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Sense of place: How should we think about urban planning practices today?

Inês Osório

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Abstract

Considering the recent socio-technological, psychosocial, political, and economic developments, will the urban planning practices (in the systemic sense of its exercise) be able to adapt to a growing, changing urban culture?

Noting the diverse variety of contemporary spatial practices in which methods, concepts, and discourses tend to be sealed off from one another, this reflection calls for a reevaluation of the plurality dimensions and layers in the construction of the urban reality, questioning in this process, the predictable hegemony regarding the supremacy of Architecture in shaping modern and current urban imagery.

This essay seeks to foster a reflection on new contemporary paradigms of Western urban life, tracing a retrospective view that allows us to look systemically at what we have built. In this process, the aim is to stimulate a future collision path, a conceptual and operational dialogue between the creative disciplines of Architecture and Contemporary Art on the current urbanization courses, proposing this possible relationship as an inseparable disciplinary set in the process of producing public space and urban territory.

Putting forth the hypothesis of reassessing the established models of contemporary urban planning, the goal is to explore the possible operationality of the *bauhausian* canon in its historical disciplinary triad (architecture/art/design) while, in a process of symbiotic interaction, considering them as complementary tools in urban design concept, promoting a pluralistic and *expanded* dialogue between the processes of designing, requalifying, and resignifying the future *places.*

keywords: sense of place, urban regeneration, systemic urbanism, Site-specific art, critical spatial practice, transdisciplinarity

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Sense of place, *urban regeneration, systemic urbanism, site-specific art, critical spatial practice, transdisciplinarity*

A political society is a community of actors, of citizens who act together, and not a simple aggregate of individuals who live next to each other and share among themselves a good *that they assume to be common.*

Daniel Innerarity[1]

From what we understand about the production of the urban environment, we can summarize that several factors interact for its definition, functionality, and enjoyment, and which, over the years and centuries, have been renewed and transformed along with our human evolution.

As we know, the urban image is not a hermetically sealed-off product, but rather a phenomenon in a permanent state of *becoming* that materializes physically, visually and symbolically in multiple expressions.

Space is, by nature, a socially defined polysemic concept (Lefèbvre, 1974) wherein *public space*, as a stage, is understood as a continuum (Carmona, 2014) because it is part of an evolving logic, that results from our social/technological/cultural progress and that depends on phenomena that are as complex as they are, sometimes, contradictory — similar to a living dynamic system, urban environment development is also made up of natural (biological) factors that are transversal to the entire animal kingdom. A few authors have studied this approach to analyzing urban society, not so much from a social sciences perspective, but rather from a natural sciences perspective. This is the case in "General System Theory" (Bertalanffy, 1966), which proposes a systemic interpretation of the human condition — which can be extrapolated, by extension, to the urban condition (Mongin,2005), which is then understood as a polyphonic organism, resulting from a complex whole, an organized and eminently interdependent structure.

In this context, our urban production can be understood under this structured logic of *subsystems within other systems* (Simon,1981): human civilization, as biophysical organism (Spencer,1896), develops itself in a set of verifiable responses, such as *growth, self-organization, adaptation, multiplication, differentiation, natural selection* and *evolution* (Lande, 1983) — abilities from which we can draw certain analogies and equivalencies, both on the macro and micro scales of the Universe.

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1. Daniel Innerarity, *O Novo Espaço Público: Que Significado Pode Ter Hoje Uma Cultura Pública Comum,* Editorial Teorema, SA, (2010)., 17.
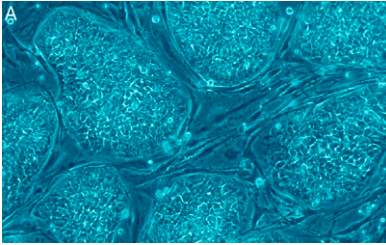
Stem cells (microscopic representation).
Appear in the human organism before birth,
as undifferentiated cells.

City of Chicago (aerial view)
The organization of human settlements is recognizable
both in the urban planning of large cities or in the
construction of small communities.

