"Public spaces in the hegemonic city: between government policies and everyday appropriations, imaginaries and possibilities."

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Abstract

This essay aims to analyze, under the logic of Free Public Spaces (FPS) appropriation, how citizens conform the city and how the latter conforms unequal places, possibilities, imaginaries and behaviors. It takes a model with four non-exhaustive dimensions and their relations with three external aspects as a base: it considers the socio-environmental, socio-cultural, socio-economic and political-administrative dimensions, and the external aspects global capital and large corporations, inter-scaleness, and tourism. It then brings a comparison between downtown Rio de Janeiro and the nearby neighborhood of São Cristóvão as a case study, seeking to discuss how government 'ideal' policies mean to shape public spaces in the hegemonic city and how everyday citizens' practices propose other appropriations, imaginaries and possibilities. It reveals what common citizens, as well as street-based workers, feel and think about FPS and how they react to external imaginaries: through protests and unlawful appropriations, denial and fear, and/or contempt and appreciation, everyday users of FPS propose a dialectical relation with the capital-state vision and engage in identity-creating practices; only one example of a long-term collective imaginary construction - different than that imposed by external agents – was found.

Key words: Free Public Spaces, public policies, hegemonic city, popular appropriations, and urban identities.

Introduction

Urban researchers seem to wish for a multidisciplinary methodology to analyze Free Public Spaces as places of *vita activa*, as producers and products of the difference society, such as authors like Milton Santos - with his socio-spatial content approach - have been demanding (1996) - and some have been trying to reach. Within this perspective, this paper analyzes, under the logic of Free Public Spaces (FPS) appropriation, how citizens conform the city and how the latter conforms unequal places, imaginaries, behaviors and identities.
FPS will be more environmentally relevant when they are vegetated or represent residual spaces, economically when they overlap infrastructure lines or can be considered of real state interest, culturally when conforming citizens identities, socially when they conform the public sphere and administratively when they become the subject of plans and projects.

This study proposes a fresh reading of FPS representations, imaginaries, appropriations and conflicts taking as its basis a model of four non-exhaustive dimensions and their relations with external aspects: socio-environmental dimension, socio-cultural dimension, socio-economic dimension and a political-administrative dimension. With a special focus on the socio-cultural and political-administrative dimensions, the paper tries to detail sociability and the public sphere, as well as symbolic and identity aspects present in FPS, comparing them to the incident public policies. The adoption of a critical framework also requires the contextualization of political practices and FPS from the perspective of capital and labor in its various forms and fractions.

As an example of the model's application it brings a comparison between downtown Rio de Janeiro and the nearby neighborhood of São Cristóvão. The first was chosen due to its identity richness as the primary locus of the city's *vita activa*, as shown by the Urban Conflicts Map of Rio de Janeiro (see www.observaconflitosrio.ippur.ufrj.br); the second was chosen due to its physical proximity to the first and the availability of urban and environmental data. This study was supported by the Federal University of Minas Gerais, the State, Labor, Territory, and Nature Lab of the Institute for Urban and Regional Planning Research (ETTERN/IPPUR) – where post-doc studies were undertaken -, and the Quality of Place and Landscape Lab of the Graduate Program in Architecture (PROARQ) - which offered its database on São Cristóvão -, both at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

The knowledge accumulated by both research labs at UFRJ indicated some needs in order to bridge social and environmental data in the two comparison neighborhoods and achieve the study objectives, including a) the collection of physical and environmental data on the downtown area through archival research, b) site systematic observation of conflicts foci in both neighborhoods, c) users survey in the conflict sites to get a general sense of their profile and perceptions, and d) territory perception and environmental behavior studies.

Two hundred interviews were conducted with local users together with a systematic non-participant observation (comprised of field notes and photographs) in conflict foci points. Unstructured focused interviews were occasionally made. The objective of observations and in-depth interviews was to understand the relationships dynamics according to Bourdieu's observations and proposals in Language and Symbolic Power (1991); they focused on hierarchies; material properties and capital; prestige, affiliations to social groups, and principles of social division; present and future collectivities.

Territory perception (Del Rio, 1999) is a sum of methodologies used for territory character apprehension from the user's perspective and includes: 1) territory morphology; 2) visual analysis; 3) environmental perception, which also adopts classic concepts such as imageability of spaces by Kevin Lynch (1999), and Norberg-Schulz' Existence Space (1979); and 4) environmental behavior. Lynch's imageability of spaces is based on the idea that people understand urban spaces by mentally drawing cognitive maps that end up being fairly similar to one another, and are built using five main structures within the city: paths, nodes, sectors, landmarks and limits. As he argues, places that present a greater conjunction of these elements in a clear and organized way have a higher imageability, and not all cities have it. Norberg-Schulz' Existence Space is based on Piaget's learning theories and plaints that people apprehend spaces starting by the most accessible objects (which they can touch with their hands), then go on to experience objects they can feel with their whole bodies, like a bench or a grass field, going a step further to the surrounding objects and street furniture or buildings that give them a closure sensation, and further on to the landscape – all that can be seen out in the horizon – to finally reach the geographical space, which is only a concept, that can be experienced through people's imaginaries, but cannot be physically experienced (cannot be seen or felt).

Twelve sets of forms, containing a survey of local resources and the four aspects of territory perception (in three different times of the day) each, were filled at conflicts foci points both in the downtown area and São Cristóvão neighborhood. The emerging picture in both regions is similar, proportion between a central place and a pericentral neighborhood kept, as shall be seen in the analyses presented.

Theoretical underpinnings

This study's theoretical framework adopts as one of its main principles Milton Santos' new geography. In so doing, it starts with understanding space as a whole, as a social instance, at the same level of economic, cultural, ideological and political instances; as such, social dialectic is not only established in space, but is undertaken with space.

