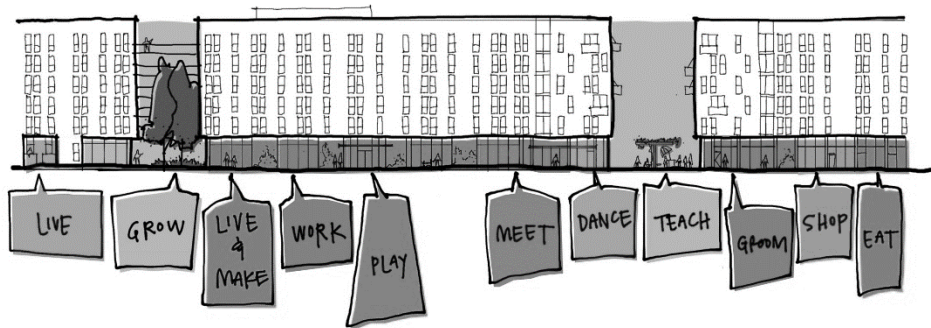


Figure 12: Activation of the in-between spaces and edges! Permeable public space, enclosed and open!

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<sup>33</sup> Roger Scruton, Christopher Knight, and Nathan Glazer, “Public Space and the Classical Vernacular,” National Affairs, accessed September 26, 2023, [https://nationalaffairs.com/public\\_interest/detail/public-space-and-the-classical-vernacular.](https://nationalaffairs.com/public_interest/detail/public-space-and-the-classical-vernacular.), pg. 7

## INSECURITY VS SAFETY

Regarding criminality and the feeling of insecurity, there are deeper historical, political and sociological reasons that are related to crime, abuse or thefts in public space. In neo-liberal, conservative and authoritarian societies, surveillance through police and cameras in public space are common practices for controlling peoples' behavior, in the name of security and safety. But this is not the way. As J. Jacobs mentions:

*"The first thing to understand is that the public peace —the sidewalk: and street peace—of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious network by voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves."*<sup>34</sup>

When public space is equally provided to people of all social groups, then social integration, solidarity and collective participation are enhanced, and consequently, the feeling of safety is strengthened.

In a more practical level, O. Newman correlates safety and "defensible space" to project size, height density, socio-economic status and income, permeability of the edges in-between private, semi-private, semi-public and public space. He focuses on public housing as housing for the poorest of the poor, and, based on this point of view, he claims that

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<sup>34</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pg. 31-32



*“the larger the concentration, the more residents felt isolated from the rest of society and felt their perceived differences to be greater. Project size affects stigmatization—as perceived both by the outside world and by the project residents themselves. The apathy that comes with stigmatization leads to neglect and withdrawal, first on the part of the residents, then by housing management, and finally by the municipal agencies that service the project: police, education, parks and recreation, refuse collection, and social services. A large project provides a continuous area in which gangs can operate, allowing even one gang or group of drug dealers to contaminate all of its public space. The more residents who have to share common areas, the more difficult it is to lay claim to them; the more difficult it is to distinguish other residents from intruders; and the more difficult it is to agree with other residents on the care and control of these areas.”<sup>35</sup>*

Although there are several theories that support Newman’s analysis, in this Thesis, mostly the opposite opinion is encouraged. In an ideal socio-political situation, public buildings and residencies, no matter what the project size is, would be affordable, provided for people of all social classes and would not be stigmatized as, for example, “building complexes for the rich”, or “workers’ housing” or “refugees’ housing” etc. Hence, the sense of ghetto

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<sup>35</sup> Oscan Newman, *Creating Defensible Space*, (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, Institute for Community Design Analysis, Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University, 1996), pg. 28-29.:  
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pubasst/defensib.html>

areas would be absent and mixed people would be integrated in an almost “messy” urban planning approach.

J. Jacobs supports that:

*“the problem of insecurity cannot be solved by spreading people out more thinly, trading the characteristics of cities for the characteristics of suburbs.”<sup>36</sup>*

J. Jacobs contradicted several assumptions in which high population density was related to high criminality and furthermore, she supported that a high concentration of people can be beneficial for the vitality of city life, economic growth and prosperity.

According to the European Forum for Urban Security, many aspects of public life have to be taken into consideration in order to enhance security in urban environments. Activation of social night life in peripheral urban areas —thus avoidance of potential isolation of such areas—, design of urban facilities according to diverse users (e.g. women, LGBT, homeless people, night workers, tourists), penal law and administrative tools against organized crime, design and strengthening of centers for protection, information, prevention and treatment of people with psychological or/and obsession issues (such as the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction), fighting against the stigmatization and exclusion, and many other

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<sup>36</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pg. 32

strategies are recommended in the *"Manifesto: Security, Democracy and Cities: Co-producing Urban Security Policies."*<sup>37</sup>



Figure 13: A CCTV camera on Oxford Street, central London.

*Do you feel safe now?*

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<sup>37</sup> European Forum for Urban Security, "Manifesto: Security, Democracy and Cities: Co-producing Urban Security Policies", International Conference of the European Forum for Urban Security, co-organised with the City of Barcelona and the Government of Catalonia, 2017 (Paris, France: published by European Forum for Urban Security, 2018) <https://efus.eu/the-manifesto/>.

## COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND PUBLIC SPACE

Collective memory can be considered as the common memory of a social group and is formed by the continuous imprints created by several actions through time. Regarding public space, activities and demonstrations, political actions etc. that have taken place in the past, they are “preserved” through collective memory. For example, past events are often “repeated” as occasional memorial events / ceremonies / celebrations in public space. Therefore, urban space is not only identified by its form but also by continuous and various occurrences that shape historical and spatial transformations.

*“Collective memory can become an important target as well as a means of commoning. The most obvious aspect of this relation is the power that collective memory has to give form and content to events in the past which the members of a community recognize as their common past. From this, however, it becomes clear that the selective character of shared memory, [...] has a strong performative result. What the members of a group recognize as their common past crucially contributes to their identity as a group.”<sup>38</sup>*

Collective memory is of utmost importance since it contributes to social cohesion and connects people to urban public space. It is our collective memory that define individuals as active members of social groups and connects them to their past.

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<sup>38</sup> Stavros Stavrides, *Common Space: The City as Commons*, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2016), pg. 188

## CONCLUSION

Public space as scenery of public life is defined by several characteristics, practices and uses that should be shaped according to public users' needs and behaviors. Those characteristics often change due to sociopolitical transformations; Therefore, it could be claimed that an urban space remains public as far as it keeps its social substance that is based on social interaction, participation, contact, inclusion, safety, democratic dialogue, collective memory etc.



Figure 14: Scene from *Nostalgia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983).  
Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome, Italy

## PUBLIC SQUARES: ETYMOLOGICAL DEFINITION

The identification of an outdoor space as public square is a complicated process, since there are differences regarding the form, shape, layout, historical evolution and function of such spaces. Hence, the definition of the term “public square” is connected to various parameters, such as the position, the morphology and topography, the activities it hosts, and its relation to other outdoor public spaces.

In Greek, public square is called *πλατεία*: from French *place*, from Latin *platea*, from Ancient Greek *πλατεία* (*plateia*) of *πλατύς* (*platús* = wide). Hence, etymologically, both in Greek and Latin, the word “platea” is related to the word “platis”(=wide) and it was primarily used as an adjective which defined street width (eg. “wide street” vs “narrow street”).

In Greek, this etymological connection between public square and street is mostly found in old dictionaries. Contemporary interpretations correlate the word “platea” to other characteristics, such as function, urban topography, design etc. Some other references regarding the interpretation of the word in Greek are: “wide street”<sup>39</sup> or “broad, flat and uncovered (not enclosed, unsheltered, open) space within the settlement/neighborhood”<sup>40</sup> or “large flat area within the city or village, often used for entertainment etc.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Αθανάσιος Α. Σακελλάριος, *Λεξικόν της Ελληνικής Γλώσσης* (Αθήνα: εκδ. Σακελλαρίου, 1887)

<sup>40</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Ελευθερουδάκης, *Εγκυκλοπαιδικό Λεξικό*, τόμος 10ος, (Εν Αθήναις: Εκδοτικός Οίκος Ελευθερουδάκης Α.Ε., 1935)

<sup>41</sup> Πασσάς. Ι. Δ., *ΕΠΙΤΟΜΟΝ ΟΡΘΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΟΠΑΙΔΙΚΟΝ ΛΕΞΙΚΟΝ «ΗΛΙΟΥ»*, (Αθήναι: εκδ. «ΗΛΙΟΥ», 1960)

This ambiguity regarding the interpretation of the word “platea” is mostly observed in Greek language, where the term can also be used as reference to other types of outdoor spaces, such as sport fields, wide urban lanes, open yards of public buildings etc. In other languages, the term “platea” is more precisely interpreted and called as piazza, place, plaza, platz, plads etc. In the English language, “public square” is the most common term for “plaza/platea” and although it seems that it defines a geometrically strict, rectangular space, is also used for any type of plazas, such as triangular plazas, circular plazas and others.



Figure 15: Omonoia square, Athens, ~1960



## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC SQUARES IN EUROPEAN CULTURE

According to urban designers and researchers, streets and public squares are the main components of the outdoor public space. However, it has to be clarified that outdoor public space is also shaped by other urban forms, such as parks, streets for pedestrians, playgrounds etc., or historical spaces, such as the Ancient Greek Agora, which is nowadays an archaeological site. Over time, public squares varied in terms of form and function. However, they are always considered as “archetypes” of urban space that act as main pillars of public life.

A remarkable example of a “square” is the Market of the archaic and classical city (8<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BC):

*“The best known public space of all time was perhaps the ancient Greek agora, the main public square which was the meeting place of the town. It was first and foremost a marketplace, as Aristotle reminds us: ‘For of necessity in almost every city there must be both buyers and sellers to supply each other’s mutual wants; and this is what is most productive of the comforts of life; for the sake of which men seemed to have joined together in one community’ (quoted in Glotz, 1929:21–2). But the agora was more than a marketplace: it also served as a place of assembly for the town’s people and a setting in which ceremonies and spectacles were performed. The agora, therefore, was a place in which economic, political and cultural*

*activities were performed alongside each other, acting as an integrative platform for the social life of the city.”<sup>42</sup>*

In the Hippodamian and Hellenistic city, the Market has a rectangular shape and mainly serves commercial functions, while political decisions take place in specific buildings. In Roman times, the Forum is located on the intersection of main streets and its area is defined by strict boundaries. It acts as a spatial unity which brings together the public life of the city.<sup>43</sup>

*“According to Vitruvius [...], the Greeks designed their agora on ‘a square plan with exceedingly spacious double porticoes’ (Vitruvius, 1999, V, 1, p. 64). However, the Italian cities, with their custom of gladiatorial games in the forum, he thought, required more spacious intercolumnations around the performance space. In inland cities, the forum was to be placed at the centre of the city, while in seaside cities it had to be right next to the port (Vitruvius, 1999, I, 6, p. 31). Temples and other public places were to be adjoined next to the forum and the senate house, in particular, and built so as ‘to enhance the dignity of the town or city’ (Vitruvius, 1999, V, 2, p. 65).”<sup>44</sup>*

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<sup>42</sup> Ali Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), pg. 169-170

<sup>43</sup> See more at: Paul Zucker, *Town and Square, From the Agora to the Village Green*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959)

<sup>44</sup> Ali Madanipour, *Ibid.*, pg. 169-171

Renaissance theorists that followed Vitruvius expanded such statements. For example, Alberti mentions that

*“there ought to be several squares laid out in different parts of the city, some for the exposing of merchandises to sale in time of peace; and others for the exercises proper for youth; and others for laying up stores in time of war.”*<sup>45</sup>

Regarding the design of squares in Renaissance cities, it was inspired by the rational and cosmological conceptions of that era, as well as the architectural theories of perspective and harmony. Those squares acted as centers of convergence, both in geometrical and symbolic terms.

Camillo Sitte carries out a complete morphological, typological categorization of medieval and renaissance squares, emphasizing their social role. He mentions that public celebrations, exhibitions, activities, and other events take place in squares.<sup>46</sup>

*“Sitte derives his “artistic fundamentals” by returning to a close analysis of medieval and Renaissance cities, with occasional references to their Greek and Roman antecedents. Through the analysis of hundreds of historical squares, he illustrates how the focus of public space is space itself, that it provides for both temporal (everyday) and spiritual (ceremonial) life and that it*

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<sup>45</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, Book IV, (New York: Dover Publications, The 1755 Leoni edition, 1986), pg.81

<sup>46</sup> See more at: Camillo Sitte, *The Art of Building Cities: City building according to its artistic fundamentals*, (New York: Reinhold publishing corporation, 1945)

*can be compared to the “principle room of a house”. This is one of the most powerful assertions that the public space of a city is not a void but can be seen as a room, and thus the subject and setting for the life of the city.”<sup>47</sup>*

Not only Sitte correlates ancient, medieval and renaissance squares to “principle house rooms”, but also many other theorists mention this parallelization. C. Moughtin claims that:

*“The square or plaza is for the city what the atrium represents for the family home. It is the well equipped and richly appointed main hall or reception room.”<sup>48</sup>*

Regarding the following periods, baroque squares were designed as single, three-dimensional spatial unities, and their forms varied through time. They were the main components of urban space planning and their design was inspired by scenography and theatrical approaches. Until the 17th century, urban squares were the hub of public life and were designed in order to support the civic needs, and up to the 19th century, the location, structure and design of squares were directly related to the development of the settlements. Therefore, in early settlements, squares were organically shaped as “cores”, without having a strict morphology, and located in central spots of main functions. On the other hand, in settlements of strict planning, squares often

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<sup>47</sup> Harrison Fraker, Peter Siostrom, Atanaska Foteva, *Minding the City, Field Notes on Neuroscience and the Poetics of Sustainable Public Space*, (ORO Editions, 2021), pg. 18-19

<sup>48</sup> Cliff Moughtin, *Urban Design: Street and Square*, (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003), pg. 90. Also mentioned by Robert Krier, at: Robert Krier, *Urban Space*, (London: Academy Editions, 1979), pg. 19

have a symbolic role and represent the character of the whole city. Their form, structure and position are related to the general design principles.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, radical changes are noticed in urban square design. Life was gradually withdrawn into private, enclosed spaces. Furthermore, due to the increase of traffic, large parts of public space were occupied by vehicles, or the construction of roads and sidewalks. Greenery and natural elements were important components for the vitality of the city, hence softscapes should be added. Therefore, the role of squares was demoted and many squares were partially replaced by parks or urban gardens.

Nowadays, it can be summarily claimed that urban squares act as connection points between streets and commercial functions, meeting places or just passages.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See more at: Paul Zucker, *Town and Square, From the Agora to the Village Green*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959)

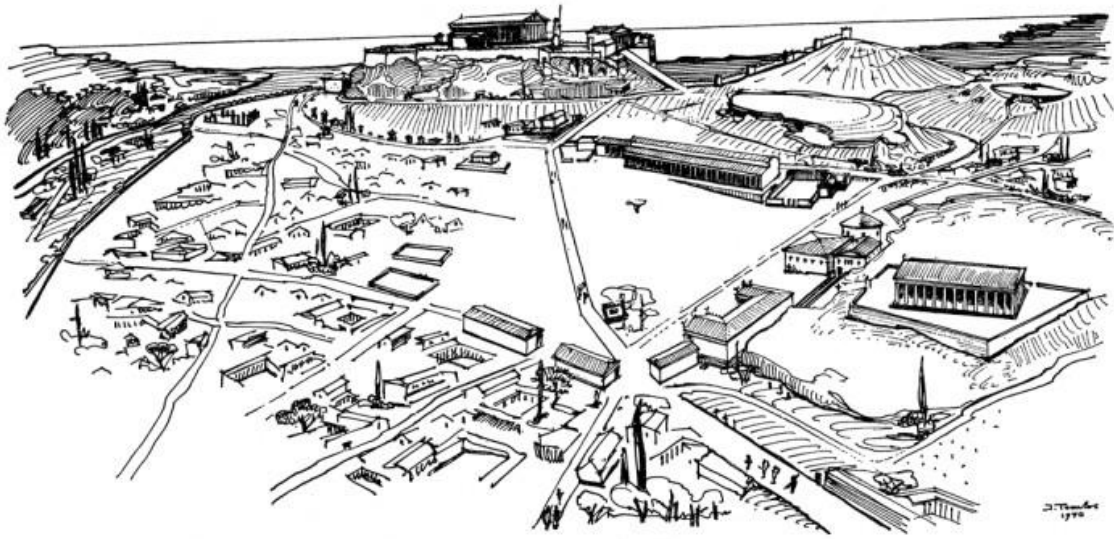


Figure 16: Athenian Agora

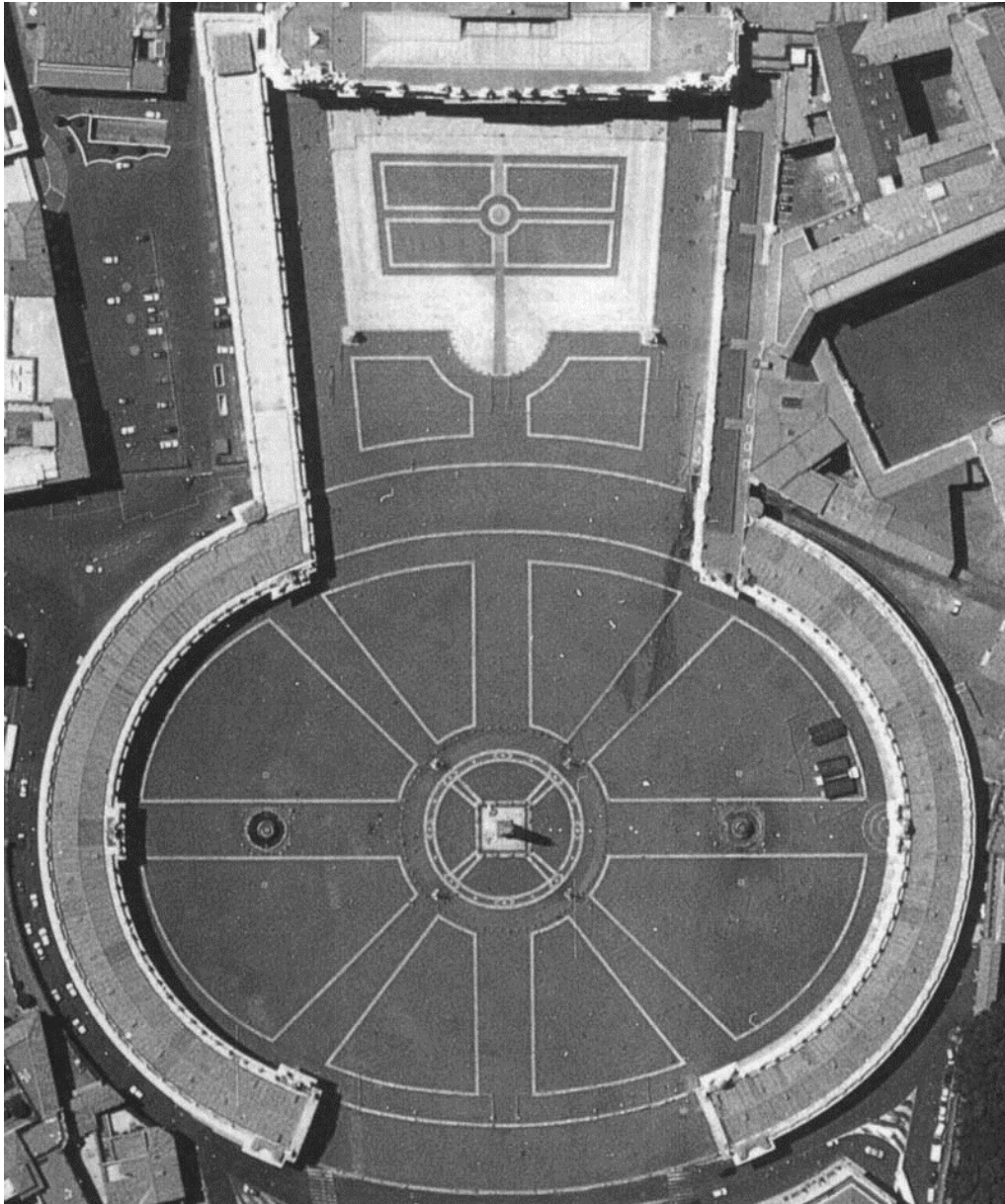


Figure 17: Piazza San Pietro, architect: Bernini (1657-1667). Rome, Italy

## PUBLIC SQUARES: CATEGORIZATIONS BASED ON FUNCTION AND FORM

### INTRODUCTION

According to the information provided above, it is clear that there are several definitions for “public squares”, related to historical, cultural and lingual terms. Public squares are not only important urban spaces for public life, but also vital spatial unities that are continuously transformed through time. However, it seems that they are always defined as spaces of the “unbuilt”/ outdoor/open urban environment, while their function and form are essentially correlated to their surrounding built environment. Furthermore, although several types of squares prevail in certain periods, many spatial relations seem to be independent of specific historical forms and transformations. Common characteristics regarding function, form and “square type” tend to appear again and again.<sup>50</sup>

There are several theoretical approaches and categorization attempts for public squares. Some of the theorists that analyzed public squares in terms of form and functions were Paul Zucker, Camillo Sitte, Rob and Leon Krier, Cliff Moughtin and many others. C. Moughtin supports that:

“There are two main methods of categorizing squares – by function and by form.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See Paul Zucker, *Ibid.*, pg. 8

<sup>51</sup> Cliff Moughtin, *Urban Design: Street and Square*, (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003), pg. 87



And actually, it is a fact that most of the urban theorists typologically categorized public squares based either on function or form. In this part of the Thesis, some theorists' categorizations will be presented and used as references in the following observations and redesign proposals.



Figure 18: Liberty Square Interactive Fountain in Budapest

## CATEGORIZATIONS OF PUBLIC SQUARES BASED ON FUNCTION

Some of the main functions of public squares are those of social, political, cultural, financial, religious and symbolic character. People in towns or cities are familiar to public squares that are used as meeting points for social gatherings, demonstrations, political speeches etc. (social-political character). Some public squares provide space for sports or playgrounds or occasionally host cultural events, such as music concerts (social-cultural character). Other public squares are occasionally used as open markets or occupied by bars or cafes, hence in such cases they are used as an outdoor extension of food service businesses (financial character).

Moreover, there are several paradigms of squares outside a dominant public building such as city halls or churches (symbolic/religious character).

According to R. Krier:

*“the square was the first way man discovered of using urban space. It is produced by the grouping of houses around an open space. This arrangement afforded a high degree of control of the inner space, as well as facilitating a ready defense against external aggression by minimising the external surface area liable to attack. This kind of courtyard frequently came to bear a symbolic value and was therefore chosen as the model for the construction of numerous holy places (Agora, Forum, cloister, mosque courtyard).”<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>52</sup> Robert Krier, *Urban Space*, (London: Academy Editions, 1979), pg. 17

Regarding European culture, there is another categorization example based on several functions, as mentioned in *“Public squares in European city centres”*:

*“[...] squares are the most representative of the values of the societies that created them [...]. Traditional functions included:  
Trade: buying and selling, depository and manufacture  
Information: dissemination of news – place of social activity  
Recreation: games, teaching, lunch and conversation  
Protection: militia, training and drill, gathering in times of danger  
Piety: holy inspiration and prayer, open space before a church for worship”*<sup>53</sup>

Other categorizations regarding the functions can be based on “active” or “passive” actions that people do there, such as:

*Assemble*: usually centrally located, often adjacent to a courthouse or similar civic building, incorporating a monumental structure etc.

*Entertain*: a square often for commercial uses and/or provides a stage for festivals etc.

*Move*: An important transition point, a portal, a promenade or riverfront.

*Retreat*: It can be similar to a pocket park, or heavily planted.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bob Giddings, James Charlton, Margaret Horne, “Public squares in European city centres”, *URBAN DESIGN International Journal*, v.16, issue 3, (2011), pg. 202-212., <https://doi.org/10.1057/udi.2011.6>.

<sup>54</sup> Julianne Rader, “Squares: A Network of Spaces, Master of Landscape Architecture”, (Master of Landscape Architecture, Kansas State University, 2009), pg. 11  
URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2097/1495>

## CATEGORIZATIONS OF PUBLIC SQUARES BASED ON FORM

Beginning with Camillo Sitte's typology of urban squares, is first and foremost based on the prerequisite of enclosure. He concludes that there are only two types of spatial form -the *long* and the *deep* form.

*"This is determined by the dominant building adjacent to the square. When the observer stands opposite the structure, the square shall appear as one of these two types. Additionally, though not directly related to form, Sitte maintained a great interest in the grouping of squares. He did not, however, see this as a form type, but rather a "manner in which squares could be related to each other and to the urban fabric in general." <sup>55</sup>*

Paul Zucker mentions that specific functions of public squares, —as for example market squares—, do not automatically produce definite spatial unities.

*"Each particular function may be expressed in many different shapes. Hence it is necessary to separate the various functions from the basic spatial concepts. [...] These archetypes [...] may be classified as follows:*

- 1. the CLOSED SQUARE: space self-contained*
- 2. the DOMINATED SQUARE: space directed*
- 3. the NUCLEAR SQUARE: space formed around a center*

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<sup>55</sup> Julianne Rader, *Ibid.*, pg. 13

4. *GROUPED SQUARES: space units combined*

5. *the AMORPHOUS SQUARE: space unlimited*<sup>56</sup>

According to P. Zucker analysis', the "closed type" of square

*"appears in its most perfect form in the Hellenistic and Roman eras and then again in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The primary element in the appearance of any closed square is its layout, be it a quadrangle, rectangle, circle, or any other regular geometrical form. Equally important is the repetition of identical houses or house types, facing the enclosed area [...]. Each façade fulfills a dual function: on the one hand, it is part of an individual structure; on the other hand, it forms part of a common urban spatial order."*<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the other types of squares, P. Zucker explains:

*"The dominated square is characterized by one individual structure or a group of buildings toward which the open space is directed and to which all other surrounding structures are related. This dominating building may be a church [...] or any other monumental structure, a palace, a town hall, an*

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<sup>56</sup> Paul Zucker, *Town and Square, From the Agora to the Village Green*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pg. 8

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 9

*architecturally developed fountain, a theater, a railway station.”*

<sup>58</sup>

The nuclear square is the:

*“self-contained space of the closed square, shaped by the continuity of the surrounding buildings, is easily perceived. The space conception of the dominated square [...] is directed through the visual magnetism of the governing structure or the dominant vista.”<sup>59</sup>*

Grouped squares are described by P. Zucker as a group / sequence of squares, usually different in size and form, that represent an entire urban entity. They can be organized in one-direction, thus establishing a straight axis, or, in a non-axial organization (eg. a smaller square opens with one of its sides upon a larger square) etc.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding the “amorphous type” of square:

*“by its very definition—amorphous, i.e., formless, unorganized, having no specific space—it does not represent any aesthetic qualities or artistic possibilities. However, if it shares at least some elements with the previously analyzed types of squares, it may appear at the first glance to be like one of them.”<sup>61</sup>*

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pg. 11

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pg. 13-14

<sup>60</sup> More at: Paul Zucker, Ibid., pg. 14-15

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pg. 16

Paul Zucker further explains that large dimensions and heterogeneous, irregular proportions of the surroundings / disproportion in scale, destroy all aesthetic possibilities and create a formless, un-unified space.<sup>62</sup> An example of irregular type of “square” is the Market of the archaic and classical city. P. Zucker claims that the form of the Market followed the irregularity of the whole city form. Regarding its function, Homer describes it as a place for political gatherings which gradually turned into a place for buying and selling, and eventually as a commercial center. Another example of square in irregular settlements, is the square of Medieval towns, since its position was related to the position of the church, town hall and commerce. Zucker extensively analyzes the form of the squares in relation to the settlements, and he classifies them according to their relation to the surrounding street(s) and their position in the city.

Other theorists, such as Cliff Moughtin, was inspired by the work of Camillo Sitte and Paul Zucker, while Thomas Thiis-Evensen’s analysis is based on an evaluation of enclosure and directionality.

*“His classification system asks the question, “Which of the directionalities in the main form and the surrounding elements is the most important for the overall character of the square?” (Thiis-Evensen 1999, 139). To determine this, Thiis-Evensen assesses the combination of building form, wall articulation and floor surface. He suggests that each of these elements should then be evaluated in order to determine which has the strongest directionality.”<sup>63</sup>*

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<sup>62</sup> More at Paul Zucker, *Ibid.*, pg. 16

<sup>63</sup> Julianne Rader, *Ibid.*, pg. 13

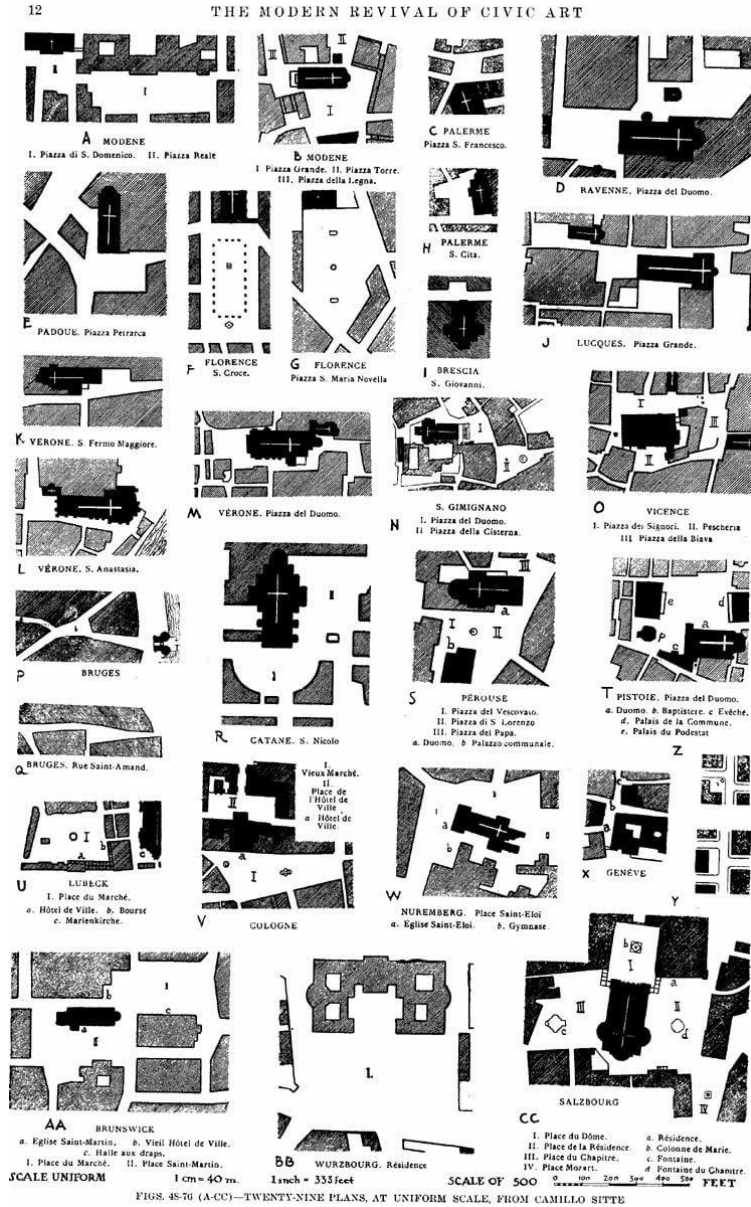


Figure 19: Twenty-nine plan types by Camillo Sitte.



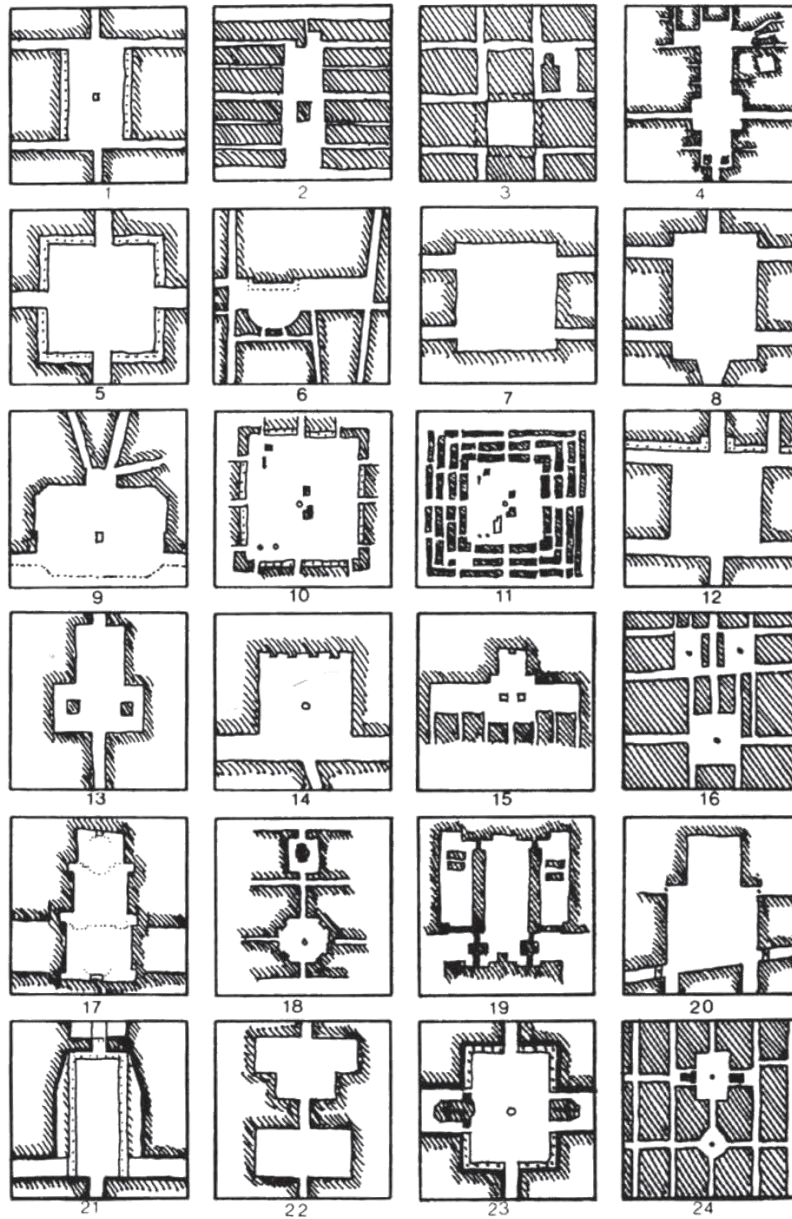


Figure 20: Rob Krier, Orthogonal Plans for Squares.

**Camillo Sitte**



Long

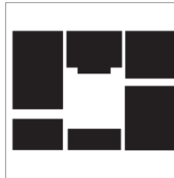


Deep

**Thomas Thiis-Evensen**



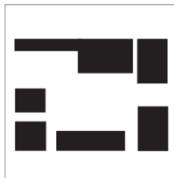
The Equilibrrious Square



The Directional Square



The Centralized Square



The Linked Square

**Paul Zucker**



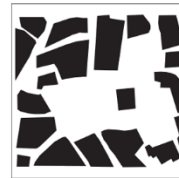
The Closed Square



The Dominated Square



The Nuclear Square



Grouped Squares



The Amorphous Square

Figure 21: Square types based on form. Diagrams by Julianne Rader.

## THE DECLINE IN PUBLIC SQUARES

The decline in public squares is undoubtedly a global phenomenon caused by a variety of factors. Sociopolitical transformations, such as privatization, control, surveillance and other flaws of contemporary lifestyle tend to prioritize enclosed private lives and financial interests, leading to the lack of social interactions, open dialogue and democracy. Hence public space is devalued and consequently urban squares that used to be considered as main components of public life in the past, are nowadays mostly used as everyday passages, places for ceremonial and occasional events or they just remain as urban voids outside monumental buildings.

