IS PUBLIC SPACE STILL POSSIBLE?
Lessons From City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition
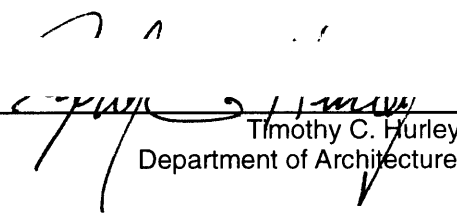
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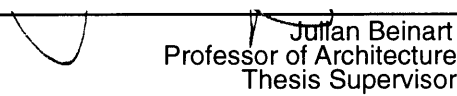Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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ABSTRACT

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In Autumn, 1994, the City of Boston, in partnership with the Boston Society of Architects and the Building Owners and Managers Association, sponsored the Revitalizing City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition. The Competition sought ideas from design professionals and lay people for ways to popularize and invigorate City Hall Plaza. The program espoused by Mayor Menino was simple: "We must create an atmosphere that will more easily link the public to an open and accessible City Hall, and provide a meeting place for Boston's diverse community."

This Competition represents two aspects of thought regarding public space; one specific and one general. Specifically, the effort to revitalize City Hall Plaza is consistent with long-standing desires to create or retain a high level of activity and stability in the Government Center vicinity. In focusing attention on the condition of the existing Plaza, this Competition continues a tradition of seeking a strong anchor for downtown Boston, maintaining an urban vitality and richness, and creating an image bespeaking Boston's regional and national prominence. Generally, the Competition created avenues for discussions of the nature and role of public space. From 190 Competition entries it is possible to determine categories that reflect two different approaches to the design and consideration of public space. One is the Morphological approach, in which considerations of the physical form of the space and the urban fabric are primary. The other is the Programmatic approach, which stresses activities and programmed attractions independently of physical form.

Using these entries and categories as data, a comparison of the categories is made which suggests that the Morphological approach is more appropriate for effecting long-term legibility and structure to a city. However, the salient characteristics of the Programmatic cannot be overlooked, especially in a modern economy. Therefore, it is ultimately concluded that the vitality of a city is best served when the immediacy of the Programmatic is appropriately housed in the permanence of the Morphological. To achieve this is to retain a vision of purposes for cities and their spaces beyond mere functionality, which speaks to the aspirations for community and humanness that have historically informed the creation of public space.

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INTRODUCTION: BOSTON CITY HALL PLAZA AND THE STATE OF PUBLIC SPACE

At 9:00 on the morning of 22 October 1994 I sat at my drawing board and began to consider the Hanover Street approach to Boston City Hall Plaza. After a few quick analyses of the street and plaza and their surrounding neighborhoods, I was ready to undertake the design and drawings that would be due at the end of the day for this one day "Making Great Public Places" urban design competition. My winning proposal involved the creation of new public spaces and the strengthening of existing ones along Hanover Street, from City Hall Plaza to Boston Harbor. Several weeks later, at about the same time of day, at the beginning of a long holiday weekend, I returned to my drawing board to begin to consider my ideas for City Hall Plaza itself. Having recently won the prior competition, I felt particularly well prepared for the competition to redesign this large and unpopular urban space. It would be a simple matter of extending the Hanover Street concept into the Plaza area itself. I was soon reminded that "simple matters" are seldom what they appear. Throughout the weekend colleagues came and went and conversations about the difficulty of the project were rampant. "What are *you* doing?" we asked one another in a desperate search for ideas. Conversations turned to the project we were also involved with in Taipei, where designs for public spaces in a large and chaotic city came comparatively easily. We were baffled that the solution to a space with which we were so familiar and that we could visit as often as we desired should be so elusive. How could it be that a single space could not be conceptualized and solved in a satisfying way? Why was City Hall Plaza so difficult?

From its very inception, Boston City Hall Plaza has been beset with problems and acrimony. Referred to, not unfairly, as a vast wasteland or a winter tundra, the windswept Plaza seldom effects fond comparison to its supposed spiritual predecessor, the Campo of Siena. In fact, it seldom elicits favorable comparisons to anything, and rarely receives any form of accolade. City Hall Plaza is an unpopular place to which the City of Boston is desperately hoping to bring life. In the City's eyes, it is the potential center of Boston, a place of periodic festival and celebration, of life and activity year round and around the clock, of boisterous groups and

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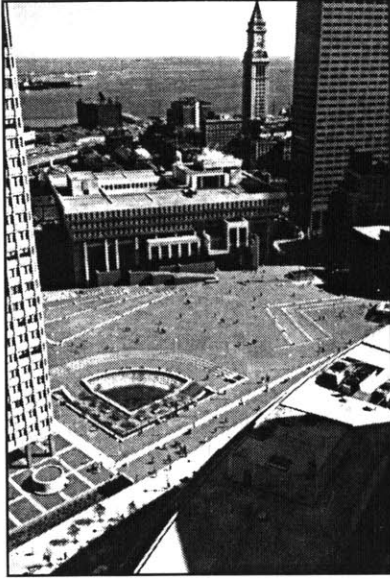
figure 1. City Hall Plaza in 1970

contemplative individuals enjoying and using common ground: it is the heart and soul of the city. This is the City's vision.

Present reality is something different, a fact to which public officials are not blind. A kind of fatalism creeps into their words when they finally concede their vision to its lowest common denominator: making the Plaza more pleasant for people who come to pay their parking fines. For, that, or something equally banal, is what most Bostonians come to do in the Plaza. It is seldom a place of congregation or activity. It is, rather, a large piece of expensive real estate awkwardly devoted to passage: from the surrounding city into City Hall, from the Common to the North End, to Government Center or Haymarket T stations, or quickly through as part of a semi-coherent "Walk to the Sea." Along with leaves, dirt, and bits of trash, the romantic vision of a successful public space is continually swept from City Hall Plaza by its scouring, intrusive winds.

It is almost impossible to ignore the formal qualities of the Plaza when contemplating its redesign; at least, it is impossible for architects to do so. Form was the primary issue my colleagues and I faced during our long November weekend as we concerned ourselves with the space and its immediate surroundings. Both the Plaza and its quasi-enclosing buildings are vacuous, ambiguous, and dull.[1] There are few indications of traditional formal spatial qualities in the Plaza. Rather, it is poorly defined in terms of containment and boundary, it is composed of isolated building elements that are only minimally linked by the space of the Plaza, it abstracts and manipulates its topography to the point where the ground plane ceases to function well, and it contrasts with its surrounding and pre-existing urban fabric with few attempts to integrate its borders with those surroundings. In short, as a composition or ensemble of architectural elements, and as a piece of Boston's urban fabric, City Hall Plaza is simply inappropriate and ineffective. Thus, for those of us participating in the City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition, there was no doubt in our minds of the necessity of doing *something*. Where we differed was in our assessments of what that something should be. The problem that we

faced was not simply one of design, but was also one of purpose. For, what we had to determine in order to pursue our designs was an overarching question of intent: what is the Plaza supposed to do?

The complexity of the Plaza problem and the depth of the questions regarding it result in City Hall Plaza being a kind of symbol of the state and future of public space in America. We are in an era when the question of whether public space remains necessary can be more readily asked than at any time in the past. From plazas to streets, we have begun to question both the form and the necessity of these once highly prized public places. Personalization and individualization mark most aspects of the work and recreation arenas, whereby we no longer need to congregate to fulfill our needs for production or distraction. Even socialization is possible without the intermediation of social spaces via ever expanding electronic communications. Some would argue that this makes the need for traditional public spaces, where interaction occurs at random and allows for fruitful chance encounters, all the more necessary for increasingly isolated individuals. Others would suggest that our new found freedom from such places provides us with the choice to create our own interactions and choose our own acquaintances. What is most likely, however, is that as a culture we will reside somewhere between these two camps, occupying public spaces that meet the need for a rich diversity of random possibilities while addressing the needs of an atomizing society. The City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition was designed to seek answers to what such a space might look like within the confines of an existing public space.

This essay does not seek a definitive answer to the problem of City Hall Plaza's future nor of the future of any particular public space. Rather, it is an investigation of the future of public space in general in light of the results of the Ideas Competition. The Competition does not provide answers to all of the possible questions that may arise over public space, for it is specific to one city and a particular objective. However, it may offer lessons that are generalizable because they indicate a pattern of thought about spaces and cities. Because the Competition seeks solutions to a major

and well known space, and because entries were received from nationwide and even international participants, it is possible that these entries will reflect a kind of state of the art in thinking about public spaces. If we are, indeed, in a new era, then this particular forum can indicate our attitudes about it and suggest where we are going. Thus, if we can analyze the results of this competition to determine our present status, perhaps we can know what to expect for public space in the future. This, in fact, is the crux of the problem of this essay. If we are presently in a state of transition of expectations about public space, if we question its very necessity, and if, consequently, we do not have a conception about what its nature will be in the future, then is public space still possible? The City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition can provide some answers to this question.

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1 Not without exception. I find City Hall itself quite interesting: it achieves an appropriate monumental presence, has an intricacy of section and elevation, and has a remarkable interplay of spatial experiences, especially in its public areas. The Sears Crescent gains sympathetic, if not aesthetic, appreciation as the sole provider of historical context. However, at some point the admiring eye will wander and find that these two specimens of architectural integrity or, at least, interest, are utterly alone, and are far from strong enough to support the entire ensemble.

A CONSISTENT VISION: THE TRANSFORMATION OF SCOLLAY SQUARE

In order to understand the motivation behind the City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition one must first know something about the history of the Government Center area. The Ideas Competition, after all, was not an isolated event that occurred at random. Nor, for that matter, is the Plaza itself "just another" place in Boston. From an evaluation of its history we find the Plaza to be a purposeful and central element in a larger development intended to re-establish Boston's regional and even global prominence. Viewing today's Plaza in its historical context will help place the Ideas Competition within a tradition of consistent thinking that underlies all efforts to use and modify the space.

Various authors and historians have found any number of starting points in time to describe Government Center's history. The most common of these seem be 10,000 years ago with the retreat of the last glacier or some 350 years ago with the retreat of Rev. Blackstone and the arrival of Governor Winthrop and his entourage. The student of colonial history will no doubt want to pursue such avenues, but for the purpose of this essay it is sufficient to begin closer to the present, somewhere in the late 19th century. It is at that time that the transformations resulting in today's Government Center and the Ideas Competition truly began.

Prior to the 1870's, Scollay Square was the main place of entertainment for the civic leaders of the day. Here were located the city's best restaurants and some of its finest and most modern hotels. While much earlier this had been a predominantly residential quarter, with many of Boston's elite living in nearby Bowdoin Square, the rise of the downtown retail and financial areas began to transform Scollay into a service district. During this time, the Square was in an ideal location as an important crossroads of the city, gathering business from all sides: businessmen and merchants came from downtown, politicians were close at hand at the State House and City Hall, travelers and commuters were arriving by train near Haymarket Square, while the source of Boston's income, the harbor, lay just down hill. With its fine accommodations and accessible location, Scollay Square was the center of the city.[1]

Two events in the early 1870's began the process of change to the Square that resulted in Government Center. In 1871, buildings at Court and Tremont street were demolished to serve a new horse-drawn trolley line. Not particularly significant in itself, this action nonetheless set a precedent for attitudes and priorities for the area.

Of more consequence was the Great Boston Fire of 1872 which destroyed most of the downtown business district. Although Scollay Square was spared physically, the predominant source of its user base was displaced by the ashes. While Scollay struggled to survive the downtown rebuilding period, the city's business center began to move southward. New, elegant hotels were built in the Back Bay, an area which was drawing more and more business, social, and political interests. By the time Boston recovered from the fire, Scollay Square was no longer a place of favor for its former clientele. In comparison with the refinement and order of the Back Bay, Scollay appeared out of date and unserviceable. By 1900, "the half-used buildings, narrow streets, and odd-shaped lots gave ample evidence of the demise of what had once been the very heart of the city."[2]

A gradually developing new clientele also served to discourage a return of the Square's previous users. This area was not only central to the aforementioned districts, but was also within easy reach of the Charlestown naval yards and their sailors. Perhaps initially attracted to the entertainment facilities of Scollay Square, the sailors proved to be a continuing source of income in the absence of downtown businessmen. However, their tastes and especially their pocketbooks were not of the same character as their predecessors', and the market changed accordingly. By the 1920's this market combined with the street and block pattern to create a chaotic physical environment of crowded buildings, rampant signs and advertisements, and an area "notorious for its shooting galleries, tattoo parlors, and burlesque houses."[3]

Although the uses and the form of this area were not as desirable as many Bostonians would have preferred, its excellent location was always recognized. While many businesses had gravitated closer to Back Bay, a solid core of business and government remained. Access by subway, rail, and foot also continued to keep Scollay Square viable. Its condition was discouraging, but many could envision its potential. Therefore, in 1930 the area of the Square was chosen as the site for a new Boston Civic Center. It was not until 1949, however, that the first action was taken to effect this new use with passage of the Housing Act of 1949. Under the Act, the Scollay Square district was classified as an Urban Renewal Area due to the following:

- 91% of all structures were substandard.
- 45% of all structures had walls visibly out of plumb line.
- 60% of the structures were vermin infested resulting in a health hazard.
- 40% of the structures lacked hot running water.
- 69% of the structures had obsolete plumbing.
- 66% of the structures contained exposed electrical wiring.
- 42% of the lodging houses had rooms which lacked access to a second means of egress.
- 67% of the licensed lodging houses had less than one toilet for each eight persons.[4]

By 1955, the mayor's office was ready to submit its "Workable Program for Urban Renewal," a document suggesting a major redevelopment of an area containing Scollay, Pemberton, and Dock Squares, the Waterfront, and the North End. It was this plan that led to the creation of Government Center and City Hall Plaza.

The timing for release of this Program and for garnering interest for a new Civic Center could not have been better. It was already recognized that the existing Boston City Hall had been outgrown and was simply not sufficient for city government needs. Simultaneously, both the State and the Federal governments were indicating their desire for expanded facilities in the city. A centralized Civic Center seemed to be an obvious solution for city and state needs, while most local parties were convinced that a Federal presence was equally appropriate. These interests, including the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, the Real Estate Board, and the governor, were seeking a new impetus for development and growth in Boston. Having stagnated since the end of World War II, and seeing its tax base decrease with building devaluation and population decline, Boston was eager for economic reinvigoration. Urban Renewal was regarded as the answer to this problem. A new Government Center in a prime and central location was thought to offer the best option for the means for renewal. In 1958 the City Planning Board issued a report on the Government Center project which contained a statement reflecting the motive behind the project. "The future of Boston," it said, "depends in large degree on how effectively and efficiently it continues to perform its role as the central city of an important metropolitan area and as the regional center for New England, a major region of the United States."[5]

Several reasons for the choice of the Scollay Square area were given in this report, all of which consolidated the prevalent feelings about the area, its use at that time, and its potential. The advantages of the Square included the state of its condition which assured availability of sites at reasonable cost. Proximity to government offices, including the nearby county, city, and state facilities, as well as the Federal Post Office and Reserve Bank, was cited. Similarly, a large concentration of business was located nearby, which would both serve and be served by the users of the new center. Ease of access was noted, including the subway stations in the vicinity, as well as the new Central Artery and Sumner Tunnel, and North Station. Additionally, changes to the area would effect enhanced access to both this area and the whole of downtown as a result of planned alterations to the existing street and traffic patterns. Finally, it was stated that the project would stabilize or increase local property values and generate new private investment.[6] Both the needs of the city and the opportunities it presented led to a belief that a Government Center Urban Renewal program was absolutely in the best interest of the city of Boston.

After years of suggestions and verbal proposals it was finally decided to give physical form to the Government Center idea. This was initiated in late 1958 with the signing of a contract with the city planning firm Adams, Howard & Greeley of Cambridge. Their report, delivered in September 1959, had the objective of proposing sites for a new city hall, a new Federal office building, a new county courthouse, and the creation of new circulation systems for pedestrians and vehicles. Supporting this objective, however, was the firm's greater goal:

> In addition to providing sites of adequate size and shape for the required governmental structures, properly related to one another and in a setting commensurate with their importance, the plan includes proposals for new private development to replace existing obsolete and uneconomic structures; for the preservation and renovation of the existing historic monuments and sites in the area; *and for the establishment of a new civic square which would give Boston a worthy focus of community pride and activity.*[7]

This was the first mention of public open space in relation to Government Center. It also proved to be the center piece of the entire

proposal, "a magnificent opportunity to produce a dramatic foreground for the heart of Boston, and to make a new focal point that would make clear and visible how the parts of the city fit together."[8] While wrangling and maneuvering occurred over the types and natures of the buildings around it,[9] the newly born Plaza remained a consistent feature of the redevelopment plan.

Adams, Howard & Greeley (AH&G), with Kevin Lynch and John Myer consulting, perceived the Plaza's purpose in a variety of ways, from the symbolic to the practical. Its symbolic nature is represented best by the quote above, as they represented their "new civic square" as having a lofty civic function, of being a place of pride and respect for the people of Boston. Much as the Common was collectively psychologically "owned" by the citizens, and therefore cherished, so too would the Plaza take on a prominent role in peoples' minds. It would do this by being the primary visual element of the composition of public and private buildings which would be responsible for the regeneration of the city. Where the Common typified history, tradition, and longevity, the new Plaza would stand for rebirth, strength, and vitality.

figure 2. AH&G's Master Plan sketch

Slightly lower in the hierarchy of associations was the Plaza's role in the reconstructed orientation and navigation sequence for the city. This was both regionally projected and locally contained. Adjacency to the Central Artery meant that Government Center would be "the principal event on entering or leaving central Boston from the north,"[10] and would certainly be a significant feature from the south as well. The emphasis on Boston's regional primacy suggested the need for a prominent indicator of the city's status that was visible to a multiplicity of eyes. What better way to promote such a desire than to place the Center near a principal thoroughfare for the increasingly popular automobile?

In order to see the Plaza from the Artery, however, it must also be part of an ensemble that discourages visual intrusion. This was provided by the creation of a connected system of open spaces within an area of purposefully low buildings. The connected open spaces constitute what is now referred to as the "Walk to the Sea," beginning at the State House and ending at the Harbor (redevel-

opment of Quincy Market was required before the chain was complete -- AH&G foresaw this, but did not include this connection in their plan). Because City Hall Plaza would be the largest and most important space along this path, it would again emphasize its significance to the entire district. The Plaza's role in the spatial form of the area is similar. AH&G conceived of a "valley of lower buildings" stretching from Pemberton Square to the Harbor that would define the Government Center as a distinct district, delineate the transition from government to business functions by difference in form and scale, maintain visual access to the State House dome from places at the Harbor and the Central Artery, and create a visual connection between the city center and the North End and the Harbor.[11] At the center of this, of course, was the Plaza, once again providing a focal point for the variety of purposes surrounding it.

figure 3. "Valley of lower buildings"

Finally, of least symbolic value but perhaps greatest practical worth, and therefore, of most importance in convincing financiers, was the Plaza's sponsorship of renewed economic growth. This aspect of the Urban Renewal program was, as has been stated above, the primary reason for the Government Center concept. Recognizing this, AH&G actively pursued a scheme that they felt would best promote such economic ends. They did so through planning, by attempting to provide the optimal configuration and mixture of public and private facilities throughout the Government Center area (this was, in fact, the largest source of discord created by their proposal, since placement of particular buildings would conceivably impact vast sums of money). They also did so through design, suggesting in words and drawings elements that would result "in the increased attractiveness, and hence economic value, of the surrounding parcels."[12] In general, from the symbolic to the practical, AH&G was concerned that Government Center accomplish the task of renewal as completely and actively as possible. For the purposes of this essay, it is significant that they chose to do so largely through the device of a centralized civic square, a point that will be considered below.

Less than four months after completion of AH&G's proposal, the administration with whom they had been under contract was

replaced by a new mayor. This man, Mayor Collins, immediately took an active role in seeing to the success of the Government Center plan. Under his authority, the Boston Redevelopment Authority hired I. M. Pei and Associates to make revisions to the AH&G plan. While both plans incorporate similar functional elements -- and even some of these were changed -- their physical configurations are quite different. AH&G's plan has a large, centrally located City Hall, in front of which is its plaza. Hanover Street remains connected to Cambridge Street, while Cornhill Way flairs into a terraced ancillary space as it intersects Congress Street. What is now Center Plaza is shown as two distinct buildings, while today's J.F.K. building is a large private office building with an offset mid-rise tower. The Plaza itself is a paved space spanning the front of City Hall from Hanover to Court Streets, removing the Sears Crescent.

Pei's proposal shifts a smaller City Hall into a central axis with Quincy Market's North Building. Hanover Street is closed and Sears Crescent retained, creating a plaza that wraps around City Hall to the north. The plaza is conceived as a largely grass covered space with informally laid out paths. Center Plaza becomes a single building, and the J.F.K. building is given its current form and use.

Fundamental differences in an approach to the Government Center composition are expressed in these two plans. For AH&G, City Hall was to be a central and prominent feature that, nonetheless, related to its urban surroundings. It was logically placed between important existing streets and was given one prominent facade as a front. Pei, on the other hand, fairly isolated his City Hall, regardless of its alignment with the Quincy Market building below. The building is not as well supported by adjacent street structures, while it is given two apparently equal and significant facades.

There are, however, similarities between the plans. Both propose an increase in scale for the Government Center area. Although the existing street and building patterns were of a typical Boston intricacy, these plans suggest a dramatic and obvious contrast to these patterns. They are, therefore, both isolationist in their attempts to create a distinct and new center for the city. In other words, neither plan appears to desire an overtly integrative approach which would embed the new Government Center in an existing urban fabric. A similar statement can be made for both plaza proposals. Although AH&G's appears to be better situated
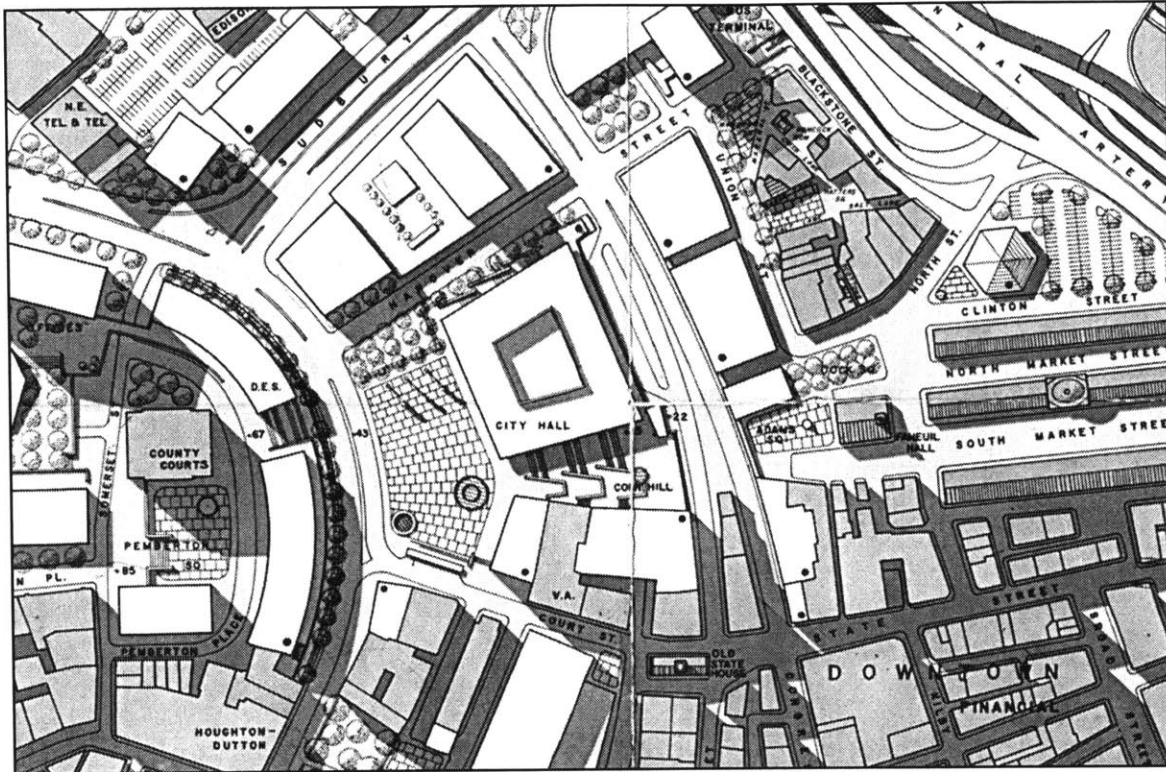
figure 4.   AH&G Master Plan
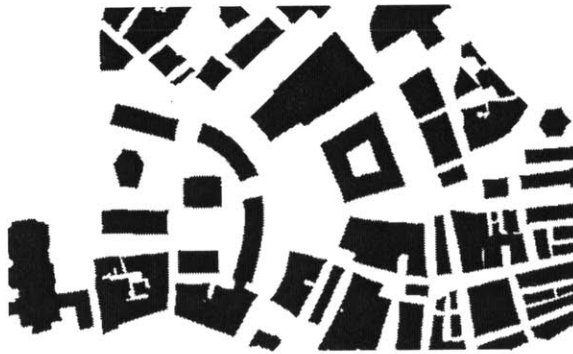
figure 5. AH&G figure-ground

for both City Hall and its surroundings than Pei's, neither plan actively creates a plaza. As we will see below, both plaza schemes are more the result of left over space than of figural spatial conceptions.

