**Mapping Theory - *a mapping of the theoretical territory related to a contemporary concept of Public Space***

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This hand-out is a concentrate of the areas covered and the conclusions drawn in the project Mapping Theory. The intention of this project has been to establish an overview of existing theory and to identify sources that could be key in defining, describing and contributing to the concept of contemporary public space.

**Context**

Although the focus is public space, public space and urbanity are inextricably linked, and therefore the concept of public space has been examined through an urban development lens to address public space in a contemporary urban context. Contemporary urbanism is characterized by such factors as: increased mobility, consumerism and leisure, speed, excess, globalisation, non-place, urban sprawl, discontinuity, flux. And addressing public space in this context, a number of questions can be asked:

* What kind of public spaces does the contemporary urban situation generate?
* How does this context affect their spatiality, their perception?
* How does this affect life?
* What is the sociality of the contemporary urban situation?
* How does this context affect our requirements to contemporary public space?

These questions have been at the basis of this mapping of theory.

**Findings**

The findings are divided into observations made along the way and ‘gleanings’.

**Observations Along the Way**

The observations made in the search for theoretical resources can be summed up as follows:

* Unclear Terminology
* Few Titles and a Traditional Stance
* Going Outside of the Field of Architecture and Urbanism
* Categorisation and Organisation of Material

**Gleanings**

*glean* [gleen]

**1.** to gather slowly and laboriously, bit by bit. **2.** to gather (grain or the like) after the reapers or regular gatherers. **3.** to learn, discover, or find out, usually little by little or slowly.

**Origin:**

1350–1400; ME *glenen* < OF *glener* < LL *glennāre* ≪ Celtic

The results of the compiling and comparing the chosen theoretical sources in summation are:

* Thematic weaving and linking
* The need for an architectural discourse on public space
* Perception and the image of public space – Negativity vs. Potential
* New types of spaces and potentials

**Conclusions**

* The concept of public space has not developed concurrently with urban development and therefore relates to a traditional concept of the city, and to the traditional spaces of the city, a concept that does not take into account changed urban form and life
* There is a need for a specifically architectural/urban discourse on contemporary public space that is in keeping with contemporary urban form and life
* To this end, themes and theories relating to a contemporary concept of public space can be gleaned from outside of the field of an architecture and urbanism and can be used to further analyse, seek connections and develop specifically architectural/urban theory on public space
* Spaces of mobility and communication can be seen as being directly related to the concept of public space in a contemporary urban perspective and require more attention regarding how they function as public spaces
* A focus on the public aspect of public space – i.e., this implicit element of social interaction – opens up for a category of spaces that need not be in physical space at all, but can be found in the interaction itself, or that are occasioned by the presence of people rather than the physical framework for their meeting.

That public space has not developed concurrently with urban form and life, and that the development of public space is affected – most often adversely – by the terminology relating to it and describing it has perhaps created the largest problem in a new thinking and a development of an architectural/urban discourse. The concept of public space in a contemporary situation holds a tremendous potential – and one that is not sufficiently accessed, tapped into or utilised at present. The reasons for this can be many – but it is my assertion that there is a sort of mental/creative block in even seeing these spaces that is perpetrated by a nostalgic view favouring ‘the good old days’, a car-less society, a type of contact that is defined, slow and permanent in spaces that are just as defined, slow and permanent. If the discourses of architecture and urbanism are to take part in the development of urban public spaces that correspond to contemporary urban form and life, a shift in the focus needs to take place – a shift that approaches the contemporary urban condition and contemporary urban life with an openness and is bent on seeing potential rather failure.