Hannah Arendt herself acknowledged architecture in a famous 1964 interview: she starts by observing that a central problem of the modern world is that nobody cares any longer what the world looks like.

INTERVIEWER: "World" understood always as the space in which politics can originate?

ARENDT: I comprehend it now in a much larger sense, as the space in which things become public, as the space in which one lives and which must look presentable. In which art appears, of course. In which all kinds of things appear.

Space is empty. Its emptiness leaves things open.

Public space symbolize the social contract amongst citizens, between the citizens and the city’s administrative representatives. Beyond the city limits the wider public space is expression of a collective cultural achievement and economy. It summarizes parks, accessible landscapes, public infrastructure, public transportation.
The way public space is used and valued constitutes individual and common values.

How do contemporary planners, architects, politicians, and artists currently assess the significance of public space for civic democratic developments?

Public space used to be constituted by intentional design reflecting a political form of government and economy. The design resulted in politically classifiable typologies and styles.

However, public space in a city’s map is no longer defined in the traditional sense by streets, squares and green spaces enclosing public space as the direct negative form of the built volumes. It is not only created by those interior spaces that Giambattista Nolli identified in 1748 as publicly accessible spaces, it is not only found in the often cited arcades of the 19th century.

Since the early 20th century public space meant primarily the investment in transportation infrastructure, hospitals, sports stadiums and shopping centers.

The non-programmed patches of grass in modern housing areas were mistaken for public or half public space and therefor ended without use and life.
From the 1990ies onwards, neoliberal tendencies and privatization added forms of simulated public life in gated communities and controlled malls and commercial areas.

Today, the internet and its selective public audience can be added to the list of public space.

The question of how architecture can produce “public spaces” isn’t simply a problem of naïve benevolent modern architecture vis-à-vis neo-liberal privatization but firstly of the deconstruction of the place and the home and secondly of the forces external to architecture that are interwoven in this process.

The home is no longer simply a place or a dwelling but a story, a narrative, a sense of belonging; it appears as a desire and search for new destinations rather than a place in the past or place of origin. It is closely linked to the individual work situation and personal life plan. Sharing starts at home.

On the other hand, space appears not as an object but as a process: Space is the mediator between mental and social activities and is thus conceived as a social product.

What are the public spaces of modern life?

The latest reconquest of public space as a political sphere in the Arabic world, in Eastern Europe, in Turkey, in Spain, in the USA, brought the relevance of streets, squares or parks to everyone’s consciousness. The mass demonstrations on the streets of Leipzig and Berlin, the Boulevard El Habib Bouruiba, on Tahir Square in Cairo or on Maidan Square in Kiew, in Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul, in Zucotti Park in New York or on Florissant Avenue in Ferguson have in some cases lead to the demise of totalitarian regimes, in others to the assertion of civil rights, in short: to a global political weaponizing of public space. There is a unifying international agreement.
Undoubtedly, public space is a memorable characteristic of a city or town, or any polis-like community tolerant enough to allow freedom of expression and political opposition.

There is an international curiosity to “copy and paste” habits and customs from other cultures to one’s own cultural context to underline the polyglot nature of the contemporary city.

The expectations of public space change perpetually and are currently expanded by new modes of uses, new means of transport, service and communication.

Unlike in the first Greek “politi” the contemporary public space is of course not any longer understood as the built architectural pinnacle of society in the form of an amphitheater, temple, stoa, stadium or “mall”.

Clearly, the contemporary focus is not on the architectural properties of any one building in isolation programmed for public spectacles, but rather on an ensemble of buildings as the site of civic space, or more likely, on a community as a whole as a locus of civic-architectural experience.

It's in this sense that one relates to architecture not as the aesthetic spectator of particular products of architectural virtuosity, but something closer to the relation between a citizen and his/her "polis."

If the effect of an ensemble of architectural creation is not the constitution of some kind of "polis," at least ideally, then the idea of architecture as a source of "citizenship" is a hollow one.

Thus, the contest for public space and its design in modern society should be discussed on three levels: politically, economically and socio-culturally

The seminar will explore physical public spaces and phenomena of virtual public space.

1. Significant public space concepts of Western Culture transformed over time (world cities)
2. Significant public space concepts of Asian Culture transformed over time (world cities)
3. Revisiting public space concepts of “the heroic modern international period” 20th century: Architecture and Landscape
4. The impact of contemporary artists in the Public Space
5. Recent case studies: International administrative agendas for Public Space
6. Fight for Rights_ The Civil Movements and Mass Events
7. Virtual Public Space: Physical co-work-live projects by the Silicon Valley companies
8. Shared spaces, new programs
   Social and political implications and impacts on urban design

COURSE ORGANISATION AND REQUIREMENTS:

Students will give two presentations in the class during the semester. Selected readings will supplement the seminar and will be discussed in the class
CLASS MEETINGS:

Tue and Thu
9:30 -11:30 am
WMB 4.118

First day of class is THU Jan 24, 2019

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:
A chronological approach to the history and theory of Public Space helps to reveal certain permanent phenomena inherent to the development of cities and - over the course of time-redundant patterns of and reasons for change.

An encyclopedic knowledge of the history of cities and related cultural theory is a prerequisite for independent research in Urban Design; to obtain a critical opinion and to contribute to contemporary urban design debate both practically and theoretical

EVALUATION & ACADEMIC POLICY

All required work and the presentations must be submitted on time. Late work will be reviewed at the discretion of the instructor. The student’s success at developing ideas and concepts, depth of reading, depth of presentation, participation in class discussion and a demonstration of reiterative comprehensive working process are the major components of the student’s evaluation. Four unexcused absences can constitute grounds for removal from the course.

An incomplete (I) is assigned as a temporary defrement of a final grade, and is assigned at the discretion of the instructor because of legitimately unavoidable and extenuating circumstances. Attendance is mandatory and, please, be on time.

Classes will start promptly at 9:30 am. If you miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

GRADE CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES:

20 % attendance
20 % discussion
60 % presentations (2x)

Bibliography:


Mitscherlich, Alexander *The Inhabitability of our Cities*, 1965


Sennett, Richard *The Fall of Public Man*, 1977


Harvey, David *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, Verso, 2012

Keen, Andrew, *The Internet is not the answer*, Atlantic 2015

Ed. Hoidn, Barbara, *Demopolis_The Right to Public Space*, 2016 Park Books