It only remains to discuss the actual creation of the Plaza to bring this history to the present. In its final version, whether by AH&G or I. M. Pei, the City Hall and City Hall Plaza composition were given spatial primacy. Although all levels of government would be represented in the Government Center complex, it was thought that the one closest to the needs of local citizens should have the central location. Additional reinforcement for this concept lay in City Hall and its Plaza being more conducive to the "valley of low buildings" than were potentially larger, bulkier Federal buildings. Finally, in terms of symbolic value, a city hall containing multiple and total government functions would better suit a civic square than would another building of nothing but bureaucrats' offices. There-

figure 6.   I. M. Pei Master Plan

figure 7. I. M. Pei figure-ground

fore, it was decided to attain the highest level of design for City Hall and the Plaza, to assure its prestige and prominence, and to "obtain the best possible design in terms of beauty, planning and harmony" by holding a national design competition.[13]

Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles, three Columbia University professors, won the competition and designed the building and plaza that have graced Boston since their completion in 1969. As controversial as any great piece of public architecture, the design provided the competition organizers with the symbolic and monumental edifice that had been desired. The architects had also succeeded in conforming without question to Pei's Master Plan. Not only did this threesome accept the plan as a stringent guideline and creative stimulus (a point of view not held by most competitors), but they also seemed to generally agree with the principals governing it. From the early civic leaders through AH&G and Pei, Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles'

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design was the culmination of a consistent interpretation of goals for Boston's redevelopment. Almost every statement from every participant in the process from the 1930's through the 1960's was realized in this design.

1 Thomas O'Brien, *A History of Boston's Government Center*, p. 10.
2 *ibid.*, p. 11.
3 Boston Redevelopment Authority, The *Government Center/Markets District Plan*.
4 O'Brien, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
5 quoted in Richard Wallace Nathan, *The Government Center of Boston*, Draft, p. 5.
6 *ibid.*, p. 6.
7 Adams, Howard & Greeley, Consultants, et al, *Government Center -- Boston*, p. 4, italics added.
8 *ibid.*, p. 10.
9 see Nathan, *The Government Center of Boston*.
10 AH&G, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
11 *ibid.*, p. 25.
12 *ibid.*
13 Mayor John F. Collins, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center in the City of Boston*, p. i.

RESIDUAL SPACE AND THE NEW BRUTALISM: A PHILOSOPHY BEHIND CITY HALL PLAZA

Common wisdom would suggest a contradiction between the intent behind the Plaza and its effect. City Hall Plaza was conceived as the very center of a revitalization for downtown Boston. Both AH&G and I. M. Pei reflected this desire by giving the Plaza its primary position in Government Center. It would appear, in fact, that as a whole the redevelopment scheme has been successful. A vast wave of construction accompanied and followed Government Center, and the downtown business and financial district is firmly rooted by this institutional core. The phenomenally successful Quincy Market is perhaps the best indicator of the revitalization that this Urban Renewal project fostered. On the other hand, there is a widely held dislike of the very focus of the project, the Plaza itself. While the periphery has flourished the heart has languished. Economic revitalization, it seems, although the primary project goal, is insufficient for many who also seek popular revitalization. The implied promise of AH&G's sketches of public spaces filled with the public has not been realized but has continued to be expected. Dissatisfied eyes glance down Cornhill Way to the activity of Quincy Market and long for such energy to dash up the hill and invade City Hall Plaza. We shall see, however, that the contradiction of the project lies not within the fact of the Plaza, but within these expectations.

AH&G were the creators of the plaza concept, and as such can be looked to for information regarding its form and use. It becomes apparent that although the plaza was given a dominant
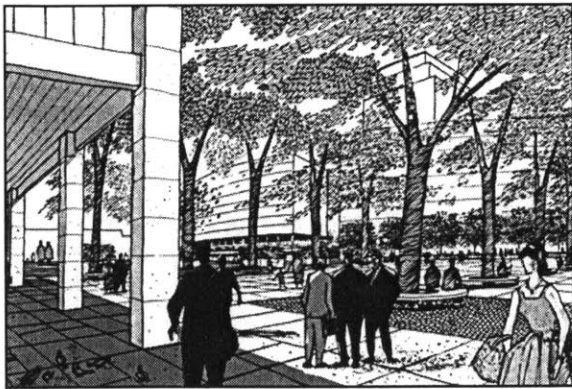
figure 8. AH&G character sketch. This is one of their more compelling drawings, as it portrays a fairly active and enclosed space.

location and was spoken of as a primary element, it was, in fact, a secondary design consideration at best. This is not immediately obvious, for the plaza figures prominently in almost all of their character sketches and its role is discussed at length in several places. However, the drawings were only intended as conceptual guidelines, while the text of the document proves to be lacking in specifics regarding this central feature. Of course, the AH&G document was a planning device rather than a set of urban design criteria, and specifics were not included for accompanying building design either. Nonetheless, the purported prominence of the plaza is belied by the very placement that was said to give it its

importance. Surrounded by distinctly positioned buildings, the plaza occupies apparently left-over space. While the buildings that form Government Center are carefully placed and determined by street patterns and land availability, the plaza is shaped by the interstices of these streets and structures. Instead of being given initial form and made an equal element with the buildings, therefore competing with them for placement and true prominence, it is made secondary by initial neglect. In other words, the plaza is never indicated as a figural space, but instead becomes the space that flows around and sets off for viewing the adjacent figural buildings. In a well-established Modernist maneuver, the space is referred to in glowing terms of symbolism and functionality, but is finally relegated to an ancillary and supportive, rather than equal and juxtapositional, role.

By their placement of City Hall and their total acceptance of the AH&G/Pei Master Plan, the architects not only share responsibility for the role of the Plaza, but are solely responsible for its ultimate form and for doing all they could to ensure its secondary status. In truth, they would have disagreed with any other notion of public space. Gerhard Kallmann was the leading theorist of the threesome, and he defined their direction: "Today's experimental attitude is interested no longer in simple form against a void but in continuous patterns of interrelatedness."[1] The Plaza would not be a place of importance unto itself, but would be a single element in the entire Government Center composition. Thus, concern for its utilization beyond compositional necessity, that is, issues of human use other than purely intellectual, was unnecessary. While Kallmann recognized that such a major space might have more than just a cerebral function, he chose to reduce such a function to its most spartan aspect in order to maintain the clarity of compositional order. He would admit that people might congregate in these places, but "a plaza is essentially a place of passage."[2]

This kind of detachment from ordinary human concerns was endemic to the period of Modernism in which Kallmann was writing and was, of course, defended and encouraged by many architectural reviews of the day. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, writing for *Architectural Forum*, stated:

> The two outstanding characteristics of the plaza concept are total separation of the space from any vehicular traffic and definition by motion rather than

by the traditional static elements of sculpture and
seating areas. There is no false pretense that this
is a bigger and better toddler playground or re-
treat for elderly chess players. It is a kinetic out-
door space whose purpose is initiation into the city
hall spaces.[3]

Interestingly, though, and indicative of Modernist sensibilities, few
contemporary reviews treated the Plaza with more than passing
comments. Rather, City Hall and some of the nearby buildings
were extensively covered as if they were isolated elements with-
out immediately adjacent urban connections. Kallmann's "interre-
latedness" was relegated to internal spatial organizations and the
intricacies of the elevations, while the Plaza was regarded as a
barely existing void against which City Hall could be viewed. A few
articles were written that were critical of this "urban space of un-
precedented spaciousness and, one must add, unprecedented
severity."[4] One such critique yearned for "life support systems"
that would humanize the Plaza, making it more hospitable and more
useful to the white collar crowd working around it, and allowing for
informal as well as formal activities. It stressed:

> The world is full of evidence that it is possible to
> build monumental urban spaces in which the func-
> tional and the formal, the practical and the poetic,
> are organically united. But to do so involves our
> relinquishing, once and for all, the Beaux Arts con-
> cept of space, in which so much as a fallen leaf
> upsets some *a priori* dictum of Platonic order.[5]

But, like those daily passers-by who wish for a more habitable
space, such a review incorrectly assumed that the Plaza was in-
tended to be a realm of humanism.

Existentialist brutalism has been said to categorize the philo-
sophical niche of City Hall Plaza and City Hall, where "small
elegances and refinements have no place...since such are believed
to be inappropriate to the human condition, and indeed beneath
us."[6] More specifically, this project was part of the New Brutalism,
a movement that emerged largely out of Britain, beginning in the
late 1940's. New Brutalism arose out of a prevailing architectural
social consciousness steeped in democratic socialism. World War
II had, in fact, strengthened the resolve of those who believed in
architecture's social agenda, for they felt that the battle had been
waged and won to promote a democratic socialist goal. Thus, the

architects felt it necessary to formulate an appropriate architecture to reflect and house this new, postwar, English social state. However, the older generation of British architects, who had become committed to truly Communist values, felt that this architectural reflection should be expressed by some kind of revision of 19th century brick workers' housing, and attempted to create a system of typologies for a "Peoples' Architecture" by revising past models: "cottage-sized aspirations, a style based on a sentimental regard for nineteenth-century vernacular usages, with pitched roofs, brick or rendered walls, window-boxes, balconies, pretty paintwork, a tendency to elaborate woodwork detailing, and freely picturesque grouping on the ground."[7] In other words, this generation was seeking an architecture with appeal to common tastes, a "New Humanism."

The younger, ascendant generation of British architects at this time had no less social conscience than their predecessors. They merely wished to express it differently and so reflect their perspective on the state of the world as they saw it:

> social chaos, a world in ruins, the prospect of nuclear annihilation, and what appeared to be a complete abandonment of architectural standards on the part of their elders....a willingness to compromise away every 'real' architectural value, to surrender to all that was most provincial and second-rate in British social and intellectual life.[8]

This younger group was faced with a situation that, for it, was tantamount to architectural disaster: a world in need of vast repair, societies in the midst of postwar upheaval and unprecedented change, and an intellectual establishment that was espousing a reactionary sentimentalism. Having come of age under the promise of Modernism's social reformations, this group felt compelled to continue the revolutionary tendencies to which they considered themselves heir.

In order to take control of Modernism, these aspirants turned away from their older countrymen and began to look to C.I.A.M. for inspiration. Within C.I.A.M., they were to find both the social agenda and the architectural fastidiousness they sought, but would not be content to follow under the tutelage of even these Modernist masters. In terms of social policy, the New Brutalists looked to the Charter of Athens and found that many of its objectives were al-

ready being implemented through official city planning procedures. However, while the C.I.A.M. ideal of healthful habitat had begun and was realizable, the method of doing so had been codified into legislation and its vitality, subsequently, eliminated: "density, structure, green belts, land use, dispersal, zoning of industry, etc. etc. has become law -- a legislative machine that can only make something we don't want."[9] That which was unwanted was an approach to social conditions and architecture that was achieved by the compromises of an established body that was seeking its own perpetuation through adherence to dogma even in the face of new conditions. Thus, in the process of breaking from C.I.A.M. to become Team X, this group decided: "We must decide what we want, evolve new criteria of urban merit, and from the new body of ideas allow new legislation to form -- for politicians can only decide between various courses of action -- we alone can act."[10]

Action was a central feature of the New Brutalism. This implied, in a sense, a de-intellectualization of architecture and its materials. It was, according to Peter Smithson, "a realization of the affinity which can be established between buildings and man....architecture as the direct result of a way of life."[11] Thus, the action of architecture was its new way of encompassing the entirety of life, freed from stylistic or philosophical categorizations. No preferred aesthetic was professed; only an approach that, like vernacular or peasant buildings, addressed the complete life situation of the user. This is not to suggest that they favored meek acceptance of all human conditions: after all, the paragon building for the New Brutalists was Corbusier's Unité which, among other things, was highly normative. Rather, architecture was intended to improve life by being an enriching connection to the materiality and sensory nature of humanness, but without the trappings of an artificial and imposed style.

It was crucial to avoid style, lest these tendencies toward human values approach the despised and rejected "New Humanism." Yet, while the older British architects were attempting to revive in socialist or Communist garb an earlier era, the New Brutalists were embracing the realities of their own time. To be normative in the postwar era was to confront existentialism. The threat of personal nothingness was to be countered by an obvious architectural physicality that demanded recognition of its presence. According to Kallmann, the new architecture was to achieve a "shock

effect," wherein "materials, their 'build' and joining, are not used for their regional association or decorative textural effect, but to convey a more active, actual, 'brutal' sense of physical existence."[12] Whereas style spoke of aspirations, brutalism spoke of a perceived reality, and thus had less to do with articulating philosophical beliefs about aesthetic effect than with indicating the actuality of materials and construction. A brutal architecture was felt to be the appropriate response to a brutal human condition, wherein existence might only be provable through blatant or outrageous maneuvers. Thus, brutalism "is an architecture true only to its own manner of making and doing. In its physical concreteness and firmness of build, it strives for a confirmation of identity and existence to counter the modern fear of nothingness."[13]

It is arguable, and, indeed, probable, that few outside the post-war intelligentsia conceived of their state of being in these terms. It may be that the average person simply did not express his deep-seated angst in articulate existentialist jargon, but would have been sympathetic to it if he could. On the other hand, it is reasonable to consider that this intelligentsia was so concerned with its own existentialist fears (hinted at in Smithson's manifesto in which he comments on American advertising having recently rivaled Dada imagery, and in which a Cadillac is held up as a masterpiece of design) as to not realize these fears were not commonly shared. In other words, the New Brutalists can be seen as engaging in arcane theorizing and self aggrandizement. The social consciousness they claim, purportedly conjoined with a universal existentialist anxiety, thus becomes nothing more than a vehicle for their particular aesthetic. Assuming this kind of universalism justifies their creation of what Kallmann refered to as a "difficult" architecture because it assumes a universal understanding of the architecture's intention. Although materiality is proposed, the architecture is more likely communicating with the intellect. Of course, this is not true of all brutalist or related architecture, for some, such as Kahn's, speaks to the entirety of the human being. However, the potential for intellectualization and disembodiment, contrary notions to the supposed desires of these architects, re-

figure 9. AH&G character sketch. This drawing belies the intention of AH&G's plan. Rather than an articulate composition of buildings, plaza, and people, this indicates the priority given to built objects over public space and the public.

curs in Kallmann's words. The architect, he said, is

> contemptuous of agreeable and acceptable es-
> thetic effect. [The new trends] are expressive only
> of the process of their genesis; they communicate
> fundamentally only the manner of their own mak-
> ing, and they do not declare themselves in terms
> other than those of architectural actuality....it ap-
> pears [that thus is ending] a phase of over-much
> gratification of the desire to please, and that an
> architecture more stern and less sensorially di-
> rected is in the making.[14]

City Hall Plaza had one fundamental purpose: to be the center
piece of a development that would revitalize an ailing Boston. Its
form, its style, its function were all secondary to this goal. As part
of a greater ensemble, the Plaza was considered crucial; the focal
point of the new heart of the city, the center of the center, past and
future. As a whole, this project was to be treated seriously and
without caprice. Indeed, in the style of its time, it was, except for
its center. A combination of Modernist object obsession and philo-
sophical arrogance turned the Plaza into a second hand residual
void. Today's Plaza and the attitudes toward it are the legacy of
decades of good intentions and their misguided formalist interpre-
tation.

1 Gerhard M. Kallmann, "Experimental Architecture," lecture, 1959, quoted in Mildred F. Schmertz, "The New Boston City Hall," *Architectural Record*, Vol. 145, February 1969, p. 144.

2 Gerhard M. Kallmann, quoted in "A Great Plaza for Boston's Government Center," *Architectural Record*, Vol. 135, March 1964, p. 193.

3 Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, "Boston's City Hall," *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 130, January/February 1969, p. 45.

4 James Marston Fitch, "City Hall Plaza," *Architectural Review*, Vol. 147, June 1970, p. 400. (See also: Henry A. Millon, "An Appraisal of Boston's Government Center," *Architectural Design*, Vol. 41, January 1971, pp. 22-23.)

5 *ibid.*, p. 401.

6 Schmertz, *loc. cit.*

7 Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic*, p. 12.

8 *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

9 *The Emergence of Team 10 Out of C.I.A.M.*, Alison Smithson, ed., p. 59.

10 *ibid.*

11 *ibid.*, p. 46. Quoting Peter Smithson's New Brutalist manifesto from *Architectural Design*, January 1955.

12 Gerhard Kallmann, "The 'action' architecture of a new generation," *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 111, October 1959, p. 136.

13 *ibid.*, p. 244.

14 Schmertz, *loc. cit.*, quoting Kallmann.

A VISION RE-BORN: CITY HALL PLAZA IDEAS COMPETI-TION

Due to some philosophical misconceptions of Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles, very few people come to City Hall Plaza to grapple with their existential fate or to decipher the genesis behind the to-pological intricacies of Plaza and building. Unforeseeable as it may be to such visionary formalists, many simply wish to come to the Plaza to eat their lunch and participate in the life of the city. Most who do so are confronted by the aforementioned contradiction between user expectation and designer intent. Few of these people would think to actually apply Existentialist or Modernist theorizing to their lunch hour or Sunday afternoon. What they want is a place that satisfies their entire range of needs: physical, emotional, spiritual, and, yes, intellectual. What they get is a space that, but for the subsequent interventions of a city government bewildered by the enormity of actually owning such a place, seeks to satisfy only the intellectual.

In order to find meaning in the Plaza that is more palatable and better suited to user expectations, myths of functionality have been created. It is easier, perhaps, to perceive the Plaza having failed to attain these mythical goals than to have succeeded in its actual aim. Foremost among these is the spatial comparison myth, that City Hall Plaza was supposed to be like some other great urban spaces and, in the same way that they serve their cities, so too would the Plaza. Noting the slope and the pattern of the paving, the most common comparison is to the remarkable Campo of Siena, yet neither the use nor the form, nor even the direction of the slope itself, bear any resemblance to the Campo. There is also the myth, periodically realized, of the big event in a big space, that occasion where the city turns out to celebrate its civic pride or accomplishments. Similarly, there is the big government myth, which says that a large space and a monumental, strong building, that make a contrasting statement from the city around and from the pre-existing fabric and show that government can be both big and good is what the Plaza is, or at least was, for. Finally, there is the exasperated myth of formal determinism or hopeful potentiality, which wonders whether some key combination of light, air, space, and form would not inevitably lead to usage; whether function would follow form. There are reasons in the Plaza for these desperate attempts to distill a believable logic from its design. Where fountains, amphitheaters, and allées of trees are provided there is evidence of some conception that use will occur. But,

when they are as ill-developed and insignificant as those of City Hall Plaza it becomes obvious that the use associated with these elements was, if not an afterthought, at least a very low priority secondary consideration. Since we know the words of the designers we know that this is in fact the case.

Since there has long been dismay over the lack of humanist content in the Plaza, there has been an abundance of popular remarks about it. In anticipation of the Ideas Competition, these recently became common-place items in the local media. The following statements were printed in the Boston Globe in several articles prior to the Competition:

> "How do I and others envision the City Hall Plaza? Lots of green grass and trees; fountains that work; benches for resting weary feet, relaxing, and sunning or reading; tables and umbrellas...City Hall...should be modeled after the European squares where people meet to celebrate their heritage, history, culture and joy of living." "TREES. Only trees can moderate the wind and vicious climate of that desert-like stretch." "We need to be reminded that our city government is what it still is -- cold, unforgiving, and unresponsive. A warm, inviting plaza might give a taxpayer the false hope that he or she would get a fair hearing on a parking ticket appeal."[1] "[A] giant brick garden where weeds of discontent and dissatisfaction thrive, rooted in complaints about the imposing harshness of the space." "A vast wasteland." "Too much cement, too much brick."[2] "[A] parched desert in the summer and treacherous no man's land in the winter."[3]

These are the ostensible reasons for conducting the Ideas Competition. A majority of people, both in and out of government, had spoken ill of the Plaza for long enough to finally elicit a response from the city. However, in speaking with Vineet Gupta, Boston Parks and Recreation Department Project Coordinator for the Competition, I was told that public sentiment was not entirely sufficient. Instead, the impetus for action only occurred with the combined energies of an active Parks Department Director and staff, the Boston Society of Architects, and a mayor who not only disliked the Plaza but was eager to do something about it. According to Gupta, the Parks Department had long been interested in vitalizing the Plaza. Not only was City Hall Plaza a large and potentially vibrant space in and of itself, but its active usage would
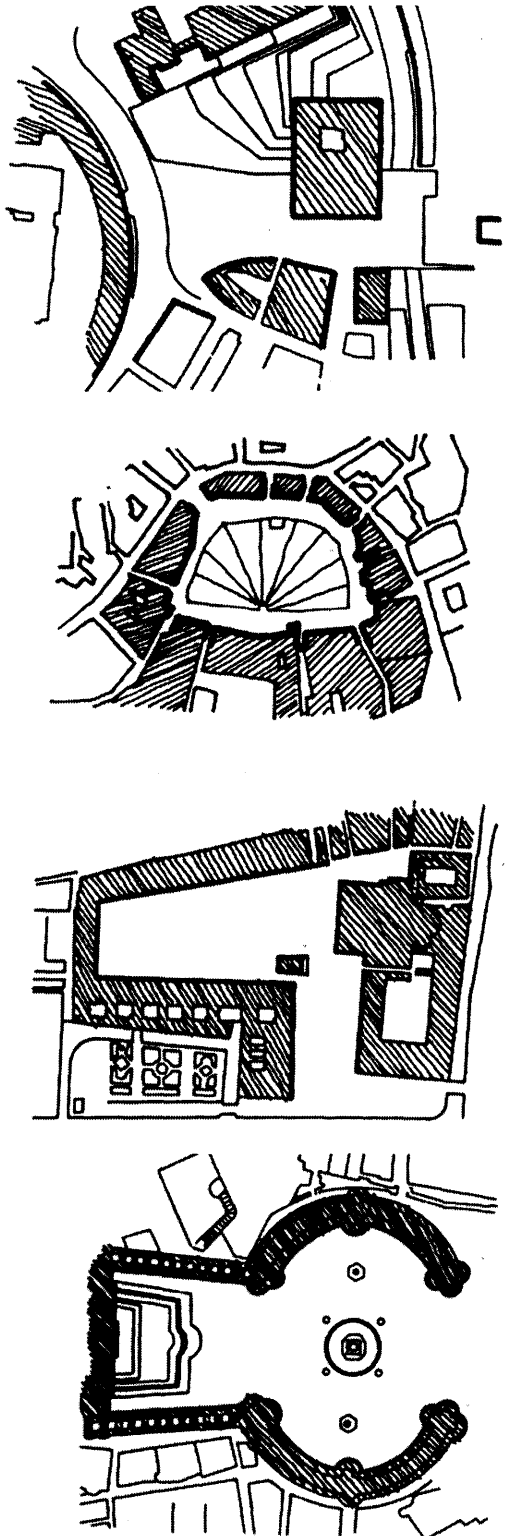
figure 10. Comparative diagrams of City Hall Plaza, Siena's Campo, Piazza San Marco, and Piazza San Pietro.

take pressure off of Boston Common which the Parks Department felt was overburdened. It was discovered that the B.S.A. was simultaneously considering taking action to investigate making the Plaza a popular place. What galvanized these groups' joint venture was a new mayor who had run partially on a campaign of accessible city government. Considering the spatial prominence of the Plaza, Mayor Menino was not blind to the symbolic significance an active "front yard" to City Hall would provide. Not content to only speak in visionary terms, in spring of 1994 the mayor told the Parks Department that he wanted something by the end of the year. For Gupta, a "just do it" attitude pervaded the department and led directly to the Competition.[4]

Mayor Menino, the Parks Department, and the B.S.A. developed three primary goals for the Competition. First, hearkening back to the days of Urban Renewal and the purposes behind the original Government Center project, it was desired to invigorate the center of the city. Rather than simply providing a massive construction program to stimulate the economy and infuse the area with potential downtown consumers, it was hoped that City Hall Plaza could actually attract the citizens of Boston to the city's historic and symbolic heart for more than mere business purposes. An active center was thought to be the appropriate culmination to a thorough urban renewal. Second, it was hoped that citizen awareness of and participation in the city would be encouraged by involving the citizens in an urban design process. With hopes of generating a city-wide interest in community involvement, City Hall Plaza was seen as a "neutral meeting place away from more turf-conscious neighborhoods"[5] where people can gather to promote their belongingness to the whole. The Plaza provides an opportunity to participate in tangible work on a symbolic site, thereby strengthening

individual ties to it and creating links between the neighborhoods and the center. At the very least, this particular goal would broaden the base of constituent users and increase the potential source of fund raising. Finally, in order to effect these two ends, the Competition organizers desired to implement some realistic physical change on the Plaza in keeping with the perceptions and expectations around its potential use. This desire is related to the goal of public participation, and is designed to encourage continuing public involvement. If the public sees that its input has been effective in bringing about initial change on the Plaza, it is hoped that an even greater awareness of the power of participation in public affairs will result.[6] In sum, it was a simple combined goal of making the Plaza a popular, enjoyable, and inviting place, in spite of the fact that the original architects did all they could do to preclude this possibility.

Because of the dramatic difference in intentions between the Competition and the existing condition, revitalizing City Hall Plaza goes far beyond local purposes. The prominence of the Plaza, both physically and theoretically, makes its solution and treatment potentially symbolic of the state of public space today. This symbolism is two-fold: it is at once a limited symbolism of contemporary attitudes toward Modernism and its physical legacy, and a broader encompassing of a philosophy about public open space in general. At its most elemental, this is an important event because it involves transforming an award-winning project; regarding something that was once considered brilliant and claiming it is no longer so. Thus, today's approach to the Plaza can affect the entirety of architecture and urban design because it says that assumptions made subsequent to the accolades for this space can now also be presumed to be wrong. In other words, a new paradigm that will change our thinking about existing and future public spaces is probably necessary.