This theoretical approach has led to developments in many fields of human knowledge (such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology), resonating most of all in interdisciplinary studies in the social sciences. The awareness that we are part of a complex systemic structure (Bertalanffy, 1966) allows us to understand that, beyond our condition in relation to other species, our process of human/social/civilizational evolution and the subsequent process of urbanization, results from a biophysical ability for adaptive response. This ability for adaptive response reveals itself culturally, socially and psychologically in multiple local and global connections, in a *phenomenon of organized complexity* (Weaver,1948) which, seems to be growing exponentially at this point in our evolution.
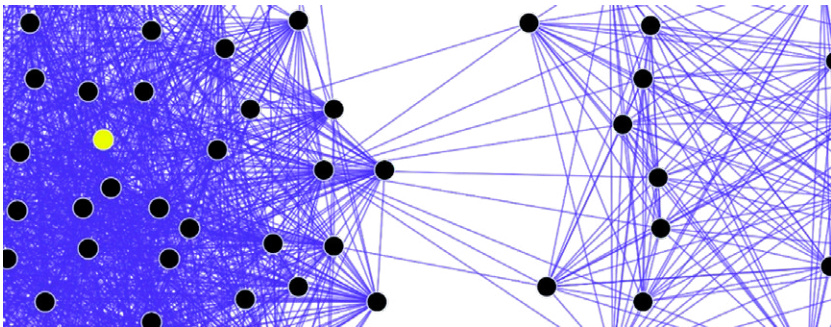
Fictional social network diagram.

Since the end of the 20th century, the world has been adapting to a quickly expanding digital reality, revealing an *interconnectivity* that has been developing daily (Castells, 1996) – with the recent pandemic crisis, this tendency has only solidified. If we focus on these recent socio-technological phenomena, we can understand the organization of human society as a *non-linear system* (Castellani, 2009) with added layers of complexity, while maintaining its self-regulation. It would seem we are living at the height of what is known as *liquid modernity*, as predicted by Bauman (2000).

Many of these dynamics directly affect the quality of our relationship with the Other, defining our *collective conscience* (Durkheim,1985), which comprises several referencing layers. Today, we are moving around in this growing abstraction and complex spectrum of symbolic stimuli: a multi-referential framework of events that implies that contexts and experiences are not repeated, preventing us from acting according to a formula.
Nevertheless is the design of today's cities based on this notion?
How is the urban landscape produced *today*?

The concept of urban landscape can be deconstructed into two approaches: one with a physical, tangible, natural dimension; and another with an abstract, symbolic, and complex dimension (Morin, 1990). Urban reality is constructed through a dialogue between the natural and the built environment, acquiring meaning from the interaction of agents, *habitus* and contributions (Bourdieu, 2020) which, as *structuring structures*, generate an ordered social behavior and consequent ways of being/living in each *field. Thus, Urban place is defined by the subject's experience*, awareness and perception of certain concepts and symbols (Tuan, 1975) . It is precisely our innate ability for abstract thought (introducing meaning beyond the visible) that distinguishes us from other animals. Based on this dimension of symbolic domain, it is possible to achieve the level of abstraction of urban society, in which its evolutionary success is mainly due to this perceptive dimension of constructed reality, moving toward a meaningful and enriching experience.
The complexity of human evolution seems to hold ever more strata and layers of influence, however: does the evolution of our cities keep pace with all these transformations?
The goal of this reflection is to frame the processes of place production and *urban territory* as representative dimensions of human civilization, understanding them based on abstract operations, which have materialized throughout history in spatial formulations resulting from a given multi-level systemic conjuncture (geographical, physical, infrastructural, environmental, biophysical, cultural, social, political, economic, technological) and, as such, the one that structures the development processes of the Western urban landscape.
However how should we think/draw the public spaces *today*? Moreover, *who* should come together for this process?

Public space (*agora*), as an interactive place for the evolution of human civilization (*polis*), establishes itself as a territorial phenomenon based on a common organization (*rés publica),* although it is locally defined by a variety of factors. Beyond the contingencies mentioned above, urban development is also structured in a political order which, although sometimes imperceptible, is decisive in defining the *socio–spatial dialectic* in which we operate (Soja,1989).

Systemically, this order reveals itself in a bidirectional relationship, since both social relations are politically projected onto the spatial domain of the urban, and likewise, the built space itself has a political impact on the relationships and dynamics that are established in the social sphere (Lefèbvre, 1974).

This rhizomatic dimension[2] of our reality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995), if understood in light of the design and materialization of urban process, allows us to question the use of predetermined plans, which begin to reveal themselves as generalist proposals and, as such, as being out of touch with the particular needs of each context.

This perspective advocates for a certain urgency in interpreting the urban territory as a systemic and interdependent whole, foreseeing the lack of responsive and adaptive solutions facing the accelerated transformations of contemporary Western society.

