



***The City as a Network of Stimulating Landscapes:
Considerations on the Composition of Free Spaces, their
Outstanding Elements and Monuments***

***A Cidade como uma Rede de Paisagens Estimulantes:
Considerações sobre a Composição dos Espaços Livres, seus
Elementos de Destaque e Monumentos***

***La ciudad como red de paisajes estimulantes: consideraciones
sobre la composición de los espacios libres, sus destacados y
monumentos***

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Abstract

This article seeks to explore issues related to the structure of cities, from the understanding of the role of free spaces in the perception of its users and in the daily life. To accomplish this, the aspects related to functionality and the spatial configurations of free spaces are analyzed. The objective of the research is to explore issues already pointed out by authors and apply the theories raised in examples of traditional and new cities. The methodology consists of a bibliographic review of authors who dealt with the topological phenomenon itself, whose understandings point to the city as a system of interconnected free spaces, with its own hierarchies and meanings, and with certain recurrent spatial arrangements. These understandings resulted in a research to identify spatial arrangements, in squares with monuments and prominent elements, serving as examples to understanding and verifying the importance of these elements for the structuring of cities, their perception and relationship with their inhabitants. In conclusion, it is clear that seeing and organizing free spaces, especially from the Baroque period, is still recurrent in the planning of cities around the world, emphasizing monumentality with symbolic aspects and an idea of order and discipline in spatial arrangements.

Key-Words: *System of open spaces; monuments; visual landmarks*

Resumo

Este artigo busca explorar questões relacionadas à estrutura das cidades, a partir do entendimento do papel dos espaços livres na percepção dos seus usuários e na própria vida cotidiana das cidades. Para isto, são analisados aspectos ligados à funcionalidade e a própria configuração espacial dos espaços livres. O objetivo da pesquisa é explorar questões já apontadas por autores e aplicar as teorias levantadas em exemplos de cidades tradicionais e novas. A metodologia consiste na revisão bibliográfica de autores que trataram do próprio fenômeno topológico, cujos entendimentos apontam para a cidade como um sistema de espaços livres interconectados, com hierarquias e sentidos próprios e, com determinados arranjos espaciais recorrentes. A aplicação destes entendimentos teve como resultado de pesquisa a identificação destes arranjos espaciais, em praças com monumentos e elementos de destaque, servindo de exemplos para ajudar a entender e verificar a importância destes elementos para a estruturação das cidades, sua percepção e relacionamento com seus habitantes. Como conclusão percebe-se que a maneira de ver e organizar os espaços livres, principalmente a partir do período barroco, é até hoje recorrente no planejamento de cidades no mundo, enfatizando a monumentalidade com aspectos simbólicos e uma ideia de ordem e disciplina nos arranjos espaciais.

Palavras-Chave: *Sistema de espaços livres; monumentos; marcos visuais*

Resumen

Este artículo explora cuestiones como la estructura de las ciudades, del papel de los espacios libres en la percepción de sus usuarios y en la vida cotidiana de las ciudades. Se analizan aspectos relacionados con la funcionalidad y la configuración espacial de los espacios libres. El objetivo de la investigación es explorar cuestiones ya señaladas por los autores y aplicar las teorías planteadas en ejemplos de ciudades tradicionales y nuevas. La metodología consiste en una revisión bibliográfica de autores que abordaron el fenómeno topológico, cuyas comprensiones apuntan a la ciudad como un sistema de espacios libres interconectados, con sus propias jerarquías y significados, y con ciertos ordenamientos espaciales recorrentes. La aplicación resultó en una investigación para identificar estos arreglos espaciales, en plazas con monumentos y elementos destacados, sirviendo como ejemplos para ayudar a comprender y verificar la importancia de estos elementos para la estructuración de las ciudades, su percepción y relación con sus habitantes. Es evidente que la forma de ver y organizar los espacios libres, especialmente del período barroco, sigue siendo recorrente en la planificación de las ciudades de todo el mundo, enfatizando la monumentalidad con aspectos simbólicos y una idea de orden y disciplina en el espacio.

