

The background of the cover is an abstract, long-exposure photograph of light trails in shades of blue. The trails radiate from various points, creating a sense of dynamic movement and depth. Some trails are straight and sharp, while others are blurred and curved, suggesting motion over time. The overall effect is ethereal and futuristic.

# Rethinking the Meaning of Place

Conceiving Place  
in Architecture-Urbanism

Lineu-Castello

# RETHINKING THE MEANING OF PLACE

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# Rethinking the Meaning of Place

## Conceiving Place in Architecture-Urbanism

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# Preface

Many architects are afraid to acknowledge what they like; they like what they are supposed to like. But we enjoy analyzing what turns us on, because if we are sensitive to our time, what turns us on will be relevant.

(Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi interviewed by Hans Obrist and Rem Koolhaas, Geneva, August 2000) (Obrist and Koolhaas 2004: 155)

Cities at the turn of the millennium are characterized by a growing provision of places, appearing in the most diverse forms: shopping malls, historical settings, restaurants, entertainment places, sports complexes, hybrid complexes, multiplex cinemas, museums, libraries – places which copy qualities found in other places, or which create what is believed to attribute quality to the urban space.

It is however common to find cultural critics who censure these manifestations of contemporary society, vehemently repeating that the places created are unauthentic and artificial. I have always accompanied these criticisms with a good dose of credulity. But the reality insists on showing a different picture, leading me to disagree – or to not fully agree – with those critical verdicts on the places of today, causing me to try to cast another eye over the subject.

This book argues that the intentional construction of places can bring favourable effects to the quality of contemporary cities.

I realize that this is quite a bold aspiration. But I know that it must be attempted because I believe there is a place for the *new places* being created in cities today. And that their countless implications in more relevant topics, such as their powerful involvement in the social and economic world, would be welcome for the quality of life which we in the field of architecture-urbanism design constantly wish to advance and improve.

Instead of facing the question, however, we pretend that it is disposable and of secondary importance. It is not. It is of fundamental relevance: theme parks are spreading, shopping centres are now the new city squares for social interaction and urbanity. Both for the rich and the poor. Even in the cities of my homeland, Brazil, which is dominated by some of the most notorious social inequalities in the world.

The procedure for proving my thesis will be less ambitious: I shall present arguments which simply manage to raise some reasonable doubt – as they say in courtroom dramas – about the universal validity of such criticism, in the wish of provoking at least some minimal discourse towards a broader understanding of the crucial role of places in urban life.

*Rethinking the Meaning of Place* should be seen as an invitation. An invitation to reconsider what our society perceives as a ‘place’ in this current period of the

turn of the millennium. (I am not overly concerned here with attempting to define place in this introduction, since this will occur repeatedly throughout the text. Particularly because there is no single description for defining place: place is one of those concepts, like ‘passion’, whose definition is damaged when put into words.)

I should add that there is nothing so extraordinary or cabalistic in my choice of ‘the turn of the millennium’ for the timeframe of this study. In positioning my observations in the period closest to the great landmark represented by the turn of the millennium I am simply making use of a major symbolic turning point, to use it simply as a supportive timeframe for approaching places and how they are being perceived in this period.

Because I believe a variation is now occurring in how they are perceived. And also because, if a change in century traditionally represents a milestone for stopping to reconsider what has happened to us as a society, the turn of the millennium adds extraordinary symbolic force to our usual recording and reflection of our practices and way of organizing life in society. In fact, as far as we can tell, great chronological turning points – be they annual, centennial, or millennial – do not in themselves cause change. They are rather moments of reflection. And a way of referring to the recording of these reflections in time.

As the 19th century turned to the 20th, for example, it was already possible to note the emergence of variations strong enough to create drastically innovative architectural-urbanistic typologies. There is no space here to list all the many examples, but it is at least worth recalling the stage of development attained by Elisha Otis’s elevators, now driven by electricity, and their huge effects on one of the most extraordinary changes in the formation of cities: the spread of tower blocks. Or neoclassicism’s cloning of classicism, lightly employing its architectural forms in eclecticism. The turn of the 19th to the 20th century was in fact – at least in terms of urban living experiences – filled with changes at least as overwhelming as those troubling us at our current change of century. Countless precedents can therefore be seen for the *variations* occurring in urban environments throughout the recent history of urbanization.