Reading urban society as a reactive *networked organism* (Castells, 1996), allows us to understand its elasticity and volatility and highlights the relevance of considering the city in its highest spatial potential. This consideration covers various urban project domains — formal, functional, environmental, territorial, symbolic and artistic — increasing the urgency of encountering the experiential dimension in producing an "existential space" (Norberg–Schulz, 1971), therefore intended to be more *humanized.*

Which brings us to the question: How have urban planning practices evolved to improve the quality of the contemporary *built environment*?

The urban landscape derives from the set of places it establishes, each one built with a specific function and purpose. The arising of *place* happens when we think about the user located "in relation to an environment" — space becomes symbolized, inscribed with meaning (Merleau–Ponty, 1945).

The urban space as a "practiced place", as a product of social relations and a result of the construction of codes with their own logic (Certeau, 1980), leads us to Marc Augé's anthropological

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2. A rhizome works like a map: "[...] the map does not reproduce a closed unconscious, it defines it [...]. The map is open, connectable in all its dimensions, dismountable, reversible, susceptible to constant modifications. It can be torn up, reversed, adapted to assemblies of any kind, prepared by an individual, a group, a social organization [...]. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entrances" Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mil platôs, vol. 1: capitalismo e esquizofrenia*, ed. São Paulo: Editora 34 (1995), 22–22.pp.22
"...any point in a rhizome can be connected to any other and it should be" Deleuze and Guattari, *Mil platôs, vol. 1: capitalismo e esquizofrenia*. pp.15

approach of the concept of *place* (Augé,1992): this approach understands the particularity of the built environment beyond its functionality and appearance, establishing its symbolic perception as fundamental, generated over time within a given collective.

In this way, each place can distinguish itself in its visible representation of certain icons of intangible value, that are locally and globally identifiable. In this sense, the urban society— as a socio-cultural organism—continually evolves, based on the *meaning/significance* we attribute to the artificial reality. As such, the urban landscape, as regards its qualities (visual, tangible, identifiable, unique, and unrepeatable), should not be diminished in its highly symbolic dimension, in which cultural artistic production plays a decisive role.

If we want to understand the combination of factors that contribute to the construction of the urban landscape, we can rely on the diagram designed by John Punter (1991) and later revisited by John Montgomery (1998), which summarizes the *Sense of Place* as a tripartite field of influences, bringing together the Physical Aspect, Activity and Meaning of a *place*:

Scales	Physical	Activity	Diversity
Intensity	Setting		Vitality
Permeability		**SENSE**	Street Life
Landmarks		**OF PLACE**	People Watching
Built From			Café Culture
Architecture	Meaning/		Events
Public Realm	Image		Pedestrian Flow
			Attractors

Legibility	Knowledgeability
Symbolism	Receptivity
Memory	Psychological Access
Sensory Experience	Fear

Sense of Place Dimension: *Three Components of Place Identity.* Conceptualized by John Punter in 1991, modified by John Montgomery in 1998.

The identity of each built environment can be defined in this triangular combination suggested by Punter and Montgomery: a process of relations that create the imagery development of each urban landscape, which as a whole, results in the set and quality of its places (Punter, 1991 e Montgomery, 1998). Based on the conceptual framework of these two authors, this reflection proposes an understanding of the inhabited place beyond these components, analyzing them from the disciplinary operative fields that allow each environment to materialize into something tangible and experiential. Therefore, the following proposal is an attempt to cross and match the disciplinary fields that create the physical/functional/symbolic characteristics of the urban environment, considering those that operate in the different scales/dimensions of the urban landscape (with the aim of mapping the disciplinary practices that allow us to broaden the perceptual experience of the urban place, whether in its cultural, historical, conceptual, environmental, functional or visual domain).
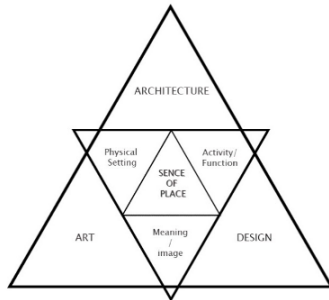
Proposal of conceptual framework for understanding place production processes (based on the conceptualization of Punter, 1991 and Montgomery, 1998). It suggests that a space gains a *sense of place* when, in addition to its *physical appearance* and *functionality*, it acquires an *identity* and *meaning*, as a result of the operative and disciplinary interaction between Architecture, Art and Design.

