MAKING TRANSITIONAL SPACE IN THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

Master Thesis Explanatory Document

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Research Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture (By Project)

Unitec Institute of Technology, 2017
ABSTRACT

The following research is an explorative study on “Transitional spaces” as a means of designing and enhancing urban architecture. To start with, transitional spaces are the intermediate areas that act as an in-between spaces. Traditionally, spaces were defined as indoor or outdoor spaces and the presence of transitional space was not experienced so this research will be focusing on these transitional spaces and the journey from one place to another marking these spaces as a destination. It also focuses on identifying what defines a transitional space that enhances the pedestrian experience in an urban environment. Also, providing a commercial building with mixed-use areas enhances the overall space and helps it merge into its urban context.

Thus, the research will be an implementation of design by intertwining the publications of architects within Western and Indian urban contexts and traditional transitional space case studies on macro and micro scales, that are related to the topic. It is an attempt to understand the traditional elements of transitional space and then implementing them in today’s urban context.

The potential site for this project is “The Aotea Quarter framework” identified by Auckland Council as the core and cultural heart of Auckland. It includes adjoining mixed-use neighbourhoods and physical interventions revealing opportunities to improve the public realm.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
1.0 INTRODUCTION
1.1 Outline of the Project

Transition in Architecture is defined as the connecting in-between spaces. It is a change of space from one state to another, and architectural spaces are incomplete without transition spaces. Transitional spaces are defined as spaces located in between outdoor and indoor environments acting as both buffer spaces and physical links (Deshmukh, 2009). The basic idea is to design a transitional space on a city scale with recreational urban facilities. This transitional space will be a connection between both macro and micro level structures. In general, spatial continuity and the consequent interaction between public and private, people and environment, open and closed, inside and outside, are established by means of certain transitional spaces. (Examples: atriums, plazas, urban corridors, gathering spaces, passage, courtyards, stairwells etc.)

1.2 Research Question

How can traditional urban space elements be used to enhance the design of transitional space in the contemporary city?
1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Project

The aim of the project is to design an important transitional space within the city context and provide a vision as to how a non-place could be transformed and developed into providing quality experiential values to the users, thus creating a dialogue between people, space and events, as a threshold between ‘Space’ and ‘Time’. The typology and nature of the transitional spaces have been changing with time. They vary in scale, usage and connection. The insertions of urban functions in transitional space should increase the activities in city spaces, building a sense of a connection between horizontal and verticals interfaces, minimising the gap between proportion and scale of buildings and human. The transitional space should be seen as an interaction between life and form, that is, the built form should be interacting and connecting with the community, creating a greater sense of journey and place within the urban environment.
1.4 Methodology

Research by literature review (by Theories)
Stage one, the literature review, is through the relevant publications of architects within Western and Indian urban contexts as per the research topic, which focuses on the cityscape, people and their activities that which makes the transitional pockets important within a city and the local context.

Research by literature review (by Case Studies)
Stage two, focuses on an analysis of both case studies of traditional transitional spaces. These case studies will provide understanding of space vocabulary and important elements which make transition interesting from one space to other marking each space as a destination, with its traditional and cultural importance. Research will then be conducted on Auckland’s Aotea Square using the philosophy and specific design characteristics from this research background.

Research by Design
Stage three, focuses on taking the understanding from theories and case studies further by setting a few elements as guidelines and making a matrix out of these to start the designing process. With this research background, site analysis will be then conducted to determine what context is required to successfully achieve the design strategies, choosing a site matching those criteria. Analysis of the surrounding urban context of the site will be conducted, taking several aspects like voids, circulations – sidewalks and stairs, relationship of façade and urban space, edge and entries/threshold. This research will be based on sketches, diagrams to show different transitional space elements and 3D modelling with respect to existing contours which respond to the previous design strategies to provide a solution for traditional transitional space in the contemporary city.
2.0 RESEARCH CONTEXTUALISATION
This research focuses on thresholds and transitions of public realm. The nature of the research literature review consists of a few books by selected authors, which deals with the same line of thought. This review consists of architects within the Western urban context and also architects within the Indian urban context. The scope of the review may be limited to a published selection of the books and authors, from a particular time period and location. This review will not explore each part of the book, but is the selective analysis of highlighted work related to this research. Most of the sources include city planning, open spaces, public spaces, pedestrian movement, social aspects, city life and other architectural and human factors.

2.1 Architects within the Western Urban Context

2.1.1 “Cities for People”, Jan Gehl

“Cities for People” by Jan Gehl (2010), represents recreating cityscapes on a human scale. He illustrates the techniques to reshape the unusable cityscapes into livable terrain for the people. He also explains the relationship between the large buildings and human scales, and how to develop cities that are lively, safe, sustainable and healthy. He focuses on what a public space should be like, a more inviting space for people.