Nonetheless, it is a fact that apart from their humanitarian and societal substance, urban squares had always been connected to hierarchies, privacy, and exclusion.

*“Though it is undeniable that public squares have intermittently functioned as powerful sites of resistance—through protests against unfair economic and labor practices, marches for civil rights, and demonstrations for gender equality—the public square has never truly been public: law and norms have always served the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable. Indeed, public squares have always served more to reinforce legal and social hierarchies than to facilitate open and inclusive democratic deliberation.”<sup>64</sup>*

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<sup>64</sup> Mary Anne Franks, “Beyond the Public Square: Imagining Digital Democracy,” *The Yale Law Journal Forum*, November 16, 2021, 427–53, pg. 429

In *The Politics of Public Space*, there is a fair enough explanation regarding democracy, publicness and exclusion on the other hand.

*“Greek polis and agora, often and reasonably heralded as significant prototypes of the public sphere and public space, respectively, are rather different from today’s public space. The agora was not defined against the ubiquity of private, capitalized space but vis-à-vis far more collective uses of space. Rights in the polis were highly restricted to a very narrow and privileged social class recognized as free citizens, and many others were excluded -women, slaves, and the throng of common people. Likewise, the publicness of the agora was also circumscribed and stratified as an expression of prevailing social relations and inequalities. The narrow definition of public space that pertained in ancient Greece may therefore be an unintentionally appropriate inspiration for the present, yet the most cursory scrutiny suggests that it also represents the converse of what we take to be the ideal public space. In practice, in both Greece of old and the Western world today, truly public space is the exception not the rule.*

*Public space, in fact, only comes into its own with the differentiation of a nominally representative state on the one side and civil society and the market on the other.”<sup>65</sup>*

Furthermore, despite the aforementioned problems, related to hierarchies, socio-political transformations, changes in lifestyle, needs, and priorities, such as the loss of symbolism and the constant increase of traffic and privatization, also affected the decline in public squares.

*“Krier (1979) articulates a general feeling that towards the end of the 20th Century, [...] the public square had become synonymous with an empty space. The loss of symbolism in particular, was greatly lamented by Giedion (1962). The empty spaces were often filled with vehicles and many squares presented an unattractive picture as traffic islands. Gehl and Gemzoe (2001) observed that the private car was invading public space. The loss of the city squares as places for citizens, seemed to hasten the commodifying of cities in which they were viewed merely as commercial and retail opportunities; and the downgrading of the public realm by privatisation. Modern landmarks started to reflect the values of commercialism, where offices and retail units replaced buildings that were more representative of society. City streets and squares were covered-in by malls. These have the illusion of being public, especially*

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<sup>65</sup> Setha Low and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space*, (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), pg. 3-4

*as they occupy public space, but are operated by the private sector (Giddings et al, 2005).*

*There also grew a perception, [...] that public spaces were dangerous places. Fear of crime began to deter people from using them (Woolley et al, 2004). Much of this negative perception was aimed at young people, and notions such as urban youth culture, clientele of the young with large disposable income (Worpole and Knox 2007), and youthful playscapes (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002) dominating city centres, encouraged increasing privatisation. Often the process happened through public-led urban regeneration initiatives, with resulting developments being owned and managed by private landlords who have the power to restrict access and control activities (Minton, 2006). It also enabled the private sector to operate a form of social control through segregation; and the attendant growth in private security enabled a reduction in police costs. Private developments on public space provided a further income for the city authorities through the tax base, as well as offering profitable ventures for private enterprises. What was left of public space was often rented-out by local governments for commercial purposes; and what has been termed cafe-creep (Kohn, 2004), spread commercial interests even deeper into the public realm.”<sup>66</sup>*

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<sup>66</sup> Bob Giddings, James Charlton, Margaret Horne, “Public squares in European city centres”, *URBAN DESIGN International Journal*, v.16, issue 3, (2011), pg. 202-212., <https://doi.org/10.1057/udi.2011.6>.

Furthermore, globalization, mixed-populations, refugee and activist movements all over the world, minorities and weak social groups, co-created a multi-cultural palette of social inequalities in terms of social classes, financial status, beliefs etc. The rapidly increasing capitalistic lifestyle that follows “business-as-usual” led to more boundaries and exclusion in public life and space, rather than openness and integration. For example, in the United States:

*“slavery and segregation excluded Black people outright from public spaces; later, selectively enforced surveillance and stop-and-frisk practices deterred Black people from entering them. Women in early America were relegated to the “private sphere” of the home and deprived of significant opportunities to earn money, receive an education, or move freely in public without a male companion. Women in public spaces were targeted by anti-prostitution and other public-decency laws, and today they continue to contend with pervasive street harassment and sexual assault. Vagrancy laws targeted the poor and unemployed for harassment and arrest, and hostile architecture has rendered many public spaces inaccessible to those without homes and those with disabilities. Public spaces are also heavily marked with symbols of whiteness, masculinity, and dominance, from the names of streets and parks to the subjects of statues and monuments.”<sup>67</sup>*

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<sup>67</sup> Mary Anne Franks, *Ibid.*, pg. 439-440

Issues such as segregation, surveillance and sexual harassment are common problems in Europe as well and they are major factors related to the decline of public squares.



Figure 22: Al Ghadir Square, in Damascus, bombed by a suicide bomber who blew himself up, killing 20 people and injuring several others.



## RE-CONSIDERING PUBLIC SQUARES

*“What lessons can be learned from the failures of the physical public square? What is the theory of the public square that provides a way to normatively assess current structures and approaches to public interaction? [...] What are the thoughtful, intentional design choices or commitments that can be made to create true sites of public discourse and rational deliberation?”*

<sup>68</sup>

It is a fact that nowadays, public squares are not used according to the ideals of ancient past or formerly societal aspects. In the modern capitalist world of fast tempo and privacy, no emphasis is given on open dialogue and public space, and, as aforementioned above, public squares are either deserted or occupied by private individuals. Taking into account nowadays peoples' needs, social sustainability aspects, and re-imprinting successful urban examples of the past, planners could propose improvements and interventions both on existing and future public squares.

Regarding contemporary urban squares, modern approaches should obviously differ from renaissance and medieval times, since contemporary design should respond to needs of a different society. Hence, there must be a reconsideration of ideals, priorities and needs of public users, and always according to the particular characteristics of each place, such as location, climate, cultural identity etc. (site-specificity).

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<sup>68</sup> Mary Anne Franks, *Ibid.*, pg. 446

As it is mentioned in the book *Minding the City, Field Notes on Neuroscience and the Poetics of Sustainable Public Space*:

*“In contrast to the slow, evolutionary and organic creation of medieval and early Renaissance squares described by Sitte, these examples have been created top-down as grand gestures by monarchs, popes, or organizations of wealthy business and civic leaders. While the interventions have been justified with many functional arguments, their imposition has served the beliefs and/or celebrated the stature of their patrons as well. Nonetheless, they can also be credited with providing major cultural amenities and a civic identity that enhance the meaning, significance, and pride in the city for its many inhabitants. Without addressing the complex questions about equity and whom these urban interventions serve, as a form of civic art, it is important to examine what aspects of perception and cognition may have priority in giving them significance and meaning.”<sup>69</sup>*

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<sup>69</sup> Harrison Fraker, Peter Siostrom, Atanaska Foteva, *Minding the City, Field Notes on Neuroscience and the Poetics of Sustainable Public Space*, (ORO Editions, 2021), pg. 22



Figure 23: Black Lives Matter Plaza, a permanent fixture of DC's streetscape.

The reconsideration of the design of public squares should include social parameters correlated to high quality urban space —*as aforementioned above*—such as:

### **Sociability, diversity, permeability, functionality**

*“Like a good public space, squares should be sociable and robust enough to facilitate people’s diverse activities. Francis (2010) described that good public space should be well connected to other spaces rather than dividing, and offer opportunities for people to do spontaneous activities. As such, squares need to have qualities of permeability, legibility, opportunities and robustness to support different purposes (Lynch, 1981; Mossop, 2001).”<sup>70</sup>*

*“The most successful city squares, though they may have a dominant function for which each is known and by which they may be classified, are often those that sustain activity through the diversity of uses in the surrounding buildings.”<sup>71</sup>*

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<sup>70</sup> Khalilah Zakariya, Nor Zalina Harun, and Mazlina Mansor, “Spatial Characteristics of Urban Square and Sociability: A Review of the City Square, Melbourne,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 153 (2014): 678–88, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.099>.

<sup>71</sup> Cliff Moughtin, *Urban Design: Street and Square*, (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003), pg. 88

### Integration, inclusion

*"Good squares are sociable places (Whyte, 2003). This does not necessarily mean that strangers will always socialize with other strangers. It implies that people are comfortable to sit, 'hang out', or eat at the square in the public realm. Halprin (1981) explained that our experience of the city is shaped by the open spaces where people have the chance to engage with the communal city life."*<sup>72</sup>

### Strengthening of cultural and communal life

*"City design requires networks of properly conceived streets and squares – introducing pedestrians to symbolic buildings, culture, entertainment as well as commercial activity. The re-introduction of public squares needs to be viewed as part of reversing the erosion of the public sector and the public realm, and reclaiming city centres from private interests for the benefit of communities. The central idea is that people need spaces in which they can conceive of themselves as citizens committed to political debate and persuasion; and as neighbours with common educational and cultural needs. Without these spaces, citizenship wanes (Mattson, 1999)."*<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Khalilah Zakariya, Nor Zalina Harun, and Mazlina Mansor, Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Bob Giddings, James Charlton, Margaret Horne, "Public squares in European city centres", *URBAN DESIGN International Journal*, v.16, issue 3, (2011), pg. 202-212., <https://doi.org/10.1057/udi.2011.6>.

Furthermore, these parameters are related to site-specific characteristics, such as urban density, space size, materiality, landscape, climate etc. Hence new planners' attempts would be more successful when related to the specific characteristics of each urban space, instead of following an outdated or globalized norm. For example, it is obvious that public squares in sunny cities of southern Europe would need more shadowed spaces. On the other hand, public squares in northern Europe would need shelters for rain and wind-protection.

Contemporary design approaches could also include interaction and participatory planning methods in the design process, so that citizens —*who are the everyday users of urban squares*— can directly be involved in the planning.

### Climate adaption

*"[...] They also need to be comfortable places. As Chesterton (1997) points out, a space needs to offer shelter, particularly from the wind. Even relatively unattractive places have been successful where they offer sheltered open spaces in the city centre. Criteria for comfortable city centre squares have been researched, and these recognise the differences between northern and southern Europe."*<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

### Pause from noise

*The designs of urban squares aim to provide open spaces for people that connect them to streets and buildings where they can gather and pause from the city's traffic and busy streets (Carmona, Heath, Oc, & Tiesdell, 2003; Zucker, 2003)."*<sup>75</sup>

### Dimensions

Vitruvius when writing about the design of the forum claimed that its size:

*"should be proportionate to the number of inhabitants, so that it may not be too small a space to be useful, nor look like a desert waste for lack of population."*<sup>76</sup>

Years later, Gehl and Lynch supported in smaller scale spaces, people feel inclusion and intimacy, thus are more able to feel related and familiar to them. Hence, oversized public squares have to be reintroduced in a way that provide different functions, variety of urban furniture and elements for diverse activities, different materials or points of view, in order to provide smaller-scale spatial unities and consequently break this "urban voidness".

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<sup>75</sup> Khalilah Zakariya, Nor Zalina Harun, Mazlina Mansor, Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, Book V, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), pg. 132

### **Location, scale**

Urban squares have to provide good connection to the surrounding functions and areas, as well as accessibility for everyone.

### **Sustainable materials and features**

Smart lighting and seating, sustainable paving, local trees and plants, recycling trash bins are some of the basic elements that have to be taken into account.

Lynch mentions that a good urban square:

*“contains features meant to attract groups of people and to facilitate meetings: fountains, benches, shelters, and the like. Planting may or may not be prominent.”<sup>77</sup>*

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<sup>77</sup> Kevin Lynch, *A Theory of Good City Form*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981), pg. 443





Figure 24: "Reclaiming Underused Space"<sup>78</sup>: Skate-spot by Strelka KB, Strelka Architects, and Snøhetta.

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<sup>78</sup> <https://www.archdaily.com/948304/urban-acupuncture-regenerating-public-space-through-hyper-local-interventions>

Regarding other ways of (re)designing squares, visual and spiritual qualities are also important. Lynch believes that the readability, or ‘imageability’ of a city derives from the recognition of larger urban patterns, unities, and elements. Furthermore, important visual qualities in open public spaces lead to readability of city forms.

Carmona believes that urban form and appearance should satisfy those who are willing to experience it. Symbolic public spaces are also important component and part of the identity of each urban area.<sup>79</sup>

An interesting approach regarding a possible guideline for the design of urban squares, was given by Asma Mehan in “*Investigating the Role of Historical Public Squares on Promotion of Citizens’ Quality of Life*”. Taking into consideration Lynch’s and Carmona’s point of view, A. Mehan categorized the main pillars for citizens’ quality of life in three major groups. Those categories and their sub-categories could be considered as main drivers for future design attempts of public squares.

In Table 1 below, citizens’ quality of urban life indicators is presented.

<i>Table 1. Citizens’ Quality of urban life indicators.<sup>80</sup></i>		
<i>Visual (Aesthetic) Qualities</i>	<i>Functional (Physical) Qualities</i>	<i>Spiritual (Non-Physical/Identical Qualities</i>

<sup>79</sup> Asma Mehan, “Investigating the Role of Historical Public Squares on Promotion of Citizens’ Quality of Life,” *Procedia Engineering* 161 (2016): 1768–73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2016.08.774>.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 3

<i>Iconic Buildings in Surrounding</i>	<i>Special Location in the city</i>	<i>Creating sense of belonging to community and sense of place</i>
<i>Human Scale</i>	<i>Accessibility and Permeability</i>	<i>Reviving Collective Memory</i>
<i>Quality of Natural Environment</i>	<i>Providing active interaction with society and environment</i>	<i>Reflection of the sociocultural and ideological values</i>
<i>Urban Scale and Geometrical Properties</i>	<i>Responsive to human needs (Comfort, joy, security, enjoy, relaxing)</i>	<i>Sustaining in different historical periods</i>
<i>General Art</i>	<i>Multifunctional Use for different activities</i>	<i>Utilizing different human Sensations</i>
<i>View Axes Wideness</i>	<i>Attendance of Special social groups</i>	<i>Providing sense of identity</i>
<i>Responsive Environment to different people and groups</i>	<i>Providing facilities (Parking, Pavements, Urban Furniture, maintenance)</i>	<i>Formation in User's Visual Image</i>
<i>Lighting</i>	<i>Inclusiveness to all users</i>	<i>Gathering place for national, religious, social and cultural events</i>

<i>Visual Aesthetics</i>	<i>Foot Accessibility pattern</i>	<i>Uniqueness</i>
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*"If we move beyond the public square, we can imagine a multitude of spaces designed for reflection instead of performativity; accessibility instead of exclusion; and intellectual curiosity, humility, and empathy instead of ignorance, arrogance, and cruelty. We can imagine spaces designed for democracy."<sup>81</sup>*



Figure 25: Red planet / 100architects.

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<sup>81</sup> Mary Anne Franks, *Ibid.*, pg. 453

Part 2:  
Athens, Berlin, Copenhagen:  
Observations on Public Squares



## ATHENS, BERLIN, COPENHAGEN: OBSERVATIONS ON PUBLIC SQUARES

In this part, some case studies on several urban squares in Athens - Greece, Berlin - Germany and Copenhagen - Denmark are presented. Historical information, observations, sketches, photographs, as well as typological analyses and critical reflections are included in the studies.

Regarding the typological analyses, the urban squares below are categorized in different typologies, according to a primary estimation that an urban designer would do, using a map. Nolli-Map method as well as aforementioned categorizations of other theorists inspired the analyses below. Observations and critical reflections that are later presented, are correlated to the surrounding urban environment of the squares, as well as to their historical background.

The purpose of the whole analysis is to understand the character, aesthetics, functions, positive and negative qualities of urban squares and explore possibilities of improvements and interventions.







Athens, Greece

## EXARCHEIA SQUARE

Exarcheia square is located in the heart of Exarcheia, a central neighborhood of Athens. It is a gathering place for people of all ages, diverse societal groups, minorities, refugees, and young people. The square is famous for the various socio-cultural and political activities organized by anti-authoritarian and anarchist groups.

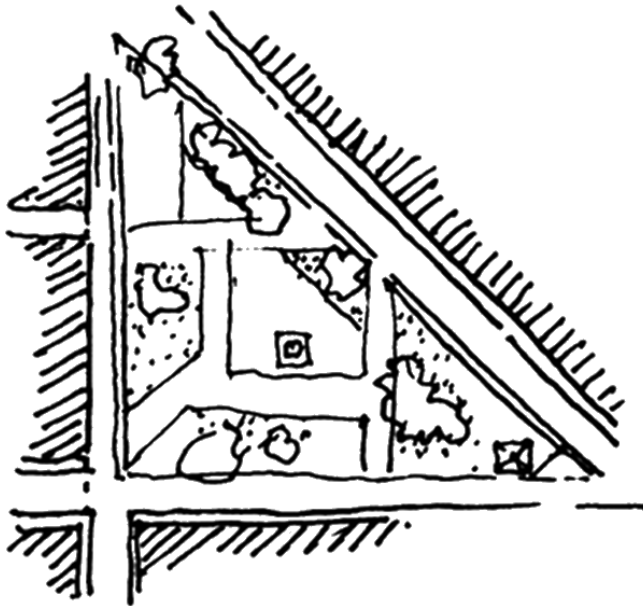
In the center of the square, a sculpture called “Τρεις Έρωτες” (“Three Loves”) was located since 1909<sup>82</sup> until September 2022. The sculpture was removed due to construction works for a new metro station following a relevant proposal. The proposal for the metro expansion has sparked controversies and a series of protests against it, since part of the square has to be destroyed and the whole intervention would contribute to the gentrification of a historical and politically active neighborhood. Furthermore, there are other metro stops close by, as well as a bus network, hence there is not really a need for a station on Exarcheia square. This new proposal clearly depicts the intention of authoritarian governments to prioritize private interests and exclude minorities, ignore social cohesion, fermentation and integration. Athenian citizens and specifically neighbors of Exarcheia continuously resist to the metro station plan, although the construction has already begun.

As the sketch below depicts, Exarcheia square is a triangular public square with a monumental sculpture in the middle. The specific sculpture (“Three Loves”), was a very common sculpture for the era it was created, and can be

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<sup>82</sup> More at: Μπίρης Η. Κώστας, *ΑΙ ΑΘΗΝΑΙ: ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ 19ου ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ 20ον ΑΙΩΝΑ*, (Αθήνα: εκδ. Μέλισσα, Δεκέμβριος 2005)

found in variations in other urban squares of Athens, as well as in other European squares of 18th-19th century.<sup>83</sup> Exploring the style and the central positioning of the sculpture, it can be claimed that it is just a decorative element. Nonetheless, in Exarcheia square, the sculpture used to provide a function, since it was connected with five steel elements that provided lighting to the square.



Moreover, as the sketch shows, it seems that the differentiation between the paths (tiles) and the natural ground (plants, soil, trees) area were designed in a strict way —also a common design approach in public squares in Europe—.

Exarcheia square also used to provide a small playground and some benches for people to sit that are now removed due to construction.

Although Exarcheia square had nothing exceptional in terms of design, the strong connection of the square to the socio-political and intellectual life of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



the neighborhood, had turned this space to a common space, a place for co-presence, integration and resistance.

As a conclusion, it seems that it is not only the design itself that gives a different character to public squares, but mostly the connection to the location and its socio-political needs that reflect historical changes.

[Figure 27: "Three Loves", Exarcheia square]

## VATHIS SQUARE

Vathis Square (official name Anexartisias Square <sup>84</sup>) is an urban square located in Vathis district, in the center of Athens.

The word “vathis” means “deep” in Greek (βαθύς). The square took the name Platea Vathis due to the stagnant waters of Kyklovoros stream which run under today's Marni Street —*the central street located next to Vathis square*—. At the point where the stream flowed, the ground of Vathis square deepened. <sup>85</sup>

The square is located on an intersection of important axes that lead to very central places of Athens. When the city of Athens was declared by Othon as the capital of Greece and public services were established, Vathis area was almost deserted and excluded from the city plan.

Later, due to the expansion of the city, Vathis area was also included in the city plan and the first houses were built. Some years later, Kyklovoros stream was transformed exactly under Marni avenue, thus creating a triangular urban square that was later named Vathis. In the past, this square provided shelter and shade because of its huge poplar tree, the famous poplar of Vathia, which was cut down in 1926. <sup>86</sup>

As the sketch depicts, a huge “urban void” is shaped next to Vathis square, due to the intersection of five axes. In terms of size, this urban void seems to be larger than Vathis square size. This fact, in combination to the high traffic

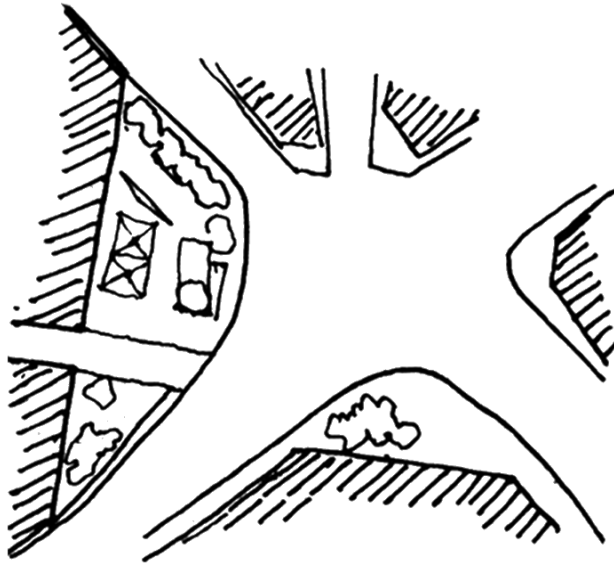
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<sup>84</sup> From the Greek word ανεξαρτησία (anexartisia) = independence

<sup>85</sup> More at: Μπίρης Η. Κώστας, *ΑΙ ΑΘΗΝΑΙ: ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ 19ου ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ 20ον ΑΙΩΝΑ*, (Αθήνα: εκδ. Μέλισσα, Δεκέμβριος 2005)

<sup>86</sup> *Μεγάλη Ελληνική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, τόμος 6, (Αθήνα: Πυρσός Α.Ε., 1934), σελ. 466

of the surrounding area, incommode the accessibility to the square. As a result, the square is mostly accessible by the side of the urban block to which it is attached.



Regarding other findings, the plants of the square are poorly treated and there are a few places for people to sit. It seems that spots for shelter and relaxation are provided by the wide umbrellas and seats and tables underneath them.

The aforementioned urban furniture (umbrellas, seats, tables) is private and belongs to the coffeeshops of the ground floor. More than half of the size of Vathis square is used by businesses such as food service.

Furthermore, as it is shown in the picture below, there are some buildings from the new-classical era as well as modernistic blocks of flats from the 60s-70s, that are attached to the square or located around it. The surrounding hardscape is creating a diverse and interesting urban environment that could potentially be highlighted and better connected to the functions of the square.

Another advantage is the pedestrian street between two urban blocks, —as shown in the picture and the sketch—, that leads to the square and could potentially be improved in terms of design, functions etc.

Due to several issues, such as ownership, private benefits, poor design elements, high traffic, decline of the whole area etc., Vathis square has been facing problems of crime, drug-dealing, prostitution. These issues can be seen as potentially transformative situations into a social, vibrant, inclusive and sustainable urban environment.



Figure 28: Vathis square, Athens

## VIKTORIA SQUARE

Viktoria Square is a square of the Municipality of Athens, Greece, located between “Tritis Septemvriou” and “Aristotelous” streets. It was named Viktoria in honor of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom, during the occasion dedicated to the annexation of the Ionian Islands to Greece in 1864.

The Electric Railway line runs underneath the square, while there is also a station on the square that connects the level ground to the underground railway.

In the center of Viktoria square, a sculptural complex of Theseus and Deidamia is located. It was created by Johannes Pfuhl (1846–1914).<sup>87</sup>

Regarding the location in general, the homonymous Viktoria district, has been through several developments and transformations. In the 40s, the district had been one of Athens' most privileged and expensive areas, comparable to Kolonaki<sup>88</sup>. In the area, there are remarkable examples of classical modernism, luxurious apartments and emblematic buildings of high quality architectural details, which were owned by the past-bourgeoisie of Athens.

Gradually, the area began to decline due to several social transformations, such as its abandonment by its original inhabitants. The neighborhood today is generally regarded as degraded and faces problems of drug dealing, prostitution and crime.

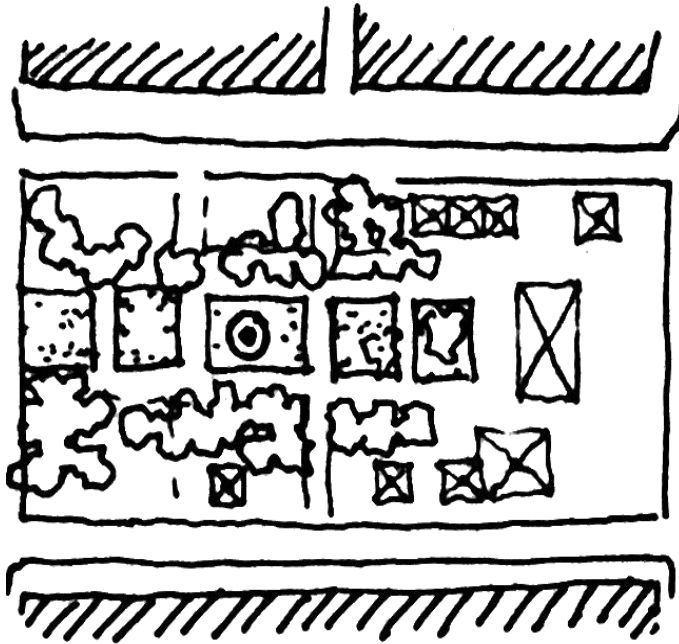
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<sup>87</sup> More at: Ελένη Γουρνέλου, «Χώρος, Μνήμη και Ετερότητα στο κέντρο της Αθήνας: Η «Πλατεία Βικτωρίας» μέσα από τις αναπαραστάσεις των Ελλήνων», (Μεταπτυχιακή εργασία, Πανεπιστήμιο Αιγαίου, Ιανουάριος 2013)

<sup>88</sup> Kolonaki area: Probably the most expensive area of Athens City Center.



As the sketch depicts, Viktoria square is a typical example of old-fashioned public square, characterized by strict distinction between rectangular green areas and paved areas. It provides some benches and lights, as well as the dominant monumental sculpture inspired by Greek mythology.



Another important characteristic is that one of the short sides of the square is used as an entrance-exit for the underground railway. This fact creates an interesting situation: The railway-station-part of the square is mostly used as a passage, while the rest of the square is mostly used by neighbors.

Taking into account the surrounding environment to which the square is almost attached —*only two narrow streets separate the square from the high surrounding urban blocks*—, the ground floors are mostly occupied by restaurants, bars and coffeeshops, which they expand their use on Viktoria square, by providing sheltering tents, tables and seats. The private use for food service on public squares is always a controversial situation and opens up this huge discussion: *Where is the line between public and private...?*

Since the neighborhood of Viktoria started losing its glamor and bourgeoisie, the whole area as well as Viktoria square, were gradually transformed into a center of mixed-population, refugees, working class people and nowadays reflect the socially poor part of Athens.

Regarding its social substance, the square within its urban neighborhood has a great potential and could be transformed into an open public space of social integration, which could bring on intimacy and safety for people of all social classes, genders, beliefs etc.



Figure 29: Victoria Square

## MONASTIRAKI SQUARE

Monastiraki square is a famous meeting point not only because it is located in the heart of Athens but also because there are several ways to access it from various locations. A Metro and railway station are attached to the square and provide good connections to many directions.

The word *monastiraki* (in Greek: μοναστηράκι) means *small monastery* in Greek. The name of Monastiraki square refers to the orthodox monastery that occupied the square during the Ottoman times. Nowadays the church remains on the square.

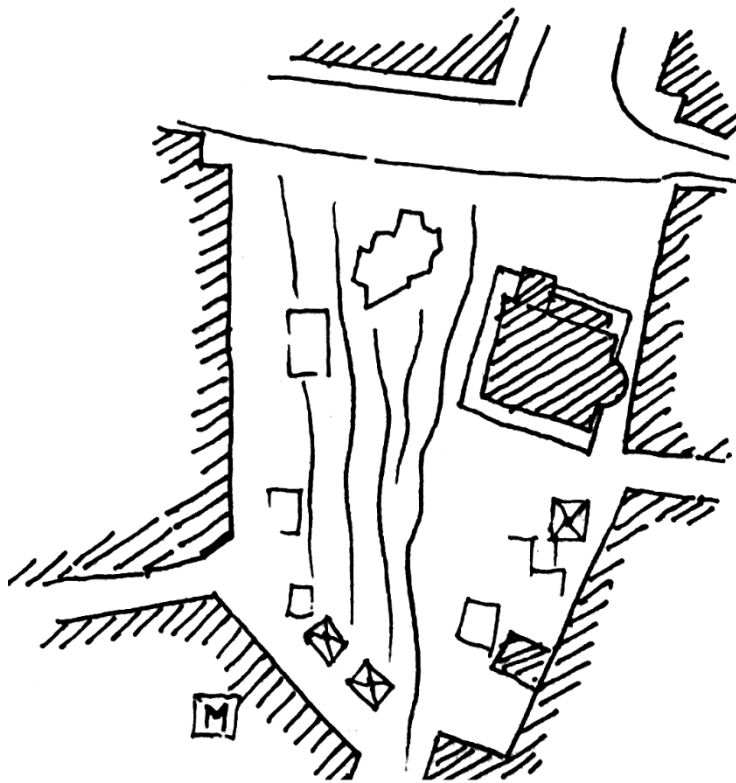
In 1759, a mosque was built there by the Ottoman governor of Athens, Mustapha Agha Tzistarakis. According to tradition, Tzistarakis used one of the pillars from the Temple of Olympian Zeus in order to make lime for the building, although it is more likely that he used one of the columns of the nearby Hadrian's Library. The function of the Mosque strengthened the economic growth of the surrounding area, highlighting Monastiraki square, that was used as a marketplace. Later around the 70s, the Mosque became a part of the Museum of Greek Folk Art. In 1981 the building was damaged by an earthquake and was re-opened to the public in 1991.<sup>89</sup> The Mosque, the Christian-orthodox church, as well as the Monastiraki station are emblematic features of the area.

Moreover, underneath the cobblestone pavement of the square runs an ancient river named Eridanus, which was considered as sacred river in

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<sup>89</sup> More at: Θανάσης Γιοχάλας, Τόνια Καφετζάκη, *Αθήνα: Ιχνηλατώντας την πόλη με οδηγό την ιστορία και τη λογοτεχνία*, (Αθήνα: εκδ. Εστία, Ιανουάριος 2013)

ancient Athens. During the construction of the Metro and railway station, workers encountered exceptional difficulties due to the riverbed. Nowadays, the only uncovered part of the river is located in the archeological site of Kerameikos which is next to Monastiraki area. The traces of the lost riverbed that were rediscovered during constructions, are partially visible at an exhibition section inside Monastiraki station.<sup>90</sup>



Furthermore, Monastiraki square is still used as an open marketplace, since freelance merchants occasionally sell their products there, such as nuts, fresh fruits and vegetables, grilled corn, handmade accessories etc. The level ground of the surrounding built environment is 100% occupied by commercial functions.

Regarding contemporary events and features, the square is occasionally

<sup>90</sup> More at: Σκουμπουρδή Άτεμις, *Μοναστηράκι-Πλάκα: Οι γειτονιές των θεών*, (εκδ. Πατάκης, Νοέμβριος 2016)

occupied by street art shows, street dancers and musicians, and it provides irregular-shaped wooden and steel sculptures for seating.

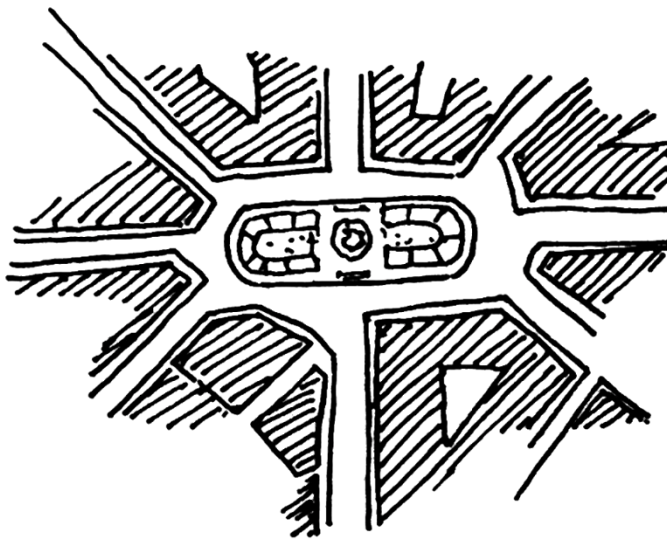
In terms of typology, we would say that Monastiraki square is shaped organically and it is a kind of “amorphous” square as R. Krier would maybe support. It does not have a strict shape and it cannot be identified as a rectangular, triangular or circular square. This is a reasonable morphology, since the open space of the square began as a left-over space resulted from the surrounding buildings that were completed in different periods, hence it was never really planned. The Mosque, the Christian-orthodox church, the metro station (in new-classical style), as well as the surrounding modernistic blocks create a diverse and organic frame of an open space that eventually was turned into a public square.



Figure 30: Monastiraki square

## VARNAVA SQUARE

Varnava Square is one of the six urban squares of Pagkrati neighborhood. It is a gathering place for all ages that provides a relaxing and also vibrant atmosphere. It gives off a sense of camaraderie, and also acts as a connection point between the areas of Metz and Pagkrati. After its recent reconstruction in 2015, it has seen days of glory, attracting thousands of residents as well as tourists. Surrounded by cafes, restaurants, sought-after wine bars and providing lots of greenery and shelter, Varnava square is open to everyone. Children playing, elderly people talking and young people wandering around shape the every-day activities of the square. A part of the periphery of the square is occupied by the surrounding food service.



In terms of typology, the oval shape of Varnava square is a less common design option for public squares. Regarding its position and relation to the surrounding urban blocks, it could be claimed that the square acts as a round-about.

Round-about type of squares is usually unsuccessful in terms of public use, since in order to reach it, it is always mandatory to cross the street around it. But in the case of Varnava square, this “oval-round-about” works pretty well, due to the low traffic and regional use of the streets nearby, as well as the small size of the square. The square as well the streets follow the neighborhood-scale, hence the urban atmosphere is calm and user-friendly. The new elements that were added during the reconstruction of Varnava square, such as plants, well-preserved greenery, the provided steel frames for climbing plants, new sustainable materials, good lighting and other furniture, turned the square into a very successful example of a re-designed public square, that is now open to everyone.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> More at: Δημήτρης Ανδρικόπουλος, Άλκηστις Δαλκαβούκη, Νικολέττα Ραλλάτου, Χριστίνα Ραφτοπούλου, Στέφανος Τσιγδινός, «Οικειοποίηση του δημόσιου χώρου: η περίπτωση του Παγκρατίου, Το ζήτημα της μεθοδολογίας και της θεωρίας στο σχεδιασμό του χώρου», (Μεταπτυχιακή εργασία, ΕΜΠ, Φεβρουάριος 2017)



Figures 31, 32: Varnava Square, Pagkrati, Athens.