The disciplines of Architecture, Art and Design are the three artistic areas that project the urban environment creatively and symbolically in its physical and spatial domain, thus allowing us to materialize the visual dimension of the urban environment. However, in a phenomenon diametrically opposed to the systemic dimension of our reality, this interdisciplinarity (once widely explored during other periods in our history) is currently devalued in urban planning processes. Often these three practices act in *fragmented* and diachronic ways in urban regeneration programs, to such an extent, that what we frequently see are autonomous disciplinary interventions that *overlap* in the urban fabric (Corboz, 2004), usually without connection or prior communication between them for a possible unified development of solutions in urban regeneration and design processes.

This type of departure between these creative disciplines in urban design's process and planning has fueled a *modus operandi* that, ironically, seems disconnected from human reality in what is its structural, systemic and *interconnected condition* (McLoughlin, 1969). If analyzed under this triangulation of creative potential, the reflection put forth herein questions the current urban environment as a result that is highly focused on the dichotomous formula constituted between the *Physical Setting* and the *Functional Activity*, consequently downgrading the third *Symbolic Meaning* component in the urban design process.

Although we are witnessing a growing disciplinary crossover that is currently recognized in the operability of Design in architectural urbanistic practices (in recent concepts such as *public design, architectural design, generative design...*), we continue conceiving spatial urban environments that hardly push beyond their architectural dimension and infrastructural functionality.

From the "death and life of big cities" (Jacobs, 1961), social scientists have realized that public spaces located *between* buildings promote social influence on the quality of urban and human connections, thus shaping neighborhood ties (Rogers, 2017). The *symbolic dimension* of the built environment — the third component in Punter's triad — enlightens us about what goes beyond the *physical aspect* and *functionality* of a given space. We understand that this third component is essential for the construction of the anthropological dimension of a *Sense of Place*, raising the question of whether artistic production in public space should be understood as the third elementary vertex in the process of designing and regenerating the urban environment.

In this framework, if the landscape dimension defines *territorial identity* based on the artistic and cultural production of a nation, context, time and space; if today we tend to (re)construct urban environments where the *meaning/* artistic component of the place seems to be secondary or inexistent; we must ask:

What positive influence can Art have during the urban design process?

Where are the contemporary artists when we are defining the morphology of the public spaces in our cities?

At what point does the artist's conceptual vision come into play during the design and re-signification of the urban place?

This possible disciplinary collaboration reaffirms the historical Western relationship between Art and Architecture: from Mesopotamia to the Renaissance, this link was a constant, however, greatest number of the interventions of art in architecture had decorative, ornamental, religious, or commemorative purposes.

The Modernist movement called for a different creative vision, led by the maxim "form follows function"[3]. Modern functionalism claimed to be a break with the past, but its vigorous search for rationality and formal purity brought with it a radical interpretation, leading the various artistic disciplines to become divorced from one another. Subsequently, in the perceived need return to a certain balance, various leading figures, not only in art, but also in architecture, called for an "integration of the arts" in the mid-20th century: from architect Josep Lluis Sert[4] to sculptor

3. Here, returning to the famous expression of the architect Louis Sullivan, associated with the practice of architecture and design at the beginning of the 20th century, established as a basic principle of modern functionalist design, in which Adolf Loos would be his faithful follower when launching the ironic theory that every 'ornament is crime". Adolf Loos, «Ornament and Crime,» *Les Cahiers daujourdhui* (1913), Original «Ornement et Crime».

4. Josep Lluis Sert (1902-1983), one of the most influential architects and urban planners of the 20th century, was one of the greatest advocates of the intrinsic relationship of the arts in the process of conception modern architecture and cities: he developed several projects with the participation of renowned artists and his theories were widely disseminated in conferences, texts and books such as "Can our cities survive?", which brings together his avant-garde urban thinking based on some of the principles of CIAM IV (1933, Athens).

Jorge Oteiza[5], several authors advocated for recapturing the connection and experimentation of (in and between) artistic expressions – from which they sought a mutual incorporation, without giving up the autonomy of each.[6] The development of urban thinking in the mid-20th century reflected this search for a *new monumentality* (Giedion et al,1958), an avant-garde theory presented in some of the most important modernist manifestos[7]. One of the privileged vehicles for expressing this trend was among them: MOMA[8] in New York. It dedicated part of its programming to lectures with guests who reflected on the possible connection between the arts and the places where they could be integrated into the modern city. Communicating their utopian ideals through numerous essential theoretical contributions to the architectural and urbanistic avant-garde, these thinkers proposed that the city, as a common sharing scene and democratic construction space, should be produced from the old concept of 'all-embracing art form', *gesamtkunstwerk* (Wagner, 1897).

