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The Architecture of Place: Placemaking In The Urban Fabric of Toronto

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF PLACE

PLACEMAKING IN THE URBAN FABRIC OF TORONTO

By

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Bachelor of Architectural Engineering

Shiraz Azad University, Shiraz, Iran, 2010

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Master of Architecture

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Abstract

Nowadays, due to economic dynamics, modernity, technology and urban sprawl, humans are suffering from “placelessness”. A look at the urban fabric of metropolitan cities makes evident that public places are losing their distinctive idiosyncrasies. 21st-century built environments are diminishing the unique characters that make places noteworthy. The problem with this is that people have the desire to associate with distinctive places. Ignoring this tendency will create a type of environment where places do not matter any more. Public spaces that serve as platforms for life are not only essential to the identity of cities but also provide venues for social-cultural activities that will attract people. This thesis aims to investigate the role of architecture in increasing the quality of people’s daily experiences in the public domain, and to explore opportunities to frame a new type of public market place in Toronto by imbuing ‘The Architecture of Place’ with ‘a sense of place’.

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Dedication

To my dear parents,

Hedayatollah Rategh and Zahra Bazzazzadeh

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“Architecture means to visualize the genius loci, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places whereby he helps man to dwell.”

Christian Norberg-Schulz

Introduction

20th- century modernity has been relentlessly condemned as an iron cage of conformity and mediocrity, a spiritual wilderness of populations bleached of any organic community or vital autonomy (Anderson, 1984, p. 96)

This quote was a sad commentary on the urban and built environment at the time it was written in 1984 and we can reflect on how it is still accurate today in the 21st century. The quote speaks of the need of focusing on the urban fabric – the form that makes up the built environment- in order to enhance the quality of urban life in cities. This is particularly urgent now when the majority of people on the planet are living urban lives. 75% of the global population is expected to be concentrated in cities by 2050 with millions of people massively urbanized in mega-cities stretched across vast areas in every country and on every continent (Burdett & Kanai, 2006, p. 3).

We are now coming face to face with emerging forms of “placelessness” and “cityness” which result from this new century of huge global urbanization (Burdett & Kanai, 2006, p. 3) (Relph, Place and Placelessness, 1976). In the 21st century there is a complex relationship amongst urban forms, the built environment and city life. By focusing on how cities and their forms and contents are changing people’s lifestyles, and by investigating how new forms of architecture and places can promote equity and social justice and more quality in everyday life, we can begin to understand the cohesive potential of public places in mega-cities like Toronto. As architects, we every day engage in the creation of places for people, of settings that can either enable social interaction or become sources of intimidation and exclusion. Consequently, it is the time for architects to understand that their role as designers transcends just building; architectural design is now not just about an artifact or a monument but about creating a ‘place’.

The modern-day urban environment is a complex collection of public and private spaces. It surrounds us in our everyday lives and presents more than simply functional benefits;

these spaces provide us with the opportunity to interact with fellow citizens and to integrate with our communities. Public spaces in particular offer us an excellent avenue for connecting with the broader society. As the planners and designers of urban spaces, architects carry the responsibility of ensuring that built form benefits. Of course, this end is hard to reach when external factors are constantly creating obstacles to this end. So, this thesis aims to investigate ‘what can architects offer the city as places to improve the quality of urban public life?’

There are various definitions for place, but generally the term ‘Place’, as opposed to ‘Space’, reveals a powerful connection between a person and a particular setting (Sime, 1986). As a matter of fact, place is a mixture of human principles and values. Consequently, a place is a specific space which is imbued with values and meanings by its users. Places play a crucial role in humans’ everyday lives. Each place has its own particular character, as social science has demonstrated (Gustafson, 2001). Social scientists have observed the importance of place in terms of maintaining and improving group and self-identity, but a second significant aspect of places is the influence of place on people’s behavior and mental health. Anatol Rapoport says that places comprise meanings and messages in addition to their physical features, and that the people in and around spaces can, through their own experiences, roles, expectations and motivations, change a space into THE PLACE. (Rapoport, 1990). The term ‘Sense of Place’ refers to the specific experience of a person in a particular setting; it is a vital factor to consider when determining the quality of an environment.

In contemporary societies, when places don’t have any meaning, people suffer from a sense of “placelessness”. The term “placelessness” is explained by Edward Relph as an environmental setting that does not have any distinguishing character or sense of place. Placelessness is the main issue that this thesis deals with. It seeks to show how the issue of placelessness can be addressed through creating characteristic of a ‘Place’. It will demonstrate how architectural design can be a valuable tool to address the problem of placelessness in modern-day Toronto, and to help places meet human needs.

Chapter 1. Place vs. Space

1.1 The concept of Place

The term 'Place' has numerous meanings. Generally Places give identity to the people who use, visit and inhabit them. The authentic atmosphere of places inspires people and draws them into a relationship with their environment that can be spiritual. The feeling people get from a place can derive from such different circumstances as the glow of a desert sunset or an encounter with a stranger in a small corner café (Friedman, 2010, pp. 10-11). Also, the experience of place can be changed from a small-scale setting like a room to an entire continent (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 141). Relph defines places as “ fusions of human and natural order” and “the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world” (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 141). Based on his definition of place it can be said that experience is a vital factor in a place. As a matter of fact, places are not a number of abstract concepts, but a collection of experienced phenomena with meanings, real objects and ongoing activities. Alan Gussow says:

the catalyst that converts any physical location-any environment if you will- into a place, is the process of experiencing deeply. A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feeling (Gussow, 1971, p. 27).

Making humans feel valued is an important characteristic of places. Relph mentions in this regard that “To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places”, also “to be human is to have and to know your place” (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 1). The philosopher Martin Heidegger (1958, p.19) declared that “place, places man in such a way that it reveals the external bonds of his existence and the same time the depths of his freedom and reality” (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 1). It is a complicated aspect of human's experience of the world. Based on Relph and Heidegger's statements the value of places is evident in humans' lives.

1.2 Existential space as Place

The difference between space and place becomes evident in the explanation of existential space. Existential space is a term used by Norberg-Schulz in his book *Genius Loci* in 1980. He divides existential space into the two complementary terms “space” and “character”. He defines place as a space with a distinct character; it follows that the relationship between place and existential space is obvious (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1980, p. 5). Space and character are two important factors that are directly related to the architecture of place, and that can define architecture as a “concretization of existential space” (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1980, p. 5). What is meant by “concretization” is explained by the means of two concepts of “gathering” and “thing”. The word “thing” originally was defined as a gathering, so the meaning of anything is included in what it gathers (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1980, p. 5). According to Heidegger “A thing gathers world” and “dwelling” are catalysts for creating existential spaces or place (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1980).

In an existential sense, creating a “dwelling” becomes one purpose of architecture. Generally, this idea refers to the orientation and identification of a human being in his/her surrounding environment, or in simple words “when he experiences the environment as meaningful” (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1980, p. 5). The term “dwelling” suggests something more than “shelter”. It implies that the spaces where life occurs are “PLACES” in the true sense of the word (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1980, p. 5). In Heidegger’s essay called *building dwelling thinking* (1950) he relates the functions of dwelling and building to basic existential structures, and reveals the substantial importance of the idea of “thing” or “gathering” which comes back to the value of places consisting of the setting for gathering and dwelling (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1980, p. 6).

Now, the challenging part is to determine how ‘places’ can be formed in our environment in such a way as to improve our daily life experiences. The obvious importance of place, both existentially and practically, has not been satisfactorily dealt with in investigations of the concept of ‘place’ and the nature of experiencing them. In fact, architects and planners have demonstrated a distinct lack of passion and interest in this matter; their

proposals can be well understood as “the possession of place” (Lyndon, 1962, pp.33-34), as the “creation of place” (Gauldie, 1969, p.173), or as the transformation of a setting into a meaningful place that gives structure and form to our experiences of the environment (Norberg-Schulz 1969, p.226).

1.3 Event Place, sense of place and Phenomenology in architecture

In observing our cities with specific attention to an examination of the quality of their places, we can notice a lack of ‘sense of place’ in the public realm of modern cities. Due to urban sprawl, the dominance of the car for transport, and rapid growth of population in cities, a sense of livability, social presence and liveliness is often missing. The infrastructure required for cars has had huge effects on the built environment and on people’s lifestyles.

Public spaces have had a huge impact as stages for social gatherings, meetings and interactions, venues for urban events and just places to spend free time. As a matter of fact, the great platforms for creating a ‘sense of place’ in cities are located in the urban public spaces. Throughout history, urban plazas and squares have been great examples of public places. Their nature gradually changed over the centuries and 21st-century cities are now developed with little regard to public spaces or to creation of a sense of place. The concept of existing public places has changed primarily due to a lack of ‘event places’ in cities. What ‘event’ means and how it is related to architecture and to cities is discussed in the following text.

1.3.1 Event Places

Over the last several decades, the terms of “event” has penetrated the work of many thinkers, phenomenologists, and architects from structuralists to post-structuralists. For many of them, an event is an element in a narrative. In a dictionary of narratology, the term “event” is defined as a “change of state manifested in discourse by a process statement in the mode of *do* or *happen*. An event can be an action or act or a happening.

Along with existents [subjects and/or objects] events are the fundamental constituents of a story” (Prince, 1987). This definition emphasizes that the notion of event is a vital component of any narrative. The phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur noted that narratives are structured by plots and contain references to time and humanity within the context of our daily lives (Recoeur, 1984). Ricoeur considers that an event exists because of its capability to contribute to a plot and sense of place in daily lives. From an architectural point of view, it can be seen that narratives spread out throughout cities at all levels, encompassing the everyday lives of its citizens as well as its general history. Therefore, it is considered that urban narratives should be addressed through architectural approaches and representations of these. Aldo Rossi has written that architecture is “the fixed stage for human events.” (Rossi, 1982, p. 22) . This means that architecture can represent itself in a way that creates events for people and for *flaneurs* in cities.

Structuralism and post-structuralism influenced a number of architects who were involved in the Architectural Association during the 1970s. That group included Bernard Tschumi, Nigel Coates, and Rem Koolhaas. At that time the importance of ‘Event’ was born in architectural theory and in representations of theory. For instance, Tschumi said that “there is no space without event, no architecture without program.” (Tschumi, Spaces and Events, 1983). So, did the acceptance of theories of events by architects and urban designers provide a basis for an investigation of how space can be used and represented? Or, in other words, how could architectural and urban space enable the creation of events? Much of this was consistent with criticism of modernist urbanism that began in the 1960s; the extensively shared opinion was that the modernist urban environment was void of vitality, meaning and ‘events’. In the 21st century it can still be seen that the idea of having event places in cities is still valid and must be addressed in any discussion of ‘built environments’ issues.

1.3.2 Sense of Place

Let us see how ‘event’ and ‘narrative’ as they relate to space can help clarify the differences between ‘Space’ and ‘Place’. As Yi-Fu Tuan says “Space is transformed into

place as it acquires definition and meaning” (Tuan, *Intimate Experiences of Place*, 1977, p. 136). It is obvious that a Space does not have an identity until it is imbued with meanings, narratives or events. The result of engaging space with meanings is the creation of a ‘Place’. We can get a vague idea of ‘place’ and the ‘sense of place’. For more clarity we need to review some of the definitions used by various scholars in different fields such as Anthropology, Environmental Psychology, Geography, Landscape Architecture/ History and Sociology.

Anthropology: Setha Low in “Symbolic Ties that Bind: Place Attachments in the Plaza”:
“*Place attachment* is the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual’s and group’s understanding of and relation to the environment.... Thus, place attachment is more than an emotional and cognitive experience, and includes cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place.” (Low, 1992, pp. 165-186) (Cross, 2001)

Environmental Psychology: Fritz Steele in *The Sense of Place*:
“*Sense of Place*: the particular experience of a person in a particular setting (feeling stimulated, excited, joyous, expansive, and so forth).” (Steele, 1981, p. 11)
“*Spirit of Place*: the combination of characteristics that gives some locations a special ‘feel’ or personality (such as a spirit of mystery or of identity with a person or group).” (Steele, 1981)
“*Setting*: a person’s immediate surroundings, including both physical and social elements.” (Steele, 1981, p. 14) (Cross, 2001)

Geography: Yi-Fu Tuan in *Topophilia*:
“*Topophilia* is the affective bond between people and place or setting.” Such ties vary in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression. Responses to the environment may be aesthetic, tactile, or emotional. (Tuan, *Topophilia: A study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, 1974, p. 4) (Cross, 2001)

Landscape Architecture/History: John Brinckerhoff Jackson in *A Sense of Place, a Sense of*

Time:

“A *sense of place* is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom.... A sense of place is reinforced by what might be called a sense of recurring events.” (Jackson, 1994) (Cross, 2001)

Sociology: David Hummon in “Community Attachment: Local Sentiment and Sense of Place

“By *sense of place*, I mean people’s subjective perceptions of their environments and their more or less conscious feelings about those environments. Sense of place is inevitably dual in nature, involving both an interpretive perspective *on* the environment and an emotional reaction *to* the environment.... Sense of place involves a personal *orientation* toward place, in which one’s understanding of place and one’s feelings about place become fused in the context of environmental meaning.” (Hummon, 1992, pp. 253-278) (Cross, 2001)

After reading these definitions it is evident that there is probably no single ‘sense of place’; instead, each individual’s various narratives, cultures and memories shapes the way he or she will respond to a place, and makes their own sense of place. These narratives tend to reshape places based on people’s own preconceptions. Although there is a lack of common definition in sense of place, there is a commonality in all explanations: this is the importance of the linkage between people and place. Any effort towards highlighting this importance helps in the attainment of a sense of place.

1.3.3 Phenomenology

Martin Heidegger’s book as phenomenology *Being Dwelling Thinking* (1951), had a huge impact on ‘70s architectural theory; Put in simple terms, Phenomenology is “the interpretive study of human experience” which examines and explains human situations, meanings, events, and experiences “as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life” (Seamon, p. 1). Phenomenology defines the whole environment as the “Place”, and the things that happen there are said to “take place”. Yi-Fu says place is “a pause in

movement ...the pause makes it possible for a locality to become a center of felt value” (Tuan, *Intimate Experiences of Place*, 1977, p. 138; Tuan, *Visibility: The Creation of Place*, 1977, pp. 161-178) Thus the place is just clearly and simply the locality, but is composed of substantial elements from materiality, shape, color, texture and scale to the environmental character and atmosphere. All these are “phenomena”, that is, anything that human beings can experience, encounter or live through them in some way (Seamon, p. 3). According to specific cultural and environmental conditions of a place, these are the phenomena that make the atmosphere and identity of a place unique and that let identical functions in similar spaces embody different properties and feelings. The notions of place, character and space become co-dependent. Yi-Fu Tuan, a geographer who studied humans’ experience based on the relation of space and place, provides one the clearest explanations of the notions of place, human experience and their relationship to the space. In his book Tuan maintains that a space requires a movement from one place to another. Similarly, a place needs a space to be a place. That movement is regarded as a secondary defining characteristic of a place, which is cultural environment. It is the culture of place that gives meaning to a place, that “affects perception” and that creates yet another dimension, the sense of place (Tuan, 1977, P.162). Phenomenology absorbs the idea of subjectivity, making unique conversations with place and space. It relates to a specific topic and not to the thing or the object itself. The man-made components of the environment on a large scale such as cities, or on a small scale such as a house, become the settlements of the human perception of space. A central focus of phenomenology is “the way people exist in relation to their world” which could be either an idealized or realistic relationship of a person to the world in Heidegger’s point of view (Seamon, p. 4). Here is the question of ‘How could this world, or in simple words, the built environment, create a successful relationship between its users and objects’? On the scale of city objects are related to the architectural buildings and settlements that shape the environment and create spaces. Susanne Langer says: Successful architecture “creates the semblance of the world which is the counterpart of a self” for personal selfhood that world is the house and for collective selfhood it is a public environment and a public space such as temple, town hall, public square or a civic center. (Tuan, *Visibility: The Creation of Place*, 1977, p. 165)

In modern North American cities such as Toronto, most places are not such deliberate creations. Basically, they are built to satisfy practical needs. Therefore, it is important to know how they are experienced by both residents outsiders, and what approach would be most effective in obtaining the goal of being perceived as place from an architectural point of view, and also how a place can be formed in the urban public realm of cities.

Chapter 2. Urban Public Spaces

Public spaces have become an integral part of our North American society and true to its name this type of space is essential for the effective functioning of public life. Everyone in the world uses public space as soon as leaving home, walking into the street, sidewalks, or path outside. It shapes an inevitable part of people's daily lives. In this sense, the public realm is one of the few services that every single person experiences, whether young or old, rich or poor. As Craig Calhoun argues, "one of the most important social characteristics of cities is the provision of public spaces in which relative strangers can interact and observe each other, debate and learn politically, and grow psychologically from diverse contacts" (Calhoun, 1986, p. 341). Hence, it can be assumed that urban development would be impossible without public spaces. From the Agora ancient Greek plaza and the medieval market places to Renaissance boulevards and today's shopping centers and pedestrian precincts, particular public spaces have played a fundamental role in the way civil societies have functioned throughout the history. Before further explanation, it is important to begin with a working definition of "public space".

2.1 What is urban public space?

We define public spaces as open, publicly accessible places where people go for group or individual activities. While public spaces can take many forms and may assume various names such as plazas, malls, and playgrounds, they all share common ingredients. Public spaces generally contain public amenities such as walkways, benches, and sometimes focal points such as monuments or water; physical and visual elements, such as shading elements, lawn or vegetation are also amenities quite often. "Whether planned or found, public spaces are usually open and accessible to the public. Some are under public ownership and management, whereas others are privately owned but open to the public"

(Marvin, 1996, pp. 16-20). In fact, the definition of public space today has widened from public squares, parks, streets and public buildings. They now include such things as shopping malls and the 'lost space' around housing estates, roundabouts, car parks and the reclamation of dockyards and waterfronts. Public spaces form our everyday lives through the possibilities, limitations and experiences they offer. They shape our neighborhoods by defining physical and perceived borders and connections; moreover, they tell a story about the society, which created them. In terms of understanding the current form and use of today's urban public spaces, it is useful to look at the roots of its creation for a historical perspective.

2.2 Historical overview of gathering and event places

Public places have been fundamental parts of communities for centuries. They have a unique quality in their potential for providing places for social interaction. The role of these places has frequently been mentioned in discussing the history of cities. Moreover they offered valuable places for public gathering and event places.

Stand in a public space, walk about, sit at its edges. Does the space itself have a presence, a definition, a quality that adds significantly to the architecture and the features that it embraces? ... Does it take your breath away as you enter, and lift your spirits as you stroll around? Is it a place in which you want to meet your friends and observe strangers? Is it the first choice for community celebrations? Does it offer a sense of place, a feeling of historical continuity, a vision of what urban life should be? Is it maintained with respect or vandalized; does it serve as an oasis or for parking? Ask another question: "if not, why not?"

Actors and décor have changed over the centuries, but the need for a stage has remained a constant.