Palabras clave: *Sistema de espacios libre; monumentos; hitos visuales*



1. Introduction

The appreciation of certain open urban spaces seems to be linked to a certain affective and symbolic character. However, it reveals something greater, something present in the understanding of the structure of the city as a whole and also interfering with its functionality. Since antiquity, the existence of prominent elements, such as monuments and artistic objects, seems to influence this process of perception of cities as feelings of urban space users. In this sense, open spaces are more than mere functional spaces that house activities. They are related to the way people understand the city and even how they get around.

In fact, prominent elements arranged in an apparently dispersed way in squares, streets, and avenues, constitute urban facts of public life that suggests transcend positively the physical and configurative existence. But how to produce such urban facts? This question has long been disturbing and fascinating architects, urban planners, and landscape designers. Several examples of old and current urban reforms suggest that it is just a matter of generating interest in open spaces through embellishment, using ornamentation. In fact, this has been a recurrent issue in urban practice, especially since the 19th century, with numerous urban reforms in many cities around the world, in which we notice a recurrent practice of inserting decorative elements, especially in squares and parks.

Diverging from the ornamentation reasoning, Frampton (1991) believes that the use of monuments is a way of reacting to the triumph of the urban spaces' banality. Therefore, it goes beyond the issue of the public space's ornamentation. He points out that it is necessary to enrich the relationships between space and man, generating an affective and interest relationship, therefore, richer than the aesthetic character, or even the necessity of being something functional. He points to the affective and emotional relationship, to the symbolic aspects, with social and political representation. The public demonstrations throughout the 20th century, and even in the 21st century, with recurrent destruction of monuments of deposed leaders and governments, or of elements that refer to refuted social and political practices and moments, such as Nazism and racism, demonstrates how symbolic associations are powerful within the collective imagination. However, even the object with a social meaning needs configurative aspects to be highlighted, to stimulate the collective perception and be powerful to the "image of the city" structure.

The love for monuments, so characteristic in traditional cities, especially after the 17th century and the Baroque art movement, seems to have returned to the discussion of architecture, taking place as a strong, significant and symbolic content. Rossi (1982) even attributes a preponderant role to monumental places in city ordering. These spaces contain significant aspects that go beyond the configuration issue, characterizing themselves as primary urban facts. These primary facts are solid cores in the urban fabric, configuring structural nodes of a network of meaning, not only from the city perception's point of view, as proposed by Lynch (1960) and Cullen (1983), but as activities focal points, typical of a functional space operation.

These primary urban facts are spaces that are playing as a decisive functional role in the city's formation. The role of monuments and open spaces consists in stablish primary urban facts, which are related to city's structure, endowing them with a symbolic and aesthetic character, deeply related to the construction of their own identity.

In this context, the city's structure is a perceptual phenomenon that is established as important urban facts, defined as remarking landscapes which participates of the daily life of the population. Some spatial arrangements are recurrent throughout the city's history, repetitions that raise certain shared values and perceptions. Therefore, the city can be understood as a network of significant places, with functional and visual relationships that connects a stronger or weaker way, depending on the elements which are present in the spatial configuration (Cesar, 2003).



This spatial arrangement also establishes an identity that arouses a feeling of affection and belonging to that urban configuration within the context of the city. A bibliographic review on the theme was made with the authors: Sitte (1993), Gregotti (1975), Cullen (1983), Lynch (1960), Kohlsdorf (1996), Frampton (1991), Rossi (1982), Hollanda (2002).

In a more perceptual strand, Sitte (1993) highlights his artistic perception of the open spaces of European medieval cities, in particular the case of the squares. His approach is specific and deals with the relationship of functional and topological aspects found in certain examples, especially the squares linked to an important urban equipment in cities, such as churches, markets, and town halls. His approach influences this research in identifying important formal aspects to be analyzed in open spaces, especially about the insertion of artistic elements.

In a similar approach, Cullen (1983) deals with the urban landscape in a very objective and intuitive way of describing the configuration of cities, focusing a visual perception. His concepts served as an instrumental basis for evaluating the perception of urban spaces. Following the same focus, Lynch (1960) carried out empirical research in many American cities, verifying how people perceive and organize random information when they travel along the paths of the cities, also including different means of transport. Kohlsdorf (1996), on the other hand, develops an approach to apprehending the form of places. For this author, the ease or difficulty of understanding cities depends on the formal attributes that characterize their forms. These authors demonstrate the importance of the spatial configuration for cities and the role of open spaces in the urban context in general, establishing an idea of a network of significant open spaces, a fundamental idea for this research. For open spaces that stand out, configure important urban facts that are connected with each other, whether on foot, bicycle, horse, car, train or any other means of transport, thus establishing a perceptive structure of the city.

