A free-space system for São Paulo

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DISCUSSIONS about public free-space systems in the city of São Paulo have been recurrent since the second half of the twentieth century, whether in academia or in the areas of urban planning and management. In academic studies there is a widespread idea that every city has a set of public and private free spaces, either planned or not, forming a fabric that, with surprising frequency in Brazil, accounts for the largest percentage of the territories of its cities, including the most populous ones, such as São Paulo (Magnoli, 1983). Still, among us the city's free spaces are often referred to as structures independent of their built environment, pockets of relief from the evils of urbanization or, what is still more frequent, as areas that are both dangerous and hostile to the development of diverse and desirable forms of sociability, given their historical vocation to house everything that is not subject to the socially established rules of civility.

The urban free-space system is inter-related to other systems – e.g., drainage, transport and protection, whose functions can match or be merely juxtaposed with those of the free-space system, building relationships of connectivity and complementarity with environmental preservation, conservation and reclassification, urban mobility and drainage, leisure activities, and collective imaginary, memory and social interaction. Included in the context of the city and integrated to the environment, the organizing element of this system is the idea of a dense, varied and unpredictable urban life, so much to the liking of the Portuguese urban model that lends us its features (Queiroga, 2009, p.94). Its constituting elements are streets, squares, parks, backyards, patios, free parking lots, vacant lots, land plots, rivers and dams, areas either cultivated or remnants of the original vegetation, on various scales of understanding and intervention, all related to the urban and economic processes occurring in the city, and to the intense social life established through complementary relationships between the public and the private. And even if incompatible at first glance with contemporary public life, whose consumer base determines the restricted sociability that has served as a parameter for numerous projects, it should be connected with it, complementing and enriching it.

Squares, streets, gardens and parks in their multiple functions are the core of the free-space system of cities, and sociability in such free spaces can neither be relegated to a secondary position nor overshadowed by ecological and en-

vironmental issues, a topic that intends to be the keynote of the present time. Especially because the economic processes prevailing in the contemporary world continue to be structured on anti-ecologic and environmentally questionable bases.

An free-space system with this formation and these functions cannot be restricted to an ecological corridor either, like that which, in the imaginary of bucolic flavor that spirits up the residents of the city of São Paulo, would follow its watercourses in a sequence designed for the primary purpose of beautifying a city they see as ugly and uninteresting. It would be better outlined in the abundance of sidewalks lined with trees as well as in squares, gardens and parks effectively integrated with each other and with the other functions of the city and of the urban, in the articulated network of elements with different locations, performance and sizes, as suggested by the word system and its constituting elements. And it would have as the central organizing element the fact that it is made up of public places or public spaces.

In turn, the key attributes of a public space are those related to public life, to urbanity. For Sorre (1984, p.116, 7), it is the possibility of being in contact with a wide variety of situations and people - i.e., the definition of urbanity – suggesting that, for such a space to operate a public activity, it should allow, first of all, the co-presence of individuals, a fact that is intrinsically related to the conditions of its formation.

The formation of public spaces follows, in each place, varied and specific determinants. In European cities, in general, this formation responded to emerging social demands in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, a period that demanded a set of urban spaces capable of housing them and opposing the gardens of monasteries and other wooded areas with little or no relation to the public life of the time. Public spaces thus formed, housed the numerous expressions of the civil life that flourished with the strengthening of an independent power of the Church, the revival of trade and concerns about the beauty and aesthetics of cities. Their main functions were socialization and trade, but they could also accommodate various rituals, weddings, funerals, executions, celebrations, theater, tournaments, races (Bakhtin, 1987, p.132). Activities which, having co-presence as a condition, already signaled the separation between society and State, paving the way for the separation of the public and private spheres that would be consolidated with the emergence of the bourgeois society.

The public sphere thus established can be understood as the sphere of private people gathered in a public object of State authority, and the condition for its development was the emergence of specific institutions, cultural functions of the cities that would enable the representativeness of this civil power (Habermas 1984, p.48).

