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d e s i g n p h i l o s o p h y  
a n d a p p r o a c h



## 5.1 DESIGN PHILOSOPHY: PUBLIC SPACE

define  
space

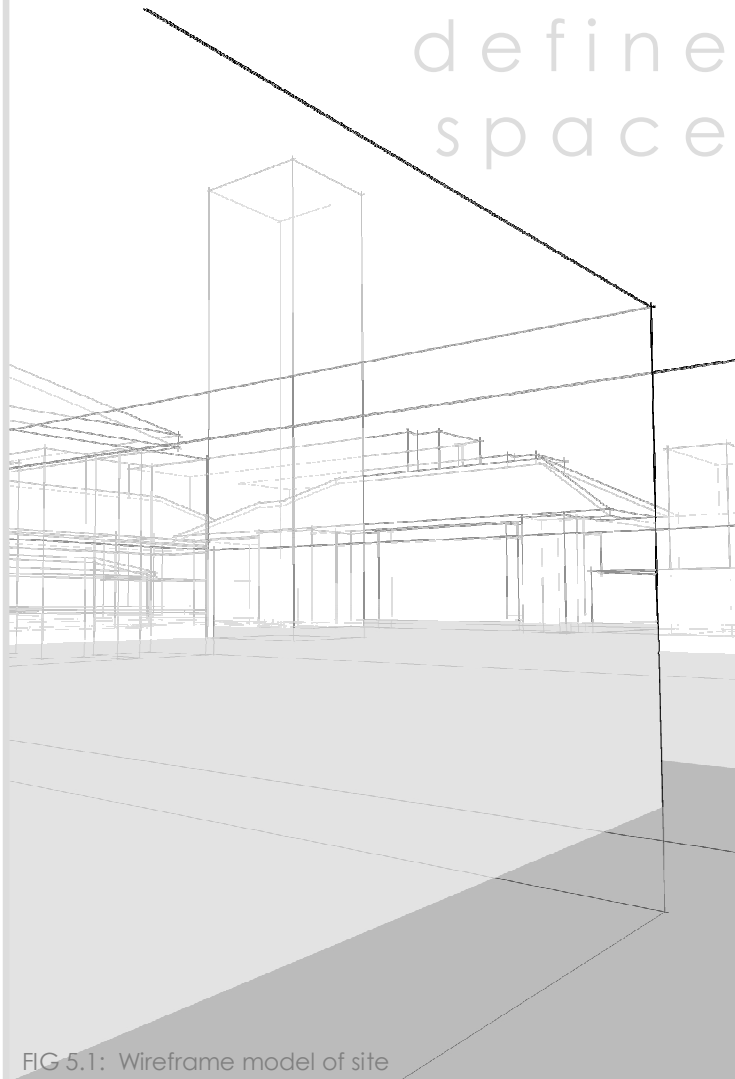


FIG 5.1: Wireframe model of site

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre<sup>1</sup> contends that there are different levels of space, from very abstract, crude, natural space ("absolute space") to more complex spatialities of which the significance is socially determined ("social space").

A **public space** or a **public place** is a place where anyone has a right to come without being excluded because of economic or social conditions.

### 'Semi-Public space:

A broader meaning of public space or place includes also places where everybody can come if they pay, like a café, train, movie theatre or brothel. A shop is an example of what is intermediate between the two meanings: everybody can enter and look around without obligation to buy, but activities unrelated to the purpose of the shop are not unlimitedly permitted.

There is no expectation of **privacy** in a public space. Public spaces are attractive for budget tourists and homeless people. Whilst it is generally considered that everyone has a right to access and use public space, as opposed to private space which may have restrictions, there has been some academic interest in how public spaces are managed to exclude certain groups - specifically homeless people and young people. Measures are taken to make the public space less attractive to them, including the removal or design of benches to restrict their use for sleeping and resting, restricting access to certain times, locking indoor or enclosed areas. Police forces are sometimes involved in moving 'unwanted' members of the public from public spaces.

<sup>1</sup> Lefebvre (1991)



# the (social) production of space

Lefebvre<sup>1</sup> argues that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings), which affects spatial practices and perceptions. As a philosopher, he argues that this social production of urban space is fundamental to the reproduction of society, hence of capitalism itself. Social space is a social product - the space produced in a certain manner serves as a tool of thought and action. It is not only a means of production but also a means of control and hence of domination or power.