(Webb, 1990, p. 12)

Michael Webb has used the terms of need for "stage" as a metaphor for the need of event places or public places in people's lives. Public places have been always about people; they could hold a huge range of events within themselves from social gathering to

economic pursuits. In the following text there is a general overview of the formation of public social places from history to gives a clear idea of how the core form and function of urban public gathering places have been changed.

Ancient Greece (agorae)

Early spaces that were major examples of civic places were *agorae* within Greek cities. The Greek public used this type of space for many type of social interaction. The literal meaning of the agora is “assembly” or “gathering place” and the activities within agorae are related to its verb “Agoreuein” which means “to do something in the marketplace/assembly” (Jowett, 2011). The Greek city had agora as its ‘living heart’. It was a hub of Greek life and the central zone of political, commercial, artistic, religious and spiritual activities. Usually the layout of the agora was square and it has only one street entrance. (Urban space initiative, 2012)

Ancient Rome (Fora)

In relation to public places, Roman design borrowed a lot from the Greeks. Romans produced the most architecturally appealing ‘fora’ and squares. T.W.Mulryne defines the Roman forum as a “name given to an open square surrounded by open buildings, to market-places and to places where business of all sorts was carried on” (Urban space initiative, 2012). The Roman forum was similar to the Greek one. The Forum Romanum was one of the most substantial public spaces in ancient Rome and the center of Roman life. The Roman forum gave a sense of enclosure by the limitation of the number of streets that had access to the main square. Also, the whole forum was surrounded by buildings such as law court, shops and temples. Both the fora and the Greek agora represent the kind of places in which the public sphere was very much alive and central. Referring to Camillo Sitte’s statement that “a considerable share of public life continued, after all, to take place in the plazas... plazas decorated in this manner were still the pride and joy of independent towns of the middle ages and Renaissance” (Urban space initiative, 2012). one can see that the Greek and Roman public space continued as a civic form.

The Middle Ages (medieval square)

A great renaissance of cities was seen in the 10th century A.D. Aggressive urban development began during the medieval period. At that time, most European cities were organic or unplanned, and are known for their uniqueness and beauty. One of the best examples of an organic city is Bruges in Belgium. In exploring the public space within this period's cities, the medieval square is something that stands out.



Figure 1. Middle ages. Bruges Map (around 1775)

By looking at these urban stages it is clear that they have in common being types of spaces with less architecture and more people. Accordingly their success was based on more community versus less architectural space. It is going to be challenging to determine how contemporary architecture could create such wonderful successful places for people not by means of 'nothing' but with innovation that combined physical and environmental design.



Figure 2. Medieval Square. Piazza Del Campo. Siena

The Renaissance

Rebirth and the renaissance of Greek and Roman thought started in the 15th century. Calculated art and symmetry became dominant themes and the irregularity of the medieval period became outmoded. The Renaissance devised plaza on a scale that had not previously been seen. Their dimensions and scales were increased and the era was the starting point of ideal shapes and ideal forms. Perspective became very significant in cities' fabric and public spaces: streets and squares became largely regularized. In the system of urban design the square was coordinated in the urban context and construction was on a huge scale. The street and square were types of constructions of public space that spread through cities as representations of dynamism during the Renaissance. The Piazza of St. Marks in Venice is an example of Italian grandness, and the Champs Elysees in Paris created in the 1600s shows how urban landscape was used to symbolize French royal authority to the public.

Throughout the history, urban public spaces have hosted many social, political and economic activities. These civic places have been the core of many cities for most important happenings. But a huge change could be seen in today's urban development which has caused so many issues regarding the form and essence of public spaces, especially in North American cities.

2.3 Degradation of Public Space

As societies change, the core functions of public spaces have the potential to fundamentally change also. In today's world, the degradation of the roots of squares, plazas and pedestrian markets can be clearly seen. As a matter of fact, the traditional form of livable city squares has been influenced by urban sprawl, the mobility of population and people's choices to leave cities and their squares for suburbia. Until the 20th century, public spaces remained meeting grounds for social gatherings, but when people started to leave the city for suburban areas, plazas and squares were less frequently used for social events and civic activities and so instead they became parking places (Urban space initiative, 2012). Since the 1960s the personal automobile has played a major role in degradation of public places. With the invention of the automobile, street life diminished

and commercial strips and shopping centers developed in suburbs, and replaced the downtown's essence as a setting for consumerism and commercial life. Urban squares are often at intersections with the result that car traffic dominates, as it is given priority over pedestrians.



Figure 3. Finch station, west side of Yonge St. Toronto . 2012

Many modern urban designers, planners and architects allocated city spaces totally to automobiles and mostly ignored public needs. This movement resulted in many lost spaces and left-over places. The use of public spaces as car parks instead of market-squares and pedestrian environments is one illustration of how this design trend approached 20th-century models of cities. Use of public space today in the 21st century exhibits the concern with such new issues as over-commercialization, an issue that has led to neglect of public life, and also shows the societal shift from pedestrian-oriented spaces to car-oriented ones and the resultant production of 'placelessness' and 'lost spaces' in mega-cities.

2.3.1 Lost spaces

Through looking at the nature of traditional urban public spaces, several fundamental principles of structures emerge. In most modern cities public areas have been lost or have

contributed to the failure of other spaces. The result is the many 'lost spaces' of modern urban form. What exactly does 'lost space' mean?

It is a leftover unstructured landscape at the base of high-rise towers or the unused sunken plaza away from the flow of pedestrian activity in the city. Lost spaces are the surface parking lots that ring the urban core in almost all American cities and sever the connection between the commercial center and residential areas. Moreover, they are the no-man's-land along the edges of freeways that nobody cares about maintaining, much less using. (Trancik, 1986, p. 64)

Generally speaking, it can be said that lost spaces are unpleasant urban areas that have high potential to be transformed into public spaces, yet currently make negative contributions to their surrounding areas. Numerous factors have eroded traditional forms of public spaces and created lost spaces in our cities. These include designs that incorporate oriented roads, modernist architectural design principals, urban sprawl, changes in land use in the inner city and the dominance of private over public interests. The five major causes of lost spaces in our cities are briefly categorized in Roger Trancik's article "What is lost space?": the automobile; the modern movement in design, zoning and urban renewal, privatization of public space; and changing land use" (Trancik, 1986, p. 64)

There is now a shift to improving the quality of public places in the city's downtown area and there was less attention given to suburban areas, particularly in terms of public facilities. Urban sprawl has had a huge impact on the process of public space. Since it is something deeply embedded in the North American way of life, it is now the most difficult to deal with and has resulted in a landscape dominated by highways, roads and parking lots. A vast majority of people use their vehicles for travelling from suburban areas to downtown areas which their offices are located. According to General Social Survey (GSS) data about the city of Toronto, the proportion of people aged 18 and over who go everywhere by car- as either a driver or a passenger- rose from 68% in 1992, to 70% in 1998 and then 74% in 2005 (Turcotte, 2008) .

While urban areas are now undergoing a renewal, the inner suburbs deserve attention by designers. Many people are living a few miles north of town, with nothing happening except a series of “little boxes” (Reynalds, 1963) and cubical house all made of “Ticky-tacky” material (Reynalds, 1963) put next to each other with a number of empty sidewalks far from the downtown area that is itself surrounded with a huge parking lot. People just go there out of necessity and not for the pleasure. There is no public realm to provide a sense of place.

2.3.2 Placelessness

Placelessness is related to the phenomenon of lost spaces- the decreased quality of places. In today’s world there is evidence that the variety of places, the localism that formed preindustrial societies and “handicraft cultures” are being eradicated and diminished (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 79). Instead of lively and meaningful places there are “flatscapes” (Norberg-Schulz C. , 1969) places created to intentionally lack perspective and depth, and that provide opportunities only for mediocre experiences. Relph talks about the present significance of the issue of placelessness in his book *Place and Placelessness*. He says:

“placelessness does comprise look-alike landscapes that result from improved communications and increased mobility and imitation, behind these lies a deep-stated attitude that attends to the common and average characteristics of man and of place.” (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 79) Geography can be divided into the geography of places, comprised of “variety and meaning”, and the geography of placelessness that is “a labyrinth of endless similarities” (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 141). Although a substantial diversity of places exists, placeless geography paradoxically increases. “placelessness describes both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude which does not acknowledge significance in places.” (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 143). According to Relph the cause of placelessness goes back into the deepest levels of place that are: cutting roots, eroding symbols, replacing diversity with uniformity and replacing experiential order with

conceptual order (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 143). In general, the term placelessness is a form of irreversible alienation of places as the homes of humans (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 143).

Relph predicts that maybe people will face a time when placelessness will become inevitable because it is the only type of geography and environment we know (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 145). David Brower mentions a call to action (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 145); he says: “The best weapon against the unending deprivation that would be the consequence of... unending demand is a revival of man’s sense of place” (Gussow, 1971, p. 15). As Relph explains it, the possibilities for restoring and maintaining human’s sense of place do not lie in the “preservation of old places- that would be museumisation; nor can they lie in a selfconscious return to the traditional ways of placemaking- that would require the regaining of a lost state of innocence.” (Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, p. 145). One of the important factors in creating place is to know that each place has its own approach that will not be suitable for other situations. Nairn (1965, p.93) talks about the fact that “each place is different, that each case must be decided on its own merits, that completely different solutions may be needed for apparently similar cases”.

Chapter 3. Placemaking in architecture

Creating a sense of place and new places is achieved through placemaking. Placemaking is not a new idea, for the concepts behind it originated in the 1960s, when visionaries like Jane Jacobs and William Whyte proposed innovative ideas about designing cities with regard for people, not just for cars and shopping centers or to serve a particular need. Both of them focused on the worth of inviting public spaces and lively neighborhoods. Jane Jacobs through her famous idea of “eyes on the street” a strong relationship between building orientation and the street, creating a safe environment for citizens, while William Whyte revealed fundamental elements for creating social life in public spaces through his street life project (pps). Metropolitan planning Council of Chicago defines placemaking as “both an overarching idea and a hands-on tool for improving a neighborhood, city or region. It has the potential to be one of the most transformative ideas of this century.” (Metropolitan Planning Council of Chicago)

Since the early 1960s, research on environmental perception has provided a substantial body of research on humans’ perceptions of urban environments. The focus on people’s perception of the environment was reinforced and extended by implementing the experience of “sense of place”, and the concepts of “re-invented” and “inventing” places and “third places” in urban fabric of the cities (Carmona & Tiesdell, 2007, p. 101). As Edward Relph noted “Places are the phenomena of experiences” (Relph, *On the Identity of place*, 1976, p. 103) Accordingly, the purpose of placemaking will be to provide a stage for various human experiences, a platform of meaning for the urban built environment. Placemaking is not just the framing of an object to accommodate people, but also a world of social and individual atmosphere that is full of meaning and that satisfies residents, foreigners and “Flaneurs”. As Yi-Fu Tuan “people do not live in a framework of geometric relationships but a world of meaning” so it is understandable how the creation of places is vital for the surveillance of cities in the world (Tuan, 1970). In placemaking social dimension plays a prominent role. As a matter of fact the relationship between social content and a place is “a continuous two-way process in which people create and modify spaces while at the same time being influenced in various ways” by places (Carmona & Tiesdell, 2007, p. 141). What it meant by

placemaking in this paper is creating a “sense of place and a place of sense”. This concept gives a dual character to the place and increases the quality of users’ connections to it, and incorporates a high range of themes in public space and functions. One of these themes is related to the idea of “flaneur” and creating “third places” for “the public life of “flanerie” (Banerjee, 2001, p. 157).

3.1 The Concept of Flaneur

The concept of flaneurs describes individuals who are indirectly influenced by a particular design experienced by means of “strolling and looking” (Tester, 1994, p. 1). This concept has had meaningful narratives in both architecture and planning at least since the 19th century. Walter Benjamin describes the flaneur as a product of modern life that is similar to the tourist (Young, 2005). He also explains how urban fabric could become a dwelling for the flaneur and how it can be exciting:

The street becomes a dwelling for the flaneur, he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his for walls. To him shiny, enameled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to the bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; newsstands are his libraries and the terraces of café are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work. (Benjamin, 1938, p. 173)

As it was explained previously one of the issues of today’s built environment in public spaces is lack of sense of place and a sense of loss associated with efficient public life linked to a livable and viable public realm. One way to address this psychological aspect of the built environment in the context of architecture and urban planning is placemaking not only for users but also for flaneurs. It is a concept that can make a place as a destination for a wide variety of people. According to Ray Oldenburg (1989), settings for public life that enhances the quality of observers’ experiences can be called “Third places” (Banerjee, 2001, p. 158). The term “third places” is opposed to the home as the “first place” and work or school as the “second place” (Banerjee, 2001, p. 158). It includes public places such as bars, sidewalk café, pool halls, parks, pedestrian malls and the like. Many of these invented places focus on the relationship between the

environment and observers, to shape and create a built form as a facilitator of displaying merchandise for mass consumption (Banerjee, 2001, p. 158). Back in the 20th century, the arcades of Paris were considered settings for flânerie and now in the 21st century new shopping malls are designed to encourage observers, flânerie and “hanging out” (Banerjee, 2001, p. 158). Horton Plaza in San Diego and City Walk in Universal City Los Angeles by architect Jon Jerde are 20th-century projects designed around the idea of offering distractions, surprises and a multitude of events for pedestrians as invented streets that mix “*flânerie* with a third place” (Banerjee, 2001, p. 158). The interesting point about Horton plaza is that the planners based its sense of place on metaphors such as an “Italian Hill Town”. In another project, Two Rodeo in Beverly Hills, designers devised a European like shopping street (Banerjee, 2001, p. 158). The need for vital urban places in the European style is evidenced by the work of architects, planners and people in American cities. It highlights the importance of places for people in today’s metropolitan cities that are more occupied by cars than pedestrians. The reinvention of streets and third places according to a new formula is obvious in street and pedestrian malls like Santa Monica, Quincy Market in Boston and Fremont Street in Las Vegas (Banerjee, 2001, p. 158). These reinvented places provide wide range of opportunities for people to engage in a social pedestrian environment.

As a matter of fact, placemaking is about people, places, philosophy and quality of life. It offers a flexible environment and one place to do a variety of things. It is not only about daily life needs like shopping and economic matters, but also it has to be about social meaning, “civic life flourishes” and “different cultures mix” (pps).

3.2 The characters of a place

3.2.1 The idea of inside-out Architecture as a place

The idea of “inside-out” in architecture considers “the emotional and physical needs of users and respect for place” (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 5). This concept is a helpful approach for ‘the architecture of place’ that insists on the value of human beings and their experience with the built environment. According to Karen Franck, any architecture from inside out is formed by at least two different templates. One is the language of “materials and shapes” and the other is “the idea of design as opportunity for socio-cultural as well as personal transformation” (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 6). Inside out is a powerful picture for various situations. With respect to the idea of ‘place’, it could refer to a type of building with indoor space that feels as if it is outdoors or the other way around. To include this idea in the design buildings as places, the following approaches are useful: large expanses of glass, glass roof, tensile structure, courtyard building and transparent building envelope (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 14).

There are various examples to support this idea of inside-out in architecture; these include the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris, where building equipment like ducts and pumps are visible on the façade; or the storefront for Art and Architecture by Steven Holl with Vitto Acconi; they created interesting inside-out and inside-in effects with their façade renovation.



Figure 4 Storefront for Art and Architecture

But a great example of inside-out architecture as a place is the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts by Diamond Schmitt Architects in Toronto. The intermission waiting area is a big hall with ramps and pathways running all over and the large glass facade almost dissolves the boundary between the interior and the street. It is interesting that so many spaces such as steps and open indoor areas are used as places for public activities and performances. The transparency of the building gives the feeling of both inside and outside at the same time. This quality helps to promote humans involvement in a built form. (COC, 2006)

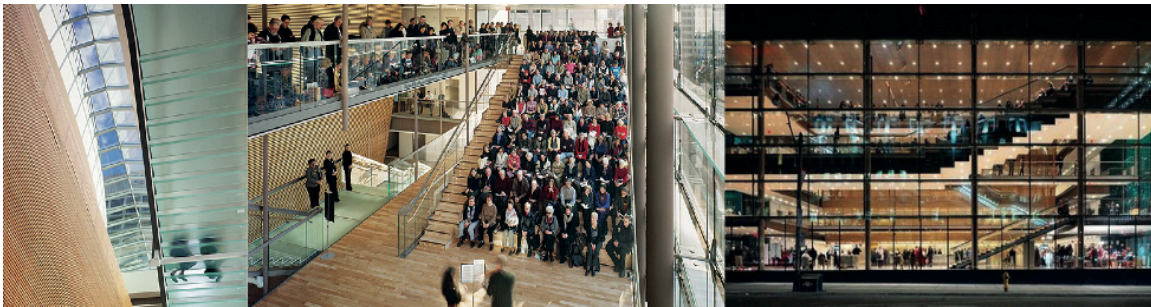


Figure 5. Four season Centre. Toronto

The term “inside out” has theoretical meanings as well as practical ones. Whatever materials or structural forms have been used, an inside and an outside have been created. Even without the presence of a physical boundary, people create their own “inside” since everyone has their own body, memories and dreams (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 18). Steven Holl mentions in Franck’s book that if someone temporarily uses a public place, that space is immediately transformed in to a kind of “inside” and becomes a “personal Space” (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 19)



Figure 6 Source: *The book Architecture from inside out* page 19

Through the way architects design and make decisions, they influence people both physically and emotionally. Since architects are specialists in designing forms and playing with different materials, they are most concerned with maintaining the values of aesthetics and appearance. Thus, they naturally choose to concentrate on exteriors (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 22). However, this thesis aims to propose a kind of designing that will consider the building design as a dwelling place for its users and not just as an isolated object.

“As buildings lose their plasticity and their connection with the language and wisdom of the body, they become isolated in the cool and distant realm of vision. With the loss of tactility and measures and details crafted for the human body-and particularly for the hand- architectural structures become repulsively flat, sharp edged, immaterial and unreal.” (Juhani Pallasmaa 1996. P20)

An important consideration when creating place is to take into account the relationship of users to a particular setting. Designing buildings according to the principles of “inside-out” requires the imagining of human experiences. Settings as places will house human activities based upon supporting daily life (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 29). As Frank and Lepori point out in their book:

What architects design is not so much form or space as it is experiencing, or rather a variety of experiences that will vary according to the time of day, the season, the activities and events occurring, and the characteristics, roles and position of the inhabitants. (Franck & Lepori, 2007, p. 40)

3.2.2 What brings people a into public place and what are the needs of people in those places?

In order to have effective design and management of public places it is necessary to understand the role of those places in people's lives, and why some public spaces are used and some are ignored. A public space has to have many reasons for its participants not only to stop there, but to stay there. There should be the desire to go somewhere and enjoy it rather than just go there and then feel the need to get away. Unfortunately, in today's urban fabric many public spaces do not provide whatever makes users want to stay. Places that serve no important functions for people will be unsuccessful or underused. Looking carefully at the needs of people in relation to specific spaces is a vital factor in the success of these spaces. Based on the S. Carr, M. Francis, L. G. Rivlin and A. M. Stone article called "*the needs in public space*", five key reasons are accounted for people needs in public spaces which are "comfort, relaxation, passive engagement with environment, active engagement with environment and discovery" the following explanation gives a quick overview that what it meant by each of them (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992) :

Comfort

Comfort is a basic need. The main measure of comfort is the length of time that people will stay in a site. As Jan Gehl states, the measure of success of public spaces is not the number of people or events that can be observed in public spaces, but rather the amount of time (minutes) spent in these spaces (Gehl, 1987, p. 79). Without comfort, accommodating other needs is difficult to achieve. Comfortable and sufficient seating is

one of the important aspects of any successful open public space. For example the steps of the New York Public Library serve as seating elements as well as an entry point. As William Whyte mentioned there is the need for “sittable space” in cities. He argues that the success of public squares is not affected by size, shape or design, but by access and choice of where to sit (Whyte, 1980, p. 30). Social and psychological comfort is also important. This is “a sense of security” (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992) that can provide the sense of comfort in a place.