The public space – space of public property and on which the government

acts to provide the urban operating conditions, or a space of public ownership where the public sphere implements its actions - is neither, therefore, the public sphere nor the necessary place for its actions, but has in its constituting elements important allies for these actions. Well, for Habermas, the public sphere, historically established with the strengthening of the bourgeoisie, follows the increasing complexity of capitalist societies. The author does not lose sight of the formation of the modern State as a fundamental determinant of the public sphere of democratic societies, and along this line of argument, the formation of a system of public spaces that supports it. But one can also say that even where a feudal system never existed, such as in Latin America, the establishment of the public space arrived with the 16th Century Expansion and spread within the productive system implemented there, through the regulation of public areas preceding even the recognition of the public sphere (Marx, 1991, p.71).

And one must not forget that such a production system, especially in Brazil, while bringing with it the suggestion of an urban life underpinned by principles and values of the emerging civil power, promoted daily the most ruthless attack against the natural resources of the territory, thus contributing to the solid, if not irreversible separation between city and nature, the consequences of which are still shaping the features of our everyday urban life.

> Sixteenth-century explorers and missionaries rarely suggest that the forest in any way intruded upon their affairs. Rarely did they report any difficulty in traversing it, and several of them, dispatched by the first expeditionaries, penetrated hundreds of kilometers with apparent ease. (Dean, 1997, p.53)

In the course of about two hundred years, one witnessed the destruction of this precious stock of information on the forest that allowed not only survival, but especially the dissemination of uses, habits and relations with the tropical nature, which then became distant and devoid of human purposes. The concern about developing an urban setting that would deny the surrounding landscape led the "natural, sometimes exuberant setting that welcomed our cities to be despised and continuously hurt by them" (Marx, 1980, p.64). And this original despised setting would be affected, later on, by urban development issues that ultimately made it impossible to reconcile the needs of the cities with the demands of their natural pace.

Nature and nostalgia

In spite of the numerous differences between the territory production processes experienced by metropolises worldwide, there is a common root between them, which is the fact that, at a certain moment in their history, they crossed their local boundaries to become points of interest and convergence of economic activities, financial control, concentration of scientific and cultural production, and development of all forms of communication, which gives them increased capacity to generate flows essential to productive work. Regardless of the particular characteristics that this process acquires in each specific situation,

in general cities of metropolitan dimensions, through mechanisms of concentration and dispersion or creation and diffusion, gain, through this potential for structuring the territory, the gift of ubiquity, the power of command and the ability to organize production and consumption spaces. But they also become, essentially, the places of poverty. They are the places where subspaces that are slower or less receptive to the gigantism of globalized economies are continuously redefined to enable new production processes. That is why, in the words of Milton Santos (1994a, p.49), "the poor and the poor economy settle within the metropolis and, sometimes, in its center, in areas abandoned by the most powerful activities."

This dynamic process of occupation of idle spaces, which uproots and often eliminates consolidated forms of sociability, also exacerbates contradictions between social classes in the daily lives of the cities, with impacts on both the construction and modification of the public sphere and the design and use of the public spaces that respond to them. Everyday life, however, is always enriched by the development of information and communication, thus increasing the relevance of the new dimensions of this sphere of life, including the one that appears to be the most important, i.e., the dimension of public and collective spaces.

For some authors, daily life has a regular pace that opposes all that is exceptional and, in its cyclical repetitions, can be considered a set of actions that resemble a simple and usual practice of the habit. However, frequent references to the cluttered everyday life of cities occupied by immigrants and criminals, with poor and inefficient transport systems and dangerous free spaces, intensely penetrate the imaginary of the urban middle class, which associates to its desire for exclusiveness a repressive and bigoted bias of claiming free spaces with the scenographic and idealized style corresponding to the country life, away from the evils of the city and its contradictions and conflicts (Sun, 2008).

> With the expansion of modern urban middle classes in the twentieth century, the social sphere has been increasingly strengthened by the ideology of consumption of goods of immediate need, but especially of symbolic goods, that ensure urban status to individuals and social groups. Thus, in modern democratic capitalist societies, being a citizen means having your civil and consumer rights respected, including the right to political alienation, not to mention the right – of those who have capital - to exploit natural and human resources, privately accumulating wealth, a fact that also occurred in complex pre-capitalist societies, but was not the highest socially recognized value. (Queiroga, 2009, p.89)

This is a condition that prevents estrangement, since world cities in a rapid growing process dissociate their actual needs from the existence of spaces that fill them, favoring those whose size and distribution bear increasingly relation to the gravity of the environmental and ecological problems that they must face. Without a clear relationship between cause and effect in the environmental dimension of the everyday life issues of the city, there is no estrangement, but

rather a mismatch that precludes the establishment of a system of public spaces to support the expressions of the civil power for the realization of an increasingly complex public sphere.