> Space is understood as an inseparable set of objects' systems and actions' systems. From this approach derive the general elements for a dialectic and systemic spatial analysis: fixed elements and fluxes, landscape and society,

horizontalities and verticalities, the techno sphere and the psych sphere, the clashes between place and world [Santos 1996], and between hegemonic and communicative rationalities in the constitution of places (Queiroga 2001).

Phenomenological relations, true geographies of perception, are established in places; a perception that permeates the individual's cultural universe, his or her psychological and historical conditions, and the image construction of place imposed on the self.

It also considers other contributions, especially considering the place scale and in search of symbolic meanings, for they do not lead to losing sight of the dialectic and systemic perspective proposed by Milton Santos' theory of space.

Free Public Spaces (FPS), everyday life, conflicts, and the public sphere

The very concept of Free Public Spaces is still open and has been structured within the encounter of landscape studies and the social sciences, based on physical, environmental and social practices, all aimed at a transdisciplinary wish. In landscape studies, urban free spaces are defined by Magnoli as spaces free of buildings; all of them: backyards, gardens, streets, parks, forests and urban beaches or empty spaces; such spaces may also form a pervasive fabric, without which one cannot conceive the existence of cities; they are everywhere, more or less processed and appropriated by society (Magnoli 1982).

In the social sciences, public spaces take the character of meeting places, sites of individual and collective manifestations, struggle, conflict, and symbolic appropriations. Social practice intrinsically brings the public sphere problem – the very *vita activa's* sphere that can only happen in public spaces.

This study understands public spaces as commonly used places like streets, squares, parks, public buildings and all collectively appropriated spaces where public sphere actions are carried out, whether publicly or privately owned. They may even exist without a physical and tangible support, considering that public institutions and cyber spaces are now important, collectively appropriated, spaces for citizen manifestation.

Physical and environmental practices, on the other hand, point out that urban free spaces systems are fairly complex, given their interrelation with other systems that can be juxtaposed on them (circulation, urban drainage, environmental comfort, leisure, imaginaries and memories, conservation and environmental improvement, to cite a few).

It is in the meeting point of such studies and practices that the concept – open and under construction – emerges in this study: in a first approaching attempt, Free Public Spaces (FPS) will mean those spaces of free access to the people, falling mostly in spaces free of buildings, but not limited to them. They are the spaces where one can observe the relationships between built and free elements, between people and goods flows, and the social interactions.

Human life manifests itself on an everyday basis, in the revelation of each society's conflicts and contradictions at different historical moments. The production of the quotidian in Post-modernity reproduces an urban way of life that highlights mass culture and globalization forces (Carlos, 1996) by standardizing procedures and practices that tend to homogenize individuals' behaviors and demands. According to Heller (2004) the duality between each person's particular individuality and the very generality of being human - present in every individual and characterizing human beings -, is currently exacerbated, overwhelmingly demonstrated in the production of FPS, as they show the coexistence, not always peaceful, between public and private spheres, between the contemporary and the traditional, between individuals, groups and the collective.

The possibilities of transgressing apparently consolidated models are exposed in daily life through small and spotted expressions that recover traditional practices common to different social groups; moreover, it is in everyday life that people create new forms of sociability, conflicting or not, generating places of encounter and unforeseen appropriations that renovate FPS. Places are spaces of resistance, where different rationalities – the systemic (more institutionalized, structured and hierarchical rationality) and the communicative (most popular, free and horizontal) meet and get in conflict (Habermas, 1981). As such, they are spaces of state and citizen action, spaces of industrial-capitalist production/reproduction maintenance, and also territories of the new, of conflict.

In Bourdieu, "it is the relationship between the distribution of agents and the distribution of goods in space that sets the value of different regions of the reified social space." (Bourdieu 1997 p. 161). Hence the interest in the various dialectic relations set by the various segments of society with different urban places, particularly with FPS, which are privileged places of urban action, of shaping the public sphere.

Conflict – FPS' relentless constitutive mark - would be, under a Durkheimian or organicist perspective, something like an "antibody" or social cohesion defense mechanism that affronts order and incites chaos, thus acting actually towards the preservation of society as such; this phenomenon would end up avoiding chaos and social system dismantling. In Simmel (1903),

conflict, the basic form of socialization among individuals, is an inseparable part of the antagonism-unit dialectic that leads to the subject's sociological significance in cooperation with the other. According to the author, humans bring hostility and sympathy to others as a form of transcendence. Social struggles would be conflicts in deed (legal), when the personality and the struggle are separated and the process can result in purely objective decisions, even if personalities are involved in the plot.

While offering the dialectical antagonism-unity construction possibility as referred in Simmel, the Durkheim's social cohesion, or Bauman's (2007) exposure to difference that makes fears disappear, conflicts seem to propose an antithetical dialogic and constructive role facing the dominant structures most commonly represented by the state.

The public sphere life is, in Hannah Arendt's words (1991), the very sphere of the *vita activa*, of political actions - understood in a broad sense, involving cultural production and citizen construction as fundamental parts of our own civilization histories. In the public sphere differences and divergences have, or could have had, the possibility to present themselves as discourses, paving the way for their recognition and inclusion in the political game; public interest and public good, socially constituted by unequal power relations, would then have to face collective interests conflicts.

It is worth noting that the public good notion cannot be misunderstood as the common good notion; the first one is the result of a dialectic political construction, while the second was produced as a ruling classes' ideology. The public sphere constitutes itself inside a freedom realm, within the cultural instance; the private sphere, on the contrary, relates itself primarily to a needs list, and as such to an economic instance.