Much of the impact of decisions about City Hall Plaza have to do with its physical stature. After all, design awards come and go and often represent nothing more than the current fashion. But, size is a compelling factor that ought to give one pause before contemplating potentially capricious action. A Post Office Square might invite a certain amount of frivolity, for it is smaller and comparatively insignificant in its symbolism. One does not want to see such a space disappear, of course, and it may be referred to for

ideas or aesthetics, but in terms of a philosophy of public space such a thing is a minor figure. City Hall Plaza, however, has a crucial combination of scale, status, symbolic role, and peculiar and specific original intent that infuses it with influence. It cannot hide and await its next makeover. It will be seen, and good or bad, it will say "this is what we do with such spaces."

Our particular time makes the influence of places like the Plaza particularly important, and perhaps a little dangerous. There is a political perception, arguably not matched by actual popular sentiment, that as little public money as possible should be spent on the public realm, and then, only for absolute necessity. To provide public amenity, to exercise a free hand toward aesthetics, to do anything beyond the functional is to risk being labeled a "big government, tax and spend" advocate worthy of losing one's political office. Such an environment, when coupled with the obvious disdain for a public space as evidenced by the comments from the *Globe* above, can result in a pursuit of goals for the public realm that are myopic and undeserving of the otherwise appropriate emulation and stature afforded a City Hall Plaza. In other words, the reactionary response may be to simply make the space different from what it now is, to do it cheaply, and to do it fast. Such a politician would think extremely highly of himself while doing extreme injustice to his constituents' city and all of those that take lessons from that city. Thus, in examining the Competition it is important to remember not only the potential positive contributions it can make to the future of public space, but these negative ones as well.

Before investigating the Competition entries it must be noted that the organizers stress that it was an *ideas* competition, not a *design* competition. They were not necessarily looking for the perfect solution from one entry. In fact, their purpose was left vague enough to belie the fact that they did not know exactly *what* they were looking for as long as it held some promise to enliven the space. With that said, it can also be said that most entries pursued a design approach, and that the ideas that proved compelling to the jury were mostly contained as elements in complete presentations. Thus, the benefit of studying solutions to City Hall Plaza is that one has before him 190 different public spaces. While they all address roughly the same purpose, and there are some overlapping approaches, nonetheless each has its particular distinction.

In an attempt to determine a kind of *zeitgeist* regarding public space, such a data base is invaluable. However, to try to decipher the spirit of all 190 is not only an enormous task, but is also unnecessary. I have instead focused on a select group, including the five winners, the professional entries, and a few exemplary others. If I err on the side of professional bias, I believe it can be justified by the fact that it is these few who will largely be determining the shape of public space in the years to come. While ideas may be generated from all sides, including the public and the client, it is ultimately the architect or urban designer who will be giving form to those ideas. Therefore, this investigation will study these entries to attempt to understand current attitudes toward public space -- what it should look like, what it should do, what is the process of its making, what sort of trends or camps exist or are developing? If the question is "Is public space still possible?" these solutions will help determine the answer.

1   "What To Do With City Hall Plaza? Readers Give Views," *Boston Globe*, 2 October 1994, City Weekly, p. 6.
2 "Wanted: Ideas For City Hall Plaza. Contest Seeks Citizen Input For A New Look," *Boston Globe*, 25 September 1994, City Weekly, p. 1.
3 Chris Black, "Ideas Abound For Spiffing Up City Hall Plaza. Put Some Life In It, The Public Says," *Boston Globe*, 7 July 1994, Metro, p. 25.
4 Vineet Gupta, Boston Department of Parks and Recreation, Project Coordinator, Revitalizing City Hall Plaza, interview, 2 March 1995.
5 "Plaza Full Of Potential," *Boston Globe*, 15 December 1994, Editorial Page, p. 22.
6 Todd Lee, FAIA, interview, 9 March 1995.

**THE COMPETITION
ENTRIES**

The Ideas Competition program is notable for two aspects. First, it was explicit in the desire to make participation in the Competition as accessible as possible to anyone who was interested. As stated above, the organizers sought ideas, which they felt could come from any source, and so invited "everyone, design and non-design professionals, students, citizens, children, etc....to participate."[1] To encourage submittals from those who cannot draw, entries were allowed in both graphic and written format. Although far fewer written entries were received, one of the winners came from this category. Second, the program or purpose itself was left purposefully broad and vague. Since the Competition promoters did not have a specific spatial or programmatic goal in mind, they were content with an open-ended statement from the mayor that called for the creation of "an atmosphere that will more easily link the public to an open and accessible City Hall, and provide a meeting place for Boston's diverse community."[2] In the place of a totalizing goal, a set of "potential issues" was suggested, such as: big ideas and little ideas, places within the Plaza, the Plaza in winter, the Plaza in summer, the buildings and streets around the Plaza, uses of water, activities, making events work better, crazy ideas. The entries that follow are the five considered best by the jury at achieving the ideas goal.

First Awards

Jury Duty at Government Center. The only written winner, this is a narrative about a family in the not too distant future that decides to spend a day in a new park at City Hall. While father is appearing at the court house for jury duty, mother and young daughter and son wander about the park that is devoted to depictions and lessons about history, civics, and public participation. Within the park are distributed different thematic elements representative of various aspects of democratic politics and their history in Boston: Old Charter Park, Jury Box of Pine Trees, Town Meeting Gate, etc. Surrounding and containing these specific functions are new physical elements, including an abundance of trees, fountains, a stage, banners, musicians, and a new glass pyramid T headhouse. Earlier than expected, father is dismissed and joins his family for a happy day at Government Center. (figure 15)

Framework for Celebration. "Pedestals, posts, and wires" is the sub-title of this entry which proposes a series of flexible elements that will allow a variety of art works and events to occur on the Plaza. The pedestals and posts, which can accommodate anything from sculptures to lighting to banners to mobiles, and which can be erected and dismantled with ease, provide for a changing definition of spaces and areas throughout the Plaza. The pieces of the framework are unobtrusive, with anchors set into the Plaza surface, and create the flexibility for the Plaza to be used in an almost infinite number of ways as the needs arise. (figure 11)

Meeting of the Trails. An attempt has been made with this entry to bring activities that currently exist adjacent to the Plaza into the space itself. The Freedom and Black Heritage Trails and the Bicentennial Bicycle Path have been rerouted into City Hall Plaza, where a Museum of Abolitionism has been added to their itinerary. A bridge over Congress Street from the Haymarket area is intended to pull that market activity to the Plaza, while other commercial uses have been introduced along Cambridge Street. (figure 12)

Tomb of the Bambino. At first glance this appears to fulfill the program issue of a "crazy idea." A more detailed look does not dispel this impression. In honor of Babe Ruth, who, this entry reminds us, first rose to greatness with the Red Sox, a baseball field has been placed in front of City Hall, with an oversized home plate directly in front of the Plaza level entry. A row of three to four story buildings has been added parallel to the J.F.K. Federal Buildings, and a new T headhouse is provided. (figure 13)

Public Video Village. This entry surrounds the Plaza with high projection screens, scaffolding, and glazed enclosures. Videos and advertisements will provide an ever-changing visual environment. The Plaza has been made all one level, and there has been added a "grass beach," a stage, retail facilities, and an indoor concert hall. A "pedestrian connector" is to be constructed between Faneuil Hall and the Plaza, going through City Hall. (figure 14)
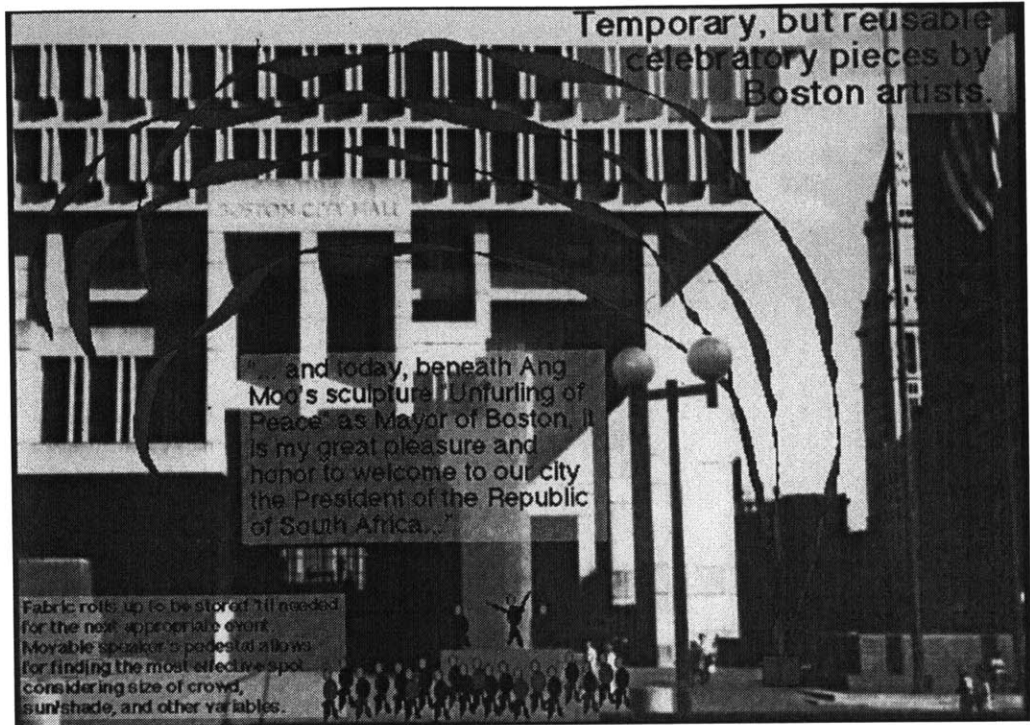
figure 11.   *Framework for Celebration*: Barbara Barros, City View/Town View
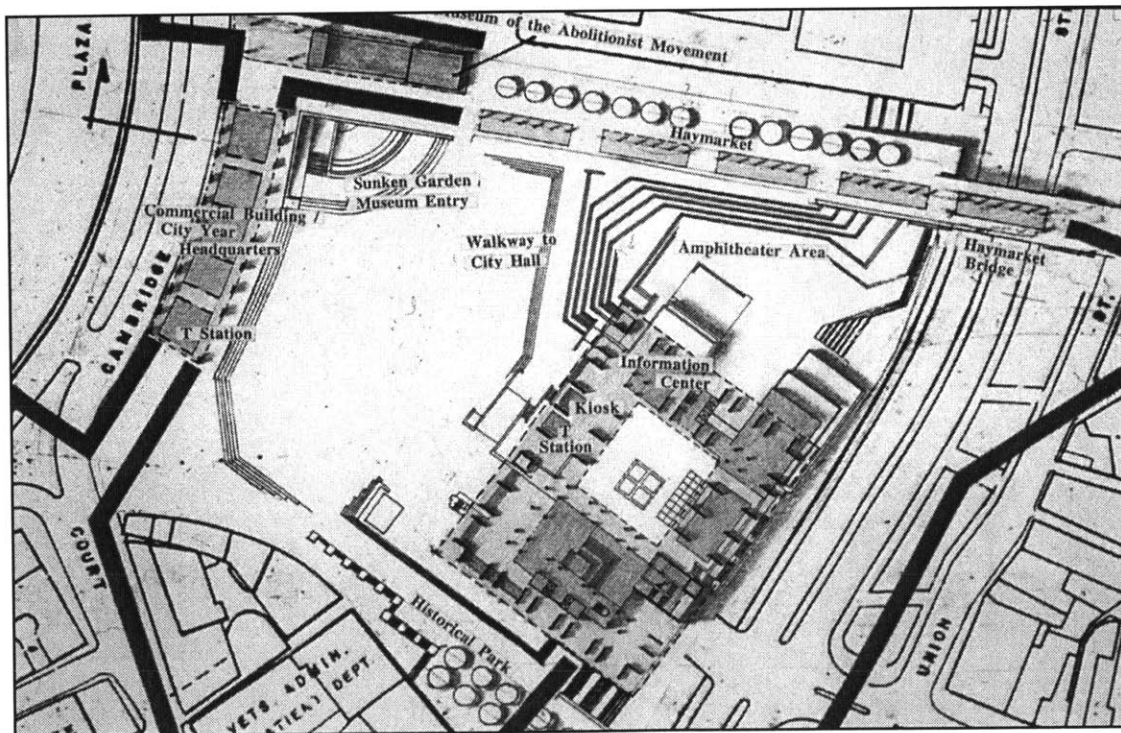

figure 12.   *Meeting of the Trails*:
Michael A. Lindstrom, Inaki Ozcariz, Kathleen Lindstrom

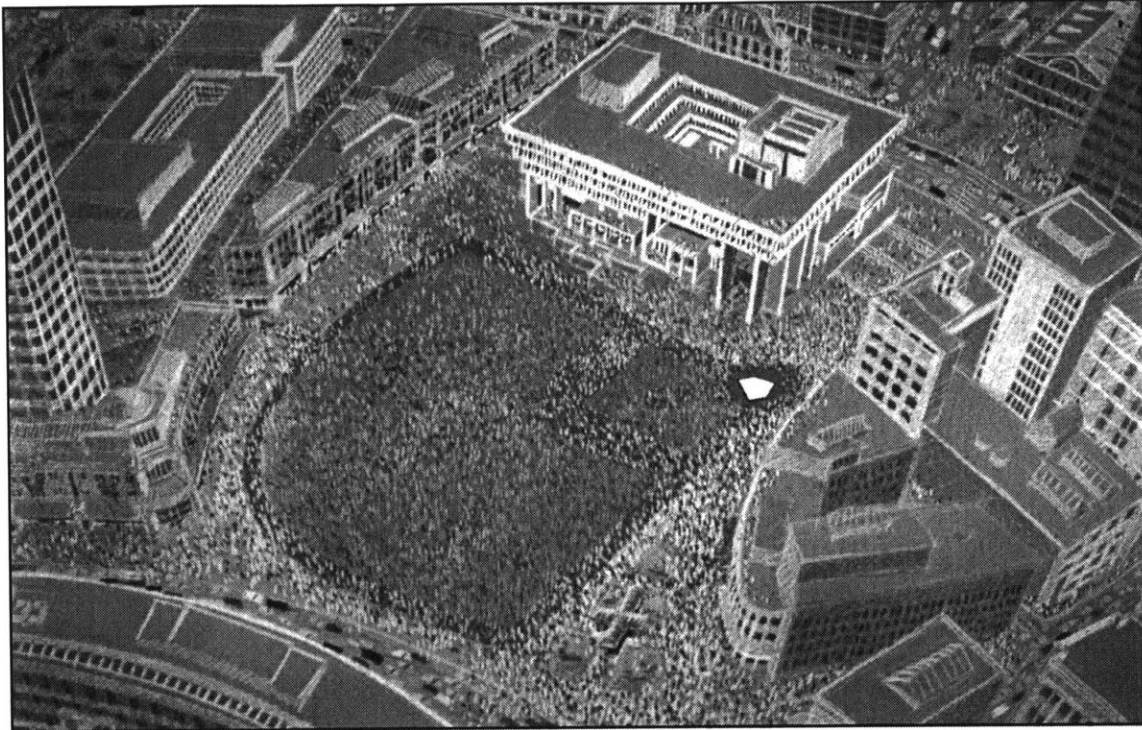figure 13.   *Tomb of the Bambino*: Chip Sloan, Randall Imai
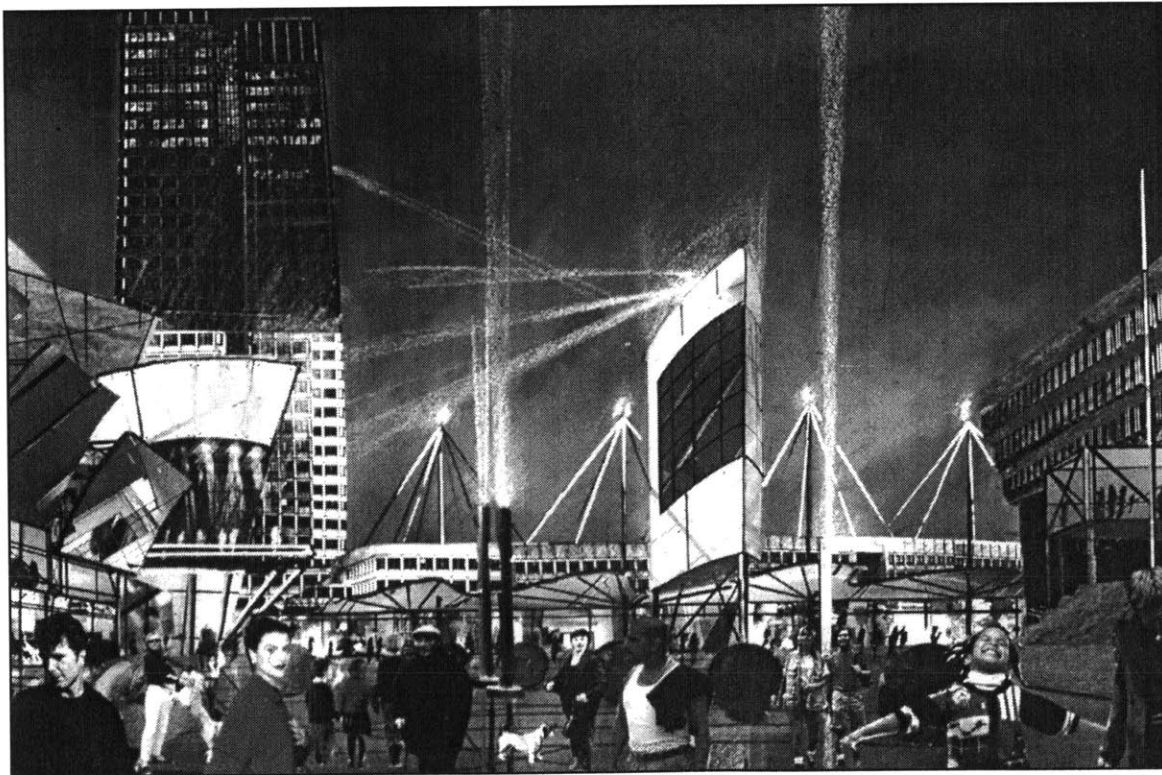

figure 14.   *Public Video Village*: Neil Harper Martin, Architect

In addition to these five First Award winners, a number of Awards and Ideas Citations were presented. These include some of the following:

- A bike path, pedestrian arcade, and washable panels for spontaneous art.
- Covered skywalks, canopied places, museum shops, sun pockets, vine clad walls, mural walls, fountains, greensward.
- Built up edges, buildings along Cambridge Street, T station campanile, pavilions and follies in Plaza.
- Blow up City Hall and return Scollay Square.
- Granite promenade, "delicate porch to the sea," glazed shopping arcade, 100,000 square foot open space/theater.
- Interactive technological art works.
- "Walk in" theater.
- Ethnic heritage park and ethnic heritage monument.
- New lighting with electrical outlets for temporary installations, resurfacing, play areas, sound gardens.
- "Lights, lights, lights."
- "Festival Hall" along Cambridge Street, gateway at Hanover Street entrance, slowing of traffic on Cambridge and Congress Streets.
- Use of Green Line elevated structures for bridges, gates, and arcades.

Maureen passed the turnstile and headed for the open door of the subway kiosk.... She could see her mother, father and brother standing in front of the glass pyramid of the Government Center T stop.

"Dad will be in for jury duty today, at least for the morning," Mom said.

"You mean we are going to have a picnic in the 'Jury Box of Pines?'" asked Maureen.

"No, this is the real thing," Mom said. "Dad has been called in for jury duty at the new Suffolk County Court House."

"But why can't Dad be in court here outside in Government Center on such a beautiful day?" Maureen asked.

"Because Government Center's Court Park is a symbolic court. It is a court of birds, trees, water fountains, and stone jury benches...."

"You see, you are sitting at the 'Bench of the Prosecution.' This game table represents the lawyer for the commonwealth. Over there, at the next bench, is the 'Table for the Defense.' The lawyer, who is defending the accused, sits over there with the person on trial. Over there, just beyond the brick serpentine wall, is the 'Witness Dock.' The witness dock is the large 'Nubian Tomb' like the one you saw at the museum last week.... Over on the other side, next to the 'Jury Box of Pine Trees,' is the monument dedicated to the 'Foreman of the Jury.'"

They all made their way through the "Jury Box of Pine Trees" and picnic tables to the playground at the far end. There, across from the playground, was the stage of the Supreme Court. Its imposing columns of colored tiles and the large doors with the cutout of the symbols of the court scales of justice left an imposing impression on the children.

figure 15.   *Jury Duty at Government Center.* Don Haska, Maureen Gannon

Thirty eight submissions were recognizable (from the names on the list of participants) as the work of environmental designers. Some of these were members of well-known design firms, some were representing only themselves, while others were affiliated with universities. These 38, though representative of a group trained in spatial design and theory, display as much diversity of thought and approach as the entirety of Competition entries. Thus, neither this group nor the larger field can claim to have a monopoly on the kind of approach deemed appropriate for this particular Competition. In fact, the proportion of designers receiving awards or citations is only slightly greater than the proportion of designers who entered. However, for the reasons stated above, the entries of the design professionals will be studied out of proportion to their numbers. The following group has been chosen for discussion as a representative sample of designer entries:

Sutton, Sullenberger, Yantis Architects, Vienna, VA. "L" shaped, five story building with arcades and mixed uses built along Cambridge Street and J.F.K. Federal Building. Plaza levels minimized to encourage multiple uses. Built in stage. Level platform around City Hall. (figure 16)

Glenn R. Merithew, AIA, Anderson-Nichols & Co., Inc., Boston. Retains existing brick plaza and stage, refurbishes existing fountain, adds Congress Street pedestrian bridge, provides "tensioned fabric event pavilions" (i.e., tents). This is an award winner, presumably not one that relied on its provocative drawings. (figure 17)

My entry. Focus on a differentiation of spaces, from large Plaza to smaller adjacent "piazzetti," linked to a series of public spaces from State House to Boston Harbor. Attempt to embed spaces and buildings within the city fabric. (figure 18)

