

Reflection

The thesis project was difficult and ultimately very enriching. I'll probably never have another chance to dedicate so much time to a single design. While the project was a success on many levels, there is certainly room for improvement. In addition to addressing such shortcomings, this section will attempt to answer the all-important question of how the design relates to the larger context; the "so what?" question.

The lingering questions of the project were in three categories: design, feasibility, and social. The first of these, design, is the most applicable to my actual thesis project. The primary design element where doubt remains was how to unite the three program elements into a more cohesive plaza. Where should they meet, and how should they fit together? Multiple discussions with advisors centered on how to make the day labor element flow into the neighborhood plaza. Barriers were necessary, but many options existed in their physical design. The demands of my program required bringing together conflicting functions (work and leisure, automobile and pedestrian). The final result represents one outcome, which was the best solution for the time available.

The feasibility question was one that really bothered me early on in the process: could something like this ever get built in the real world? I was caught up with the idea that my design should be "implementable," that it shouldn't be a strictly academic ex-

ercise divorced from the reality of what people actually needed in a public spaces. I eventually moderated this view, however, because I saw that to design only according to what could actually be built would be intellectually limiting. Worse, it might become an exercise in adhering to building codes and zoning regulations, which wouldn't have been very fun. While every developer has to go through this process to get a project built, a student should be allowed to "dream big" while they have the luxury to do so. So I discarded most notions of designing a buildable project and instead focused on how to make the best design possible regardless of legal realities.

The politics alone would likely restrict such a plaza from every getting built, since day labor centers have become such a controversial subject. In point of fact, the day labor center in Herndon (HOWC) was recently ordered to close after the election of new town council members with an anti-immigration mindset. Immigration reform on a national level has been discussed in both the House and Senate, but little has been done so far to enact any kind of amnesty or increased enforcement measures. If new federal laws are passed which can somehow stem the flow of illegal immigrants seeking day labor, then the necessity for such a center would obviously be in question.

A design such as mine begs larger social questions which I have not addressed. Would such a day labor plaza ultimately help or hurt the cause of immigrant assimilation? The argument has been made

that such centers do nothing more than encourage illegal immigration, and reasonable people continue to disagree on such questions. My project begins from the assumption that such a day labor center would be helpful to both immigrants and legal citizens by encouraging immigrant assimilation. My design would help the day labor center be more aesthetically pleasing to homeowners in an existing neighborhood, becoming a landmark instead of a locally-unwanted land use.

A minor corollary to this is whether day laborers themselves even endorse using day labor pavilions. While the ones I spoke with and observed were largely in favor of them, some told about how they would often seek out less-crowded locations so there would be less competition for jobs. This makes sense. The problem of the rushing behavior is an expression of the intense competition, and could be read as a sign that there is a peak number of workers that each site can support. Above a certain number, perhaps there is a "decreasing marginal utility" for both day laborers and employers. I attempted to incorporate such concepts into the final design, but there is no guarantee that even the best day labor pavilion would be used, since its own popularity would create more competition between ever larger numbers of laborers. This was a troubling contradiction in the work, but one that didn't detract from the actual process of design.

What pleased me most about the project was how it fit with my educational background and interests. I have a bachelor's degree in Spanish and international

relations, and a master's degree in urban planning. Designing a day labor center was the perfect way to unite these diverse threads of interest through a design for an underserved public. Many of the users would be Hispanic, which allowed me to practice my Spanish and think about larger issues of international relations, such as the structural factors in trade relations (i.e. NAFTA) which created both the demand for and supply of illegal immigrant day laborers. The provision of these public work spaces within existing communities is very much a planning issue, while their actual physical design is what my project sought to address.

I also enjoyed the application of case study findings to design. I remain inspired by the work of William H. Whyte, with his use of observational analysis and application of findings to subsequent design (1980). I wanted to find a project that would allow some of the same logical, semi-quantifiable links between method and design. Perhaps because of my planning background, I place myself in the design camp of "functionalism," which puts pragmatic use and physical comfort above aesthetics and artistic expression of the designer. I hope to always design with the needs of the user in mind, in hopes that I can help create spaces that work well. If such spaces are also deemed aesthetically beautiful, then so much the better, but my foremost goal is to create places that satisfy human needs for utility and comfort. I believe that this thesis is a good beginning towards these goals.

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Credits for Sources

Chapter 1

1 - Fig. 1.4 - From *Town and Square: From the Agora to the Village Green*. Author Paul Zucker. Courtesy of Columbia University Press

2 - Fig. 1.6 - Ibid.

3 - Fig 1. - Ibid.

4 - Fig. 1.11 - Ibid.

Chapter 2

5 - Fig. 2.1 - Satellite photography courtesy of Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>)

6 - Fig. 2.5 - Courtesy of Arlington County, VA

7 - Fig. 2.6 - Courtesy of Arlington County, VA

Chapter 3

8 - Fig. 3.1 - Satellite photography courtesy of Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>)

9 - Fig. 3.2 - Ibid.

10 - Fig. 3.4 - Courtesy of Arlington County, VA (<http://magellan.co.arlington.va.us/acmap/Webpages/map/MapView.aspx>)

11 - Fig. 3.5 - Ibid.

12 - Fig. 3.6 - Ibid.

13 - Fig. 3.8 - Courtesy of Bowie Gridley Architects

14 - Fig. 3.10 - Courtesy of Environmental Data Resources, Inc.