Capital, labor, state and their fractions at diverse scales

The struggles fought in urban spaces are, ultimately, struggles between capital in its various forms and labor. Powerful developers, the financing system, multinational corporations, real estate speculators and a whole set of capitalist actors have and exert direct and indirect interests in the city and therefore in FPS. At the other end of the spectrum is labor (in its various fractions), which depends on space not only as its production means, but also as its means of reproduction, depending on it to realize most of its activities and its survival means (reminding ourselves that urban structure and infrastructure elements are physically overlaid with FPS in most cases). The third major component in the equation is the state, which could theoretically approach either side, but has systematically sided with capital.

Torres Ribeiro (2006) cites Milton Santos to remind us there is an alternative system being conceived out in the streets, in opaque spaces, in new communication forms, facing the dominant projects for our large cities. It proposes a system based on alternative rationalities that can be identified, for example, in the new space ownership forms developed by social movements and diverse labor fractions. In order to understand quotidian and place, the author argues for a greater involvement with the complexity of social life, either due to its inter-scale character or to its hybridism. According to Torres Ribeiro, one cannot understand the underlying social fabrics through models uprooted from their social practices, for they are deeply connected to their labor and capital fractions.

Brandão (*apud* Fernandez and Brandão, 2010) proposes a critical analysis of regional development departing from social classes' fractions at different scales; he further states that it is necessary to understand both history and the diverse trajectory paths undertaken by the development discourse based on the capitalist logic within its own historical and concrete expressions in space-time. There is a need to treat spatial scales dynamically when thinking about structural processes. In order to do so, he also sees the need to adopt social labor division as a basic explanatory category to explain endogenous and exogenous factors as determinants of socio-economic-political-historical-theoretical institutional and territorial processes.

Fernandez and Brandão (2010) argue that scales, given their heuristic capacity, are essential elements of multidimensional analysis that may account for the complexity of socio-spatial transformation processes; both shaping and shaped by social struggles' and routines' processes, scales would not be reifiable instances, since they result from unstable social constructions complementary to the concepts of network, territory and place within the complex spatial dynamics configuration. Neil Smith argues that "the scale dimension of everyday life is imprinted and expressed in all scalar settings, from our bodies to the international instance, crossing through the community, the urban, and the regional" (Smith *apud* Vainer 2002 p.24); according to Vainer (2002 p. 28), "since cities do not exist loose in the air, the domination and accumulation forms that characterize them cannot be perceived without a regard at their regional, national and increasingly international articulations". In Swyngedouw (2010), the interescalar perspective is more sensitive to globalization processes spatiality, to the centrality of political dominance and to the shifting and changing power relationships and geometries. Along the same Marxist critical theory line taken up by Harvey, the author points out that as capital expansion always is the dominant factor, capital will

sometimes side with nation-states, sometimes subordinate the latter siding with local instances and their networks, in a dynamic process that gives rise to a set of new spatial scales, constituting what he calls glocalization.

Urban life: symbolic and identity aspects, imaginaries and Bourdieu's habitus

Bauman (2007) describes FPS based on the social possibilities of encountering the other. Here, the "difference" is a key city feature; FPS are places of encounter with the different, of individual identity construction, just like Simmel wants with his sociological significance of the subject. If on the one hand public spaces lead to feelings of repulse, on the other hand, the attraction they exert over individuals may work as to overcome or neutralize such repulsion:

> Public spaces are places where strangers meet and therefore are condensations and encapsulations of all city life defining features. It is in public spaces that urban life, with everything that separates it from other forms of human co-habiting, reaches its fullest expression, together with its most characteristic joys and sorrows, premonitions and hopes... [Not] suppressing the differences, in fact [public spaces] celebrate them. Fear and insecurity are relieved by the preservation of differences and of the ability to move freely around the city. [...] It is the exposure to difference that, with time, becomes the main factor of happy cohabitation. (Bauman 2007 p. 102-103).

FPS perception according to subjective processes is diverse and individual, as it comes from relational experiences between the city and the subject. Space identification and appropriation begin with the perception of physical, environmental, social and cultural elements, hence developing a personal experience with the human psychological, emotional and sensorial elements that can create place recognition and individual bonds, imaginaries and memories (LYNCH 1999).

Serpa (2013) sees two different processes of FPS apprehension and appropriation: on one side is the everyday perception, through which individuals have a basic reading of the city in which they move; on another side there would be a more experienced and elaborated reading leading to the subject's cognition of places and to place appropriation according to his/her possibilities in the encounter with the different, through an identitarian process.

Identification with FPS seems to be also influenced by membership to social class fractions, when subjects share social behaviors, habits, values and social position. In building his field concept, Bourdieu proposes the *habitus* concept as a "system of the social order constitutive differences" (Bourdieu 1987) in which the ownership of financial and cultural capital will dictate structural hierarchies of actions and symbolisms; in this case, objective possibilities conform imaginaries and subjective expectations, the latter conditioned by the subject's perceptions of his/her own social position.

According to the author (2010), personal identity would come from each individual's complex and multiple representations/imaginaries of reality, given his/her position in the urban *habitus*, which is made of the following symbolic power criteria: 1) hierarchies, authorities and relative positions of the subject; 2) material properties and capital; 3) prestige, reputation and fame; 4) ethnic and religious affiliation, housing location; 6) principles of social division; 7) present and future collectivities. Bourdieu also seems to understand *habitus* as a result of class trajectories, as he makes a clear distinction between middle classes' *habitus* - based on freedom of consumption - and working classes' *habitus* - based on consumption needs -. Bourdieu also sees the possibility of social production of individualities under the existing social structures logic.