Relaxation

Relaxation is defined by the experience of users in a place rather than by the physical elements of the place. It is distinguished from comfort by a different degree of positive feelings. A prerequisite for relaxation can be a sense of psychological comfort, or a kind of lifting of “physical strains” and a transformation of the user into a state of tranquility (Whyte, 1980). Whyte has presented persuasive arguments that many users of small urban plazas and parks seek liveliness and some form of engagement with the life of the city, rather than a retreat from it. In designing public spaces, natural features such as trees and other greenery are considered powerful factors that offer opportunities for relaxation and retreat.

Passive engagement

Passive engagement with the environment describes people’s interest in watching others and the enjoyment derived from observing changing scenes. It is called passive because it involves looking rather than doing or talking. Jan Gehl said that people’s presence and human activity are what draw people to public places, “People come where people are” to engage with seeing “strangers” (Gehl, 1987, p. 79). Thus, in designing public space, architects and designers have to consider the features that could increase the involvement of people through passive engagement. Based on Whyte’s report of small urban spaces, people-watching (passive engagement) is one the most popular activities for user of urban public spaces. He says “what attracts people most, it would appear, is other people” (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992). He suggests elements that facilitate the opportunities for passive engagement: “Sitting place adjacent to the pedestrian flow; physical separations that can make the visual contact with people easier; create

opportunities for observing outdoor performances and formal activities, well designed physical features; increasing aesthetic qualities of a site with engaging public art and compelling landscape” (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992).

Active engagement

The term “active engagement” relates to the physical quality of a place. It suggests a direct relationship with the “experience with a place and the people within it” (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992, p. 234). This aspect of engagement comprises a wide variety of elements, places and activities that contribute to the theme of public space; these include large and small plazas, parks, sitting places, shopping markets, places to accommodate festivals and ritual celebrations. The most important aspect of active engagement is the frequenting of a place based on people’s interest in the activities, entertainment and opportunities for socializing with neighbors, friends, acquaintances or relatives that it provides.

Discovery

The sense of discovery gives another dimension to a place. The possibility of discovery gives a sense of excitement and serves as an enticing invitation to a place. The need for discovery is usually met by the means of travelling “going to new places to discover their special qualities, to meet new people, to find new challenges from landscapes that contrast with familiar ones” (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992, p. 236). However, it can also be created through extending opportunities in space beyond individual perception. It requires constant change in the character of physical qualities and of human activities. This feature could enhance the quality of people’s experiences of a place through providing unique situations that include opportunities for pure fun and enjoyment.

3.3 The Role of Architects

Some people live in places that they love and care for. Others sometimes hate where they live. In today's day and age, it is important to know that the world does not exist only for consumption, but it that it must provide places for people where people can rest their minds and engage in social activities. Architects must create places with a sense of place, a sense of identity, and a sense of civility. Architects are responsible for more than the design of buildings: they must create types of places that are imbued with layers of meanings and that can enable events. Tuan in his book *Space and Place* says "if a piece of sculpture is an image of feeling, then a successful building is an entire functional realm made visible and tangible" (Tuan, 1977, p. 164). Architecture has the power not only to create meanings and feelings but to operate in the functional realm and to create cultural images. Langer talks about the cultural image of architecture that creates enormously complex and fluid movement patterns of personal and social life. She says "the architects creates a culture's image: a physically present human environment that expresses the characteristic rhythmic functional patterns which constitute a culture" (Langer, 1979, p. 165). Moreover, Langer explains successful architecture as a collective selfhood for the public environment. She mentions that successful architecture creates "the semblance of the world which is the counter part of a self" (Langer, 1979). For personal selfhood, architecture's creation will be a house but for collective selfhood it will be public places like civic centers or town halls. The problem remains that current design strategies are built to satisfy practical needs without considering the quantities that promotes how do they acquire visibility as regards both practicality and a sense of self.

Juhani Pallasmaa is an architect who talks about architecture and the senses in his book "*The eyes of the skin*". "*The eyes of the skin*" is an expression that refers to understanding the world and human experiences through the tactile sense. (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 11). Based on his studies on senses in architecture, it is evident that Architecture does not have to be a framework of fabrication and "fantasy", but it has to "articulate the experience of our being-in-the-world and strengthens our sense of reality and self" (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 12). That is to say, the sense of selfhood or collective selfhood that is strengthened by architecture allows users to engage in the mental dimensions of a

project. Architects have the role of providing stages in cities to facilitate human existential conditions and situations. A good architecture makes people experience themselves as completely embodied spiritual beings. As Pallasmaa explains “A wise architect works with his/ her entire body and sense of self. While working on a building or an object, the architect is simultaneously engaged in a reverse perspective, his/her self-image, or more precisely, existential experience.” (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 13).

The most important aspect of the work of architects is the sense of atmosphere and emotion that they create. An architect, like a poet, can use his/her power to provide a stage as a great platform with a joyful sense of place. It is all about the relationships between producers and users.

Obviously, architectural work is not experienced as a series of isolated objects and images, but rather it offers pleasurable shapes and surfaces that capture people’s attention and feelings and thereby encourages them to experience a place rather than just using the space for necessities of daily life. In experiencing architecture the user “lend his/her emotions and associations to the space and the space lends him/her its atmosphere” (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 13) Atmospheric characteristics of places and buildings must be grasped before any conscious observation of details can be made. Hence, it is important for architects to create places that provide distinctive atmospheres and that therefore will be desirable destinations. They must investigate opportunities for creating meaningful places with atmospheres that enable engagement and provide social architectural spaces.

Chapter 4. Case Studies

The main focus of this thesis is on social and civic places. It will deal with such elements as streetscapes and markets. Below is an analysis of samples of traditional markets; both streetscape market zones and market buildings are included because of the social aspects that they present to their societies. Helen Tangires in her book *Public Markets and Civic Culture* says that “ more than a place to buy and sell food, Public markets were civic spaces, the common ground where citizens and governments defined the shared values of the community” (Friedman, 2010, p. 54).

1. The Scale of Street:

Las Ramblas

Barcelona, Spain



Figure 7. Las Ramblas . Barcelona. Spain

Las Ramblas is a series of five connected boulevards street in Barcelona that includes a tree-lined pedestrian mall. This is the type of place where everyone can easily walk through the space and engage with the environment. This is possible due to the quality of the space itself: it considers human scale and also features reduced vehicular engagement.

The following diagram illustrates how the program of the ground floor works with the street level to enhance the quality of human experience.

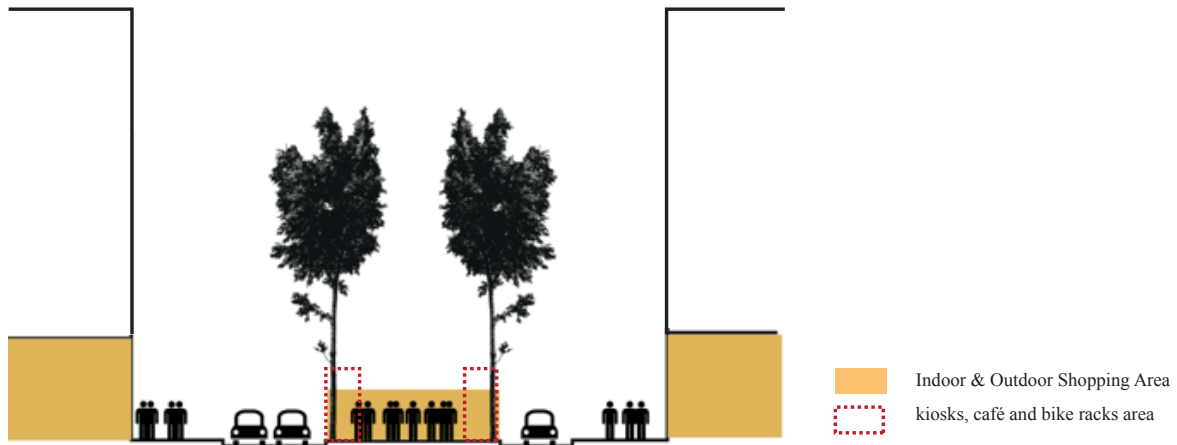


Figure 8. Diagram of Architecture of Las Ramblas

Chaharbagh Blvd (Four Orchards)

Architect: Shaykh Bahai

Esfahan. Iran



Figure 9. Chahar Bagh. Esfahan. Iran

Chahar Bagh (Four Orchards) Boulevard is the main street of the city of Esfahan in Iran. The street is about 6 kilometers long, going through the city from the north to the south. The architect of this place, Shaykh Bahai, has implemented interesting strategies to make this street a place that everyone likes to experience. The current street contains various elements that enrich this setting. Those elements are: 1. the orientation of three well known gardens on the west side of the boulevard 2. a tree-lined walking, cycling and sitting path for pedestrians in the middle of street (linear pedestrian plaza) and 3. locating shops and food eateries along the street. The many pedestrians on the street experience the phenomena of place as they engage with their surroundings. (Chahar Bagh Street, 2007)

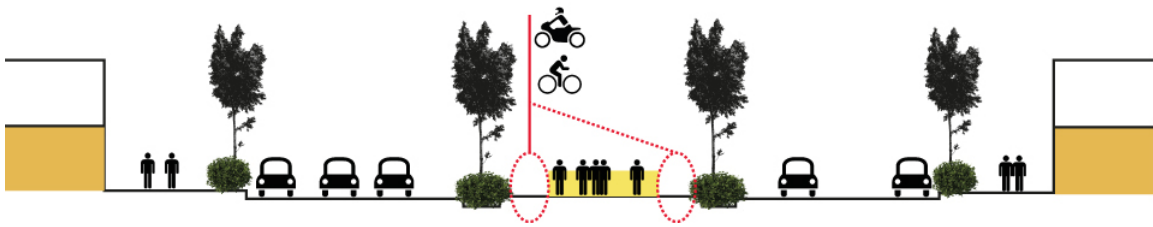


Figure 10. Diagram of Architecture of Chahar Bagh

Yonge Street Celebration

September. 16. 2012

Toronto. Ontario. Canada



Claiming sitting area along street

Outdoor restaurant area for pedestrian engagement

Blurring boundary between pedestrian path and street by engaging nature

Figure 11. Yonge Celebration. Summer 2012. Photo by Pegah Rategh

The heart of downtown Toronto celebrated its main street-- 'Yonge St.'-- with a community-based event in summer 2012. This event transformed the street into a new type of place and of experience by expanding public space onto stretches of the street itself. The barrier between pedestrians and vehicles was blurred when new strategies were proposed for the place such as comfy outdoor sitting places, art installations, a Live Green Planter Box and various activities like games for kids. The architecture of ground floor is a key factor in making this event successful. The way that buildings are located near the pedestrian sidewalk gives opportunities to support pedestrian activities and also to create a place experience that cannot be missed.

2. Scale of Urban Block

Vakil Bazaar of Shiraz



Figure 12. Vakil Bazaar of Shiraz Iran

Vakil Bazaar is the main bazaar of the historical center of Shiraz-Iran. This bazaar displays a wonderful architecture of place with wide pedestrian shopping corridors, high ceilings, and a number of openings that allow the penetration of natural light and the circulation of air. The main architectural type of this place is a design based on the combination of main courtyards, shopping corridors and cozy sitting places. Natural features like water and green plants make the courtyards' space more lively and

interesting. Outdoor courtyards are an outside version of the inside. This is a traditional example of inside-out architecture. The primary materials used are yellow bricks in combination with some colorful tiles; they give a unique identity to this place. The 7.6-meter high ceiling creates opportunities for decorating the whole space for various events throughout the year. (Historical Iranina Sites and People , 2009)

Santa Caterina Market, 2005 1997-2004

Barcelona, Spain

Architects: Enric Miralles Benedetta Tagliabue

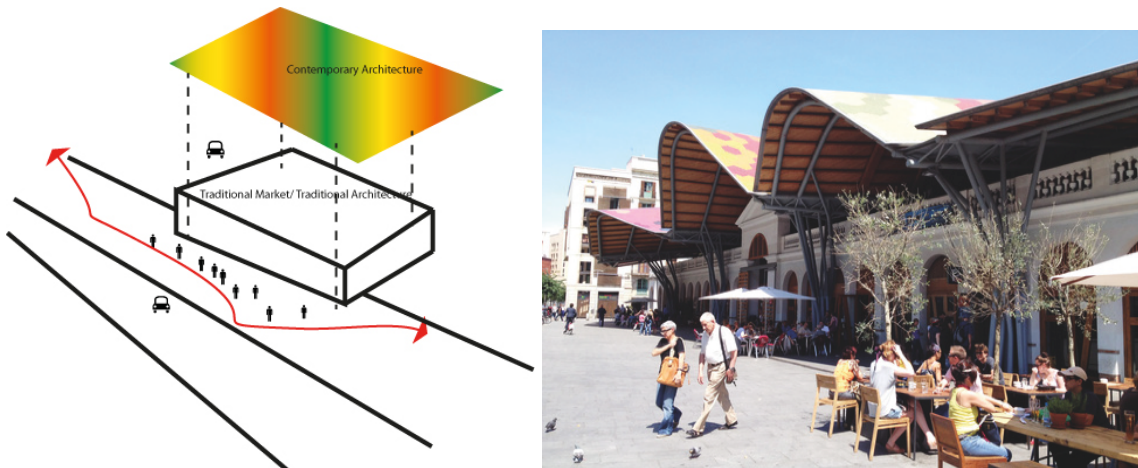


Figure 13. Santa Caterina Market. Barcelona. Spain

Santa Caterina Market was the first covered public market square in Barcelona. It was renovated by EMBT architects and reopened in 2005 as a new type of neighborhood market. Their design combines the traditional and contemporary, and is classified as an example of architecture of place because of how it considers both outdoor and indoor activities. The multi-colored roof is a key signature of this place; it creates a sense of joyfulness for the surrounding buildings that are able to view it from above. Also, using wood as a material in this building has given it a sense of tradition, while the structural curving roof has taken its inspiration from the traditional vernacular tiled roof of the

region. The wide-open plaza in front of the main entrance is able to support informal vendors and seasonal events throughout the year. The interior part of the market is designed for traditional market stalls. According to Nicole Jewell, this place not only preserves a historical building, but also helps to preserve a traditional life style. (Jewell, 2011). This market demonstrates the idea of place not only in how it is designed practically as a place for purchasing food but also in the sense that it is a community that enhances civility and social engagement.

St Lawrence North building Competition 2010

Location: Toronto, Canada

Architects: Adamson Associates Architects and Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners

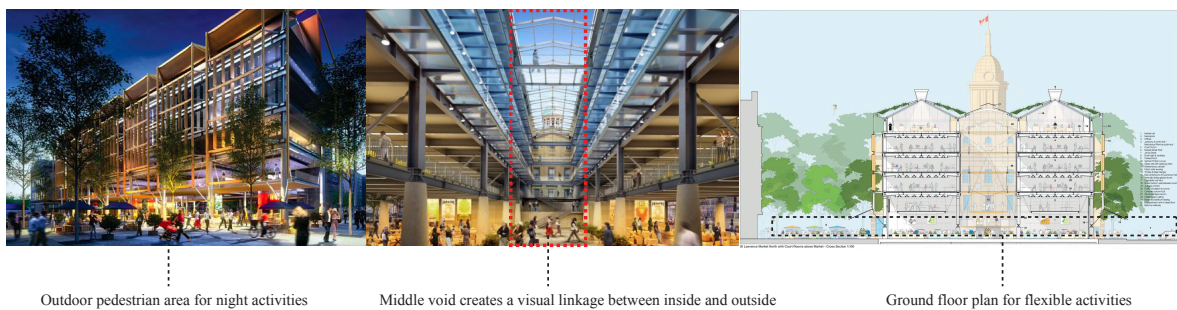


Figure 14. St. Lawrence north building proposal

This project is a new proposal for St. Lawrence Market north building design competition in Toronto. The current building is going to be redesigned by a four-stories shopping market to enhance the pedestrian life and public activities on Front and Jarvis Street in downtown area. The interesting character of this proposal is its glass atrium that has framed out the historical monument in the back of the building while creating an open indoor market. This visual linkage also has given the opportunity to give a dramatic view of St. Lawrence Hall to the north, also creating a strong visual connection with all three buildings of the complex. Moreover, a wide outdoor area is allocated to pedestrian

activities beside the building to promote seasonal daily and night activities. (Toronto, 2013)

As a general analysis, the following matrix of case studies (figure 15) summarizes the qualities derived from the analysis of mentioned case studies. This matrix includes the vital elements for making a space a place (creating a sense of place). Those characters are:

Vital Elements for creating a sense of place in placemaking
1. Pedestrian only environment
2. Cultural identity
3. Color of place
4. Smell of place
5. Light of place
6. Sound of Place
7. Natural features
8. A place for arts, street performances & festivals
9. Place for sitting (outdoor and Indoor)
10. Informal Vendors
11. Passive engagement
12. Night life
13. The architecture of place

Table 1. Vital Elements for creating a sense of place in placemaking



Figure 15. Matrix of Case studies

Chapter 5. Design Exploration

5.1 Context and site analyzing

Toronto is one of the cities dealing with the issue of a lack of “sense of place”. Observing the urban growth of the city of Toronto from the perspective of quality of place, we find ourselves facing placelessness in the city’s public realm. There are fewer lively pedestrian places due to urban sprawl to suburban areas. Also, cars have become dominant and have had a huge effect on the built environment and on people’s way of life and how they daily experience the city. The greatest potential platforms for creating sense of place are located in the urban public spaces now occupied by parking lots or unused spaces; these represent the placelessness in the city. These spaces present a great opportunity for re=creation as stages for social gathering, meetings, spending time, seeing strangers, and other types of social interaction. Flaneur’s manifesto is one of the best tools for realizing the situations in cities and the quality of places. Shawn Micallef uses the concept of the flaneur in his book “stroll”. He says it is a key tool for understanding the city because Toronto is more than the “sum of its parts” and these places can be found only “on foot” (Micallef, 2010, p. 11). As American essayist Rebecca Solnit noted in her book *Wanderlust: A history of walking* “Cities move at the speed of walking” (Micallef, 2010, p. 11). Walking is a means to understand the sense of environment and surrounding called “psychogeography”, (a term coined by Situationist Guy Debord in the 1950s) (Micallef, 2010, p. 13). The situationists were concerned with the issue of the influence of environment on human feelings and behavior. The theory of the environment having an impact on human minds has been proven accurate since the 1950s. In the sense that Yonge Street architecture makes more provision for cars than for people, it is an example of lack of quality in human-environmental interaction.

