

Final Statement  
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I set out with an interest in the spaces between buildings, but little formal understanding of the characteristics that lend to their personality and relative success. I have found it extremely difficult to make sense of these aspects and nearly impossible to categorize spaces as they always seem to fall somewhere on the spectrum between two pure circumstances: public versus private, path versus place, orchestrated versus organic to name a few. My studies have therefore been focused primarily on the varying levels of public and private as well as the experience, visual versus physical.

As a point of departure, I began most of my investigations by looking into the achievements of the space between as it serves the needs of the public as opposed to those of the individual. Urban areas are becoming increasingly crowded and complex, which leaves us questioning our own definition of public space and questioning the value of the space between. This may be an overlooked topic of discussion, but as a concept is not necessarily a new. I've found, for example, that the spatial volumes of the Roman courtyard house transition effectively from more public at the front atrium to more private in the rear dining court. Boston's North End also has an ambiguous break between public and private. The triangular open plots, as well as the streets themselves, sustain the highest level of public interaction. On the other end of the spectrum, the inner-block courtyards often discourage or reject altogether admission for non-residents. The blurred zone exists where a number of alleyways cut between or under private residences. I have come to realize the value of looking beyond obvious public areas and into the grey zone of the semi-public.

Public space is not always about physical access, but often about perception. Some of the most remarkable spaces in between exist inadvertently, such as that formed by the walls of a canyon. These spaces do not belong to any individual and are perhaps the most public of them all. Visual, as opposed to physical, space is abundant in the urban context. In the Roman example, spatial volumes of the courtyard house are aligned axially such that an orchestrated view connects the street to the residence interior and vice versa. The Roman interest in this view stresses their dependence on the urban context as well as their understanding of space as a visual. In the North End of Boston there exist a number of interesting spaces detached from the ground plane, some views framing the open sky and some the architecture beyond. Openings in the urban assembly act as extensions of the public realm and add texture and depth to the individual encounter. Because space as a visual is extremely experiential, and can stir emotional response, it is design tool of great value.

As a growing population we could greatly benefit from looking beyond the obvious spatial boundaries and into the more ambiguous areas of the semi-public and the visual. We tend to be spatially acquisitive and feel comfortable behind the definite boundary of our white picket fence. The question exists: can we ever look at space as a shared entity? And on the topic of non-physical space, could we ever embrace the idea of the visual as a public right and benefit to a point where it is preserved and on some occasions designed? Whether there is ever a change in public thinking, it is our responsibility as designers to consider these notions of space and utilize them as tools to enrich the public experience.