Coming from a Gramscian perspective, Serpa speculates that the subordinated classes' fractions "produce subdominant or alternative cultures when facing ruling classes hegemonic strategies of cultural production" (SERPA 2013 p. 148). In so doing the subordinated classes would be exercising a desire to subvert Bourdieu's habitus: fractions of the subordinate classes would be ultimately challenging power structures through different space appropriations. Finally, according to Serpa, different class fractions' spaces of representation (spaces "of complex cognitive structures" resulting from both the everyday perception and an elaborate environmental cognition) "contain and also express the struggles and conflicts [of such fractions] for the domination of these places conception's strategies" (SERPA 2013 p. 176). Thus, in Serpa, the conception of popular spaces reveals the underlying conflict between dominated class fractions' and hegemonic imaginaries.

Towards a multidisciplinary analytical model

In an attempt to understand the form-content or the social reality in human space - albeit provisional and always renewed - as Santos demands, this study proposes, as a first

instrument, the systematization of local relations designed by Tourism scholars (Beni 2002; Boullon 2005). According to these scholars, places are necessarily structured by social, economic, environmental, and cultural local relations; these relations are permeable and overlay each other to some extent, forming an inseparable whole. The set of local relations would be in constant exchange with the external environment and under the influence of a superstructure given by the political and administrative dimension.

Departing from their proposal for tourism modeling, this study seeks a rereading of relations manifested in FPS by taking as a basis the set of local relations, anchored in four non-exhaustive dimensions and their relationships to external influences (in their current most relevant aspects). Considering the understanding of form-content we assume that all local dimensions can be formulated within the social sphere; hence, they can be reduced to the socio-environmental, the socioeconomic and sociocultural dimensions, plus the political-administrative dimension (considering structural issues). Adding the external influences on local issues, interscalarity processes emerge as fundamental (as scale theories contextualized here demand), while the processes inherent to late capitalism now in vogue (large corporations, globalization and the tourism industry) seem to complete a parsimonious equation.

Thus, under the socio-environmental dimension, one must minimally consider the green areas, the infrastructure lines that overlay/underlay them endangering or enhancing quality of urban life, and the residual spaces, vegetated or not (which are often located in fringe belts), given their potential. Basic actions of preservation, conservation, restoration, and/or intervention, as well as their adequacy to the promotion of social and environmental justice, should be considered in these areas, since environmental issues are not restricted to natural and rural areas and should be promoted at all times and places in order to reduce social pressure on the natural environment.

Under the socio-economic dimension are, in the first place, aspects of land use and real estate speculation that structure capital flows and investments in urban areas, and are largely structured by transport axes, true urban expansion axis. The reproduction of capital via real estate speculation and/or major transportation projects is the cause of most violations of human rights cases intrinsic to the urban environment (housing, freedom of movement, and information).

The socio-cultural dimension relates primarily to past and present sociabilities and to the public sphere, given by FPS appropriations and uses. This dimension, which socially structures

the city, can be understood both for its role in industrial capitalism - providing leisure and amenities to workers - as for its symbolic character and identities (present in landscapes, squares, parks, and main transportation axis and urban central spaces, when they are appropriate for public use). Complementing the practical aspects, it is the glue, the unity that establishes collective memories.

The political-administrative dimension basically regards government structures and public policies relating to the three above mentioned dimensions; in relation to FPS, important courses of action seem to be city entrepreneuring - widely adopted model which focuses on neoliberal management of the city as if it were a private, for profit, enterprise with market interests -, resourcing to hygienists policies to "clean" the most visible and marketable spaces, and city marketing, which uses FPS to promote exclusionary policies and the administrators' images.

Among the most relevant aspects in the current urban picture are the interscale character of phenomena such as capital flows and public policies, all largely submitted to global capital and to world corporations; business, events and other types of tourism, understood as the material side of volatile monetary flows, become a primary mean for rotating resources and investments in the global game.

In sum, this study seeks to understand FPS representations, imaginaries, appropriations and conflicts considering the aspects described in Table 1.

Table 1- Set of local and external relations

Social-environmental dimension
Green areas, infrastructural lines and residual spaces (fringe belts included)
Preservation, conservation, restoration and intervention
Environmental social justice
Pressures on the natural environment
Socioeconomic dimension
Land use and real estate speculation
Transport axes, expansion axes
Human rights (housing, freedom of movement, and information)
Sociocultural dimension
Sociability and public sphere - Appropriations and uses
Leisure and amenities

Symbolic and identity aspects (present in landscapes, squares, parks, and urban central spaces)
Political-administrative dimension
Cities entrepreneurship
Hygienists policies
Political marketing
Current external aspects
Interscalarities
Global capital and large corporations
Tourism

Source: the author's.

Downtown Rio de Janeiro and São Cristóvão (SC) neighborhood case studies: previously established knowledge

Since 2000 the Quality of Place and Landscape Lab has produced, collected and mapped an enormous amount of data about São Cristóvão (SC), including: morphological history and analysis of urban/landscape conditions; free spaces; vertical spaces; free areas per inhabitant; population evolution; characterization and sketches of the most important open spaces; analysis of the use and appropriation of squares, parks and the like. The SC planning region is about 750 ha big, including São Cristóvão, Benfica, Mangueira and Vasco da Gama neighborhoods; by year 2000 it housed about 70,000 people. Its flat areas are the predominant physical elements, together with the hills still visible through the built mass, and the railway branches.