Despite this ancestral relationship between artistic and architectural production in the evolution of human civilization, we can see that in the West (from the second half of the last century until today), the practices of artistic disciplines have gradually moved away from each other. This trend has led sculpture practice to be contemporarily considered a secondary or even extrinsic production to the urban conception and design process.

5. This integration of art and architecture had been widely defended by Oteiza not only over the years in his sculptural practice, but also in his reflections on the production of the urban, such as his lecture ''The city as a work of art'', developed in 1958 for the Conference ''Art, Architecture and Urbanism'' in Valencia, where the author reflects on the operative, political and existential function of art in the transformation and evolution of the city. in Ana Arnaiz and Iskandar Rementeria, ''Saber de escultor entre el arte y la ciudad,'' *Art&Sensorium – Revista Interdisciplinar Internacional de Artes Visuais da UNESPAR/ EMBAP* 1, no. 01 (2014).

6. ''The architect Jose Lluis Sert outlined three possibilities for combining painting and sculpture with architecture: the integral approach, in which the architect assumes the role of the artist (...). In a second possible combination, the arts would be applied to buildings as decorative only to enhance the architectural composition. In this case, the artist's visual language is preordained by the architecture. Collaboration of this kind, which treats art as ornament, requires the architect's hand to dictate the style and content of the work (...). the third possibility, that of mutual independence, would be the most promising. Respecting the different visual tendencies, it would be a reciprocal cooperation sympathetic to the arts and architecture, in which personal ideals would be preserved within an overall framework.'' Free translation. Magda M Melo, ''Síntese das artes na arquitetura de Oscar Niemeyer,'' *Semina: Ciências Sociais e Humanas* 24, no. 1 (2003).

7. An example is the 1943 text, ''Nine Points on Monumentality'', by J. L. Sert, F. Leger and S. Giedion, which presents the ideal of urban production as a process that unifies the arts. According to this manifest, urban production was not reflecting the spirit of modern times, so these authors therefore declared the need for a new architectural practice that would place the concept of the *monument* as a link and ''integration of the work of the architect, the painter, the sculptor and the urban planner'', leading to ''an intimate collaboration between them all''. Sigfried Giedion, *Architecture, you and me: The diary of a development* (Harvard University Press, 1958).

8. MOMA, the Museum of Modern Art, had organized several meetings to debate this issue, especially in the symposiums organized by the American architect and curator Philip Johnson, including topics such as 'How To Combine Art and Architecture' in 1949; ''Relation of Painting and Sculpture to Architecture'' in 1951; or ''Why We Want Our Cities Ugly'' in 1968. source ''MOMA Archive'', https://www.moma.org/research/archives/finding-aids/PJohnsonPapersb.html, consulted at 11.01.2024.

On the other hand, in a diametrically opposite direction, it is curious to note that, precisely since the middle of the 20th century, modern artistic production and, more specifically, contemporary sculptural practice, has been concerned with *space* (city and the landscape or environmental dimension) in their productions, theories and reflections.

It is therefore interesting to realize that the current debate on context-oriented urban methodologies and practices (named *"place-making", "place oriented", "place focused", "place-based planning"* (Kruger, 2007)), seems to refocus the importance of a growing attention on the particularities of the context and the latent intersubjectivity in the interrogation of the *place/non-place* duality (Augé, 1992). At the same time, it also reaffirms the relevance of rethinking certain operating patterns in urban design and regeneration processes or methodologies.

These recent practices seem to reestablish, as common denominator, the modus operandi of the sculptural practices of the 60s, with its conceptual production aligned to the context and local characteristics, definitively transforming the lived experience of place.

"Walking a Line in Peru", 1972 by Richard Long   "Untitled (Mirrored Boxes)",1965 by Robert Morris

Since that decade, a wide range of artists have developed conceptual projects known as site-specific[9] artworks (Kwon, 1997), a moment when sculptural practice "abandons its pedestal", involving all physical and real spaces—*expanding* itself (Krauss, 1979). Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, Michael Heizer, Richard Serra, Christo were some of the artists who, in this period,

9. About this concept, Miwon Kwon would clarify: "Whether inside the white cube or out in the Nevada desert, whether architectural or landscape-oriented, site-specific art initially took the "site" as an actual location, a tangible reality, its identity composed of a unique combination of constitutive physical elements: length, depth, height, texture, and shape of walls and rooms; scale and proportion of plazas, buildings, or parks; existing conditions of lighting, ventilation, traffic patterns; distinctive topographical features.", Miwon Kwon, "One place after another: Notes on site specificity," *October* 80 (1997).

began a tridimensional artistic production that interfered spatially beyond the human scale[10], influencing both the urban and landscape dimension, as well as the experience of time and space in that environment. This type of sculptural work, launched into space, uses the context and surroundings to produce the work's meaning, thus introducing new possibilities into contemporary spatial production.