Figure 1: City Planning: a combination of life, space and buildings
2.1.2 “Life Between Buildings”, Jan Gehl

“Life Between Buildings” by Jan Gehl (2011), investigates the quality of public spaces. Throughout his book, he looks at understanding the life of cities on a larger scale with the daily human activities of people in public spaces - the necessary, the optional and the social types of behaviour. He also talks about lively and healthy public spaces, urban recreation, social interaction and perception, and how human senses relates to the city life taking place. Through his book he tries to convey that architecture needs more careful attention. He suggests these all to be crucial areas of understanding for planning processes for spaces between buildings.
2.1.3 “The Death and Life of Great American Cities”,
Jane Jacobs

“The Death and Life of Great American Cities” by Jane Jacobs (1961), is a critique of 1950s urban planning policy, which it holds responsible for the decline of many city neighbourhoods in the United States. This book talks about the current city planning and rebuilding it. The author also talks about the four generators of diversity:

• Mixed primary uses, activating streets at different times of the day;
• Short blocks, allowing high pedestrian permeability;
• Buildings of various ages and states of repair;
• Density.

She also talks about sidewalks – as a central mechanism in maintaining the order of the city. Parks and sidewalks are lively and successful because of the functional physical diversity among users and their schedules. She also mentions the four beliefs of good park design:

• **Intricacy**: which means variety of uses and repeat users;
• **Centering**: which means main crossroads, pausing points;
• **Access to sunlight**;
• **Enclosure**: presence of buildings and diversity of surroundings.

*Figure 4: The Death and Life of Great American Cities*
2.1.4 “The Image of the City”, Kevin Lynch

“The Image of the City” by Kevin Lynch (1960), explains the people perception towards the city and experiential values through space and time. He describes a city with its surroundings and elements. He mentions the relationship of the complexity of every structural element like nodes, paths, districts, edges, landmarks that combine, which makes a city. He also analyses the forms and public areas and, adding to this, he also tells us that in order to design a city, one needs to understand the problems and opportunities related to it.

- **Paths**: the streets, sidewalks, trails, and other channels in which people travel. He noted that paths were the main elements surrounded with the other elements for people;
- **Edges**: a connecting element to join two regions together; It can be more or less perforated;
- **Districts**: Areas which have common in the characteristics on a larger scale. Characteristics include sequential experience within the space, through texture, space, form, detail, symbol and building;
- **Nodes**: the important junctions in a city into which one can go.

Figure 5: Order to design a city
2.1.5 “The Concise Townscape”, Gordon Cullen

“The Concise Townscape” by Gordon Cullen (1961), is the art of giving visual coherence and organisation to the jumble of buildings, streets and spaces that make up the urban environment. He describes the components that make cities and towns work. He also talks about different spaces like serial visions, narrow, punctuation, deflection, enclave, enclosure, closed vista and closure.

Figure 6: Serial visual experience through the space
2.1.6 Analysis of Square by Camillo Sitte

Camillo Sitte’s analysis of square was selected after the site selection, which was Aotea Square, to understand the square workings. His work was a showcase of urban patterns and treated urban spaces as aesthetic arrangements of building masses, facades, spatial structures of cities and street spaces. He believed that the points of the entry are placed eccentrically which gives extreme spatial enclosure which is called as turbine square. His analysis on square was based on five elements like:

- **Enclosure**: square should be closed entities
- **Positive Shape**: buildings should be joined to one another in a way that the façade defines the space;
- **Shape**: proportional to the surrounding buildings;
- **Monuments**: elements in a free space on which one may focus, placed along the edge of the space;
- **Streets**: enter at angles.

*Figure 7: Turbine square with spatial enclosure*
2.2 ARCHITECTS WITHIN AN INDIAN CONTEXT

2.2.1 CHARLES CORREA

Charles Correa’s work is a fusion of applying Indian traditional principles into a modern environment, that is, adapting modernism to a non-western culture with local materials and according to the climatic conditions. His early works are the reflection of local vernacular architecture, with providing long corridors and wide arches in order to provide shades and ventilation, thus, taking India’s climatic conditions into consideration. He worked taking a few principles like disaggregation, processional unfolding of spaces and “open to sky spaces” being the most important one.

Charles Correa also planned the New Bombay as a “Bazaar” city, with taking into consideration the basic needs for new sustainable urbanization. He believes that living in an Asian city involves much more than just a room. The four elements which makes the whole system livable for people are divided in hierarchy. They are:

- Courtyards as a semi-private activity space between different group of houses;
- Doorstep acting as a threshold and a frontage where children play or there is interaction with neighbourhoods;
- Neighbourhood places like the area near city water tap which acts as a community space.
- The main urban area called maidan (open space) used by everyone, acting as a big community space.