## OMONOIA SQUARE

Omonoia square is probably the most central urban square in Athens. It marks the northern corner of the downtown area, as defined by the city plans of the 19th century, and is one of the city's principal traffic hubs. It is served by Omonoia metro and railway station.

Omonoia square is one of the oldest squares in the city of Athens and an important commercial centre. It is located at the intersection of six main streets (Panepistimiou, Stadiou, Athenas, Peiraios, Agiou Konstantinou Street and Tritis Septemvriou Street).

The square was constructed in 1846 and its original name was “Plateia Anaktoron” (Palace Square), since according to the initial urban plan of Athens in 1834(1833;) —*proposed by the architects Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert*—, the area was intended to be used for the construction of the palace. Later, the square was renamed “Othonos Square” in honor of King Otto (Othon of Greece). After Otto was deposed, in 1862, the square was named “Omonoia Square” (*omonoia* from Greek *ομόνοια* = concord, peace), due to the leaders of the opposing political factions who gave the oath of peace to stop hostilities.<sup>92</sup>

At the end of the 19th century the square underwent several formative changes. Trees were placed throughout the square, a polygonal platform was placed at the center of the square and lighting systems were installed. During

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<sup>92</sup> Hisham Abusaada, Abeer Elshater, and Dennis Rodwell, *Transforming Urban Nightlife and the Development of Smart Public Spaces* (Hershey, PA: Engineering Science Reference, IGI Global, 2021), pg. 196

those times, Omonoia square was a meeting point where social life thrived, it was surrounded by numerous hotels and also the railway's starting point. From 1925 to 1930, the underground railway between Piraeus and Athens required further redesign of the square. Omonoia square was transformed into a circular/round-about type of square and marble bars were put at the entrances of the railway station.



Figure 33: Omonoia Square, 1910

In 1958 the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation held a competition for the development of Omonoia Square. The new proposal included a circular fountain in the middle of which a sculpture under the name “Poseidon” would be placed. The square was redesigned, although without

the placement of the sculpture. The fountain of Omonoia became a famous feature of the city and the square itself was often shown in Greek movies of that time.

Figure 34: Omonoia Square, 1934-1937





Figure 35: Omonoia Square, ~1988

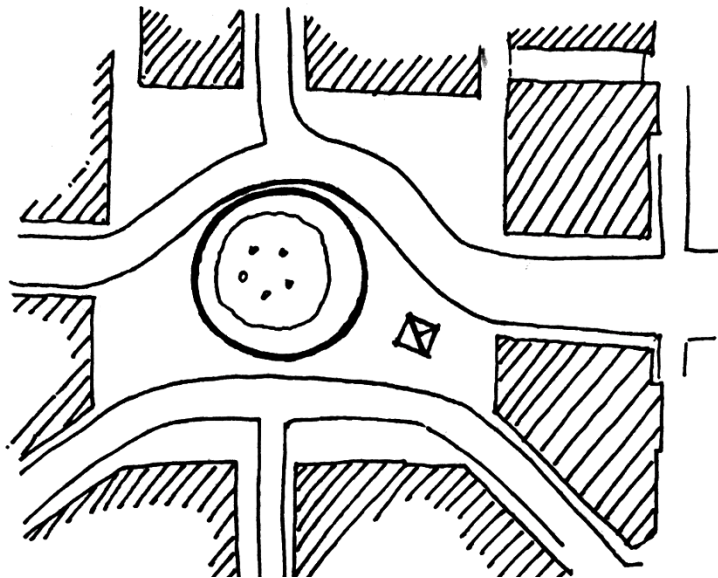
In 1988, the first oversized contemporary sculpture named “The Runner” was placed in the middle of the fountain. In November 1992, the fountain was destroyed and the sculpture was removed, since the area had to be excavated for the construction of a new metro line and station. Another feature of Omonoia square is the “Pentakiklon” (the “Five-ring” sculpture); it was placed at the square in 2001 but never fully functioned according to the architect’s plans—it was meant to be a sculpture-in-motion when water would

run through it—. The sculpture was finally restored and put in motion in 2020.  
93

During 2019-2020, after several aesthetical changes that had eventually led to the degradation of Omonoia area, Omonoia square underwent another major reconstruction. The municipality of Athens, supported by public and private funding, restored the fountain and replaced the old pavement with thermoneutral materials that reduce the thermal footprint of the entire square. The redesigned square was opened to the public on May 14, 2020.

Regarding the surrounding environment, two of the most recognizable buildings are the old neoclassical hotels of the area; “Bagkeion” and “Megas Alexandros”.

The sketch, as well as the photograph below, depict today’s situation in Omonoia square. It seems that Omonoia square is mostly a space that acts as bone of contention between political parties, rather than a public space that prioritizes social needs.



<sup>93</sup> More at: Μπίρης Η. Κώστας, *ΑΙ ΑΘΗΝΑΙ: ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ 19ου ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ 20ον ΑΙΩΝΑ*, (Αθήνα: εκδ. Μέλισσα, Δεκέμβριος 2005)

and: Κώστας Χ. Χατζιώτης, *Πλατεία Ομονοίας: Η καρδιά της Αθήνας*, (Αθήνα: Σύλλογος των Αθηναίων, 1993)

After several unsuccessful transformations, history has clearly shown that such a huge open space surrounded by high-traffic roads could not be easily accessible, especially in case it works as a huge round-about. Although after traffic flow interventions the square is now attached to two blocks, its huge size creates an urban division that still incommodes accessibility.

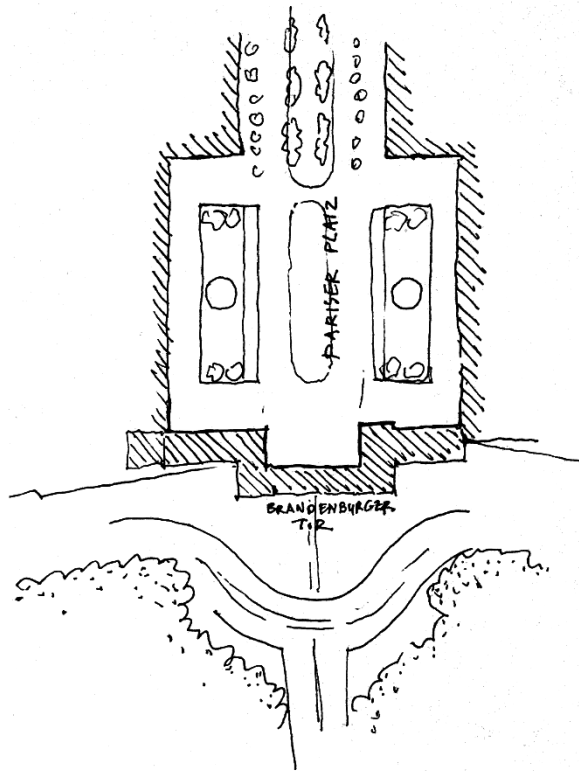


Furthermore, the unreasonably oversized fountain gives a past-mongering, monumental character to the square, in a way that eventually “cancels” a large amount of square meters that could alternatively be used for other important functions and furniture, such as benches, shelters, plants, public toilets, playground equipment and much more. In this way, the square is used as a “weapon” of political and financial power against public use, excluding people from the square. *[Figure 36: Omonoia square, nowadays.]*



Berlin, Germany

## PARISER PLATZ



Pariser Platz is one of the major central squares of the city of Berlin. It is located at the end of the “Unter den Linden” Boulevard in the “Mitte” district. Pariser Platz is one of the three squares designed by Philipp Gerlachi, Friedrich Wilhelm I's architect and it has a rectangular-quadrangle form. For this reason, it was initially named Viereck Square (in German: viereck = square) but was later changed to Pariser Platz, in memory of the Paris occupation by Prussian troops during 1870. The Brandenburg Gate, probably the most famous gate of the Berlin Wall, is also in this square.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>94</sup> More at: Wolfgang Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe: Regime and Architecture 900-1900*, (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1988), pg. 212-220



Pariser Platz can be considered as a closed type of square, since it is surrounded by buildings. It can also be claimed that Pariser Platz is a dominant type of square, due to the presence of the Brandenburg Gate, which is a monumental construction in terms of size, architecture and decoration.

During World War II, Pariser Platz was intensively bombarded. Apart from the Brandenburg Gate, the surrounding buildings were destroyed. Pariser Platz became a completely idle and almost deserted square afterwards. After the devastations, authorities of East Germany made important decisions for the vacant square. In order to highlight the quadrature-shape of the square and define its boundaries, trees were planted around it. Despite the war, authorities had to preserve the square since it had a major significance in Berliners' urban life. The form of the square, the surrounding structures, as well as the elevation differences were preserved.

In 1989, the first demolitions of the Berlin Wall began at Pariser Platz, in front of the Brandenburg Gate. After the re-union of East and West Germany, Berlin was declared as the capital city once again. With the act of the Senate of Berlin, Pariser Platz was considered again as the center of the city. Since the building of the German Parliament ("Reichstag") was located very close to the square, the administrative buildings of the state were also positioned close to the square. The Adlon Hotel ("Adlon Kempinski"), that was once in the square, was rebuilt and took its former place. As part of the rejuvenation project, the American and French Embassies, the Academy of Art, office buildings, and the DZ Bank building –*designed by Frank Gehry*– were built in the surrounding area.

The materials used in the reconstruction of the square were selected according to its history. Cube stones were used in pedestrianized paths and elevation differences, carved stones were put in places open to traffic. In the reconstruction process of the surrounding buildings, several criteria regarding the colors and materials were set, in order to prevent irrelevant choices that would not fit to the square.<sup>95</sup>

Nowadays, Pariser Platz is mostly an attraction for foreigners and visitors, rather than a public square in everyday use. It seems that the monumental style of the square does not enhance everyday appropriation and its main users are mostly tourists. Nonetheless, due to the historical significance of Pariser Platz, it is still considered as one of the most important squares in Europe, where people occasionally gather there, in order to freely communicate their wishes and complaints to authorities and demonstrate. Furthermore, many fiestas related to the New Year's celebrations, take place at the square. Pariser Platz can also be considered as "The Symbol of Separation and Union", due to its relation to the Berlin Wall.

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<sup>95</sup> More at: Andrea Bärnreuther, Paul Kahlfeldt, Josef Paul Kleihues, Thorsten Scheer, *City of Architecture, Architecture of the City: Berlin 1900-2000*, (pub. Nicolai, January 2000) and: Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *German Architecture for a Mass Audience*, (London: Routledge, 2000)



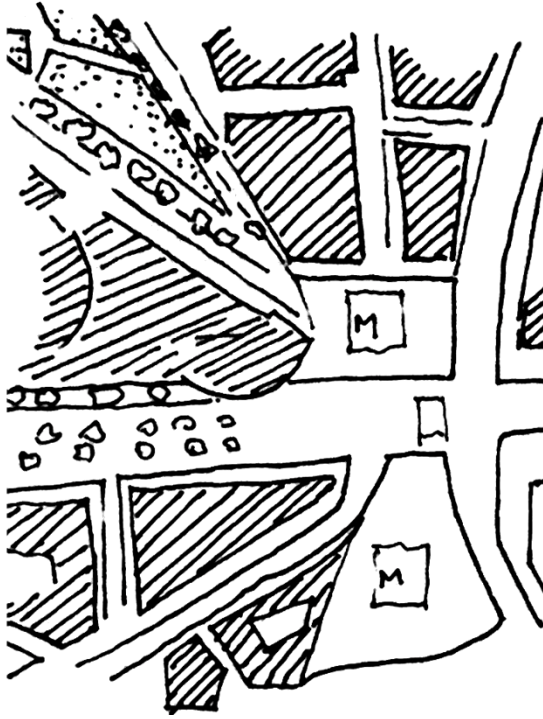
Figure 37: Pariser Platz, around 1915.

## POTSDAMER PLATZ

Potsdamer Platz is a public square and traffic intersection in the center of Berlin, Germany, lying about 1 km south of the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag (German Parliament Building), and close to the southeast corner of the Tiergarten park. Since German reunification, Potsdamer Platz has been a site of major redevelopment projects. It was totally destroyed during World War II and then left desolated during the Cold War era. Nowadays the square and the surrounding area are considered as the most bustling traffic intersection in Europe.

Its street layout followed the Baroque-style grid pattern and was based on two main axes: Friedrichstraße running north-south and Leipziger Strasse running east-west. All the new suburbs were absorbed into Berlin around 1709–10. In 1721–3 a south-west expansion of Friedrichstadt was planned under the orders of King Frederick William I, which was completed in 1732–4 by architect Philipp Gerlach. During the expansion, Wilhelmstrasse, a new north-south axis, was emerged.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the surrounding area of Potsdam Gate began to develop, it was a district of quiet villas. Many rich citizens moved outside the Berlin Customs Wall and built spacious houses around the trading post along the developing boulevards, as well as around the southern edge of Tiergarten park. The development was piecemeal, but in 1828, the area received royal approval for a more purposeful metamorphosis into an even more rich residential colony, which would gradually be full of palatial houses and villas.



In 1838, the Potsdamer Bahnhof, –which was the terminal of a 26 km line connecting the city of Berlin to Potsdam–, opened, and the first railway line came to Berlin.

Since the authorities would not allow the new railway line to breach the Customs Wall, the line route had to stop just at Potsdamer Platz. This fact signified the beginning of an important transformation of the area and the square itself, into a bustling focal point.

Later, in October 1851, a railway line started running through Potsdamer Platz, just inside the Customs Wall, crossing numerous streets and squares at the street level. The purpose was to allow goods to be transported in various stations of Berlin, thus creating a traffic obstruction that lasted for twenty years.

Years later, Potsdamer Platz was also the location of Germany's first electric street lights, installed in 1882 by the electrical giant Siemens, which was founded and based in the city.

With the construction of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961, Potsdamer Platz was physically divided in two parts. What had once been a busy intersection, after the Wall construction had become totally desolated. With the clearance of the bomb-damaged buildings on both sides, the area of dozens of hectares looked almost like a desert. Further demolitions occurred up until 1976.<sup>96</sup>

With the demolition of the Wall in 1989, the Senate of Berlin decided to expropriate the surrounding area of the square. With an international competition for redesigning Potsdamer Platz in 1991, a major transformation started in the square.<sup>97</sup> World-renowned architectural offices participated in the competition, but the architectural office of Hilmer & Sattler from Munich, won the masterplan phase. Due to the high financial demands of the redesign proposal, the masterplan was divided into four sections and sold to Daimler, Sony, Beisheim and Park Kolonnaden. Since the area was promoted as Berlin's new face, the companies contracted with famous architects such as Renzo Piano and Helmut Jahn.

The project consisted of 50% office, 20% residence and 30% shopping area. The Sony Center project, financed by Sony, was designed by the German architect Helmut Jahn. The most important feature of the building is the inner courtyard parallel to Potsdamer Street. Surrounded by office buildings, the courtyard is covered with glass that is suspended at a height of 103m and has

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<sup>96</sup> More at: Raimund Hertzsch, "Der Potsdamer Platz in Berlin um 1930", *Der historische Ort*, no. 184, (Berlin: Kai Homilius Verlag, 2006) and: John Allen, "Ambient power: Berlin's Potsdamer Platz and the seductive logic of public spaces", *Urban Studies*, 43(2), 2006, pg. 441–455.

<sup>97</sup> Raimund Hertzsch, *Ibid.*

also a symbolic quality for the design. Renzo Piano was the other famous architect who got involved in another phase of the project and was financed by Daimler. The most prominent feature of Piano's design is sustainability. The Berlin Film Festival has been held in these places for years.<sup>98</sup>



Figure 38: Potsdamerplatz, Berlin.

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<sup>98</sup> More at: [architectuul.com/architecture/potsdamer-platz-masterplan](http://architectuul.com/architecture/potsdamer-platz-masterplan) and: Yamin von Rauch, Jochen Visscher, *The Potsdamer Platz: Urban architecture for a new Berlin*, (Berlin: Jovis editions, 2002)

## LEIPZIGER PLATZ

Leipziger Platz has an octagonal form and is one of the three urban squares designed by Gerlach. It is located at the eastern side of Potsdam Gate, which is a part of the walls of Berlin. In 1823, the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel redesigned Potsdam Gate, and the area up to the west of the Gate had a more circular form.<sup>99</sup>

*“Leipziger Platz was reduced to ruins during the Second World War and was once part of the no man's land surrounding the Berlin Wall, but has since been reconstructed in its original configuration, albeit with modern architecture. Before World War II the area around the Wilhelmstraße intersection was one of the centres of German national administration, being the location of various governmental buildings. Near Leipziger Platz was the first seat of the German Reichstag parliament, before the inauguration of the Reichstag building in 1894. The blockade of the Soviet side on 13 August 1961 passed between Potsdamer Platz and Leipziger Platz. This barrier gradually transformed the area into a gigantic undeveloped land in the middle of the city, consisting of the strip of death between the barrier walls on the land of East Berlin and a depopulated desert on the part of West Berlin. All the buildings that currently exist on Potsdamer Platz and Leipziger Platz arose after the German Unity in 1990. It is noteworthy in that context that the*

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<sup>99</sup> Yamin von Rauch, Jochen Visscher, *The Potsdamer Platz: Urban architecture for a new Berlin*, (Berlin: Jovis editions, 2002)



*Berlin Senate decided in 1992 explicitly against the elaboration of any strategic planning document for the former border strip as a whole, even though by that time numerous renowned architects and urban planners – notably in the course of an exhibition organized in 1991 by the Museum of Architecture in Frankfurt-upon-Main – had already developed alternative design visions such as turning the whole strip into a public precinct.”<sup>100</sup>*



Figure 39: Leipzigerplatz, aerial photo.

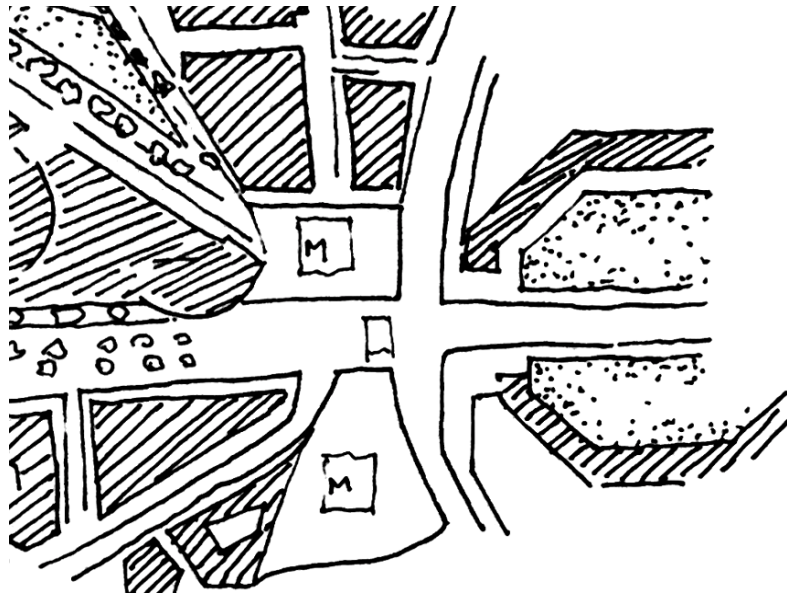
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<sup>100</sup> Lin Yuhang, Fang Siwei, “[Re-Berlin]: The theme of reconstruction in the area of Leipziger platz, The Reconstruction of The Ethnological Museum In Berlin”, (Master’s Thesis, Politecnico di Milano, 2020)

## POTSDAMER PLATZ & LEIPZIGER PLATZ: FURTHER OBSERVATIONS AND CRITIQUE

Potsdamer Platz and Leipziger Platz are located next to each other, *–both divided into two parts, and both surrounding the same axis–* characterized by huge open spaces and oversized surrounding blocks.

Regarding the division in two parts of both squares, the “spatial void” has derived from the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Since then, this “urban pause” is used as a huge axis of high traffic and public transport exchange spot, thus creating an urban confusion of vehicles and noise. Both squares mostly remind us of boulevards, rather than public squares.



In conclusion, these two public squares are mostly called squares but are not representative examples of well-designed and functional public spaces. Since there are no design intentions for smaller-scale functional spots on their open space, these squares are used as spots of transition that prioritize traffic and private needs.

The construction of the train station, the trade development, the numerous hotels, casinos and business centers of the area have prioritized private interests. Furthermore, the government of East Berlin decided that the historical forum of the city should remain the same –*this was also decided for Pariser Platz*–. The old-fashioned idea of city blocks and networks, in combination with the over-capitalized European trend, tend to the abandonment of public squares.

Regarding this imposing European trend of secluded urban spaces, lost in the noise and the traffic, Tom Wilkinson in *The Architectural Review*, mentions that in the city of rapid circulation:

*“the square dissolves in a series of blocks floating in traffic fumes. The character of such pseudopublic space tends to force the subject into self seclusion, a manufactured depression given form by spaces that can seem joyless but for the buzz of acquisition.”*<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Tom Wilkinson, “Typology: Public Square,” *Architectural Review*, September 16, 2022, <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/typology-public-square>.



Figure 40: Potsdamer Platz & Leipziger Platz, aerial photo.

## ARKONAPLATZ

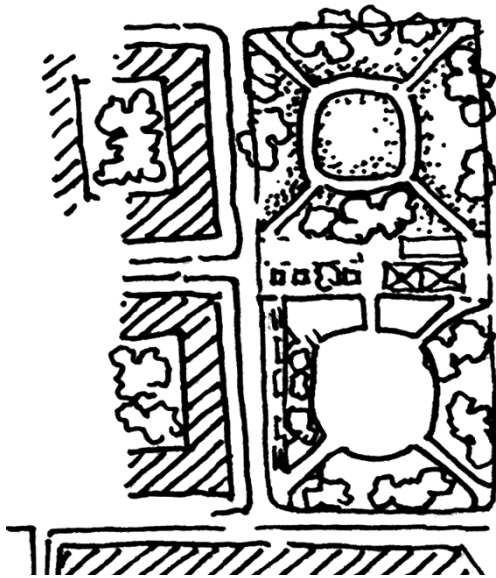
Arkonaplatz is an 1.5-hectare urban square in Berlin's Mitte district. It was created in the middle of the 19th century. It was designed and laid out, according to the building regulations of 1853 and the Hobrecht plan, as Square C of Department XI. In 1875, it received its name "Arkona" after the steep coast of Cape Arkona on the island of Rügen, and a transformation period of its surrounding neighborhood into a residential area started.

Instead of the 1887 design as an ornamental square, a children's playground was added to the square in 1918. Later, the magistrate ordered the square to be decorated with paintings and features. In 1927, a pelican and a seal made of shell limestone by Martin Müller, a penguin and an anglerfish by W. Schade, also made of shell limestone, were positioned there. For the paddling pool, four groups of children made of bronze by Georg Hengstenberg were set up.

The square and its surroundings developed into a quarter for poor population groups. During the World War II, about 1000 of the more than 4000 dwellings at its boundaries were destroyed. The demolished buildings were cleared away and new apartment buildings were built there during the 50s and 60s. From the 1970s onwards, the GDR extensively restored and partially modernized the square, and the overall area was redesigned. During the extensive redevelopment of the residential area around Arkonaplatz, the section of Swinemünder Strasse that runs across the (present) square was integrated into the square. Furthermore, a weekly market has been held in Arkonaplatz since 1987.

After the end of the GDR, the square was developed into a residential area for young families. Children could use the spacious playground and the parents could join the restaurants surrounding the square.

On the west side of the square is one of the oldest school buildings in Berlin (now an elementary school called “Grundschule am Arkonaplatz”), but it is not listed as a historical monument. On the east side of the square is a historical toilet building that nowadays is out of function.<sup>102</sup>



Arkonaplatz is considered as a quiet square and has retained much of its original character.

As the sketch depicts, Arkonaplatz is a quite big urban square which consists of two rectangular areas. In the first one, there are some benches, trees and a playground. In the second rectangle, a few benches and thicker layers of greenery are provided.

Although Arkonaplatz is an old-fashioned square in terms of typology, it really seems functional, for four main reasons: It is located in a calm residential neighborhood that prioritizes family and children needs (eg. new-style playground equipment), it is easily accessible since it is surrounded by

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<sup>102</sup> More at: Florian Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990*, (London: Routledge, 1st Edition, 2009)

streets of low traffic, it has a mixed-character in terms of natural elements and rough materials –*it provides qualities similar to a park*–, and last but not least: the lane that is shaped in-between the two rectangular spaces, is occasionally used as an open market which provides several products. This fact gives an even more open and vibrant character to the square.

Figure 41: Playground in Arkonaplatz.



In general, Arkonaplatz is one of the most successful examples of public squares in Berlin, that still has a great potential for slight interventions and improvements.

## JOHN F. KENNEDY PLATZ

John-F.-Kennedy-Platz, formerly Rudolph-Wilde-Platz, is a square in Schöneberg (district of West-Berlin), located in front of the City Hall of Schöneberg (Rathaus Schöneberg). It was there, on June 26, 1963, that US President John F. Kennedy gave his famous speech to the Berliners, in which he stated: "Ich bin ein Berliner".

The square was renamed John-F.-Kennedy-Platz on 25 November 1963, three days after Kennedy's assassination and a large plaque dedicated to Kennedy, mounted on wall next to the entrance of the City Hall, was unveiled one year after Kennedy's speech.

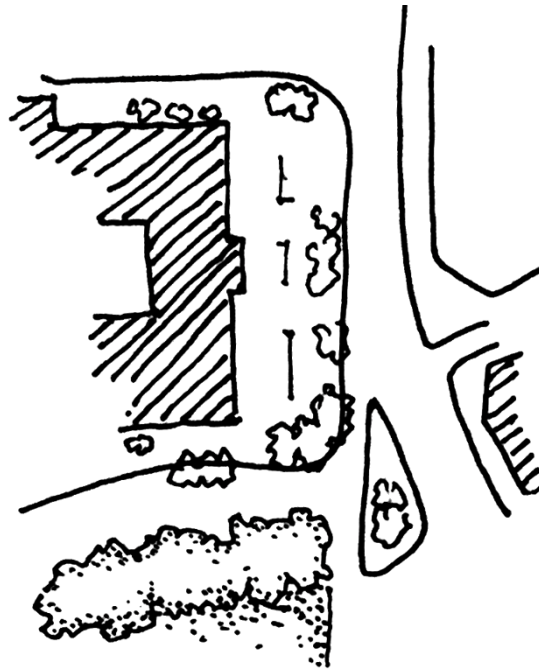
John-F.-Kennedy-Platz is a common case of urban square that is called "square" but only occasionally, mostly for civic culture reasons, is used as public square.<sup>103</sup>

The locality of Schöneberg provides a lot of good urban qualities for the citizens and since Schöneberg City Hall is located exactly in-between Rudolf-Wilde park and Heinrich-Lassen Park, *–two really large and important parks of Berlin–*, John-F.-Kennedy square could potentially be transformed into a vibrant place that acts as an activity focus for Schöneberg, as well as a great connection point between the two parks.

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<sup>103</sup> More at: Andreas Daum, *Kennedy in Berlin*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pg. 136-156.





Furthermore, as the top-view sketch depicts, the building of the City Hall of Schöneberg is a huge, monumental volume, hence the “square” looks a tiny lane in front of the building.

Apart from a few trees, some bike stops as well as a few lights and the occasional flea market, John-F.-Kennedy square is mostly used as an open parking lot by individuals.

Although the open space looks tiny, in fact it is not at all. There is plenty of space for several functions, as well as great potential for pedestrianization of some of the surrounding streets that are connected to the square.



Figure 42: Schöneberg City Hall, in Kennedy square, Berlin.

## TEODOR-HEUSS-PLATZ

Theodor-Heuss-Platz (colloquially called Theo by locals) is a large city square in the Westend district of Berlin. The square is located at the western end of the wide Kaiserdamm boulevard, leading via Straße des 17. Juni to several important toponyms that are located in the same axis, such as: Ernst-Reuter Platz, Tiergarten and the Berlin Victory Column, Brandenburg Gate and Pariser Platz. Unter den Linden and the site of the City Palace in Berlin Mitte are also located in the western part of the same axis.

Underneath the square is the U-Bahn station which is also called Theodor-Heuss-Platz.

The square was part of the development of the new Westend district during 1904-1908, and before and after National Socialist era, it was named "Reichskanzlerplatz", due to the office of the Imperial Chancellor.

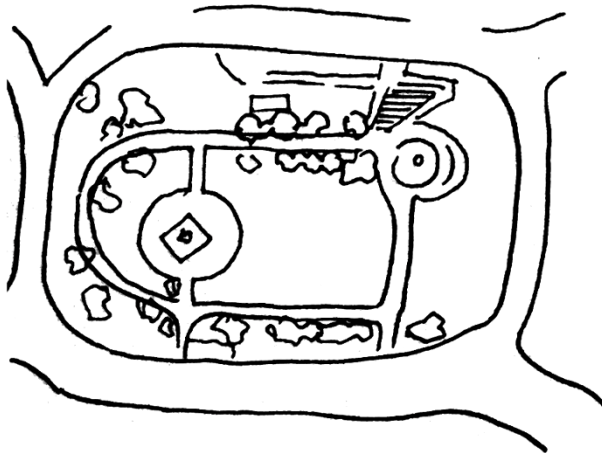
During Nazi times, the square was renamed Adolf-Hitler-Platz on April 21, 1933. According to the Welthauptstadt Germania plans, organized by Hitler and the architect Albert Speer, the square would have a significant role at the western end of the monumental east-west axis, since it would include a vast heroes' memorial *—that was never constructed—*.

Regarding its present name, the square was renamed "Teodor-Heuss-Platz" six days after the death of the President Theodor Heuss, on December 18, 1963.

Regarding the surrounding built environment, at the south of the square is the former Edinburgh House (1960-1962), the Deutschlandhaus and the Amerikahaus (1928-1930). In 1970, on the eastern edge of the square, the

construction of 18-storey high TV centre of the former Sender Freies Berlin (SFB) broadcaster was completed.

Furthermore, some interesting sculptures and monuments are placed in the square. In 1955, an eternal flame monument was erected by compatriot groups, organized by the Federation of Expellee, in order to commemorate the Flight and Expulsion of Germans (1944–50) during and after World War II. The eternal flame monument was inaugurated by Theodor Heuss himself, lighting the flame. There is also a plaque with the inscription *"This flame warns: expulsion never again"*.



Moreover, in 1989, the sculpture "Two Heads" was erected at the eastern edge of the square. Later, in 1995, "The Blue Obelisk" was placed opposite to the eternal flame monument.

104

As the sketch depicts, Teodor-Heuss square acts as a huge round-about, surrounded by high-traffic roads. Although round-about squares are usually unsuccessful public spaces, Teodor-Heuss square is a public square in use, due to its commercial location and historical significance.

<sup>104</sup> Information provided by the official site of the city of Berlin (Berlin.de), at: [berlin.de/ba-charlottenburg-wilmersdorf/ueber-den-bezirk/freiflaechen/plaetze](http://berlin.de/ba-charlottenburg-wilmersdorf/ueber-den-bezirk/freiflaechen/plaetze)

On the other hand, regarding the round-about typology and possible improvements in traffic situation, the square is often shown in several proposals (eg. architectural competitions) for transformation. Future improvements regarding possible transformations in a non-round-about square, would facilitate the accessibility to the square.

In addition, the slight elevation of the square (compared to the ground level), highlights the place, and the U-Bahn station next to the square, eventually makes it an everyday meeting point. Although Teodor-Heuss-Platz is also connected to Hitler's history and some people still avoid to visit it, younger people join the square and often use it as a gathering or festive place.

The ground materials and sculptures co-create spots of different visual features or functions. Furthermore, due to the high trees and greenery, the square is a hybrid of a park and a square. This mixture of hardscape and softscape gives a diverse character to the square, especially compared to several central squares in Berlin that are mainly shaped by hardscape materials.

Regarding future improvements, the plenty of greenery is an advantage, since it could be combined with green and blue strategies, such as permeable paving, bioswales, water beds and underground tanks. The existing water elements, could also be connected to higher-speed running water (fountains, water walls etc.) that creates white-noise (effective type of noise for the neurosystem), and consequently "cancels" the traffic noise. The addition of functions and urban furniture would be also useful, since there are no many in the square, apart from a few benches.



Figure 43: Teodor-Heuss Platz, aerial photo.



Copenhagen, Denmark

## THE KING'S NEW SQUARE

Kongens Nytorv (lit. "The King's New Square") is a public square in Copenhagen, Denmark, located in the center of the city, at the end of the pedestrian street Strøget. It is the largest square of the city and was laid out by Christian V in 1670, together with a major extension of the fortified city. In honor of the king Christian V, an equestrian statue of him is placed at the center of the square.<sup>105</sup> Paved with cobblestones, the King's New square had been considered as the "new center" and was planned to have a garden complex, inspired by the Royal city planning seen in Paris from the early 17th century.<sup>106</sup>

Important buildings facing the square include the Royal Danish Theater from 1874<sup>107</sup>, the Charlottenborg Palace from 1671 (now the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts), the Thott Palace from 1683 (now the French Embassy), the Hotel D'Angleterre and the Magasin du Nord department store.

An old telephone kiosk stands on the square since 1913. It was built in Baroque Revival style with a copper-clad roof and hand-carved ornamentation. It also used to offer the first public telephonic connection in Copenhagen from where it was possible to call every day except Sundays, from 10 am to 8 pm.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> More at Carl Bruun, Dr. Phil. P. Munch., *Kjøbenhavn, En Illustreret Skildring Af Dets Historie, Mindesmærker Og Institutioner*, Tredie Del, (Kjøbenhavn: Det Nordiske Forlag, Bogforlaget: Ernst Bojesen, 1901), pg. 865

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pg. 107-108

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pg. 274

<sup>108</sup> More at: Bo Bramsen, Palle Fogtdal, *København før og nu - og aldrig 1*, (Copenhagen: Fogtdal, 1996).



*“Kongens Nytorv underwent a renovation in the 1990s, including cobblestone paving and the replanting of Krinsen garden. In 2001, the double row of trees lining the square was re-established with 80 linden trees. The 300-year-old parterre garden now stands almost as it was originally planted in 1688. For two separate periods of time, Kongens Nytorv was one of the large Metro construction sites in Copenhagen. With the opening of the Metro City Ring in 2019, Kongens Nytorv reassumes its central role in the life of the city. Through the years, it has often hosted large outdoor photo exhibitions, and in the winter Krinsen is transformed into an ice skating rink.”<sup>109</sup>*

Today it houses a small café which provides outdoor service.

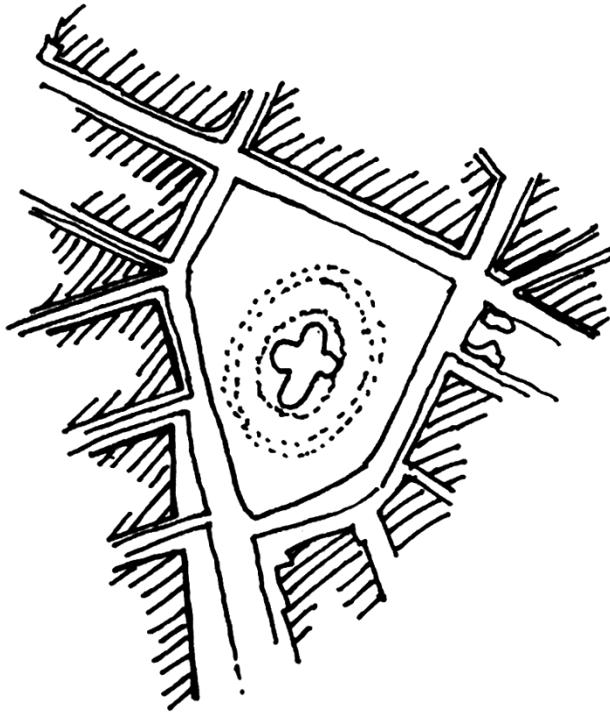
The square is frequently used as an open-air exhibition venue, as well as for high school graduation celebrations.