Samuel E. Mintz, AIA, AICP, Suzanna K. Serbicki, Yoshi Hama, Mintz Associates Architects/Planners Inc., Boston. Glass enclosed arcades are provided along most surrounding building edges, kiosks and pavilions are built within the Plaza, and a pool/skating rink is provided. (figure 19)
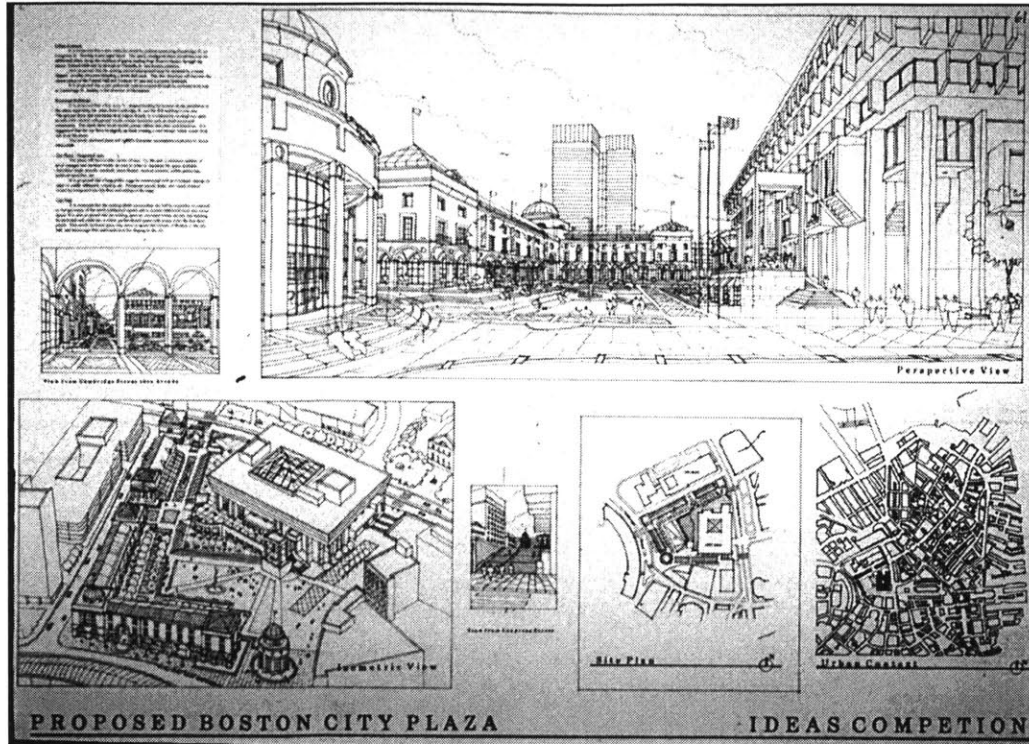
figure 16.   Sutton, Sullenberger, Yantis Architects
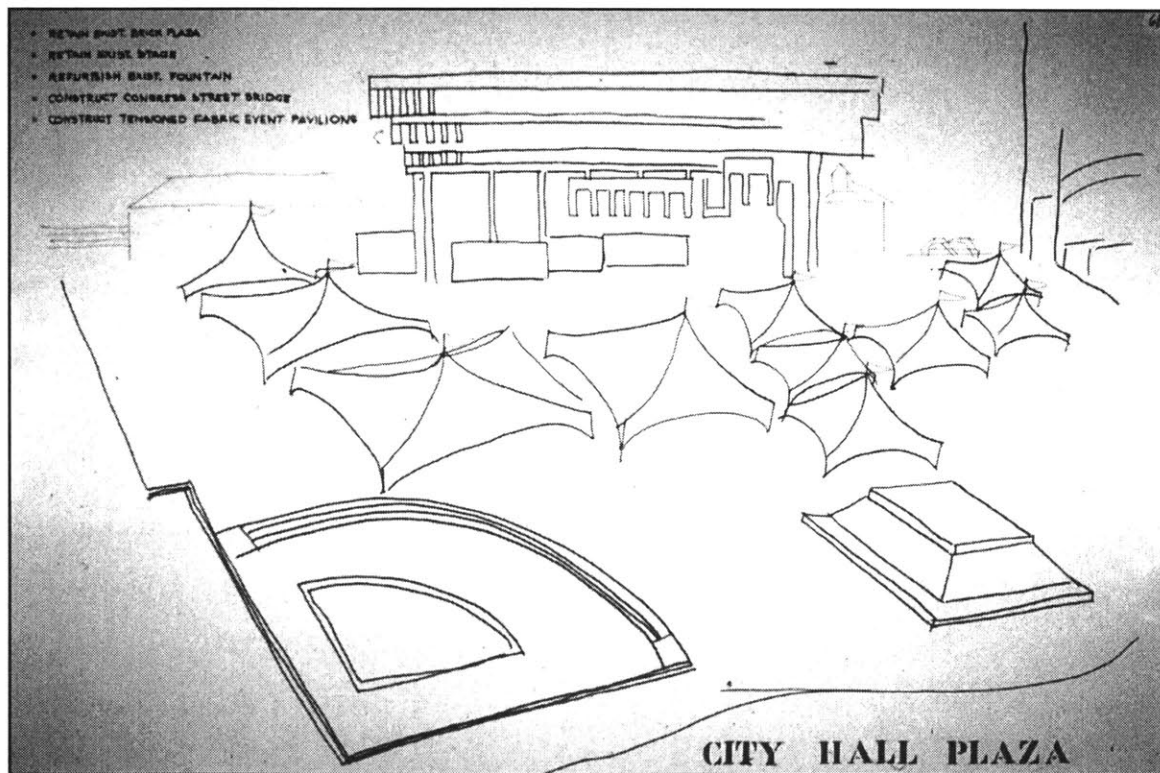
figure 17.   Glenn R. Merithew, AIA
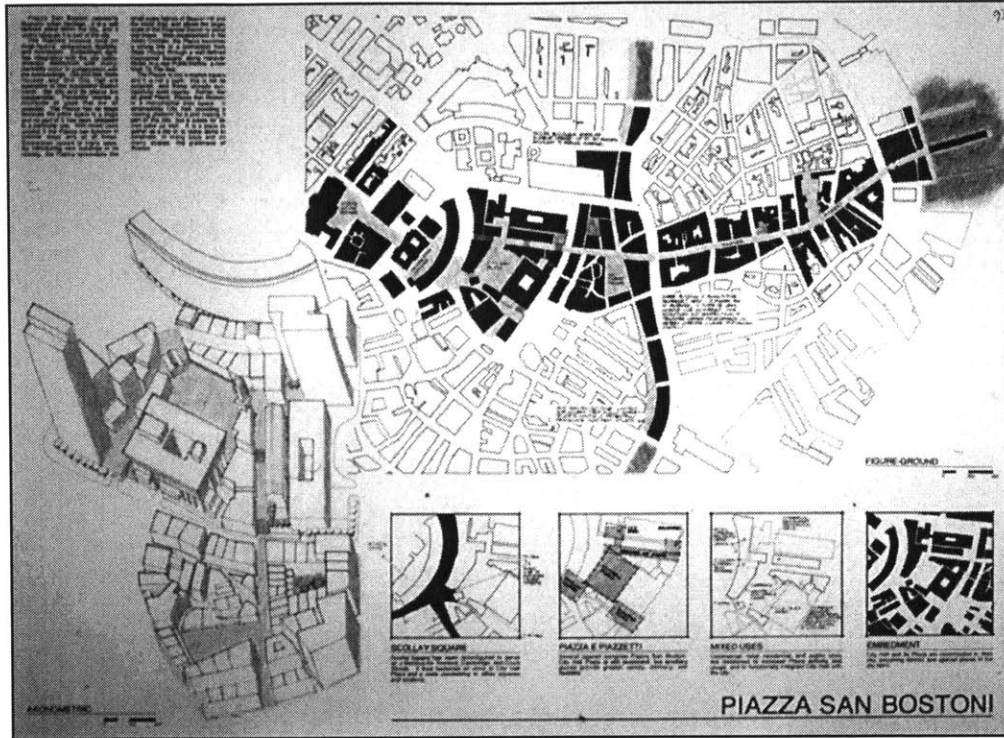
figure 18.   Timothy C. Hurley
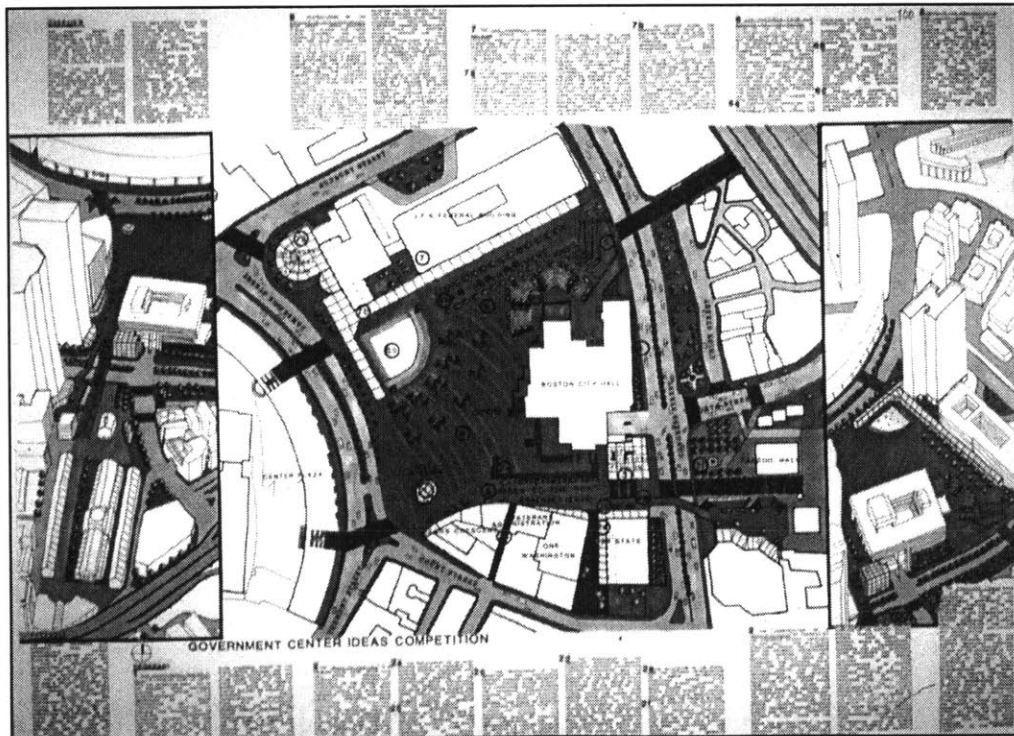
figure 19.   Samuel E. Mintz, AIA, AICP, Suzanna K. Serbicki, Yoshi Hama

William Schaffer, William Schaffer and Associates, Cambridge, MA. This illustrates Boston's "rich diversity and sparkling creativity" with a number of new elements, including a lighted "world fountain," a "swinging on a star" sculpture, a glass-roofed T headhouse, protective trellises, tot lot playgrounds, "City Hall Park," "The Museums at City Hall," a Holocaust memorial, and a café and restroom pavilion. This was an Ideas Citation winner. (figure 20)

J. Vandenbergh Lewis and Michael Dennis, Michael Dennis and Associates, Boston. Two sets of three story arcade structures are provided, one creating a contained square in front of City Hall, the other running parallel with the J.F.K. Federal Building. A row of trees is planted on the inside face of the square. (figure 21)

Philip Hresko AIA/ASLA, HRESKO Associates, Boston. A "'Baker's Dozen' Design Ideas" is offered, including a new subway headhouse, level slope at Sears Crescent, shops in Washington Street alley, greenhouse/solarium/café at existing fountain site, flags along Cambridge Street, Holocaust Memorial, two bridges, Haymarket activities in the Plaza, a flea market, and skateboarding facilities. This was an Ideas Citation winner. (figure 22)

Matti Nurmela, Eeva Kilpio, Rauli Ukkonen, Nurmela-Raimornta-Toss Oy Architects, Helsinki, Finland. The Plaza is leveled, trees are planted around the T station, the existing fountain is repaired or turned into a pool, and a "gallery" building is provided at the Hanover Street entrance. (figure 23)

Juann Khoory, Arrowstreet Inc., Somerville, MA. Named "A Place of Crossing Paths," the entry provides T station gateways, new paving patterns, and a new building parallel to the J.F.K. Federal Building. (figure 24)

Keith J. Bongirno ASLA, EDSA/Orlando, Orlando, FL. This suggests "a unique and memorable variety of outdoor spaces and experiences," including a lawn mound, grass seating for a stage, trees, flowers, new paving, new levels, and water features. (figure 25)

Antonio DiMambro AIA with Arben Arapi, Daniel Barton, Jennifer Marshall, Mili Tomanic of Communitas, Inc.; *Anthony Pangaro,* Macomber Development Associates, consultant. A contained built enclosure, with surrounding buildings and additions to existing buildings, as well as a museum proposed inside City Hall. (figure 26)

Search for Themes

Throughout the 190 entries there are scattered a variety of similarities, both thematic and physical. The latter includes fountains, skating rinks, lawns, trees, stages, arcades, sculptures, campaniles, bridges, and lights. Physical aspects were not limited to small scale or elemental objects, however. Larger than these furnishing-like pieces, but still objectual, were things like museums, monuments, memorials, retail stores, cafés, market places, and playgrounds. In most instances, it was this larger element that was used to define the particular thematic category into which a competitor can be placed, while the smaller items embellished that theme. Such a comment suggests that a clear demarcation of thematic categories exists. This is not so clear, though, for there is a degree of richness in almost every entry that wants to defy classification. However, it is the fact that similarities do, indeed, exist that allows one to draw conclusions about the present state of public space and which gives this competition a wider reach than the Boston city limits.

One effort at distilling themes was presented in a *Boston Globe* article on the day of the awards ceremony. *Globe* architecture critic Robert Campbell offered what he referred to as two extremes: the "Video Villagers" and the "Nostalgia Freaks." The former are those responding to "the age of the Internet [who] want to convert the plaza into a huge public information center" with video screens, tourist information, and news reports. The latter "want to revive the traditional Boston of narrow streets, small buildings and well-defined squares...in the hope of bringing everything down to a more human scale."[3] While generally accurate, Campbell's review oversimplifies these entries to the point of marginalizing them, especially when he applies labels that approach the pejorative. He would have served the Competition far better if he had avoided such glib labeling and concentrated more on discerning truly substantive differences. If ideas were the goal, their implementation will be much more successful if the values underlying them are understood. It
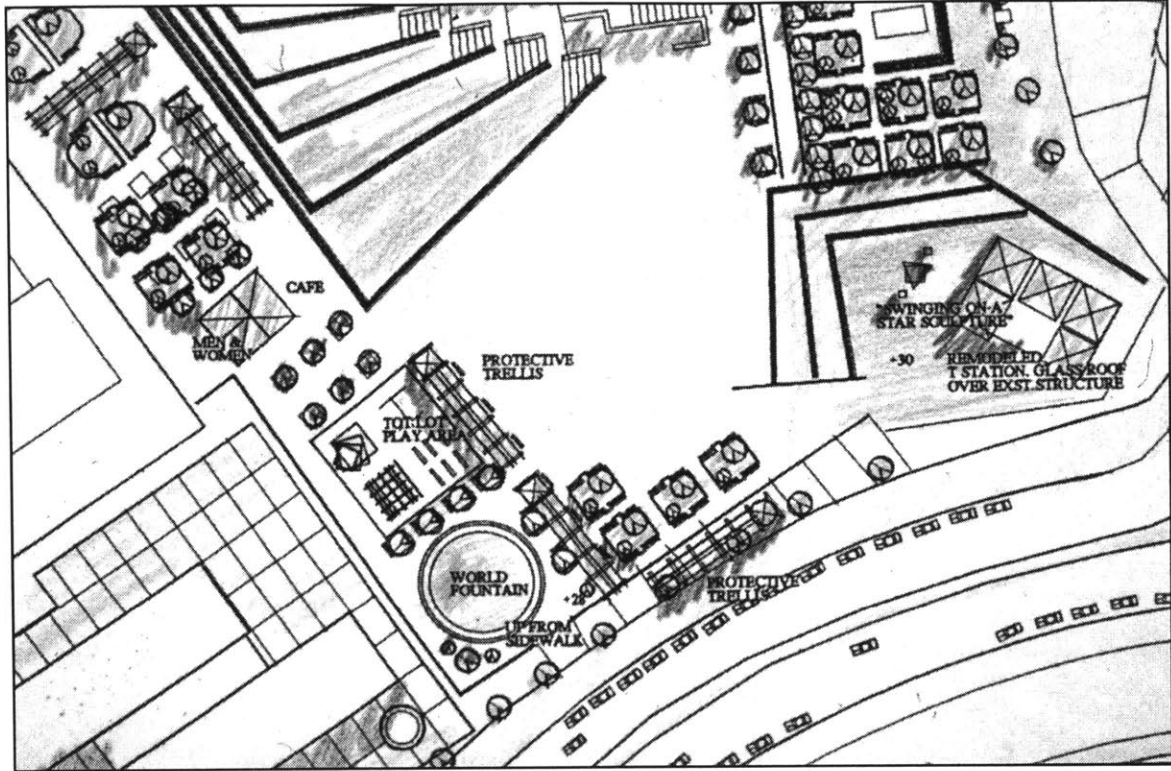
figure 20.   William Schaffer

City Hall Plaza
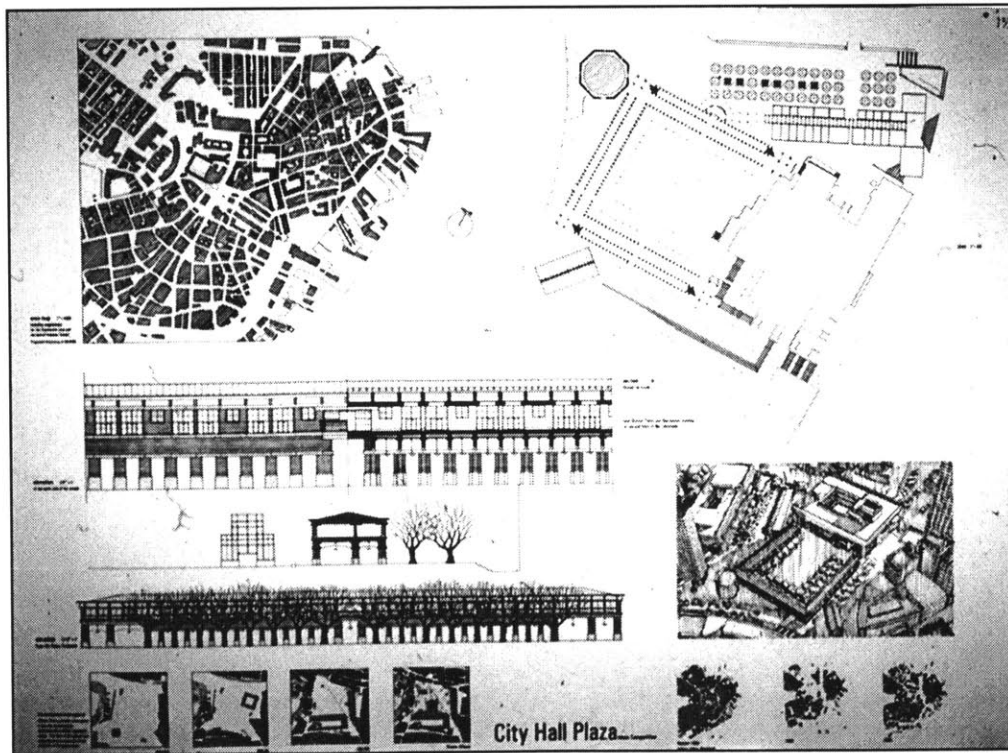
figure 21.   J. Vandenbergh Lewis & Michael Dennis

figure 22.   Philip Hresko AIA/ASLA

figure 23.   Matti Nurmela, Eeva Kilpio, Rauli Ukkonen
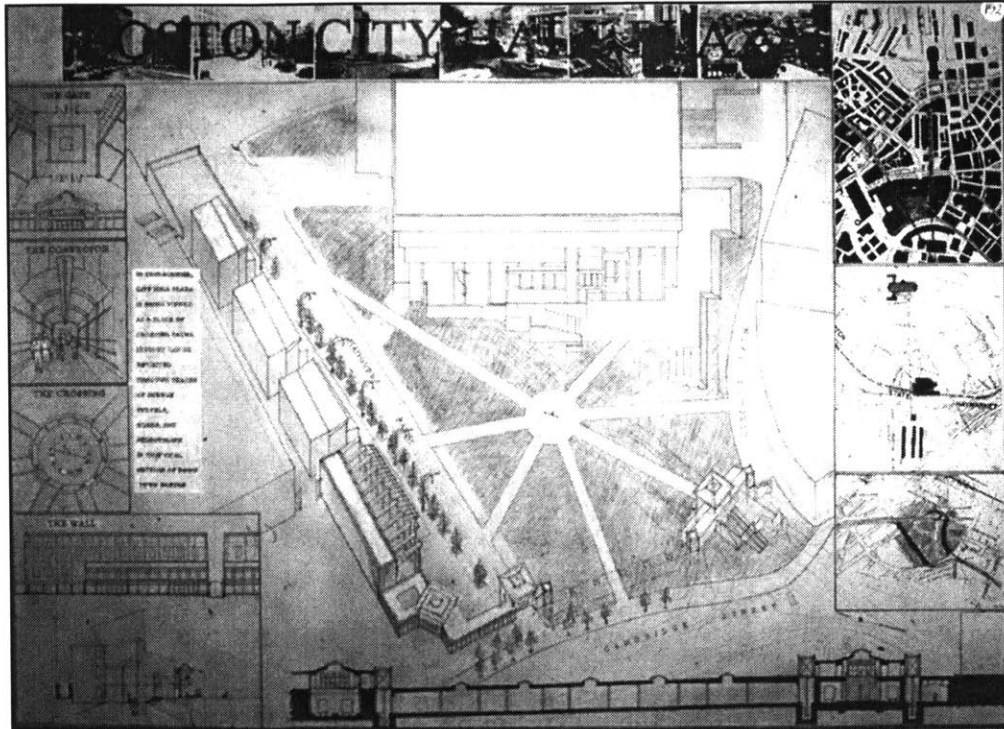
figure 24.   Juann Khoory
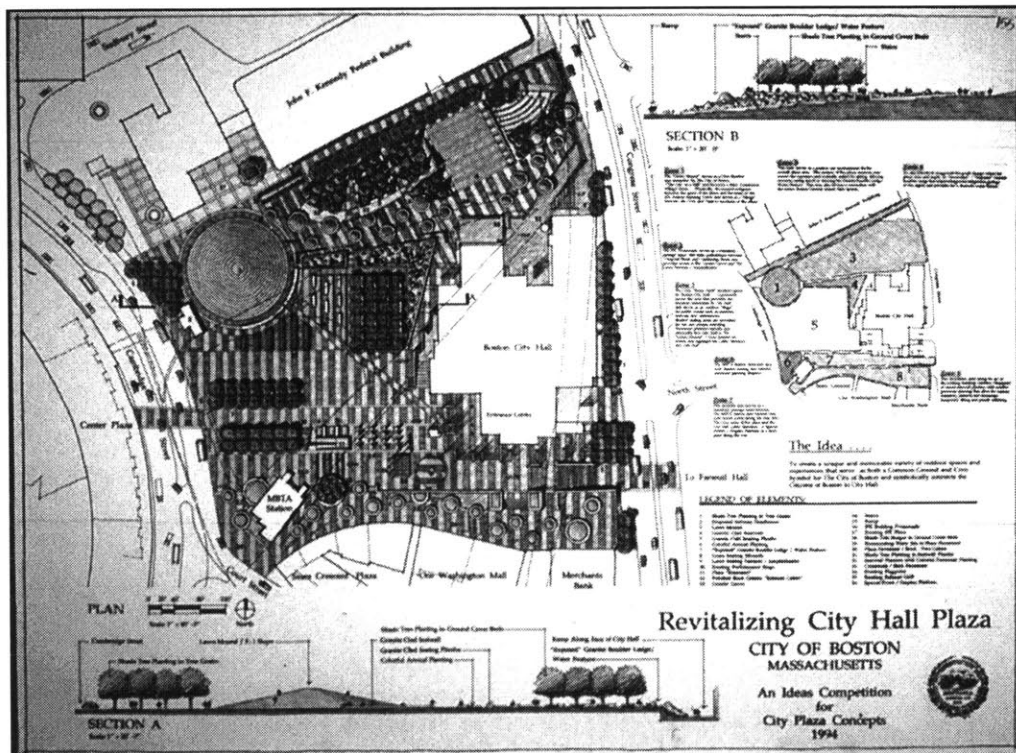
figure 25.   Keith J. Bongirno, ASLA
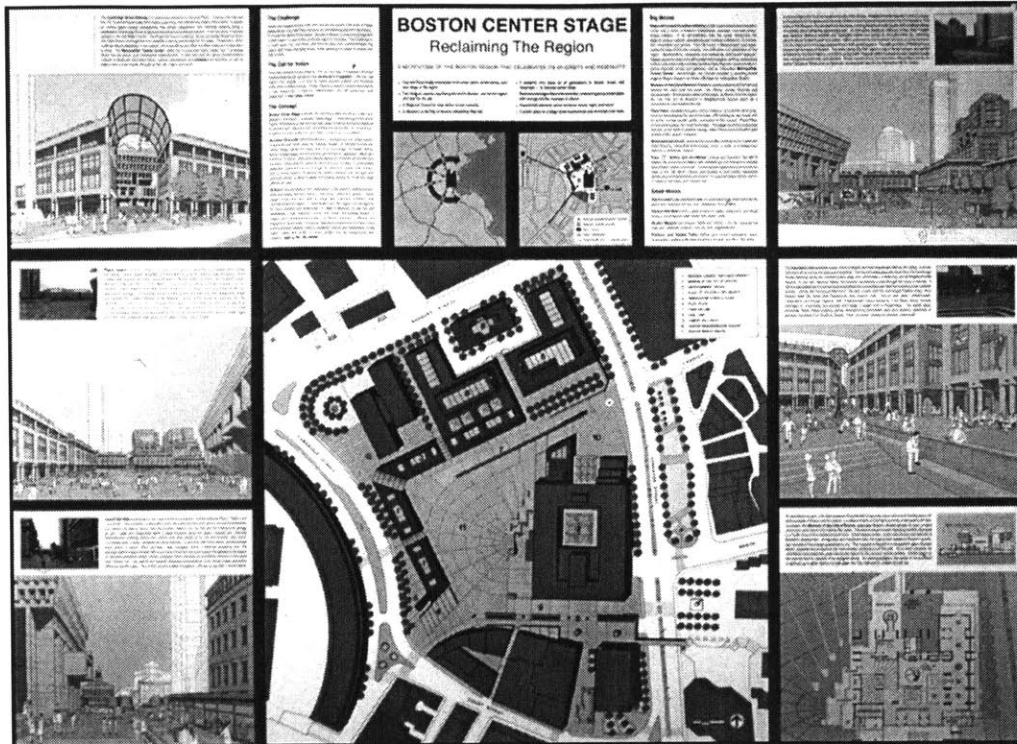
figure 26.

Antonio DiMambro, AIA with Arben Arapi, Daniel Barton, Jennifer Marshall, Mili Tomanic & Anthony Pangaro

is one thing to install a fountain and hope it becomes popular. It is quite another to know what it is that fountain is supposed to do and why it is there.

broad categories & meta-categories

The physical elements described above indicate different approaches to conceptions of the Plaza's purpose. While the mayor had called for a meeting place for Boston's diverse community, he left open the ways in which this could be achieved. Five categories can be discerned that answer this challenge: connection, enclosure, activity, multiple unique spaces, and information. Connection is best represented by the winning entry, *Meeting of the Trails*, where existing paths of the city are brought into and joined in the Plaza. The Plaza thus becomes another, albeit important, place in the linked experiences within Boston typified by the Black Heritage and Freedom Trails. Enclosure is seen in such entries as Sutton, Sullenberger, Yantis Architects, Lewis and Dennis, or mine. In these an emphasis is placed on physical boundaries that create a contained space for a well articulated Plaza. Activity is usually portrayed as being spurred by some new physical element, as in *Framework for Celebration*, while in some schemes it results sim-

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ply from programmatic enhancements. William Schaffer and As-
sociates provide the best example of a multiple unique space pro-
posal with their variety of different spatial elements and experi-
ences. Finally, the winning entry, *Public Video Village*, represents
the information category with its emphasis on information-giving
systems as spatial definers and purpose-givers within the Plaza.

These are the broad approaches taken in pursuit of the Com-
petition program requirement. They represent the means by which
entrants sought to satisfy the desire for a centralized, neutral meet-
ing ground for a diverse city. However, of even greater importance
is how these categories themselves are contained, how they cor-
respond to conceptions about space, and what the inherent phi-
losophies behind them are. The five classifications above are re-
sponses to a particular program and place, and while generaliz-
able across all entries, remain specific to this competition. In dis-
tilling these five into new categories, perhaps they can be deemed
"meta-categories," we seek to understand not only what gener-
ated Ideas Competition approaches, but what attitudes exist to-
ward public space in general, and what approaches may be as-
sumed to be probable in the future. In other words, it is not only of
interest to know *what* was done for this Competition, but *why* it
was done. The discovery of an ultimate system of beliefs about
the purpose of public space is what is sought.