Figure 8: Hierarchy of spaces depicting different activities
In one of his projects, “Mahatma Gandhi Ashram at Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, Gujarat”, it can be seen that he designed the Gandhi Ashram’s structure in modules. The museum displays the memories of Mahatma Gandhi. The design is the showcase of the matrix of covered and open spaces which creates a feeling of lightness and transparency throughout the museum. He gives the opportunity for a moment of pause for the people moving in that space with making courtyards or gardens. He also gives importance to the pathways in his building; for example, through pathways he is giving a sense of people actually walking through the village and not in the museum to create the sense of the origin of place, thus making pathways as a journey connecting different spaces of the building.
2.2.2 BALKRISHNA DOSHI

Balkrishna Doshi believes that in India architecture is a celebration of life – the interaction of life with buildings. His work considers with climate, lifestyle, local material and technology, and characteristics of Indian culture. In India the buildings are multifunctional and from ground level to the terrace everything is used. Hence, there is no wastage of space, material and form. Doshi’s work has a strong influence from “form givers” Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn. His learning from Le Corbusier was to have no distinction between object and living as they should be merged – building, life and environment goes together as one entity. Thus, making architecture an extension of life. His work is a compelling mixture of modern and traditional, containing fundamental aspects of each. He believes festivals, gatherings, meetings, rituals/temples and streets/bazaars influence spaces in India a lot. He also talks about:

- Interrelationship of indoor and outdoor space;
- Appropriate and honest approach to materials;
- Proper climatic response;
- Observation of hierarchy and order that have been always present.
One of the finest example of his early works is the Centre for Environment and Planning Technology (CEPT), Ahmedabad. It was one of Doshi’s early projects which showed the influence of Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn in the building design. The free plan concept of Corbusier’s Villa Savoye of lifting the building above was adopted in here, keeping the space underneath active and multifunctional with sun protection and cross ventilation from the breeze. The design emphasis was on giving more open, flexible spaces to all with hardly any doors in the building. And the building’s arrangement is such that it has several combinations of paths throughout the space, giving a sense of continuity and openness. The design also incorporates for different activities like a central courtyard, canteen, plazas and the basement.
2.3 Overview from Architects within the Western and Indian Urban Context

These selected publications within western urban context helped in making a base to start interpretation of the cityscape with a human scale and helped in setting the parameters for increasing the efficiency for public realms and understanding the life of cities on a larger scale in consideration with daily human activities. In addition to this there is a developing understanding of people’s perception towards the city and its experiential values through space and time with knowing the components that makes cities work. Camillo Sitte’s analysis helped in deriving the elements to do a site analysis of Aotea Square to understand the workings of a perfect square.

These two architects, Charles Correa and Balkrishna Doshi, helped in understanding the architecture on an urban level in context with cultural and traditional values of India. This helped in understanding the traditional transitional city spaces and superimposing those ideas into modern architecture, keeping context and climatic condition in mind. This also gave an idea about, how to analyze the case study of the Indian Pol community cluster on a macro urban scale and micro scale and then take those elements further onto site, which is Aotea Square, in regard to Auckland’s urban context. This will help in recreating those traditional transitional spaces in the heart of Auckland CBD and enhancing the public realm.
2.4 CASE STUDIES

2.4.1 POL –Indian Community Cluster

A pol is an Indian community cluster in the walled city of Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The form of the city was developed over a time with different factors affecting it. The structure of the walled city can be differentiated at two levels: one being the macro scale of the city, and the second being the micro scale of the neighbourhood. Thus, the walled city is the formation of hierarchy of different spaces in layers.

Looking at the macro scale of the city, it can be seen that the walled city is the cluster of multifunctional units including different retail outlets, eatery shops, offices, residential blocks, community spaces and house of worship (i.e. temple/mosque). The hierarchy of the streets depicts the transit within the city which leads to these different spaces. The main street is generally the combination of retail outlets and eatery shops on the ground level and residential units at the upper level.
The images below show the layers of transition in the walled city of Ahmedabad. In first image is a plan showing the basic layout of the walled city, where the wide hatched patch is the main street distributing into secondary and tertiary. The cluster adjoining the main street in yellow is the commercial shops. In the other image the dashed line shows the main street with the sides used by vegetable vendors. The yellow area marked is uplifted pedestrian space as a threshold between the main street and commercial shops. The building transition is from public to private vertically. The edges of the road are also used for parking and as informal pedestrian space.
Coming to the micro – scale of neighbourhoods, this walled city is a cluster of several “Pol”. These polys are traditional cluster arrangement of several residential blocks. Each pol has its own cluster houses of one community. Each pol has its own transit from public to private. It is a journey between the different space elements, starting from the entrance through the main gateway, a common quadrangle – acting as a community space for that particular pol with a temple/mosque and a well, a primary street and a secondary street, along with an adjoining cluster of houses. The traditional values of the pol are that it binds the families, creating a sense of togetherness among its inhabitants with traditional and historical values.