Since 1993 the Rio de Janeiro's Permanent Observatory of Urban Conflicts has filed about 2,700 events, drawing a fairly approximate picture of urban conflicts, its causes and motivations, agents involved, type, spatial distribution, social demands and urban problems that lie in their origins, according to local newspapers of general circulation and the State Prosecutor. The Observatory data does not express all the conflicts that occur in the city, but is a possible mapping from the selected sources. It also provides basic data about the neighborhoods where there are conflicts, what allow us to perceive the socioeconomic similarities between the two districts focus of this study. They have roughly the same size and population, and count on similar household basic services and literacy rates.

The Rio de Janeiro's Urban Conflicts Permanent Observatory points out that since 1993 the most contentious issues in the downtown area relate to access to and use of public spaces, with 40 % of total registered conflicting manifestations. The second most important issue is public safety, with 19% of cases and thirdly housing, with 9% of the protests. Street vendors, merchants and artisans are the main organizers of these conflicts, adding altogether 39% of the total, while 10% are manifested by residents or neighbors, and 8% by unions and professional associations.

Of the 64 conflicts organized by street vendors, merchants and artisans downtown, only four had public safety as their subject matter; all other cases, totaling 60, involved access to and use of public space and the right to work: they protest against the removal of vendors from their locations, against police surveillance, the sale of plots where they usually work, and the destruction of barns and markets which house them.

Residents and neighborhood associations organize the conflicts originated in SC; they protest in public spaces against municipal government demanding better safety conditions (what shows some level of depolitization, since public safety is a state government's responsibility). There is also a significant group of street vendors, merchants and craftsmen who demonstrate against municipal government, in public spaces, demanding greater access to and use of public space.

Among conflicts originated and manifested in the downtown area, there was a greater concentration on its main avenue, Presidente Vargas, from the Central Station all the way up to Uruguaiana Street, where the street vendors have their own market. Among conflicts generated and manifested in SC, the highest concentrations were near the Campo de São Cristóvão, and at the entrance of Barreira do Vasco slum with three events, all protesting against police actions such as killing slum youngsters.

Expanding previous knowledge: new understandings on territorial perception

According to socio-demographic and user behavior criteria (as in the method proposed by Claude Kaspar *apud* Dencker, 2003) applied to downtown, the predominant profile presents a population in working age majority (25-64 years) with an education history ranging from 8 to 11 years of study (complete Elementary School), living either downtown or in the northern and western regions of town. The same criteria in São Cristóvão point to a similar predominant profile.

The territorial perception studies presented here focus on the places where most conflicts were manifested in São Cristóvão – Campo and Barreira do Vasco – and those downtown researched places to which some correspondence concerning conflicts could be made, allowing some comparisons.

São Cristóvão Field

The field gardens were last refurbished in 1996 together with the Northeastern Traditions Center opening, what resulted in a major change in the whole area use due to the people influx. Most of the economic activity has taken place inside the trade pavilion, gaining notoriety due both to its scale and their unique identitarian activities, responsible for the Northeast spirit installed from Tuesdays to Sundays; furthermore, it turned out to be a consumer reference to all three traditional schools located around the Field.

Nowadays the Field's landscaped area, which used to be all gardens and became one of the neighborhood consumption symbols, is surrounded by viaducts and irregular orthogonal blocks composed of different clearances in relation to the sidewalks, mostly 19th century preserved style commercial and residential buildings. Bars, restaurants, residential and public buildings, a theater, a church, and a Brazilian Jockey Club gambling branch compose the land use elements in the blocks surrounding the large garden. Altogether, they set the neighborhood's entertainment scene, which counts on a good paved road system and on satisfactory public transportation, with lines connecting the neighborhood to several locations downtown and up north.

Judging by the large flow of vehicles during rush hours, air and environmental quality are moderate, while noise pollution is high in the surroundings; despite the fairly good lighting inside the field, it lacks public safety – as highlighted by interviewed residents and local officials who avoid it at night due to robberies and crack abuse, despite the continued presence of the Municipal Guard -. Rainfall causes flooding in some spots. Garbage collection inside the Field, its surrounding streets, and sidewalks is done daily by City Hall, what does not suffice due to its most common use - by homeless - and the diversity of medium and large trees, which bring large amounts of garbage and leaves respectively.

Regarding the existence space and its perception levels, the most accessible objects of the observed area are the many trees, benches, gazebos, fences, trashcans, children's equipment, sports courts and a skateboard park. The urban spaces representation is present in the surrounding buildings, roads and transport services, while the Campo surrounding street

"closes" the landscape space (Norberg-Schulz, 1979); the street is also the clearest path in the area. The pavilion has landmark, sector and node characteristics, with the viaducts operating as limits. The whole set offers a good degree of identity and imageability (Lynch, 1991).

People, from homeless to staff, develop activities such as moving, talking, waiting, reading, eating, playing board games, or carry out sports activities and use soft drugs inside the area's gates. Young locals and students who have already developed a relationship with the physical context represent the users' largest share, but workers resting also is a standard behavior in the garden areas, in contrast with the homeless' and youngsters' territory. The use of the area as a shortcut for pedestrians is one of the behavioral sequences that can be seen, except at night when entertainment is the main specific activity (including rapists' jam sessions).

Under two viaducts, the area between the fire department and the pavilion entry is used as a shortcut for pedestrians who avoid the longer way across the Field street. Workers who enjoy the shades use this freight vehicles' and taxi drivers' territory. Under the Agenor Oliveira viaduct public security is poor, what causes residents to avoid the stretch, leaving it to the disorderly occupation of vehicles in all areas and creates a scenario composed of cars, trash, drug users and car-keepers; the area is also neighbor to the pavilion gates with numerous banners at the main entrance. Altogether, these elements end up setting a low environmental quality at the area.