Michael Brill (in Sun, 2008, p.20) points out the nostalgic attitude of a misleading public life as a determinant of contemporary urban designs developed from an idealized vision, in American cities, of central multifunctional spaces. According to him, this nostalgia has become an ideology of design whereby the bucolic public space would automatically bring back an old public life that has been lost and that probably never existed as imagined by contemporary society. In a context marked by segmentation, pluralism and social stratification, there is no place for a diversified, democratic public life, without class distinction, and, therefore, changes in sociability that accompany the continuous evolution of the civilization process are the cause of public space transformation, rather than its consequence.

The concept of the landscape that reduces nature to a frame of isolation of urbanization and its evils is the same that emphasizes the quality of parks with expressions like antidote, opposition and refuge, reinforcing a disguised hostility against the city and its energy (Jacobs, 2000) and precluding its integration with other functions of daily urban life. The possible union between the two poles is currently established through the emotional defense of the sustainable environment, a product that, in the current global conditions of production and consumption, contains evident features of social and economic distinction. But that should be pursued and claimed by all, fostering the illusion that creating parks, squares and other free spaces of contemplative character represents an advance and not an opposition to the essential concept of public: the promotion, through use, of integration between people of all social classes.

Free-space system or set of free spaces?

It is the everyday expression of the contradictions and conflicts of the city that the dynamics through which our society creates and recreates the public sphere can be found and understood. And public space, associated with the idea of location, accessibility and distribution, leisure and conservation of natural resources is the fundamental urban element for enjoying the civil liberties that the cultural sphere suggests. As such, it is part of both the territory production processes and of the features that the cities acquire in response to the roles they play at each moment, making it essential to define a periodization that includes a logic of its own and circumscribes urban processes. Because, according to Santos (1994a, p.61), "at each historical moment the legacies of past periods have an active role in the territorial division of current labor" and in the use of the city and its free spaces.

This periodization in the city of São Paulo does not follow a consensus among the many authors dedicated to this topic. For Souza (1998), the main periods of production of the city's territory correspond to the shining village

(1554-1640); the provincial capital (1640-1840); the foreshadowed metropolis (1840-1900); the national locomotive metropolis (1900-1945); the vertical metropolis (1945-1964); the modern metropolis or metropolis on tires (1964-1982); and the metropolis of democratic management (since 1982).

Reis Filho (1994) proposes longer periods that identify different faces of the city: the old adobe city (1554-1888); the European city (1889-1930); the modernist city (1930-1960); and the centralized and congested metropolis (1960-1990).

For both authors, the changes experienced by the city in different periods converge to characterize the industrialization process as a milestone of a cycle of metropolitan expansion. And although Reis Filho emphasizes in his work the loss of character and the difficulty to establish a face for São Paulo, it is clear in his writings that there is a mismatch between the demand and supply of public free spaces compatible with the face and functions that city begins to play in each period. But we must recognize that in those periods the multiplicity of functions efficiently performed by the city led to a financial, economic, cultural and informational concentration that translated into changes and mismatches of the urban function and brutal changes in the internal logic of the city, but also into a surprising operation of estrangement, a unique condition for overcoming everyday life as a habit.

According to Sun (2008, p.77), «the prescription of sanitation and protection of water resources contained in the designs of parks and green areas systems inaugurated by Olmsted in Boston at the end of the nineteenth century would be adopted in the occupation of the floodplains of the Tietê River in São Paulo, from the city's first integrated plans - the Avenues Plan in the 1930s, and the Basic Urban Plan of 1968», in addition to feeding the proposition and the creation, in the 1980s, of two parks associated with flood control, one upstream and one downstream of the city.

The Avenues Plan of São Paulo, designed by engineer Francisco Prestes Maia, mayor of the city in 1930 - a period that defines São Paulo as a modernist city, according to Reis Filho (1994), or as a national locomotive, according to Souza (1998) - believed in a broad restructuring of the road system, with the various areas of the city integrated through avenues converging to the central area and complemented by a system of parks and free spaces of different types and scales. It suggested, back then, an order subject to the road system, a reference that was more associated with the urban past of large American and European cities than to the future of a growing city in Latin America.