In a strand that emphasizes the symbolic issue as fundamental, Rossi (1982) broadens the vision linked to perception, seems to want to resurrect old values and relationships that spaces keep through their history, and that fell into oblivion throughout the twentieth century, in an attitude of denial of the past. In the same line of reasoning, Frampton (1991) presents the defense of an architecture with "expressive resonance" through the cultural depth revealed in architecture. For him, the architectural maturity of a city is only possible through a critical production of material reality. In turn, Hollanda (2002) seeks to understand the city as a spatial and social phenomenon, analyzing behavioral implications related to urban forms. The author seeks to understand the social logic behind the spatial gesture in different societies and historical periods. Such reflection connects with the idea of open space network, because connections between important urban spaces represents a greater possibility for the planning of paths, as well as the appropriation of urban spaces.

The bibliographical research provides the identification of aspects that will be worked by the authors, to relate the themes addressed by the authors with the identification of relevant aspects of urban configuration, to structure the understanding of the city as a network of stimulating landscapes. As a work method, photos of cities will be analyzed, in which formal aspects of open spaces and their elements, to reveal a repertoire of spatial arrangements with recurrent configurations in the cities' structures. It is understood that these arrangements can be reproduced in other cities, intending to help to qualify open spaces with certain characteristics and associated values.

Finally, the focus of this article is to demonstrate that the urban context can be enriched, when it is formed by a network of paths that connect important open spaces of the city, whose arrangements mentioned in this article, represent potential places to receive monuments and prominent elements, because they are able to carry enough symbolic content to awaken more than the mere strong perception. Finally, it is understood that certain spatial arrangements promote important urban facts for city inhabitants and facilitate users' spatial understanding.



2.2. Aspects of the city's visual landmarks and urban structure

Each city has its own network that keeps a relationship with urban equipment. The uniqueness of a city, as well as its ability to create a strong image for the people, depends in part on the ability of this network to be perceived as something organized and understandable.

The notion of organization is very much related to the idea of order, discipline, and geometry, although it is not the determining factor for the understanding of urban structure, capable of giving identity to places. Thus, both cities with formal and regular layouts and cities with irregular layouts can establish a clear perception of structure (Cesar, 1997). In general, it is desirable that the structures of cities' open spaces are perceived in a clear, organized, unique and original way, with easy understanding.

Although the understanding of the city as a network or mesh is an abstraction for those who observe the city from above, the statements previously made are not invalid, but lack a complementation of the true experience of the observer and user of urban space.

The true urban perception is the one lived by the pedestrian, the cyclist, the vehicular driver. This experience does not absorb the global logic described above, because it establishes a perception based on fragments of the totality. These are partially absorbed through vision and the other senses. In fact, what is perceived are perspectives of larger or smaller visual fields, which successively change as people move around the city.

The intersections of roads or paths offer the possibility of changing direction and consequently combinations of fragments of urban perception. The very possibility of change already incurs in something significant that draws attention as a significant urban fact. Therefore, intersections or connections are privileged spaces for the occurrence of important urban elements and equipment.

Although intersections are important elements in the construction of the perception of cities, this does not always happen in a strong way, which raises the idea that spaces could draw attention with different intensities. In fact, it all depends on the capacity of visual or sensorial stimulus that each space offers. The stimuli has different natures, but they always fall under a basic principle, the contrast. The more different an element is from its surrounding context, the more attention it will receive.

The elements can be of different natures and associated in spatial configurations. They can be buildings, statues and monuments, a group of vegetation, or even an empty space, which draws attention by differentiating itself from the rest of the built environment.

In this way the city spaces articulate themselves creating sequences of visual fields in their possible paths. These, in turn, are marked by elements in certain points that make the perceptual experience dynamic and differentiated, highlighting in local intensities that are more sensorially stimulating than others (Cesar, 1997).

According to Cesar (1997), if we think of the intensities of visual stimuli distributed by points spread throughout the city through intersecting paths, it is easy to imagine the big number of combinations possible. It helps to visualize the city as a group of several lines connecting stimulating open spaces, considered as interesting urban facts. These urban facts can stand out and be measured by their stimulating intensity, like differentiated pieces of a beaded necklace. The city can be compared to a tangle of necklaces interconnected by larger and smaller beads. The city is thus a combination of paths and perceptions that merge and articulate themselves as sequences of events that are meaningful and stimulating on different levels, like different beads of a necklace.