Kongens Nytorv is a typical example of urban square that reflects royal culture. This connection between public spaces and royal power always raises questions regarding the “publicness” of such spaces and possible ways of appropriation and public engagement.

In the case of Kongens Nytorv, the dominant oversized equestrian statue, as well as the surrounding baroque-style garden, strengthen the past-mongering ideas of royalty. Hence the whole square seems to prioritize its function as “royal monument” and public uses are of secondary significance. Luckily, the square is spacious and allows plenty of space for activities and occasions.

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<sup>109</sup> Information provided by the Danish Architecture Center, at: [dac.dk/en/knowledgebase/architecture/kongens-nytorv-inspired-by-the-baroque/](http://dac.dk/en/knowledgebase/architecture/kongens-nytorv-inspired-by-the-baroque/)



Furthermore, in terms of urban scale, Kongens Nytorv works as a huge round-about, which is usually an unsuccessful urban typology for a square. Nonetheless, due to its oversized spatial unity (related to the surrounding urban environment), acts as an imposing open space that encourage people to reach it.

Regarding its features and functions, there is plenty of space for improvements.

The addition of more benches, folding shelters (mostly provided during winter), playground equipment and encouragement for the host of contemporary exhibitions, installations, or live stages, would enhance an everyday multifunctional use.

Moreover, implementation of green and blue strategies, such as water collectors and permeable paving, in combination with the existing trees and greenery, would update the square into a vibrant urban space that connects the past to contemporary urban needs.

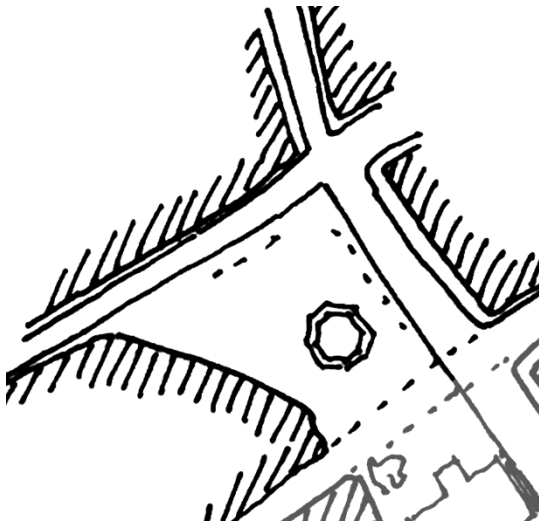
Figure 45: Kongens Nytorv, Copenhagen.



Last but not least, possible asymmetrical placement of urban furniture or different points of view (eg. furniture / sculptures of various topography), could “break” the symmetrical aesthetics of royal culture and provide other visual and aesthetic qualities.

## GAMMELTORV

Gammeltorv (Old Market) is the oldest square in Copenhagen, Denmark. Adjoining Nytorv, it forms a common urban space along within the Strøget pedestrian zone, which “divides and connects” the two squares. While the square dates back to the foundation of the city in the 12th century, most of its buildings were constructed after the Great Fire of 1795 in Neoclassical style. A dominating feature of Gammeltorv is the Caritas Well, a Renaissance fountain erected by King Christian IV in 1610.



Historically, Gammeltorv has been the focal point of Copenhagen's judicial and political life as well as one of its two principal marketplaces. Several former City Halls have been located on the square or close by. Its name is a reference to Amagertorv, that was also one of Copenhagen's major markets in early times.<sup>110</sup>

In the Great Fire of 1728, the Town Hall was burnt. A new Town Hall was erected on the foundations of the previous one and it was designed by Johan Conrad Ernst and Johan Cornelius Krieger in Baroque style. A few years later, in 1749, in order to commemorate the tercentenary of the House of

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<sup>110</sup> Carl Bruun, *Ibid.*, pg. 506-507

Oldenburg's ascent to the Danish throne, the City Magistrate erected an octagonal memorial temple in the square.<sup>111</sup>

In the Fire of 1795, the City Hall was burnt down once again. Afterwards, the new City Hall was placed at Nytorv and the two squares, Gammeltoiv and Nytorv, were merged to form one large rectangular square.<sup>112</sup> Most of the surrounding burnt buildings were rebuilt in Neoclassical style, that was a typical architectural trend for those times.

Nowadays, Gammeltoiv is one of the busiest squares in the center of Copenhagen. A modern proof of Gammeltoiv's historic significance, constitutes the fact that house numbers in Copenhagen proceed from the end of the street which is located closest to the square.



Figure 46: Gammeltoiv.

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<sup>111</sup> More about the Fire of 1728 and buildings who were burnt down around Gammeltoiv at Carl Bruun, *Ibid.*, pg. 809-814, 817

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 836

## NYTORV

Nytorv, together with Gammeltorv and Strøget pedestrian zone, form a common space. The square is dominated by the imposing Neoclassical façade of the Copenhagen Court House, which between 1815 and 1905 was also the City Hall of the City.

Nytorv was created by Christian IV in 1610 and thrived as a marketplace: it was at Nytorv that the butchers carried out their work, while most of the sales took place at Gammeltorv.<sup>113</sup>

Nytorv also became the location of the city's scaffold and a pillory. Pillories were also found at several sites around the city. When the City Hall was rebuilt after the Fire of Copenhagen in 1728, an octagonal masonry podium was built to support execution activities.<sup>114</sup>

Between 1728 and 1740, Ludvig Holberg, a famous writer, historian and philosopher, lived in a house on the corner of Gammeltorv and Nygade, on the border between the two squares. In an epigram, which is originally in Latin, he commented on the dual nature of the site, between the "elegant" Gammeltorv, with the Caritas Well and its "ancient" features, and Nytorv with its sinister execution facilities. In 1761, the scaffold was demolished since it was dilapidated and was planned to be moved to other locations.<sup>115</sup>

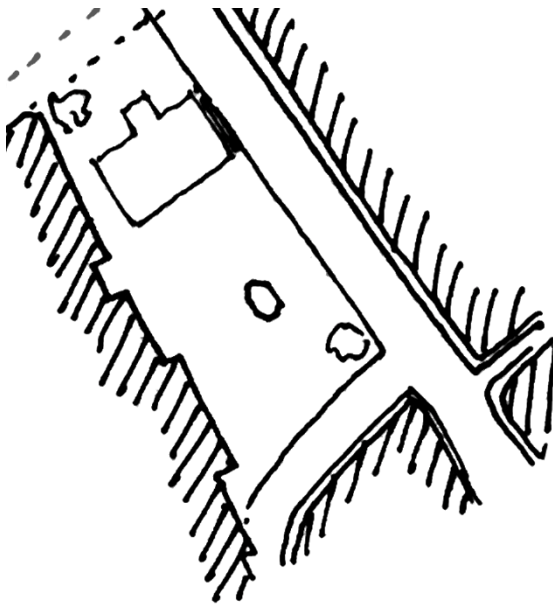
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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pg. 506-507

<sup>114</sup> Information provided by [web.archive.org/www.kobenhavnshistorie.dk/bog/kko/g/kko\\_g-8.html](http://web.archive.org/www.kobenhavnshistorie.dk/bog/kko/g/kko_g-8.html)

<sup>115</sup> More about execution activities in Nytorv, at Carl Bruun, Ibid., pg. 258, 717

In the Fire of 1795, the City Hall burnt down once again. This time it was not rebuilt at the same site, but, as aforementioned above, moved to a larger lot on Nytorv's western side. Since 1728, Nytorv had been the location of the Royal Orphanage but it was also burnt down and later moved to other locations around the city.



The new building, which was planned to be both a City Hall and a courthouse, was designed by Christian Frederik Hansen, the leading Danish architect of the time. Completed in 1815, the project also included a jailhouse next door, connected to the courthouse by an arch-opening with a passageway.<sup>116</sup>

After the fire, Nytorv and Gammeltorv shaped one common space. During the 20th century, market activities gradually disappeared from the square, which became increasingly dominated by cars. The situation changed in 1962, when Strøget was pedestrianized.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> More at: Carl Bruun, *Ibid.*

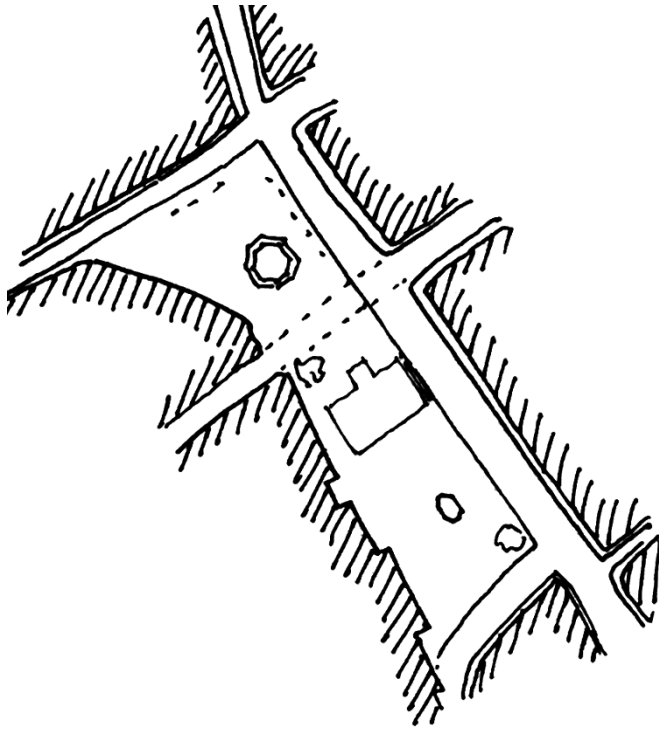
<sup>117</sup> Jan Gehl, Lars Gemzøe, *Public Spaces, Public Life*, (Copenhagen: the Danish Architectural Press and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, 1996), pg. 16.

During the latest refurbishment of the square, conducted by Otto Käsner in 1993, an octagonal podium was placed at the site where the scaffold used to be. Furthermore, the footprint of the former City Hall was marked in with a paler stone. Nowadays, the podium is used as an everyday bench or occasionally –for instance during *Copenhagen Jazz Festival*– as a bandstand.



Figure 47: Nytorv. Figure 48: Gammeltorv-Nytorv, aerial photo.





Another famous feature in Nytorv, is one of the old telephone kiosks which are found in several central locations in the city. The original model was designed by Fritz Kochs, but the one found in Nytorv is a later model, –a bit larger and even more “heavy” regarding its design–, and it was installed there by Martin Jensen in 1913.<sup>118 119</sup>

Considering Gammeltonv and Nytorv as one urban square, it is an undoubtable fact that in terms of typology, materiality and functions, it belongs to a past-mongering, monumental type of square. Regarding its functions, the square provides only a few benches and some bike racks, mainly on Gammeltonv’s area.

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<sup>118</sup> More for Gammeltonv and Nytorv: provided by Københavns Stadsarkiv and Københavns Kommune, also at [web.archive.org](http://web.archive.org), at:

[www.ksa.kk.dk/Historier%20fra%20Koebenhavn/magtens-korridorer](http://www.ksa.kk.dk/Historier%20fra%20Koebenhavn/magtens-korridorer)

<sup>119</sup> More about Gammeltonv and Nytorv’s history at: Slægtsforskernes Bibliotek - Danskernes Historie online, accessed October 1, 2023, <https://slaegtsbibliotek.dk/921492.pdf>.

People often use the few steps around the Caritas Fountain for seating. Moreover, the few steps that are found on the slight elevation difference in Nytorv's area, are also used for seating.

The crowded passage of Strøget, makes Gammel-Nytorv an everyday stop. Due to the lack of benches and shelters, people use the square in order to seat for a while and usually eat street food. The lack of trash bins and public toilets in combination with the crowded passage of Strøget, lead to a discouraging result in Gammel-Nytorv, which is usually full of food-leftovers and trash.

A few sheltered spots are provided by some owners of restaurants and bars, that expand their use in Nytorv's area and provide some umbrellas, tables and seats (mostly during spring and summer period).

Furthermore, although underneath the square there is an important water supply system, the Caritas Well is mainly out of function. Another disadvantage is the fact that the square lacks of softscape materials, while the paving is somewhat hard in terms of accessibility for people with kinetic difficulties. There are only two existing trees in the whole square, while the homogeneity of the pavement enhances the monumentalism and the "voidness" of the space.

Addition of trees and plants, implementation of green and blue strategies, diversification of ground materials and plenty of urban furniture, would provide several functions giving a rejuvenated character to the square.

## KAREN BLIXENS PLADS

Karen Blixens Plads is an urban square at the University of Copenhagen South Campus, created by COBE. The project was completed in 2019. Occupying approximately 20,000 sq.meters, it is one of the biggest public squares in Copenhagen. It is located between the recently built university buildings of the South Campus and the nature reserve Amager Commons. It is connected to Amager Commons through a gradual transition, which makes it a hybrid of park and public square. It is structured as a superimposed surface of human-made hills and valleys with space provided for 2,000 parked bicycles inside the hills. Karen Blixen plads works mainly as a campus landscape.

For a long time, the University square had been a dull parking area for bikes, characterized by an unfriendly scale and lack of spatial hierarchy. Although it was one of the biggest public spaces in the city, it was only used by a few people.

After the reconstruction, the heart of the campus nestles among hills and valleys, thus providing a central urban living room that works as a connection between the three main entrances of the university. Furthermore, it offers a variety of urban spaces, which are well connected to the city fabric, and it is easily accessible for all users.



Figure 49: Karen Blixen square from above.

*“The campus square with its adjacent greenery and bicycle hills has a floating surface, evoking the impression of an undulating urban carpet. The bicycle hills are integrated into this floating carpet, providing covered bicycle parking underneath.”*

*A double layer of programming turns dull bicycle infrastructure into an interesting and inviting public space and student hang-out.”<sup>120</sup>*

As a meeting place, the area is characterized by a flexible character, where several and diverse activities can unfold, such as informal breaks, lectures, group work or outdoor events.

*“The connection to Amager Commons is created as a gradual transition from the urban university square to the greenery that naturally merges the green and urban spaces and materials. This creates a fine balance between the urban character of the university campus and the open natural space of Amager Commons.*

*The bespoke solution creates three types of bicycle parking – uncovered, covered and slightly sunken into the terrain– and creates a landscape of hills that people can walk on top of or sit among in addition to using the bicycle parking.*

*The bicycle hills are created as iconic concrete domes with a shell construction as the load-bearing structure.*

*The almost cathedral-like form of the bicycle hills further offers an aesthetic experience in its own right, both when people park their bikes and when they use the hills for lectures, group work, concerts or Friday afternoon socializing.*

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<sup>120</sup> Information provided by the official COBE site at: [dk/place/karen-blixens-plads](https://dk/place/karen-blixens-plads)

*At night, the bicycle hills are lit from within. The lighting gives Karen Blixens Plads a warm and safe atmosphere in the dark.”*

<sup>121</sup>

Regarding the whole plan, the rejuvenation of Karen Blixen Plads is undoubtedly an ambitious project that prioritizes cyclists and has interesting artificial topography. Nonetheless, several questions could derive from the design of the square, such as:

*Apart from the bicycle parking area and the few benches and tables, what are the other functionalities of the square regarding its public users?*

*Although it is mentioned by the designers that is “easily accessible for all users”, how accessible are those artificial hills by people who are using a wheelchair?*

*How site-specific is this design approach? Is the connection between the Plads and the Amager Commons strong enough?*

It could be claimed, that Karen Blixen Plads is a “thematic” urban square, since its dominant function is bike parking. It seems that despite the alluring aesthetics and the well planned and spacious bike parking spots, the design approach of the square is mainly impressive rather than multifunctional or inclusive.

The whole planning of the square mostly works as a hangout-space for students and due to the complexity of the artificial landscape, it is not easily accessible by people with kinetic difficulties.

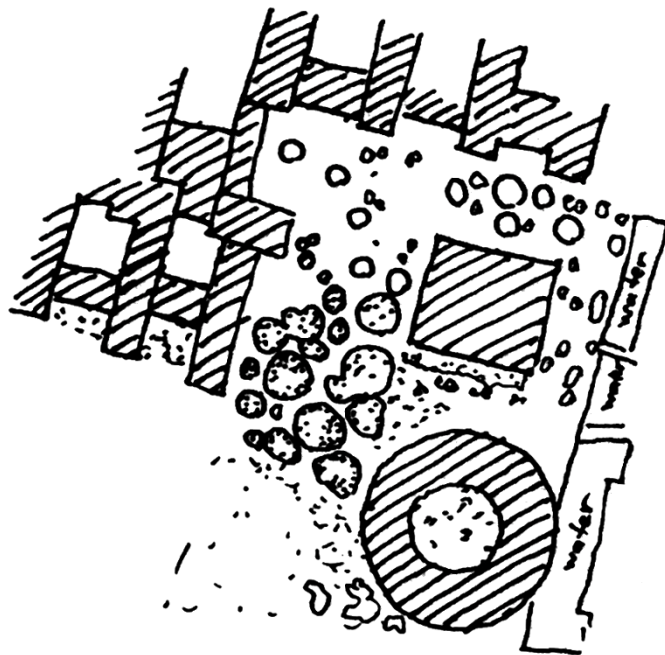
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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, the different levels created by artificial topography, might face issues related to storm water, since the designers do not mention any strategies regarding sustainable materials of the underground levels or water circulation. On the other hand, the whole plan integrates natural landscape and has an intention to create connection to the Amager Commons.

Nonetheless, this connection could be even more highlighted through larger pedestrian paths, bike lanes or visual elements. A stronger connection would encourage openness and integration outside the campus zone.

Moreover, folding equipment in bike parking spots, could easily transform the under-hills spaces into “empty” surfaces that could occasionally host several events, such as open cinema, music lives, dance events etc.



## OFELIA PLADS

Ofelia Plads is a public square in Copenhagen, located in the Kvæsthus Pier on the harbourfront, next to the Royal Danish Playhouse. Nowadays it is mostly used as an open-air venue by the Royal Danish Theatre as well as for several occasions, exhibitions and festivals. Its most recent transformation was completed in 2016, designed by Lundgaard & Tranberg. Under the square, there is an underground parking facility which provides space for 500 cars.

122



Figure 50: Ofelia Plads, concert.

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<sup>122</sup> Information provided by the official site of Danish Architecture center, at: [dac.dk/en/knowledgebase/architecture/ofelia-plads-2/](http://dac.dk/en/knowledgebase/architecture/ofelia-plads-2/)



The pier was named Kvæsthuset<sup>123</sup>, due to a naval hospital of the same name, which was located at the site since 1686. The hospital was later moved to Christianshavn and the former building was then used as poorhouse and later for storage. The pier had been for many years an important site for trade exchange and a main location for the steam ferries that were operating routes between Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

*“Surrounded by architecture spanning nearly all of Copenhagen’s most important epochs, this unique stretch of the harborfront makes an excellent starting point for a tour of some of the city’s finest buildings.*

*Sweeping dramatically from Skuespilhuset into the harbour between Amalienborg Palace and Operaen, Ofelia Plads gives its visitors 360-degree views of Copenhagen’s finest buildings, right from its beating aquatic heart.*

*In all seasons, this is a platform – literally for accessing the water, and culturally as an urban space. Its pavilions bring people together, housing a café, stages and a hidden car park’s entrance. The space can also be adapted for giant screens, installations, marquee events and sports.*

*Known as Kvæsthusemolen, this area was where the Oslo Ferry docked until its final departure in 2004. In 2010, Ofelia Strand was opened, igniting a three-year examination of its potential*

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<sup>123</sup> More about Kvæsthuset at: Carl Bruun, *Ibid.*, pg. 193-194, 505, 649.

*as an urban space, and coming to inspire the Ofelia Plads of today.*

*The site measures 13,430m<sup>2</sup> – 25% larger than City Hall Square – and was developed alongside Sankt Annæ Plads. The result incorporates complimentary elements including a 500-vehicle underground car park set over three floors, all naturally lit by a grand atrium. Next to this, decked steps to the water are built over a vessel able to absorb nine million litres of rainwater during cloudbursts. Romantically dubbed ‘the kissing stairs’, here you can sit, eat, drink, people-watch or kiss, all in a stunning city setting.”<sup>124</sup>*

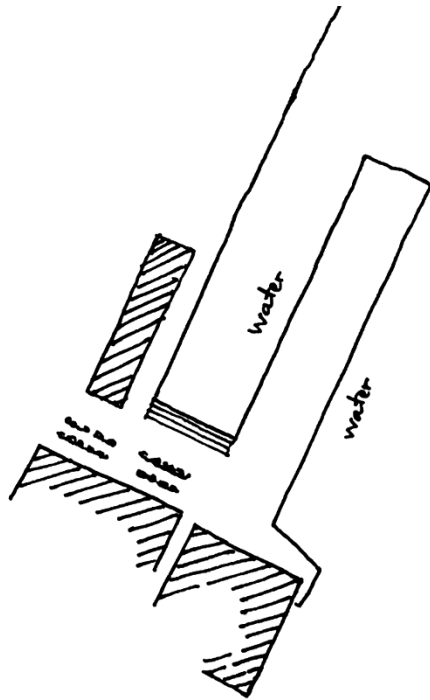
Although Ofelia Plads occasionally hosts a variety of important socio-cultural events, such as exhibitions, installations, music, theater and dance shows, and much more, regarding the everyday use it is mostly occupied by private interests (cafes, bars and restaurants).

The lack of shelters leads to a less “public” use during unfriendly weather conditions, since people prefer to join the enclosed pavilions and umbrellas/shelters that are mostly occupied by the food service businesses. On the other hand, the pavilions have great potential to be transformed into everyday spaces for public use, in case they are not mainly occupied by private businesses.

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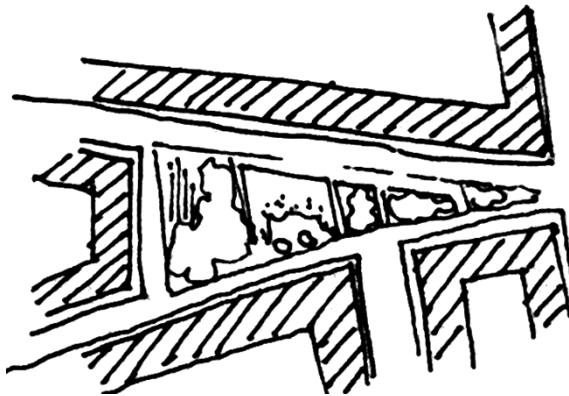
<sup>124</sup> Information provided by the official site of Danish Architecture center, at: [dac.dk/en/knowledgebase/architecture/ofelia-plads-2/](http://dac.dk/en/knowledgebase/architecture/ofelia-plads-2/)

Another remarkable fact, is the specific location of Ofelia Plads in the waterfront. This fact raises questions regarding the sea level rise and possible issues that Ofelia Plads might face in the future. Green and blue strategies, such as forecast strategies for future elevation of the square, addition of green elements or bioswales in proximity to the square, could might be efficient for a sustainable future of the whole space.



## TÅSINGE PLADS

Located in Østerbro, Tåsinge Plads is Copenhagen's first climate adapted urban square and was inaugurated in December 2014. The project is one of the three projects forming "The Climate Neighborhood" and it was launched within the scope of a neighborhood renewal program. Tåsinge plads is a project of the City of Copenhagen and HOFOR – Greater Copenhagen Utility. Further project partners were the neighborhood renewal office, the consultancies, viatrafik and ORBICON, as well as the architectural firm "Third Nature".



Tåsinge plads is a great example of how sustainability aspects can be implemented in urban projects, since green and blue strategies have seriously been taken into account in this project.

Regarding hardscape materials, around 1000m<sup>2</sup> of unsealed asphalt, 625m<sup>2</sup> of granite tiles and 600m<sup>2</sup> of cobble stone have been used for the paving of the square. The permeable ground (both unsealed asphalt and pavement) handles water from an area of 7000m<sup>2</sup>.

According to the strategy related to water management and sustainable ground and underground system, the National Network for Climate Adaptation mentions that:

*“Road runoff is not suitable for infiltration, among other things, due to the use of salt in winter. Water from roads and pavements therefore runs into planting beds, right next to the road. A layer of filter medium holds harmful substances back. During heavy rain, the water flows through the dome shaped grills into underground retention basins, before it reaches the sewer.”*

Furthermore, the selected urban furniture is characterized both by nice aesthetics and multifunctionality. For example, *the rain drop sculptures* and *the umbrella statues* are not just a visual feature, since they are also used as water collectors. Rainwater from the surrounding rooftops, flows into an underground retention basin that is right below the rain drop sculptures. Water is also caught by the umbrella statues.

Planning for the best and implementing sustainability, the designers have created several layers of water management: For example, when the tank is filled, the water flows across into an infiltration bed, and, in the exception that this bed is also filled, the water keeps flowing through small openings into larger beds. There is also an emergency overflow to a cloudburst tunnel at the pointy end of the square. The whole system delays the water before it reaches the sewers and prevents flooding.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Information from the official site of the National Network for Climate Adaption, at: [dnnk.dk/taasinge-square-eng/](http://dnnk.dk/taasinge-square-eng/)

Moreover, urban furniture such as “The Copenhagen bench” which is placed in several spots, wooden tables, curvy wooden furniture and the raindrop sculptures, can be used both for seating and playing.

There is no more to analyze for Tåsinge plads, since its multifunctionality has created a vibrant environment for the whole neighborhood. It seems that people are engaged to the square, and they are also encouraged to get involved into further develop it. Regarding further improvements, maybe some shelters could be provided to the square, since the weather in Copenhagen is mainly cloudy, rainy and snowy. Shelters and covered, semi-closed places could enhance the public use of the square during winter as well.

Figure 51: Tåsinge Plads from above.



Part 3:  
Participatory Design Attempt

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN: WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Regarding the definition of Participatory Design, it can be claimed that it is a planning procedure related to a more participatory way of thinking in everyday life; it is a mindset of sharing, co-creating, holistically caring about the needs of a community and shaping ideas together.

Participatory design can also be described as the practice of collective creativity.<sup>126</sup> In *The Handbook of Participatory Design* (Simonsen and Robertson, 2012), Participatory Design is described as:

*“a process of investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schön, 1983). The participants typically undertake the two principal roles of users and designers where the designers strive to learn the realities of the users’ situation [...].”<sup>127</sup>*

Consequently, users are actively involved in the planning from the beginning to the final result of the design procedure, so that the product/service will meet their needs, and designers:

*“see the people as the true experts in domains of experience such as living, learning, working, etc. Design researchers who*

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<sup>126</sup> Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders & Pieter Jan Stappers, *Convivial Toolbox, Generative Research for the front end of Design*, (Amsterdam: BIS publishers, 2012), pg. 28

<sup>127</sup> Susanne Bødker, Christian Dindler, Ole S. Iversen, Rachel C. Smith, *Participatory Design, Part of the book series: Synthesis Lectures on Human-Centered Informatics (SLHCI)*, (Switzerland: Springer, 2022), pg. 1



*have a participatory mindset value people as co-creators in the design process and are happy to include people in the design process to the point of sharing control with them.”<sup>128</sup>*

The intention to involve participatory planning attempts in the present Thesis, derived from fundamental questions such as:

“Who takes the design decisions in urban planning?”

“How satisfied are the users of public space about its design?”

It is a fact that in traditional urban planning methods, the design guidelines are given by the designers, while users of public space are not involved in the planning procedure. Undoubtedly, the shift of this traditional mindset requires long-term sociological and political transformations, but since the proposal of this Thesis is the re-design of three European public squares, an attempt to involve public users was deemed necessary.

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<sup>128</sup> Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders & Pieter Jan Stappers, *Ibid.*, pg. 18

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN REFERENCES

Regarding the origin of Participatory Design, it is less frequently acknowledged that the issue of participation in design had already been widely introduced in several design communities during the 1960s and the 1970s.<sup>129</sup> There are several examples of research projects that involved users' participation in systems development during the 1970s.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, participatory design:

*"is often associated with the groundbreaking work of American and Scandinavian researchers engaged with systems design and automation in the 1980s and 1990s [...]."*<sup>131</sup>

Based on other references, participatory design as an almost occult research approach, was practiced by a small group of church priests back in the 1980s. Those times participatory design practice was a response to first-world problems belonging to the 1970s and 1980s, and was applied by the priests in a Scandinavian and socialist research environment.<sup>132</sup>

Another example is the Collective Resource Approach that was established in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, in order to increase the industrial production value by involving the workers in new workplace development systems.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Toni Robertson, Jesper Simonsen, *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design*, (Routledge, 2013), pg. 147

<sup>130</sup> Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders & Pieter Jan Stappers, *Ibid.*, pg. 28

<sup>131</sup> Toni Robertson, Jesper Simonsen, *Ibid.*, pg. 147

<sup>132</sup> Susanne Bødker, et al, *Ibid.* pg. xv

<sup>133</sup> Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders & Pieter Jan Stappers, *Ibid.*, pg. 28

Nowadays Participatory Planning procedures are taking place in several countries in Europe, mostly Scandinavia, as well as outside Europe. They are often related to femme-centered communities, places for kids, perma-cultural communities, as well as to interaction design field, virtual reality environments and technologies.



Figure 52: Design Jatra, a socio-architectural practice in Maharashtra, India.

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

*“Participatory design today spans a wide spectrum of domains and makes use of a broad repertoire of methods, tools and techniques in both commercial, community oriented and research contexts.”*<sup>134</sup>

Participatory planning practices can include contextual inquiries, diary studies, concept tests, cognitive walkthroughs, eye-tracking, interviews, surveys, ethnographic studies and others. All the aforementioned practices combine areas of application, tools and principles for organization.<sup>135</sup>

Regarding the principles, a fundamental one is the sharing of decision-making power between all participants during the design procedure. Since the design process includes several decisions, the users have to voice their opinion and be aware about what are the problems and how they can be solved.<sup>136</sup>

*“Participatory Design [...] is also dealing with groups of people who are heterogenous in terms of power, resources, and cultures, even more so than in the classical work setting. Communities, public (who have a joint cause and something to be against), and more organized political contexts often deal with both people who work and represent formal democratic, political, or organizational units and people who participate as citizens or community members, perhaps with certain particular*

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Toni Robertson, Jesper Simonsen, Ibid., pg. 118

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., pg. 129

*interests. The meeting of formal, organizational structures and development thereof, and the public and communities that are active in the setting as far as their resources go, or until they lose interest, need to be considered in the Participatory Design processes.”<sup>137</sup>*

Furthermore, since users can be everywhere and nowhere, vary in numbers and have different commitment to the application area / design area, Participatory Planning methods presuppose a high frequency of communication and meetings, in order to develop users' familiarity to the design process and application area. Hence, mutual learning between designers and users is enhanced and the users have a practical commitment to the design project.<sup>138</sup>

Consequently, it becomes clear that Participatory Design has to be a social, emotional and embodied experience, it starts from a more theoretical level (such as questionnaires, interviews, surveys etc.) and continues to in-person meetings and activities within the users and designers.

In the present Thesis, the Participatory Planning part is referred as “Participatory Design Attempt”, since in terms of academic proposals it is related to a hypothetical redesign of public squares. This means that neither the users nor the designers are actively re-making those urban squares. Hence, the Participatory Planning procedure is performed in a theoretical/research level, based on interviews and surveys.

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<sup>137</sup> Susanne Bødker, et al, Ibid., pg. 44

<sup>138</sup> Toni Robertson, Jesper Simonsen, Ibid., pg. 136

In the present section, a focus on a survey will be given. The purpose of the survey was to gather information regarding when, how and why people use a public square, as well as what they would ideally want to feel, do and find there. The results of the survey will be extensively presented and critically analyzed, since they were taken into account for the re-design proposals.



Figure 53: Community Architecture approach by Design Jatra, India.



## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN ATTEMPT ON PUBLIC SQUARES: A SURVEY

Regarding the survey that was used for the re-design proposals on the three European public squares, it was organized in five sections.

As it is shown in the statistical results, the survey was answered by 124 people. In order to make the qualitative analysis easier, the specific survey was guided to be answered by people who are currently living in Athens, Berlin and Copenhagen (42 answers from Athens' public users, 41 answers from Berlin's public users and 41 from Copenhagen's public users).

A. The first section included general questions such as the age, occupation, country/city in which the participants currently live, as well as country/city they have mostly spent their life.

The goal of the questions related to age and occupation was to gather a mixed population from various profession/study fields and age ranges. Hypothetically, different occupations and ages would give a larger variety of opinions and preferences.

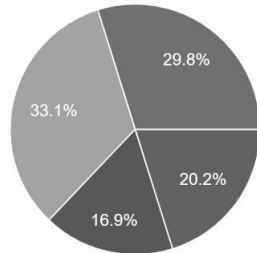
Furthermore, the questions referring to the cities/countries in which the participants are currently living/mostly have lived in, were given in order to qualitatively analyze the variety and diversity of urban references of the involved users.

The rest of the first section questions were related to how often, how long, when and why people use urban squares. The point of those questions was the identification and reconsideration of the frequency of use and reasons of using a public square.



How often do you visit a public square?

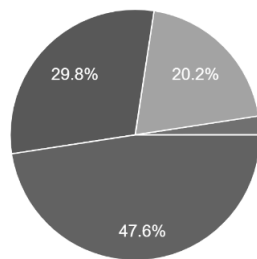
124 responses



- Once per month or more rarely
- 1-2 times per month
- 1-2 times per week
- 3 times per week or more often

At the times you visit a public square, for how long do you usually stay there?

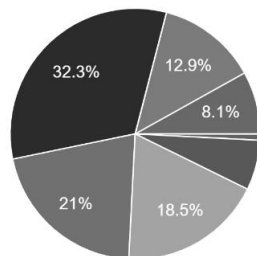
124 responses



- Less than 30 minutes
- Maximum 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- More than 2 hours

Around what hours of the day do you usually visit a public square?

124 responses



- 06:00 - 09:00
- 09:00 - 12:00
- 12:00 - 15:00
- 15:00 - 18:00
- 18:00 - 21:00
- 21:00 - 00:00
- Other

As a quick reflection on the above chart pies, it can be claimed that public squares in Athens, Berlin and Copenhagen are in use by the participants every week and, probably every day (if we take into account qualitative analysis related to population and possibilities). Regarding the time of stay, it seems that around a 52% of the participants uses an urban square for some hours and around a 47% uses an urban square for less than 30 minutes.

In a later qualitative analysis, it was shown that the duration of stay on public squares is related to other characteristics, such as season, weather, time of the day, cultural identity etc. For example, during autumn months, participants who live in Athens tend to use public squares much more compared to participants from Berlin and Copenhagen.

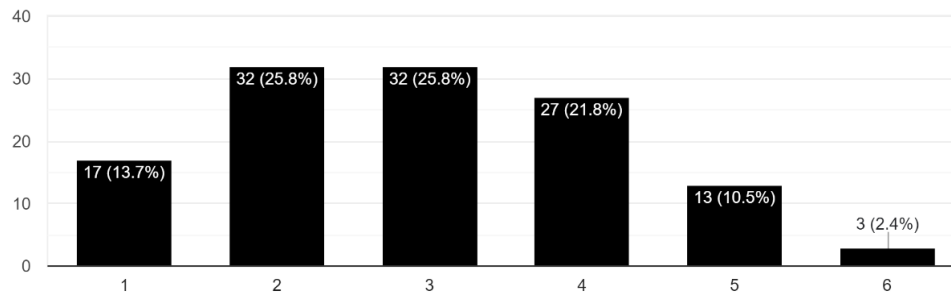
Regarding the time of the day that the participants of the survey mostly use public squares, it seems that from 12:00 at noon to 21:00 at night is a pretty active time frame with a peak in between 18:00 and 21:00.