5.2 Yonge Street

Yonge Street is the heart of Toronto and, of course, the longest street in the world. This vital axis “holds mythic place in the Canadian psyche” (Micallef, 2010, p. 18). Yonge Street hosts many programs within itself, but as Micallef mentions it is not the main shopping street any more (Micallef, 2010, p. 18). The seedy shops or bars along Yonge are not designed well for their locations and lack of quality from the architectural point of view; “nobody calls Yonge home” (Micallef, 2010, p. 18). Images of Yonge Street are parking lots in some locations and creepy strip malls mixed with car plazas in others. When phenomenologists talk about the spirit of place and the phenomenology of place, we are reminded of these concerns about Yonge Street.

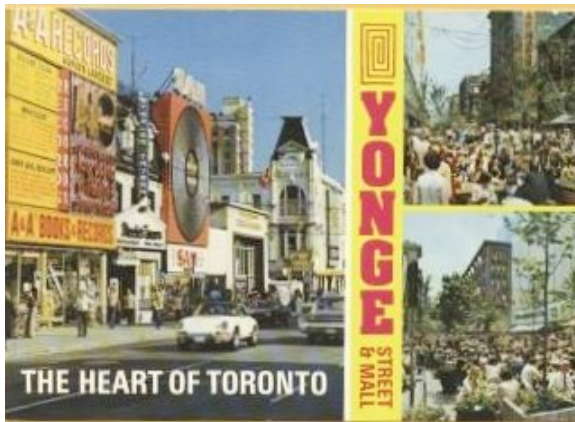


Figure 16. Yonge Street.

This mythical street has had a huge potential in terms of welcoming people and gathering them together as a community. In the 1970s, Toronto turned downtown Yonge Street into a pedestrian mall during the summer months. This was before the opening of the Toronto Eaton Centre that now occupies one block of downtown Yonge Street.



Figure 17. Toronto Yonge Pedestrian Mall 1970.

It was in 1971 that Yonge Street was closed to vehicular traffic and opened to pedestrian access, street musician performances, open-air coffee shops and independent sellers, becoming the first pedestrian mall in Toronto (Idlewild & Taylor, 2011). This approach addressed the issue of a lack of “open spaces” inside the “core” district of Toronto under Mayor David Crombie’s municipal government. The mall occupied the approximately 1.3 kilometers between Wellington Street to the south and Gerrard Street to the north. It was a summer-only mall that premiered for only two weeks in 1971 but would continue for eleven weeks in 1972 and 1973 and eight weeks in 1974 (Idlewild & Taylor, 2011). This type of mall encourages pedestrians to engage in the vital social atmosphere that it provides; also, it encourages pedestrian-oriented activities within the city. Interestingly, after 41 years, the city decided to bring back the concept of a Yonge pedestrian mall in the year 2012 by sponsoring Yonge celebration events. The success of these events proved the value of giving priority to pedestrians and providing vibrant public activities. Yonge starts right at Lake Ontario and continues till Lake Simcoe. But it has lost its power, particularly in the far north part of Toronto, North York and Newtownbrook neighborhood. The following photo analysis of Yonge Street illustrates lack of sense of place and car priority over pedestrians in 2012.



Figure 18. Analysis of Yonge St. in terms of identifying lack of sense of place

Today the city, especially along Yonge Street is in huge need of pedestrian places. Persian Plaza is one of the areas that should have consideration given to its fundamental revitalization. This site is an example of the kind of placelessness encountered in many other locations in the city. It is located on 6103 Yong Street, just south of Steeles Ave. “It was originally a multi-ethnic plaza, but in the mid-1990s, it morphed into what it is today: one stop shopping for members of the nearby Persian community who want to make use of tailors, video shops, travel agencies and money transfer services run by their compatriots” (Iranian-Plaza, 2012). There is a so-called name for this area of Toronto among Persian communities: “Tehranto”. This word demonstrates a connection between the words “Toronto” and “Tehran”, the capital of Iran. “Tehranto” by itself doesn’t have any specific meaning but the word was created to describe Iranian communities located in this part of Toronto.

According to Statistics Canada's 2006 census, the majority of the population in North York consists of immigrants and non-native residents. The population of this area had increased between 2001 and 2006 by 3.1 percent (Statistic Canada, 2006). It is clearly a multicultural zone in the city of Toronto, but unlike the downtown it is unfortunately not a great destination for entertainment and social activities. Although public transportation is available, people prefer to drive themselves rather than take a bus or walk. The low quality of pedestrian activities in this area needs to be dealt with. The images below illustrate the location and the current situation of the area.



Figure 19. Lack of physical quality for pedestrian activities



Figure 20. Persian plaza. view from Yonge Street. The linkage between location activities and street have been usurped by parking lots along Yonge street

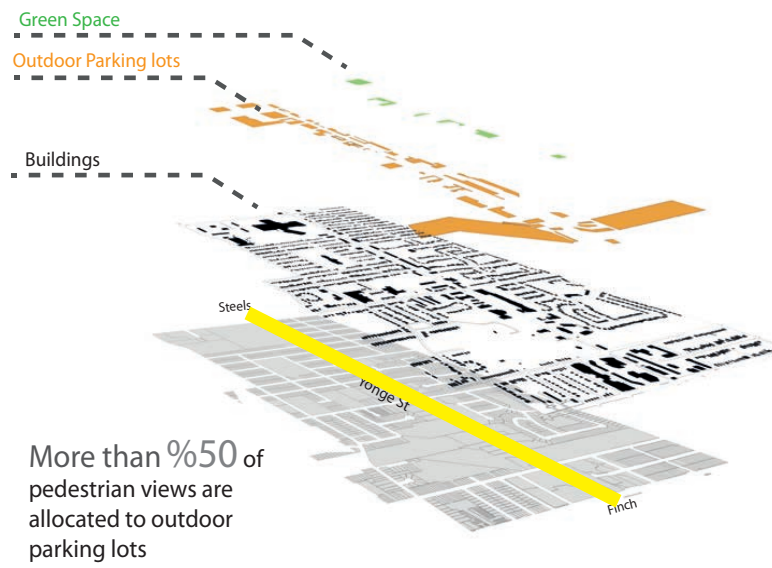


Figure 21. Site analysis

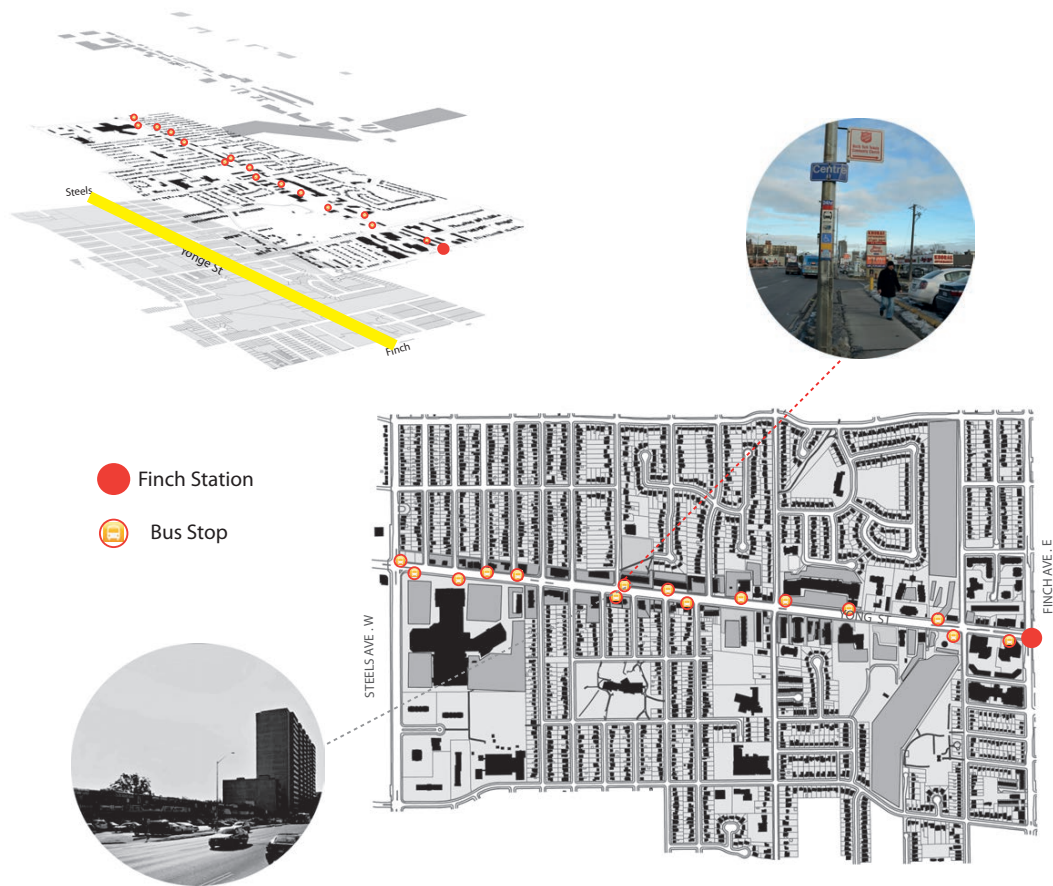


Figure 22. Current public transportation

A great future potential for this site is the extension of Yonge subway lines past Finch station. According to Metrolinx, one of the proposals for this extension involves six stations; this proposal is documented in *Yonge North Subway Extension Benefits Case* (Metrolinx, 2009). Its many benefits when implemented will include that of increased pedestrian involvement in the area.

Site Analysis

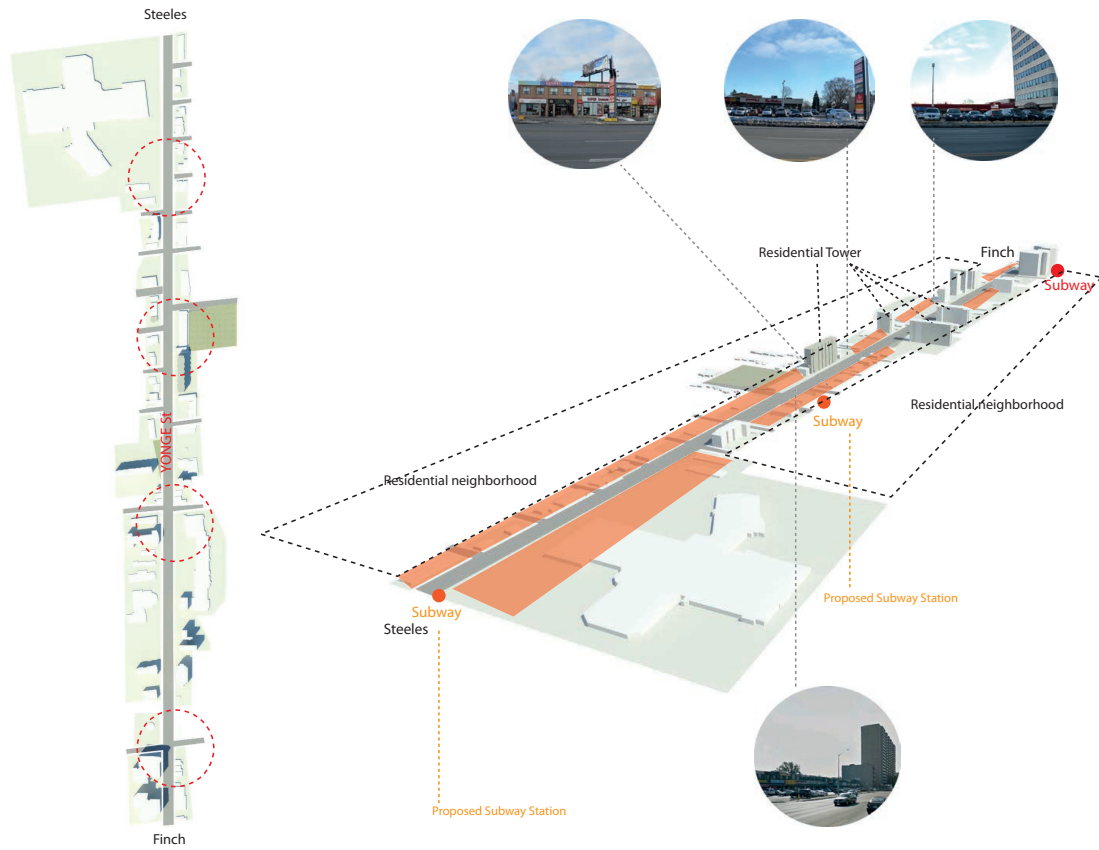


Figure 23. Placelessness in Yonge street between Finch and Steeles Ave

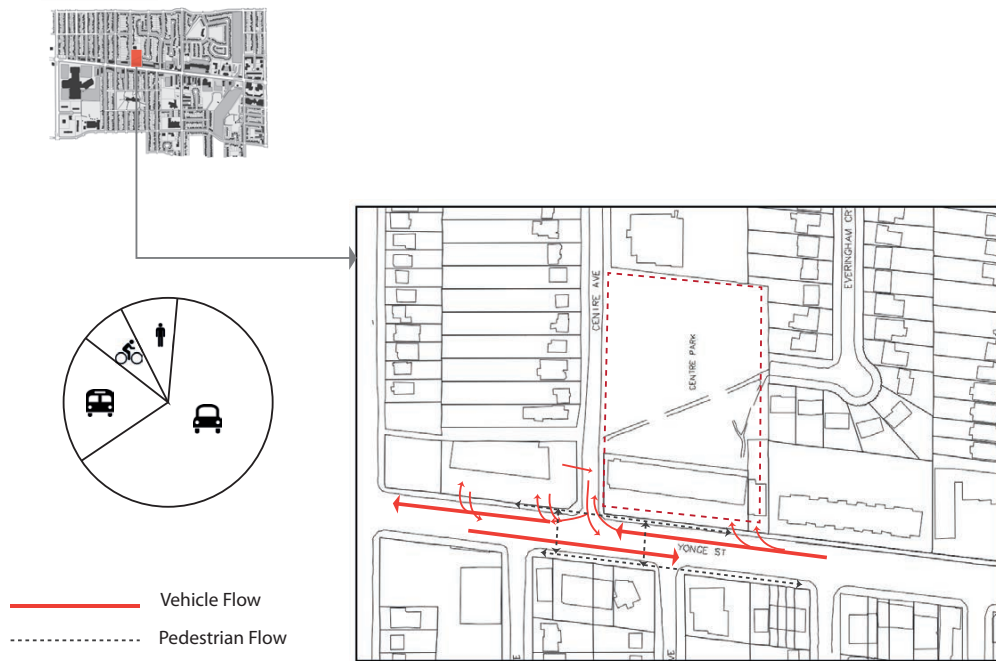


Figure 24. Analysis of existing situation



Figure 25. Persian Plaza Toronto. 6103 Yonge Street. South part of steel Ave

5.2 Design strategies

The “Architecture of place” uses qualities of place as powerful tools to form a physical setting to address the issue of placelessness. The main idea of this thesis is followed by general strategies get out of the ‘phenomena of place’ and ‘placemaking’ following diagram (figure26).

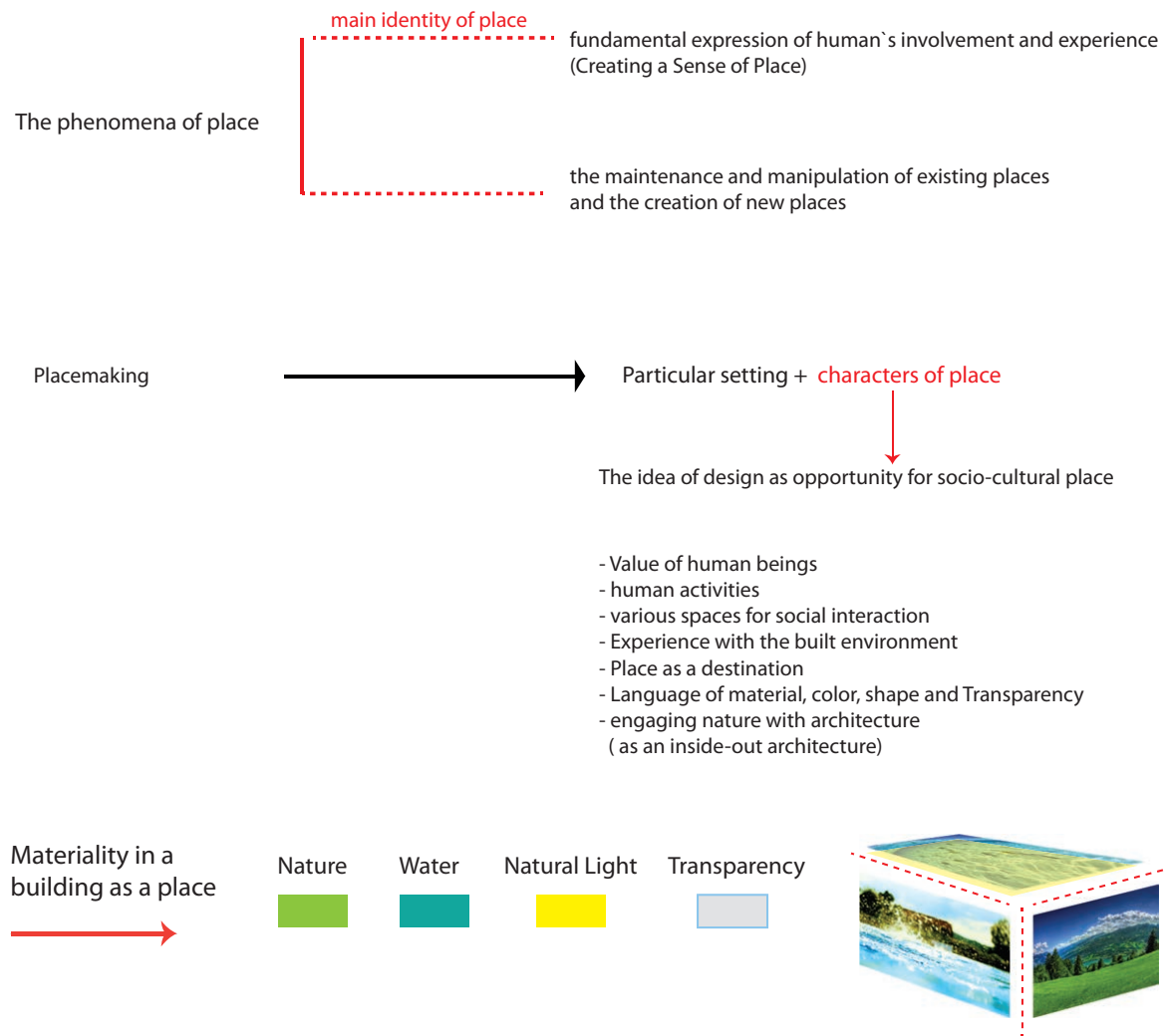


Figure 26. Diagram of place and placemaking

According to the example situation in this thesis (Persian Plaza) the general formation of current situation (placelessness along Yonge street) (Figure27) is redesigned based on the concept of place. The current existing buildings are assumed as objects which are going to be transformed in to a place.