2.3. Urban perspectives and city's focal points

The city can be understood as a system of open spaces, whose organizational logic emphasizes

significant urban facts and serves to establish an easily perceived urban structure. Some spatial combinations and arrangements are very recurrent and deserve to be highlighted. Among them is the construction of perspective lines in the landscape and the highlighting of certain elements, including as focal points. This is an important spatial arrangement for the structure of the city's open spaces and was addressed by Cullen (1983), in the studies of identity by Lynch (1960) and Kohlsdorf (1996), and later in the landscape compositions' study by Cesar (1997).

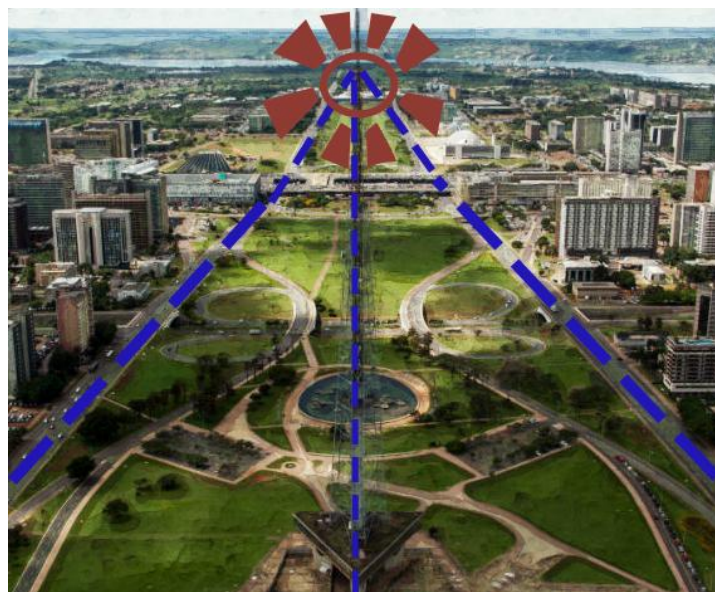
Perspectives built in some cities such as Paris (figure 02), Brasilia (figure 03) and Rome, or even in Gardens such as Versailles and Queluz among others, translate more than the idea of a wide view. It establishes an idea of control, power, and monumentality that brings back a perception related to mathematics and geometry, present since antiquity, as a vision of the world and of nature to be tamed. In these cases, the formalist style prevails, and the composition denotes the attempt to emphasize a certain urban fact, placed as a focal point.

Figure 2: Example of urban perspective, Arc de Triomphe and surroundings, in Paris.



Source: authors' adaptation.

Figure 3: Urban perspective example, Eixo Monumental and surroundings, in Brasilia.





Source: authors' adaptation.

Therefore, a recurring spatial arrangement, often employed in urban renovations and planned cities, is the use of straight, unobstructed visuals, known as urban perspectives. They can be employed on large or small scales and are powerful resources for city perception and identity (César, 1997).

By analyzing cases of urban perspectives, it is possible to relate the emphasis of certain buildings and monuments to their functional and symbolic importance. The direct visual connection between the observer and a certain point that is a spotlight element becomes more than just a special arrangement. It is almost an imperative visual message of subjection to that object. An idea of visual clarity emerges where a focal point stands out and is emphasized by other elements that are organized in perspective configuring a visual depth, directing the gaze to the focal point.

Perspectives can be flat or sloping, visual effects are distinct. Perspectives with different height levels establish a more prominent context for the elements that are the focal point, while flat perspectives emphasize goals to be achieved in the paths. Then, the highest focal point suggests something monumental and something separate. A flat perspective, on the other hand, suggests a greater bonding relationship, including among other perspectives.

Perspectives can be emphasized on any road, because they are important circulation places for urban life, but they can also take place inside large open spaces such as squares and parks. In these cases, they serve to create an internal structure. Perspectives in these open spaces serve to connect specific points within parks and squares, as well as to connect these to the outside, such as the arrivals of flows of streets and avenues, or to establish visual connection with important buildings and monuments in the landscape.