In the spaces external to the gated gardens, some standard behaviors conform clear sequences, such as avoiding for no apparent reason the stairs that separate the street's two levels, students and local staff clustering in the narrow sidewalk that links the High School to the nearest square, and the excitement at the main pavilion entrance, most important action stage.

Carmela Dutra Square

Located at the confluence of Ricardo Machado and General Américo de Moura streets – at which Vasco da Gama stadium is predominant - the small semi-circular square is flanked by some Barreira do Vasco slum accesses and houses the 4th Military Police Station in Rio de Janeiro, an elementary public school, the Child Development Center, the neighborhood association's headquarters and local commerce, composed of several bars, bakery and pharmacy. Facing the square there are two empty plots; one, open and paved, works as a parking lot when soccer games take place; the other one is a large lot fenced by a crumbling

wall and informal trade kiosks. Surrounding blocks are regular, orthogonal and define regular lots where two-store buildings lye.

The square is 100% paved, which gives a feeling of dryness and hardness; bus stops, taxis, rental vans, and motorcycles add a busy and disorganized character to it. On the other hand, the good quality of public lighting, drainage, garbage collection and commerce remind small neighborhoods courts. If a first existence perception brings the user closer to abundant and superimposed street furniture, the second perception level offers comfort under the trees shadows, near the children's equipment, benches and tables, and by the small service kiosks; the buildings around it define the urban space; further, the Tijuca Hill 'closes' the landscape behind large open areas. The major landmark is the Headquarter of Vasco da Gama (soccer club) with its imposing building, which contributes to the main road (Av. General Américo de Moura) looks, a path leading to the Square-node Carmela Dutra. 'Behind' the square is the limit represented by the shops and the small alleys giving entrance to the slum.

The presence of community children and grandmothers is most striking inside the square, where teenagers also occupy the sports court; policemen, and residents in search of public transportation fill the sidewalks, while groups of retirees play dominoes, checkers and cards. In the immediate surroundings, women shop and groups of friends sit at the bars' tables – during the weekends they are pack full with Vasco's fans. Further from the square area, and opposite to the Military Police station, the militia established its territory and agents subcontract motorcycle couriers, oversee the local fairground and close agreements with slum residents so that they can obtain services such as cable TV and security. This is clearly a Rio de Janeiro's suburban square. On soccer days at Vasco's stadium the whole scene is transformed and the consumption logic that sports engender nowadays overlaps the quotidian.

Brazil Central Station

As the main rail station in Rio and located in one of its main avenues, Central Station can be characterized as the neural center of the entire region, whose redevelopment in the 1940s created regular orthogonal and triangular blocks, wide roads and small squares that 'disappear' in face of the fey routine.

The Station is marked by intense flows throughout its opening hours, comprehended by all kinds of people, mostly coming from the northern and western areas of the city and the metropolitan area; the building's internal areas are regularly taken by anxious workers checking out on train schedules and platforms in front of big screens (in a clear behavioral

sequence), generating uproar during peak hours and disorderly rush for their internal destinies, especially when sudden changes come up on the screens. The side entrance from Bento Ribeiro Street conforms a street workers' territory, from jacks-of-all-trades who offer their services and small objects, to vendors and prostitutes, they all appropriate the large gated area to rest, sleep and beg the thousands of passersby.

The adjacent streets, usually lined with uninterrupted rows of street vendors, also play the role of bus stations, with a number of crowded stops during business hours. The entrance to the Leo XVIII Hotel/School Popular Foundation, serving meals at popular prices, is on the same narrow sidewalk as the Bureau for the Elderly at Senador Pompeu St., which also has a number of bus stops and the more ephemeral street vendors site of the region, known as 'clothesline'; together, they cause rather intense flows, including policemen trying to suppress the ongoing trade. The Bento Ribeiro Street's block neighbor to the station turned out to be an action stage fully occupied by street vendors victimized by the fire on the local street vendors market back in April 2010. Conflicts between street vendors and the Police 'shock of order' policy are constant in these places.

In addition to the station building itself, the Duque de Caxias Palace is the main built reference in the area. Presidente Vargas Avenue together with Procopio Ferreira Square fluxes block the view to Campo de Santana's large green area, notwithstanding the square open spaces, more sparsely occupied by finer goods street vendors, youngsters with street trajectory, and various bus stops.

The accessibility furniture on the platforms compose the Existence Space first and second perception levels and the streets together with the buildings and street vendors 'walls' compose the third, urban, perception level; the emptiness of Presidente Vargas' Ave., composes the landscape perception level, for that emptiness seem to stretch itself endlessly westward and the framing green southwards closes the horizon. The Central Station and the Duque de Caxias Palace buildings as well as the Campo de Santana have a good imageability, but pedestrians seldom perceive this quality, being more involved with the station and the promenade fluxes.

Republic Square/Santana Field

The field, a famous architect Glaziou's project, opened in 1880 serving as a landmark between the downtown area and Rio's suburbs for decades. It lost portions of its area through successive urban redevelopments and is currently restricted to one block of gardens located

right across the avenue from Central Station, amid the downtown frenzy; it has four entrances (Presidente Vargas', one East and two West of the Republic Square) and is maintained by City Hall, with the Military Police and the Municipal Guard's help. Well-positioned benches for passive contemplation, very much in harmony with the diverse fauna - formed by agoutis, peacocks, cats and other loose animals – and the local flora conform a beautiful gated green area. The English style garden, offering a great scenic effect with its exotic species, is in strong contrast with the surrounding buildings.