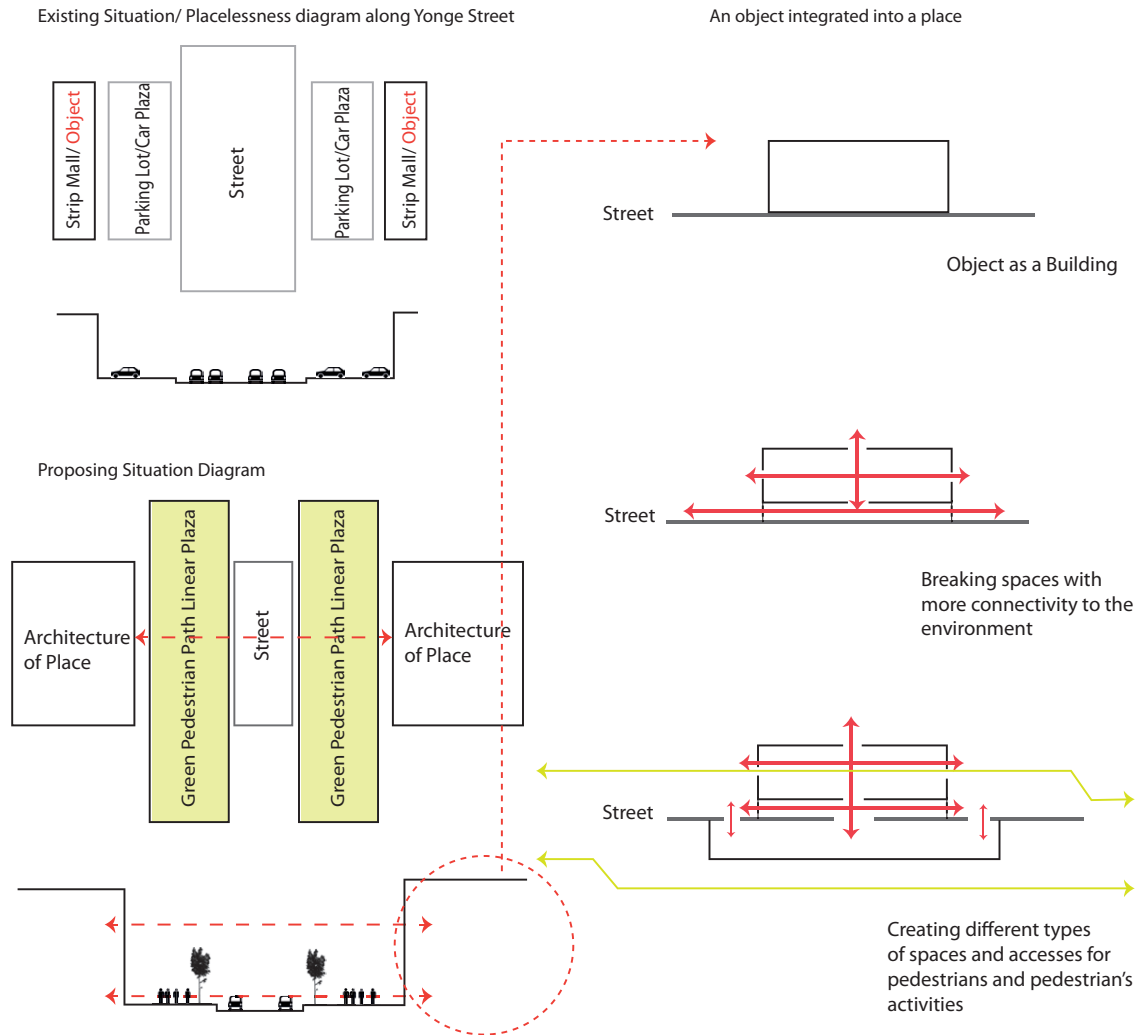


Figure 27. Diagram of current placelessness situation and the proposed situation

Although, mentioned strategies are important for creating a building as the architecture of place, the relationship of street and building is an inevitable factor in designing process. This relationship talks about how much space is allocated to pedestrian activities rather than car plaza and car lanes along Yonge Street. Moreover, how the barrier between street and building could be blurred by increasing connectivity, visual linkage and also adding nature as a buffer zone to this area (Figure 28). These strategies could be implemented for other locations with issues of placelessness.

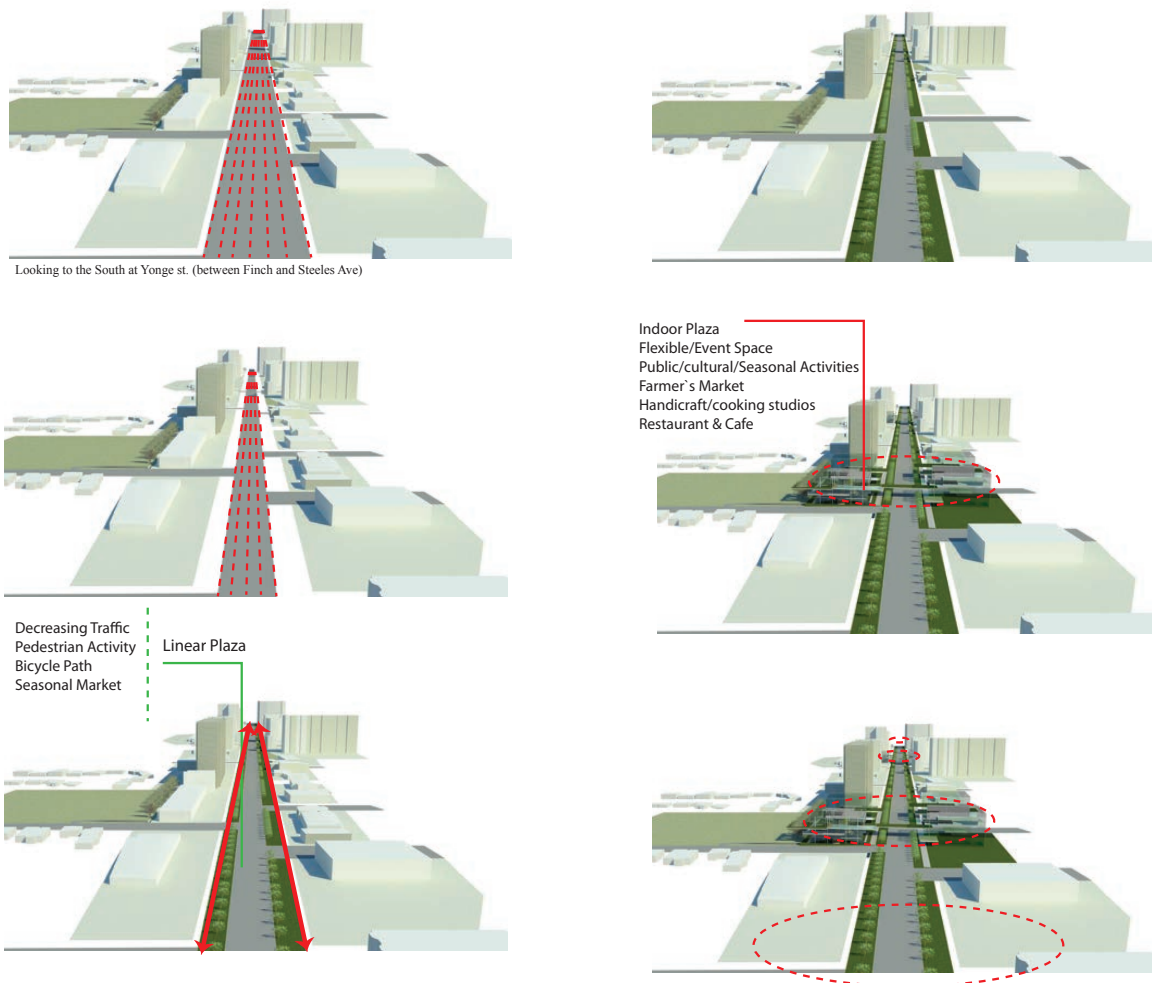
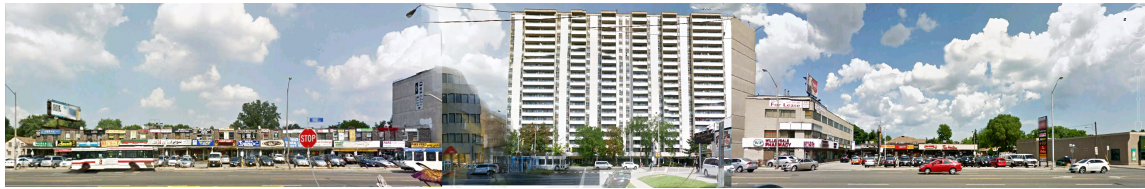


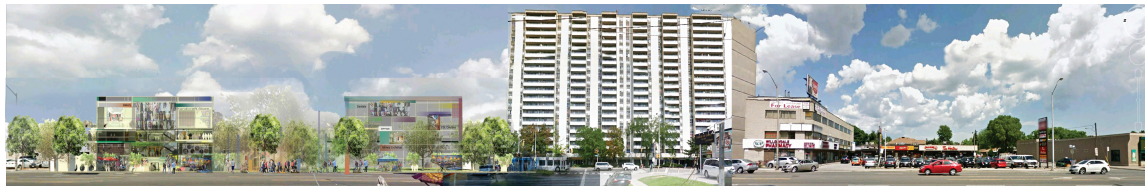
Figure 28. General strategies for relationship of street and the building for the 'architecture of place'

5.3 Design Proposal

The following images in this chapter illustrates a proposed physical transformation of the setting as a new type of socio-cultural market building along Yonge Street. In this proposal the current buildings of this particular area are redesigned based on strategies followed by the idea of place. Two of proposed buildings are used as market places and the other two are proposed to be primarily office buildings. As a detail example only one of the four buildings, the new public market (proposed in site plan figure 31) is designed in detail.



Panorama view, Yonge St. East side (between Centre Ave and Wedgewood Dr). Summer 2013



New Proposal .6105 Yonge St. East side (between Centre Ave and Wedgewood Dr)

Figure 29. East Yonge Elevation (current situation and proposed design)

The transparency of this building has tried to blur the boundary between interior and exterior activities for creating an inside-out architecture. It has tried to keep the sense of identity of the cultural environment of this area with implementing colorful glasses in entrance canopy and pedestrian bridge.

West Elevation



Figure 30. West Elevation

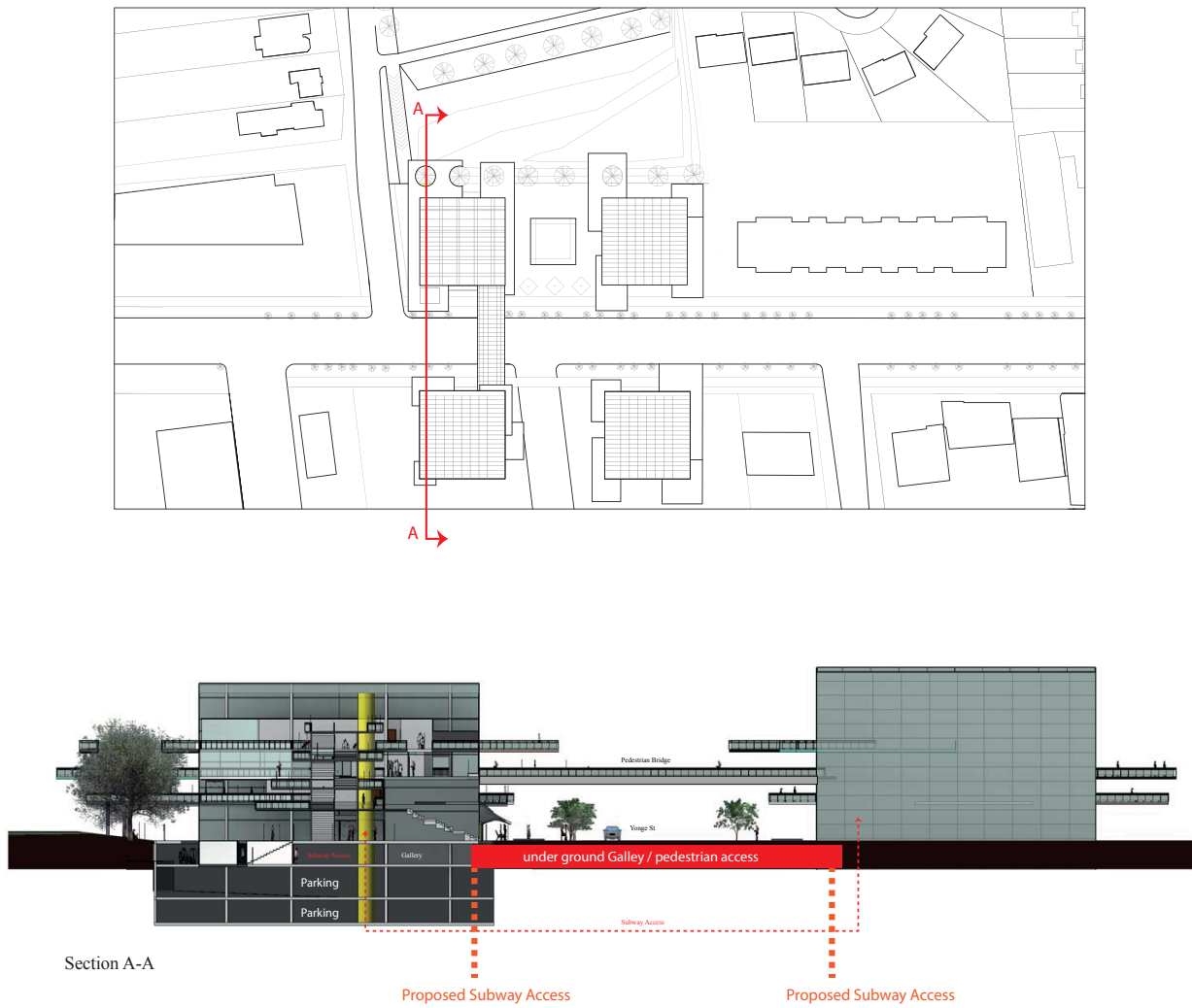
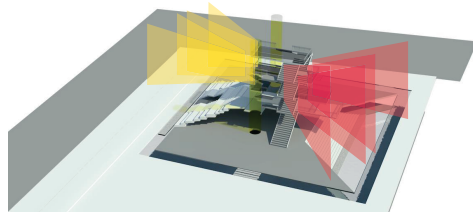
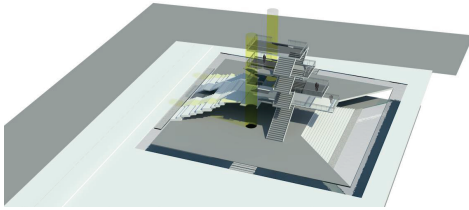
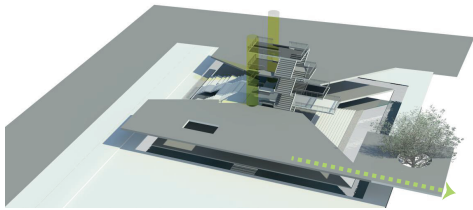


Figure 31. Site plan (proposed design for 6103 Yong St.) and East-West Section

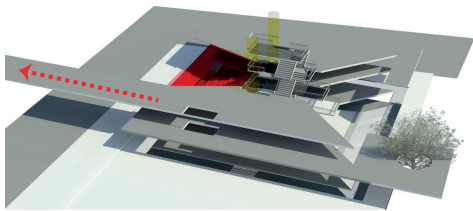
Mass Levels Diagram



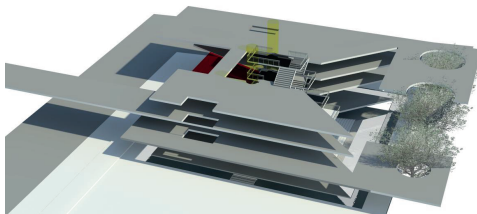
GroundFloor Level



Second Level



Third Level



Forth Level

Programs

- Main Core of the setting(Consider as both circulation and event area for public activities)

- Event Steps
- Indoor Plaza
- Flexible event Space(Seasonal market, temporary galley, public entertainment area like projecting movies)
- Visual linkage between inside and outside

- Indoor Shopping Market
- Restaurant
- outdoor Sitting

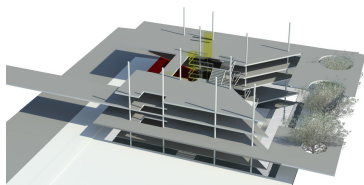
- Indoor shopping Market
- outdoor Market
- indoor/outdoor Cafe
- Pedestrian Bridge

- Handicraft Market
- School House (handicraft/cooking Studio)
- Indoor & outdoor water features

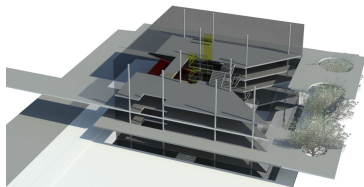
Figure 32. Mass levels and programs diagram

The curtain wall's structure is comprised of a basic horizontal-vertical structural grid where the horizontal mullions transfer the load of the glazing to the adjacent vertical mullions, ultimately grounding the entire load. In locations where there are mezzanines and direct floor slab support is not available at each level, the mullions are structurally reinforced.