Directionality is the effect that accentuates the sense of depth in perspectives. This is a very recurrent formal arrangement to structure gardens, squares, and parks, establishing an idea of order and discipline (César, 1997). In them, the elements converge to a single focal point of emphasis. In city streets, the direction can be made by buildings that conform walls and frame the perspective, or with lamp posts and other urban furniture, or with the use of large vegetation, such as rows or alley of trees, palm trees, columnar trees or vegetal groups that direct our vision to the center of the perspective. In the case of gardens, the direction can be established with flowerbeds, parterres², and vertical plant elements such as palm trees, shrubs, and specially trees.

2.4. Patterns of Open Space Occupancy

Squares are generally important elements of the structure of the cities and its perception. They are often related to urban perspectives and can be treated as significant urban facts, playing an important role in the open space system of cities. However, depending on their size, they can be subdivided and structured internally with smaller perspectives and highlights, establishing their own internal logic, mainly related to the pedestrian experience.

Squares can be subdivided with different functions, depending on the expected activities. However, as Holanda highlights (2002), there is a logic that precedes the functional definitions, influencing the perception and consequently the use itself. The faces connected to the roads are more exposed and associated to circulation in general, while the inner spaces are more sheltered. These initial vocations can be decisive for the choice of furniture and activities and configure primary references for the organization of the spatial arrangement. Therefore, the primary references concerns to the location of elements, thinking about the exposure of places, that is the identification of the spaces that have potential characteristics of being more exposed or more reclusive.

² Parterre is derived from the term "broderie par terre", which in French means: embroidery on the ground. Therefore, the term parterre simply indicates elaborate beds (BENOUF, 2001).



This understanding has importance in the definition of everything that will be inserted as programmatic content in the interior, such as objects, urban furniture, circulation of pedestrians and/or vehicles, or even living elements such as vegetation and even the presence of people and animals, even if transient and ephemeral. This placement is based on studies of internal flows in open spaces, which were treated by Hollanda (2002) when dealing with spatial syntax³.

2.5. The Monuments and prominent elements as important urban facts

The last important spatial arrangement for the context of the structuring of the city's open spaces concerns the insertion of prominent elements, often with symbolic character and considered as monuments. Such elements in the urban context must be defined by their location, interfering directly in the perception of the city, and even interfering in the activities that occur in the surroundings. It is understood that such elements are fundamental in the spatial arrangements of the city, for this reason they are highlighted in this paper.

Monuments are often linked to an eminent symbolic character. This symbolic character is commonly found in cities' main squares. These open spaces constitute structuring facts of public life and are part of the mental⁴ image of their users. The evolution of cities shows how important these public spaces are in the collective imagination, and despite cultural diversity and geographical location throughout history, there are many examples with common points.

As it could be seen in this discussion, the qualification and conformation of the city depend a lot on its open spaces. All citizens, regardless of class, gender, ethnicity, or education, should be able to appropriate these spaces, being an important condition of people's appropriation of their cities. Thus, the projects of open spaces allied to urban planning should be attentive to social and natural aspects that are present in a certain place, as long as they are "stages of citizen life", as stated by Medeiros (2016) on this subject:

"It is impossible to analyze open spaces without considering the socioeconomic characteristics and the use that is made of these places. In Brazil, there is a great omission of the State in the production and management of the system of open spaces, which end up being created and managed by the expansion of private initiative, [...], that is, of access restricted to a few" (MEDEIROS, 2016, p.39)

The idea of spaces that tell stories is quite recurrent, either to establish the memory of something that happened, or to reinforce principles agreed upon in each society. More than spaces dedicated to a particular purpose, they are spaces that generate interest, curiosity, and establish emotional bonds. Open spaces with a symbolic character are associated with the recurrence of commemorative, religious, and civic activities, and nevertheless contain prominent elements such as monuments.

Frampton (1991) believes that the use of monuments is a way to react to the triumph of banality in the urban environment, they establish the dimension of the "extraordinary" in an aesthetic and configurative way, but it is their symbolic character, loaded with collectively shared meanings that imposes itself in the landscape. For this author, the monuments in the spaces enrich the relationships and interpretations of man in relation to the public space. Finally, it generates interest unrelated to the merely functional character. The presence of monuments in structuring spaces in cities is part of history itself and are, in fact, memory records that tell the cultural evolution of Man. The use of monuments has been, as a rule, elements of demonstration of power, revealing hegemonic values and paradigms of

³ Spatial syntax proposes that urban configuration affects the spatial pattern of people moving around the city, which would make it possible to predict which roads will be more and less crowded with a reasonable degree of safety (HOLLANDA et al., 2012).