Around the Field lies what is officially called Republic Square, now reduced to two parallel streets (east and west sides of the field), Frei Caneca St. (tangent to the field's southern border), and Presidente Vargas Ave. to the northern border. The Square was named after the Republic proclamation - which took place on the site - and houses a number of buildings from the imperial era, with low, orthogonal and large volumes and heterogeneous clearances from the sidewalk, such as the National Archive, the Secretary of Education Radio, the Fire Department, and the UFRJ's Faculty of Law.

Pedestrians in a rush, who enter through the Republic Square east gate and head towards Central Station - shaping a behavioral sequence -, are the primarily users of the Field; the area provides them a more pleasant microclimate than the surroundings. Frequented by older neighborhood residents and students of the public elementary school situated at Republic Square, it presents a territorial appropriation typical to large cities' downtown areas: there is the soft drugs consumers' territory right next to the Presidente Vargas entrance, where they enjoy a beautiful landscape over a little creek and can also sleep under the Municipal Guard's eyes. The homeless wanderers crisscross many areas and often approach the prostitutes' territory along the most used pedestrian paths; there are women of all ages from all Rio's regions and even from other states. Most of them share rooms in the precarious buildings nearby, while the lower income prostitutes sleep in the streets. Their default behavior is the professional approach of passersby, but many of them also use the site to get high without being bothered.

Another important territory is the crack users', deeper down on the Field toward Frei Caneca St. (where there are no entrances), mostly frequented by adult men. There is still a small visitor population (both tourists and locals) who sits around the lakes, enjoy the landscape, take pictures, and walk around with their families; they are there for leisure and resting purposes. With such disparate users there are, of course, small robberies and thefts.

The existence space may be understood, at the first instance, by the urban furniture and vegetation, along with the most significant landscape elements such as stones, monuments, and the creek. At a broader level, the green predominates intertwined with paths and nodes. All the Field space is landscaped. Taking the outside areas into consideration, there is a big contrast made even more evident by the different conservation and noise pollution standards. The Presidente Vargas Ave. has a main path role, but it also works as a limit, dividing two realities: one is given by all the action around the Central Station, the other is given by the encapsulated Field sector.

What users feel and do about central FPS: literature and survey accounts

Moreira (2004) and, in her pathway, Giannella (2013) both see a *tabula rasa* policy (or 'destroyed land' policy, as a strategy to generate a 'crisis' feeling) in a number of downtown/port area FPS. It can be diagnosed from the deliberated neglect of services, equipment and FPS, bringing to city users a feeling of uneasiness with places that are submitted to a degrading process. The next step is to offer a solution path through privatizing public spaces, outsourcing services and gentrifying the area.

Among the various uses FPS may have, the highest in quality and intensity are those related to leisure, resting and meeting activities usually performed in locations that also have better urban planning and environmental qualities. At the other end of the spectrum are low-urban and environmental quality places that serve only as passing places or are avoided.

The survey conducted in Rio de Janeiro's AP1, which includes both downtown and São Cristóvão, brings the 'destroyed land' stigma: fifty-seven percent of the users were only passing through, 12,5% were there to rest, 8,7% were to meet friends and only 6,7 % to practice some sport. This usage pattern is not conducive to building significant ties to the space concerned; it is more difficult for the user to develop imaginaries and memories since appropriation and identification with its elements are momentary and do not grow close. This is even more true with downtown FPS, where the main function is the coming and going.

When asked about their well being in the region's FPS, 37,5 % of the users classified it as below reasonable (less than or equal to 5, on a scale of 1 to 10), and when asked about the sense of security in the FPS, 53,8% of the visitors classified it below reasonable (less than or equal to 5 on a scale of 1 to 10) and only 7,7 % said they were completely satisfied (scoring 10), with 95% certainty. Positive ratings for well being and satisfaction with security correlate with 99%

certainty, highlighting the importance of a sense of security for the well being, and for overcoming fear (Bauman 2007). In the studied case urban fear seems to overcome the social possibilities of meeting the different. Central FPS do not play the role of places of encounter with the other, or of individual identity construction.

Considering satisfaction with the region's FPS in general, 40.4 % of the users ranked them as below reasonable (less than or equal to 5, on a scale 1-10), while another 37% ranked them as reasonable or just above (15.4% gave the item a 6, and 22% gave it a 7). Users of Rio de Janeiro central areas feel the insecurity and uneasiness caused by *tabula rasa* policies in tune with neoliberal governments and keep themselves away from there or use the FPS as passageway in their daily errands.

Spaces whose predominant character is being passageways, heterogeneously frequented, where there is little identification with one's social group and its construction and meaning, are felt as unsafe and degraded, hindering the construction of identitarian relationships with the self, even if these spaces are routinely used. The difficulty in developing a more complex and experiential cognition of these spaces (as described by Serpa) so that people can create identity relations with them becomes very clear.

The FPS within the "Porto Maravilha" (Wonder Port) Project area, have been since 2009 the object of an identitary struggle according to Guimarães (2013): port area residents, particularly those elected to be in 'preservation areas', had to struggle for the inclusion of their identities in the SAGAS refurbishment plan. While City Hall planners defined historical sites according to a Portuguese heritage, residents came up with a rather different heritage image, within which the African influence was determinant: Little Africa, through 'Pedra do Sal' and the 'Valongo Gardens' became the areas' most important sites, conforming the only one example of a collective and enduring imaginary construction in the region. Within the project's "non-building" communities (defined by City Hall), residents seem to radically depart from City Hall hygienist imaginaries: they foresee the refurbishment of informal settlements without evictions and the preservation of their historical landmarks, as opposed to standardizing them to be sold out in the cultural market. Projects presented by City Hall in order to refurbish Morro da Providência were clearly directed at disorganizing the community's social fabric and creating new 'historical' sites, as have been demonstrated by Gimenez et al (2014): the preservation project proposed for the Cruzeiro Square intended to redesign both the church and the surrounding buildings, making it look like a typical Portuguese churchyard, what found severe resistance within the community (Gimenez at al, 2014).