When all the Competition entries are reviewed, and the sample
represented in this essay is more closely scrutinized, one finds
that there is a fundamental polarization between a conception of
the role of form in defining space and the function or purpose of a
space. Essentially, it is a separation between those for whom form
either determines or is, of itself, the purpose of space, and those
for whom social utilization of space independent of form is deter-
minative of purpose. From Hillier and Hanson, it can be seen as
the difference "in the ways in which space fits into the rest of the
social system,"[4] or the conception a society has about the role of
space in its culture. These will be categorized by name as the
Morphological and the Programmatic; that which holds form pri-
mary and that which prioritizes activity.

There is a danger, of course, in creating generalizing catego-
ries. If one speaks of, and then classifies, a polarization within a
particular group, and suggests that this polarization can be consid-
ered generalizable, one risks transferring such polarities to realms

beyond that group. The following discussion does not intend to do this. Rather, the intention is to discern and assess the nature of a broad polarization that is represented by the data analyzed in this essay: to wit, the Competition entries. Theories and qualities of existing Morphological and Programmatic spaces are, indeed, presented, but only insofar as precedents may better elaborate these camps' positions. These categories are not, in other words, considered to be universal conceptualizations of public space. That genre is far too complex to be so easily classified, while the categories themselves would be diluted by an attempt at making them universally encompassing. If, therefore, any aspect of these categories can extend past the confines of the Competition it is only in that they might reflect tendencies of thought that are represented in the entries. Since the goal is to discern some idea of the state of public space, we are aided by recognizing polarities in our data that may suggest the distinctions in conceptions that created that data. The following critique (which occupies the rest of this essay) is not intended to analyze or suggest the only two possible approaches to public space. Rather, it is meant to elaborate on the virtues of both, and in comparing them, determine their value relative to one another and as broad conceptual approaches to the design of public space.

Morphological Space

Morphological space will be defined as possessing two dominant attributes. First, it is distinguished by its particular formal and spatial characteristics -- shape, size, height of enclosure, scale, etc. Second, it is integrally connected to its context in terms of urban fabric and texture (figure-ground), spatial hierarchy, and patterns of movement. As the name suggests, it is the presence of some level of formal coherence that makes a space Morphological. Such characteristics are used to judge the space's ability and success in becoming part of the public realm and urban fabric of the city. A Morphological approach to space of necessity looks beyond programmatic needs. While form is of greatest concern, the concern often extends past the particular space under investigation. The particular space is conceived as part of a larger matrix of spaces that create the fabric of the city as a whole, and to which the individual space must be connected.

Giambattista Nolli's map of Rome represents the integral nature of connected and interrelated spaces in the Morphological city.
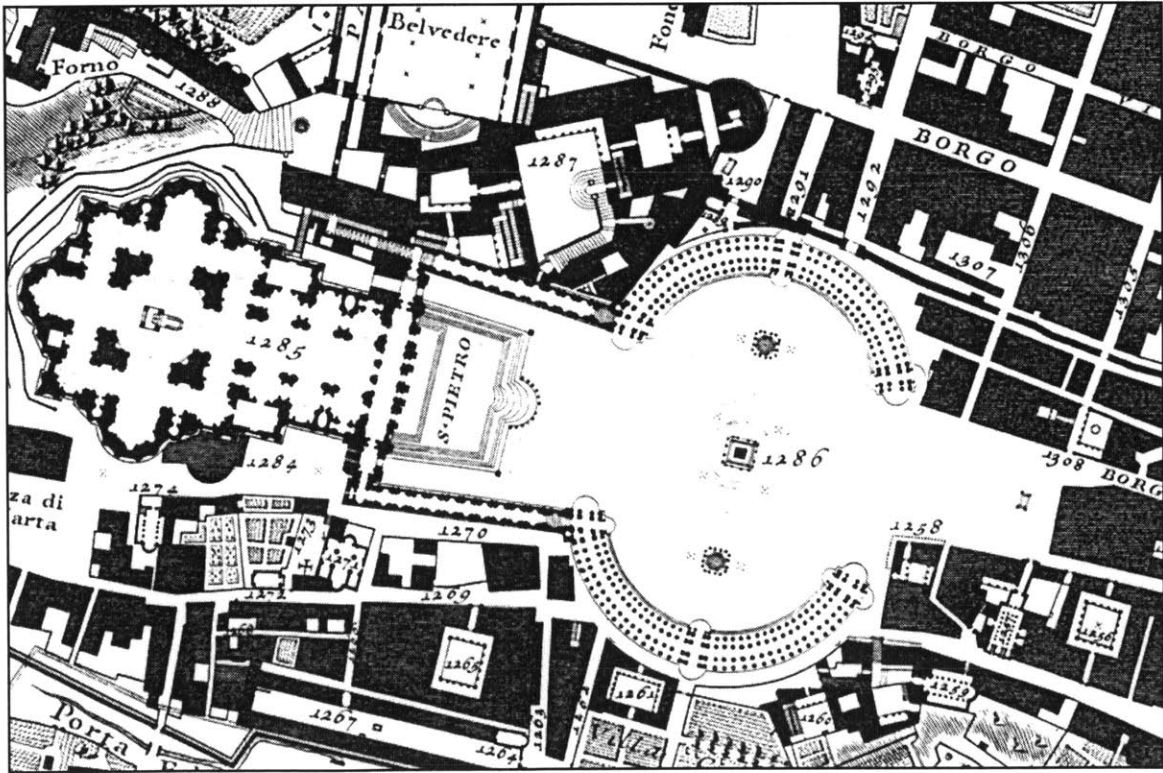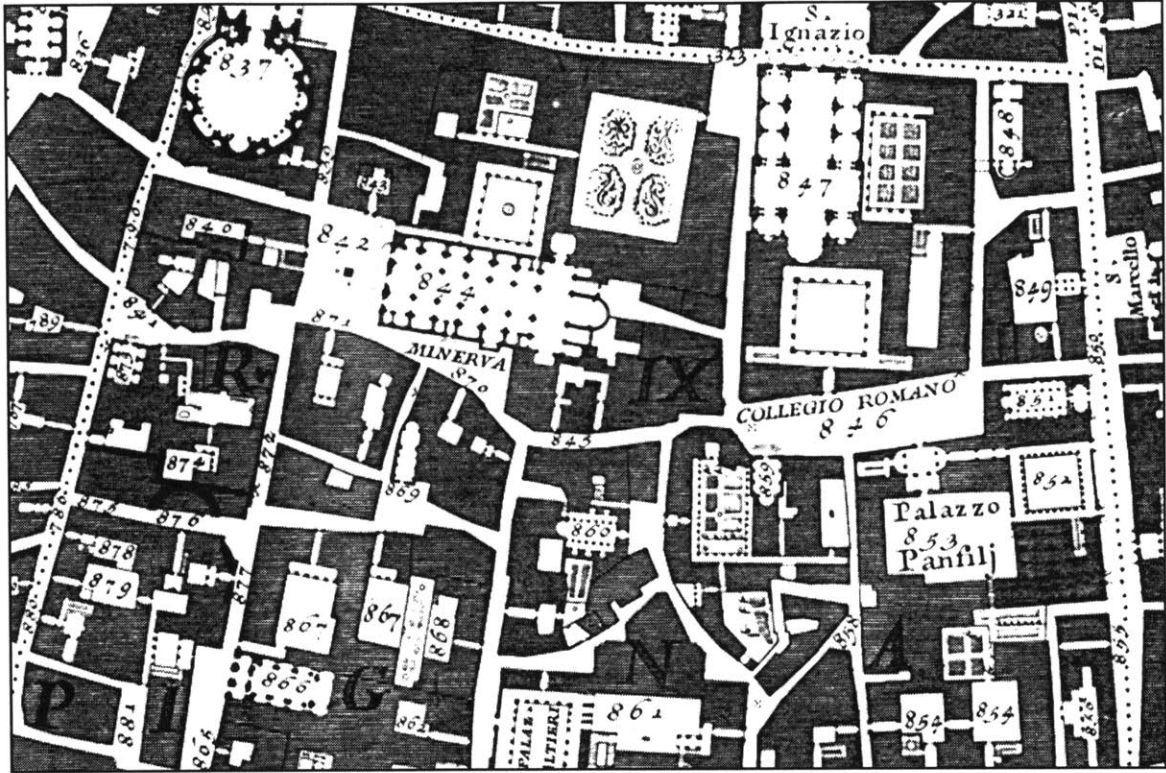
figure 27.

Nolli's map of Rome: general view and detail view showing the porosity and heirarchy of public and semi-public spaces.

figure 28. Revere Mall

figure 29. Revere Mall: gate
behind Old North Church
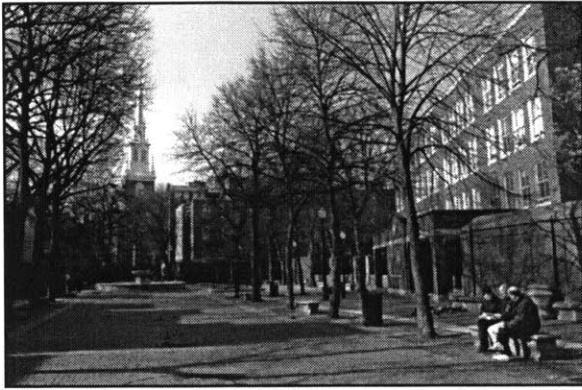
Nolli presents the city "primarily as the inter-woven relationship of spaces, incorporating the entire spectrum of sequences which connect the public and semi-public to the private."[5] Thus, the relationships of spaces, conceived along a continuum from public to private, establish the framework for the social relationships that occur within them.

A comparison of Nolli's Roman plan with a Nolli-esque plan of Government Center will help explain the Morphological treatment of City Hall Plaza (see figures 27 and 30). Nolli's Rome is a city of rich interrelations between spaces, both interior and exterior. It provides the full range along the continuum from public to private that allows for a variety of uses or potential uses and for a subsequent flourishing of urban vitality. What provides this vitality is the porosity of the spaces, their ability to be penetrated by the public and made a part of each individual's perception and ownership of the city. There is enough public or semi-public space given over to public access that the city can become infused with its people. The citizenry is not, in other words, marginalized to a limited number of allowable spaces and experiences that soon become too familiar and disinteresting. With a series of varyingly penetrable spaces, a hierarchicization of spaces will occur. Rather than a few spaces carrying the entire usage load, a diffusion of activity will mean a greater appropriateness of each space to its associated use. A city or district becomes more interesting with a greater variety of spaces, where one does not have to depend on one dominant space to accommodate all potential activities. In Kevin Lynch's lexicon, this is an "imageable" city, one which is "well formed, distinct, remarkable, [inviting] the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation....Such a city would be one that could be apprehended over time as a pattern of high continuity with many distinctive parts clearly interconnected."[6] Like a good bouillabaisse, there must be enough ingredients to enliven the whole, they must be sufficiently combined to create a sense of unity and belongingness, they must be appropriately proportioned to allow the primary ingredients to be dominant but not overwhelming, and no one element must be relied upon to carry the
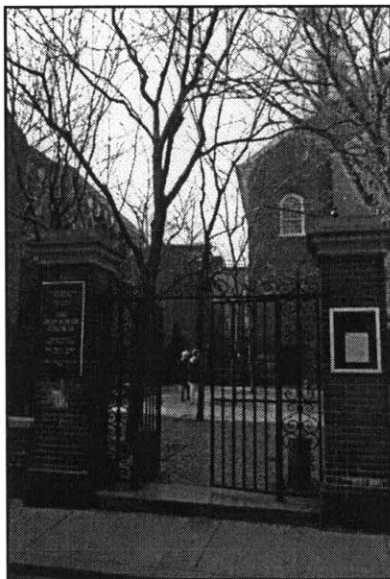
entire stew.

An example of such a Morphological bouillabaisse exists quite close to City Hall Plaza: Paul Revere Mall in the North End. Here we find a wonderful progression of public and semi-public spaces intimately relating to the private realm. Starting at Hanover Street, the Mall is entered and proceeded upon in a linear fashion. It contains a number of elements within it that create ancillary spaces that add spice to the whole -- the statue at the entry; the fountain well within the mall; the undulations of the wall and benches which contrast with the straight row of trees and create pockets of semi-independent side spaces. After crossing a small street, the Mall passes through a gate and enters a small courtyard at the rear of the Old North Church. An enclosed garden can be entered from one side of this court, or one can proceed up a short stair and through a narrow space between the Church and its museum to Salem Street and the front of the Church. The opportunity now exists to enter the Church or walk around it to two enclosed Church gardens. Further diffusion of the Revere Mall experience occurs at the small alley, where one can veer off to enter a nearby garden courtyard, or at Salem Street where one can continue uphill to the Copps Hill Cemetery. As a whole, the sequence offers a contrast to the fairly dense fabric of the North End, providing a variety of relieving spaces to that density and so serving its immediate neighborhood. With the Freedom Trail running straight through it, with its connection of Old North Church and Bulfinch's St. Stephen's church, and with its intersections with streets and alleys, the Mall is also connected to the greater city. It is a rich stew that is part of a multi-course meal.

Returning to the Nolli-type map of Government Center we find none of the character of the Roman map or Revere Mall description. Only a limited number of spatial interpenetrations occur in this area, while the diffusion of spatial sequences is so great as to lose all coherence of connectivity and allow related spatial experiences to simply disappear. Where the Paul Revere Mall contains its experiences within a controlled whole, while revealing tempting, related tangential excursions, Government Center allows so many opportunities that no hierarchy is possible. Further, few occasions arise that provide for experiencing the semi-public realm, the interior spaces of Nolli's churches and monuments that communicate with the outside but provide a new and different space
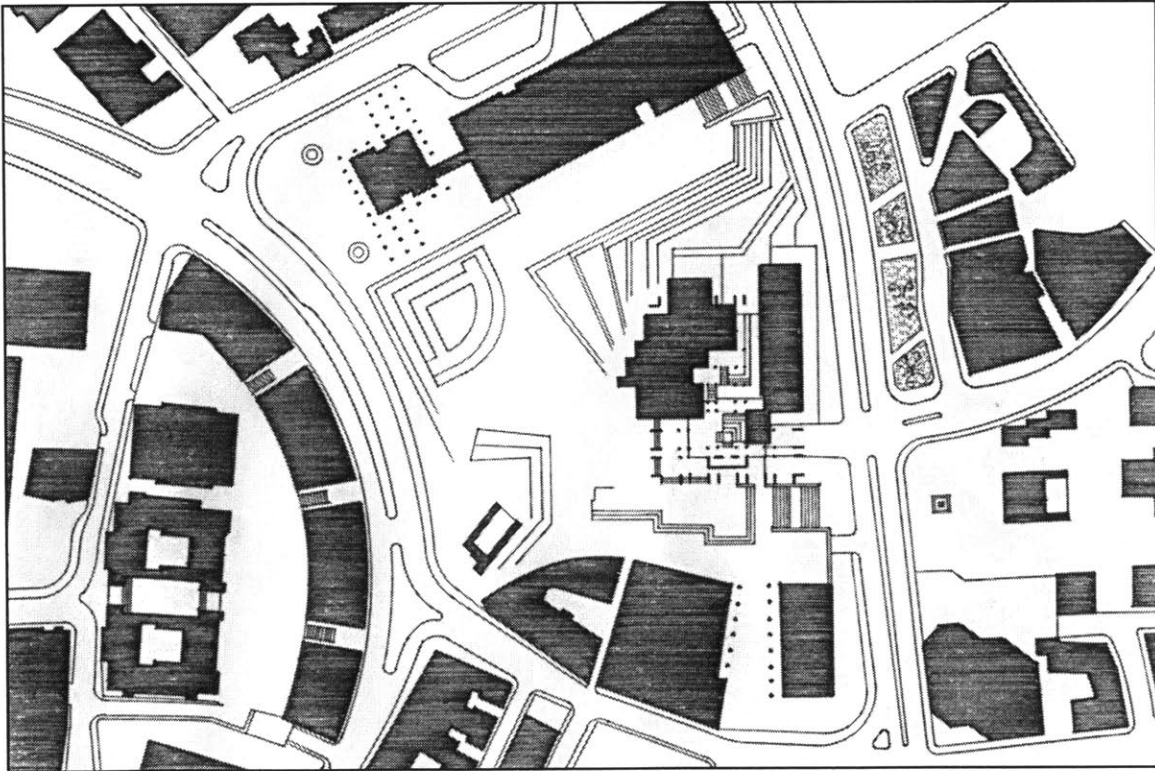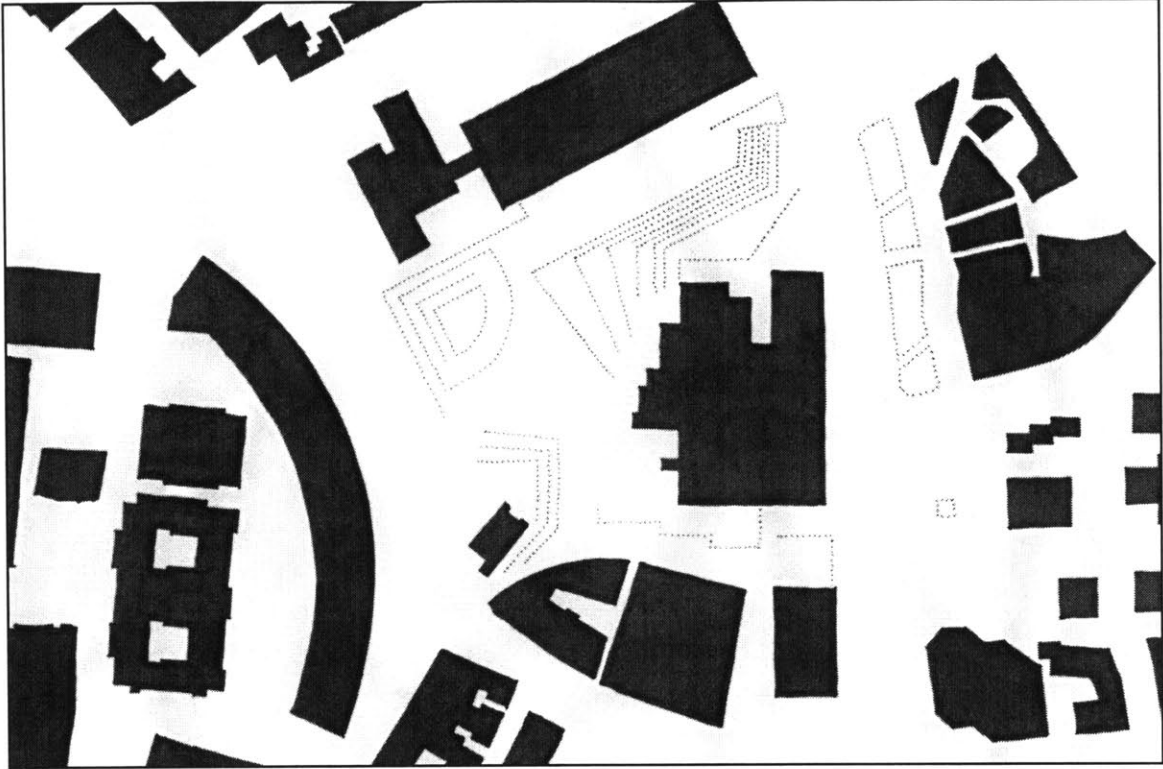
figure 30.   City Hall Plaza figure-ground and Nolli-type diagrams.

within. The State House, which is not a part of Government Center, is the closest such experience one will find -- the metal detectors at the County Courthouse discourage public passage, while the labyrinthine spaces of City Hall, while interesting, are of too great complexity for non-business related public use. Apart from these three limited options for spatial variety, the relationships indicated in the Nolli-type map and the figure-ground map of Government Center are nearly identical. Penetrable space hardly exists, leaving the public with a limited supply of experiential spaces. The Revere Mall and Nolli's Rome demonstrate the kind of robustness and substance that can enrich a city. They show how spatial patterns can make a city more interesting and more flavorful by giving it variety and enough diversity to allow for different experiences on different occasions. Like a good meal, these examples are satisfying and do not leave one wanting more. On the other hand, if public space is like a bouillabaisse, then the fish are just too strong at City Hall Plaza.

What is missing from the Government Center area, and what was being proposed by the Morphologists, is a complex urban fabric. It is not, after all, simply the spaces of Rome or Revere Mall that make them successful urban areas. Success comes, rather, from the combination and interplay of the solids and voids of the plan, between the buildings and accumulations of buildings in blocks and the spaces that sometimes are defined by the solids while at other times do the defining. The aim of the Morphologist is to create a field of such interplay, where enough of it exists to define an area of distinctive urban character, expressed largely through a development of the full range of the public to private continuum. The private, whether solid or void, is used to provide a counterpoint to the public. Mostly, the private is a solid, the building mass that delineates the spaces around it. These spaces -- streets and squares basically -- "are the principal elements formed from the urban medium of space....constituting the active compositional elements of the field."[7] This means that space is at once the primary means of defining the urban fabric, and is the place that literally "sees the action." Streets and squares are the medium in which public life portrays itself. However, sometimes the private is also a void, but an inaccessible one. Within the garden just off the rear courtyard of Old North Church one can see adjacent private gardens, or hints of their existence, but cannot enter them. These
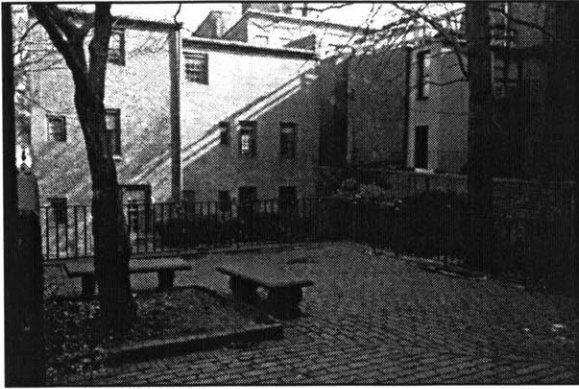
figure 31. Rear yards adjacent to Revere Mall.

gardens expand the perceptual limits of the public realm and give evidence of the world beyond the public walls, indicating that yet another level of complexity exists close at hand. One is not only titillated by such views into the almost forbidden, but is connected to a continuity of life that surrounds the public. A different kind of action occurs behind the private walls -- maybe scandalous, elegant, tawdry, sophisticated, but always exciting and curious because of its very inaccessibility. When there is enough interaction between the solids and the voids, that is, when the form is rich enough to provide the potential for this kind of mutual and self-perpetuating fascination between the public and private worlds, then the Morphologist is satisfied.

City Hall Plaza, of course, does not provide this. Its lack of physical porosity is not compensated by a revealing visual connectivity. It is a blank which does nothing to perpetuate a dialogue between two realms or provide an interactivity and symbiosis. Nor does it produce the kind of urban service mentioned above in relation to Paul Revere Mall. At the very least, a public space creates a contrasting condition within the fabric that releases the pressures of urban density and therefore bestows upon itself a purposeful and recognizable meaning. Siena's Campo or the Piazza San Marco are largely successful because of the density of fabric and population around them. As a whole, "the solid and continuous matrix or texture giving energy to its reciprocal condition, the specific space; the ensuing square and street acting as some kind of public relief valve and providing some condition of legible structure" is what is sought in concentrating on form.[8] The Morphological approach was aimed at providing principally an urban structure in which City Hall Plaza made logical sense, and the framework of an urban fabric in and around the Plaza that would support the mayor's inclusionary goals.

