

International Intercity Square

Squares are the sites for social encounter, public meetings, entertainment, small-scale informal commerce (bazaars), gatherings, parades, celebrations, collective actions and protests. Moreover, they are the metaphors of 'public sphere' as a notion of public forum, where democratic debate is possible. Since the '90's, the conception of the bourgeois public space of Habermas has been revisited and criticized while new concepts such as "civic space" or "post-public" were coined to understand and define the term "public" or "public space" in the contemporary context.

Today, it is no longer possible for us to talk about a unified and consensualized public sphere, nor a single "public" united under a "general will". The fragmented public spaces are facilitated by diverse publics with different cultural, ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. Here the question is how to live together and how to organize the urban public spaces, and specifically the squares, to represent the multitude?

Alongside the growing discontent with the existing regimes, governance and ideologies, urban public spaces, especially, squares became a stage for the expression of conflict and unrest as exemplified by the protests in the Arab world in 2010 and early 2011. The recent social movement against corporatism "Occupy Together", for instance, reclaims the squares and streets as a project for social justice and spatial equality. Struggles over space are central for any social movement to challenge the status quo. However, we can ask: what is the specific role of spatial dynamics vis-à-vis the progress of such a social movement? As a spatial component of the democratic apparatus, how do squares function -aid or abed- the civic rights?

Juxtaposition of simultaneously realized projects in squares of different cities from different geo-political regions will not only create a possibility to examine their democratic possibilities, spatial organizations, specific meanings, historic positions, current uses and future possibilities, but also to understand them as a historic functional form, where power relations are represented and shifted. The comparison of the squares can provide an analysis of socio-political, spatial and cultural structures of those cities and respective countries; thus, expose differences and common grounds between them.

The intercity square project is conceived in the format of a periodical open (and invitational as well) call in every two years. The projects will be realized (preferably) concurrently in the different squares in different cities. The first edition is planned to realize in the squares such as the Dam Square / Museumplein / Mercatorplein in Amsterdam, Taksim Square in Istanbul (TR), Tahrir Square (?) in Cairo (EG) and Zuccotti Park or a square in Harlem in New York (USA) in September 2013 as a part of the 13th Istanbul Biennial.

Under an umbrella concept, the projects will be curated in collaboration with the eminent curators of the partner institutions such as the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam, NL), Townhouse Gallery (Cairo, EG), International Istanbul Biennial (Istanbul, TR), Creative Time (New York, USA).

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All projects will be documented / represented / exhibited in all participating cities at partner institutions, which are also responsible for the organization and finances of the projects that are held in their cities. There will be a joint end-publication articulating the aim and vision of the event, documenting the process and the projects as well.

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