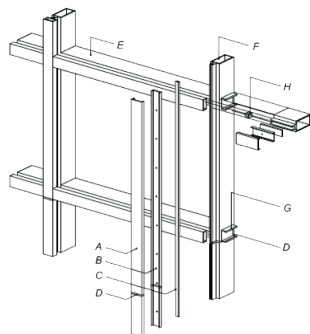
Structural diagram



Column Grid



Transparent Shell
(curtain wall system with horizontal-vertical structural grid)



- A Snap cap
- B Pressure Plate
- C Thermal break
- D Expansion Joint
- E Horizon rail
- F Vertical mullion
- G shear mullion
- H Corner block

Detail A. Curtain Wall panel Detail

source: Principles of detailing. curtain walls lecture.
(Arthur Wigglesworth, 2011)

Figure 33. Structure and Building envelope diagram

Diagram of market building in the urban fabric

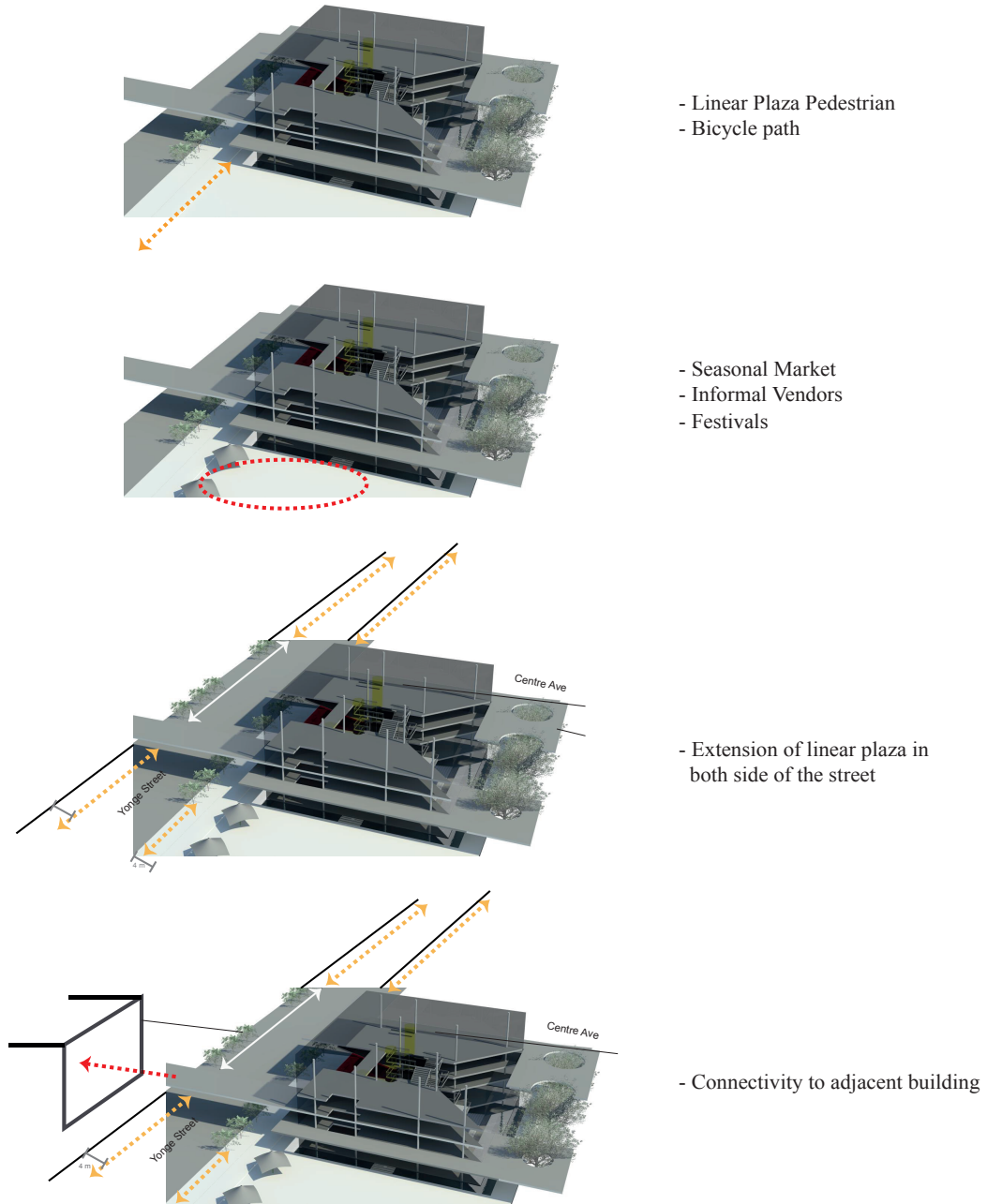


Figure 34. Diagram of market building in the urban fabric

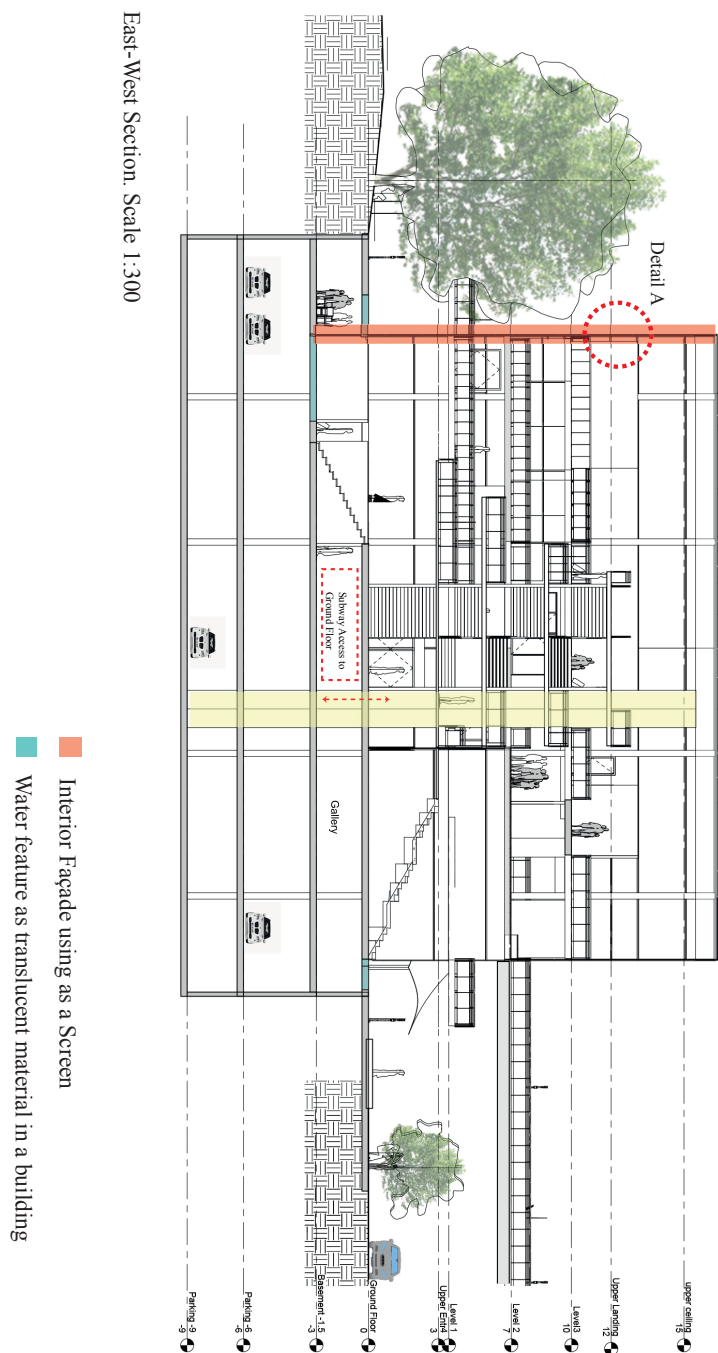
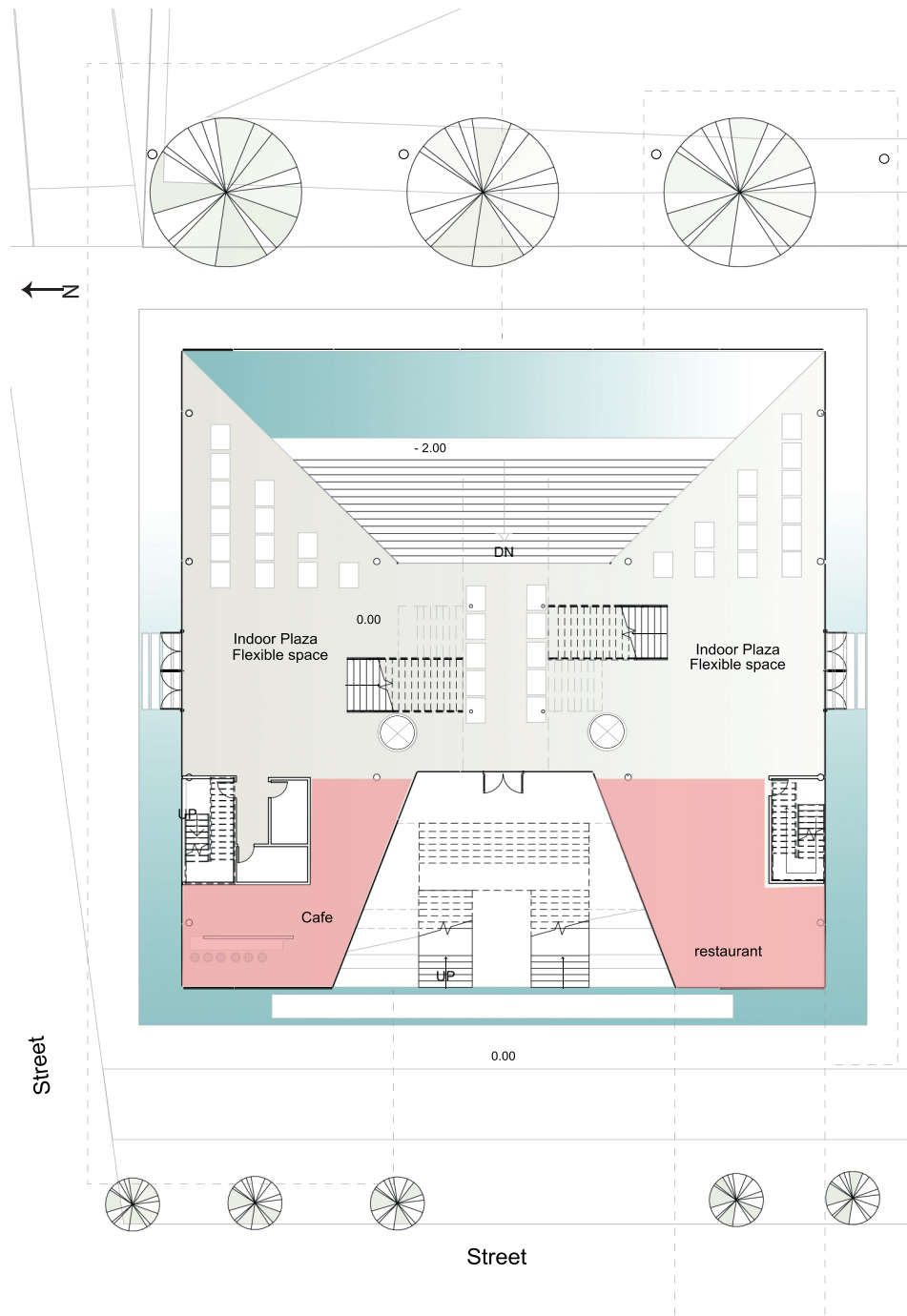
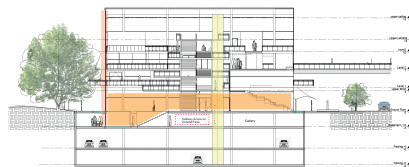


Figure 35. East-West Section



GroundFloor Level. Scale 1:300



Key Section

Figure 36. Ground Floor plan

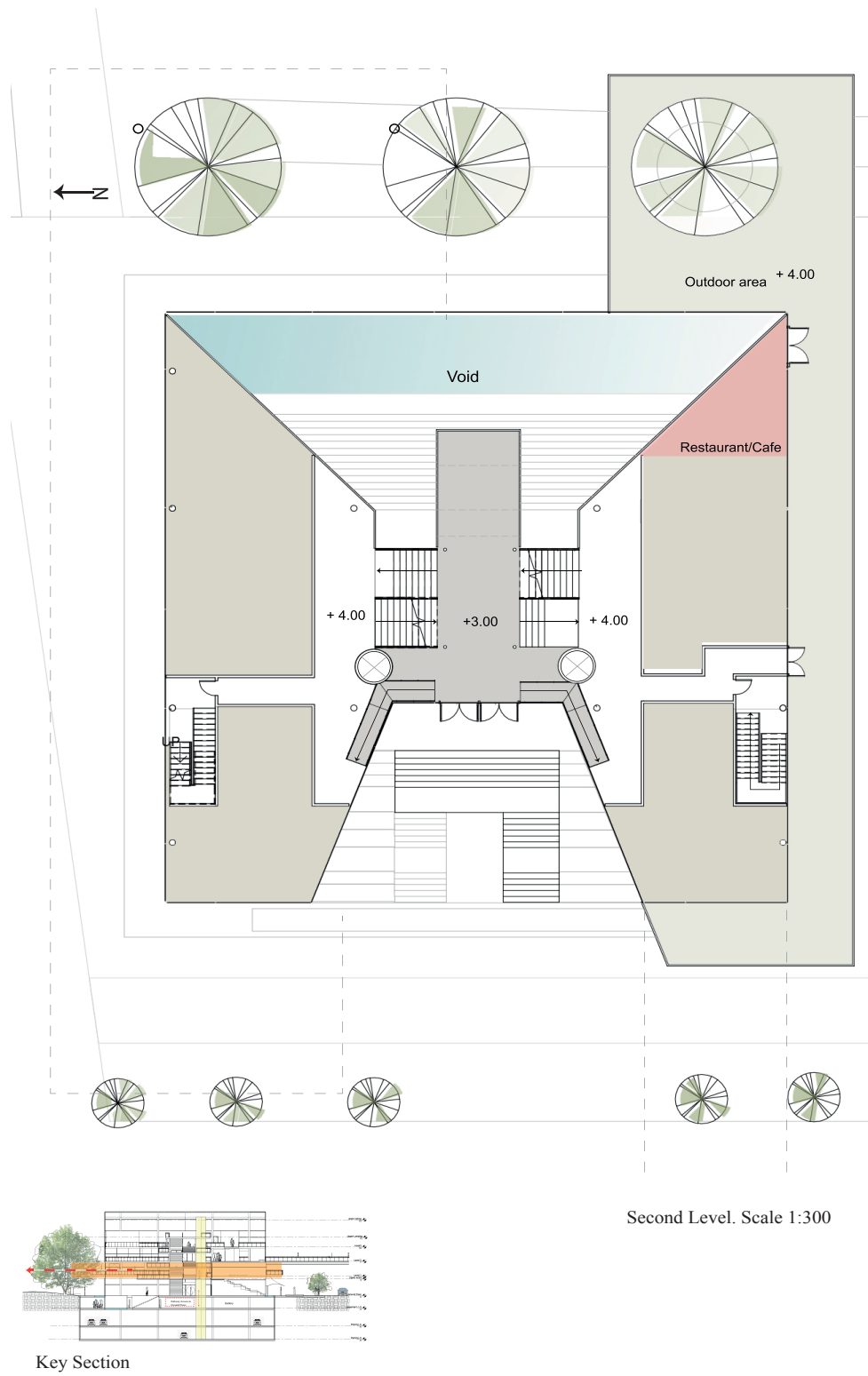


Figure 37. Second Floor plan

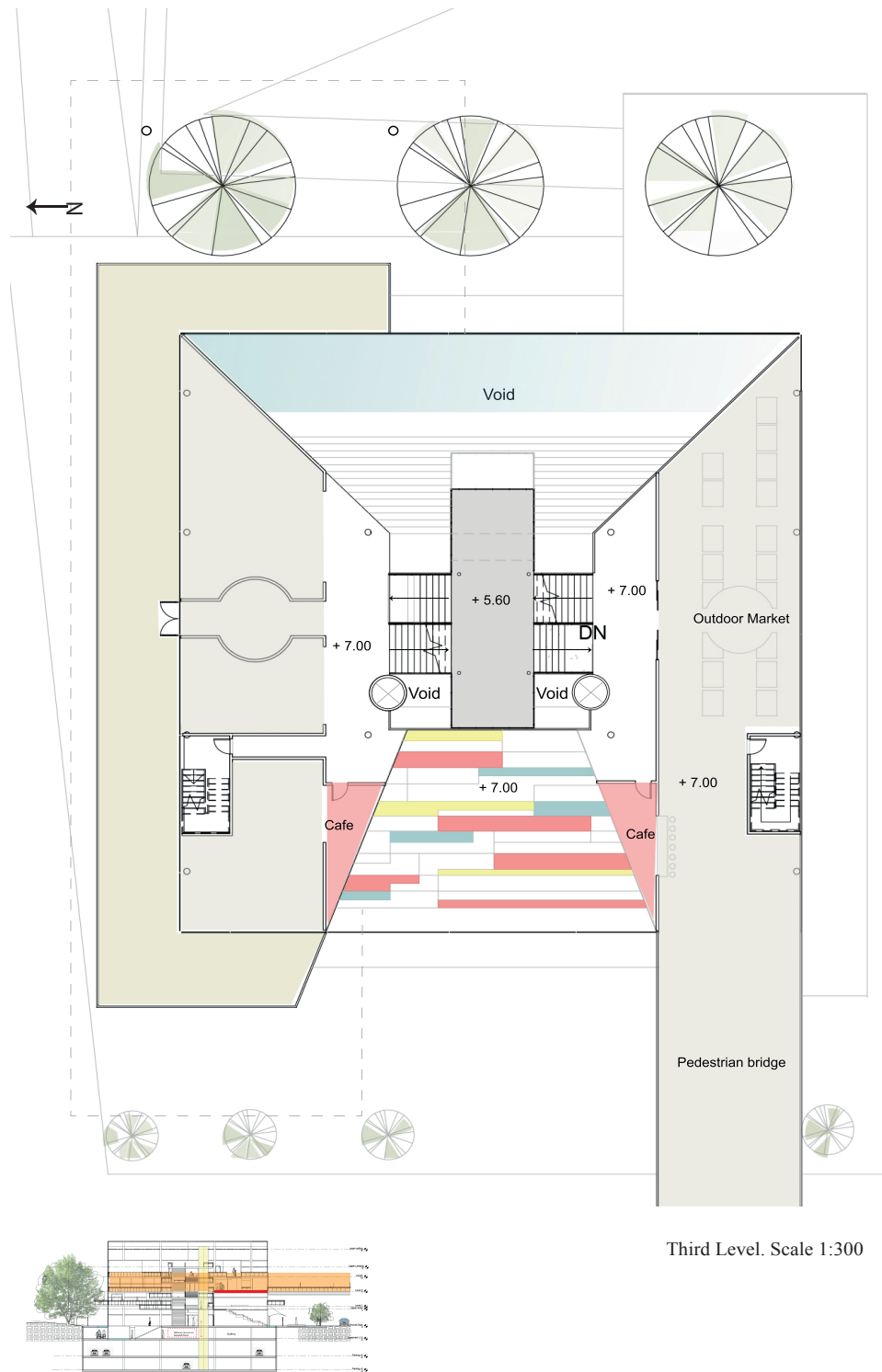
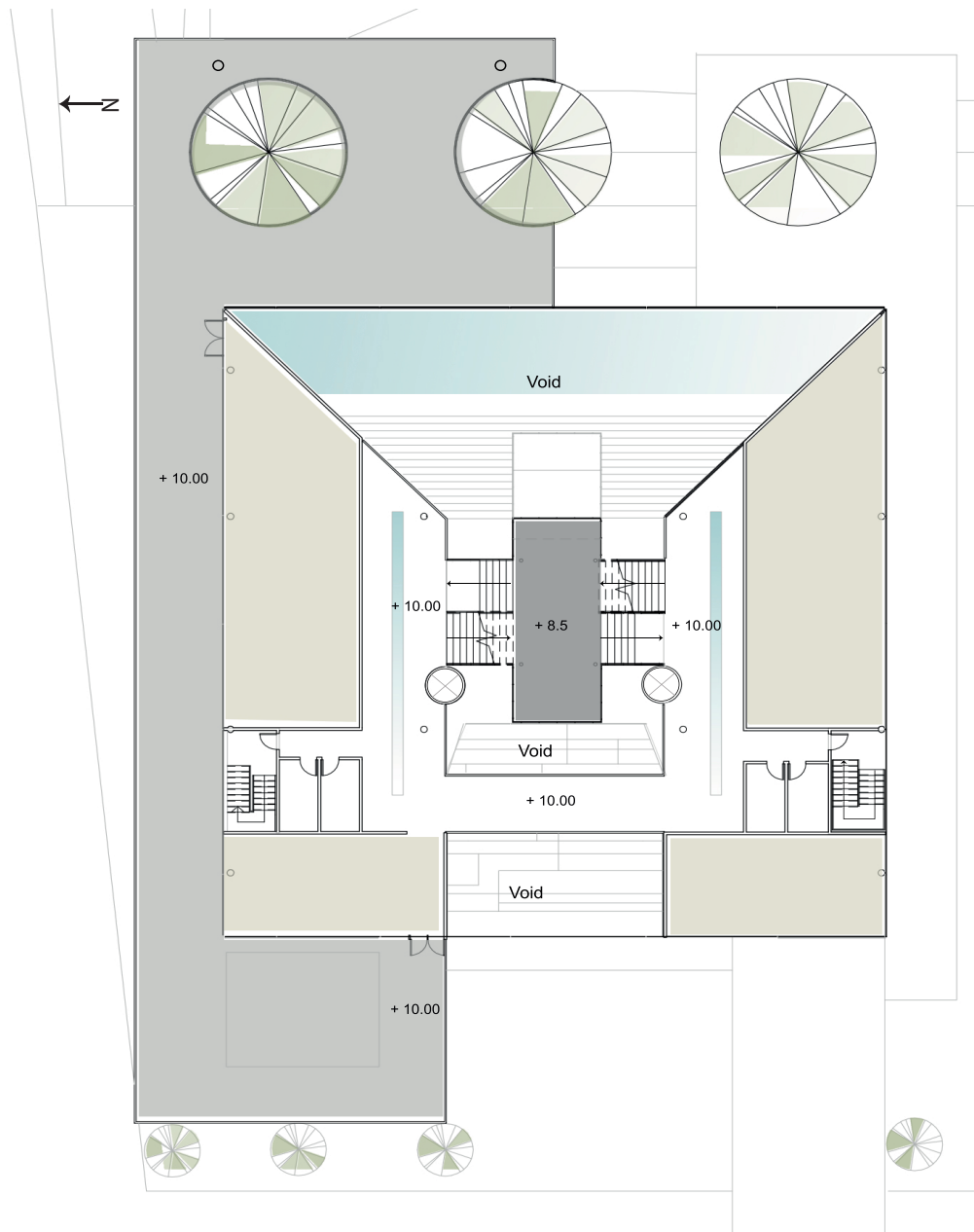