If the Morphologists were concentrating so much on formal characteristics for the Plaza area, how would that sponsor social interaction and community bonding? Would the creation of spaces that respond well to their immediate surroundings foster a city-wide interest? Does anybody but the tourist and the North End resident really sit in Paul Revere Mall? The formalist would have

to answer affirmatively to such questions for three reasons: scale, flexibility, and potentiality. Returning momentarily to the Nolli map of Rome we see a great intricacy of interconnected spaces, which, as discussed above, contribute to a dynamic interplay between the public and private. And, as we have seen, the Nolli type plan of Government Center does not offer anything like this. One of the

scale

differences is that of scale. Rome has a diversity of scales in both solid and void. It is composed of a multiplicity of small scale elements that can be easily penetrated by complex webs of space, or that can combine to create larger blocks of solids that prevent spatial infusion. Where a larger scale solid is introduced, such as a church, the smaller scale solids and voids can easily flow around it and accommodate it within their fabric. Government Center, on the other hand, contains almost completely large scale structures, and almost entirely divorces itself from anything of smaller scale. The intricacy of the Roman plan is missing because there can be no flexibility of plan with these huge solids, nor can the structures adequately combine or disjoin to allow spatial flow between them. Instead, due to their mass, they must separate entirely and, consequently, space rushes past and is lost. Similarly, it is felt that the spaces that correspond to these buildings must be of equally and proportionally large scale. When the entire area becomes so mis-scaled, the ability to achieve any semblance of spatial interplay and its resulting social connectivity is impossible. Thus, the Morphologists attempted to reduce the scale of the Plaza by adding small scale, spatially defining new structures.

flexibility

Where scale provides the possibility for spaces and forms to bond and enhance social interaction thereby, flexibility suggests the possibility of this occurrence over time and within the inevitable changes that will take place within the form, usage, and user groups. "[T]he apparent virtues of the traditional city," state Rowe and Koetter, include

> the very great versatility of the supporting texture or ground. For, as a condition of virtually continuous building of incidental make up and assignment, this is not under any great pressure for self-completion or overt expression of function; and, given the stabilizing effects of public facade, it remains relatively free to act according to local impulse or the requirements of immediate necessity.[9]

A Morphologist may not create a condition of universality today,

but will provide the physical setting whose universality may come and go with time. If the scale is small enough, incremental changes can occur that respond to new requirements without destroying the whole. If the spaces and buildings are designed without rigid requirements of particular specificity, they may have the opportunity to be adapted a multiple of times while retaining their part of the whole's integrity. Thus, instead of providing only that programmatic element that is sought in the present, the Morphological approach seeks to provide a space that will accommodate that element and many others.

potentiality

Therefore, from flexibility we derive potentiality. From Anderson we find that few spaces have "physically determined conforming uses. Rather, physical environments allow ranges of activities and significances which are bounded by what are usually broad limits of the possible."[10] Borrowing from and elaborating on Gans, Anderson suggests that the physical environment may be constituted of three parts. The *potential environment* is the entirety of the environment, or of the environment in question; the "arena for potential actions and interpretations." The *influential environment* is that part of the "arena" that is accepted, used, or understood by
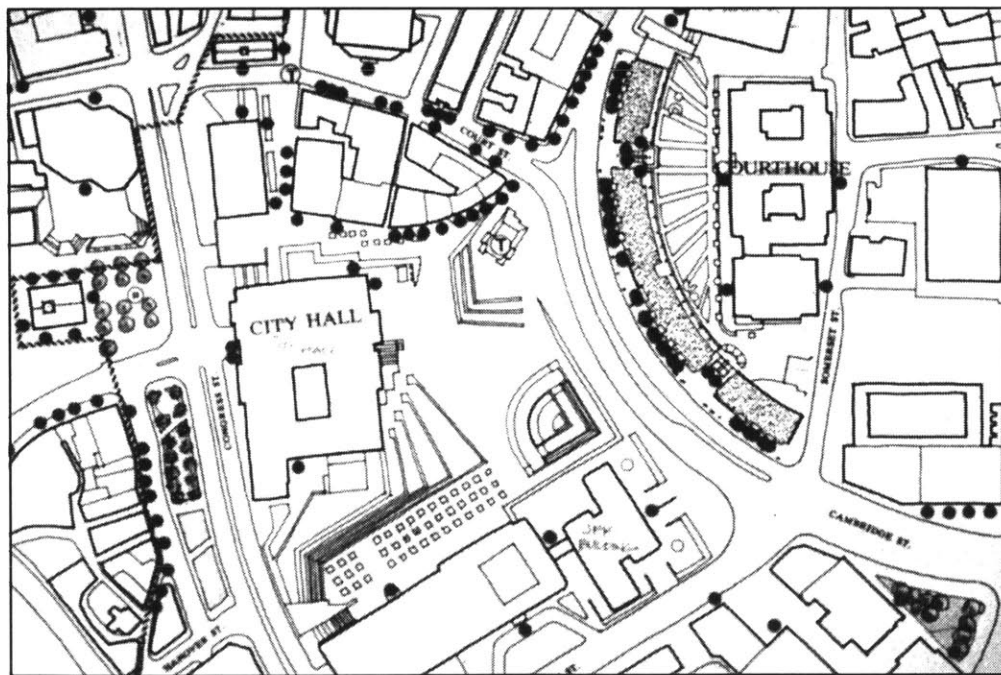
figure 32.   City Hall Plaza entries diagram. Each dot indicates a building entry. A misscaled space is typified, and exacerbated, by limited building entries that limit interaction between people, buildings, and the space.

its users. The *latent environment* is the rest of the potential environment that is not part of the influential: in other words, it is that part of the potential environment which remains to be used or discovered by other user groups or individuals.[11] It is the idea of latency that most inspires the Morphologist, because it implies that enough richness will be infused in an environment as to ensure a continuing interest and process of discovery in that environment over time. For Anderson, this involves contributing enough complexity and articulation to the environment to allow for change and new interpretation while simultaneously providing enough specificity to support current and future uses. For Norberg-Schultz, the environment should "offer rich possibilities of identification because of its complex articulation. This is in general a property of any great work of art, which, due to its complex structure, may be subject to various interpretations."[12] The goal of a latency-ridden potential environment is, to paraphrase R. D. Laing, whom Anderson quotes, to offer the fullness of human experience and the enhancement of human consciousness. Thus, the attraction of a Morphologically conceived space for City Hall Plaza lies not only within its recognition of present desires for its usage, but in its long term satisfaction of changing desires and uses. If its scale provides interesting intricacies and allows for flexibility in form and usage, and if it is suffused with potentiality for present and future interpretation and activity, then this kind of Plaza will have a broad and long lasting appeal.

It might appear that a Morphological approach focuses so intently on variability and flexibility that program, especially present program, is ignored. For, even though a Morphological design for City Hall Plaza may provide a long term space of ever changing levels of interest, this does not necessarily imply that it will immediately function as Boston's central meeting and gathering place. However, the very notion of flexibility suggests that rather than attempting to accommodate a single program, this kind of Plaza will seek to allow a multiplicity of programs within it. Purposefully few specific programmatic elements are provided in the Morphological Plaza plans because so doing might indicate a restriction of the space to a limited or even singular function. However, where few restrictions are given, greater freedoms may result, such that the Plaza can become not only the city's meeting ground but much more as well. This kind of design recognizes that uses and de-

sires may arise that cannot presently be foreseen, but which must be provided for as well as possible ahead of time. However, since it is a function of space itself that creates this potential, and since it has already been established that space must be related to form and, therefore, be limited and perceivable, it is a fact that some present and future activities will be excluded. There is, in fact, a long list of activities that cannot be conducted within an erstwhile flexible and potential-laden space. Some are ridiculous -- you cannot drag race in a Morphological City Hall Plaza, even if that would serve to bring diverse groups together. Others scratch at the surface of legitimacy -- a county fair might work, and would work programmatically, but would probably come up against the limits of the Plaza's space. But, if drag racing is ridiculous, the notion of an all-encompassing Plaza is even more so. It is less important how many activities a flexible environment will allow than the fact that it can hold more than one, and, therefore, will not become nonfunctioning and dead once the particular use for which it was primarily intended is no longer in vogue. This is the essence of the Morphological approach: to create an environment that has the potential to satisfy today's needs as well as tomorrow's.

No one entry of the Morphological category attempted to create a space that satisfies all of the above Morphological typologies. However, each in its way suggested an element of this approach to public space that it considered appropriate. Entries such as Sutton et al (figure 16), Lewis and Dennis (figure 21), and DiMambro et al (figure 26) were mostly concerned with issues of legibility, sought by the creation of a physically contained and defined space. These entries did not propose an intricacy of scale surrounding the Plaza, but did, in fact, give the Plaza itself a refined scale. The structures providing this new, smaller Plaza scale were left unspecified enough to promote a continuing flexibility and potentiality. With my proposal (figure 18), a breakdown of scale was proposed in order to provide a variety of spatial experiences within the City Hall environment. Likewise, the urban fabric was condensed around City Hall to embed it in the texture of Boston such that, like both old and new State Houses or Old City Hall, it relates to and is part of the spatial network of its environment. Finally, even the *Tomb of the Bambino* (figure 13) possesses Morphological characteristics. By proposing some level of spatial containment, a distinctively identifiable ground plane, and a symbolic yet

flexible use, the *Tomb* offers possibilities for extended use and urban spatial integration.

Programmatic Space

Programmatic space will be defined as space in which use and activity are of greater importance than form, and for which form is only a minimal determinant. Programmatic spaces are those which have a specific programmed use, as well as those for which programming is necessary while types of use remain variable. The urban fabric and public realm are considered in terms of differing and competing attractions into which new programs are placed. The majority of Competition entries correspond to this approach to space. That is, they provide a range of specific activities or activity generators that seek to directly satisfy the goals of the Competition and mayor. Although some provision of form is made in a number of these proposals, form is never more than a secondary agenda and is used to directly provide for the intended activities. Thus, activity becomes the source of urban texture which weaves different areas of the city together. In a sense, this approach behaves somewhat like zoning, wherein particular types of uses are programmed to occur in particular places, with overlap discouraged. By so doing, a collection of attractors is created. These attractors compete for public attention by the quality and type of their content, and together provide an entire set of functions for public use within the city.

It is easiest to identify the attractor function by first looking at major and obvious examples of usage-oriented spaces. Most cities have spaces that are devoted to particular uses or a limited range of uses. Among these are sports stadiums and arenas, fair grounds, band shells, even playgrounds. Such facilities have a certain degree of flexibility -- a stadium may accommodate baseball *and* football -- but remain generally specific as to their purpose. Thus, their reason for existence is to provide for that purpose. It is possible for some such spaces to support ancillary activities, as a band shell may allow for picnicking or loitering, but it remains clear that these are "nonconforming" uses. While Gans interprets such nonconfomance as the primacy of societal predispositions over formal determinacy, it would appear that a strong correlation between form and activity exists. Nonconforming uses prove that determinism is not absolute, yet the preponderance of established and programmed uses within a given Programmatic

figure 33. Playground at Cambridge Common

space suggests that some degree of spatial and formal predetermination does exist.

The reason predetermination is valid is because there are a number of activities or uses that a society wants to encourage and provide. If a city wants to have organized sports, or a place for carnivals and expositions, or a definite area where formalized performances can occur, or a contained and safe place for children to play, then it will create obvious spaces for such things. If a guarantee of a particular activity is sought it makes no sense to simply hint at it with a flexible space that is hoped will fill with that use. An obvious hierarchy must be established to prevent an unwelcome and perhaps unforeseen use from gaining primacy. If Boston's Hatch Shell had been intended for a kind of potentiality, then would Fourth of July picnickers willingly yield to the Pops Orchestra? Except for the sake of civility, the picnicker could claim as much right to use of the Shell as the Pops. To forestall this, the Hatch Shell was designed for and dedicated to a particular and primary use. In fact, the question of one group yielding to another is made moot by barriers to public access to the Shell: obviousness and guarantees of use are assured by physical decree. Central to such specificity, however, is specificity of activity: baseball, county fair, orchestral concerts, children's play. Such events are tangible and formalized and lend themselves to dedicated spaces. When the intended activity becomes amorphous or generalized the nature of its space can become unclear. What exactly does a diversified gathering place look like?
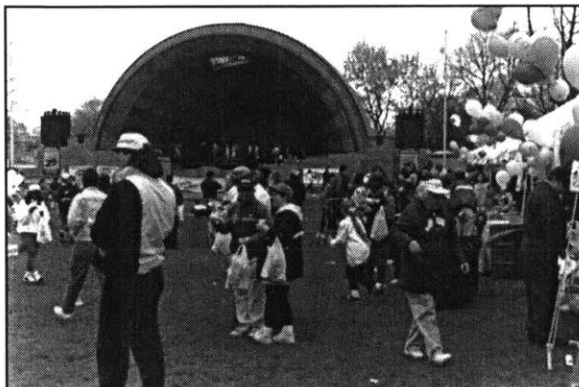
J. B. Jackson presents the historical basis of the gathering place of a political society, in which the square is placed in the most prominent part of town and is surrounded by its society's most important structures: court house, seat of government, archives, library, etc. In this center are symbols and activities that correspond to that society's self image: "statues of local heroes and divinities, monuments to important historic events." For Jackson, the traditional public space was not for

figure 34. Hatch Shell

simple socialization or entertainment: "it was for *civic* awareness."[13] Those who belonged to the society recognized their belonging through familiarity with the symbols in the square, while those who were not of the society and its laws were made aware of this through an inability to partake of the meaning of these objects. From the stated purpose of the Competition it would appear that Jackson's "civic awareness" is no longer the goal of civic space. Instead, it seems to be a kind of societal awareness based not on the binding quality of law and politics but on current notions of human unity. The exclusivity of political space that Jackson suggests defined the traditional square has been replaced with an overarching inclusivity designed to make all people feel welcome.

Jackson states his belief in the fall of civic space upon reflection on the work of William Whyte. Whyte studied the social dynamics of New York public spaces and concluded that "what attracts people most...is other people."[14] Sunlight, trees, fountains, chairs and other objects all serve to make a space more popular, and, therefore, successful. According to this study, the greatest use, and therefore, it seems to be concluded, the purpose, of public space is for sociability and merely being in the presence of other people. It is quite possible that Jackson has no need to lament this turn of events in the history of the perception of public space, for he may have overlooked a long standing social aspect with his politicization of space. If the Aristotelian agora is so important to Jackson for its political content, surely he cannot overlook the simple fact of human contact within it. The New England Puritan, of whom he is fond, did not come to the meeting house only on account of law: he came to see, be seen, and participate in the social life of his village. If a political change has occurred in regard to public space perhaps it is only that an inclusionary politics has replaced an exclusionary, and that the symbols representative of this change are the people themselves.

The question, then, of what a diversified gathering space looks like has a two part answer. First, and most importantly, it is full of people. Whether they are there purposefully to celebrate their inclusive politics, or are simply acknowledging inclusiveness by gathering with others, it is their presence and not their purpose that matters. The second part of the question is less definitive, for it returns the discussion to the elements of Programmatic space. Both Whyte and the group of Programmatic Competition entries con-

ceived of this kind of space as being "built on a set of basics that are right in front of our noses."[15] The list of items in the Awards and Ideas Citations (p. 40) has been narrowed to its essentials by Whyte: places to sit, sun and light, trees, water, and food. When all or some of these elements are included in a public space, it has the greatest potential for being a successful attractor. When the space is appropriately sited, in terms of accessibility, elevation, and relationship to the street, its attractive potential will be best utilized by being visible to a maximum of users. If the space is in a location that is not immediately obvious to the larger user group, then a logical connection to other adjacent attractors will be necessary, such as connecting City Hall Plaza to the Freedom Trail. That this aspect of the nature of Programmatic space is less definitive than that of being "full of people" is simply a matter of specificity. While Whyte's suggested elements are basic and straightforward, there is no formula or mold that guarantees the satisfaction of the goal of a well-used space. Just as a Morphological space must be carefully designed according to its nature, so too must the Programmatic. Thus, it remains simplest to reiterate that being full of people is both the goal and the nature of Programmatic space.

figure 35. New York Public Library: a place full of people.

Programmatic space would appear to be an answer to or a product of modern society. To return briefly to the Morphological, we see that this kind of space is most frequently associated with the traditional city, in which a density of residential and commercial uses both allows for and necessitates these "public relief valves." Its most frequent attraction lies in its relationship to the people who reside near it and use it for the openness it provides. Most of its potentiality lies in the allowances it gives its neighbors for their range of daily uses, from drinking cappuccinos to promenading to letting the children chase pigeons. It serves the larger community only infrequently for a big event. Why, then, should the suburbanite care about, much less visit, such a space? The "big event" may or may not be an attraction, and it may be better seen at home on T.V. anyway, while the daily activities of the city dweller are of absolutely no concern. There must be something available in a space

to cause non-neighbors to want to visit and use it, and to care about it.

This is becoming increasingly true as attractions proliferate and privatize. To pull the teenager away from his video games or the middle aged professional away from the garden requires something of greater interest than what they are doing, and even more so the farther they are from the city. Shopping malls have done this, providing the attractor of convenience for shopping and socialization. More than this, however, malls have been able to gather within themselves a combination of positive elements and negative features (namely, "this is *not* downtown") to make themselves into social centers for all age groups. Once themes are introduced, such as Mall of America's Camp Snoopy, the obviousness of shopping as an attraction is subsumed by a kind of place-making. Place becomes defined by image, and image becomes a commodity: people are attracted not so much by what the place is or what it offers, but by what they perceive it to be.[16] Within a culture dominated by market consumption, these perceptions are used in the competition between attractors. Thus, the developer of the West Edmonton Mall can proclaim, "What we have done means you don't have to go to New York or Paris or Disneyland or Hawaii. We have it all here for you in one place!"[17] If the suburban dweller can go to the mall rather than Paris, there is very little reason for him to go to downtown Boston. Thus, a Programmatic space uses its predetermined set of activities not only to get people out of their own homes, but to entice them to that space rather than another. It is much like the consumptive market, where marketability determines success.

Programmatic spaces are attractive to cities because of this marketability factor. If they are successful, that is, if they attract many people, they will do exactly what was in mind for City Hall Plaza: revitalize their neighborhoods with activity and money. The truly successful spaces will have city-wide impact. First, they will not only serve the people around them, but will attract people and money from the city at large and the suburbs. Rather than allowing activity to leave the city, these spaces will bring it in. Second, they will allow for a dynamic specialization and distinction in the city. Instead of legibility being achieved by physical means of fabric and texture, the city becomes knowable through its activities. Districts are established around particular uses or themes such
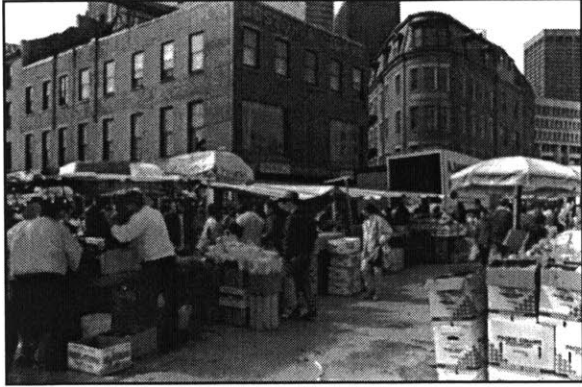
figure 36. Boston's Haymarket, a temporary yet recurring urban district.

that the city is composed of competing yet complementary parts, each of which contributes to the richness of the whole. In Manhattan, for example, a vibrancy results not so much from the physical city structure, which, after all, is fairly limited in its Morphological richness, as from the existence of distinct areas. The structure of SoHo is non-descript, but the form and imageability of its use make it unique. Finally, Programmatic spaces provide their own kind of flexibility. Not encumbered by formal bounds, they are more easily altered to meet the changing needs of their users. Using Competition entries as an example, it will be easier in the future to dismantle projection screens and erect the next desired elements than to demolish rows of expensive and privately owned surrounding buildings. Designing for attractors, just like designing consumer goods, recognizes the inevitability of change and, therefore, designs with change in mind. As a further benefit, this creates an atmosphere of awareness of fashion and design trends and philosophies, rather than a staid environment of traditional enclosing and encumbering space.

figure 37. Quincy Market withauxiliary uses that feed off of shopping.

To conclude this discussion of the nature of Programmatic space, it is appropriate to repeat that it is human activity that is sought. The best forum for such activity is one that promotes usage through programmed activities or activity types. There is a greater guarantee that people will go to Quincy Market when shopping is the primary programmed activity. The auxiliary uses that now occur, such as strolling or brown-bag lunching, are benefits of the space but are not its principle purpose. If the space were more loosely organized, wherein a variety of activities were equally supported by way of potentiality and where no distinct activity was promoted, it is questionable whether the market would be as successful as it now is. In other words, to be attractive, a space cannot be neutral; and if all other places have distinct functions that make them unique, a noncommittal space will be doomed. It is a simple matter of

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clarity: if people do not know what the space is for, and do not live in a city or society in which a flexible space is necessary or typical, they will not know how to use it and consequently will not use it. Use is the fundamental goal of Programmatic space.

Unlike the Morphological entries, none of which pursues all aspects of its category, many Programmatic entries are complete examples of theirs. *Framework for Celebration* (figure 11) and *Public Video Village* (figure 14), two First Award winners, are examples of this Programmatic totality. Each creates an environment that is determined by a programmed use: the former by public art exhibits that encourage public events, the latter by video information structures. Both can be described as a place of unique and attractive events that distinguish it from other Boston attractions. *Public Video Village* will be discussed as a Programmatic space in more detail later. The entries of William Schaffer (figure 20) and Philip Hresko (figure 22) are also Programmatic, but of a less defined sort. These two approach Programmatics broadly by providing an abundance of seemingly disparate elements. Hresko's title, "'Baker's Dozen' Design Ideas" accurately portrays this attitude, in which it is hoped something for everyone can be incorporated. In other words, these and similar entries forego a unique "district" in favor of an all-encompassing space. In this sense, they are like a fair with its multiple attractions. Finally, a review of the list of Awards and Ideas Citations (page 40) shows that most of the ideas praised by the jury were of a Programmatic nature. As we will see, this particular approach was highly valued.

1 "Revitalizing City Hall Plaza," Ideas Competition Program, 1994, p. 19.

2 *ibid.*, p. i.

3 Robert Campbell, "Giving purpose to City Hall Plaza," *Boston Globe*, 12 December 1994.

4 Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*, p. 4.

5 Steven Peterson, "Urban Design Tactics," *A.D. Roma Interrotta,* Vol. 49, 1979.

6 Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, p. 10.

7 *ibid.*

8 Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City*, pp. 62-63.

9 *ibid.*, p. 63.

10 Stanford Anderson, "People in the Physical Environment: The Urban Ecology of Streets," *On Streets*, S. Anderson, ed., p. 1.

11 *ibid.*, p. 6.

12 Christian Norberg-Schultz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*, p. 37.

13 J. B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, pp. 18-19.

14 William H. Whyte, "Small Space is Beautiful: Design as if People Mattered," *Technology Review*, Vol. 85, July 1982, p. 39.

15 *ibid.*, p. 49.

16 Michael J. Crosbie, "The Vatican of Consumption?" *Progressive Architecture*, Vol. 75, March 1994, pp. 70-73.

17 quoted in Margaret Crawford, "The World in a Shopping Mall," *Variations on a Theme Park*, Michael Sorkin, ed., p. 4.

**A NARROWING OF
VISION:
DESIGN SEMINARS
AND THE JURY'S
DECISIONS**

In September and October, 1994, three public seminars and an academic symposium were held in preparation for the City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition. Through the comments of the speakers' panels, which included design, political, academic, business, and community leaders, a series of ideas were presented that gave an indication of the prevailing sentiments about the Plaza. These ideas included not only the litany of present ills on the Plaza, but also visions of how it should be improved. Because each panel was composed of various points of view, these visions offered a wide range of sometimes contradictory possibilities. The intention for these discussions was to stimulate the generation of ideas in anticipation of the Competition and to do so in a broad enough way as to encourage the inclusivity sought by the Competition organizers. Thus, no dominant theme was raised that appeared to be the favored answer to the question of Plaza revitalization. It is interesting, therefore, to see how these visions were narrowed and refined by the time the jury was ready for its deliberations.

The third seminar, entitled "Designs: Past and Future," was probably the most important in terms of influence on upcoming design ideas. While the prior two had focused on perceptions, needs, and programs on the Plaza, the third was a discussion of the physical approach to such issues. It was obvious (perhaps only so because of the makeup of the panel, which was dominated by architects) that programmatic change was insufficient without corresponding physical alterations. However, the nature of such alteration was in dispute. Homer Russell, Assistant Director of Urban Design and Downtown Planning with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, favored an attitude of forbearance and restraint in addressing change. His two major points were that a fine tuned, small scale physical change accompanied by programmatic changes were preferable to total reconstruction, and that a non-hierarchical, spontaneous space would best allow for choice and democratic use. Robert Campbell, *Boston Globe* architecture critic, disagreed with Russell. According to Campbell, programming is not the answer. Instead, since the Plaza should be a 365 day-a-year space, it needs a distinct sense of purpose with individual and variable programs overlaid on this purpose. To this he added a list of suggested, though unelaborated, purposes and images: a city-wide historical repository, a center for commercial activity, a center of surrounding neighborhoods (a place of infiltration and

embedment within the city fabric), and a place for opening up and witnessing civic and governmental functions. Todd Lee, FAIA, of Todd Lee/Clark/Rozas Associates, who later indicated to me that his seminar comments revealed the Park Department's "hidden agenda," encouraged differentiation between the Plaza and the city's parks, especially Boston Common. The parks, he thought, must be reclaimed for their appropriate use, which he suggested tends toward the individualistic, while the Plaza must serve as the city's social and communal space. Planned activities distinguish his Plaza vision, but only if they are made easy, fun, and cheap. Finally, he commented that without people a space is dead. A month before the Competition began, the Morphological and Programmatic camps were forming.

One week following this final seminar, the Making Great Public Places academic symposium and competition were held. The symposium was a complement to the previous week's seminar, for it provided musings on the general nature of public space. Four panelists, again with a predominance of design professionals, presented their "Top Ten" lists of public space attributes (figure 38). Perhaps in anticipation of the next day's competition, in an effort to present philosophies rather than particular solutions, a kind of vagueness or open-endedness marked these lists. What is noteworthy about this panel's recommendations is that no distinct camps were defined. With City Hall Plaza, as such, removed from consideration as the primary subject of discussion there was greater latitude for discussing public spaces in general. The Plaza could certainly be included in this category, but it was left to the audience to determine the validity of panel ideas for the Plaza itself. Ultimately, it was left to the Competition jury to decide whether it agreed with these list or had one of its own.

On 8 December 1994, the night of the awards presentations in City Hall, Charles Redmon, FAIA, chairman of the jury, spoke of three issues he and the jury had considered in making its awards decisions. First, he suggested that the jury had used Mayor Menino's challenge to the competitors as its guideline. Thus, they looked for those entries that best met the mayor's desire:

- ideas that would bring residents and visitors to the Plaza to share in the city's life and culture
- ideas that would open City Hall to the public and make government more accessible

- ideas that would create a common ground for the diverse communities in Boston
- ideas that would revitalize the Plaza with life and energy.

Second, he stated the jury's top ten list of "what seems right for City Hall Plaza:"

- small interventions creating "lovable, sacred places"
- friendly entrances to the Plaza, including the redesign of Government Center T station
- defining the edges of the Plaza, especially along the J.F.K. Federal Building, and humanizing the scale of the edges with objects and activities
- creating an infrastructure for Plaza events
- an Artist-in-Residence at City Hall Plaza, and art installations in and around the Plaza
- commercial activity at the Plaza edges, places to sit, and "food, food, food"
- doing something with the fountain
- providing distinct "place markers"
- placing the Plaza within the existing network of city parks and places
- making the Plaza a symbol for the future, "of how groups of people can cherish the Plaza, how people can cherish each other."