Narrowing it down to each individual pol house, the overall structure remains the same as of a pol. A typical pol house consists of the entrance as otla, an entrance room, a courtyard as chowk, along with the kitchen, the storage room and individual rooms in the rear or one level up. Generally, the pol house has two to three floors with a terrace above it.
Hence, to conclude this urban fabric in the walled city is a very good example of traditional transitional spaces where the main street of the city links to the primary street of the city. This primary street of the walled city merges with different pols with the secondary streets, thus, acting as a connecting space between two confined spaces that are the walled city and the streets of the pol. When further narrowed down, these secondary streets of the pol merge with each individual pol house. Here, the main porch of the house (i.e. otla) is uplifted a few steps above the street, acting as a transitional space. As this otla marks the transition between the public –neighbourhood pol houses and street to the private – each individual house. These otla act as a functional space for social activities in the neighbourhood. The typical layout of each house is divided into public and private utilisation through the central courtyard (i.e. chawk). Here, the courtyard acts as a transitional semi-open space.
2.4.2 MARAE – Maori Meeting Place

A marae is a communal house of the Maori people of New Zealand. It is a fenced-in complex of carved buildings and grounds that belongs to a particular tribe, sub-tribe or a family. A marae is generally used for meetings, celebration, funerals, educational workshops and other important tribal events. A marae consists of a meeting house with an open courtyard in front, a dining hall and kitchen, and a toilet and shower block. The most important space of a marae is the meeting place, which is called “Wharenui”. Each structural element of the wharenui is related to with the human body and usually it also represents a particular ancestor of the tribe.

Marae and meeting house symbolized the distinction between war and peace. The marae is often referred to as being the domain of the god of war, where the locals challenge their visitors and where people engage in debates, whereas the meeting house interior is the realm of the god of peaceful activities where people debate in favour of learning, conversing or sleeping. Between these two worlds is the threshold between life and death, mythological past and living present. The change between realms is marked by paepae.

Figure 25: Typical Marae

Figure 26: Different elements of Wharenui
Spatial Arrangement in Marae:

The whole space in a marae has layers of enclosure of transitional space. It is the journey which begins from welcoming through the main entrance which gives the sense of place; this leads to the open courtyard where the host group welcomes the guest group, and the open spaces faces the main meeting place “Wharenui”. The meeting place is generally a little uplifted from the ground and which leads to a porch of the wharenui called “Paepae” which acts as a threshold between the exterior and interior space.
2.4.3 HAMO TE RANGI: Design for A Contemporary Urban Marae

The “Design for a Contemporary Urban Marae” by Steven Hutana is about how urban marae fulfil contemporary Maori needs. His main question is how to use traditional Maori forms within contemporary urban design, that is, to design a proposal for an urban Maori community through traditional Maori architecture (Hutana, 2011). After a brief understanding of the about the history of the traditional marae and urban marae he made design strategies for urban marae based on concepts like:

- **Kotahitanga**: bringing communities together;
- **Wairuatanga**: spiritual connection with the environment that links people;
- **Manaakitanga**: giving acceptance and hospitality to visitors and security of community;
- **Rangatiratanga**: making mixed use density living environment of clustered buildings;
- **Orangatanga**: wellbeing of the community by providing open spaces with mixed use purpose, open and covered walkways encouraging more people to walk through;
- **Mauritanga**: focusing on sustainable architecture possible in design;
- **Whanaungatanga**: providing social setting through membership in community to create a local identity;
- **Kaitiakitanga**: protection of local landscape features which are important to local community;
- **Matauranga**: respecting and understanding the community history, character and identity. (Hutana, 2011, p. 25, 26).

Hamo Te Rangi Marae's basic functions includes physical, spiritual and symbolic communal spaces. The main master plan of the design is based on four primary zones:

- **Cultural**: traditional spaces which includes Marae Atea, Wharenu, Wharekui and Wharepaku;
- **Community**: business, education and performance;
- **Circulation routes**: walkways, car parking and Waharoa;
- **Cultivation spaces**: weekend markets, dedicated links to residential area near Marae. (Hutana, 2011, p. 33).
**Interpretation of his design**

Overall, Steve Hutana’s contemporary design of Urban Marae is a collaboration of all the building functions which are required for good community space. The design merges well with the neighbourhood streets in respect to its urban context. The main idea is to make it a contemporary design, with keeping values, culture and tradition in mind. Thus, he made the design by abstracting the organic symbolic forms of Maori art and using sustainable local materials. His design is also a reflection of a journey throughout the urban marae connecting different areas of the building that are office space, residential apartments, theatre and even cultural hub “wharenu” with open courtyard. He made all the in between transitions with a play of covered and uncovered pathways. Hence, his design is the best example of representing traditional Marae into contemporary Urban Marae.