Figure 38. Third floor plan



Forth Level. Scale 1:300

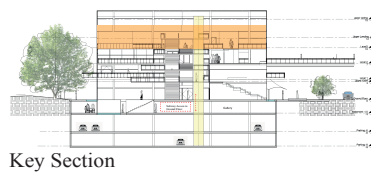


Figure 39. Forth floor plan



Figure 40. Entrance view of New Market Building

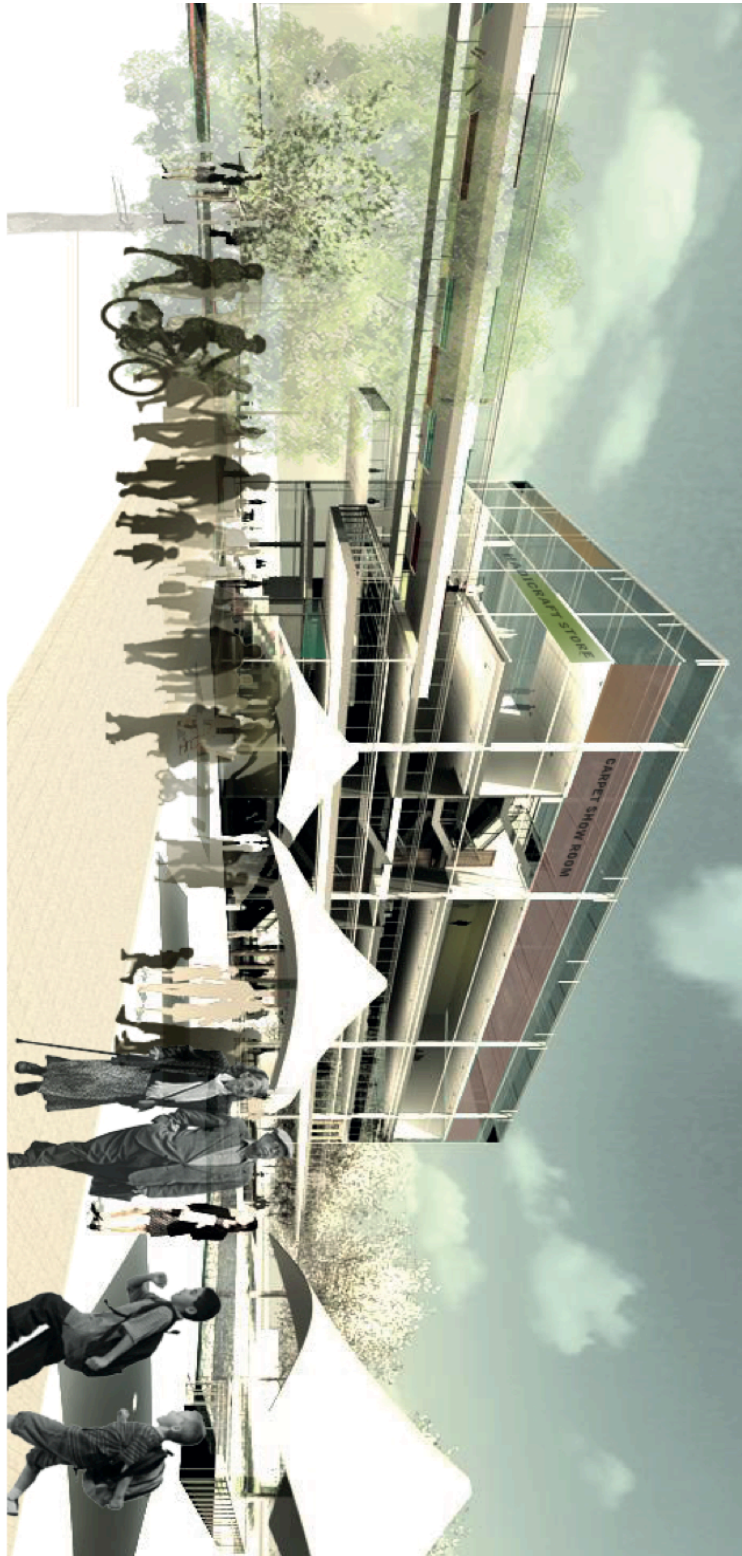


Figure 41. Exterior view from outdoor plaza



Figure 42. interior view from third floor and colored glass floor



Figure 43. Interior view

The ground floor level is an important area allocated to flexible events throughout the year. For instance, this area can be used for seasonal or farmers' market during the daytime as an indoor plaza (Figure 45); Meanwhile it could be used as a temporary gallery (Figure 44). Besides this flexibility there are some permanent restaurants and cafés accessible from both inside and outside to increase the quality of place. The open indoor plaza helps this place to be alive at different times and seasons, also gives variety to place in terms of different programing possibilities.

One of the most important strategies in this proposal is the use of steps and stairs not only as circulation, but also as a place to support social activities. In addition, the interior void could use the interior façade as a projection screen for daily and night public indoor activities (Figure 45-49).