In addition to the *expansion* of the sculptural field, these works propose a conceptual possibility that reveals latent exploration in the classical methodologies of urban space design.

"The Gates" by Christo, 1979–2005. Project drawing, 2003. Installation in Central Park, New York City, 2005."

Works of this nature suggest a new *spatiality* of art and place, altering our experience of them both in terms of (perceptual) field and (lived) time. From the moment the artist begins to dialogue with the same *reference spaces* and *activity scales* as the architect, this type of artistic production not only expands sculpture's field of action, but also seems to embrace the scale of the *architectural model* (Boudon, 2002)[11].

In this process, Art begins to actively intervene in spatial and experiential transformations. In these ephemeral contexts of production, the role of photography is therefore unavoidable,

10. Thus emerged the terms *environmental sculpture* and *land art*. By a spatial imposing on their size and extent, these monumental artworks demanded a journey, a displacement, an experience on the part of the user. This type of intervention in architectural or natural space, carried out through the lens of the modern sculptor, would promote a new artistic production that would change forever the scope of sculptural practice.

11. If we think of spatial production as a complex whole made up of different scales and layers, we can consider that contemporary sculpture embraces certain levels of specific interference from the field of architecture, physically and conceptually reaching the so-called "architectural scales" (symbolic–formal, symbolic–dimensional, functional, technical, human and geographical scales). Philippe Boudon, *Echelle(s): l'architecturologie comme travail d'épistémologue* (Paris: Anthropos, 2002).

as a privileged medium of recording and sharing the work and its future repercussions on contemporary spatial theory and production. However, contemporary art in its *expansion* to a site–specific dimension, confirms its potential intervention not only in place re–signification but also in the spatial and experiential domain of the environment. Affirming itself as a practice that rejects its accessory function (of ornament, evocation, or spatially delimited landmark), the sculptural work in an *expanded field* comes to define itself as a *spatial experience* capable of reformulating the characteristics of the surroundings, as well as of transforming the way we perceive, feel and use a given *place*.

This sculptural practice, commonly framed under the *expanded field* concept proposed by Rosalind Krauss in 1979, was later appropriated in "Architecture's expanded field" by Anthony Vidler in 2004, reaffirming the significance of considering the critical, dreamlike, conceptual and symbolic dimensions of artistic practice for the contemporary production of the built environment, thus announcing the potential for a new interdisciplinary dynamic. The spatial approach brought about in the 1960s by *expanded field sculpture*, therefore appears to acquire greater relevance today, as it opens itself up to the new contingencies of human nature's growing systemic complexity.

Although widely explored autonomously by artists in numerous parts of the world, these sculptural practices have been occurring in isolation as independent, ephemeral, external interventions, far away from or even out of step with current urban practice. Which leads to the question:

As a device for interpreting reality, can Art, promote new visions or methodologies for urban design and planning, from ground zero of a regeneration project?

Is the contemporary sculptural practice a potential catalyst in the construction of the symbolic dimension in the process of place production?

Can site–specific art, as a spatial intervention practice, be the engine for a renewed concept of urbanity?

The various contributions in contemporary spatial thinking have led to a recent rapprochement between artistic and architectural practices, which seem to cyclically and mutually attract each other, generating a hybrid practice that has come to be called *critical spatial practice* (Rendell, 2006).

Perhaps, diametrically opposed to Adorno's idea that "the function of art is to have no function" (Adorno, 1970), the artistic production's critical thinking, in proposing new ways of living/thinking about reality, could have the potential to stimulate our real experience through the domain of "sharing the sensible" (Rancière, 2000). This leads us to consider that the disciplinary role of Art – if understood as a participative/active agent in this process of producing the spatiality of the place – can promote new ways of creating the *built environment* and, therefore, new ways of *city* production.

This type of artistic spatial intervention, specifically in the urban domain, expands the political dimension of the production of public space but also of the artistic practice: distinct from architecture, artistic practice proposes itself as a different vision of reality and, as such, enhances *divergences* in the socio-cultural fabric by introducing new tensions, fictions, *dissents* (Mouffe, 2005), generating other ways of (re)configuring the way we experience reality. According to Chantal Mouffe, if public space is more developed the more it is the result of *conflicting visions*, then we can consider that the production of the urban environment must nurture this broad and *agonistic vision* (Mouffe, 2013). For it is precisely in this confrontation of ideas and in the *tension* created between distinct disciplines, that we can construct increasingly conscious and democratic cities.