![Figure 30: Steve Hutana’s contemporary urban Marae: showing the circulation](image)

![Figure 31: Steve Hutana’s contemporary urban Marae: entrance to the Marae](image)
Figure 32: Steve Hutana’s contemporary urban Marae: Laneways near dining and kitchen area

Figure 33: Steve Hutana’s contemporary urban Marae: Te Pua Ote Roku Marae (Wharenui)

Figure 34: Steve Hutana’s contemporary urban Marae: art centre and business hub
3.0 SITE SELECTION
3.1 Aotea Square: Past

The Aotea Square Quarter, Te Waihorotiu played an important role for Maori in gathering food and collecting water close to ancient sites in Albert Street and Albert Park. It also holds important historic and ecological stories. Aotea Square Quarter is in the middle of Auckland’s city on a basin. It sits distinctively on the ridgeline topography of the Queen Street valley, edged with the curve of Mayoral Drive. Queen Street is the spine and primary street. The insertion of the Mayoral Drive was done in 1970s and 1980s was done to relieve the pressure of east-west movements across the city centre.

Figure 35: Auckland Council Plan: Te Waihorotiu Stream
Figure 36: Auckland Council Plan: showing the Aotea Basin and landform
Figure 37: Auckland Council Plan: street pattern and network
Aotea Square was created in 1979, with a large part of it being the former end of Grey’s Avenue, which used to connect directly to Queen Street – a large underground carpark with 930 spaces had been erected underneath in 1975.

The initial plan for the Aotea Centre comprised an auditorium with a sitting capacity of 5,000 and a 1,200-seat theatre. However, due to the cost of construction, the building was reduced to a 2,300-seat auditorium and an 800-seat theatre. The final design by Ewen Wainscott was unveiled to the public in 1980. Eventually, “a generation overdue” because of financial struggle, the controversial Aotea Centre, described as “a tragic and expensive mistake” by opponents, broke ground in August, 1985, a day which some called “a momentous day for Auckland”.

[Year: 1940]

[Year: 1974-89]

[Year: 2013]
Figure 38: Aotea Square before


Figure 39: Aotea Square at present

Figure 38: Aotea Square before
3.2 Aotea Square: Present

Aotea Square lies in the middle of the Auckland CBD, surrounded by the main streets Mayoral Drive, Wellesley Street and Queen Street. It acts as a break-through space in a dense concrete jungle, and is used for different public events, open-air concerts, gatherings, markets and political rallies, accommodating crowds up to 20,000. As it is in the centre of the city it binds the other zones into it. It is not only the heart of the city in geographic terms, but also in socio and cultural terms. Aotea Square is in the centre of an attractive collection of cultural public buildings and spaces like the Civic Building, Aotea Centre, Town Hall, Skycity Metro, Civic Cinema, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland Central Library, bars and cafes.

Figure 40: Aerial view of the selected site (in red) in the heart of Auckland CBD
**Aotea Centre**

Aotea Centre is a 25-year-old building. It was the product of post-war urban intentions to create a new civic centre and square for Auckland. It includes facilities like a foyer, gallery spaces and function rooms. The recent redesign gives the lower terrace fronting Aotea Square an extended canopy with steps and a Box café. This has improved the edge of the square immensely, making it more active.

**Town Hall**

It is a civic landmark in Neo-Baroque style. It is a historical building place on the Queen Street with alignment to Greys Avenue. It is currently used for several events such as showcasing art and culture, concerts by Orchestra and other different international shows and performances.

**The Civic Administration Building**

The Civic Administration Building is on the edge of Aucklands’s Aotea Square. It was the city’s first skyscraper and became an icon of local government. It was designed in mid 1950s and completed in 1966 by Tibor Karl Donner.
3.3 Aotea Square: Future

Auckland City Council is certainly familiar with Aotea Square’s limitations. The square has been gradually upgraded since 2000 with constant debates amongst architects, urban designers and critics. The aim was to transform it into a strong destination as an open public space; a comfortable and familiar place for people to relax and socialize.

The Aotea Quarter Framework seeks to update and advance the strategic direction set down in the Aotea Quarter Plan 2007 and the more recent City Centre Masterplan 2012. Reflecting the change already happening and transformation yet to occur, the framework provides a strategic vision for next 20 years. The framework identifies four outcomes to deliver the vision:

- **Outcome 1:** A Civic and Cultural Heart – The quarter core as the enduring home for the arts, culture, entertainment and civic life, creating a unique destination.
- **Outcome 2:** Transport-Enabled Development – A public transport node that improves accessibility, supports growth and enables high-quality development.
- **Outcome 3:** Supporting Neighborhoods – Livable, vibrant and diverse inner-city neighbourhoods engaging and supporting the quarter core.
- **Outcome 4:** Sustainable and Cultural Showcase – Spaces and buildings that lead and showcase Auckland’s drive for sustainability and celebrate its unique cultural identity through the Te Aranga Māori design principles.
Also, the Auckland Council Proposal is for the restoration of The Civic Administration Building in Aotea Square with development of the surrounding area, to the breathing space of Auckland’s city centre. The proposal consists of the residential apartments on the upper floors, with food and beverages on the ground floor of the existing building. The site also holds potential for mixed-use building with facilities like office space, hotel, hospitality, retail outlets, and residential.