Lefebvre<sup>1</sup> contends that the production of space in its raw form is nature, which is transformed into a product called art. The Bauhaus group considered themselves to be revolutionaries since they had developed a global concept of space. They understood that objects could not be created independent of each other in space without taking into account their interrelationships and their relationship to the whole. For them, the production of space corresponded to the capacity of productive forces which eventually led to rationality. Therefore, forms, functions and structures came together in a unified conception.

David Adjaye<sup>2</sup> is one of Britain's leading architects. He combines the physical and emotional with a theoretical approach to the essential elements of architecture. He has explored scale, measurement, space, light and materials in projects that have included private homes, retail spaces, and public buildings, refusing to lower his recognized language to a signature style.

Peter Allison<sup>2</sup> states that public space is never open space. It is continuously legislated, monitored and explored by official institutions. Adjaye regards the creation of public space as a responsibility in his work. He states the following:

"We do not built public spaces; we construct it through a variety of individual govern-mentalities. It is not the organization or buildings choice, but rather the silent but obvious facilities that is recognised by everyday users as symbols of the publicness of space. An architect must visualize to constantly make this aspect visible to obtain the quality of public space."

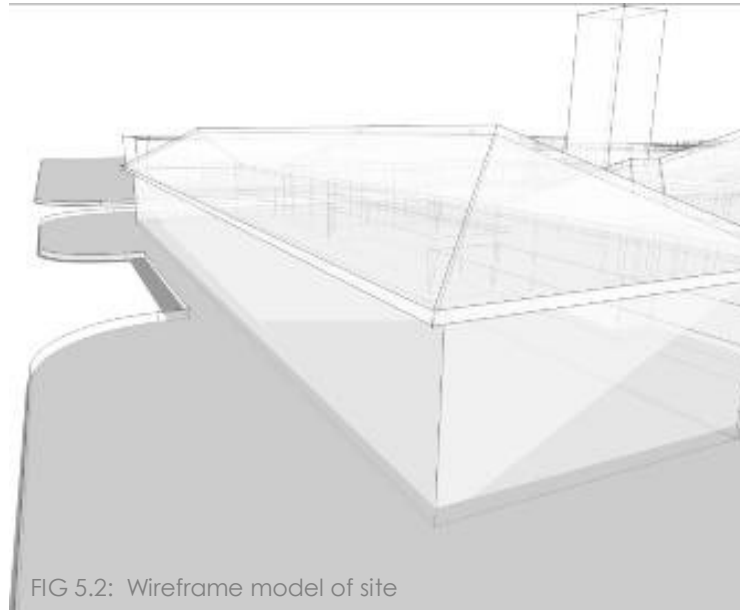


FIG 5.2: Wireframe model of site

1 Lefebvre (1991)

2 Allison (2006:7)



## public materials

Public space is not an object but rather a value-added principle of existing architecture.<sup>1</sup> There is a complexity created within buildings that can be seen as a 'third space',<sup>1</sup> a kind of invisible zone of maximum interaction and social dialogue between people. This is a fundamental concept of open space, one that is predicated by both the simplicity of design and the individuality of function, use, ethics, and value. Adjaye's buildings emphasize the functionality of the built environment while considering the experience and understanding of it. Adjaye<sup>2</sup> state the following:

"Buildings are deeply emotive structures which form our psyche. People think they are just things they manoeuvre through. But the make-up of a person is influenced by the nature of spaces."

The combinations of the smooth with the rough and the existing and the new are strong concepts in Adjaye buildings. His goal is to make space itself present, to strengthen one's experience of it. In many ways, Adjaye's buildings rise from within. In an interview with Peter Allison in 'David Adjaye, Making Public Buildings',<sup>2</sup> he speaks of his public buildings as public rooms, marked by an informality 'that is about everyday reality'. Attention to materials is one of the elements that he deploys to this effect. David Adjaye's recent engagement with public buildings comes at a time of renewed urgency and debate around notions of "publicness".

Architectural elements such as floors and walls, or glass that reflects street activities, are interpreted as material transitions between systems and environments, as boundaries that define openness and closure. The degrees of visual protection and exposure, noise and silence, reflection, colour and texture that materials provide create different modes of perception.

Rosalyn Deutsche<sup>1</sup> defines public space as the intimate connection with ideas about what it means to be human, the nature of society and the kind of political community we want. In this sense, it is not public space but public society that should be attended to first. Public space is never a given; it must constantly be produced and forms an essential part of civil society.