Examples of this transdisciplinary creative approach includes the Spanish urban regeneration projects that brought together the architect Luis Peña and the sculptor Eduardo Chillida. Such is the case in the design process for the public work ''Peine del Viento'' in 1977, which became one of the city's most emblematic landmarks — now a cultural heritage site in the Basque Country.
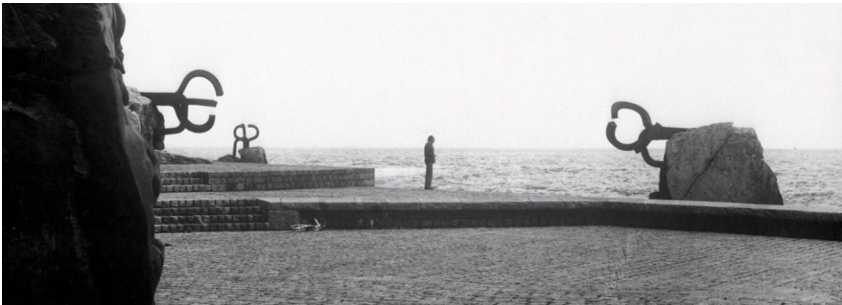
"Peine del Viento XV", 1979, San Sebastian. Urban revitalization work by Eduardo Chillida and Luis Peña.

Another compelling case by this duo of authors was the redesign of the Spanish ''Plaza de los Fueros'' in Vitoria-Gasteiz, whish opened in 1981. As a monument-square, it features a peculiar place comprising a labyrinth inspired by the silhouette of the region's map. This new place includes an embedded semi-circular elevation with bleachers that extends spatially into a large triangular area for hosting cultural and sporting activities. After some controversy surrounding this urban transformation, it has finally become a prime place for the community to enjoy, meet and relax, as well as a symbol and touristic point of interest.
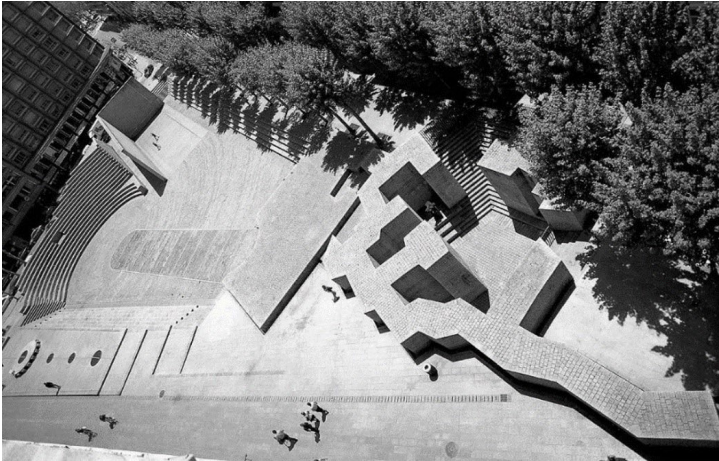
"Plaza de los Fueros", Vitoria-Gasteiz. Designed in 1979 by Eduardo Chillida and Luis Peña Ganchegui.

Another recent example of collaboration in co-authored urban projects, is the Superkilen Park in Copenhagen. Inaugurated in 2012, its design brought together architects, artists and landscape architects and comprises an urban arrangement that is divided into three color-coded zones, where different objects from different origins, cultures and nationalities can be explored[12] along 750 meters of pedestrian pathways.

The symbiotic collaboration of contemporary art with architecture in the process of urban conception/design, although not well explored, seems to open space for new creative freedoms[13] and other spatial design methodologies, thereby increasing the spectrum of

12. Superkilen Park brings a new way of thinking the urban environment and place production, by connecting various creative fields in the process of conception and, with it, unfolding multiple conceptual possibilities from several cultural references: "Rather than plastering the urban area with Danish designs we decided to gather the local intelligence and global experience to create a display of global urban best practice comprising the best that each of the 60 different cultures and countries have to offer when it comes to urban furniture," said BIG project leader Nanna Gyldholm Møller." source https://www.dezeen.com/2012/10/24/superkilen-park-by-big-topotek1-and-superflex/, accessed at 10.01.2024.
13. Take the example in Portugal of a co-authored urban project: in 2012, "Praça do Toural" brought together architect Maria Manuel Oliveira and artist Ana Jotta to conceive the revitalization of one of the central squares in the city of Guimarães, during the European Capital of Culture.

aesthetic, symbolic and conceptual possibilities in the urban design process itself, *expanding* it to other contingencies [14].