Applying the multidimensional model

In an attempt to make sense of all the information collected, this essay resumes the theoretically proposed dimensions in order to explore some aspects of our interest and focus of this study.

Under the environmental dimension it will be necessary to think the fields of São Cristóvão and Santana, green areas preserved amidst 100% urbanized and valued regions, which lend themselves more as outcasts refuge than as amenities for the leisure-work system reproduction. Fenced and gated, they do not offer themselves as places for the encounter with the different; rather, the imaginaries they bring are best represented by loose prisons, where passersby come and go as fast as they can, feeling uneasy and insecure despite their equipment, furniture and gardens being reasonably kept and monitored by the State; homeless, prostitutes and unlawful drugs users make themselves home. It seems that, under the neoliberal kingdom, leisure areas take a new role in addition to the already known and engendered by capital: the hygienist possibility of hiding non-workers with the placid agreement of the State.

Under the socio-economic dimension there is the land use regulation aspect, exclusionary mechanism that pushes the underprivileged away from formal spaces and entails struggles against the inequality established by the State in FPS on capital's behalf; in a country where around 40% of all economic activity is estimated to be in the informal sector (MANGUEIRA, 2013), street vendors imaginaries include the right to work in FPS and to make FPS their production means. As such they demand the use of such spaces and do not accept to be banned very easily. The vast majority of conflicts registered in and around the Central Station and at the São Cristóvão's Field show there is a need for FPS that support people's production and survival activities. The encounter that takes place in such areas is not of the different, but of the class fractions casted away from formal work. Whenever their *habitus'* expectations indicate (considering primarily their association and bargaining potential), they protest out in the streets. What changes is the scale.

The State, representing their second sector partners, policies reveal an opposite imaginary for FPS highly visible, such as those around Central Station: they support or endanger the real estate values of nearby plots as well as they create an image of the city. The tabula rasa policy perpetrated by the State to devalue some portions of the central region has generated a sense of 'crisis', clearly felt by users who avoid its FPS, or use them as necessary passageways.

It is necessary to ask then, under the socio-cultural dimension, what kind of public sphere is being forged in FPS when public equipment as parks are used by the state as internship quarters of yore; when this same state, symbolized by its police forces, closes eyes to what the greater public cannot see, criminalizes poverty trying to suppress labor activities by force and kills squatters at Barreira do Vasco; what identities are created when the unconsciousness of drugs is viewed with complacency, the militias are tolerated in poor areas, and the right to the city (including the right to work) struggle is violently repressed. Moreover, what identities are being denied and what identities are being forced onto the port area residents, when their African-Brazilian heritage and habits are the object of hygienist policies in order to impose a government imagined Portuguese heritage. Finally, what kind of future collectivities and identitarian expectations are being allowed when refurbishment projects intend to forcefully evict a good proportion of residents and transform their neighborhoods in visitors' attraction.

Considering the external dimension, it is clear that the State role is dictated by a capitalist interescalar coalition involving tourism, mega events and their profits: the state does not intend to be an interests mediator, it is subdued to the market - there is no educational activity, no recovering activities of public interest; there is no political mediation, for the economy is in charge, as summarized by Torres Ribeiro (apud Camera 2006).

Capital fractions were not an issue and were not explicitly mentioned in the 2014 survey, but a reading of FPS users dissatisfactions with central Rio (encompassing both downtown itself and São Cristóvão), shows the high level of dissatisfaction with public services and the feeling of insecurity where strategic planning has consistently created a sense of crisis. This strategy aims at devaluing the territory so that the cheap land is amenable to refurbishment through megaprojects and can be offered in the market in due time.

Rethinking about Bourdieu's propositions, authorities make themselves violently present when the disadvantaged struggles for properties and capital are in evidence; the state treats in very different ways the same class fractions deepening social divisions, and thus threatening social ties and future collectivities. The International Ball is for a few and let the barred ones drug themselves in low visibility spaces, or be beaten until they clear the FPS of greater visibility.

Notwithstanding the embedded contradictions between the more radical Marxist authors here discussed (which, by and large do not see any mediation process in the class struggle as welcome or fruitful) and authors such as Durkheim, Simmel, Habermas or Bauman (who, in their own and very different ways, see a possible solution to urban conflicts), attempts to

counteract the state order, to take ownership of city spaces creating conflicts and proposing antithetical roles should be, more than ever, objects of interest, study and publicity.

(Might be) Conclusions

This paper analyzed, under the logic of Free Public Spaces (FPS) representations, imaginaries, appropriations and conflicts, and taking from a model of four non-exhaustive dimensions (socio-environmental, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and political-administrative) and their relations with external aspects, how governments, capital and citizens encounter in the public sphere and how they shape and/or are shaped by places. As an example of the model's application it brought a comparison between downtown Rio de Janeiro and the nearby neighborhood of São Cristóvão.

It also tried to picture how common citizens, residents and street-based workers feel and think about FPS and how they react to the imaginaries imposed by neoliberal public policies. Through protests and unlawful appropriation, through denial and fear, and/or through contempt and appreciation, everyday users of FPS propose a dialectical relation with the capital-state vision and consequent policies and places. Everyday practices seem to follow Bourdieu's habitus to a good extent, bringing some tension regarding what can or cannot be accepted, or over who gains what and through which mechanisms. Another aspect analyzed, is if and to what extent UPS users engage in identity-creating practices and are able to share collective imaginaries different than those imposed by external agents.

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