Levebvre<sup>3</sup> explains social space as the following:

"Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information."

1 Deutsche (1996:269)

2 Allison (2006:7)

3 Lefebvre (1991:25)

### ANCHORING PUBLIC SPACE THROUGH DIFFERENCE AND COMPLEXITY - PUBLIC BUILDINGS THAT MAKE PUBLIC SPACES:

Allison<sup>4</sup> explains the concept of public buildings as components of the urban fabric that stand out where they are inserted. They produce a point of gravity around which practices can emerge and take shape. He states that these buildings are not simply in public space, but they *are* public space.

In public buildings, the wall can be seen as a critical element, normally associated with space that is restricted or private. Environments are given barriers in order to express logical borderlands or boundaries. Barriers must rather become components and parts of connected space and not act as divisions between two different spaces expressed as inside or outside and private or public.

The 'third space'<sup>1</sup> or wall, is symbolized by its different functions in the context. It is interpreted as borderland rather than borderline. In Adjaye's buildings,<sup>4</sup> the wall becomes a space that creates or activates public space, and does not divide inside from outside. The integrated objective of the walls of these public buildings ensures that the interactions of the inside and outside are directly co-dependent on each other. The uniqueness of and relationship between each element, the building, the wall and the surrounding context, maintain their specificity. It can be said that the energy of people moving through these elements creates an underlying visual connection between them.

The corner of Bosman and Minnaar Streets lends itself to a new interpretation to form a public space. It is situated in the perfect location with high enough levels of pedestrian and vehicle movement to form a 'third space'.

Awareness of the interior function would become clear if the corner of the Old Fire Station building were to be opened up. If a visual link between the inside and the outside context were created, the public space could become a more accessible environment.



FIG 5.4: Wireframe model of site

4 Allison (2006:14)



## 5.2

 DESIGN APPROACH:  
 SUCCESSFUL SQUARES

## MISSION FOR SQUARES

The following advice in the layout and design of areas of concern in the public spaces is given by the 'Project for Public Spaces, Inc.':<sup>1</sup>

## flexibility

Public spaces must respond to the changing needs of a community over time. Their design should be flexible and responsive rather than fixed and static. The development of a strategy will allow for the evolution of the public spaces as the development grows and changes.

## access

Access and linkages play a major role in creating vibrant public spaces. Optimizing of pedestrian, transit, bicycle and vehicular mobility and access must be considered. The design of streets and walkways will enhance the adjacent land uses and increase mobility for all users, not just cars.

## facilities

The role of seating, lighting, shade and landscaping – in short the facilities that make people feel safe and comfortable in a public space must be incorporated into the design. The development aspects include the design of storefronts, restaurants, public buildings and other ground floor uses that will bring energy to the streets and enhance the success of the retail and other commercial uses.

According to Kent's newsletter: '**Why Great Places are more than the sum of their parts**' from the 'Project for Public Space, Inc'<sup>2</sup> a successful urban environment's function, should be made up of destinations. Each destination should offer many things to do. They call this concept the **Power of Ten:**<sup>2</sup> **to be successful, a community should have at least ten great places and each place should have ten different things to do there.** This diversity of places and activities ensures that a community will attract the people who will make it a successful place. The Project for Public Space, Inc.<sup>2</sup> firmly believes that the success of public spaces can largely be attributed to the activities, events, recreational uses and social gatherings that take place there, whether planned or spontaneous and not to a fixed design.

Today, more people come to recognize the concealed energy of squares and plazas. Underperforming spaces in the inner-city can be transformed into a great nodes of activity. An understanding of how people will use a place and what activities will draw them there is necessary. Within any successful square or plaza, there should be several dynamic destinations that attract different kinds of people. These destinations should offer many things to do. Creating a great public space requires helping communities articulate a vision for these activities and destinations. The 'Principles for Creating Successful squares'<sup>2</sup> creates a concept plan with the following ten basic principles:

<sup>1</sup> Kent (2004)

<sup>2</sup> Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (2006)



## TEN PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING SUCCESSFUL SQUARES

### 1 Image and Identity

Historically, squares were the centre of communities, and they traditionally helped shape the identity of entire cities. Sometimes a element was used to give the square a strong image: The training tower of the Old Fire Station act as a landmark in this space. The image of many squares was closely tied to the great civic buildings located nearby, such as cathedrals, city halls, or libraries. Today, creating a square that becomes the most significant place in a city, and that gives identity to whole communities, is a challenge.