Within this systemic proposition, the current urban planning practice, operating in an increasingly dynamic and multifaceted reality, seems to be based on an outdated and anachronistic methodological (non-)strategy: if on the one hand today's society demands a complete and integrated vision of humanity in all its multiple meanings, on the other hand, urban planning still seems to maintain the disciplinary hegemony of Architecture as a praxis by perpetuating a disciplinary hierarchy in the creative process of thinking about the spatiality of the urban place. This epicentral perspective on traditional urbanistic project, contrasts with the complexity of the urban (and human) condition when it is carried out by a society that claims to be eminently democratic, integrative, free and plural (Innerarity, 2010).

That classical approach to urban planning can thus be understood to be a reductive process for the contemporary spatial production potential. At the same time, it contrasts with a certain divergent recent trend wherein architecture studios are presenting a growing interest in the integrated participation of artists in architectural projects, with both creative areas working in close collaboration.[15]

Given the relevance of the systemic dimension of urban planning in its broad spectrum of intervention, the hypothesis proposed herein could rescue the *bauhausian* vision with a conceptual, operative and functional relationship between the disciplinary areas of Architecture, Design and Art – using this collaborative methodology in designing/regenerating *urban form*.

This hypothesis calls for bringing back the sense of place to the process, by considering and thinking about the built environment based on greater artistic contributions, thus reducing the recent boundary established between creatives in urban regeneration projects. In this context,

14. A studio under research is the Warehouse: "Warehouse is an architecture and art collective founded in 2013. In our search for what architecture is nowadays and what role the architects play, (...) Warehouse develops participatory architecture projects in the cultural and social scope. These processes lead to results with greater impact in the emerging urban landscape." Warehouse, source http://warehouse.pt/about/, accessed on 12.01.2024.

15. Other national examples under our attention are the KWY studio: "a multidisciplinary platform investigating the nature of collaboration within the context of specific projects. (...) Recent collaborators include artists, writers, curators, educators, designers and other architects. With few initial preconceptions, (...) this process-oriented methodology often leads to diverse thoughts that are otherwise unexpected and unimaginable." KWY, source https://www.k-w-y.org/about, accessed on 12.01.2024.

In recent years, we can also find some architectural practices with the occasional participation of artists, such as the architect João Mendes Ribeiro (with the participation of the sculptor Rui Chafes); or the various architectural projects by the architect Nuno Valentim, who often works in close collaboration with the artist/designer Gémeo Luís, which intervening conceptually throughout all project.

Other Portuguese examples of transdisciplinary architectural practices include the architectural studio Atelier do Corvo and internationally: the MUF architecture/art studio, ENSAMBLE STUDIO, ZK/U Berlin – Center for Art and Urbanistic, among other cases still under study.

site–specific artistic and sculptural production presents itself as a starting point for rethinking certain patterns of action: one of the axes for transforming the operational methodologies of urban planning practices might incorporate Art as a disciplinary creative tool capable of interpreting, conceptualizing and spatially reflecting on (and for) the ongoing complex urban reality.

To achieve this goal, it will be essential to inspire urban planning practices that move beyond their innate multi and interdisciplinary dimension (Berger, 1972), thus introducing a transdisciplinary methodological framework (Piaget, 1972). This methodology would call for integrating a heterogeneous body of knowledge into their design teams, in a common creative process which, in addition to the exchange of ideas, would promote cooperation between knowledge fields (Palmade, 1979), interconnecting professionals with different lexicons within a collaborative systemic conceptual process — potentially creating new meanings, new solutions and innovative dimensions of present and future urban imagery.

We can therefore conclude that the paradigms imposed today are vast, deep and complex, escaping the norms established in conventional urban planning practices, and are beyond the possibilities of an autonomous response from each of the disciplines involved in the production of *public space*. The hypotheses brought forth in this work, call for epistemological reformulations in the process of thinking/designing urban environments, thus to this end, it seems inappropriate to continue using the procedures traditionally established in urban planning — since the exchange of visions and methodologies between different creative disciplines seems indispensable to responding to the contingencies of an effervescent contemporary society.

Recent social and psychosocial changes (cognitive and intellectual) have not yet had a direct impact on our urban fabric and its public spaces. However, it is imperative that we encourage reflections on these new contemporary paradigms, outlining critical and attentive visions that allows us to look *systematically* at what we are as humanity, what we have become as a society and, above all, where we are heading as a species.

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