B. The second section of the survey consists of linear-scale diagrams from 1 to 6 related to the surrounding environment preferences for public squares.

(1 = "I dislike it", 6 = "I really like it")

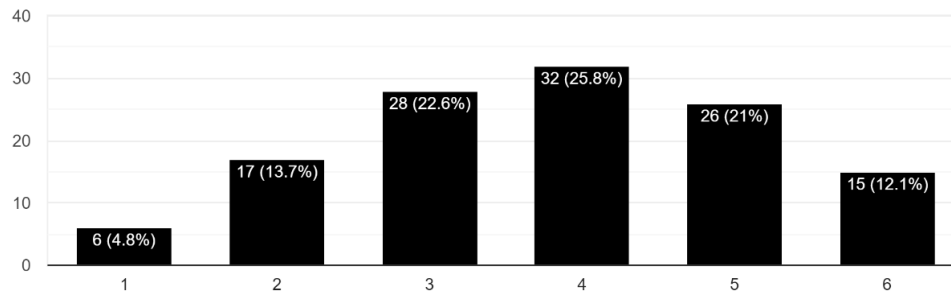
**DENSE BUILT ENVIRONMENT** (Series of block of flats and / or public buildings enclose the public square.)

124 responses



**SPARSE BUILT ENVIRONMENT** (Detached buildings around the public square, with open, un-built space between them.)

124 responses

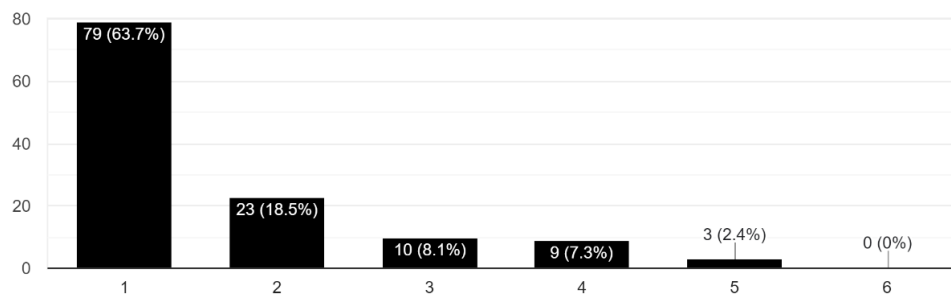


Regarding the surrounding built environment, in a quick reflection it seems that the participants have a tension to prefer sparse build environment than dense built environment. In qualitative analysis, this result is interesting to be compared to cultural differences regarding types of urban blocks that people are used to be surrounded by. Furthermore, those results can be used for socio-psychological studies in order to examine how exposed an urban square is and how exposed a user of public square feels.

In a parallel qualitative analysis, it seems that participants from the architectural and urban design field respond more positively for denser surrounding built environment, since it might be easier to create and enhance connections between various functions, as well as spatial integration of the public square to the regional area.

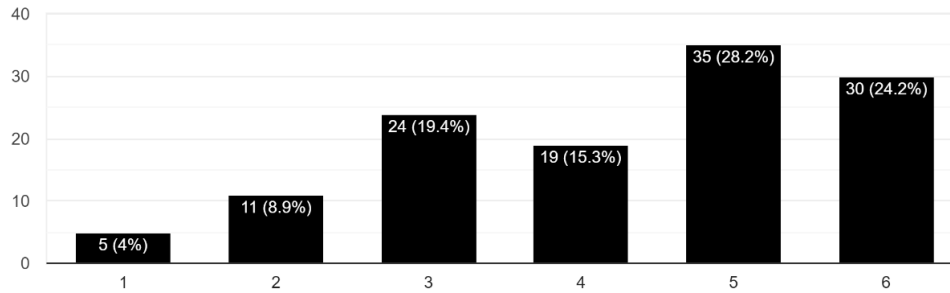
HIGH TRAFFIC ROADS (The public square is surrounded by really noisy roads, with 2 or 3 lanes for vehicles, such as lanes for buses, trams, cars etc.)

124 responses



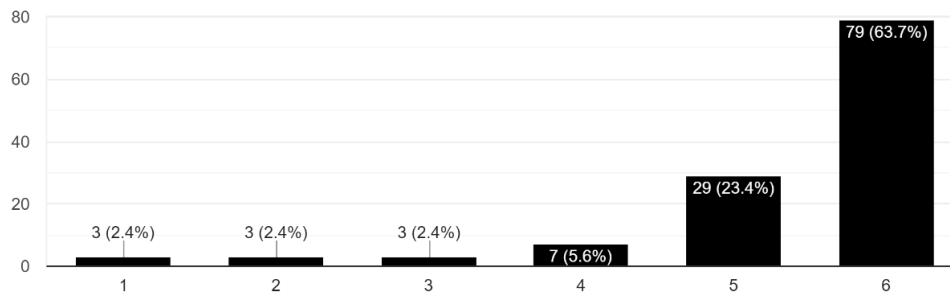
LOW TRAFFIC ROADS (The public square is surrounded by less noisy roads. Maximum 1 lane for cars.)

124 responses



PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY PATHS / ROADS (In this case, vehicles are not permitted. Lanes for bikes are often provided.)

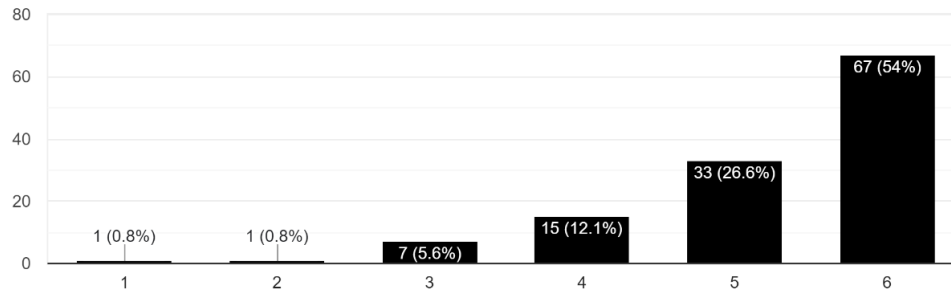
124 responses



Unsurprisingly, apart from the cultural differences and the fact that most of the people use a vehicle (they either drive cars, or use the public transport), the majority prefer less noisy surrounding network for public squares. There is a huge preference for pedestrianized network and a remarkable antipathy for high traffic roads.

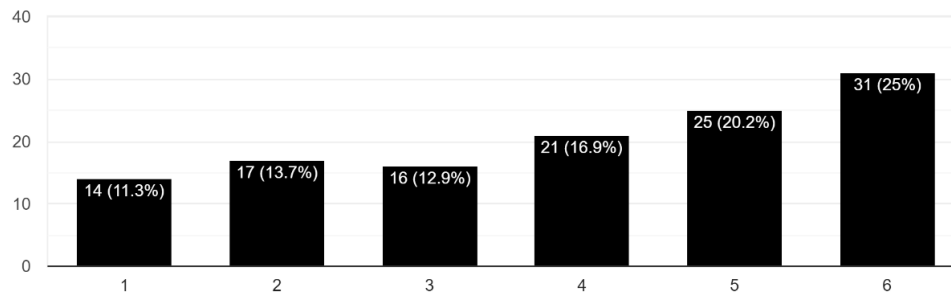
**HIGH VEGETATION** (The public square is surrounded by series of trees.)

124 responses



**LOW VEGETATION** (The public square is surrounded by bushes, grass lanes, flowers.)

124 responses

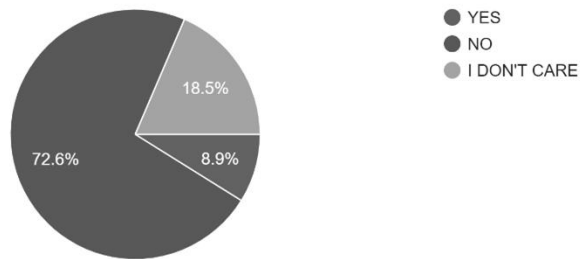


In the diagrams above, although it is a bit difficult to shape a clear result regarding low vegetation preferences, it is absolutely obvious that the participants tend to prefer high vegetation option for public squares.

C. In the third section of the survey, some questions related to the feeling of the place were provided, such as: "Would you like a public square to be an abandoned or a lonely, calm, crowded, social, safe, exposed place...?" The participants had to respond by choosing one of the three given options (yes / no / I don't care) for each word (abandoned, lonely, calm, crowded, social).

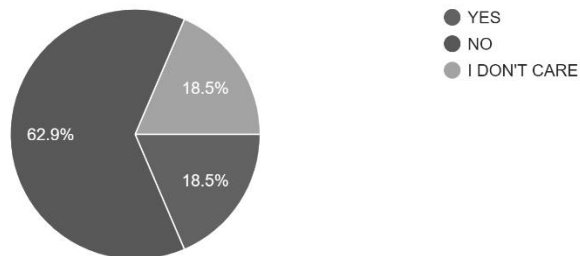
#### ABANDONED PLACE

124 responses



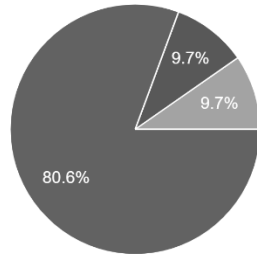
#### LONELY PLACE

124 responses



CALM PLACE

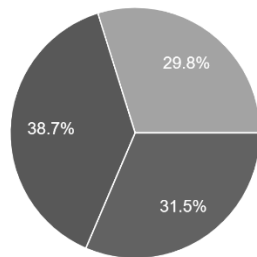
124 responses



- YES
- NO
- I DON'T CARE

CROWDED PLACE

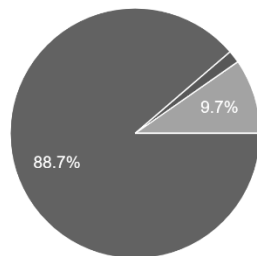
124 responses



- YES
- NO
- I DON'T CARE

SOCIAL PLACE

124 responses

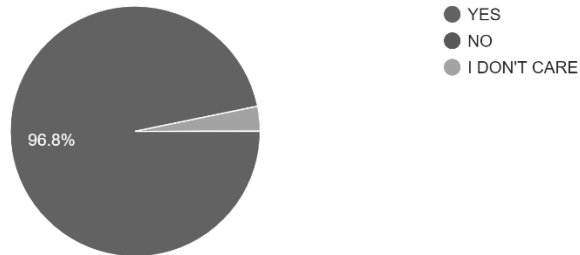


- YES
- NO
- I DON'T CARE



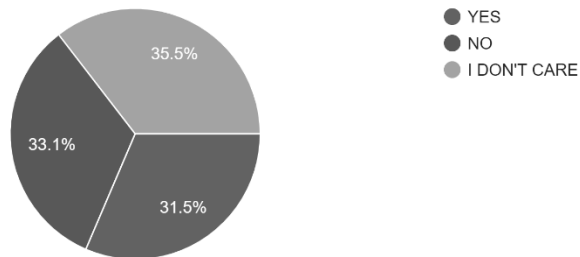
## SAFE PLACE

124 responses



## EXPOSED PLACE

124 responses



Summarily, without providing qualitative analysis of samples and specific cases of participants, it can be claimed that the majority of the people who answered the survey do not prefer a public square to be an abandoned or a lonely place.

A remarkable percentage of the participants' responses is positive for safe and social public squares, but also for calm public squares. The high percentage of positive responses both for social as well as calm public

squares might be characterized as paradoxical, but on the other hand, there could be a crowded public square with people who interact in a low-volume level. Usually, noise could characterize how calm a place is, and this fact is related to the overall size of the crowd, the cultural behavior and activities, and the surrounding environment (eg. how traffic roads etc.). For example, people could be just sitting and relaxing on a public square, or simply talking to each other calmly.

Regarding safety and exposition results, they have already been forwarded to environmental psychology researchers, as well as to sociologists, since there are several factors who have an influence on how and why people feel safe and/or exposed. Hence, safety and exposition are quite difficult to be defined.

Some of the participants of the survey gave an interview as well. Many of them seem to correlate unsafety to exposition. Moreover, many participants from the social sciences field correlate safety to cultural identity, history and socio-political circumstances, such as social integration, social behavior and other factors.

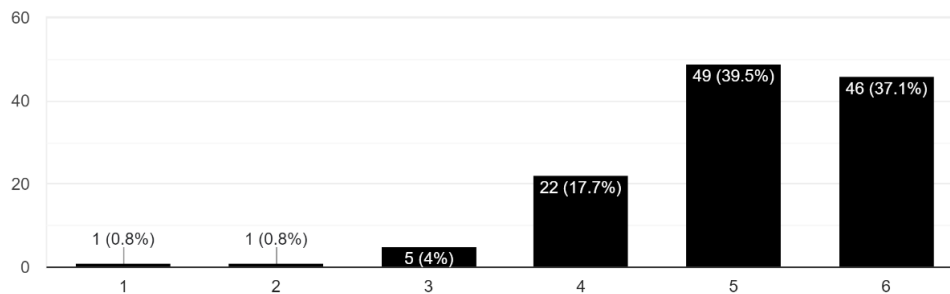
People from the urban design field seem to correlate safety to design options, such as lighting on public squares, colors, materiality, or specific design prerequisites for people who use a wheelchair, kids, elderly etc. Furthermore, urban designers tend to correlate exposition of public squares to low-density surrounding environment or topography.

D. The fourth section was shaped by several words or phrases, such as: active, passive, meet, create, buy, play, exercise, celebrate, demonstrate, sit, shelter, park, noise, lights, trees, water, topography, public toilets etc. It is obvious that these words are related to feelings, activities and materials, and had to be rated by the participants of the survey in a linear-scale from 1 to 6. (1 = "I dislike it" / "I don't need it", 6 = "I really like it" / "I really need this").

The given question in the beginning of the section was: *"What would you like to feel / do / find in your "ideal situation" on a public square? Please rate the following words from 1 to 6."*

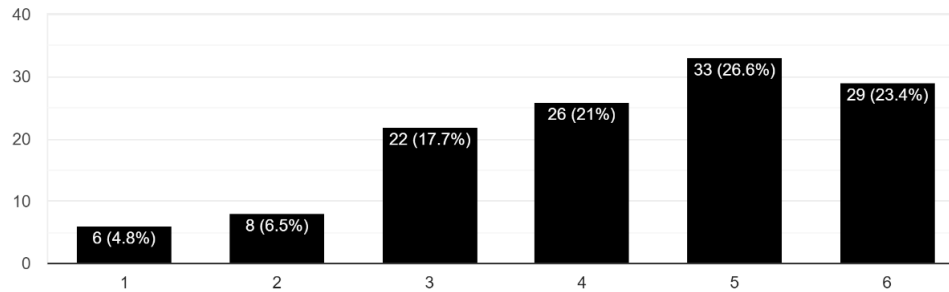
The provided words for rating were 30 in total. Below, some of the given words and responses will indicatively be presented and criticized when deemed necessary.

RELAXED  
124 responses



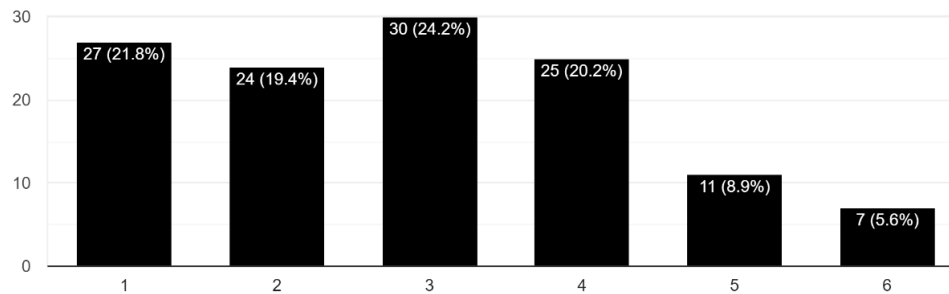
## PLAY

124 responses



## BUY

124 responses

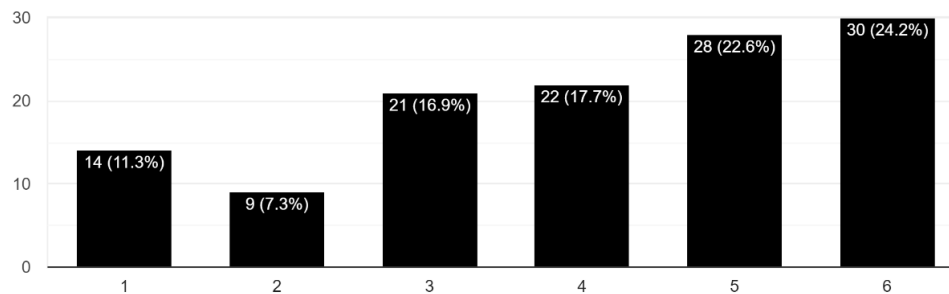


Regarding the responses for “buy”, in a qualitative analysis of the survey, as well as through interviews, it was shown that the majority of the participants who live in Berlin do not wish to buy things in public squares. They seem to be interested in occasionally buying stuff from flea markets on public squares, but not in having an every-day commercial activity on the squares. Moreover, they do not prefer food-service expansion on the public squares.

Half of the participants from Athens are interested in buying things on public squares, while as it was shown in interviews, most of the participants from Copenhagen seem to enjoy food-service expansion on a part of public squares.

#### DEMONSTRATE

124 responses

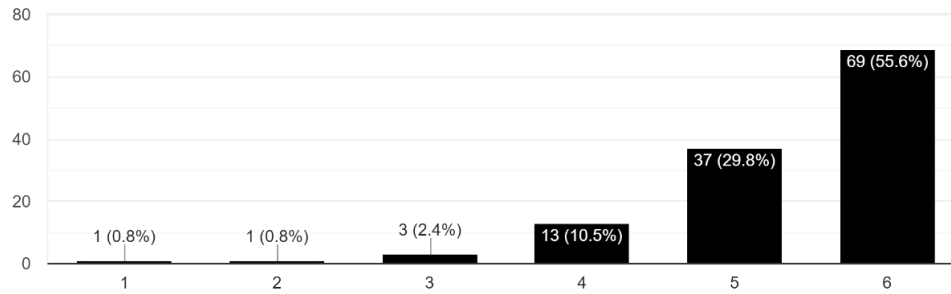


In the responses for “demonstrate” it was shown that participants from Athens and Berlin were much more into correlating political actions and demonstrations to public squares, compared to participants from Copenhagen who seem more neutral in using public squares for demonstrations.

**Seats/Shelters:** Through interviews and discussions, it seems that participants living in Athens need shaded places to avoid the sun, since in Athens the weather is extremely hot and sunny for most of the months of the year. Participants living in Berlin need shelters in order to have the possibility to stay on public squares during rainy days, but they also vote positively for shaded spots, in order to use the squares during hot and sunny summer days. In Copenhagen, participants need sheltered spots in public squares to protect themselves from rain and wind.

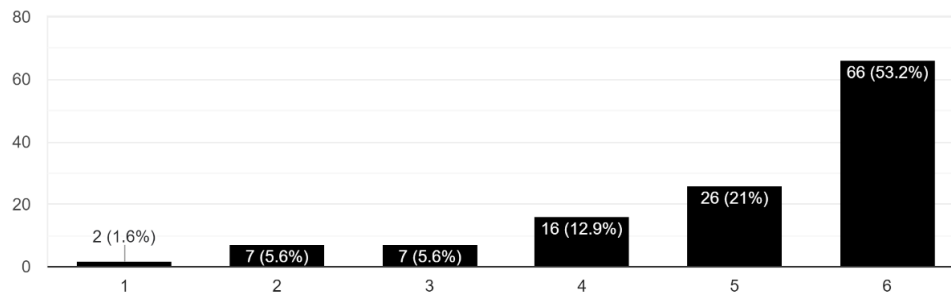
SIT

124 responses



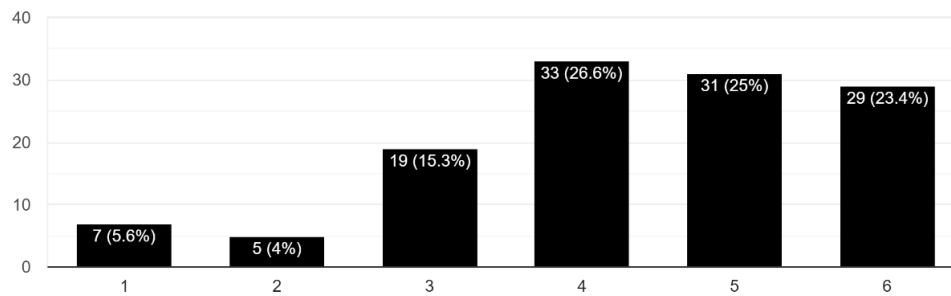
SHADED SPOTS

124 responses



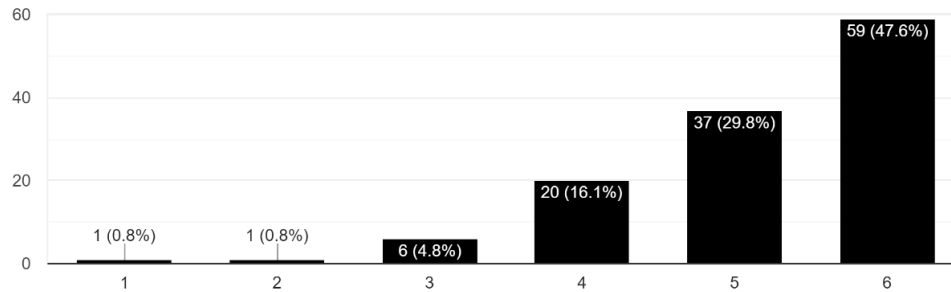
SHELTER

124 responses



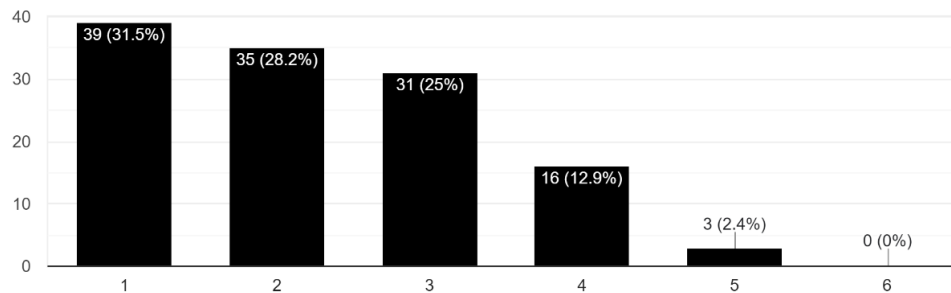
## WATER

124 responses



## NOISE

124 responses

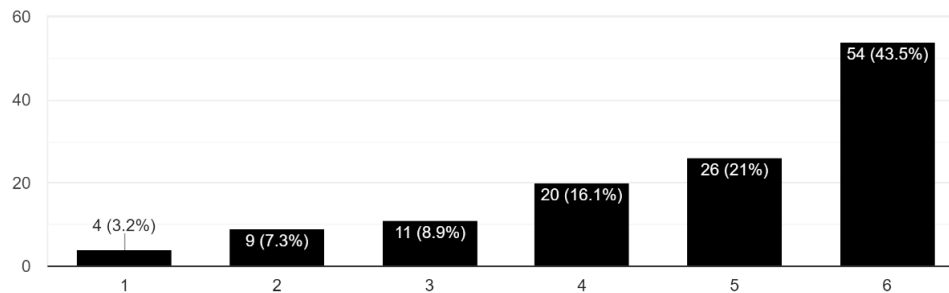


According to the water diagram it is clear that the participants of the survey wish to find water on public squares. Researchers from the psychology and environmental psychology field have proved that it is effective for people to be close to water, interact with water, watch the movement of the water or listen to the sound of running water, waves etc. Interviews and discussions with the participants have also shown that they really wish to find running water on public squares, either in a more artificial way (eg. fountain) or natural (eg. existing pond/part of river which is integrated to the square etc.).

Furthermore, the noise diagram shows that most of the participants prefer to avoid noise (anthropogenic noise). This preference can be carried out through running water elements on public squares. Running water creates white noise, a type of noise which “covers” city noise and prevails, while it acts as a neuron system tranquilizer.

#### PUBLIC TOILET

124 responses

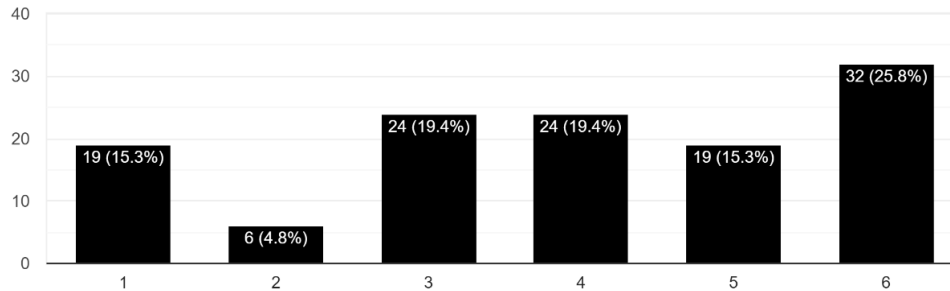


Public toilets are always necessary in public spaces and usually open spaces, especially public squares, lack of restrooms/WCs. In addition, the existing restrooms on public squares are usually not free to use and people have to pay instead. This fact was repeatedly mentioned as a complaint by the interviewed participants and it seems that the need for free public restrooms is urgent, especially for public squares in Athens.



## SPECIAL EQUIPMENT FOR KIDS

124 responses

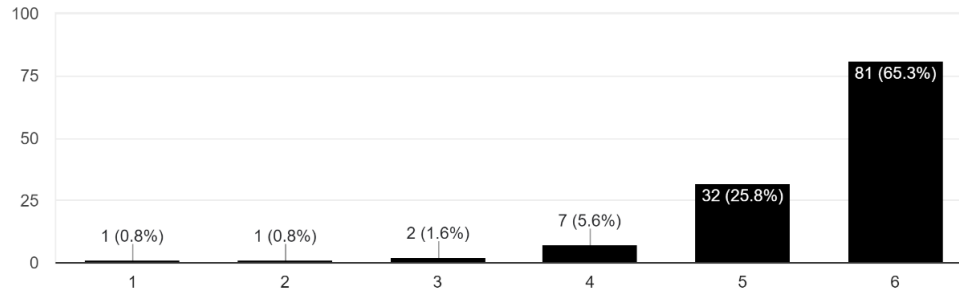


Regarding equipment for kids, there is a variety of diverse opinions. Since the diagram results were not really enlightening, interviews and qualitative analysis were deemed necessary. In conclusion, it seems that mostly participants who are parents wish to find playground equipment in public squares, while many of the younger ones (22-28 yo) and single participants do not vote positively for integrating playground equipment in the squares. However, many participants who proposed a separate place/spot for kids, rated the topic with a “3”.

Furthermore, participants from Copenhagen seem to be more familiar and welcoming to the idea of playground equipment on the squares. Participants from Berlin have mixed-opinions (around half of them vote positively for children equipment). Participants from Athens really wish to find playground equipment on squares, since most of the squares in Athens either lack of such equipment or provide poor/old-fashioned and rusty equipment for kids.

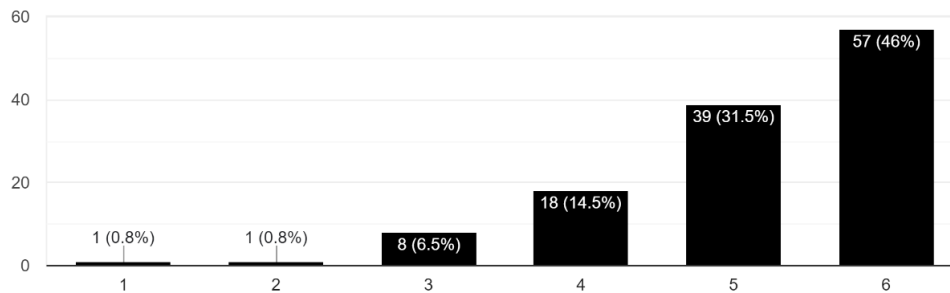
## TREES

124 responses



## SOFTSCAPE / SOFT LANDSCAPE MATERIALS (e.g. vegetation, plants, grass etc.)

124 responses



Since most of the public squares are characterized by hardscape materiality (paving, cobblestones etc.), participants were asked about trees and softscape materials. It is an undoubtable fact that participants really wish to find trees on public squares. In addition, they also show preference for other softscape materials. In interviews and proposals it was clearly shown that the majority of the participants describe public squares as empty hardscape fields and this is the main reason they usually prefer to hang out on a park instead of a square. Wishes regarding mixed-character and combination of hardscape and softscape materials were highlighted.

E. The last section was shaped by individual proposals of the participants:

*"You are the user of public space and you can now co-design and transform a public square. What would you propose? Think something that you believe is important from your point of view. Keep it simple, propose 1 thing. (eg. On a public square, I would like to plant my own trees.)"*

The collection of proposals was really interesting, as well as the fact that many participants have similar wishes. Some of the highlighted and almost repeated ideas that inspired the redesign of the three squares are indicatively mentioned below:

"I don't want to use it as a passage. I want to do things there."

**"Nature In The City!"**

**"On a public square, I would like a space that is flexible for all occasions and activities."**

"I would like to have open space with flowers and trees."

"I 'd like to feel sheltered from the noise and the weather conditions of the city and feel connected to nature."

"To have an open stage"

"Waterfalls?!"

"Playground for children"

"On a public square i would like to have more music and dance on a stage"

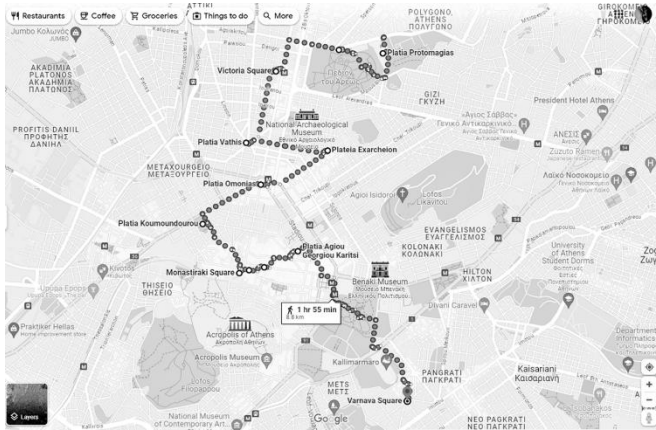
**Part 4:**  
**Redesign Sites**

Through several Routes and observation studies in Athens, Berlin and Copenhagen, information regarding history, architecture and functions of many public squares was collected. Most of the collected information was previously presented in Part 3.

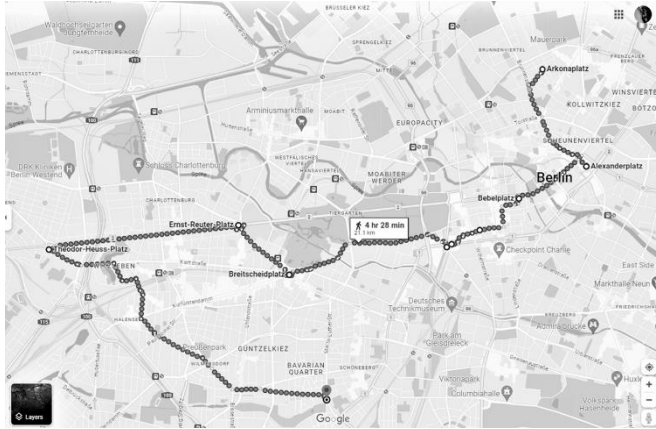
In Part 4, three public squares, one from each of the three European cities (Athens, Berlin and Copenhagen) are selected for redesign proposals.

Photographs, sketchy maps, diagrams of the redesign processes, drawings, visualizations and explanatory text will follow.

The intention is to encourage a new, socially sustainable design approach for public squares, based on people's common needs and participation, as well as to site-specific characteristics.



Athens Routes



Berlin Routes



Copenhagen Routes

## REDESIGN SITES

The selected sites for redesign are:

1. Vathis Square, Athens
2. John-F.-Kennedy Square, Berlin
3. Gammeltorv-Nytorv, Copenhagen

Vathis square, Athens:

Regarding Vathis Square, it is selected as redesign site mostly because of the great potential of the whole urban block. The void space next to the square, created by the intersection of the surrounding streets, is a great design challenge. A proper transformation of this void, could provide pedestrianized axes that create user-friendly connections to the square, as well as reduce the traffic and the noise. As a second step, the transformation of the square itself could bring on connections to its history, surrounding buildings, as well as citizens' wishes derived from the participatory planning questionnaires and interviews.

John-F.-Kennedy Square, Berlin:

John-F.-Kennedy Square is Berlin's selected site because it is potentially a public square which has to be designed almost from scratch. The open spaces of the surrounding blocks have to be taken into account for underground parking spaces. By solving the problem of the open parking lot that is the main function of the "square", the open space outside Schöneberg's City Hall

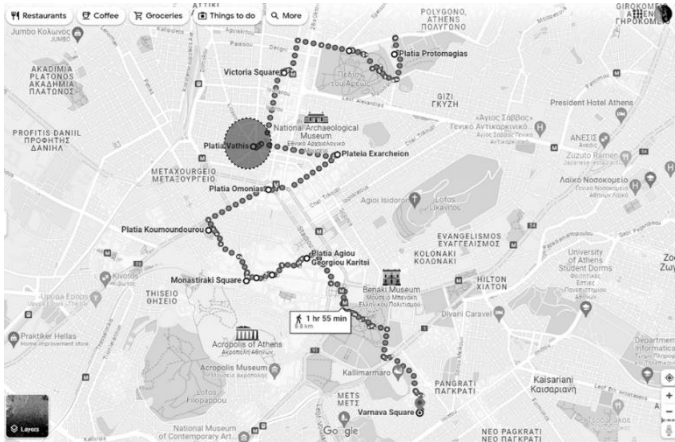
would now be empty from vehicles and available for transformation. Participatory design proposals, such as water elements, more plants, greenery, and shelters were taken into account.

Gammeltorv-Nytorv, Copenhagen:

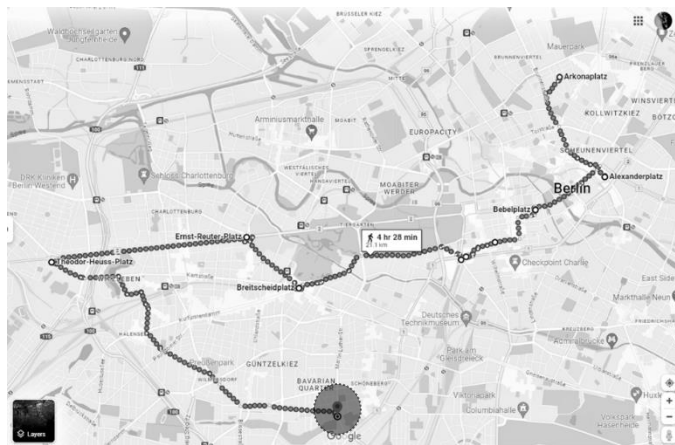
Gammeltorv-Nytorv is reasonably seen as a whole public square. This open space is characterized by great advantages, such as its historical value and good location. As Scandinavia is one of the pioneers in urban design field, it is very common to see new sustainable design approaches in new public squares. So, why not rejuvenate the old historical ones ...?

The space of Gammeltorv-Nytorv is located in the heart of Copenhagen and the surrounding car-oriented streets are of very low traffic. At the same time, Gammeltorv-Nytorv is connected to one of the busiest pedestrianized streets of the city. Inevitably this square becomes an every-day passage, hence by adding to its charm it can also become an interesting, multi-functional stop, and not remain a monumental, past-mongering space.