These precepts, in a way, contributed to the subsequent dissemination of urban freeways, a solution that was adopted in São Paulo from the 1960s – a centralized and congested metropolis according to Reis Filho (1994), or a metropolis on tires for Souza (1998) – and destroyed large portions of the urban fabric, and with them, the free spaces used by pedestrians, creating barriers even

larger than the rail lines that crossed and divided São Paulo at the end of the nineteenth century - the European city or the foreshadowed metropolis.

The set of public free spaces in the city of São Paulo, despite the successive deletions and mutilations experienced over time, seems to have been conceived and consolidated for the purpose of promoting, even if in a limited and discontinued way, a type of sociability focused on recreation and sports, seeking, ultimately, the improvement of the urban environment and the preservation of natural resources. At the end of the twentieth century, in the democratic management metropolis proposed by Souza (1998), new forms of public life led to the proliferation - in a world already guided by mobility and ways to make it more efficient - of private and semi-public spaces as integral parts of a peculiar form of sociability. Denying the first, this new form of sociability found in shopping malls, business centers and boardwalks, elements able to perform a function of the public sphere, which does not require public space. This characteristic, contradictorily, assured the elements that made up the set of free spaces in the city, the sense of both spaces in public ownership and spaces of public appropriation, without the need for co-presence.

The previous integrating urban fabric, if not as regards use, at least with respect to its design was gradually replaced by a non-inclusive fabric that "perversely insisted on the anti-urban message deeply rooted in the merits of low density and in the social prominence of isolation" (Sun, 2008, p.72), painting in the city of São Paulo an urban portrait with the colors of abolition of the idea of public life and public man. According to Balbim (2003, p.101), "that's how the value of public space as the accomplished time of all is lost, and the history of the city is restricted to a few places of memory."

Naturally, some progress has been made with regard to the recognition of other forms of sociability contained in the design of public spaces in São Paulo, although this progress may also be included in the understanding of urban design in force at the beginning of the twentieth century. But there is also a question of conflict of use and adaptability of the demands of previous centuries to the demands of the twenty-first century and the new historical period defined by Santos (1985) as a technical, scientific and informational period.

Obsolescence and renewal

That period, according to the author, begins in 1984 and is defined by the ever larger and more important presence of artifacts intended to enable the simultaneity and instantaneity of actions. Differently from previous periods, now information flows are dissociated from material flows, i.e., although they overlap, their own logic does not require contiguous actions and infrastructure for them to materialize. The means of communication are fully disseminated and quick, and technology is an autonomous force to which the other variables are subject in terms of operation, evolution and possibilities of dissemination.

Communication technology enables innovations that emerge not only together

and associated, but also to be disseminated together. This is peculiar to the nature of the system, as opposed to what happened in the past, when the dissemination of different variables was not necessarily linked ... The immediacy and universality in the dissemination of certain modernizations dismantle the organization of the previous space. It is mainly a factor of dispersion, which clearly opposes the concentration factors known to earlier periods. (Santos, 1985, p.27-9)

Concentration factors include the size of corporations, the indivisibility of investments and the urban and the economies and urban and agglomeration externalities needed to implement them. And dispersion, information, dissemination conditions and consumption model.

At present, communication and dissemination techniques are available in every continent or country, but this was not true 40 or 50 years ago. There is no place that cannot be reached by the information developed by a handful of large companies able to produce an interpretation of the facts adapted to the different parts of the world. And that is what enables different places to interconnect, or at least the world to be made up of places that have the possibility, whether achieved on not of immediate communication, all of which contribute to the concentration in a few vantage points of the space, of the necessary conditions for the implementation of activities that are important for the period. This, according to Milton Santos, is the technical, scientific and informational means.

