

## PLACE PUBLIQUE

**PUBLIC SQUARE:** public space in an uncovered area which is generally surrounded by buildings. The public squares witness the urban way of life in history. They result either of successive contributions, or of a single composition.

"An ample empty place, from which the prospect of some beautiful fabric is seen." **Palladio**, Four books of architecture (1570), tr. Isaac Ware (1738 - third book p. 72)

In the 13th century BC, the Greek agora is a simple esplanade of irregular form, surrounded by public buildings reserved for democratic debate or religious events; it changed to become at the beginning of the 5th century BC, under the impulse of Hippodamos from Milet, a square space which was registered within an orthogonal layout city and surrounded by galleries (QV). The form of the place can be more subtle as in Assos (1).

The forum is the Roman name for the Greek concept in the 7th century BC; the basilica appears there towards the 3rd century BC, it will be finally used as a model for the Romanesque church (Trajan Forum). The forum was generally located at one of the angles formed by the

" La grandeur des places publiques doit être proportionnée au nombre du peuple... la largeur doit être telle qu'ayant divisé la longueur en trois parties, on lui en donne deux... Cette disposition donnera plus de commodité pour les spectacles. " Viruve, architecte de Jules César et d'Auguste.

" Au Moyen Age et pendant la Renaissance les places urbaines jouaient encore un rôle vital dans la vie publique et par conséquent il existait encore une relation fondamentale entre ces places et les édifices publics qui les bordaient, alors qu'aujourd'hui elles servent tout au plus au stationnement des voitures et tout lien artistique entre places et bâtiments a pratiquement disparu. "

Camillo Sitte

cardo and the decumanus (major streets of the Roman town plan); it represents the introverted type of place turning its back to the surrounding district (2).

In the medieval 12th century city of Central or Northern Europe, the squares are formed by the widening of the road which crosses them, and mix the storied dwelling blocks with the public buildings.

The church square (3) of the Middle Ages is a space prolonging the church entrance; This time also sees creation in the "bastide" towns (like Monpazier - cf. housing allotment) of designed squares which have a covered gallery and a market on one of its sides.

The squares of the Renaissance are intended to emphasize the public buildings and to constitute a scene. The baroque square like the Capitol square /

piazza del Campidoglio in Rome (4) will allow, thanks to the genius of Michel-Angel, to give some unity to the whole of the public buildings which surround it.

The French model of "place Royale" such as the place des Vosges (5), which dates from Henri IV (1606) and was designed by the architect Met-ézeau has an equestrian statue of the king at its centre (cf. Royal Square).

The parade grounds "places d'armes" evolve from Vauban to Napoleon the 1st like for example in La Roche-Sur-Yon (6).

der Napoleon III appear the garden squares, designed by Alphand with English inspiration, dedicated to the relaxation of the townspeople. A number of places are thus transformed into public gardens (cf. Square). Others designers use the central part as a landscaped roundabout (7) like in

Toulouse.

In 1867, the esplanade of the Champ de Mars (8) accommodates a World Exhibition.

Modern town planning sees then the creation of two types of squares, one symbolic and dedicated to the political and cultural events - like the "Praça dos Três Poderes" in Brasilia (9) where the buildings are isolated objects on an esplanade; the other, more utilitarian, is dedicated to shops surrounded by parking spaces (10) : it is the case in the new towns.

Since 1970, many partnership projects of local authorities with central government help made it possible to enhance the use of the squares by pedestrians (cf. "L'amélioration des places publiques [The improvement of public squares]", RMA, 1980), by deferring the parking of vehicles into car parks provided underground (11) or at the periphery (cf. parking). Many works of art are also brought in, especially on the squares of the new towns (12).

Cf. AGORA, FORUM, PARVIS, ESPLANADE, TERRACE, GARDEN SQUARE, CROSSROADS, ROUNDABOUT, PUBLIC GARDEN, PARADE GROUND, ROYAL SQUARE.