⁴ Mental images can have several visual features in common with perceived objects or events. There is evidence to state that mental images exhibit resolution levels that correspond to those present in visual perceptions (MENEZES, 2007, p.20).

societies.

Although never totally abandoned, the monuments so important for the city's identity, seem to have lost space in modernism since the end of the nineteenth century, influenced by a logic of circulation that did not privilege the city seen as a web, whose nodes were structured by the symbolic spaces with monuments. However, the discussion of city architecture still contemplates the idea of structuring open spaces, as a place of strong significant and symbolic content, as can be found in the Toledo Gate in Madrid (Figure 04).

Figura 4: The Toledo Gate is an example of a monument that is a landmark, which makes this point a primary fact of significance.



Source: authors' adaptation.

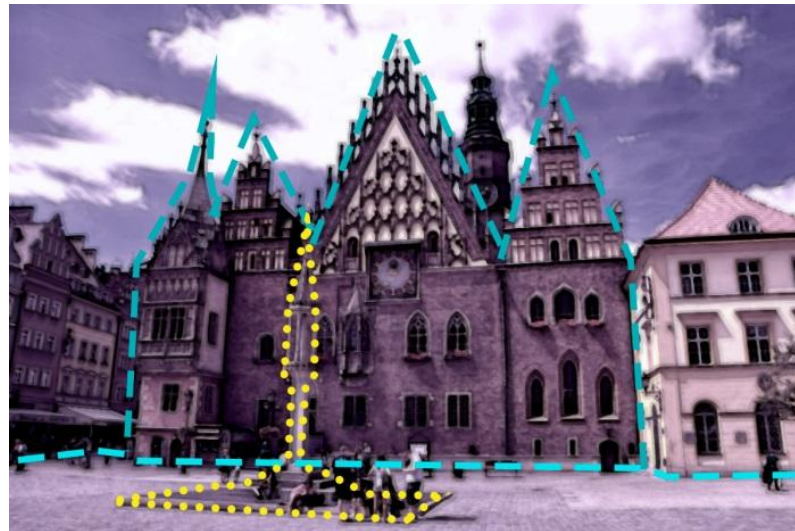
Rossi (1982) attributes an important role to monuments in the ordering of the city. These open spaces become structural nodes of meaning, integrating the perception of the city. In the same direction, Lynch (1960) relates people's perception to the context of their paths, highlighting the configuration of spaces as fundamental elements to give the identity of places. In general, it is understood that the quality of perception is based on the ability to sensorially stimulate the users of open spaces. Despite the content of the evocations present in the monuments, the uncertainty about their suitability remains, perhaps because of this, the existence of prominent elements in the urban context, regardless of their functional character, only increases their fascination. Arantes (1993) states in relation to the existence of monuments:

"This monument's fascination makes it plunge into a dense ambiguity of significant stratifications, [...] with a margin of arbitrariness" (ARANTES, 1993, p.141).

Undoubtedly, the issue of monuments evokes the aesthetic quality of open spaces, in addition to their value as a meeting place for people. Thus, there is a relationship between the presence of "urban life" of people and the ornamental elements, such as fountains, reflecting pools, and monuments themselves. The Breslau square (Figure 05), exemplified by Camillo Sitte (1993), is something that embodies the "picturesque"⁵ image of the place, while linking these aesthetic qualities to people's attractiveness, including the activities that take place there.

Figura 5: Breslau's town hall square, monument moved from the center, buildings in the background.

⁵ A new perception influenced by the Romantic movement of the 19th century in which the discovery of nature was seen as "beauty in every way". It was a philosophical resistance that tried to relate art to new scientific discoveries (CÉSAR, 2003, p.37 and p.109).



Source: authors' adaptation.

Camillo Sitte points out that the center of open spaces should be unobstructed and should be offset from the main flows to not constitute obstacles. The issues raised by Sitte contrast with Renaissance principles of composition that envisaged the squares' center as privileged locations for monuments.