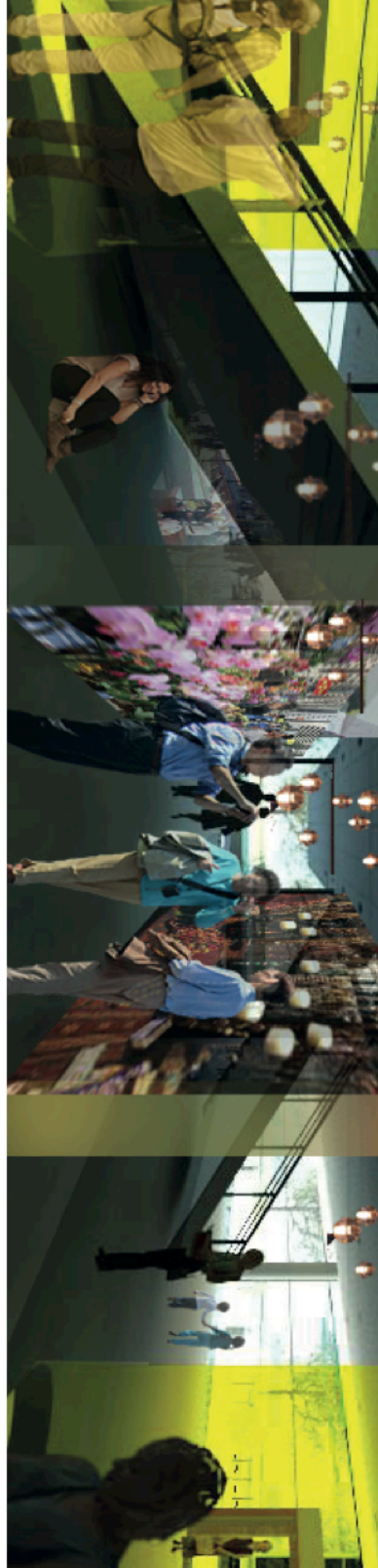


Figure 44. Temporary gallery in the indoor plaza area

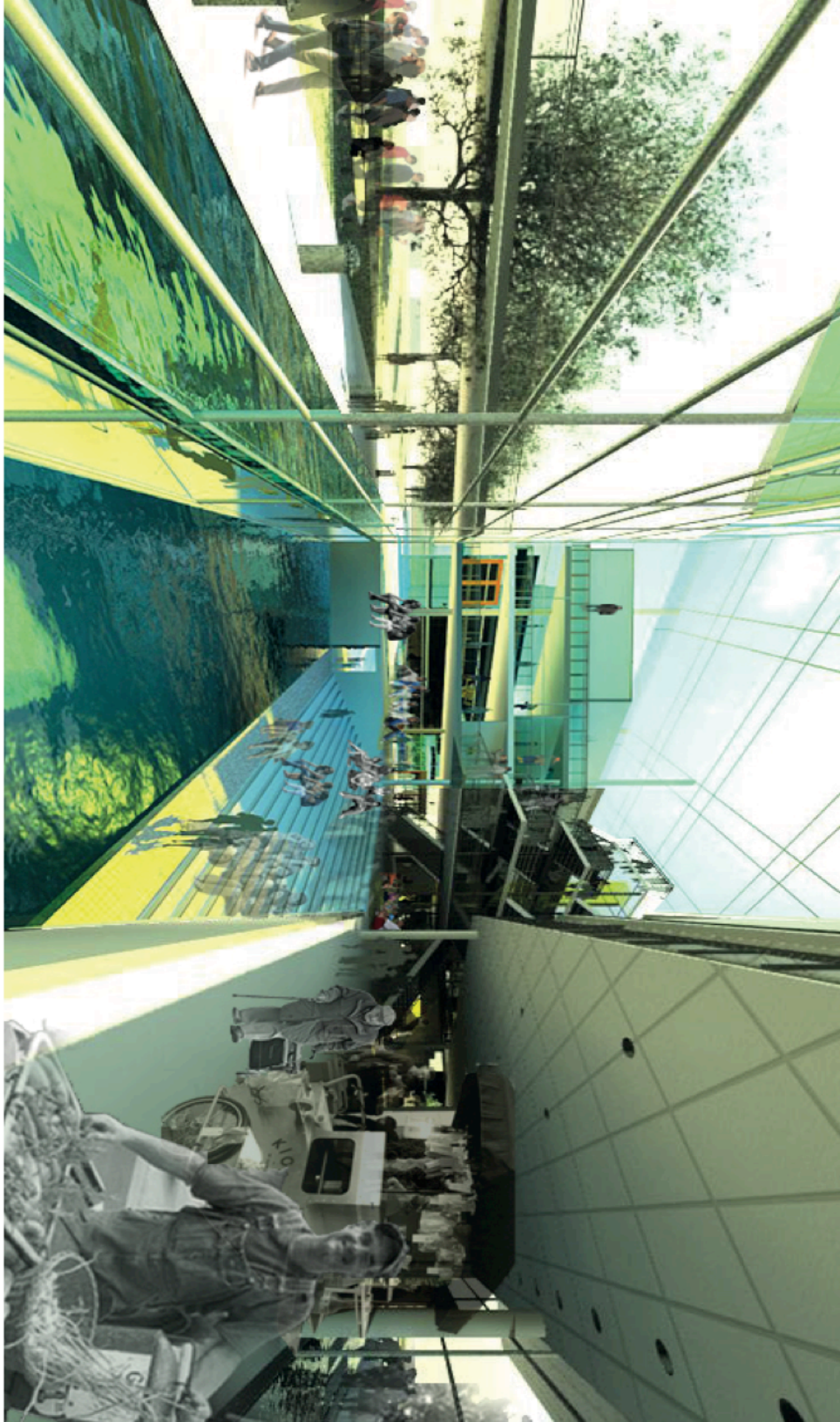


Figure 45. Indoor Major void

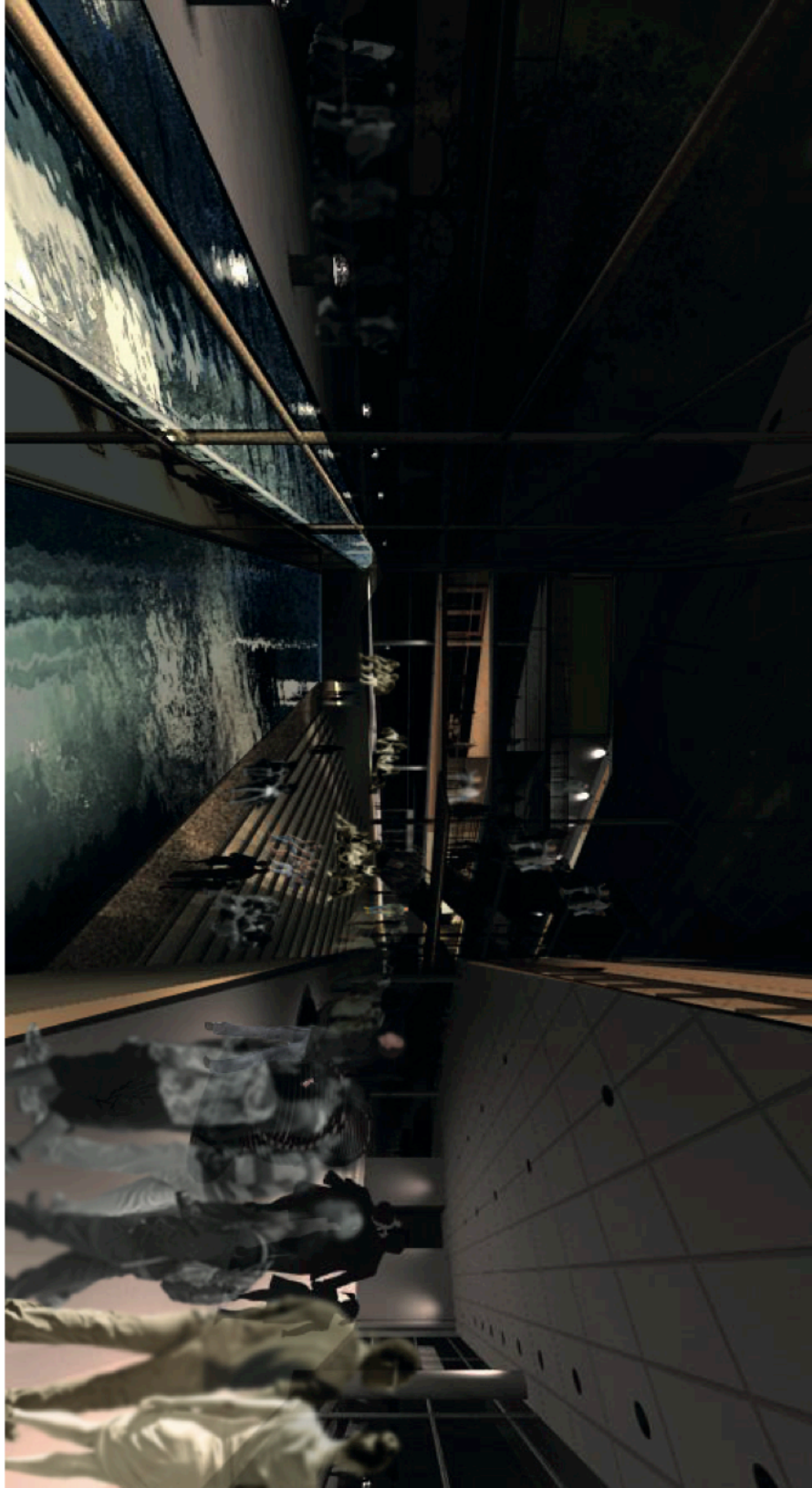


Figure 46. Interior main void. 'event place' at night

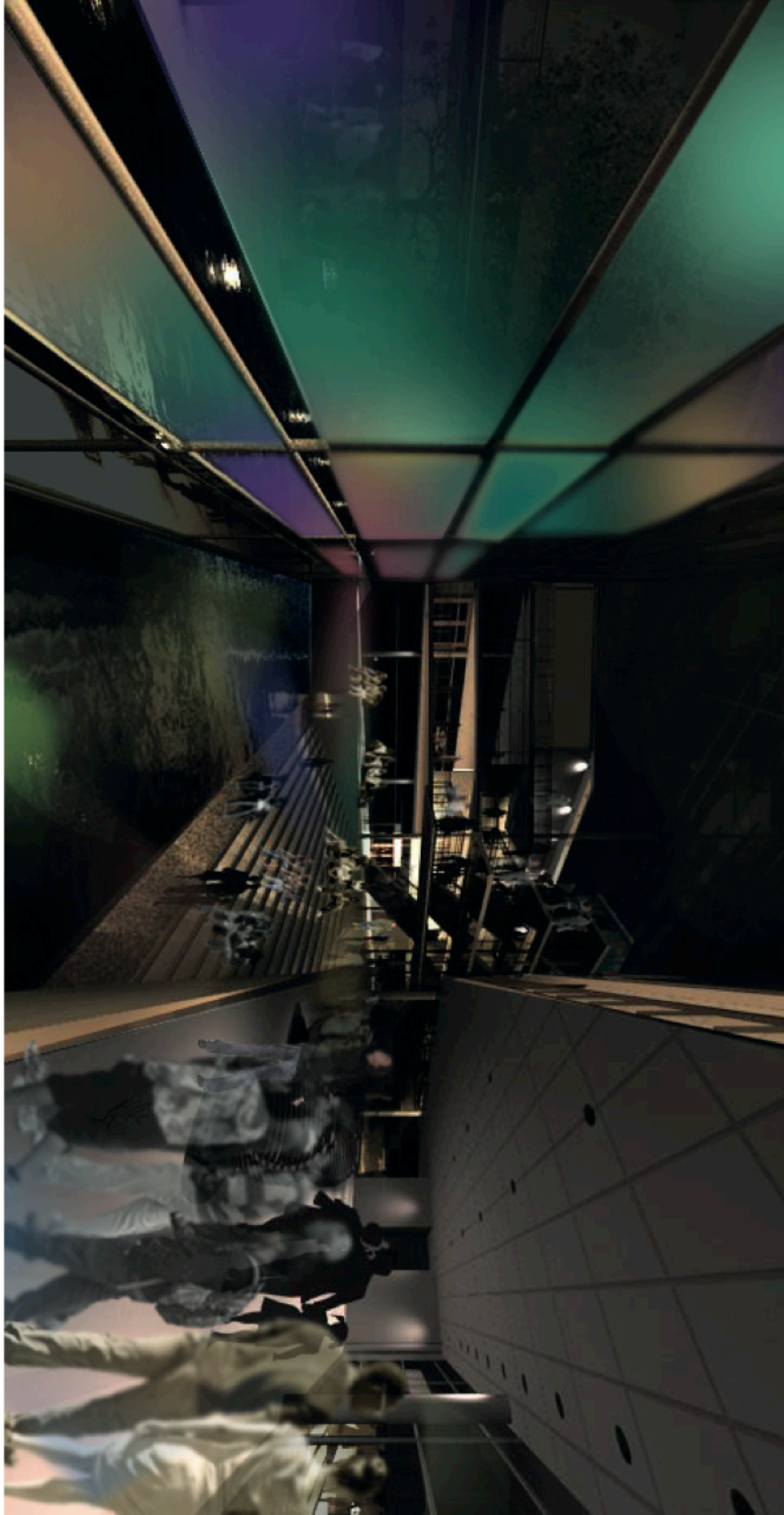


Figure 47. using the interior facade as a screen for night activities

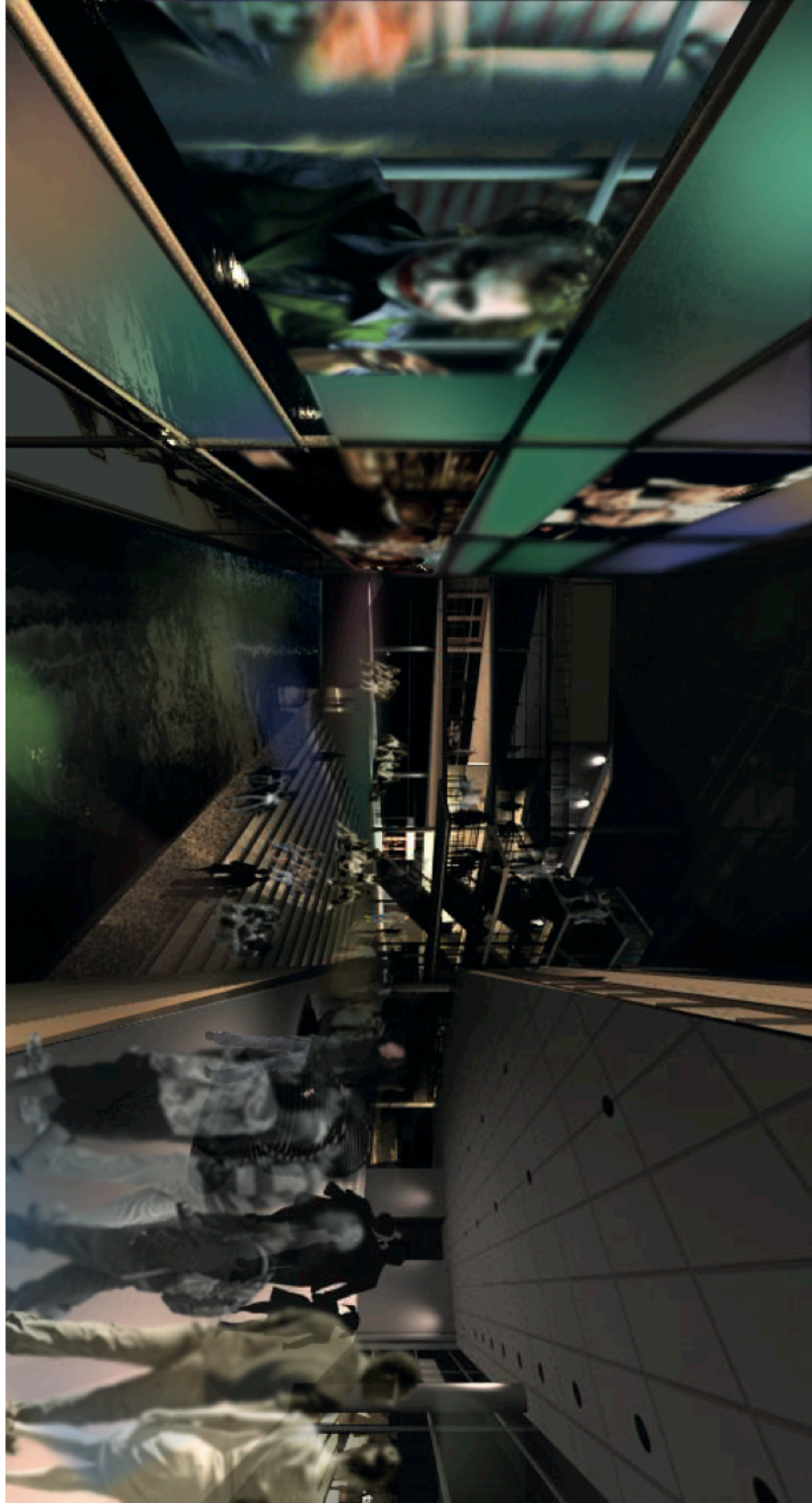


Figure 48. using the interior facade as a movie screen

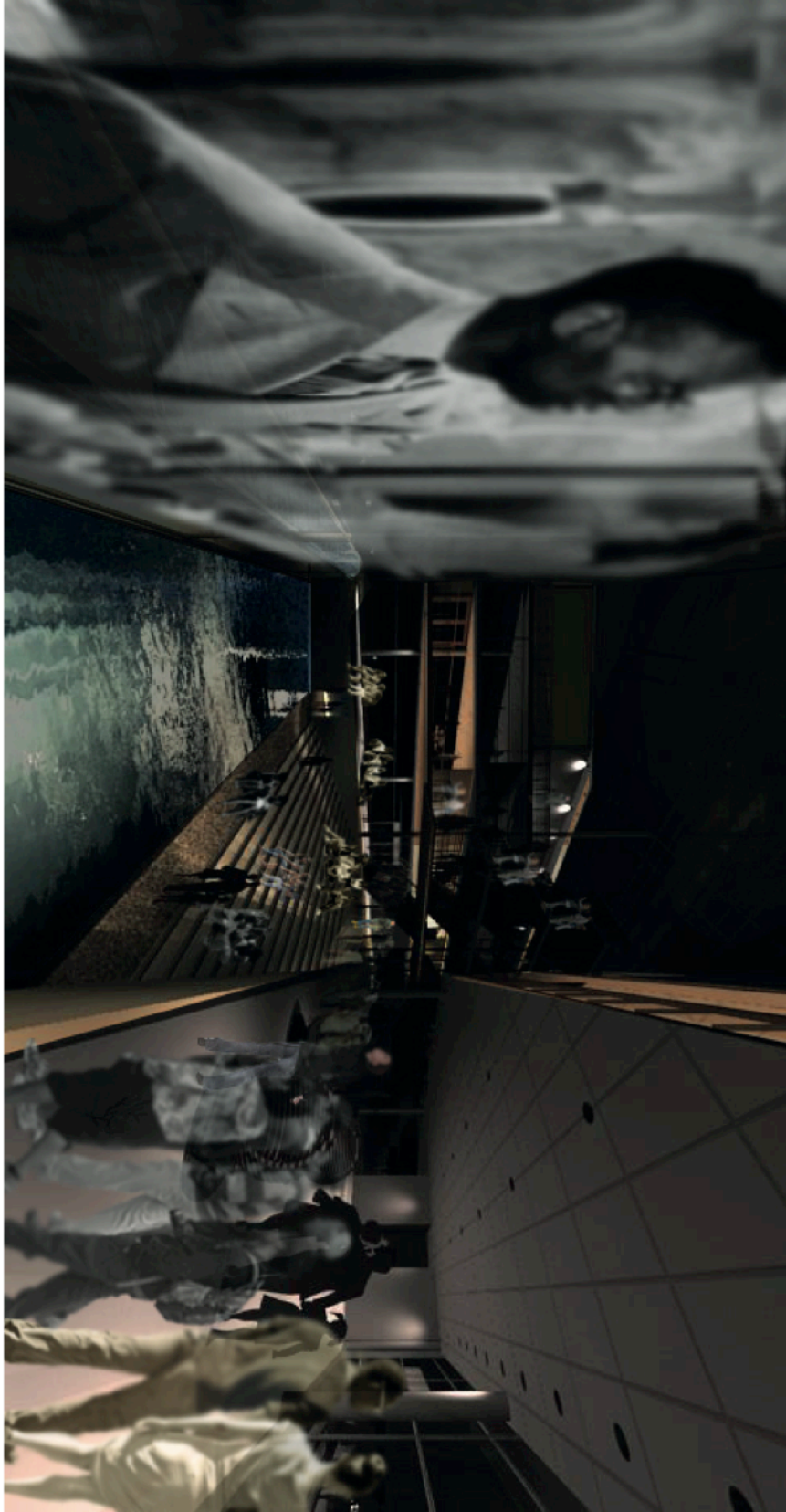


Figure 49. main void at night time



Figure 50. Exterior night view

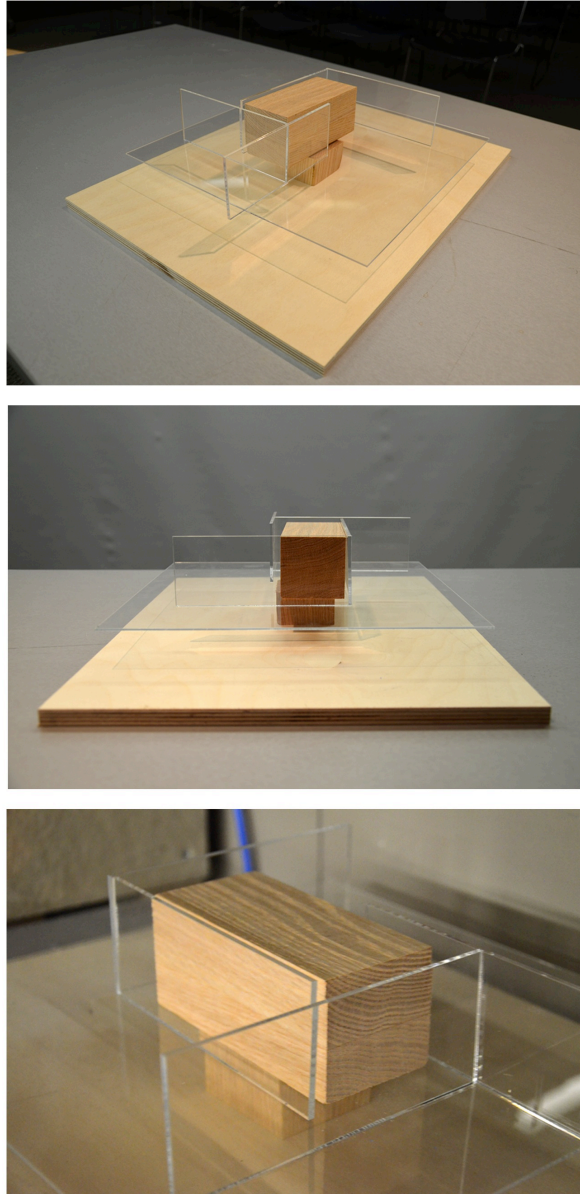


Figure 51. Conceptual Model photos

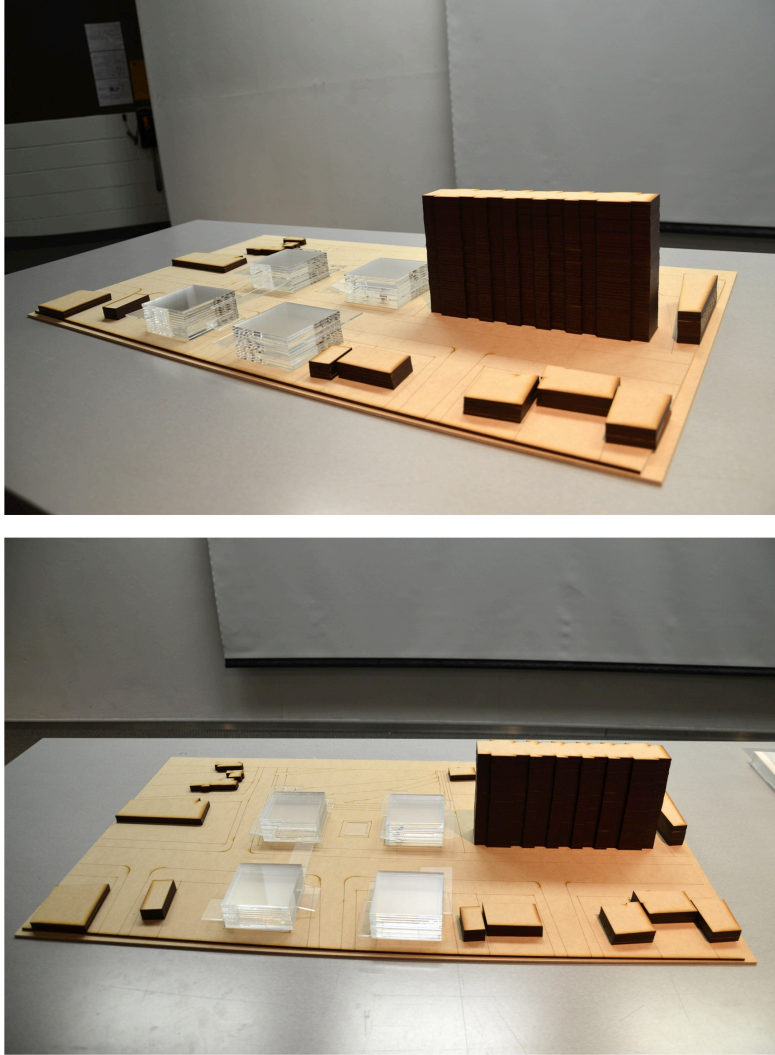


Figure 52. Context model photos

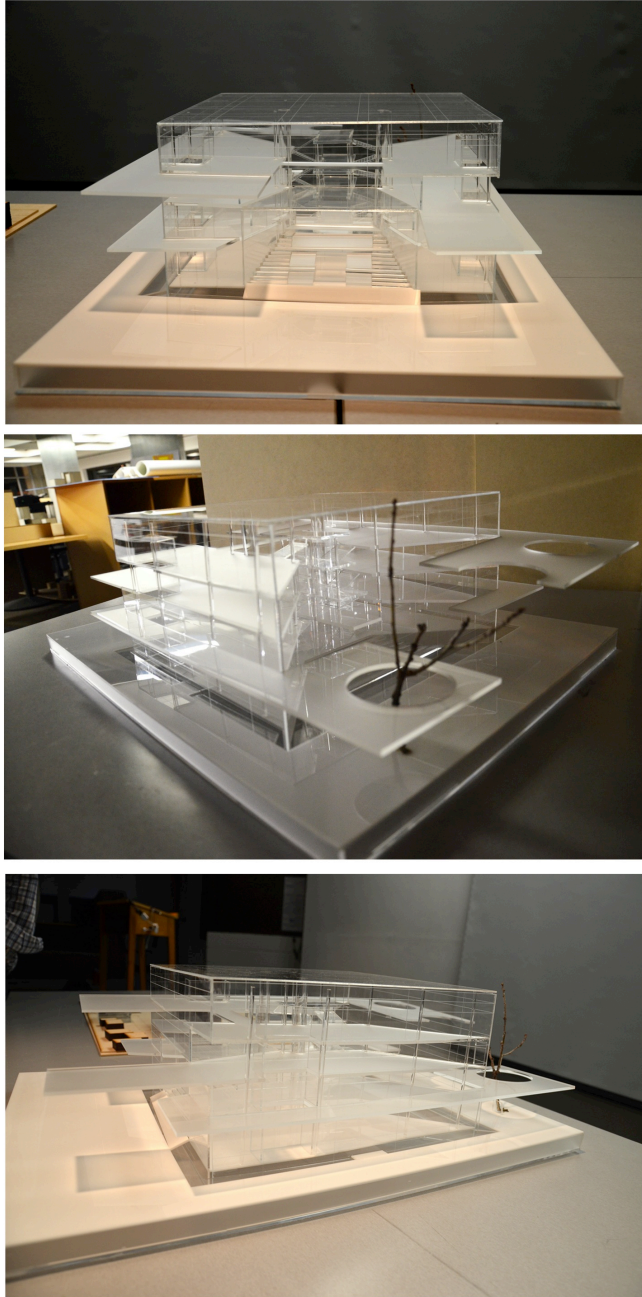


Figure 53. Public market model photos

5.4 Conclusion

‘The Architecture of Place’ is a demonstration of the potential and practical power of the idea of place. It addresses the issue of placelessness in many of today’s cities including Toronto by proposing places that provide opportunities for the gathering of people as they go about their daily activities. This proposal can act as a prototype to be used in other cities for the creation of centers for human intentions, actions and meanings. The inclusion of the idea of place in the design of public spaces like markets will help prevent the erosion of civility and encourage those social activities so important to all humans but especially to those in urban areas.

The process of placemaking in the ‘architecture of place’ has brought about general strategies that can be used in various ways in public buildings to promote human engagements. Moreover placemaking strategies can balance the requirements of the physical setting, social needs and spiritual qualities of a place. As a conclusion, the following table (table 2) mentions the most important factors in programming the structure of the ‘Architecture of Place’ as placemaking in the urban fabric. They are divided into three main categories: the physical, social and urban quality of place. It is the aim of this thesis to create a framework by which architecture can ascend from being a mere object and space to fulfill its interactive potential and become a “place”. The design project takes these principals implements them to create a place that enhance the public realm.

General Strategies for ‘the Architecture of Place’		
Social qualities	Physical qualities	Urban qualities
Value of human beings	Transparency in a physical setting	Place as a destination
Increasing pedestrian activities	Engaging nature with architecture (As an inside-out architecture)	Blurring the boundary between street and building
Various spaces for social interaction	Language of material, color, shape	Availability of public transportation with ease of access
Experience with the built environment	Increasing Natural Light in a Public building	Create visual linkage between green areas and street
A place to promote cultural activities	The idea of a indoor plaza	Removing parking lots from the street view
	Having flexible programing in a ground level	Building and Street Connectivity
	Having an open concept for interior spaces to gives more visual linkage	Including Café and restaurant as a main street frontage
	Having a multifunction Façade by engaging glass panels	
	Creating stage steps and stairs for supporting public activities	

Table 2. General Strategies for 'the architecture of place'

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