15 - Fig 3.11 - Courtesy of Sun Gazette

16 - Fig. 3.13 - Satellite photography courtesy of Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>)

Appendices

A. Barrio Paradigms

Barrioization

This paradigm has most often been used to examine the discontinuous community of Mexican Americans in the American southwest. Nevertheless, it bears examination here as a means of learning about the Hispanic/Latino community in Northern Virginia. Barrioization is a process whereby Mexican/Latino immigrants were spatially concentrated into marginal or unwanted spaces within the larger city. In Southern California and parts of the Southwest, this occurred primarily in the first half of the 20th century as more and more Mexican immigrants came to the states to fill jobs openings in rapidly expanding urban centers (Herzog, 2004). Since they didn't have the economic resources to choose where they could live, they were functionally segregated into enclaves, or barrios. The process of chain immigration (whereby recently-arrived immigrants act as a chain, pulling links of family and friends in their home countries to come over) brought more and more Mexicans to these barrios, which were well-established by the 1950s in cities such as Los Angeles, El Paso, Tucson, and San Diego (Herzog, 2004). Barrioization advanced further with the location of unwanted infrastructure and land uses into these barrios, such as factories, freeways, and large stadiums. These projects displaced residents and disrupted the landscape of the

barrios, with freeway extension slicing up barrios such as Chavez Ravine in LA and Barrio Logan in San Diego (Herzog, 2004).

Barriology

Developing concurrently was a more positive sense of consciousness of Latino identity within these barrios. Barriology represented a determination by Latinos to create permanent spaces in the neighborhoods, to invest their landscape with cultural symbols and meaning. Such acts included parades, holiday celebrations, mural painting, and other cultural events that helped establish identity of the barrio residents within the dominant culture. In several cities, this process manifested itself with the protests and successful preservation of several public spaces. Latinos in Los Angeles fought for and preserved Obregon and Elysian Parks. In San Diego's Barrio Logan, residents worked hard to create a public park under the imposing struts of the Coronado Bridge, part of a freeway project that had bisected the neighborhood. Latino activists occupied the site and refused to leave when they learned that the space was to be used for a parking lot/substation for the California Highway Patrol, and today the park remains as a valuable symbol of community pride (Herzog, 2004). Barriology can be seen as a response to the negative effects of barrioization, as a means of reclaiming and transforming marginal spaces into landscapes of pride and cultural meaning. It could also be seen on a smaller scale with the augmentations made to private

homes, where fence treatments, lawn shrines, and material applications were all used to "Latinize" previously homogeneous housing. They moved from dejected ghettos, a condition of barrioization, to vibrant, significant landscapes. This process is barriology. (Herzog, 2004).

My project: towards Barriology without Barrioization?

In much the same fashion as in California, Hispanics in the DC Metropolitan region are experiencing the process of barriology. The evidence from this area suggests that barriology can occur without barrioization as a precursor. The Chirilagua neighborhood in Alexandria, Virginia, is an amenable neighborhood of retail and multifamily housing on the border between two municipalities. While it never really underwent barrioization, it already shows evidence of barriology of the landscape (Figs.1.12 and 1.13)

B. Plaza types from *People Places*

The Street Plaza is a small section of public open space adjoining a sidewalk with a close connection to a street. It can be a widening or extension of a sidewalk, and is a space that is used for a brief period of sitting. The seating edge is a low wall that affords seating along the plaza edge, and it may have a bench, shelter, or trash can that provides a waiting place for a bus. The authors cite Crocker Plaza in San Francisco as an

example of the Street Plaza. This type of plaza might also be a pedestrian link between connecting two buildings, or it might be a sun pocket between buildings that people can bask in during lunchtime. The Street Plaza can also be a sidewalk that extends under an arcade or building overhang, perhaps with chairs or benches (Cooper Marcus and Francis, 1990).

The Corporate Foyer forms part of a new building complex. Its main purpose is to provide an approach and entry for its corporate patron. It can be compared to the medieval parvis, the space in front of the cathedral that served much the same function (Zucker, 1959). While privately owned and maintained, it is often accessible to the public, at least during business hours. The Corporate Foyer might come in several different types. A decorative porch is a small entry with some plants and seating, and perhaps a water feature. If it's larger, it might be an impressive forecourt, with expensive materials like marble or travertine, expressly for passing through and not lingering. The largest type of Corporate Foyer is the stage set, which glorifies the building it adjoins, acting as a kind of stage backdrop. An example is Giannini Plaza, the Corporate Foyer for the Bank of America Headquarters in San Francisco (Cooper Marcus and Francis, 1990).

The Urban Oasis is a plaza that is conceived as a garden or park, with intensive plantings and a more secluded character. It might be separated somewhat

from the street, and it acts as a refuge from the noise and activity of the city. It often attracts more women than the more visible spaces like the Street Plaza. It might be an outdoor lunch plaza, delineated by a level change or semi-transparent wall with good seating and maybe a cafe. It could be a garden oasis, small, enclosed, and lushly planted with a garden-like quality. Flowers, lots of seating, and sometimes a water feature help give this plaza its contemplative quality. TransAmerica Redwood Park in San Francisco is a good example of this type. The Urban Oasis might also take the form of a roof garden, which is an elevated area that is planted, and usually harder to access (Cooper Marcus and Francis, 1990).

The fourth type of plaza is the Transit Foyer, made for easy access from heavily trafficked public transit stations. While it might be designed for passing through, the intensity of activity and stimulus encourages people to linger and watch. The authors of *People Places* classify the Berkeley BART plaza as an example of a transit foyer. Further subdivisions within this type include the subway entry and the bus terminal (Cooper Marcus and Francis, 1990).