Athens,  
Vathis square



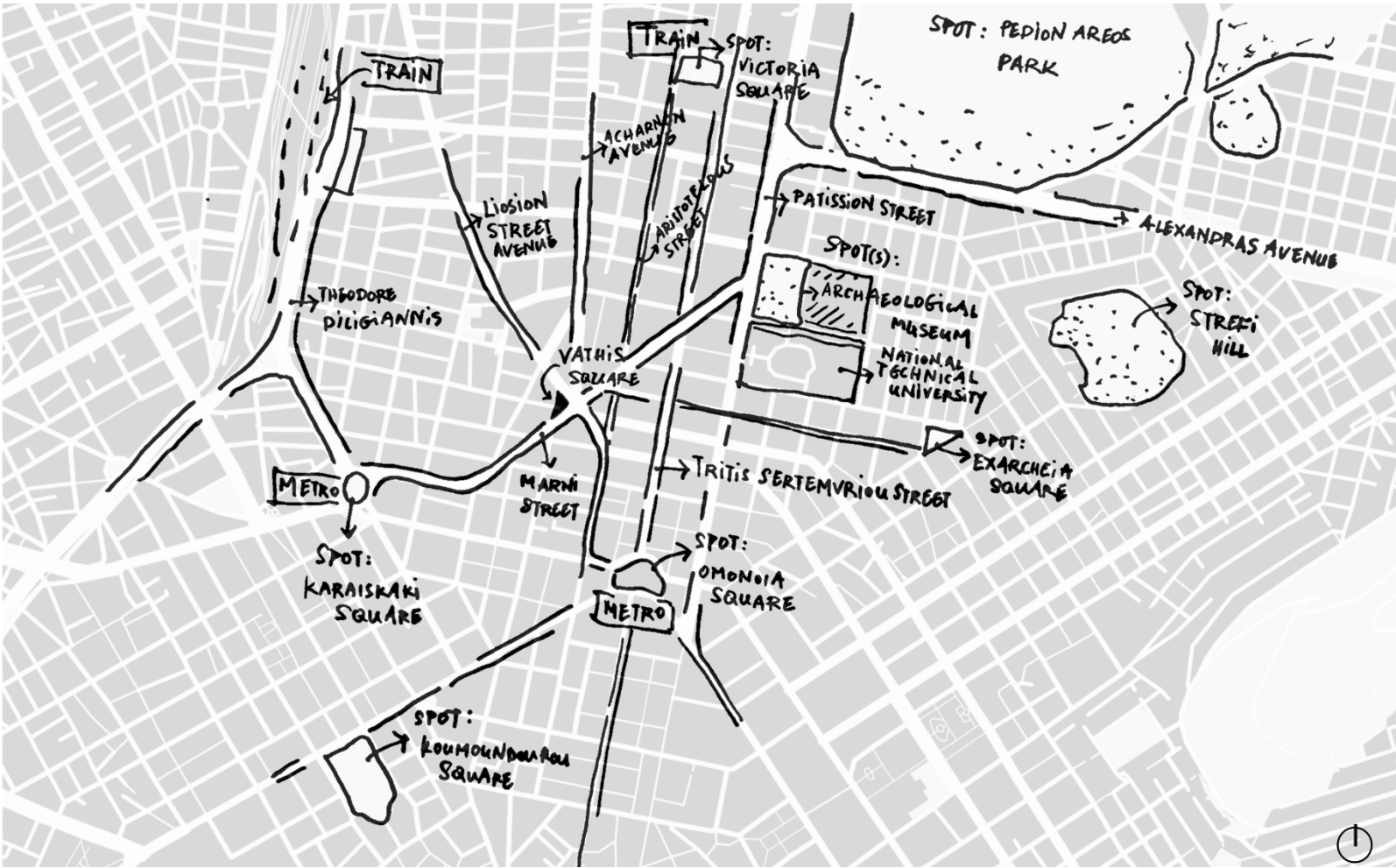
Berlin,  
John-F.-Kennedy square



Copenhagen,  
Gammeltorv-Nytorv



Vathis square, Athens



MAP\_Ath1

As MAP\_Ath1 depicts, Vathis square is a small public square of Athens center in close proximity to several important toponyms.

Marni street connects Vathis square to Karaiskaki square and its Metro station (around 9 min. walk), as well as to the Archaeological Museum and the National Technical University of Athens (around 8 minutes walk away).

Pedion Areos Park is 15 min. walk away from Vathis square, while Victoria square and Victoria Train station are 12 min. walk away from Vathis square. Moreover, Liosion Avenue connects Vathis square to Omonoia square and Omonoia Metro and Train station, which are located around 7-9 min. walk away from Vathis square.

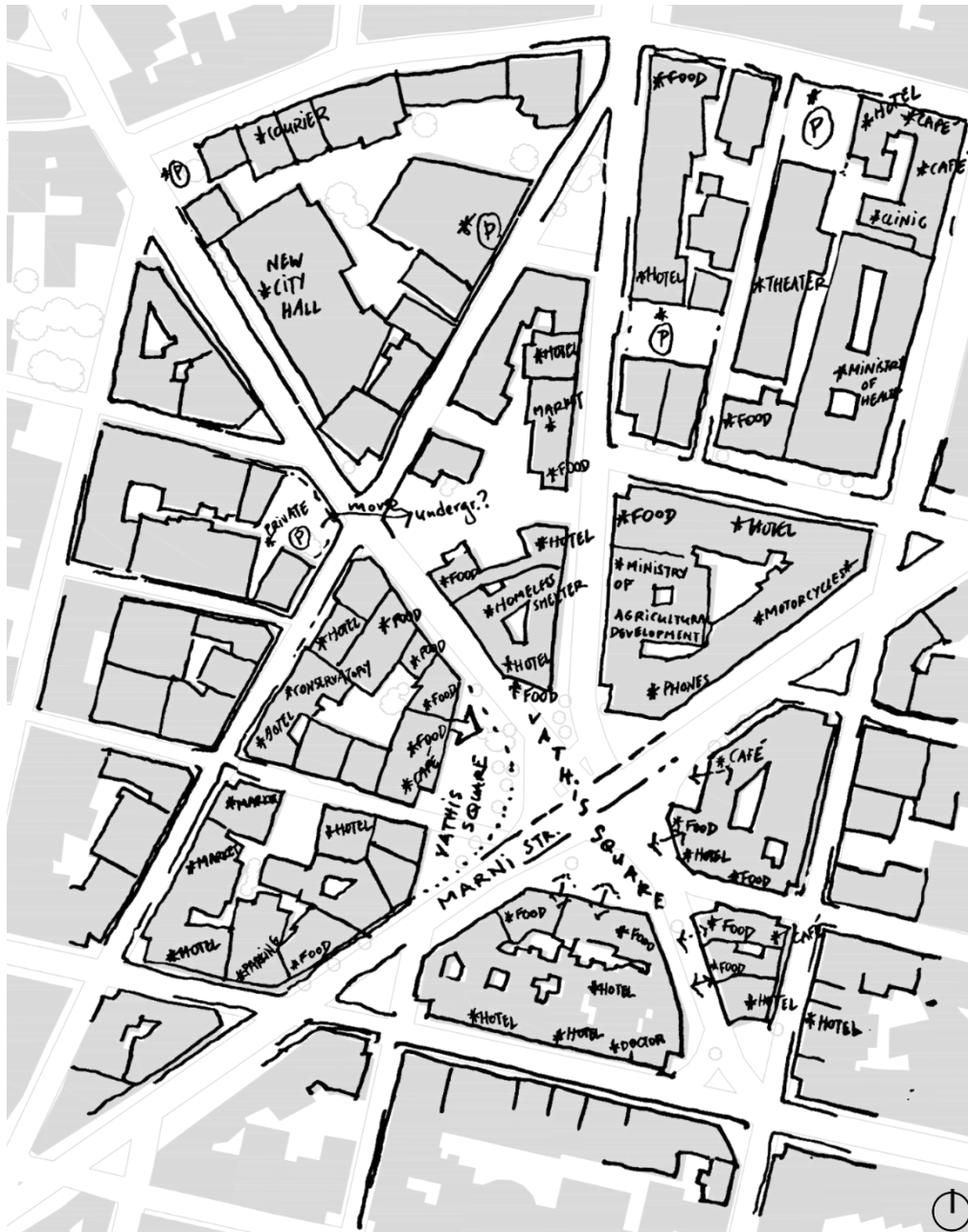
Zooming in the surrounding blocks of Vathis square, it is clearly depicted in MAP\_Ath2 that the square is not only connected to central toponyms and public transport stations, but also to several services and functions.

Plenty of hotels, hostels and apartments to rent, the homeless shelter, as well as a huge variety of food services and cafes are located in the neighboring urban blocks.

Some of the food services expand their functions in part of the existing square or the paved area opposite to it.

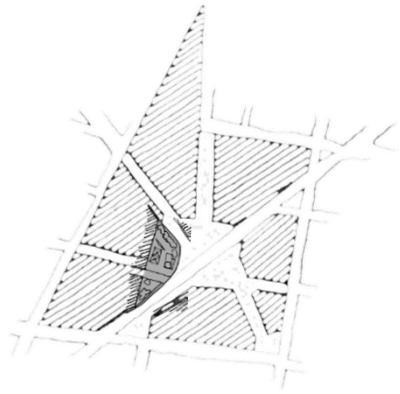
Furthermore, a theater, a conservatory, a clinic and some markets are also close to the square. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as a New City Hall are located in the surrounding blocks. There are also five parking lots close by, marked with a “\*P”.

Map\_Ath2 already shows the intention for exploring enlargement possibilities of Vathis square.

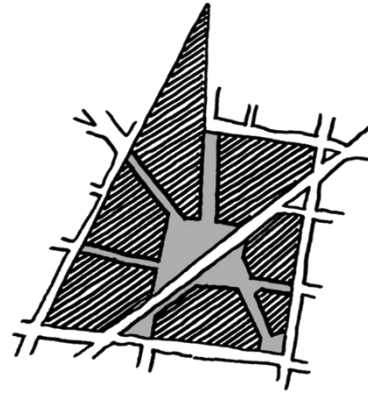


MAP\_Ath2

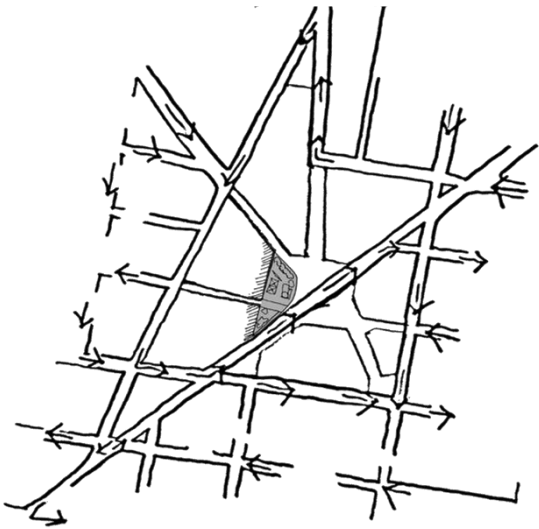
A1



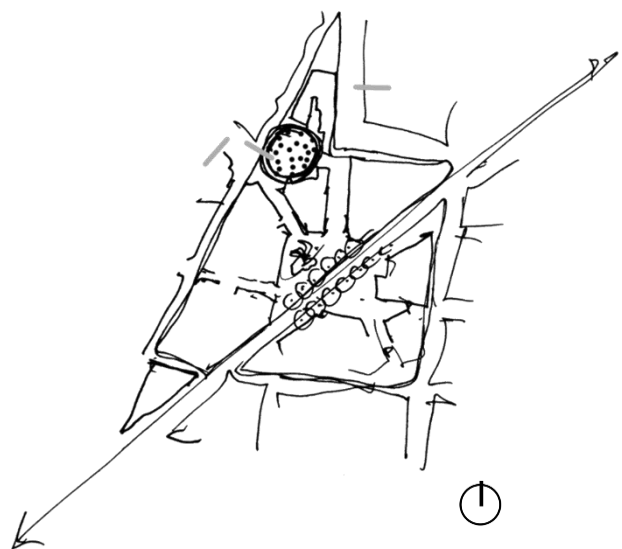
A3



A2



A4



A1: The diagram A1 depicts the existing area of Vathis Square. The accessibility to the square is difficult, since the square is located on the intersection of wide axes. This intersection creates an unfriendly, noisy and unsafe crossing. Prioritization is given to cars, hence people outside the western neighborhood of the square, avoid visiting it.

A2: Due to the huge axes intersection that creates a busy and chaotic void, the challenge was to find a solution with traffic, in order to provide pedestrianized areas and create bigger blocks around the square. The diagram A2 explores this possibility, using the existing traffic destinations.

A3: Now a new and bigger public square is proposed. The new area as well as the paths that lead to the open space are shown in grey.

The new Vathis square is divided by the main car-street (Marni) into two main spaces. The paths are also used as part of the square, providing some functions (bike stops, playground, public toilets etc.).

Area of the new square: 4114 sqm.

Area of the paths: 3761 sqm.

A4: The diagram explores possible ways to define the two divided parts of the redesigned Vathis square. There are also some notes (grey lines) regarding possible entrances for underground parking, as well as a possibility for a pocket park (black circle, northeastern part of the square).

Original scale of the diagrams A1, A2, A3 and A4, is 1:2000.





In the following maps, the existing situation of Vathis square (map on the left) as well as the redesign proposal for the square (map on the right) are presented. Original scale of the maps is 1:2000.

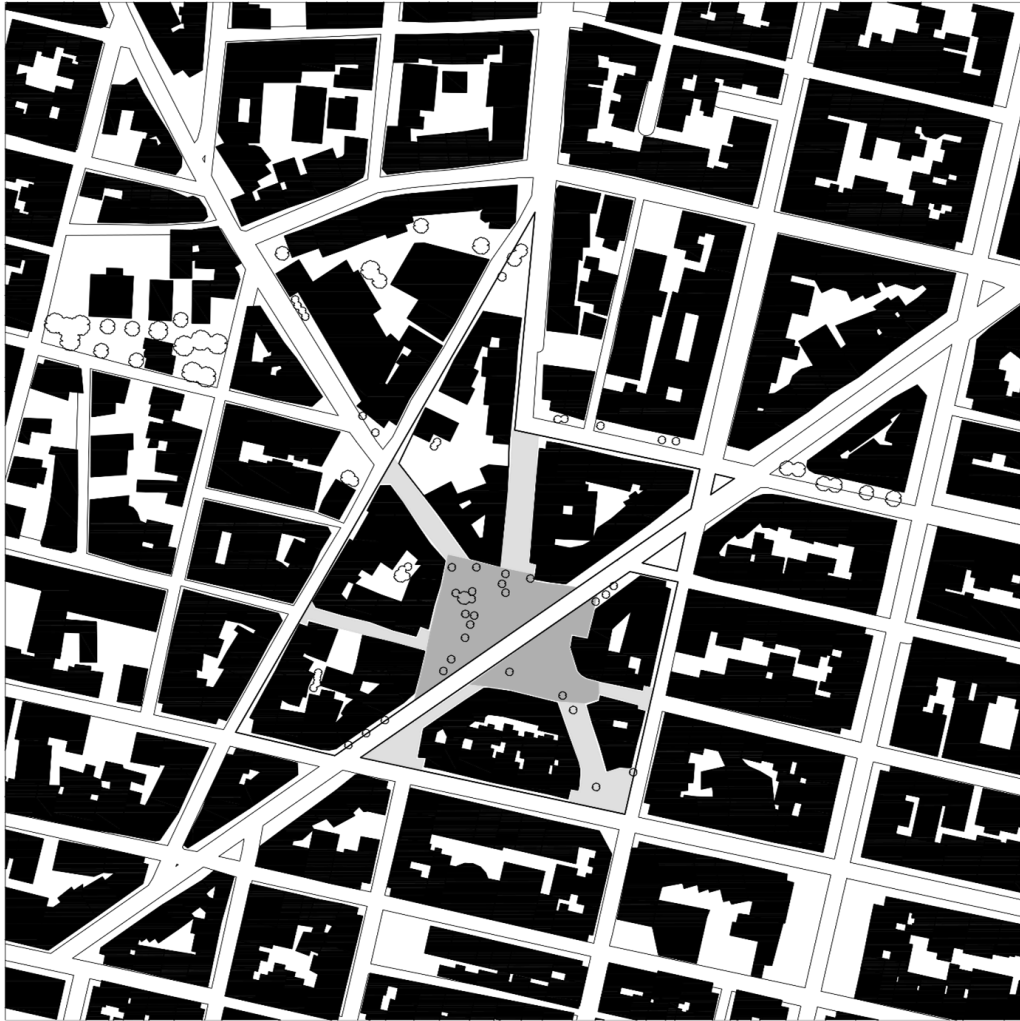
The main point of this proposal is that three car-oriented streets, as well as a part of a fourth street are now pedestrianized. The cars have still accessible ways that replace their previous options and pedestrians can feel encouraged to use a much safer and calmer urban block. Moreover, spaces for parking are provided nearby, as well as ramps for accessibility to underground parking spaces.

Because of the reduce of the traffic and the proposed pedestrianization, now more open space is created as expansion of the public square. Hence, the new form of the square will be a large "rectangular" square, divided into two triangular spaces by the main car-oriented Marni street that remains open for vehicles.



Before





After



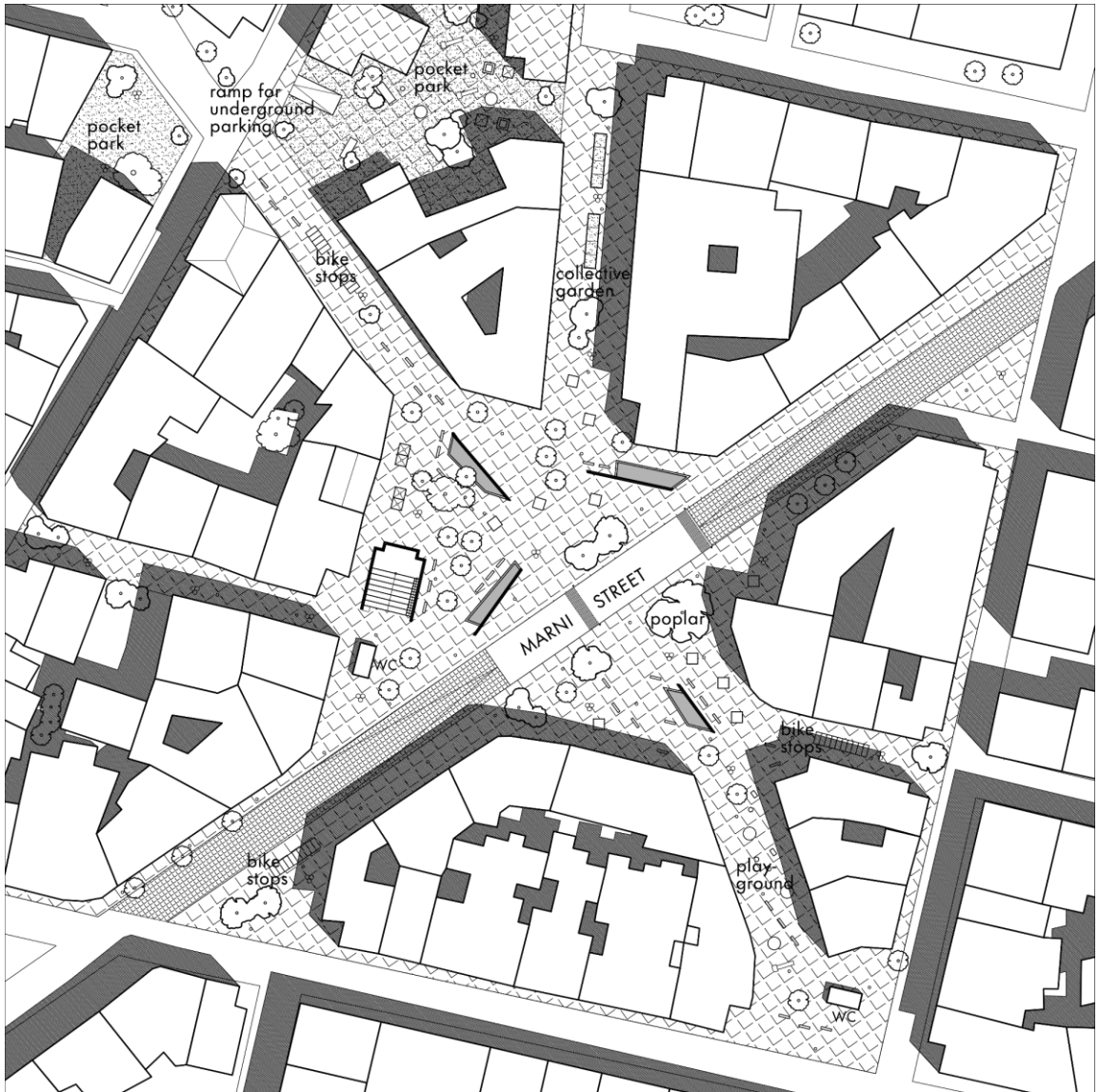
By avoiding strict organization and separation of different functions, integration and mixed-character are enhanced in the proposed design.

The intention is to create a multi-functional public square, where the users can find diverse functions spread all over the place.

The functions that are only found on the supportive paths of the new square, are a bit separated from the heart of the square for specific reasons:

- The participants asked for a special place for the collective garden, which is proposed on the pedestrianized part of Acharnon street. Furthermore, the building on the right of the garden is the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food, hence seminars, workshops and collaboration with the people who take care of the garden are enhanced.

- The playground has also a special place, since in terms of safety and noise, participants suggested introducing equipment for kids in a more enclosed spot, a bit away from the very central part of the square. The playground is proposed on the pedestrianized Kamaterou street, next to public restrooms and bike stops.



Vathis Square Detailed Plan, Original Scale 1:500















Apart from the proposing pedestrianization, two new pocket parks are also proposed, as it is clearly shown on the Vathis Square Plan (original scale 1:500). One of the pocket parks provides a ramp that leads to an underground parking. The proposed underground parking in combination with the other parking lots and enclosed parking spaces in the surrounding area encourage traffic decongestion. Regarding the built interventions, four water walls are added, in order to create white noise and eventually reduce the noise that the vehicles produce. The design of the walls as well as their positioning on the square is inspired by the surrounding axes and view-points.

Furthermore, an amphitheater with a stage is added to the square, since it was a participants' wish. This topographical "plunge" that is created by the amphitheater, is also conceptually connected to the stagnant waters of the Kyklovoros stream that use to run below the area and created a deepening of the ground. The water has now "reappeared" through the introduction of the waterwalls.

Regarding built furniture, all of the benches are made by demolition leftovers of cement or concrete. Due to participant's proposals, new wooden kiosks for shade, as well as wooden tables and seats below the kiosks are provided. Wood is selected for the furniture since it is the most appropriate material for the hot sunny weather of Athens.

Free public restrooms are added in the western part as well as in the corner of the south-eastern part of the new square. Drinking fountains are spread all over the square.

In order to enhance ecological behavior, big wooden recycling bins are spread all over the new square, while some bike racks are also provided. In terms of energy efficiency and sustainability, LED urban lights are proposed, while plenty of trees and softscape materials are added.

Regarding the trees, plenty of sour orange trees, almond trees and black locust trees are proposed, since they are compatible to Athens climate and several of them are found around the area. The historical poplar tree that was cut in the past, is now replaced on the other side of the new Vathis square, providing a special spot for shade and oxygen: a circular wooden

bench is proposed around the poplar.<sup>139</sup> Close to the amphitheater, there is a “break” of the paving tiles and a softscape ground is proposed: this spot can act as a bioswale, in order to encourage stormwater management.

In addition, specific decisions were taken based on accessibility prerequisites. All of the wooden furniture, as well as the public restrooms and drinking fountains are accessible by people with moving difficulties and wheelchairs. Moreover, the amphitheater, provides space for wheelchairs as well as an electrical wheelchair lift.

A part of Marni street is elevated to the level of the new square, in order to create accessibility to both parts of the square. For the safety of crossing Marni street, several traffic lights are positioned, while for the part of Marni which connects the two sides of Vathis new square, cobblestones for lower traffic speed are proposed. Another proposition related to accessibility enhancement, is the placement of big smooth paving tiles all over the new square, to reduce the vibrations.

The wooden tables and seats which are shaded by umbrellas, will be used by the existing food service and cafes, as it is happening so far. This is the only part of the square that the private benefit is using part of the public space. Last but not least, arts, graffiti on the back side of the water walls, music and dance events on the stage, as well as political speeches and demonstrations, are always encouraged, based on participants’ opinion.

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<sup>139</sup> The circular bench around the biggest tree of the square acts as a historical reference to a common type of squares in villages and regional parts of Greece. This type of square is called “Plateia Platanou” («Πλατεία Πλατάνου» in Greek) and is basically the central meeting point of a village/town, always located around a huge platanus.











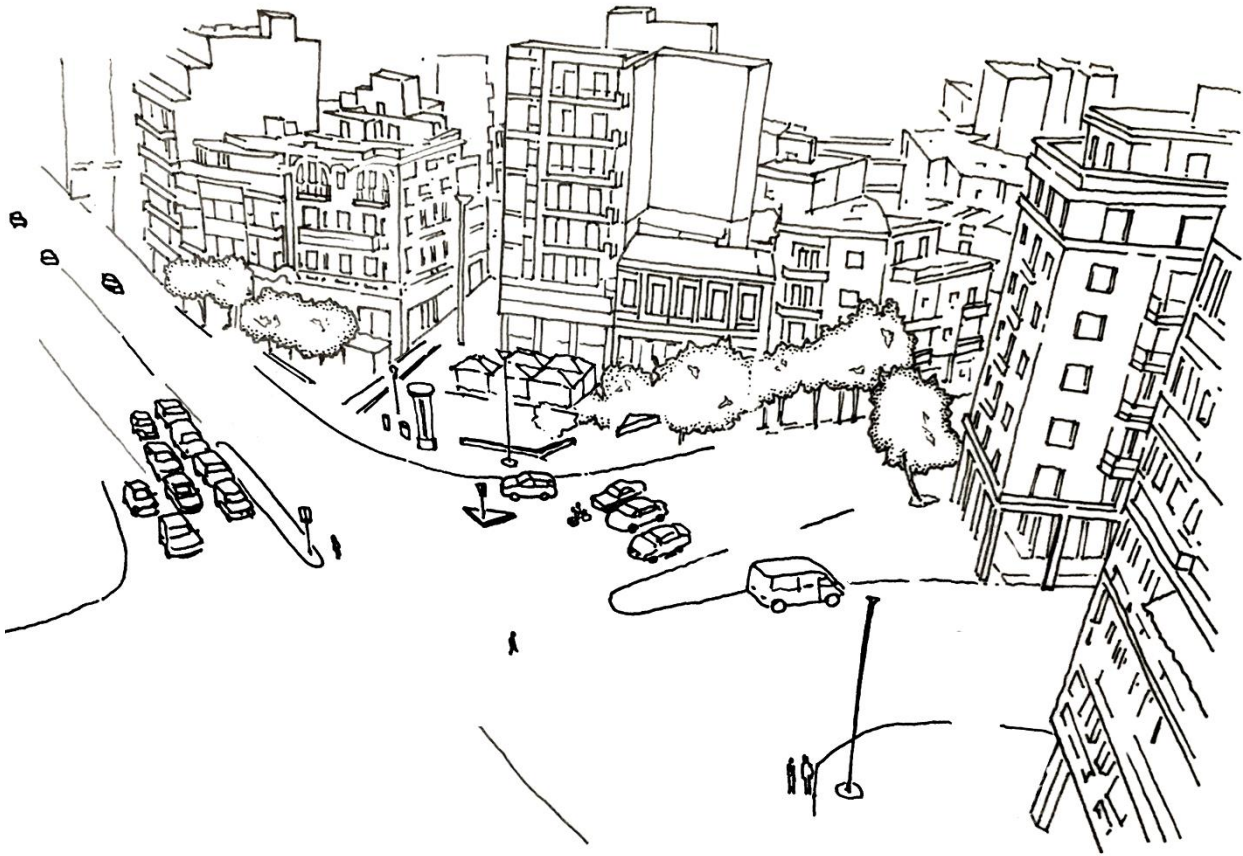




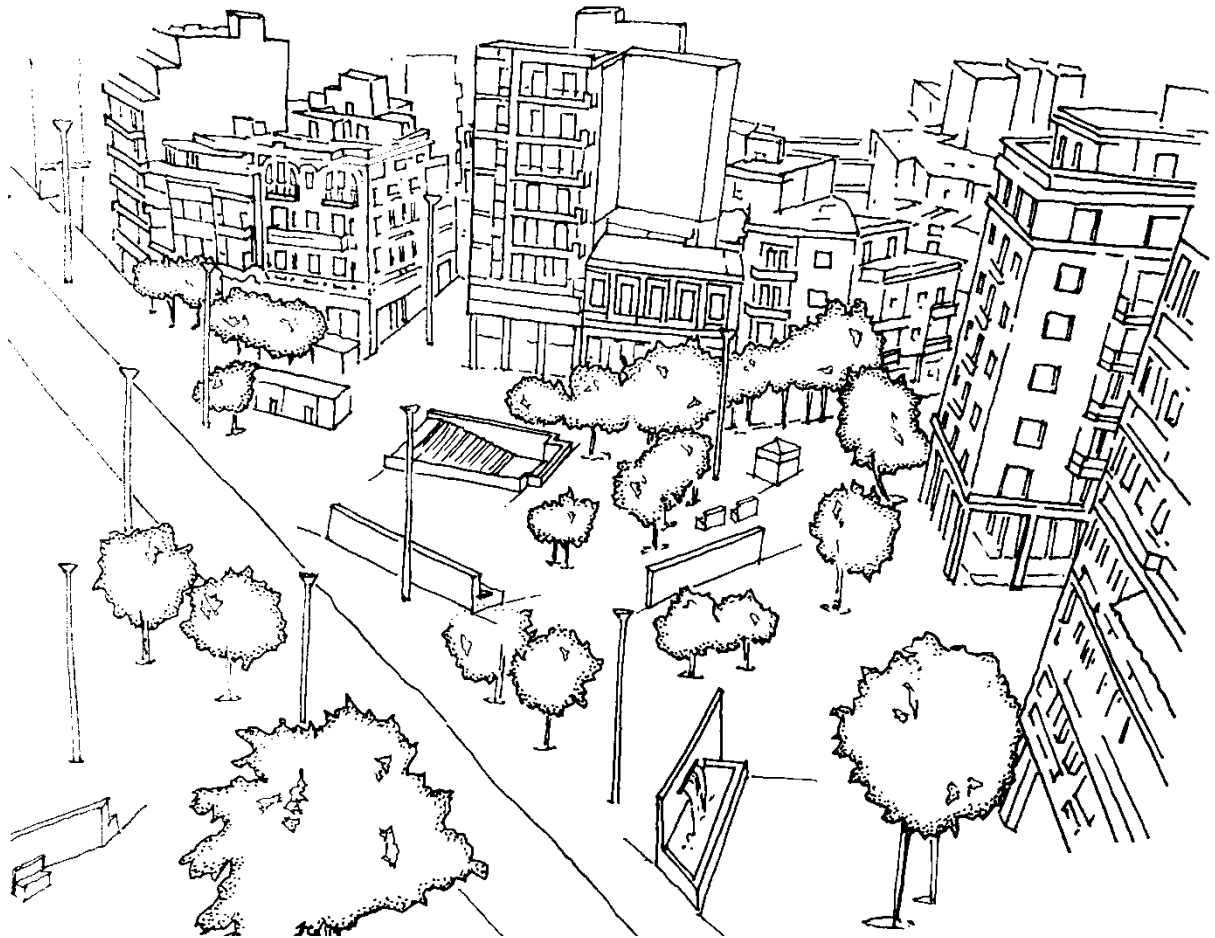


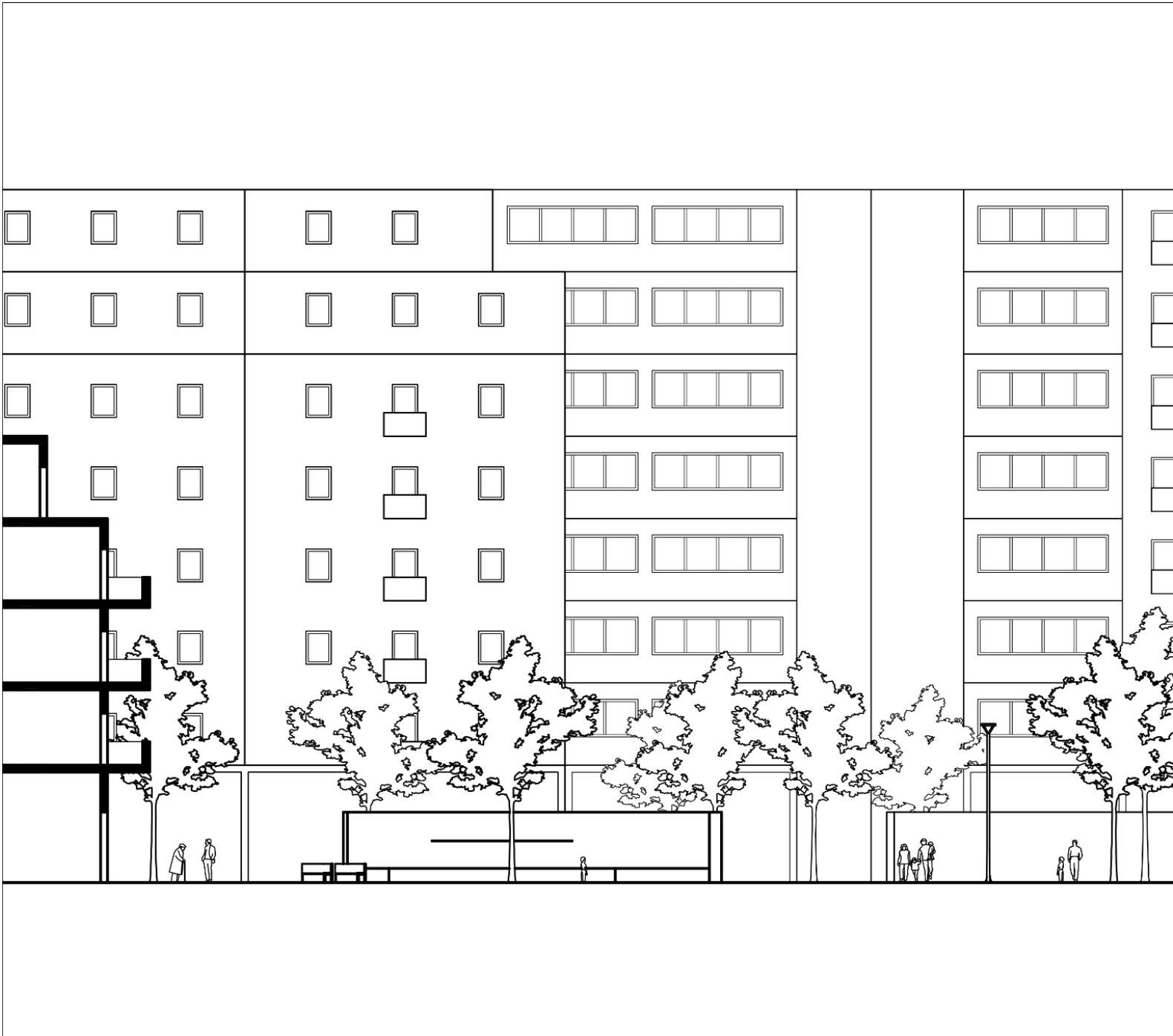


Before



After





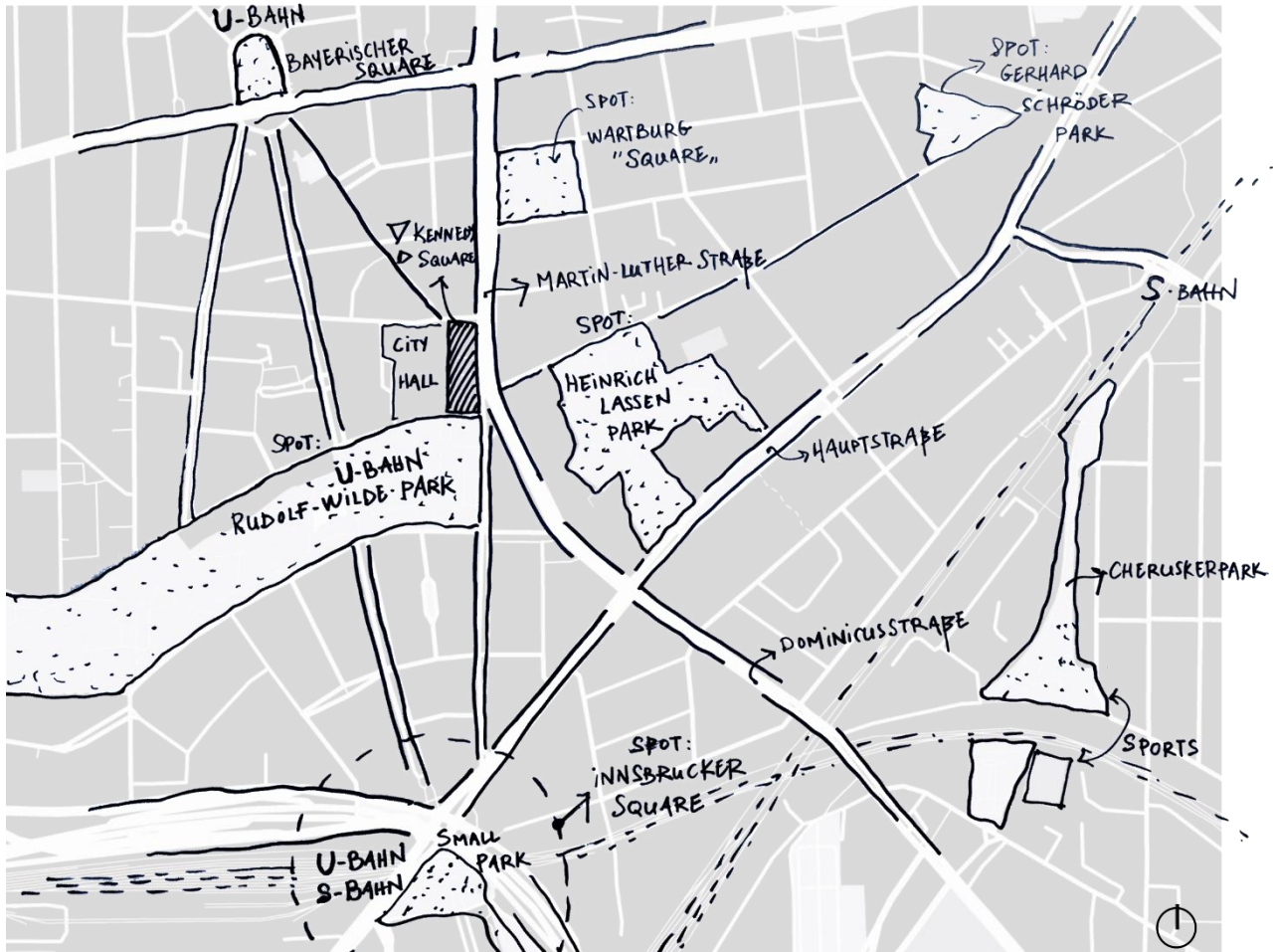






John F. Kennedy square, Berlin





MAP\_Berl



As MAP\_Berl depicts, John F. Kennedy square is a rectangular outdoor space outside City Hall of Schöneberg, a nice district of Berlin. The square is close to important toponyms and connection points of Berlin (S-trains, U-Bahn, bus stops), such as:

- 7-9 min. walk from U-Bahn Bayerischer Platz

- 3 min. walk from U-Bahn Rathaus Schöneberg (entrance next to Rudolph-Wilde park)

- 5 min. walk from Wartburg square

- 4 min. walk from Heinrich-Lassen Park

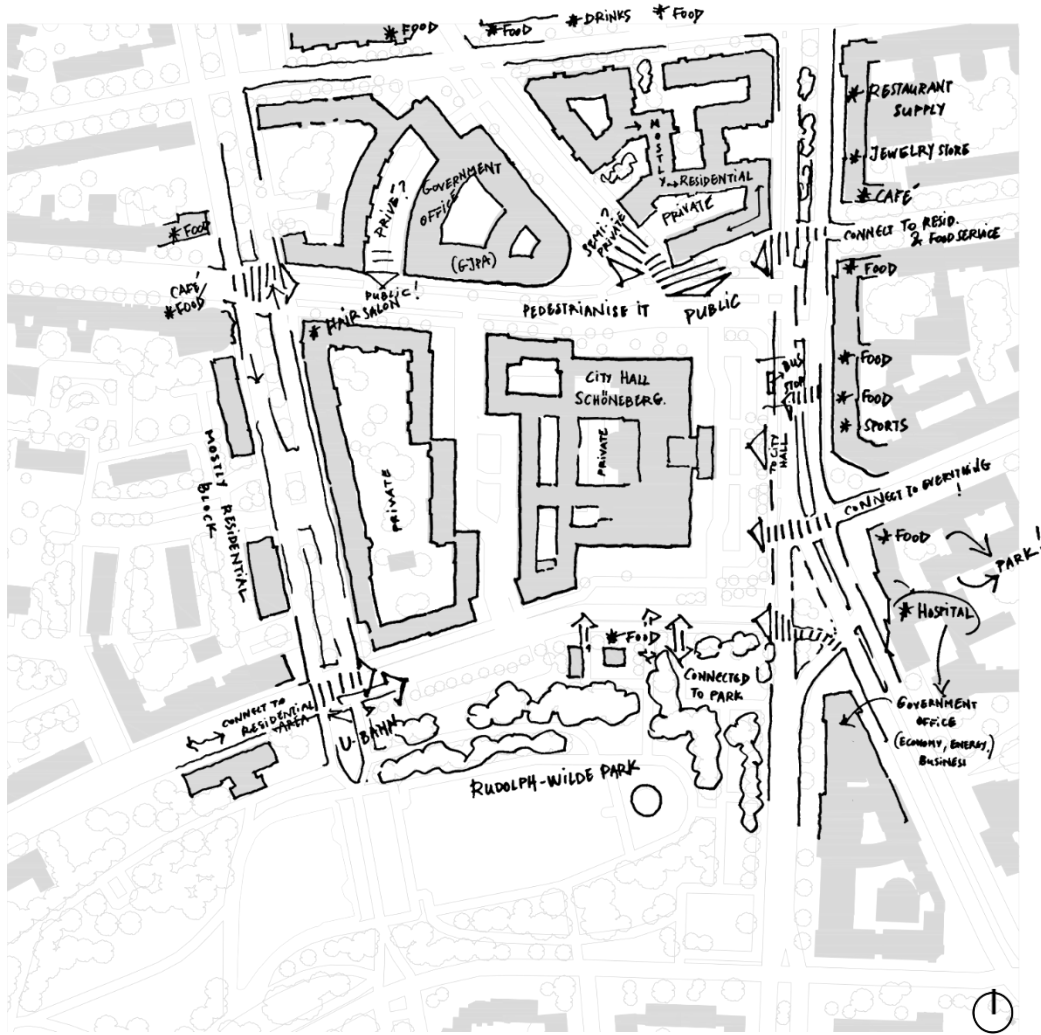
- 13 min. walk from Gerhard-Schröder Park

- 12 min. walk from Innsbrucker Platz (S, U, buses)

The most important toponym, located exactly next to the Kennedy square is Rudolph-Wilde Park.

Furthermore, one of the important axes of south-western Berlin, Martin-Luther-Street is framing the eastern part of the square.

Another important axis of south-western Berlin, Dominicus-Street, creates an intersection with Martin-Luther-Street very close to Kennedy square.



MAP\_Ber2

Some zoomed-in information regarding surrounding functions are noted in MAP\_Ber2.

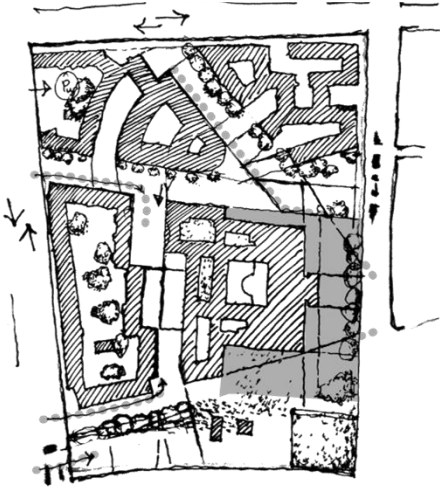
The northern and especially the eastern part which face Kennedy square, are characterized by plenty of food service functions, places for coffee and drinks, while the western surroundings are mostly residential, exempting the Schöneberg City Hall.

Apart from the City Hall which prevails with its large size and dominant façade, there is also another monumental public building next to the City Hall: the Senate Department for Justice, Consumer Protection and Anti-Discrimination of Schöneberg (GJPA) characterized by its impressive circular façade.

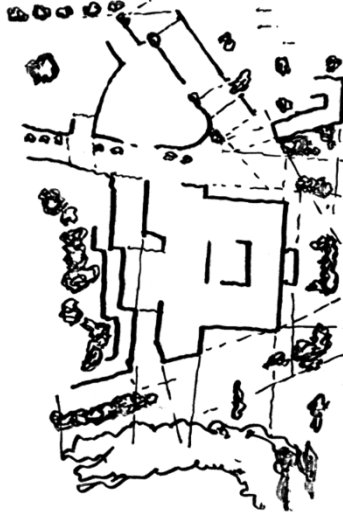
An intention for pedestrianization of four blocks, including the City Hall and Kennedy square, the residential block behind the City Hall, the GJPA building as well as the residential block opposite to the GJPA, is explored in MAP\_Ber2.

In MAP\_Ber2, an intention to connect surrounding public functions and private yards to Kennedy square is shown. Stronger passages, safer crossing and connections between the square and the eastern surroundings are also depicted.

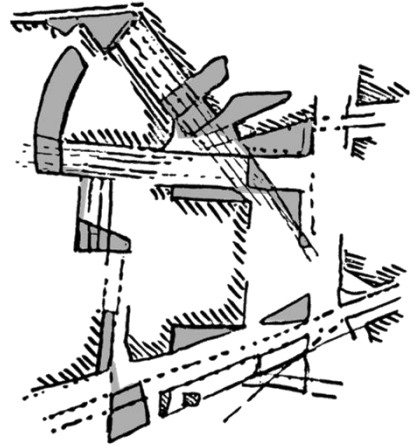
B1



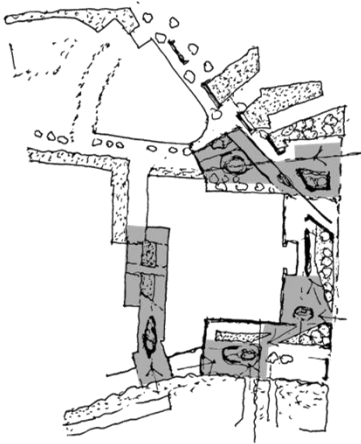
B2



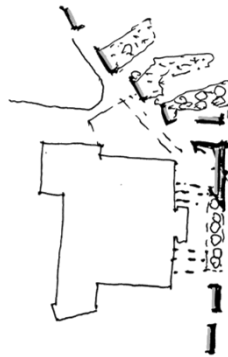
B3



B4



B5



B1: The diagram shows the new proposition: pedestrianization of the depicted block. The district provides many circular connections for vehicles, hence it is not necessary to keep all of the surrounding streets for vehicles. Due to the huge number of cars on the current square (which is mostly being used as an open parking lot), the diagram shows in dot-lines possible entrances for underground parking. Also in dot-lines some view points are connected.

B2: The diagram shows an intention for visual and walking connections (dashed lines).

It also depicts the existing trees and greenery which is quite a lot!

B3: Possibilities for thicker greenery layers and connections are shown in grey. These areas derived from connections of the previous diagrams. The intention is to create an interesting co-existence between the private yards and the public square.

B4: The new John F. Kennedy square is now an area of 18097,15 sqm.

The supporting pedestrianized area is around 6653,62 sqm.

Overwriting the previous diagrams, grey areas depict wider points of interest.

B5: Last but not least, walls for climbing trees or/and running water are suggested. Their use can create a rhythmical and playful composition that defines paths and points of interest (theatrical entrances, ramps for seats, waterwalls, trees, kiosk spaces, graffiti surfaces). The walls are a reference to the historic Berlin Wall as well.

Original scale of the diagrams B1, B2, B3, B4 and B5, is 1:2000.



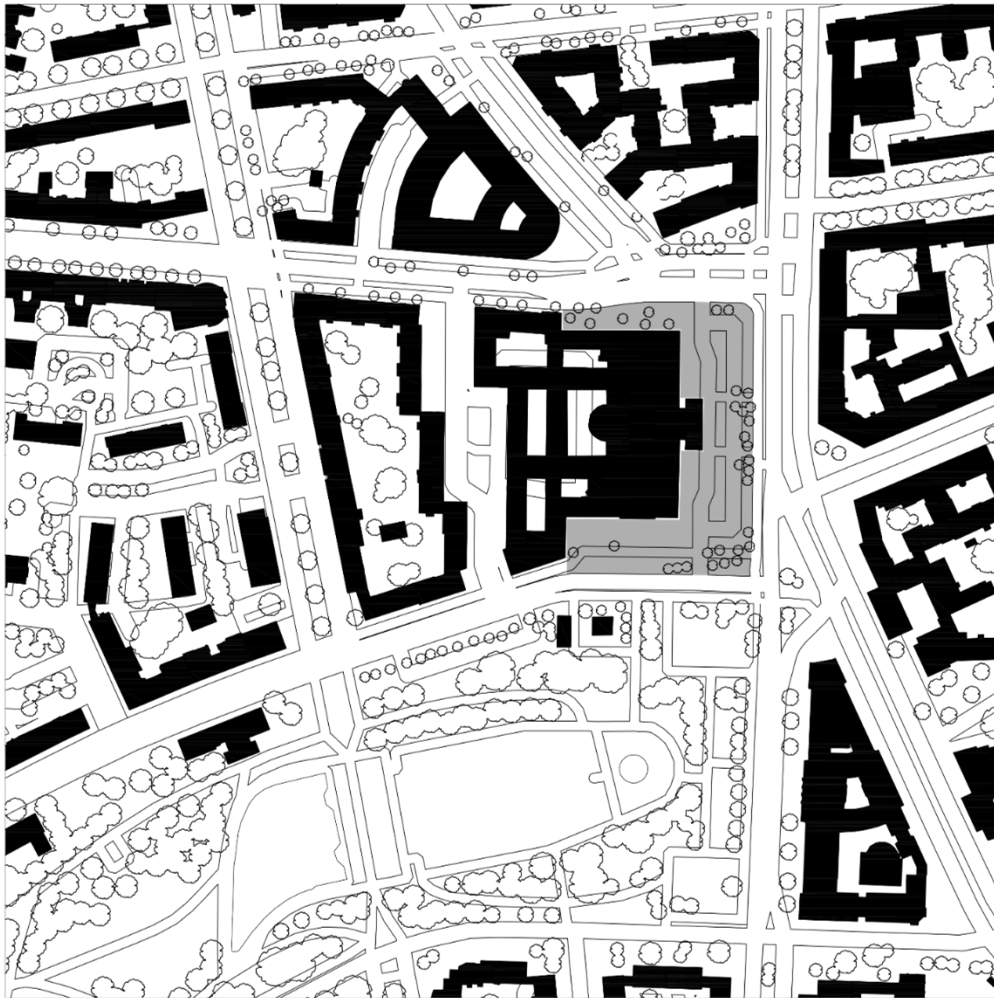
In the following maps, the existing situation of John F. Kennedy square (map on the left) as well as the redesign proposal for the square (map on the right) are presented. Original scale of the maps is 1:2000.

This proposal suggests a public square design almost from scratch. The main challenge was to provide solutions for several ramps that lead to underground parking lots, in order to remove the open parking lot outside Schöneberg's City Hall, and as a result create a clear space for public square purposes.

After rejuvenating the existing traffic network and by providing solutions of underground parking spaces, a pedestrianization of the two urban blocks above the City Hall was added to the proposal. The traffic circularity still works and the pedestrianization does not cause any disturbances.

Hence John-F.-Kennedy new square belongs to a bigger urban block which includes: the City Hall, three large residential blocks of flats, as well as the building of the Senate Department for Justice, Consumer Protection and Anti-Discrimination of Schöneberg.

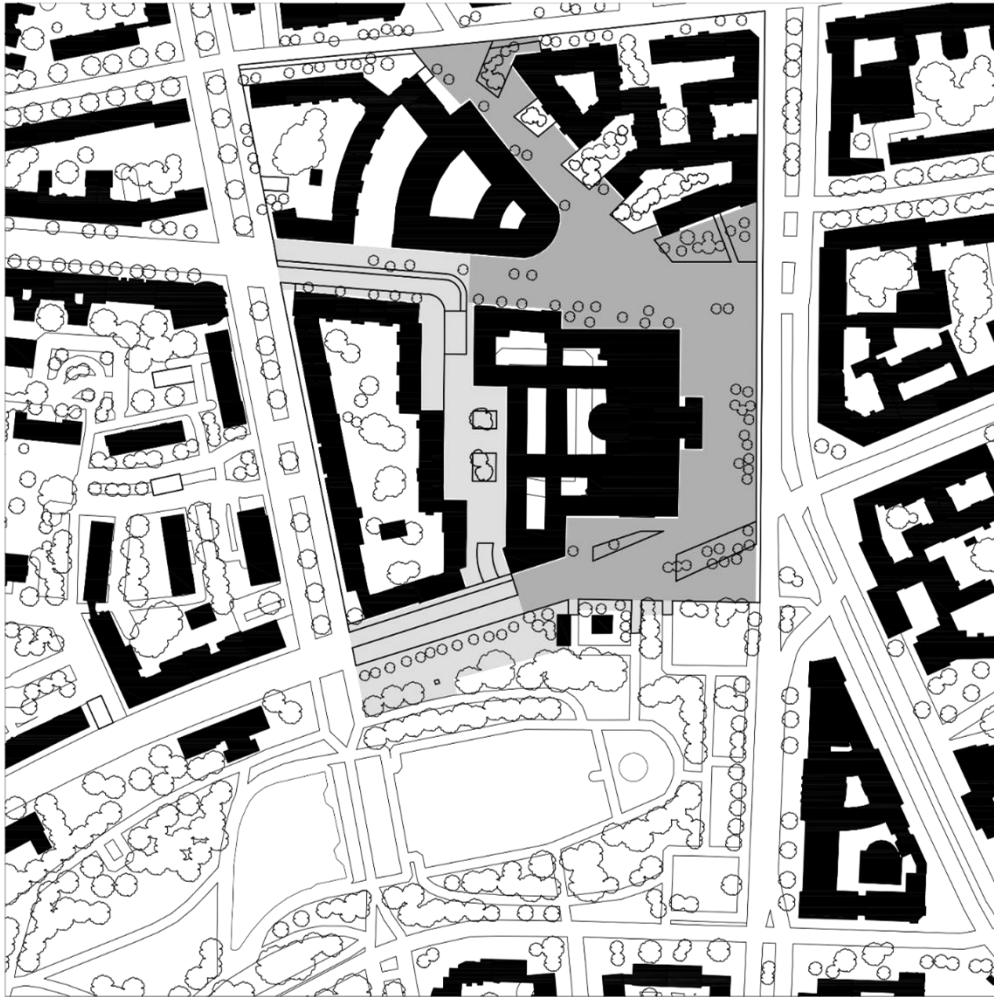
The proposed square is much larger and safe from cars.



Before







After



244 | RE-THINKING PUBLIC SPACES

G.J.P.A.

amphitheater

CITY HALL

ramp for underground parking

ramp for underground parking

ramp for underground parking

ramp for private underground parking

bike stops

bike stops

bike stops

playground

food

food

lift

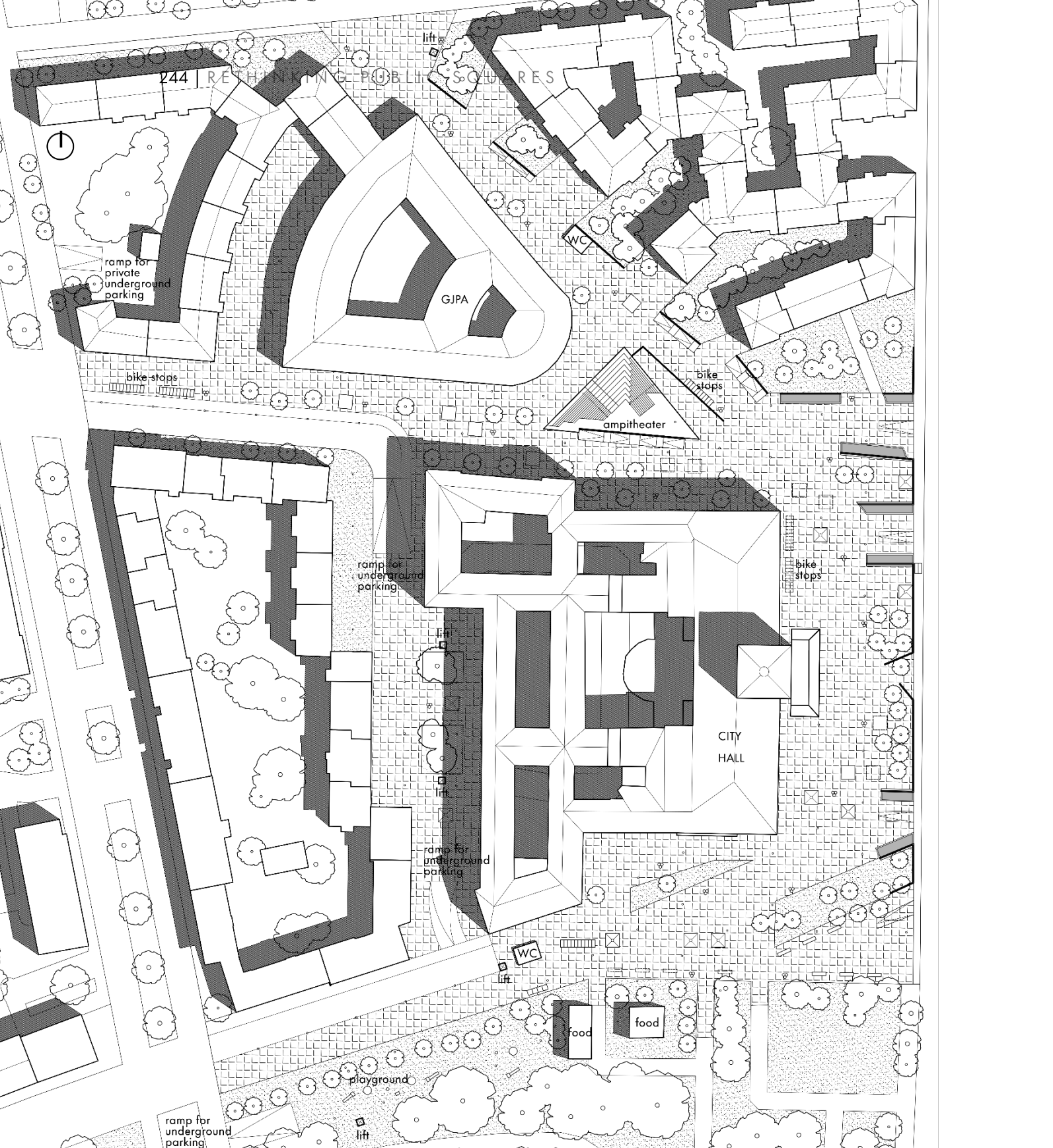
wc

lift

lift

lift

lift



[Drawing: John F. Kennedy Square Detailed Plan, Original Scale 1:500]

Regarding the built interventions, seven water walls are added, in order to create white noise and eventually reduce the noise that the vehicles produce. All of them are located on the border line between the square and the main traffic axis which is parallel to the City Hall.

The water walls create a playful and theatrical scenery in front of the City Hall, while they could act as a historical reference: parts of Berlin's Customs Walls combined with graffiti and political art could be appeared in the new walls.

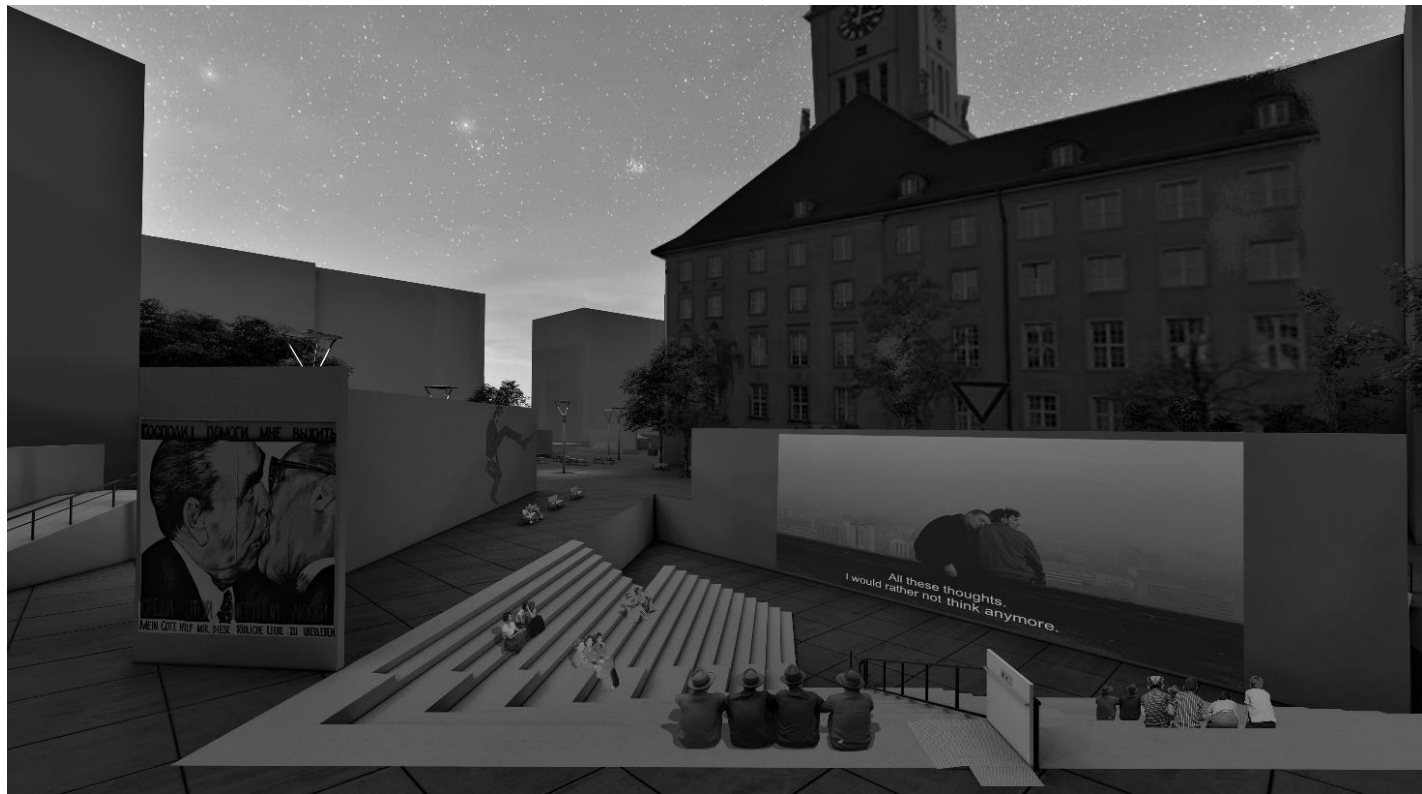
Furthermore, walls for climbing plants and ramps are used in one of the diagonal pedestrianized entrances to the square (on the northern part of the urban block). This rhythmical appearance of those walls has a triple function:

- regarding the inner side, the walls create a mystical and enclosed border for the inside private yards of the block of flats, that are now turned into "urban jungles" with plenty of trees, bioswales and plants
- regarding the outer side of the walls, they are connected to playful ramps that provide seats and view-points in different heights (based on participatory planning propositions)
- last but not least, the walls work as a promising invitation to the public square, and they rhythmically lead to the City Hall square part and the big built intervention: the amphitheater that makes a deepening on the ground, hence creating an interesting topographical differentiation on the square.

The amphitheater can be used for theatrical, musical, political events, or even as an open-air cinema during summer months.

The water walls, the view-points of different height, as well as the amphitheater and stage were added to the proposal due to participants' wishes.



















In terms of other functions, new LED lights, wooden benches, some tables with seats, plenty of recycling bins, two public restrooms and bike racks are added to the proposal.

Taking into account the bikes and vehicles of the residents and people who work for the public buildings of the new urban block, three main accesses are proposed. These axes (vehicle and bike lanes) lead to ramps and underground parking spaces. Two of them are located behind the City Hall and the third one is located on the rough ground of Rudolph-Wilde park below the City Hall. Four new lifts connect the underground to the public square. Moreover, the existing bus stop at the eastern sidewalk of the square is kept.

Playground equipment is integrated to the Rudolph-Wilde park, since according to participant's opinion, the playground should be located a bit further from the central part of the public square.

In general, apart from the walls and the amphitheater, there are not many of stable built furniture on the new design proposal. Most of the proposed furniture can be removed, so that the square can occasionally host different events. This alterable character of the new Kennedy square is based on participant's opinion and the fact that as a City Hall square, it has to occasionally provide an open clear space for political speeches, demonstrations, celebrations and other events. Regarding the occasional events, since there is already a weekly flea market on the existing Kennedy square, the top view plan as well as the collages depict several spots of kiosk tents, where people could sell and buy stuff.

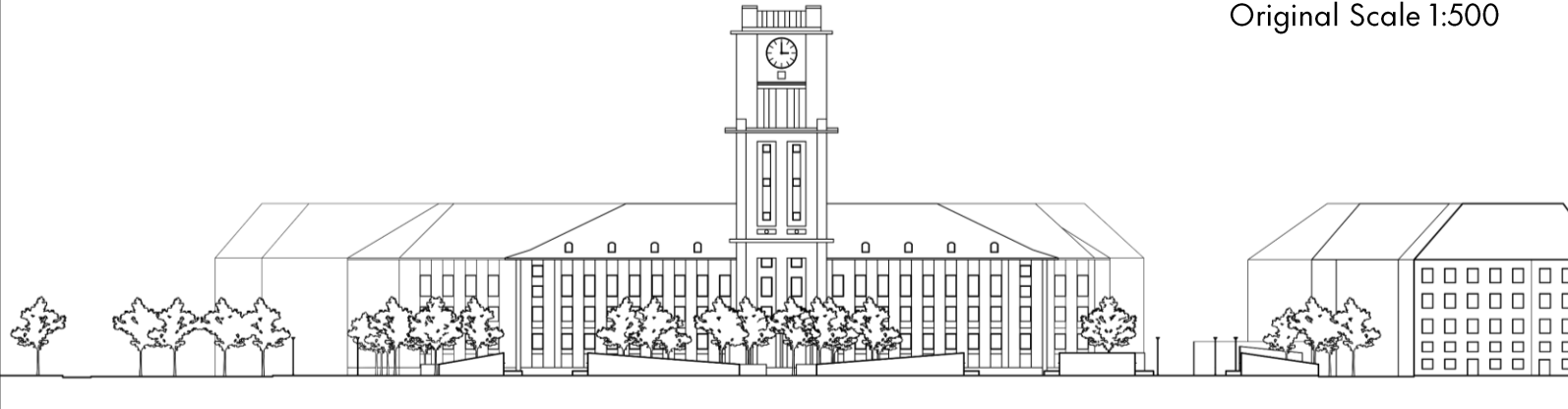
Accessibility criteria are seriously taken into consideration: large-size and smooth paving tiles are proposed for the pavement of the new square, while ramps of extremely slight slope ratio are provided in all of the entrances of the square. The picnic tables as well as the drinking fountains that are spread all over the new square are 100% accessible.

Since Kennedy square is located in a neighborhood full of trees, in-between of two parks, it can keep a more formal and hardscape character. Nonetheless, a few trees in combination with softscape areas and bioswales are added both to the square as well as to the residential yards, in order to enhance sustainability aspects. Most of the trees are variations of oak type of tree.