The time-space described by technical innovations radiates from the areas where capital is concentrated with greater strength and interest, and it can be said, agreeing with Balbim (2003), that thereafter immaterial flows of all sorts are taken more seriously and their dominant power over the most diverse material relations within the territory, of both permanence and mobility of people and objects is prioritized. However,

> The gestation of the new, in history, occurs often almost imperceptibly to contemporaries, since their seeds begin to impose themselves when the old is still quantitatively dominant. This is exactly why the quality of the new can go unnoticed. (Santos, 2000, p.141)

In the case of today's world, we are aware that we are experiencing a new period, but the new we learn more easily is the use of the formidable resources of technology and science through new forms of the big capital, supported by equally new institutional forms. A possible social landscape outlined from the late twentieth century would result from abandoning and overcoming the current model, in which centrality is occupied by money in its most aggressive forms, sustained by ideological information, and by its replacement with another model capable of guaranteeing, for the largest number of people possible, the fulfillment of the needs required for a decent life, relegating to a secondary position the needs fabricated and imposed through advertising and consumption. During this period, the social interest would supersede the current precedence of economic interest and would lead to both a new investment agenda and a

new hierarchy of public, entrepreneurial and private spending. And that is where the discussion about the space system in the urban and in the cities occurs.

> Actually, there are two things that are being unjustifiably and happily confused, that is, the city and the urban. The urban is often the abstract, the general, the external. The city is the particular, the concrete, the internal. There is no reason for confusion. So, in reality there are stories of the urban and stories of the city. Among the possible stories of the urban would be those of the activities that take place in the city; of employment, classes, division of labor and its opposite, i.e., cooperation; and also a story that is not quite finished: that of socialization in the city and of socialization by the city. And among the stories of the city would be those of transport, property, speculation, housing, urbanism, centrality. (Santos, 1994b, p.69-70)

What, then, would the free spaces of the urban and of the city of São Paulo be like in the technical, scientific and informational period?

With regard to discussions about the urban in Brazil - a society built on patrimonialist and elitist foundations - civil rights began to be established around 1930, when most of the structural elements of free spaces in the cities were already consolidated. The main advances in the democratization of civil rights date from the 1980s, with the renewal of federal, state and municipal legislations between 1988 and 2008. It should be noted that these renovations occurred already within the technical, scientific and informational periods proposed by Milton Santos: the Federal Constitution of 1988; State Constitutions in all 26 states of the Union, 1989; the Statute of the City, 2001; and the creation of the Ministry of Cities, 2003. This set of rules ensured, at least from the legal standpoint, the rights of the states to create municipalities and metropolitan areas, previously assigned to the Union; it assured municipalities the responsibility for their own development through the preparation and approval of Master Plans and Municipal Organic Laws; it enabled decentralization and civil society participation in the definition of public urban policies through forums or public hearings; it created important tools and mechanisms of local power capable of operating in the urban space: the master plan, joint urban operations, expropriation, onerous grant of the right to build, adverse possession, administrative easements. These possibilities, which embody conditions for broad popular participation in the fate of their living places, vested the public spaces of the cities with greater significance for allowing the development, within them, of all sorts of political and communication actions demanded by the contemporary public sphere.

The malls have become spaces of a new form of sociability.

However, the extensive and rapid occupation of the territory of São Paulo was not accompanied by a reflection about landscaping which, recognizing in these new forms of urbanization both problems and virtues, limited itself to proposing actions and interventions aimed to temporarily solve the public space crisis without contributing to eliminating its causes.

The failure to develop in the city of São Paulo a practice of free space design that meets the demands of this period is also due to the persistence in the way of thinking out the landscape of São Paulo, of an ambiguous relationship with the city. According to this conception, squares, streets and parks do not merge with their surroundings, thus precluding the organization of free spaces in São Paulo into a possible system, a coordinated network of elements with varying locations, performances e sizes. This disconnection allows events with the same root cause, such as civil works of great negative impact on natural resources, to be seen as a collective benefit, while poor housing is perceived as hazardous to environmental balance.

Possibilities of remodeling or the possible future

However, how to create in the dense and consolidated urban fabric of the city of São Paulo public free spaces that meet the emerging forms of protection, socialization and mobility of people in this period of the city's history? Public access and articulation with the urban fabric would be the basic criteria for the design of these spaces, which could then recover part of what is systematically lost to a road system whose implementation consumes huge and exclusive areas, an example of which is the number of square meters required for the construction of a simple intersection that prevents, where it is built, any use other than the traffic of vehicles. Moreover, the very peculiarities of the urban design, in the case São Paulo, favor the existence, within the city, of considerable tracts of land, remnants of the road layout, of public or private property, without any purpose. The proposition of a viable traveling alternative that would not deny but rather reduce the impact of the road system on the design and planning of the city is a condition to relieve areas currently committed to the traffic of vehicles. Therefore, prevented from performing functions related to environmental preservation, conservation and reclassification; urban mobility and drainage; leisure activities; collective imaginary, memory and social interaction that integrate public and determine the proposition of an free space system, these areas suffer and fail to absorb the seasonal impact of the pace of natural events.