Thus, the restoration of The Civic Administration Building creates 104 apartments from 1BHK of 56m² to 3BHK of 115m² and pent house, a new apartment building on the Mayoral Drive corner, with a boutique hotel and featuring a Whare Tapere performance space fronting Aotea Square.
AOTEA SQUARE

SERIAL VISIONS

RELATION BETWEEN FACADES AND URBAN SPACES

ACCESSIBILITY

VISUAL CONNECTION

DENSITY

CIRCULATION

CONNECTION WITH THE MAIN STREETS

INTERACTION WITH HUMAN SCALE AND PROPORTION

DAILY ACTIVITIES OF PEOPLE IN THE CITY

EXPERIENTIAL VALUES THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

Figure 45: Mind map of Aotea Square
3.4 Advantages of Aotea Square

Aotea Square is located in the city centre with its three edges linking with Auckland Town Hall, the Aotea Centre, bars and cafes. Aotea Square encourages the public not only to pass through the space, but also retains them for interaction in activities. In his book “Cities for People”, Jan Gehl discusses the relationship between facades and urban space and how they can affect the way the space is used. The physical arrangement of the bars and cafes on the ground level of the square invites people to spend some leisure time – coffee in the office hours and drinks at the bars. Hence, Gehl calls it a ‘staying square’, as opposed to a ‘walk-through’ square as it keeps people in the square.

Another factor which adds up is the balance between the greens and the concrete sections, which allows mixed crowds to come in for different small and large events. The proper seating opportunities of benches arranged throughout the square and a green canopy providing sufficient shelter invites people to sit and enjoy the life in the square. Some arrangements of the benches also create the cluster groups for private interaction. Thus, the arrangement of the benches in the square creates a place for public interaction, relaxation and observation.

Then, the connection of the Aotea Square with the main streets which makes the circulation easy. There are multiple access entries from these streets as well as from the underground parking, excluding the individual building entries which keeps the square transition constant. These building entries add to the space for functions and small gatherings into the square. These makes the façade and the square interact with each other.
3.5 Limitations of Aotea Square

Aotea Square is less successful in building up the connection throughout the square with the streets. The orientation of the square bifurcates the spaces into two different individual areas, and doesn’t provide a welcoming entrance into Aotea Square from Greys Avenue. On the southern side of the Aotea Square the relationship between facades and urban space is weak because of the building function in that area.
3.6 Chosen Site

Thus, the chosen site is not the whole of Aotea Square but the part of the square with the most potential, which is the southern side, which is a car park at present. The site is across the edge of Mayoral Drive and Greys Avenue with the path to Myers Park under the bridge of Mayoral Drive.

Figure 46: Aerial view of Aotea Square showing the selected site (in red) and main streets
4.0 SITE ANALYSIS
4.1 Void

From the ground figure shown below, it is difficult to identify Aotea Square. The placement of Aotea Centre in the middle of a massive void makes the square’s boundaries difficult to be identify. This is mainly due to a lack of mass or defined edges on the southern side of the Aotea Square.

Figure 47: Aotea Square: figure diagram
Figure 47: Aotea Square: ground diagram
Figure 48: Aotea Square: Aerial view
4.2 Edge

Aotea Square’s edge has incomplete and undefined boundaries. The break in the edge or the inactive edge tends to reduce the activities around the square. It can be seen in the figure below that the southern part of the square has no defined boundary due to a lack of mixed-use public buildings which invites more people throughout the square.

Figure 49: red marking showing the edge of the square
4.3 Threshold/Entry

Threshold and entries have an important part in defining the Aotea Square. There are eight entries to the square of which two are from the Aotea Centre. All the entries to the square are not specific and hence fails in addressing Aotea Square. The only entrance which gives a sense of place, with the Maori artwork gate called “Waharao”, is from the Queen Street. It marks the importance and welcomes walking people into the square from the Queen Street.

Figure 50: (left): red markings showing the entries to the square  
(above): Maori artwork gate (Waharao)
4.4 Circulation: Sidewalk

The two main pathways with maximum footfall in Aotea Square are the one which connects the Mayoral Drive through the Aotea Centre across to the Event cinemas connecting to Queen Street, and the second across to the Town Hall.

Figure 51: red marking showing main two circulation (middle) across the Town Hall going towards Mayoral Drive and (right) across the event cinema
4.5 Circulation: Stairs

The stairs on the frontage of Aotea Square from Queen Street are used as both for transitioning into the square and as a sitting option, thus, acting as a threshold between the busy pedestrian street and square. The stairs facing the Town Hall are not used much compared to the first one because of their placement. The first gives a sense of openness to people sitting around square while the other faces the Town Hall façade.

Figure 51: orange patch in the plan showing two main stairs providing opportunity people to sit
4.6 Relationship Between Façade and Urban Space

The physical arrangement of the bars and cafes on the ground level of the square invites people to stay in the square. The square also provides sitting opportunities with benches, with a green canopy providing sufficient natural shelter, and invites people to sit and spend some time.

