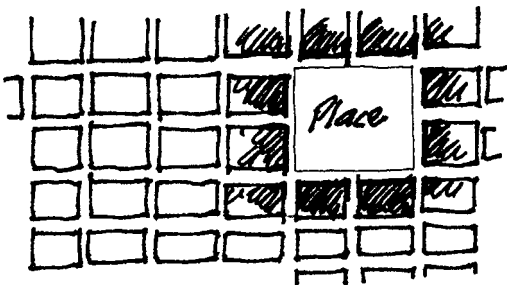


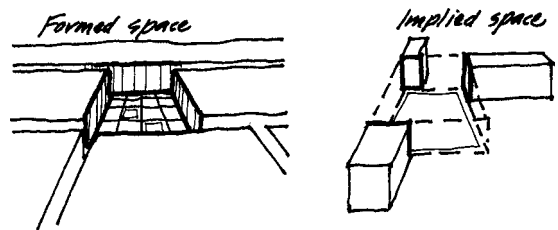
elegant urban ornament. The goodness of a functioning portal is largely based on the success of the path and place it connects. It is difficult to describe a gateway as successful if it serves as an invitation to a dead and unattractive plaza. Portals need not be deliberately designed to be good. Unplanned building configurations can shape a beautiful garden entry experience and become a fitting terminus for a street. If there is evidence of design attention in the making of the gateway, we may consider the application of the success criteria discussed earlier. The headings of Definition, Identity, Character, Beauty, Habitability, Significance, Connectedness, and Sensuality guide us to telling questions about portal success. Is the portal well-formed? Does it have shape, a sense of entity, thereness? Does the gate possess presence? Is it memorable as an element and experience in its own right? What is the energy quality there, the feeling tone? Is it supportive of the pathspace and placespace that it joins? Does the portal offer an aesthetic experience? Are we moved emotionally by its attributes? Is urban life affirmed by the portal? Does the entryway have a history that deepens our experience there? How does the portal relate to other portals, paths, and places? Is it part of a larger pattern? Questions like these can lead us to personal value positions and attitudes about portal success.

Place

Places in cities are the plazas, courtyards, gardens, and parks. They are the destinations to which paths take us, the urban rooms into which we move through portals. In dense town form, places are the voids between the solidity of building, relief and release from the compression of streets. Whereas path is linear and portal is point between path and place, place has spatial volume, roomlike stability of shape and proportion.



Path is about anticipation, expectation, approach. Portal is about transition, threshold, entry, arrival, disclosure, orientation. Place is about joining, being, belonging. While path invites us to move and portal to move through, place invites us to stay, to settle in and participate in the city life there. Some urban places are dedicated to vehicular traffic or parking, but we are interested here in spaces for pedestrian use. An urban space may have been deliberately planned or may have evolved unselfconsciously over many years with no comprehensive design attention ever devoted to it. A grand plaza today could have had humble beginnings as the site of the town market in the early days of the city's history. The enlargement and shaping of urban places often happens in conjunction with the construction of major civic buildings or as a power gesture by a new government regime. When spaces are planned, they frequently are dedicated to and named for important events or people in the town's history.



Container

Aspects of the physical presence of urban places that we tend to notice on first encounter are spatial volume, building facades, freestanding elements in the space, and ground plane.

Spatial volume is the open area contained by the buildings, its sectional, dimensional, scalar qualities. Spatial volume has shape, length, width, height, proportion. It has edge conditions that are sharply defined and planar or convoluted and rambling. A plaza space can be fully formed and defined by boundary buildings or barely inferred by a few structures that only imply the space.

The building facades that shape an urban space can occur as several types of enclosing fabrics. There may be no featured buildings and no comprehensive effort to plan the facades as a total composition. One or more of the plaza facades could be designed as a coherent unity. A single building might be featured, anchor the space, provide a focus, and establish the space's theme and character. There could