Wide sidewalks that favor a continuous system of pedestrian traffic and consider the possibility of bike treks that respond to the excesses of the road system and traffic engineering are part of a modernization proposal that not only proposes adopting new and ephemeral forms and concepts of public space, but also limits the use of the automobile as the main driving force of the city's layout.

The multimodal nature of transport and traffic systems responds to the

diversification of paces and reasons for mobility that accompanies the technical, scientific and informational period in the city, and characterizes the difference between imposed mobility and mobility chosen by residents. Providing them implies rethinking the pedestrian mobility system, a privileged connection between the various modes of transport or, in other words, thinking out the systems in an integrated fashion from the standpoint of time, traffic and tariffs.

Dieese studies conducted by Walter Barelli and mentioned by Santos (1990, p.88) indicate that one minimum wage in 1965 enabled buying 600 bus fares. This amount steadily decreased to a critical point in 2003, corresponding to 114 fares. Currently, this capacity varies between 170 and 200 fares, depending on the evolution of the adjustment proposed for 2011 and on the adoption, in the State of São Paulo, of the minimum regional fare, which is higher. One must remember that this drop in purchasing power coincided with the incomparable increase in the size of the city of São Paulo, which transformed the trips of significant portion of the population into journeys on foot.

The distance between home, work, school, shopping and other daily activities of the city has transformed the most mundane tasks into events that require time stolen from production or leisure. Deeper changes in individual spatial practices, such as between the public and the private induction or stimulation, the replacement of part of these trips for communication and the complementarity resulting from the greater effectiveness of transport modes can be viable solutions even in a context where there are no immediate alternatives to change consolidated forms of traveling. Prioritizing the pedestrian traffic system can also contribute to reducing the significant number of accidents involving pedestrians and motor vehicles in the city, a symptom of the mismatch between the swollen road traffic infrastructure and the aforementioned need to travel on foot.

It is true that, today, individual spatial practices have multiplied and diversified, almost completely abolishing their traditional forms of representation in everyday life - work for the majority in defined locations, few and concentrated recreational options, lower insertion into the consumer market, less individual trips, little schedule flexibility - and therefore reducing the redundancy of city life. The period in which daily life could be confused with habits has been overcome. Today it is determined by the enormous diversity of operating modes, by technical diversity, by the simultaneously unpredictable, flexible and greater labor division, by the multiple speeds and temporalities, and especially by the segregation of activities and people in the city.

Everyday life has also experienced deep changes with increasing male unemployment from the 1990s, with initial impacts that can be identified in the form of moving around the city: it is no longer home-work commute, but longer stays in n spaces, whether in search of formal employment or in the performance of all types of informal work, whose income depends on both modern forms of communication and efficient means of urban mobility.

The so-called traffic spaces - streets, avenues, walkways - not only lend themselves to the flow of vehicles and pedestrians, but are also spaces of socialization and work of the most different scales and natures ... which turns them into illustrative stages of contemporary urban life. (Queiroga, 2009, p.94)

However, the other elements of public space continue to be affected by the same asymmetries that characterized their formation and social appropriation: squares are better maintained and cleaner in the most affluent areas of the city, even though their use is incipient, when not prevented by actions of private appropriation - fencing, scenographic maintenance, restriction on the use of sporting facilities - and thus reduced to visual mitigations of the increasingly vilanized urbanization process. Parks are more frequent and better maintained in wealthier areas, and although the city has more recently witnessed the establishment of a significant number of parks in its peripheral areas, there is not among them a single one in which the frequency is greater than in more centrally located parks. Surely this is also due to the existence of more abundant means of transport in the central areas, and if on the one hand there is the guarantee of accessibility promoted by them, it should be remembered that, on the other, if the city were to have an integrated transport system more widely disseminated and functional, the areas contiguous to public transport terminals, under its current distribution and sizing criteria, would not enable the flow and traffic of users compatible with the requirements of a metropolis like São Paulo.