Figure 52: Red marked lines shows the relationship between façade and urban space
5.0 INITIAL DESIGN
5.1 Brief

The initial design focuses on three major aspects to start with the final design. The three major aspects are:

- Positive and drawbacks of the future proposed development plan from Auckland Council
- Site potential
- Seven components/elements derived from literature review which are different theories and case studies of traditional transitional space.

The initial step in the design was to analyze positives and drawbacks with the future development of the area surrounding the Civic Administration Building as per the Auckland Council Proposal. The proposed design incorporates mixed-use building functions in that area which will increase the number of people walking through Mayoral Drive to Aotea Square. The drawbacks of the proposed design are:

- The mass of the building which makes it look bulky and heavy.
- The design does not in respect to the existing contours.
- It surrounds the whole periphery of the Civic Administration Building.
- There are no building connections on upper floors, other than the ground-level corridors in-between.
The site holds the potential to increase transition on the southern side of Aotea Square with the insertion of building blocks with mixed-use functions that interact with the urban space. It is important to make a strong connection by merging Mayoral Drive and Myers Park to Aotea Square. The idea for designing is to fragment the building functions in different units and then connect them through bridges, laneways, stairs and courtyards.

With this research background of theories, case studies and site, the next step was to set up the guidelines for designing, to get the best of transitional spaces reflecting the traditional transitional space elements. The seven components/elements derived from this research background are:

- **Laneways**: as vibrant and informal urban spaces with incorporating green space, cultural/art and making an active physical link.
- **Sidewalks**: promoting pedestrian-friendly streetscapes to encourage people to walk.
- **Framing**: to create a gateway and perspective to give a “sense of welcoming” to a place.

This will lead to interesting pockets of spaces and will create a journey within different spaces. With these transitional spaces forming within the site, it is necessary to provide a setback to each space which acts as a threshold, and to give a sense of welcome to the place through placement of the buildings blocks. The design will incorporate mixed-use functions like: residential apartments, offices, retail outlets, restaurants/cafes and on the exhibition gallery facing the Aotea Square.

- **Bridge**: to increase the connectivity and transition within the buildings on upper levels.
- **Stairs**: as a functional transitional space providing connectivity to different levels. If the stairs are in an urban context, then they can provide sitting opportunities to increase the efficiency of that space.
- **Porch**: a covered canopy extended or a setback of the upper floor acting as a “threshold”
- **Courtyard**: an open space creating an opportunity for small gatherings and events, acting more like a community space.
### MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENTS</th>
<th>POL</th>
<th>MARAE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INDIAN COMMUNITY CLUSTER</td>
<td>MAORI MEETING PLACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. LANEWAYS</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. SIDEWALKS</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
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<td>3. FRAMING</td>
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<td>6. PORCH</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. COURTYARD</td>
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</table>
6.0 DESIGN MASTER PLAN
6.1 Masterplan

The connection of spaces within and around the Aotea Quarter is weak currently. The integration of mixed-use built forms will help in creating an active street edge along the frontage of Mayoral Drive and Greys Avenue. Also, this will improve the Mayoral Drive underpass which leads to Myers Park. The design respects the existing contours. Hence, it provides two main accesses through stairs from the Mayoral Drive pedestrian area. This will make transition from Mayoral Drive to Aotea Square easy and accessible. Circulation here will allow people either to go through the laneways or pass through the buildings which leads to Aotea Square. The design incorporates journey through different transitional spaces, each being marked as a destination.

The building functions go from public to private. The ground floor consists of retail and food outlets, upper floors as office space and the top floors as residential apartments. The building in the front of Aotea Square is gallery space with its own café and library.
6.2 Design Layout

The design process starts with the edge of Mayoral Drive as a way to merge the southern edge with the Aotea Square. Thus, the first step was to figure out the existing pedestrian area and contours. The main drawback of this existing pedestrian area is the level difference towards the Civic Administration building. At present one has walk through Greys Avenue pedestrian path from Mayoral Drive to get to Aotea Square. Currently it is a car park which doesn’t encourage people to walk towards the square.

Thus, the design promotes retail and food outlets on the ground level which keeps the building accessible for passersby. To make the pedestrian area walkable and invite more people, it is extended and merged with the building. As discussed above, the level difference is substantial and because of that one has to walk through Greys Avenue. The design incorporates stairs which take a person directly to the street which leads to the Aotea Square through laneways between the building blocks. Also, the stairs near the hidden entrance of Myers Park underneath the Mayoral Drive are visible, inviting more people to the park. The design also provides an open community space in front of the stairs which gives an opportunity to sit and relax. That community space would be an extension of the Myers Park.