The unobstructed centers advocated by Sitte have parallels in the modern discussion of open spaces, which values greater freedom in spatial arrangements, inserting various prominent elements, including buildings. Several modernist squares consider emptiness as a fundamental element. In this context, sculptures and monuments are secondary elements. Open spaces designed by Oscar Niemeyer (1907-2012) exemplify a modernist design attitude, in which emptiness predominates. The Square of Three Powers, Republic Square in Brasília (figure 06) and the Latin America memorial in São Paulo are examples of this attitude of relating several prominent elements in the same modernist free space.

Figura 6: Republic Square in Brasília, a modernist project by Oscar Niemeyer. Open spaces whose buildings are monuments in the landscape.



Source: authors' adaptation.

This discussion raises aesthetic issues that deserve to be explored to address the elements of prominence between themselves and the surrounding landscape. Sculptures, urban furniture, and even buildings can stand out from the context of open spaces. The immediate surroundings also participate in the configuration allowing to establish a background, the buildings, for the internal elements.

The insertion strategies of the prominent elements should consider not obstructing the predominant

paths and traffics, but instead should be used to strengthen perception in these, creating focal points with perspectives within the open spaces.

Another strategy is to highlight elements and monuments by relating them to important buildings in the surroundings. In this case, two distinct situations can occur, the first is to relate the highlighted element to the building, and the second is to treat the building as a background. In both cases it is necessary to observe the architectural composition of the building, the rhythm and harmony of its constituent elements, such as doors, windows, columns, etc.

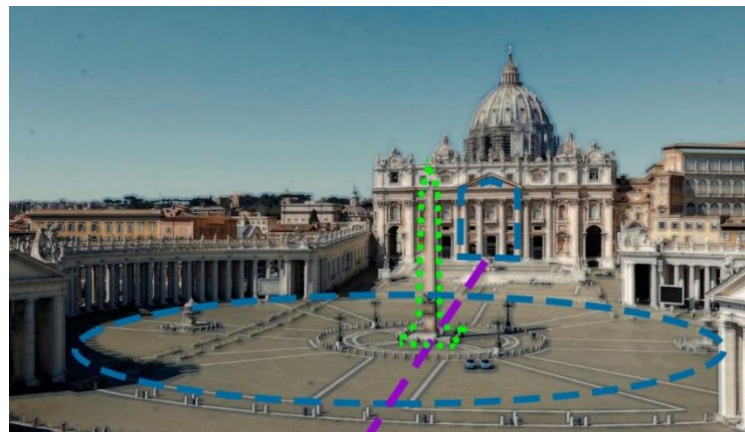
When the building has porticos or elements that are important in perception, it is a recurring strategy to align these prominent elements with those that are inserted within the open spaces. These are usually fountains, obelisks, and sculptures that emphasize the building's symbolic character. They are usually public or religious buildings that have a strong relationship with the immediate surrounding. The Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires (figure 07) is an example in which the spatial arrangement of the square is linked to the building, in this case a fountain is in the same axis as the entrance to the presidential palace. Religious buildings also articulate with open spaces by creating adros⁶ with crosses and other religious monuments. The Vatican is a monumental example of the synergy created between prominent elements in the square and the building (figure 08). Despite several examples of Renaissance and Baroque squares, Sitte, with his vision focused on medieval space, considered that these arrangements harmed the building and the monument, as they were not seen and admired in their uniqueness.

Figura 7: The Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, monument coincides with the entrance of the building and the axis.



Source: authors' adaptation.

Figura 8: Monuments in Vatican City, with axis of the building.



⁶Adro is the open space in front of the convent church. There were several attitudes prohibited in adros, such as the practice of trade and conducting profane games or dances (CARVALHO, 2014, p.110 and p.111).

Source: authors' adaptation.

The other situation is when the building has neither a symbolic character nor a striking presence in the landscape. In this case the buildings can function as a backdrop to the open spaces' prominent elements. It is common to find monuments and statues that are highlighted by background walls. Michelangelo's statue of David has a wall as a background in the Palazzo della Signoria in Florence (figure 09), among other lesser-known examples.

Figure 9: Palazzo della Signoria in Florence, monuments as focal points and building as background.



Source: authors' adaptation.