Finally, he gave a smaller list of "what seems wrong for the Plaza:"

- large grass areas that are too hard to maintain
- unusual paving schemes, such as city maps, that are only readable from the air
- large buildings that fill the Plaza, and attempts to hide or mask City Hall or J.F.K.
- "re-historicizing" the Plaza area
- active recreational or sports activities such as skating rinks or basketball courts.

I later spoke with Mr. Redmon and was given an elaboration on these points. According to Redmon, the jury had several preconceptions about the Plaza that they were looking for in the entries. One of the largest centered around usage, and usage by whom. A great effort was made to make the Competition inclusive, and the jury was concerned that inclusivity extend to the Plaza itself. During the first pre-Competition seminar, Hubie Jones, Senior Fellow at U Mass Boston's McCormack Institute, spoke of a

ROBERT CAMPBELL	ZEREN EARLS	DAVID LEE
10. Has windows 9. Enables us to imagine ourselves behind these windows 8. Full of exits and entrances 7. Includes old and new 6. Offers a promise of immortality in the marks of its users 5. Has ghosts/memories, even when empty 4. Has a perimeter wall, and things within 3. Includes an important public building that tries, but fails, to dominate the space 2. Suggests the world beyond 1. Where we all have permission to enter.	10. Easy to maintain 9. Easy access to utilities 8. Responsive to climate 7. Interacts with commerce 6. Culturally animated 5. Includes playful features 4. Offers viable scale and levels 3. Architectural personality 2. Invites democratic participation 1. Functional for public use.	10. Nobody's turf 9. Art and politics can happen any time 8. Linked to a purpose 7. Architecture symbolizes purpose 6. Clean but not tidy 5. Has sunlight, at least sometimes 4. Should not cost a lot to get to or use 3. A memorable photo taking spot 2 A place where you can't wait to go to without your parents 1. A place to send out-of-town guests.

figure 38.   Seminar speakers' "Top Ten" lists [1]

lack of connection to City Hall on the part of the city's African-American population. Using this as a model, the jury was looking for ways to create encompassing connections. Similarly, ways to avoid the distinction of clientele bases that are apparent in Quincy Market and Downtown Crossing were sought; that is, ways to create a unified and diverse clientele for City Hall Plaza. Other than these quests for an inclusive spirit for the place, a number of practical elements were desired. It was hoped that daily activity would be addressed as a priority over special events, without neglecting the possibility of the latter. An invitation to simple uses and activities, and amenities for ordinary people, were preferred. A definite, identifiable place was sought; a "there there." The jury was not looking for another Boston Common, although it was not averse to a softening with landscaping. Entry and arrival, it was hoped, would be made clear and would be made part of a larger inclusion of the Plaza in connections to the city's pedestrian pathways. Finally, the jury thought that year round and day and night use were appropriate and desirable.

The jury's selections for the Competition winners indicate a preference for the Programmatic type. In fact, very few of the cho-

sen entries even approach the Morphological. Redmon explained this in historical and practical terms. In his estimation, there is a different conception of public space in Boston now than when the Plaza was first constructed. Where Boston of the late 1960's and early 1970's was in an economic and spiritual doldrums and was looking for a symbolic uplift, the city today has a renewed confidence and has undergone a kind of renaissance. Today's Plaza should reflect that difference. The jury felt that containing the Plaza in a Morphological manner was a way of rehistoricizing it. Redmon and the others felt that the city was strong enough now to allow the Plaza to keep its essential form as a representative of its own time, taking its position along side so many other active Boston historical artifacts. Enclosing it might suggest that it could not be adequately controlled or utilized, an unthinkable admission for a now robust city. With a kind of bow to the tenuousness of urban health, Redmon also suggested that certain ideas had an appeal because of their immediate possibility. In fact, the entire citations class was chosen for this kind of immediacy and for the apparently limited costs of its ideas. Thus, there was a search for ideas that conformed to the jury's image of what the Plaza should be as well as conforming to Boston's budgetary limitations. When the program called for big ideas and crazy ideas, it forgot to mention that they would also have to be feasible ideas.

Although feasibility was not actively encouraged by the program (the program indicated the location of subway tunnels and other underground items that would make some structural solutions expensive or infeasible, while comments during the seminars suggested that these might be overlooked in the face of particularly tantalizing ideas) its place in final deliberations becomes more clear when a comprehensive vision of the Plaza's future is understood. Vineet Gupta, Todd Lee, speaking on behalf of the Boston Society of Architects, and Charles Redmon all spoke of the necessity and desirability of including the private sector in Plaza decision making. Under Parks Department guidance, two public - private ventures related to the Plaza are now being realized. One, the more powerful of the two, is the City Hall Plaza Abutters Group, which includes all of those parties who abut the Plaza, such as The Beacon Management Company, owners of Center Plaza, The Rouse Company, managers of Faneuil Hall Marketplace, Coffee Connection, The Bostonian Society, and the General Services

Administration which occupies the J.F.K. Building. The other, The Friends of City Hall Plaza, is a more populist organization. This group is intended to be the vehicle by which the public at large voices its concerns and desires about the Plaza, and works to effect change on it. Already, the former group is sponsoring a feasibility study to determine how the Plaza might best sustain itself economically, while an Action Plan for long term policies and loose design guidelines is being formulated. Market studies and structural studies are also planned to help determine what might be appropriate and possible on the Plaza's surface.

These groups, while definitely concerned about the present state of the Plaza, are not necessarily comprised of urban visionaries. They are practical, money oriented, and tend to be averse to major changes. If it can be shown that positive solutions to the Plaza's problems can be achieved at reasonable expense, their involvement and support can be guaranteed. Once "crazy ideas" are allowed into the discussion, there is a good reason to believe that their enthusiasm may begin to wane. Moreover, the subtleties of a Morphological argument about urban fabric can easily be lost to the immediacy of popular activity. It is far more clear to recognize the success of Faneuil Hall Marketplace's cash flow than to understand its spatial role in the city. Thus, in order to garner and maintain the financial and political support of key local players, there was a necessity of choosing comprehensible, understandable, and feasible Competition winners.

Three categories of such winners were created to indicate how well the jury felt the entries responded to the mayor's and the jury's criteria. The five First Awards were unanimously felt to contain a coherent single vision and could "overlay themselves on the Plaza."[2] That is, they could successfully work as activity generators without altering the basic form of the Plaza. The Awards category entries were felt to approach the clarity of the First Awards, but did not receive unanimous approval. Finally, the Ideas Citations were given to entries that contained ideas the jury felt were interesting, provocative, and potentially useful, but were not the kind of complete images that either award class offered.

With these awards and citations, Redmon felt a new City Hall Plaza could emerge and take on a new role in the city. Where it had once been called the city's "living room" or its "welcome mat," it could now be those things and much more. It could be a place

where the distinction between government and citizens is blurred and their roles connected. It could be a place where all of the city's players can congregate and mix, from government to business to citizen. Finally, it could be a place of comfort and identity "on all people's maps." The Competition, Redmon thought, provided the means and the lessons for achieving these goals. It had shown that there is a need for a complement of intimate spaces that work within an expansive space and provide human scale and activity to that space. It had also shown that activity and attractions are absolutely necessary and can be accomplished in a number of ways. The bottom line for Redmon and the jury was the question of how liveliness can be infused into the Plaza and what best provides that potential. Their answer was the Programmatic approach.

1   Robert Campbell, Architect, Architecture Critic for the *Boston Globe*. Zeren Earls, President, International Alliance of First Night Celebrations. David Lee, Architect, Stull and Lee; Harvard Graduate School of Design.
2   Charles Redmon, FAIA, interview, 14 March 1995.

QUESTIONS OF INTENT AND SUCCESS

In almost unanimously glowing terms, the Competition's organizers and promoters consider it a great success. Not only are they thrilled with the quantity of ideas that were generated, they are astounded by the number of people who simply showed interest in City Hall Plaza. According to Charles Redmon, there was early concern that few would bother to undertake the effort when the prize money, that was to be split between all winning entries, was only $5000. Nonetheless, over 300 Competition Kits were given to interested parties, while well over half of those kits resulted in submissions. But, even more than these numbers, Redmon was "wonderfully surprised" by the evidence of passion and beliefs about the Plaza that was shown in the entries.

Indeed, considering that one of the Competition's goals was to generate public interest and involvement in the Plaza, there is no denying its success. It proved that, given the opportunity and the proper object of focus, a city's residents have a definite interest in public space and the form of their environment. The citizenry is not simply a passive user of whatever spaces designers and developers give it. People are, it turns out, eager to not only use their city's spaces, but to transform those spaces to suit their needs and expectations. The results of the Competition, even if only applicable to Boston itself, are important, for they show that laypersons are aware of their environment and are eager to find and share in solutions to the perceived problems within it. A greater than expected level of public sophistication about public space was also revealed through the entries. If the comments carried in the *Globe* prior to the Competition were illustrative of common thinking about public space, there should have been nothing but grass and trees proposed by the non-designer entrant. While much foliage was proposed, there seemed to be an implicit understanding about the presence and importance of nearby Boston Common and the different role that the Plaza should play.

This kind of understanding and sophistication is one of the reasons for the kind of success the Competition achieved. As a whole, the competing public proved itself to be a tremendous idea generator. It should be expected that the designers would provide the wealth of solutions that they have been trained to produce, but no such expectation confronted the layperson. It gives encouragement to the professional involved in urban design that the people affected by his work will potentially be knowledgeable participants

in it. It would seem that the possibility for good design is increased by an attentive public. Thus, in this way, the Competition provided a service to the realm of public space. Not only did it keep open the debate about the nature and purpose of public space, but it broadened this debate to include the public itself. Inclusivity was not only sought for the Plaza, but was encouraged by the Competition's form. The entire process, thereby, has a chance to become self-perpetuating. Having once involved the public, a framework for its continuing involvement and interest is more easily established. Thus, the program and the means for achieving that program enforce one another and are more likely to lead to successful resolution.

The Competition was also of service to public space in general by being of service to a particular space. As mentioned above, City Hall Plaza is a prominent space whose influence extends beyond the Boston city limits. As an architectural attraction, if not an icon, the Plaza and attitudes about it are well known to the design profession. Solutions that are sought for this one space will consequently have ramifications for other spaces nationwide, if not beyond. City Hall Plaza's Competition will not only influence these other spaces by its physical solution, but equally by the process of arriving at that solution. Once again, it is the importance of the role of the public in the debate about public space that proves to be a major Competition success.

It is important to keep this success in mind, and the fact that the Competition involved both process and product, when going on to discuss its failures. For, as successful as the process may have been, the product cannot be said to have achieved the same. It may be necessary to temper this statement with a qualified assessment of the product's success. Such a statement would suggest that the success of the physical aspect of the Competition was limited, and that this success came from generating a good set of ideas that are of secondary importance to the discussion of public space. The problem with the Competition was that it was by intention only seeking ideas. Long term or permanent solutions were disfavored while small-step ideas applicable to immediate implementation were prioritized. Such secondary goal seeking, while possibly appropriate in the present in the face of wanting to take some kind of action on the Plaza, leaves open the distinct possibility of a continual process of ideas implementation without

benefit of problem resolution. One wonders when the next "Ideas Competition" will be held and whether the currently eager public will not then see beyond the facade of quick fixes and drop out of a recurrent debate. In other words, it would appear that the Competition ultimately had as much to do with local politics as with urban design.

If the Competition ever had an intention of being more than a political tool, (which it did -- the B.S.A. and the Parks Department had more than a political agenda in their efforts to transform the Plaza), then it failed. Its failure came in terms of primary urban design issues, that is, the nature of city form. There were strong notions that the Plaza is a poor space and that something must be done with it. There were political interests in making it a gathering place for the city's diversity, but there was no conception of what this really meant in terms of the physical city. There was a program given that was neither distinct nor comprehensive, that was at once too limited and too broad. It was a vague program that left all vision to the competitor and took no leadership stance. Instead of specifying what was sought in a place of common ground, the city instead chose to accept a wide range of disparate ideas from which it must now pick those that it thinks best suit its agenda. However, without specifying or clarifying that agenda (is it truly inclusiveness, or is it the demonstration of a willingness to do something, or to spruce up the Plaza with only a little money so it looks better, or to significantly alter and improve the urban fabric?) there was no meaningful dialogue about whether it is appropriate or not. There was simply a plethora of individual ideas about how City Hall Plaza can look better and attract more people. Individual ideas like these are valuable, but only in their appropriate context. In this instance, that context would have been a specific agenda or vision from City Hall describing what it expected out of a common gathering place. Like the patron who does not really understand music or his composer, City Hall merely asked for something pretty, leaving the composer the opportunity to create anything his heart desired.

There are three reasons the Competition failed to comprehend or address the primary urbanistic issues of public space. First, it did not suggest a long term plan or purpose for the Plaza. It did not answer, much less raise, the questions "what does the Plaza want to do?" nor "what does the Plaza want to be?" It was as-

sumed that "a meeting place for Boston's diverse community" was a sufficient program statement for providing public space. It was not. Second, no indication of the preferred form for such a space was given. Unlike the competition to design City Hall, no guidelines for form or function were provided. No position was taken with which one could agree or disagree, so vagueness predominated. Finally, ideas were allowed to supersede solutions, but proved insufficient on their own. In sum, the Competition suffered for a lack of the very element it was intended to show: vision.

Obviously, care and forethought must go into determining the nature of such purpose or vision. The City Hall Plaza designed by Kallmann McKinnell and Knowles had two purposes, but only one success. It was to be a place of passage rather than gathering, but there was little to suggest what destinations were intended for that passage. The Plaza was, and largely remains, on the edge of downtown, with a minimum of highly popular destinations beyond that require passage through its space. Neither the West End nor the North End, nor even Boston Garden, are best accessed from the Plaza, but instead are easiest to reach from its periphery. It is, in fact, something of a detour to go from downtown to any of these destinations through the passage of the Plaza. Moreover, from a design rather than a strictly purpose-oriented perspective, the Plaza does not encourage passage. While it is physically easier to traverse along a line of elevation, perpendicular to the slope of a hill, the location and layout of the Plaza forces one to pass parallel to the slope, either up or down. Rather than doing so in a grand way, as at Rome's Scala di Spagna, or even in a direct way, as in San Francisco's many hillside pedestrian park passageways, the Plaza allows the pedestrian to choose a desultory path down fairly uncomfortable shallow steps or ramps. Neither the purpose nor the form of the Plaza supports the intention of passage.

Fortunately, at least for the designers, passage was secondary to the other purpose of revealing the existentialist condition of man, as discussed above. For this, the purpose and the form are harmonious and successful. Unfortunately, since few of the public were interested in such revelations, the various programs for the Plaza have not coincided with its purpose and form. It should make us rather skeptical, then, of the efficacy of simple, easy, reductionist statements of purpose, whether "a revelation of man's existentialist nature," or "a common meeting ground for Boston's diverse

community." Such vague and minimal statements of purpose will not long serve their purported goals. As we shall see below, the more variability that is allowed to exist in the program or purpose, the more disuse and failure are likely. Purpose and vision must be well defined in advance.

THE PROBLEM WITH PRO-GRAMMATIC SPACE

There is hardly an idea presented in the Competition that is not in some way a good idea. Even some of those approaching the "crazy" designation are not so bad as to not be potentially worthwhile and popular. Disneyland is home to many of the world's more unusual ideas, and few would deny its success. Unfortunately, one simply does not know when such Competition ideas might become good enough or appropriate to provide the attraction desired for the Plaza. This means two things. First, some ideas may be excellent in terms of public use and attractiveness, but may not have the widespread appeal sought for Plaza elements. Second, other ideas may have latent broad appeal that will not become apparent until social trends align with these features. Considering the nature of trends, however, such an alignment may be fleeting. Returning briefly to Disneyland, its "crazy" ideas are not static; today's park is constantly growing new thematic appendages to create and provide for public demand. Many of its original attractions remain popular, yet as a whole the park would suffer under a reputation of staid conservatism if it did not anticipate consumer desire. Disneyland and places like it will not succeed without constant change.
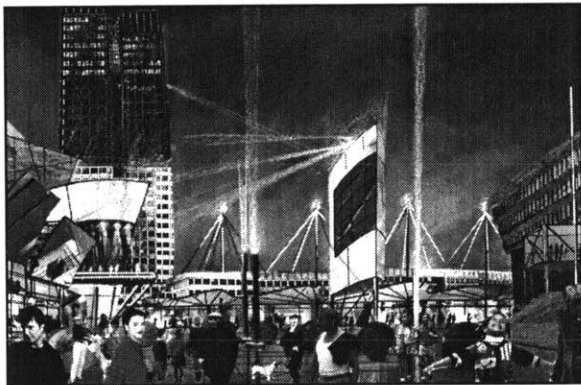
figure 39. *Public Video Village*

One of the winning entries can be used to illustrate both of the above possibilities. The *Public Video Village* is a wonderful concept for a vibrant and dynamic place that conceivably would be attractive to many people. However, one can imagine it being more popular with particular age and income groups, a video cognoscenti, while leaving others overwhelmed by the technology and the random, chaotic video images. It does not seem to offer enough significant alternatives to its main feature to ameliorate the discomfort of its disaffected constituency, nor to attempt a gradual means of introduction to these potential users. Were it to provide a successful introductory feature it might effect a satisfactory solution to the problem of synchronization of supply and demand. On the other hand, it might also hasten its own obsolescence by achieving wide spread familiarity: for, a saturated market will languish without an infusion of novelty. This particular entry, then, serves as a generalizable example of how an apparently good idea is insufficient on its own to serve the goals of the Competition.

Such an example is not only generalizable to the Competition, but to public space as a whole. In the majority of public spaces there is a purpose or function that is predominantly devoted to public use; as agora, forum, or a combination of the two. In these instances there must be present a set of qualities that generates appeal for the space and prevents deterioration. Appeal is provided by the character of the elements contained in the space, both formally and programmatically. Questions to be asked in relation to creating appeal include: is it possible to contain all appeal in one place; is it possible to appeal to all people; is it wise to rely on one place to appeal to all people? Recalling the issue of focused districts from the discussion of Programmatic Space above, perhaps it is better for the contemporary city to sponsor a range of different spaces that have different appeals. A single space does not then carry the burden of a totalizing appeal, while a variety of city districts will receive benefit from their associated public space. The burden is, indeed, great, as many Competition entries proved. In an attempt to provide as wide a range of appeal as possible, these entries offered so many elements as to decrease appeal. In the face of multiple themes and methods of attraction, no sustainable or well developed level of interest could be maintained. Except for those for whom constant and variable sensory stimulation is desirable, this kind of space quickly loses its appeal. To attract all people to one place appears, therefore, to entail a logical impossibility, since the very methods of attraction become deterrents. Appeal, it would seem, must be fairly specific and must be only limitedly combined.

The specificity of appeal must then take into account deterioration. Physical deterioration is always an obvious factor which must be addressed. It is, however, more likely for some items than for others, and this must be acknowledged when determining the nature of a space. Of the few unique physical items provided in the existing City Hall Plaza, the fountain fell victim to a deterioration unbecoming its popularity. Consequently, once it was broken its popularity diminished dramatically. If it is desired that long term success be possible in a space, then its elements, both formal and programmatic, must have a corresponding longevity. Physically, this implies that solid and substantial materials be used in construction and maintenance. The flimsy and temporary will not survive. It is the same programmatically: lasting usage will only re-

sult from lasting appeal. This also means that deterioration into kitsch must not occur. A continual search for novelty in order to maintain attractiveness will inevitably lead to what has been described as "an attitude of inauthenticity in which places are treated as things from which man is largely alienated, and in which the trivial is made sign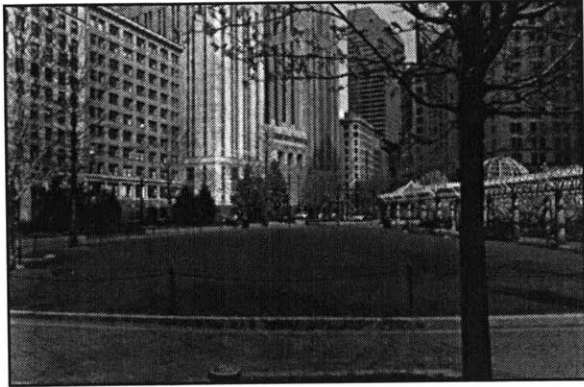ificant and the significant is made trivial."[1] Thus, whether because of physical or programmatic deterioration, and often simply due to a loss of interest regarding a particular look or style or thing, continual replacement will occur.

figure 40. Boston's Post Office Square. A place of great appeal for a predominant use -- workday lunching.

Let us return to the *Public Video Village* to explore these issues.[2] We have already noted that its appeal may be limited, either to a particular group or to a particular stretch of time. It then becomes a question of its very physical duration. One cannot imagine its lightweight physical framework lasting longer than fifteen to twenty years without continual extensive maintenance or eventual replacement. The technological features used to project images and sound can be assumed to have an even shorter life span due to both prolonged usage and the inevitable obsolescence of technological devices. Of course, one must simultaneously question whether its physical duration will outlast that of its popularity, or whether it will be abandoned before decay has begun. In either instance, the result is the same: a project that was intended to serve as a major and predominant popular attraction has fallen into disrepair or disrepute causing great civic consternation and desperate appeals for its replacement. One can well understand the opinion of a Boston citizen when giving his comments on what to do with the Plaza: "Don't do it! The fads and fashions of the times come and go. We forget that City Hall and its Plaza won dozens of awards when they were built; and redoing the Plaza is in that sense like modernizing the Custom House Tower with aluminum siding."[3] If redesigning City Hall Plaza or any other public space is going to be nothing more than an exercise in current fashion that will more likely than not lose its appeal to the next appearing trend, then it is probably better to leave it alone.

The lesson of appeal and deterioration is that disuse of Programmatic space is far more likely than disuse of Morphological

space. In Programmatic space, objects and programs or activities are primary, while the space is secondary. If the object or program is devalued, nothing of value will remain to support the space or place. In Morphological space, the space itself is primary and can accommodate changing programs and trends within itself. Thus, devaluation of programs can occur, leading to replacement with new programs, while the space remains stable and attractive of itself. Since a Morphological space provides flexibility and potentiality, it is far more likely to contain secondary uses that will remain active even upon the demise of the primary use. If, for example, ice skating were to disappear altogether from Rockefeller Plaza in Manhattan, it would not cease to remain the popular destination for eating, socializing, and people watching that it is when skating occurs. On the other hand, if the *Public Video Village* were to cease to exist and be dismantled, the pre-existing unpopular void of City Hall Plaza would be all that remains of an unsuccessful attempt to invigorate that space. Reliance solely on Programmatic space provides too great an opportunity for total spatial failure.

figure 41. Fountains at the Trocadero, Paris. A flexible Morphological space that hosts a variety of secondary activities.

Spaces must be highly and formally programmed if they are to survive as Programmatic spaces without regard for form. Often, this implies reliance on special-events programming that activates the space at particular times but does not maintain any intensity of use during non-event hours. City Hall Plaza currently operates fairly successfully in this way. The Competition packet gave a long list of Plaza activities that occur year-round, many of which are well attended. Nobody involved in the Competition organization suggested that this was contrary to what they foresaw for the Plaza; they simply wanted more. They desire a Programmatic space that is active almost constantly rather than the one that is, to some degree, already fairly successful at what it does. A similar example is the park near my house in Cambridge, which is devoted mostly to a variety of ball fields. When the programmed activities occur, the park is crowded and active. Without the ball games, it is as sparsely populated as City Hall Plaza in winter. These two examples are successful Programmatic spaces that indicate the limit of Programmatics. If structured, pre-planned activities are sought,

as they are at my local park, then Programmatics is the appropriate solution. If other activities of a spontaneous and daily nature are desired, something more must accompany this approach.

Physical form that creates a space with potentialities is that which is required. Even for a highly Programmatic space such as the Cambridge park, form sometimes is critical for programmed success. There are times when the wind blows across the play fields so fiercely that no possibility exists for using the space as intended, hence not at all. There are no formal provisions -- such as windrows, fences or berms -- to allow the programmed uses to proceed in the face of adverse conditions. Instead of the flexibility or potentiality of a Morphological space, the rigid provisions of a highly Programmatic space create a situation in which only one possible kind of activity in one possible set of circumstances is possible. During the pre-Competition Symposium, Zeren Earls, President of the International Alliance of First Night Celebrations, spoke of the daily rigidity of City Hall Plaza but compared this to the wealth of opportunities presented there for programmed First Night activities. However, when the weather for First Night '95 turned unfavorable, the Plaza did not provide the flexibility necessary to allow participation and personal comfort, and activity in that space was consequently paltry. When programmed activities cannot occur due to unforeseen conditions it is a result of a non-conducive form that provides no alternatives to rigid programming. In all cases, form must be conducive to the uses it supports. If a rigidly programmed use, like those portrayed in these examples, is dependent on form, then less structured Programmatic space will be even more so.

For the purposes of the Competition, a Programmatic approach will simply not work without supporting form. The ideas that were so lauded by the jury will not create the kind of space necessary to support themselves because, as was discussed above, they will only be temporary attractions. When these objects or activities become obsolete, or even when they are momentarily unused by a person who is seeking other, non-programmed events, the unsupportive nature of the entire environment will once again be dominant. City Hall Plaza is presently an unwelcoming site for any but the most highly programmed activities; it simply does not support anything else. Because of the transitory nature of Programmatic elements, no Programmatic solution that does not have a

significant formal counterpart will satisfy the demands that are now being placed on the Plaza. A comparison can be made with county fair grounds throughout the country. These are spaces that are highly effective for their intended purposes, and could be said to be spaces promoting a great diversity. However, if one becomes dissatisfied or bored with the fair, or if one goes to the fair grounds when the fair is out of town and wishes to find other attractions in that space, there is no chance of doing so. Alternatives cannot exist in an inflexible, potential-poor space.