John F. Kennedy Square Eastern View,  
Original Scale 1:500





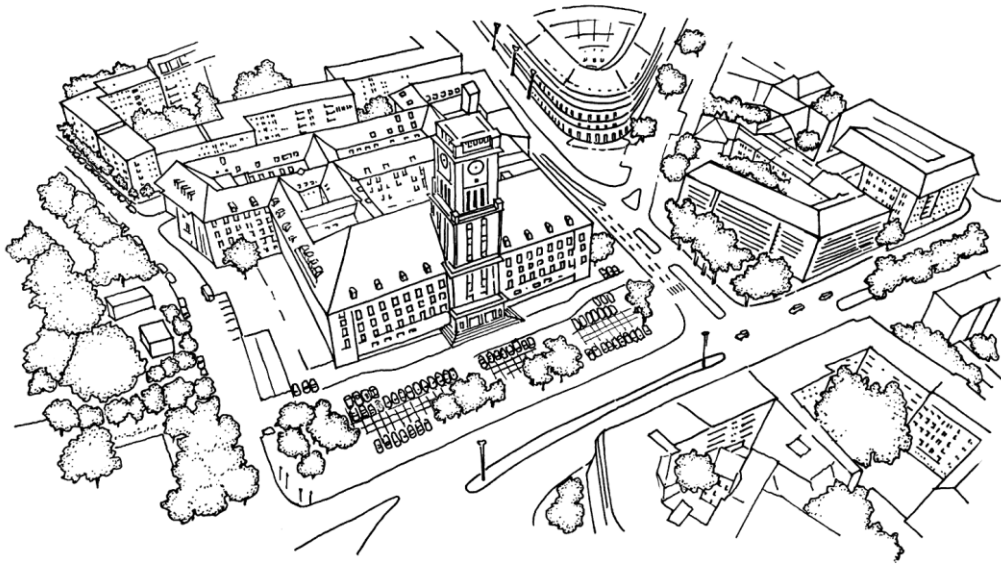




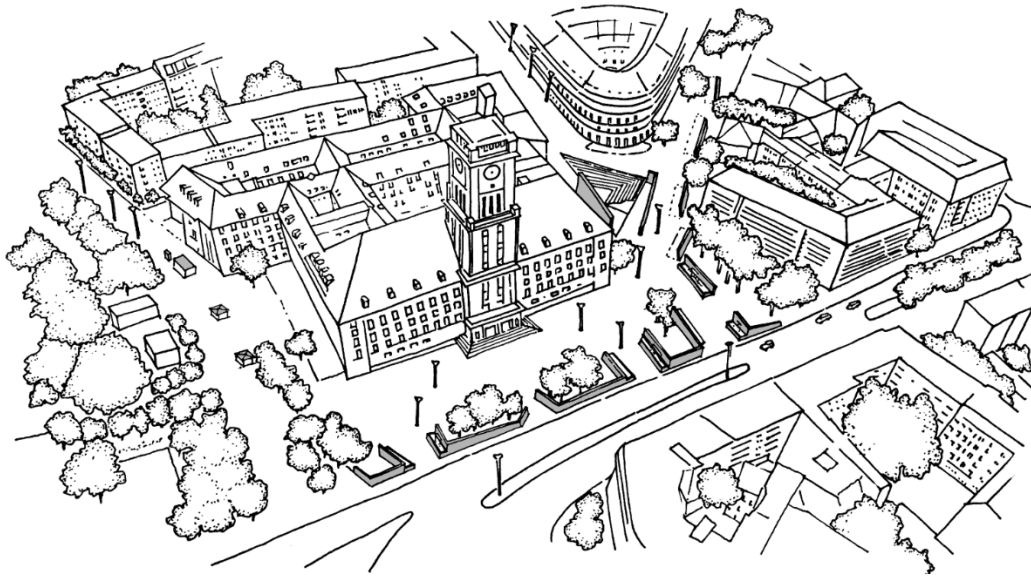








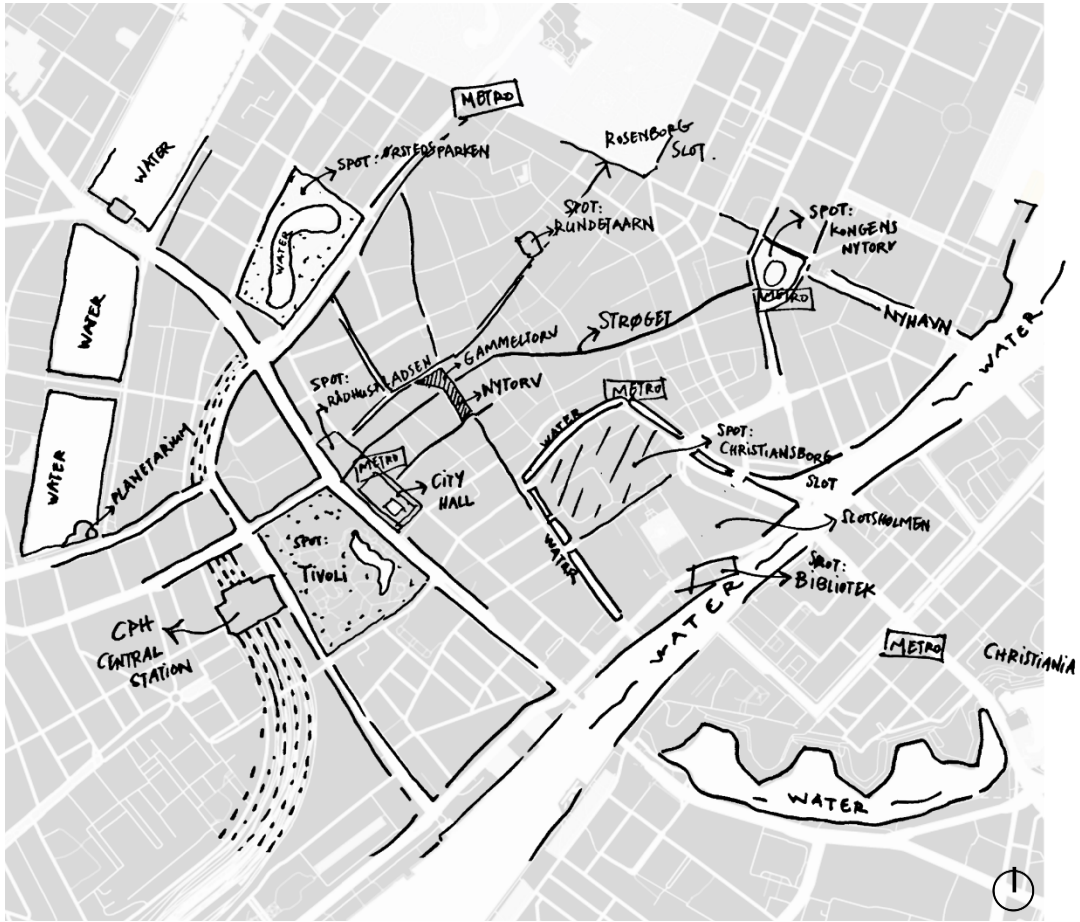
Before



After



Gammeltorv-Nytorv, Copenhagen



MAP\_Cph1

As MAP\_Cph1 depicts, Gammeltorv-Nytorv, seen as a whole square, is located in Strøget, which is probably the most famous and central pedestrianized zone, 100% car free, as well as a shopping area, in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Strøget divides the whole square into two zones, Gammeltorv and Nytorv, and as an axis, connects the square to the City Hall of Copenhagen (Rådhuspladsen), which is 5 min. walk away from the square, as well as to Kongens Nytorv (17 min. walk or 13 min. by Metro – M3 or M4) and Nyhavn area. Strøget also passes by two important toponyms: Tivoli gardens and the Central Station of Copenhagen, which are both located 10 min. walk away from Gammeltorv-Nytorv.

As it is shown in MAP\_Cph1, apart from the aforementioned toponyms that are connected to the square through Strøget, there are also other important spots close by, such as:

- Copenhagen Cathedral/Vor Frue Kirke - 2 min. walk
- Copenhagen's University - 2 min. walk
- Gråbrødretorv - 4 min. walk
- Rundetaarn - 7 min. walk
- Ørstedsparken and Israels square - 8-10 min. walk
- Rosenborg slot - 10 min. walk
- Planetarium - 14 min. walk
- Museum of Natural History - 16 min. walk

In MAP\_Cph2, some notes are taken regarding the surrounding blocks and the functions which are found around and on the square. In general, most of the functions are related to food service (cafes, bars, restaurants, fast food), while there are also plenty of commercial functions (gift shops, sports equipment, clothing stores etc.)

As it is aforementioned in the historical analysis of public squares, during the latest refurbishment of the square in 1993, an octagonal podium was placed at the site where the scaffold used to be, in Nytorv's area. Since the square lacks of benches, nowadays, the octagonal podium, the few stairsteps in Nytorv's part, as well as the slight height differences surrounding the Caritas Well are used as seats, mainly by people who use the square as a temporal stop to eat some fast food and then leave the square.

Furthermore, the surrounding built environment of the square is remarkable for its architectural aesthetics. Important buildings of historical value surround the square, such as:

- the Court House, in new-classical style (faces Nytorv)
- the old Cigar shop (south-western corner of Gammeltorv) designed by Kaare Klint, which is nowadays under reconstruction
- the Stelling building by Arne Jacobsen from the 1930s (diagonally across the Gammeltorv from the cigar shop), in functionalist style
- plenty of old buildings in renaissance and neo-baroque style <sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> <https://danishdesignreview.com/kbhnotes/tag/Gammel+Torv>



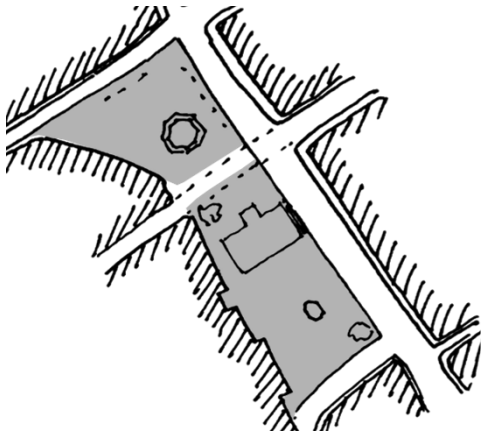
MAP\_Cph2



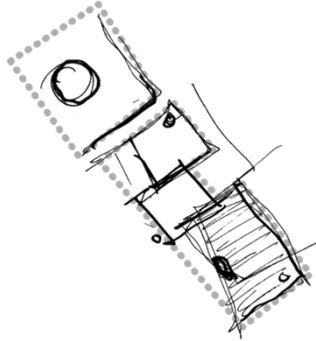




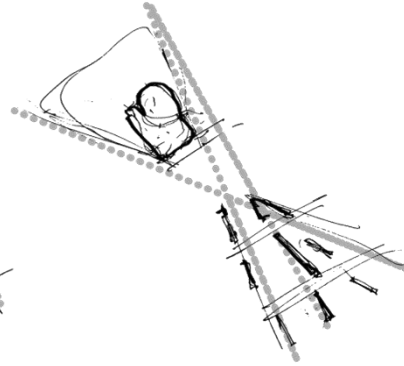
C1



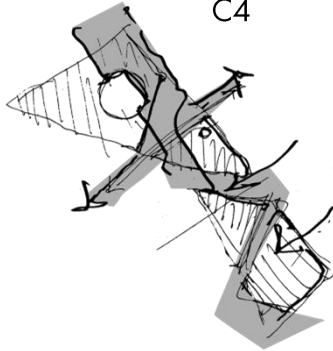
C2



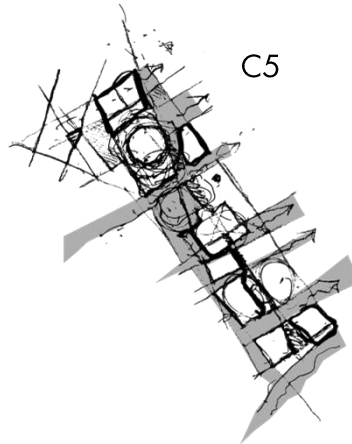
C3



C4



C5



C1: Regarding the current situation, Gammeltorv and Nytorv, smoothly divided by the most central pedestrianized axis of Copenhagen, are large open spaces without any specific functions. They are located in the center of the city, hence they are always a passage's stop. They are surrounded by monumental buildings and defined by famous features from the past: the fountain "Caritas Well", the old telephone kiosk, the octagonal podium, the Memorial plaque for Copenhagen's third and fourth Town Halls (engravings in black, depicted on the diagram).

C2: The dotted-lines explore the possible areas of different activities, framing all the existing materials and features of the square.

C3: The dark lines explore an idea for use of water walls. This idea was a proposition that derived for participatory planning survey. This design attempt includes the existing fountain.

An intention for visual connections in-between the surrounding functions and view-points is also shown in dots.

C4: In black lines, an intention for keeping the existing pavement is shown. The grey area shows an intention about creating new, well-defined entrances to the square, as well as better flow on the square, by using a new, accessible paving. The new material will be smoother and easier in use, especially for cyclists, children, and people who use wheelchairs.

C5: The new Gammel-Ny-torv will be an area of 6653,62 sqm, more or less same area as before. The main intervention is the rhythmical repetition of water walls and ponds, the use of the new paving (grey area), as well as lime trees and softscape elements.

The octagonal podium, the Memorial plaque, the telephone kiosk and the fountain are integrated in the new design.

Original scale of the diagrams C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5, is 1:2000.

In the following maps, the existing situation of Gammeltorv and Nytorv (map on the left) as well as the redesign proposal for the square (map on the right) are presented. Original scale of the maps is 1:2000.

Since Gammeltorv-Nytorv are located in a well-organized urban area, the redesign proposal does not suggest urban interventions around the square. Hence, the proposed redesign is related to the functions and aesthetics of the public square itself, as well as to the surrounding functions.

The intention is to transform the monumental, past-mongering character of the square(s) into a refreshed and functional public space that encourages people to use it, even during the bad weather.

The main strategy is based on three main points:

1. to combine the paler stone pavement (conducted by Otto Käsner in 1993) with a newer paving, permeable, smoother and more appropriate in terms of accessibility
2. to reuse the historical structures: the telephone kiosk, the monumental fountain (the Caritas Well), the engravings from the 1610 City Hall that was burnt, as well as the slight height differences
3. to add plenty of lime trees (*tilia cordata* type), since there are only two trees in the existing square.



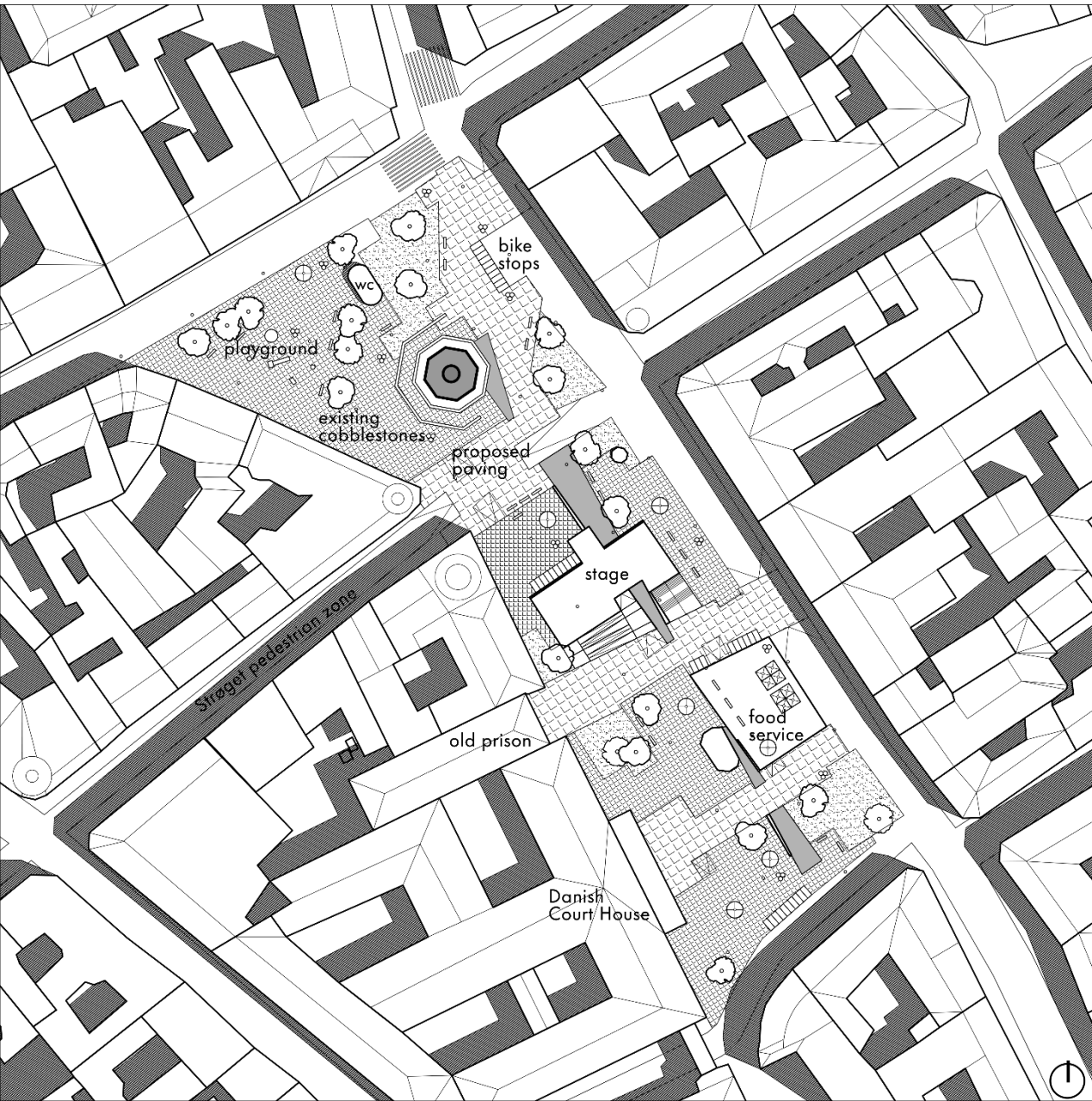
Before





After





Gammeltorv – Nytorv Detailed Plan, Original Scale 1:500



The new pavement creates flowy entrance routes to the square, as well as theatrical connections to entrances in-between some important surrounding buildings, such as:

- a diagonal connection in-between the old Cigar Shop and the Stelling house
- smoother connection in-between Gammeltorv and Nytorv area
- two theatrical entrances to the square in front of the old prison entrance and the Court House entrance.

Regarding other built interventions, five water ponds that collect water from the proposed granite water walls and the Caritas Well are shown in grey. Their shape and rhythm derived from intersections of surrounding view-points and entrances.

Moreover, 19 lime trees are proposed to be planted, since the existing square provides only two. Natural ground is found on some places, mainly around trees. Soil, bioswales and little gardens which are integrated to the square, in combination with the underground water network and the water ponds, which during winter times mainly act as water collectors rather than fountains, enhance stormwater management and give a softscape-character to the space. The water walls and ponds as well as the trees were proposed by the participants of the survey and interviews.

Playground equipment is added in the north-western part of the square (Gammeltorv area). Next to the playground zone, an oval-shaped, free public toilet is added. Its design is mimicking the public toilets of Copenhagen that are found in the city center.

The old fountain is now surrounded by a polygonal granite bench. Plenty of benches and circular kiosks that provide sheltered seats are included in the redesign proposal.

In Nytorv's area, a playful and sarcastically monumental staircase and accessible ramps, added in the middle of the square, leads to the central "scene"/stage of Gammeltorv-Nytorv. This "platform" is built on the engravings of the old City Hall, connecting the historical past to the proposed transformation.

Last but not least, LED lights, bike racks, recycling trash bins and accessible drinking fountains are spread all over the square.



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The aesthetics of the new square is based on site-specificity. For example, apart from some contemporary style benches that provide electricity and USB network gates, many “Copenhagen type” benches are added to the square, due to urban regulations for Copenhagen’s city center. The circular steel kiosks which provided sheltered seats are inspired by Copenhagen’s Tivoli gardens and their design can be characterized as “urban carousel type”. The green steel trash bins are also often found in Copenhagen’s city center.

Furthermore, the old structures such as the Cartias Well and the telephone kiosk are integrated to the proposal, while they are both rejuvenated. The fountain is now a part of the stormwater management system and the old kiosk can work as an information desk about Copenhagen’s historical center, toponyms and routes.

Moreover, based on other Danish references, decorative corten steel jardinières with flowers are added to the square. Corten materiality, which is usually found in Scandinavian urban design, is also used as separative element in-between the softscape spaces and the hardscape of the proposed square.

Stones, which are also usually found in Scandinavian design, are added in the gardens, as well as in the playground zone. They are not only a natural, rustic, and interesting visual element, but they can also be used for seating or as playscapes.

The central stage of the new Gammeltorv-Nytorg, which is constructed on the engravings of the old City Hall, is made by concrete and provides 100% accessible ramps. A handrail has to be added in the ramp area, although it

is not depicted in the collages for visual reasons. The stage can be used by street musicians, dancers, gatherings, speeches, celebrations and other occasions, such as Copenhagen's Jazz Festival.

Regarding the surrounding functions, only a south-eastern part of Nytorv's area can be used by the surrounding food service, providing umbrellas and accessible wooden tables and seats. This part is being used the same way in the existing square.

In order to handle the slight height differences of the existing topography, some accessible ramps of slight slope ratio are constructed on the new pavement areas, in-between the differently paved zones.







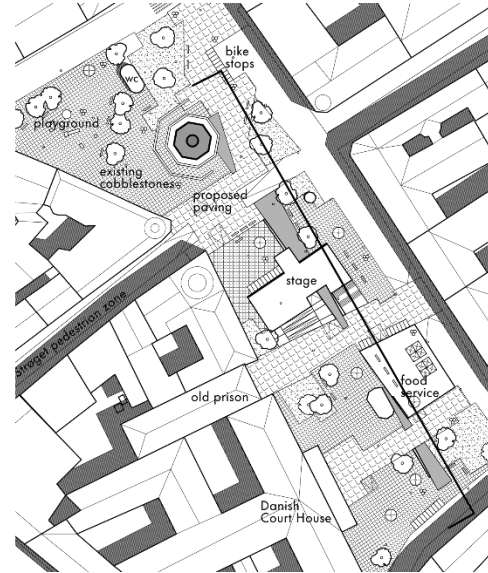






Gammeltorv-Nytorv Section, Original Scale 1:200

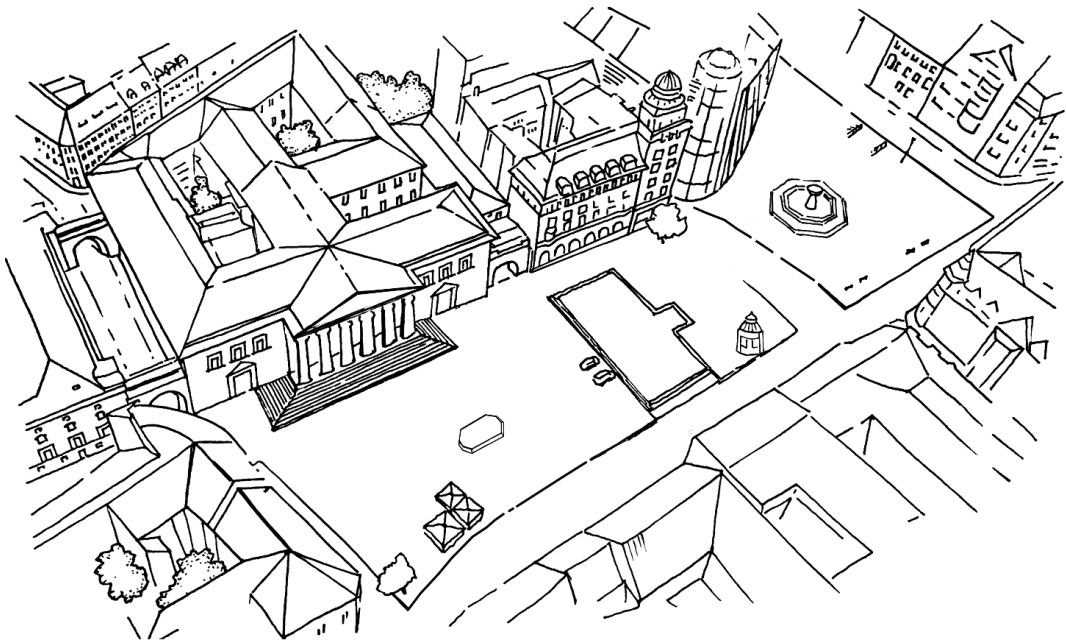






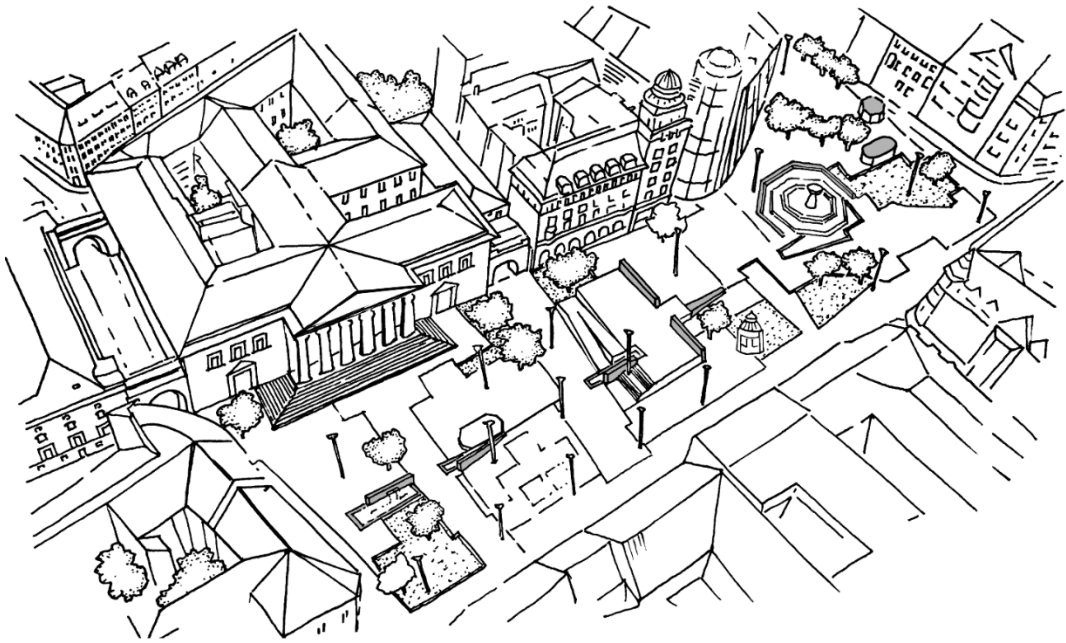






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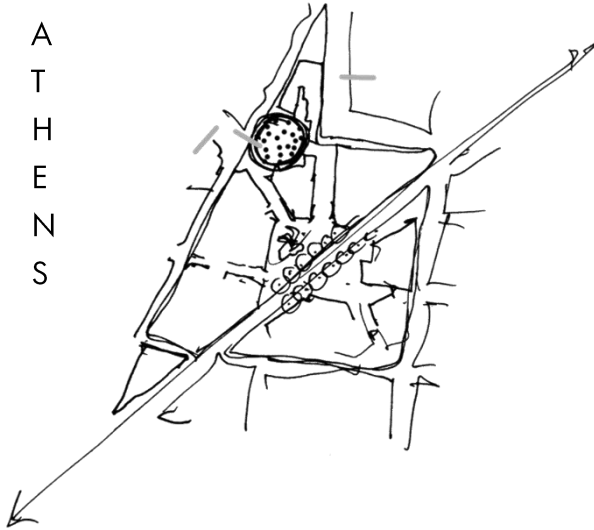
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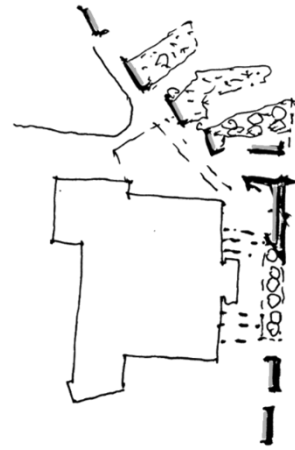




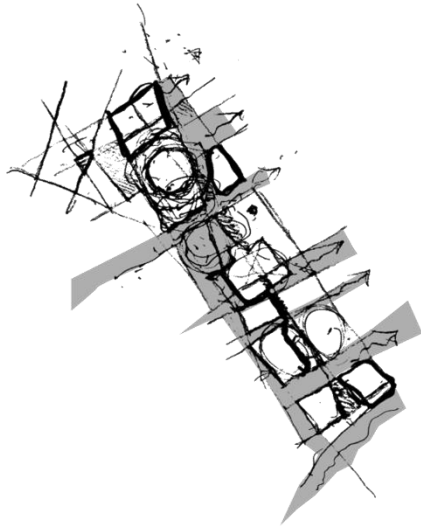
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<https://danishdesignreview.com/kbhnotes/tag/Gammel+Torv>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Superkilen, Copenhagen: <https://www.archdaily.com/286223/superkilen-topotek-1-big-architects-superflex/5088ce7e28ba0d752a0000e2-superkilen-topotek-1-big-architects-superflex-photo>

Figure 2, pg. 17: Strøget, Copenhagen's main street, before pedestrianization: <https://globaldesigningcities.org/publication/global-street-design-guide/streets/pedestrian-priority-spaces/pedestrian-only-streets/pedestrian-streets-case-study-stroget-copenhagen/>

Figure 3, pg. 21: Demonstration. Stockholm, May 1, 1902: <https://digitaltmuseum.se/011013837561/demonstration-stockholm-1-a-maj-1902-man-i-demonstrationstag-med-fanor>

Figure 4, pg. 26: Traffic at Potsdamer Platz with traffic tower, 1933: <https://gr.pinterest.com/pin/374854369001066710/>

Figure 5, pg. 29: Public open space. Berlin, Spittelmarkt: <https://suitesculturelles.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/tracing-the-locations-of-berliner-chic-then-and-now/>

Figure 6, pg. 31: Harvard Plaza, designed for programming throughout all 4 seasons: <https://www.stoss.net/journal/2019/3/7/flexible-open-space-plazas>

Figure 7, pg. 36: New York. Sunday bench sitters in front of the Central Park Zoo restaurant: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8d22245/>

Figure 8, pg. 38: Students in a chain passing cobble stones for the barricades, Gay Lussac Street, 5th arrondissement. Paris, France. May 10, 1968: <https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/politics/the-legacy-of-may-68/>

Figure 9, pg. 40: Workers from the Nanterre Citroen car factory take part in the demonstration organized by the CGT French workers union on May 29, 1968: <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/05/29/613671633/in-france-the-protests-of-may-1968-reverberate-today-and-still-divide-the-french>

Figures 10, 11, pg. 46: Navarinou Park, a self-managed Park, Athens: <https://voidnetwork.gr/%CF%80%CE%AC%CF%81%CE%BA%CE%BF-%CE%BD%CE%B1%CF%85%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%85/>

Figure 12, pg. 49: Activation of the in-between spaces and edges! Permeable public space, enclosed and open!: <https://commonedge.org/activating-the-edges-how-to-create-lively-active-streets/>

Figure 13, pg. 53: A CCTV camera on Oxford Street, central London. Do you feel safe now? : <https://www.wsj.com/articles/with-brits-used-to-surveillance-more-companies-try-tracking-faces-11575369002>

Figure 14, pg. 56: Scene from Nostalghia (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983). Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome, Italy: <https://filmmap.tumblr.com/post/80767231679/nostalghia-andrei-tarkovsky-1983>

Figure 15, pg. 58: Omonoia square, Athens, ~1960: <https://www.lifo.gr/culture/music/101-tragoydia-gia-tin-omonoia>

Figure 16, pg. 64: Athenian Agora: <https://www.topoi.org/feature/public-space-and-private-commerce/>

Figure 17, pg. 65: Piazza San Pietro, architect: Bernini (1657-1667). Rome, Italy: <https://stpetersbasilica.info/Exterior/Square/Square.htm>

Figure 18, pg. 67: Liberty Square Interactive Fountain in Budapest: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liberty\\_Square\\_Interactive\\_Fountain\\_%2802%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liberty_Square_Interactive_Fountain_%2802%29.jpg)

Figure 19, pg. 74: Twenty-nine plan types by Camillo Sitte:

<https://alchetron.com/Camillo-Sitte#camillo-sitte-666179fa-97a0-4e0d-a33b-197e5f3e351-resize-750.jpeg>

Figure 20, pg. 75: Rob Krier, *Orthogonal Plans for Squares*: Robert Krier, *Urban Space*, (London: Academy Editions, 1979), pg. 33

Figure 21, pg. 76: Square types based on form. Diagrams by Julianne Rader: Julianne Rader, "Squares: A Network of Spaces, Master of Landscape Architecture", (*Master of Landscape Architecture*, Kansas State University, 2009), URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2097/1495>, pg. 15

Figure 22, pg. 82: Al Ghadir Square, in Damascus, bombed by a suicide bomber who blew himself up, killing 20 people and injuring several others:

<https://ddnews.gov.in/international/20-killed-car-bombers-strike-syrias-capital>

Figure 23, pg. 85: Black Lives Matter Plaza, a permanent fixture of DC's streetscape: <https://www.washingtonian.com/2021/10/29/black-lives-matter-plaza-is-now-a-permanent-installation/>

Figure 24, pg. 91: "Reclaiming Underused Space" : Skate-spot by Strelka KB, Strelka Architects, and Snøhetta: <https://www.archdaily.com/948304/urban-acupuncture-regenerating-public-space-through-hyper-local-interventions>

Figure 25, pg. 94: Red planet / 100architects:

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Figure 26, pg. 99: Athens, Greece: <https://www.pxfuel.com/en/desktop-wallpaper-ibnjj/download/1920x1080>

Figure 27, pg. 102: "Three Loves", Exarcheia square: <https://www.lifo.gr/tropozois/living/treis-mikroi-mparok-erotes-me-didyma-aderfia-sto-kentro-tis-athinas>

Figure 28, pg. 105: Vathis square, Athens:

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Figure 29, pg. 108: Victoria Square:

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Figure 30, pg. 111: Monastiraki square:

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Figure 31, 32, pg. 114: Varnava Square, Pagkrati, Athens:

<https://www.lifo.gr/now/athens/telika-petyhe-i-polysyzitimeni-anaplasti-tis-plateias-barnaba-sto-pagkrati>

Figures 33, 34, pg. 116, 117: Omonoia Square, 1910, and, Omonoia Square, 1934-1937: <https://www.athensvoice.gr/life/life-in-athens/699615/i-plateia-omonias-kai-i-istoria-tis/>

Figure 35, pg. 118: Omonoia Square, ~1988:

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Figure 36, pg. 120: Omonoia square, nowadays:

<https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/i-plateia-omonias-anoixe-xana-oi-protos-boltes-gyro-apo-sintribani>

Figure pg. 121: Berlin, Germany:

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Figure 37, pg. 125: Pariser Platz, around 1915:

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Figure 38, pg. 129: Potsdamerplatz, Berlin:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/49/Potsdamer\\_platz\\_01.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/49/Potsdamer_platz_01.jpg)



Figure 39, pg. 131: Leipzigerplatz, aerial photo:

<https://www.hdsarchitecture.com/mosse-palais>

Figure 40, pg. 134: Potsdamer Platz & Leipziger Platz, aerial photo:

<https://www.greenroofs.com/2023/06/06/refeatured-project-potsdamer-platz-berlin/>

Figure 41, pg. 137: Playground in Arkonaplatz:

<https://onlinestreet.de/strassen/Arkonaplatz.Berlin.22492.html#&gid=1&pid=1>

Figure 42, pg. 140: Schöneberg City Hall, in Kennedy square, Berlin:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/Berlin\\_Rathaus\\_Sch%C3%B6neberg\\_asv2021-06.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/Berlin_Rathaus_Sch%C3%B6neberg_asv2021-06.jpg)

Figure 43, pg. 144: Teodor-Heuss Platz, aerial photo:

[https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor-Heuss-Platz#/media/Fil:Berlin\\_Th-Heuss-Platz\\_UAV\\_04-2017\\_img2.jpg](https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor-Heuss-Platz#/media/Fil:Berlin_Th-Heuss-Platz_UAV_04-2017_img2.jpg)

Figure pg. 145: Copenhagen, Denmark: <https://pixabay.com/photos/copenhagen-denmark-architecture-4878678/>

Figure 45, pg. 149: Kongens Nytorv, Copenhagen:

<https://dac.dk/en/knowledgebase/architecture/kongens-nytorv-inspired-by-the-baroque/#gallery-1>

Figure 46, pg. 151: Gammeltorv:

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/b9/9d/3c/b99d3c92383edccd25a2a45a63be0c2e.jpg>

Figure 47, pg. 154: Nytorv: [http://www.hovedstadshistorie.dk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/DSC\\_0059-RED.jpg](http://www.hovedstadshistorie.dk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/DSC_0059-RED.jpg)

Figure 48, pg. 154: Gammeltorv-Nytorv, aerial photo: <https://kontoret-gammeltorv.dk/kontorfaelleskab-koebenhavn/kontoret-gammeltorv/>

Figure 49, pg. 158: Karen Blixen square from above:

<https://www.archdaily.com/926901/karen-blixens-plads-public-square-cobe/5dae17823312fdd53c0003a7-karen-blixens-plads-public-square-cobe-photo>

Figure 50, pg. 162: Ofelia Plads, concert: <https://kulturhavn365.dk/klassisk-paa-kyssetrappen/>

Figure 51, pg. 168: Tåsinge Plads from above: <https://uia2023cph.org/case-studies/taasinge-square-in-the-climate-resilient-neighbourhood/>

Figure 52, pg. 173: Design Jatra, a socio-architectural practice in Maharashtra, India: <https://www.infurnia.com/blog/participatory-design-with-design-jatra?sourceRef=Direct>

Figure 53, pg.176: Community Architecture approach by Design Jatra, India: <https://www.infurnia.com/blog/participatory-design-with-design-jatra?sourceRef=Direct>

Figures pg. 200, 203: Google maps

Figure pg. 204: Vathis Square, Athens: <https://www.athenssocialatlas.gr/fr/article/la-place-domonion/>

Figure pg. 233: John F. Kennedy square, Berlin: <https://www.ebay.com/itm/114612909779>

Figure pg. 262: Gammeltorv-Nytorv, Copenhagen: <https://hea.dk/lejemaal/kontor-klinik/405-m2-lyse-kontorer-midt-pa-gammeltorv/?fbclid=IwAR2ZgHlHoWAusb6HvITFW93FWfKLDcUY6QBEuhk2IssWm7NRFxzPGaU49Y>