The prominent elements and monuments, even if they are not at the center of the open spaces, can participate effectively in the composition, playing an effective role in sensory stimulation along the main paths. In the layout of the "Plaza de las Platerias" in Santiago de Compostela (figure 10), as well as in the "Schöne Brunnen" (Beautiful Fountain) in Nuremberg market square (figure 11), fountains are located in the most exposed part of the squares, not interfering with the flows of pedestrians and vehicles, in harmony with the façades as their backgrounds.

Figure 10: The "Plaza de las Platerias" in Santiago de Compostela is an example of the arrangement of fountains, displaced from the center of the squares, this fountain perfectly matches Sitte's aesthetic aspirations.



Source: authors' adaptation.

Figure 11: “Schöne Brunnen” (Beautiful Fountain) in Nuremberg market square, monument as focal point.



Source: authors' adaptation.

Aspects of the cities' structuring, based on open spaces, lead to an understanding of the city as a web formed by significant nodes, which can be worked and emphasized by prominent elements, highlighting symbolic values in monuments and important buildings.

This way of seeing and organizing open spaces, assumed mainly from the Baroque period, as seen in this study, is still recurrent in the planning of cities around the world, emphasizing monumentality with symbolic aspects and an idea of order and discipline in the spatial arrangements.

The connections between the free spaces create lines of perceptions that are emphasized by sensory stimuli, mainly visual ones, which can have different intensities, generating unique perceptions. Perspective effects caused in streets and paths help in the pregnancy of the visuals and produce points of vision that can be exploited to increase places' identity.

Projects can explore these configurative aspects that exist in exemplary cities, considered archetypal, and can be implemented both by relating different open spaces, as well as by dividing and structuring them.

3. Conclusion

The perception of the city is related to the system of its open spaces. Some spatial arrangements are recurrent in traditional cities and enhance the prominent character of certain spaces, establishing perspective effects that favor a network of urban connections with a distinct character and significant content for the population. Squares and parks play an important role in this context and are linked to the idea of a city structure. Therefore, the urban structure and its perception can be substantially improved, or become more pregnant, when it is defined by spatial arrangements that relate monuments to streets, squares, and parks.

In addition to the road issue and the form of open spaces, the elements present in these spaces also play a decisive role in people's sensory stimulation, promoting the pregnancy of the image as a spatial reference factor. The orientation and identity of places are linked to this ability of spatial arrangements to establish a striking spatial configuration.

On the other hand, important open spaces of the urban structure generate interest and stimulate urban activities around them, preferably associated with the important activities of “public urban life”. They are usually related to prominent buildings, whether they have a religious character, or play an important role



in the functionality and city's landscape.

The cases presented cover different aspects of spatial arrangements and their elements. This study identified the importance of sensory stimulation in urban perception, especially in the landscape treatment inside open spaces and, in the relationship of these important open spaces to each other, identifying how to emphasize and locate prominent elements in the urban landscape, to enrich the relationship of users with the public space and emphasize the symbolic character present.

In conclusion, the perception and construction of prominent elements that carry symbolic content help in the identity of "places", being more than their mere configuration. Therefore, the qualities required for open spaces depend both on the formal characteristics and on the ability to bring people together, their respective interests and meanings shared collectively. The research approach was based on urban examples in different contexts and countries (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Spain, Italy, France, Germany) and allowed the identification of certain recurrent arrangements that carry a strong symbolic load, with values and easily assimilated representations.

The importance of building urban perspectives was observed, as in the case of the Arc de Triomphe and the Eixo Monumental, arrangements capable of emphasizing certain open spaces in cities. It was also noted that these spaces, usually squares and parks, can be subdivided on a smaller scale aimed at the pedestrian experience. Finally, it was identified the importance of inserting prominent elements, especially monuments, such as the cases of Toledo Gate, Plaza de Mayo, Republic Square, Plaza de las Platerias and in the other analyzed squares.

These recurrent spatial arrangements also highlight the relationship between the insertion of prominent elements and people's behavior, considering the users' expectations of exposure and confinement. All these issues are important for project definitions, as they are related to the way the citizen will see and relate to the prominent elements within the internal structure of squares and parks.

Finally, the aesthetic relationship between man and open spaces is, on the one hand, a sensory experience related to beauty and sensory stimulation, it is a relationship with the functional and symbolic experience that goes beyond the experience of aesthetic delight, constituting the affective relationship with the city.

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