Thus, in considering the value of Programmatic spaces to a city it is well to understand their limitations. A single attractor or a series of attractors may be valuable in generating activity and revenue in city districts 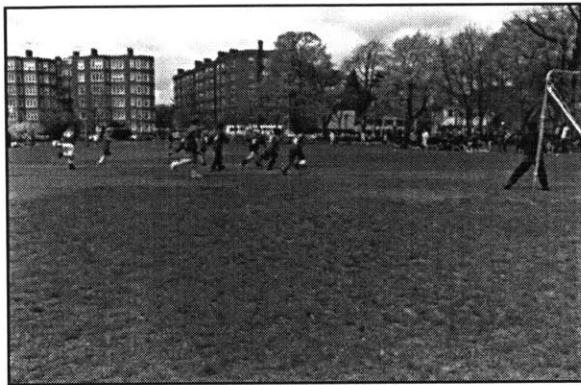as long as they remain attractive. Once this is no longer the case, their value is diminished and they may even become a derelict liability. On the other hand, a space that is flexible enough to allow for a variety of changing attractions will retain a supply of value in a district over the long term. The space itself, therefore, becomes an attractor that allows for the existence of a succession of attractions. Simply, an attractive space may hold many programmed attractions, while a programmed attraction may not contain attractive space. Without the space, the programs become severely limited.

figure 42. Soccer at the Cambridge Common -- a programmed attraction in an attractive Morphological space.

It should not be thought, however, that providing a program-conducive form will inherently bestow success. There must be, in addition to and preceding form and program, a defined purpose for the space. It is purpose that yields form, which in turn yields program. If there is no specific desired purpose, then there is very little way to satisfactorily achieve a successful space for there will be no basis upon which to design it. An architect cannot design a building without a program, that is, a statement of purpose for what the building must achieve both physically and conceptually. A symphony hall cannot be designed without the architect first knowing how many seats are desired and what kind of civic presence the building should have. If the architect is not given a program from the client then he will work with the client to create one. It is simply impossible to design the building without it. There is no reason to

think it is any different with public space. To provide a space, one must first know what it is intended to do. Is it to be a Morphological space that creates a new spatial experience within the city that addresses the urban fabric and spatial composition? Will it be a Programmatic space that accommodates a functional need for a kind of activity that is desired in a city district? The new space can be designed to provide whatever purpose is required of it, but it cannot be left purposeless.

It can be argued that, historically, the purpose we now bestow upon traditional public spaces often resulted from accretions of form onto pre-existent programs. Siena's Campo, it is said, began as a market place around which ad hoc forms grew until the space as we now know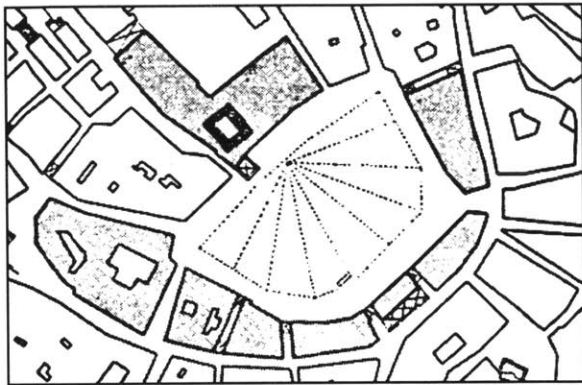 it was designed and built as a whole.[4]   What is today an exemplar of Morphological space is the result of an initial Programmatic function. In most, if not all, modern American cities and towns, such organic growth is now forestalled by modern economics and zoning restrictions, or conceivably by sheer impatience. It is difficult to foresee, for instance, the gradual formation of a Boston Haymarket Square, growing around the present farmers' market, that satisfies the Morphological tendencies of a Campo. Rather, the exigencies of modern real estate suggest that such a space would be

figure 43. Siena's Campo -- Morphological space evolving from Programmatic space.

conceived of and built as a whole, at once, and probably by one designer. Without the advantage of centuries in which to grow our public spaces, we are forced to determine, to some degree, their purpose, form, and program in advance. The possibility of doing this in the absolute is impossible -- for all things cannot be foreseen. It is also undesirable -- for the same reason. However, some level of predetermination is necessary, and is best accomplished by adhering to the order of purpose - form - program. If a program is to succeed, it must be placed in a commodious form. Form, meanwhile, cannot be conducive to its programs if there is no clear conception of what the form is meant to support. Where the purpose is articulate and rational, the form will provide for the program. A paradigmatic slogan for this concept would say that program follows form which follows purpose: Function follows Form follows Meta-Function.

Meta-Function -> Form ->
Function

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Where, then, and how, do Morphology and Programmatics enter into the new paradigm? Essentially, they are both Meta-Functions, as they both suggest a particular role for public space within a city. However, when the features of both and their total contributions to the city are compared, it becomes clear that the Morphological approach is superior to the Programmatic. The arguments for Programmatics are compelling: they provide activity and income to places throughout the city, they provide for the things people want to do, they are attractive to a wide range of users. On the other hand, they are transitory, singular, and leave no options for use beyond or other than that which they provide. Inherent in the nature of the Morphological, though, is the answer to the problems of Programmatics. A Morphological approach addresses both the immediate and long term needs of the city by addressing itself to the spatial and compositional urban form as well as providing the kind of flexibility that will allow for a continuing multiplicity of uses and interpretations. Regardless of the uses to which it is put, a Morphological space will allow other uses to coexist and simultaneously flourish. It will both gather people and disperse them, as it offers a variety of spaces and attractions that can appeal to a variety of desires. In other words, it has long lasting appeal while resisting deterioration.

Ultimately, it is better to combine the two rather than to separate them. The activities provided by Programmatic space are almost always suitable for Morphological space; if they are not, they either do not belong inside the city or are in some way inappropriate for a *particular* space.[5] Because of the nature of Programmatic activities, this combination is abundantly practical. The Morphological space allows for the temporality of the activities it contains. It becomes the neutral framework within which a continual flow of uses can occur, both uses that are purposefully temporary such as displays and exhibits, and uses that become temporary due to the obsolescence of trends. Around this change, the space itself remains strong and viable due to its own flexibility and richness. Consider the desire of the Competition organizers for a place of "common ground," and the many solutions given to

figure 44. Cathedral and market place, Freiburg, Germany -- the combination of Morphological and Programmatic space.

achieve this. Many ideas were brilliant, and would no doubt, at some time, provide an attraction that would be appealing to a majority of Bostonians. They would not do so forever, though, and the Plaza would continue to periodically prove unsatisfactory. If, however, these ideas came and went in their natural succession in a space that remained functional and appealing even in the interim, then there would not be a worrisome Plaza with which to contend. No one would be concerned if ice skating on the Public Garden or Santa's Village on the Common were to go out of vogue, for everyone would know that those spaces would remain just as viable and popular without those programs. With Morphology and Programmatics, two Meta-Functions that influence Form and Function, combined in City Hall Plaza, the same could be said for it.

There is a greater reason for combining these approaches, though; one that acknowledges the reason for having public space at all. Christian Norberg-Schultz states:

> We might also say that *life interprets itself as space, in taking possession of the environment.* This happens simultaneously through physical *orientation* and through a more profound *identification.* When an action takes place, the place where the action occurs becomes meaningful, in the sense of expressing the possibility of the very occurrence. What happens does not only partake in a spatial structure, but is also linked with a system of values and meanings, and thus acquires character and symbolic importance. Particular actions are hence connected with particular places. This holds true both when we take possession of the given surroundings and when we create new spaces.[6]

Space and the activity within it create a symbiotic relationship that affects the way we perceive our cities. When an action takes place, its place of action becomes memorable and creates a personal link between self and place. We learn to identify ourselves with the places in which culturally and personally significant activities have occurred: we consecrate, formally or informally, culturally or personally, these special locations. Where we were when we learned of the assassination, when our favorite team won the championship, when we proposed marriage creates the form in which the memory is housed and which connects us physically with the event. When we revisit the place, we are allowed to revisit the
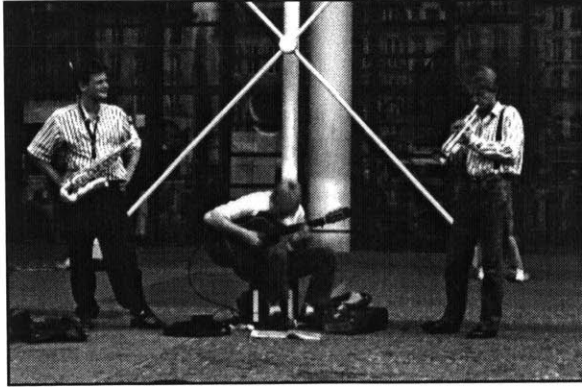
figure 45. Pompidou Center, Paris -- culture is reaffirmed in public space.

memory and reconnect with the past that has created our own and our societal culture. If the place was transitory and is no longer remaining, then there is no basis for the memory, and it is weakened and can even be questioned; at least, it can lose its sharpness and, therefore, its significance. Spaces, therefore, create and allow for culture. Whatever we wish to do as a culture, how ever we wish to see ourselves and be seen by others, we will enhance our chances for quality and success by doing it in public space.

In *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi states: "I am inclined to believe that persistence in an urban artifact often causes it to become identified as a monument, and that a monument persists in the city both symbolically and physically. A monument's persistence or permanence is a result of its capacity to constitute the city, its history and art, its being and memory."[7] Although he was referring more to structures than to spaces, this comment lies at the heart of the blending of Morphological and Programmatic space. It implies that those spaces (and buildings) that can interact over time with their users become elements of the physical and emotional *essence* of the city -- it is a sacred bond that is formed between the permanent physical foundation of a culture and the transitory uses and users that occupy the space and leave their impressions in it. Rossi says "by permanence I mean not only that one can still experience the form of the past in this monument but that the physical form of the past has assumed different functions and has continued to function, conditioning the urban area in which it stands and continuing to constitute an important urban focus."[8] Form acts as the container of both a culture's vision and identity over time, providing the locus for each of these aspects to influence the other.

1   E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, pp. 82 - 83.

2   My use of this entry is, in a way, more a form of flattery than disparity. *Public Video Village* is one of the more complete and fully realized Competition entries. Its concept is clear and logical, while I find its idea particularly compelling. I use it as an example of some of the questions and failures of a Programmatic approach as a way to indicate that if *this* one is flawed, and if it is better than the others, then those others are even more flawed and need not be referenced. It is, in that way, a kind of benchmark example.

3   "What To Do With City Hall Plaza? Readers Give Views," *Boston Globe*, 2 October 1994, City Weekly, p. 6.

4   Spiro Kostof, "Urbanism and Polity: Medieval Siena in Context," *1982 Year Book - Multiplicity of Language vs. Eclecticism*, 1983, pp. 66-73.

5   Although Louisburg Square may well house many of the same types of functions that City Hall Plaza might contain, it is questionable whether they would all be welcome or appropriate. Thus, the notion of the "district" remains important when combining the Morphological and the Programmatic. That is, the use ought to be advantageous to its setting and its context.

6   Christian Norberg-Schultz, *op. cit.,* p. 31.

7   Aldo Rossi, The Architecture of the City, p. 60..

8   *ibid*, p. 59.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS FROM THE COMPETITION

There is a range of lessons that can be learned from the City Hall Plaza Ideas Competition, from the local to the universal. At its simplest, this was a competition devoted to a particular space in a particular city. The lessons from such an event could extend no further than providing the solutions to the program of the Competition and possibly giving some clues for a more effective or efficient local competition sometime in the future. This would be a rather disappointing outcome for a competition involving a space of such prominence as City Hall Plaza. On the other hand, the lessons could be generalizable to the entire genre of public space, useful to any city that is struggling with its own existing or proposed spaces. If this were so, then the Competition would transcend the bounds of regional and cultural differences and be useful as a model anywhere. But, this seems impossible. It is unlikely that Los Angeles or New Orleans or Denver, to speak only of American cities, would be facing the same issues that Boston is, or would even be asking the same questions. Surely there is too much uniqueness remaining in cities to be able to usefully apply a universal. Would the broader lessons not have to be applied to significantly similar situations?

Fortunately, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the Competition that span the range of scales, from local to universal. Even across cultural and typological borders, the Ideas Competition can provide answers to some of the questions we may be asking about public space today. If Los Angeles is contemplating a regional park or Denver a neighborhood square, both can look to Boston for clues about how to proceed.

The Competition as the State of the Art

If the Competition can be seen as the state of the art in thinking about public space today, then it can be assumed that much of what we find in it will also appear in future public space design. One can conclude from the majority of Competition entries that we will therefore be seeing such things as randomness, formlessness, capriciousness, desperation, temporary solutions, and, at best, some good ideas in bad spaces. Instead of providing quality environments for public use, most entries merely provide interesting objects or potentially interesting programs. The consideration of space, as a whole and as an envelope for public activity, is generally lacking. It is not so much that *spaces* are lacking, for there are many micro-spaces around various new Plaza elements that are

potentially quite appealing. There are intimate garden settings, groupings of café tables, places to view displayed art, and paths to stroll. Yet, there are few conceptions for larger space, for a space that would provide the setting for the micro-spaces and the elements that form them. One might almost say that public space has been discarded for personal space in the public realm. There is little of J. B. Jackson's space for "civic awareness" and much of Whyte's "places full of other people." As Jackson noted, it would appear that what is considered attractive in public space is the presence of a public that one may observe but with which one need not participate.[1] Unfortunately, this may ultimately lead to a logical fallacy, for if everyone indulges in observation without participation, then nothing will be left to observe.

It is not so much the logical problem as the problem of our continuing ability to design public space that becomes an important issue. The question arises whether we are capable of designing spaces or only objects in space. It is significant, I believe, that the majority of Competition entries did not engage in the creation of space, as discussed above. This is not attributable simply to the requirements of the Competition program: the existence of the two approaches to solutions correctly suggests that the program was vague enough to allow for a variety of responses. Indeed, it is due to this variety, a variety that encompasses basic "ideas" as well as total solutions, that broad conclusions about the Competition results can be made. We see, therefore, that public space, as a whole and formally conceived, was seldom considered. There are three instances where this lack of consideration appears most glaringly: the program left formal space secondary, few architects proposed formal space, and the jury discounted it altogether. At the beginning of this essay I suggested that it is the architects and other professional designers who will be implementing the ideas that we as a society have about our public spaces. It would appear, therefore, from the Competition entries, that we can expect these kind of fragmentary environments to prevail in our new and renewed public spaces into the future.

One wonders why our conception of public space has evolved in this way, for even in America we are not without some examples of successful Morphological space. In Boston there is Louisburg Square and Commonwealth Avenue, New York has Rockefeller Plaza and Paley Park, Savannah is full of its public squares, and

figure 46. Louisburg Square

San Francisco has the Golden Gate Park panhandle and Union Square. Nor are those who are responsible for the design and conception of public spaces ignorant of the rich heritage of spaces worldwide. It would appear that the problem lies not in our knowledge of the past or of precedent, but in our conception of and condition in the present.

Politics must take its share of the blame, at least in terms of conceptualizing public space. By "politics" I mean to convey one of the negative connotations of the word -- the politics of broad appeasement, risk minimization, reelection for its own sake. These politics were, in fact, rife in the Competition, appearing in both the program and the jury's decisions. It is an inherently political move, for instance, to suggest that a public artifact be accessible to the entire populace of the city, and be a means of creating city wide unity. In today's era of acknowledging heterogeneity and cross culturation, it would be impossible for a savvy politician to do otherwise. Of course, such all encompassing inclusivity is equally impossible and potentially more problematic. In a heterogeneous society, the attempt to provide something for everyone invariably leads to providing either nothing at all or nothing of substance. It simply cannot happen that all things can be provided for all people. This is not to suggest that a benevolent dictator be enthroned to determine the nature of our public spaces. Rather, it simply seems impossible for a single place to accommodate all interests, and one is more likely to succeed by providing a well designed space that has the potential for Rossi's notion of permanence. The long term politics of discourse and beneficial compromise that can occur in a society that houses its identity in public structures will be better served by these kinds of spaces.

This is further illustrated by the kind of political involvement in which expediency becomes too prevalent. There is an overriding sentiment for doing *something*; for making work whatever does not work, for doing it cheaply, and for showing the people that government is responsive to public concerns. There is much wisdom in stating that Rome was not built in a day, but it is also wise to remember that Rome did not always have an elected government. With each city administration desirous of leaving behind its physical, symbolic legacy, the ability to allow change and growth to proceed over time is diminished. Thus, we and the spaces we inhabit

and design are trapped between lofty statements encouraging any and all ideas, and final decisions seeking feasibility and immediacy. Since politicians are essentially the client and will have the final word in what gets approved for the public realm, the designer who wants his ideas built will feel compelled to provide a proposal in keeping with political motivations.

However, there is seldom a client who cannot be persuaded to alter his preconceptions when confronted by reasoned and convincing arguments from the architect. The fact that many architects did not propose Morphological space cannot be merely attributable to kowtowing to prevailing political sentiment. There would seem to be a dominant conviction that Programmatic or non-Morphological space is appropriate for the broad purposes outlined for City Hall Plaza. Architecture has a strong tendency toward fascination with trends, and the dominant trend in architecture, especially in the architecture of the public realm, has long been the glorification of the object. While this has a certain appropriateness when providing civic monuments and edifices, it does not translate well when considering public space. The isolated and independent objects we see in a Parc de la Villette do not speak of civic space, nor were they intended to. However, the attractiveness of such a setting, with its deference to architectural objects rather than space can be too seductive to prevent inappropriate thematic duplication. I am not suggesting that the non-Morphological Competition architects were attempting to create a Bostonian La Villette. I am simply indicating that the imagery of such a project was allowed to supersede its substance.

It could also be that for the architects and the non-architects, it is not so much a trend that was followed as a capitulation to a predominant social paradigm of individualism. For a designer, this would mean that it is more appropriate to aggrandize one's own predispositions than to accommodate the citizenry and their city. For a layman, it would mean supporting elements and objects that speak more to one's own interests and desires of what is appropriate in public space instead of seeking a kind of space that is of itself potentially inclusionary. Inevitably a focus on individualized space will result in an inability to conceive of the nature of an actively inclusionary space. It is easy to conceive of a public space that everyone can use individually -- it looks something like Boston Common. It is not so easy to visualize a space in which the public

comes together and where individual expression is not a predominant purpose of the space. As Todd Lee stated at the Symposium, a park is a place for individualized activities while a plaza is for social activities. But, while the city was interested in taking the pressure off the Common for these social events, it instead received ideas for another space that is equally individualistic. Instead of appealing to the city as a whole as intended, the Programmatic approach appeals to distinct individuals who, it is hoped, will create a crowd.

An interesting lesson learned from the Competition, that is perhaps even more useful today in our individualistic era, is that successful public spaces do not have to be active and lively. A space without people is not necessarily dead. There are, in fact, public spaces that are purposefully devoid of people, such as the green spaces in front of county courthouses and city halls. People implicitly understand that these spaces are intended to serve as foreground to symbolic edifices and are not for active use; they remain, however, part of the public spatial realm. There are other spaces that are successful but not crowded, and become less successful with crowding. Who would deny that Boston Common is successful, but would rather not be there on a normal occasion with a crowd of people? It is that suggestion, in fact, that is at the heart of the matter: "a normal occasion." For, there exists no space that is full of people every day, yet there are many spaces that are successful and far from being "dead." Where potential exists, success is likely to follow. If a space can be empty but still be imagined as full of people, or if full can be imagined empty, and if both scenarios have appeal, then success can also be imagined. Even more than this is whether purpose can be imagined and understood. If a green space in front of a county courthouse is intended to be empty of people, but is constantly overrun by pedestrians, then though full of people, it is not successful. And, if a plaza is meant to serve as the meeting place of a diverse community, but is full of people intent on their own desires, it too is not successful. Thus, we come to an axiom of public space that hopes to dispel the notion that it is merely the presence of others that legitimizes a space. The axiom is this: successful public space is space used as intended.

If successful public space is space used as intended, then there must be a purpose, or a Meta-Function behind that space. The purpose can be anything, as long as it is reasonable and definable, and can be determined by resolving a series of issues. The first, and most important issue to raise is "what is the space for?" or "what is it supposed to do?" This must first be addressed by determining the most desirable and appropriate approach: strictly Morphological or Programmatic, or a combination of the two. It must be determined whether the fabric of the city can support a Morphological space, or how such a space can be made that is correct for that city's structure. If a traditional Morphological space is inappropriate to the city fabric, enough of the characteristics of such a space to provide a satisfactory variety of spatial experiences for the users is probably achievable. Whether this is possible will be decided by knowing what specific uses are intended and if they will work within a defined space or are better served otherwise. This suggests that if Programmatic elements or functions are desired, then their nature must be articulated. In other words, it must be determined whether the space will be primarily envisioned as a space for a particular purpose: recreation, socialization, relaxation, demonstrations, the expression of monumentality and awe, etc. Or, it may be considered that a range of activities can be accommodated in the space. Essentially, it must be decided whether the place or the activities within it should have dominance. Of even greater importance, though, is whether place and activity can be conjoined as a way of creating cultural identity and memory.

This implies that the desirability and sufficiency of activity itself must be addressed. That is, it must either be recognized that activity will never be constant (necessitating a design that is satisfactory without associated activity), or provisions for constant activity must be provided. The size or range of sizes of user groups relate to this issue. No people, a few people, or crowds of people will serve the intentions and goals of the space quite differently. Similarly, the intended constitution of that crowd -- diverse or specialized, city wide or local, age or gender specific, etc. -- and the frequency of its visits will also impact the nature of the space. On the other hand, the sufficiency of potentialities to either activate or sustain the space must also be questioned. This relates to the purposes mentioned above and the degree to which a particular pur-
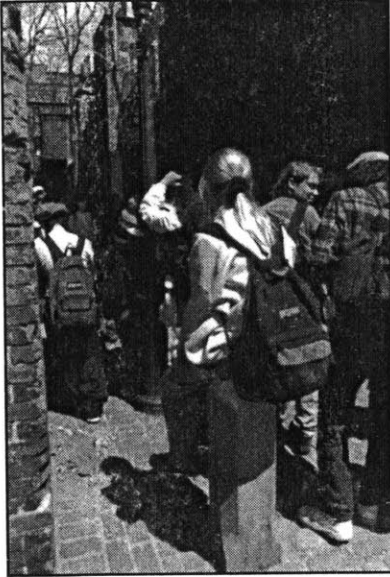
figure 47. A spontaneous gathering in a Beacon Hill public space.

pose alone can provide the desired level and kind of activity, or whether a mixture of primary, secondary, and potential uses will better serve the space and area around. Since potentiality is a phenomenon that ideally unfolds over time for each user, the degree to which potential uses are specified, as opposed to simply provided for or encouraged, must be resolved in relation to the explicitly stated purpose.

Finally, beyond basic Morphology, Programmatics, potentialities, and activities, an ulterior motive for the space must be conceived. The space should be special and, in some way, unique within the city: it must be a *place*. It must have connotations and characteristics that will distinguish it from other city spaces, both in its city and when compared to others. Will it be as great as Piazza San Marco or as subtle as Paley Park? Will its name become associated with other well known places that make cities great? It is not enough to have functions and form. What makes some cities and their spaces great is their perfect blend of Function, Form, and Meta-Function. Purpose and vision are necessary to make public space possible.

If public space is going to be possible, then we must confront our cities and our spaces actively and resolutely. We have to have a vision of the quality not only of our public spaces, but of our cities as a whole and of our lives within them. It is not sufficient to wonder about traffic flows or crime rates or water quality or homelessness or any other urban ill or benefit, and whether the presence or absence of public space contributes positively or negatively to such phenomena, without taking into account the entire scope of human existence in the city. Nor is it sufficient to conceive of broad and open-ended desires for a city or a space without a complementary vision of corresponding spatial and policy implications. To borrow from Norberg-Schultz, we must ask ourselves: "What do we have to demand from the environment in order that man may call himself *human*?"[2] Thus, we must make a decision about what we want the city to be. If we are content with a city of temporary themes and attractions, in which trends come and go and briefly occupy our spaces before withering away to leave our land once again empty and waiting, then we must state that such is our intention and desire and do our best to create as satisfactory Programmatic spaces as possible. If, on the other hand, it is our intention to create cities and spaces that have ap-

peal and resist deterioration, and that are made of a substantial form and fabric that can accommodate a succession of the temporary, then we will endeavor to design from a Morphological approach that is accepting of the Programmatic.

The Morphological and the Programmatic are two categories that were designated in response to the Competition entries, and cannot be considered inclusive of all approaches to the design of public space. However, they are instructive in their simplification of broad methods of thought towards such space. Their greatest contribution lies in their ability to expose a common failure in our conception of cities and their spaces. They show us that it is far too easy to address space as a venue for activity or formal investigation, or even for a healthy combination of the two, without considering broader implications. Neither the Competition program nor any of the entries considered these implications in great detail. An attempt was made to change an existing space, and to create an environment of inclusivity within it. The consideration for making Boston a better city as a result was minimal. Perhaps this is too broad an indictment that glibly ignores the creditable efforts to improve an important place in the city. Yet, if we approach our cities as simple agglomerations of independent pieces, then we risk losing our vision of a greater human environment. The lesson, therefore, is to learn how to create quality incremental changes, be they Morphological, Programmatic, or others, that are even more successful as a whole.

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1 Jackson, *loc. cit.*
2 Norberg-Schultz, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

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