Living next to a square or a park is currently the strongest appeal of the real estate market in São Paulo, aimed at increasing the price of their ventures. At the same time, future residents will avoid frequenting, in every way possible, the square or park in question, as they are seen as hazardous places for allowing the access of unemployed, homeless and all kinds of social outcasts that populate their imaginary. By so doing they have transformed the possibility of permanent contemplation of nature into a factor of conceit, an attitude of prevention against the city and its energy. In general, São Paulo residents are increasingly limiting themselves to their homes in their free time, which brings as a result the abandonment of public spaces and a decrease in the diversity of situations experienced, of opportunities for socializing and of cultural experiences.

None of this, however, prevents urban sprawl or transforms the city into a bucolic and friendly settlement. The contradictions and social conflicts and the material deficiencies of everyday life in São Paulo are the most reliable indicators of the need for renewal, reclassification or redesign of its public spaces, aiming to extend accessibility to places and services that the city houses and offers.

It is based on the arrangement of the objects and in the content they are awarded that places and their daily lives can be understood. And is flowing through the city or the concrete possibility of traveling it at will and according to individual needs, that ensures its use as a metropolis. The differences in accessibility produced by the various modes of travel in the city enable observing that

public transport works based on the logic of contiguity, while individual transport reaches different places based on the logic of connection between isolated points. It follows that the practices of one mode of transport cannot be replaced by the other without challenging the form of social inclusion of individuals and of the life of relationships dictated by the spatial context of the city itself.

> The socio-spatial inequalities that characterize the physical accessibility of material or virtual communication networks ensure the safety of faster trips for some, which invariably contrasts with the reduced speed of traveling - already slow - for others. Accessibility emerges as a political fact that increases with the spatial characteristics of fragmentation and anarchic location activities that make the car the only means of transport adapted for obtaining accessibility in the metropolis of São Paulo. (Balbim, 2003, p.525)

In other words, each traveling practice and form of mobility has its projection and realization guided by needs, complementarities, impositions, accesses and impediments related to all other forms of mobility, on the individual scale or for society as a whole. And reduced individual immobility is not to be confused with increased general immobility, as suggested by the catastrophic analyzes that seek to justify the maintenance of the current state of injustice and unequal conditions in the use of existing facilities and structures in São Paulo.

The city denies, in the sphere of consumption, what it organizes in the sphere of production, because it still clings to the public / private division established in the period of its foreshadowed metropolization. Just like the road advances over the city's public spaces, urban sprawl advances over its area of environmental protection, leading to the loss of valuable and important resources for maintaining the city/nature balance, the result of which are disasters of all sorts. It is not possible under these conditions to adopt the deceiving discourse of sustainability by insisting on claiming as a citizenship right that which, under the current conditions, represents but segregation and prejudice.

Reviewing the concept of citizenship entails addressing it as spatiality. Citizenship reviewed in loco, having as a universal principle accessibility to an urban design and to a production process that recover nature and the city as collective social constructions, is a condition for the majority – and not just those with more resources – to be able to use the metropolis in its entirety, and to prevent this majority from being destined to experience it as if it were a small town with no services, poor housing conditions and under-use of essential social facilities, while paying high prices for them.

All this should guide the discussion of the design of a public free-space system in São Paulo. Meanwhile, the city is still waiting for a landscape concept that considers it for what it really is: a Brazilian metropolis which, immersed in the technical, scientific and informational period, is demanding material conditions for the urgent and essential democratic management of its public space and its public life, thus ensuring the performance of its activities in perfect harmony and coordination with both the environment and the urban fabric.

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ABSTRACT – The system of urban free spaces constitutes a complex in interrelation with other systems – drainage, transports, protection – whose functions may coincide with it or only juxtapose it, establishing relations of connectivity and complementarity with environmental preservation, conservation and reclassification, the urban traffic and drainage, leisure activities, and collective imaginary, memory and social life. In São Paulo this system may be only poorly mentioned, since the set of free spaces in the city, disconnected from its built environment, does not make up an articulated network of elements with different locations, performance and dimensions, as suggested by the word system and its constituting elements. Without the basic conditions to meet the requirements of the contemporary public sphere, it cannot be understood as public space associated with the idea of location, accessibility and distribution, leisure and conservation of natural resources – a fundamental condition for the enjoyment of the public freedoms required by the city's cultural sphere.

KEYWORDS: Free spaces, Systems, Public scope, Periodization.

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