### 2 Attractions and Destinations

Any great square has a variety of smaller 'places' within it to appeal to various people. These can include outdoor cafés, fountains, sculpture, or a musical performances. These attractions don't need to be big to make the square a success, but draw people throughout the day. The idea of 'The Power of Ten'<sup>1</sup> is to set goals for destinations within a square that can be applied. Creating ten good places, each with ten things to do, offers a full program for a successful square.

### 3 Facilities

A square should feature facilities that make it comfortable for people to use. A bench or waste receptacle in just the right location can make a big difference in how people choose to use a place. Lighting can strengthen a square's identity with highlighting specific activities, entrances or pathways.

### 4 Flexible Design

The use of a square changes during the course of the day, week and year. To respond to these natural fluctuations, flexibility needs to be built in. Instead of a permanent stage, for example, a retractable or temporary stage could be used. Likewise, it is important to have on-site storage for movable chairs, tables, umbrellas.

### 5 Seasonal Strategy

A successful square can't flourish with just one design or management strategy. Great squares change with the seasons. Skating rinks, outdoor cafés, markets, horticulture displays, art and sculpture help adapt our use of the space from one season to the next.



## 6 Access

To be successful, a square needs to be easy to get to. The best squares are always easily accessible by foot: Surrounding streets are narrow; crosswalks are well marked; lights are timed for pedestrians, not vehicles; traffic moves slowly; and transit stops are located nearby. A square surrounded by lanes of fast-moving traffic will be cut off from pedestrians and deprived of its most essential element: people.

## 7 The inner Square and outer Square

The streets and sidewalks around a square greatly affect its accessibility and use, as do the buildings that surround it. An active, welcoming outer square is essential to the well-being of the inner square.

## 8 Reaching Out

Just as important as the edge of a square, is the way that streets, sidewalks and ground floors of adjacent buildings lead into it. The influence of a good square starts at least a block away. Vehicles slow down, walking becomes more enjoyable and pedestrian traffic increases. Elements within the square are visible from a distance and the ground floor activity of buildings attract pedestrians.

## 9 The Central Role of Management

The best places are ones that people return to time and time again. The only way to achieve this is through a management plan that understands and promotes ways of keeping the square safe and lively. For example, a good manager understands existing and potential users and gears events to both types of people. A feeling of comfort and safety in a square should be created, fixing and maintaining it so that people feel assured that someone is in charge.

## 10 Diverse Funding Sources

A well-managed square is generally beyond the scope of the average city parks or public works department, which is why partnerships have been established to operate most of the best squares examples. These partnerships seek to supplement what the city can provide with funding from diverse sources.





GUIDELINES FOR THE  
DESIGN APPROACH

5.3

- \_Structural flexibility is required to accommodate varying spatial needs and loadings.
- \_Ground floor areas adjoining public spaces must be incorporated by 'active' rather than 'passive' uses. There should be interaction between inner 'private' spaces and outer 'public' spaces.
- \_Multiple entrances must be created to encourage interaction between public and private areas and to improve planning adaptability. Too many entrances may lead to the legibility of the block breaking down. Many entrances must be closable for security and legibility reasons.
- \_In locations where the privacy of the ground floor level should be preserved, a change in level between pavement and ground floor should be introduced. Privacy can also be achieved by horizontal distance, or a combination of horizontal and vertical distances.
- \_Balconies on the public facades allow the private domain to interact with the public areas and enhance surveillance of the public domain.

- \_On-street parking will be provided throughout, to support street activities. Street intersections are intended to aid the crossing of pedestrians, incorporating traffic calming devices where appropriate. This was already done when Minnaar Street was upgraded.
- \_To be successful, mixed-use developments need a 'live-in' community. When a place is one's home, the local environment becomes one's concern. There are already apartments and rooms designed for the original usage of the existing building. The proposed development will take a residential or accommodation component into account.
- \_The layout of the site lends itself towards the idea of the perimeter block, with the exception that the edges are more defined. Perimeter blocks define the public realm, only retreating from the street to form focal nodes. This creates continuity of the street and assists its use in terms of legibility and orientation. Perimeter blocks also define a private realm that offers security and privacy.
- \_Active pavements form a vital component of the public realm. Where appropriate, they can be up to 5 meters wide, allowing activities to spill out from the building, if desired.

Both the existing site and building lend themselves to the easily implementation of the above guidelines.