The cluster arrangement of the blocks is in such a way that it provides building canopies and open terraces for office and residential blocks.
The figure below shows the extension to the existing pedestrian area which merges with the building leading towards Aotea Square either through the laneways, sidewalks of the Greys Avenue or from within the buildings. The extended canopies give a spacious and welcoming entrance to the building. This also forms a sheltered walk and gives an opportunity for outside seating for the cafes and restaurants.
There are two main stairs from Mayoral Drive’s pedestrian area which lead a person to Aotea Square from laneways through the buildings. These stairs act as a threshold between the main pedestrian area of the Mayoral Drive and the open courtyards, and the buildings. The stairs near the Myers Park also acts as an amphitheatre, giving people an opportunity to sit and relax. The open space in front of it acts as an open community space. The building canopy is designed in such a way that it is functional as well as having aesthetic value to it. Functionally, it is the bridge between upper floors, and aesthetically, it creates sheltered laneways.
The design is the play between the mass and void, forming a series of open and closed transitional. The building blocks are fragmented but still connected when seen in the plan. This is because of the building canopies acting as a bridge to connect the upper floors. These voids keep the ground area free for people to move around and on upper floors gives connectivity through different building blocks.
6.3 Series of Transitional Spaces

There are a series of transitional spaces forming throughout the design. This series of visual experiences develops a journey from Mayoral Drive through different buildings and laneways to Aotea Square. Hence, with the insertion of these elements as discussed in the matrix above, the transitional spaces can make the southern edge of Aotea Square more active. The series of transitional spaces could be seen in three different levels. They are:

- Edge of the Mayoral Drive
- Different Building Entries
- Framing and Laneways

6.3.1 Edge of the Mayoral Drive

The main idea in the design was to make an active edge of the Mayoral Drive which leads walkers towards the square in interesting way. Here in the figure below the orange part shows the extended pedestrian area which merges with the building and stairs which leads to Aotea Square. This makes the relationship between the building façade and urban space stronger. The second stairs connect Mayoral Drive to Myers Park entrance which is underneath Mayoral Drive and the same stairs are also one of the entrance to that building. The risers and treads of these stairs are wider than the usual, giving an opportunity for people and children to sit and play. Hence, this open courtyard space could be an extension of the Myers Park, forming a small community space.
SERIES OF TRANSITIONAL SPACES

1. EDGE OF THE MAYORAL DRIVE.

Building up the Connetion from the main street (Mayoral Drive) with the building leading towards Aotea Square.
6.3.2 Different Building Entries

All the entries into the building are either within the extended building canopy or with a setback of a few steps going up or down as per the contours. As discussed earlier in the case study of the pol, where the uplifted otla acts as a threshold between the street and the house, in the same way here the entries act as a threshold but the context is changed. The building facing the Aotea Square is on the same level. To make the main entrance of the gallery more interesting the ground floor façade is kept porous. The porosity could be seen with pivoted doors which makes the flow from Aotea Square to the gallery more flexible.
6.3.3 Framing and Laneways

The design recreates the framing and laneways in respect to Gordon Cullen’s series of visual experiences and the respective case studies which showcases the entrance, giving a sense of place to a particular space. The scale over here is a bit larger in respect to the site context and needs. The arrangement of the building canopies is such that it solves its purpose of connecting the upper levels but also forms framing that acts as a gateway. The laneways here are the linkage between different small activity spaces. Thus, the laneways are not narrow throughout.
7.0 CONCLUSION
The aim of the project is to answer the question “How can traditional urban space elements be used to enhance the design of transitional space in the contemporary city?”. By the understandings of literature review from theories and case studies seven traditional urban space elements were derived and then were superimposed onto the chosen site to get the best workable design. Analyzing the Aotea Quarter Framework helped in selecting the site, which was the southern edge of Aotea Square linked with main streets of Mayoral Drive and Grey’s Avenue. After the successful analysis of the site, the main aim was to develop a strong connection from the Mayoral Drive to Aotea Square and making the Myers Park entrance visible by merging it towards Aotea Square.

This was possible by adding several building functions to the site like retail outlets, cafes and bars, restaurants, office spaces, gallery and residential apartments on upper level. Thus, to make the space interesting it was necessary to make series of transitional space which makes a journey from start of Mayoral Drive to Aotea Square or from Mayoral Drive to Myers Park marking each as a destination. The best way of superimposing the traditional urban space elements was with developing a matrix on the seven main elements, which were, laneways, sidewalks, framing (gateways), bridges, stairs, porch and courtyards according to the urban context of the site. The matrix shows the connection from both the case studies of Pol and Marae which reflects in the design.
# MATRIX

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>MARAE</th>
<th>MY DESIGN</th>
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8.0 REFERENCES
References from Websites and Books


List of Figures


Full name of author: JANKI SNIL SHARMA

ORCID number (Optional): .................................................................

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ('the work'):
Making Translational Space in the Contemporary City

Practice Pathway: ...........................................................................

Degree: Master of Architecture

Year of presentation: 2018

Principal Supervisor: Cesar Wagner

Associate Supervisor: Matthew Bradbury

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