And that is one of the points of my argument: that the perception of what places are can undergo variations. It is Tuan, the eminent Chinese geographer based in the United States, from whom I shall find good instruction throughout Chapter 2, who alerts us that it took a whole century for the Eiffel Tower to be received by the French as it is now: established as a legitimate *urban place of quality* (Tuan 1980b). And like that tower, very many examples of places the world over have also been victims of the most cutting criticism, yet over the course of their popular appropriation many of them end up shaping and accommodating the perception that has bestowed them with the quality of *places*.

My invitation is therefore directed towards *casting another eye* onto the new designed spaces in today’s built environment. They cannot at heart be as worthless as their less reflective critics imply, and may indeed even be the places the society of today needs for achieving better experiences of life. A society which itself

displays variations, starting with the 21st century opening to recognition of a new society – the society of information technology – and experiencing a condition which many people refer to as postmodernity.

Urban society in cities at the start of the 21st century in fact displays characteristics that enable it to be singled out in relation to others. Firstly, because it is a society occupying a new type of world, an urbanized world. Secondly, because besides being urbanized, it is also a globalized world. This globalization mainly occurs in economic-financial terms, with flows of capital circulating endlessly to all corners of the planet 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in global conditions of time, space and scale not previously experienced by other societies. But, besides these features, it can be seen to be accompanied by other equally globalized manifestations which fully meet the cultural dimensions of the global population. Advances in information technology not only operate splendidly in globally interlinking the flow of finance, but also allow cultural events to become instantaneous and simultaneously perceived throughout the world with the same intensity and in the same proportions. Thirdly, because it is a society which is for the first time translating into real terms the shift from the old economy of production into the new economy of consumption.

As a result, it can be fully expected that the behaviour of the inhabitants of this new urban reality would be taking a different form, manifestly developing *in new types of spaces*. These are spaces that are progressively becoming decisive and fundamental for the everyday practices of this society; spaces perceived as *places*, and places whose formal structure represents an unveiling of the spatial manifestations of society and, although formed with different features, is recognizable on both a global and a local level (which will be illustrated even by small urban communities in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul – the Brazilian state of my home).

The invitation is focused – not exclusively of course – more closely on architects, urbanists and urban planners. Rather than being the traditional social rebels of the past, architects of today have been transformed into shrewd social observers, observing what they perceive to be the wishes of society, to be better able to materialize the elements of popular imagination.

It is moreover quite admissible to recognize that the conditions of contemporary society, almost 90 percent of whose members live in urbanized environments, will favour the consumerist behavioural practices typical of metropolises, cities and urban agglomerations, for one of the origins of these concentrations is fixed precisely in the *urbanity* provided by the *place* acquiring opportunity for exchange and information between people and social groups. This in itself would be enough to allow the idea of new urban places displaying some tendency towards consumerism. On the other hand I should emphasize that I am referring to ‘urbanized environments’ precisely because mankind has decisively chosen the *urban* as its locus for life. Even though, as I discuss in more detail in the text, *city* is perhaps today a somewhat controversial definition for satisfactorily explaining the current sense of the *urban*.



A shortcut needs to be found between the cursory dualism separating the accredited 'authentic' place from the discredited 'invented' place. And it needs to be admitted that it is not possible to turn the clock back to a golden age 'when everything was better' – because it is not true: things were not usually that much better – if at all. Rather, it is possible to take a new course, establishing foundations for *making* everything better.

We doubtless need to know more and in more detail. One initial step may be to attempt to immerse oneself in the world of the places of today, yet without preconceptions, as stimulated by the media theorist and biologist Arjen Mulder (2002: 7): 'If you want to understand a development, it's no good standing outside the process; you have to wade into it. You have to allow yourself to be developed by the developments'.

That is more or less what I am trying to do.

I excuse myself in advance for such an ambitious pursuit of conceptual approaches to place in the chapter that addresses it through different fields of knowledge. I am well aware that the attempt may almost have been foolhardy. To make amends, I have therefore had to adopt a selective stance, in favour of debate. I adopted a method leading me strictly to refrain from excavating all those more classical assertions about *place* that had been compiled in the past. To make progress in a topic that renews itself each day, it is necessary as much as possible to approach authors whose contributions are still being discussed or at least have not yet been disseminated with the attention they deserve, to thus begin to construct an argument through reflections taken from their works, scrutinizing how each author understands the present (new) conceptions of *place*.

I have examined the available Brazilian literature and was pleased to find the theme approached with familiarity, especially at conferences, through brief items in electronic magazines and some academic production. A large number of these touch quite closely on the theme of created places and their perception. Except that titles by architects or planners or, simply, translated are still quite scarce in relation to the scale of the phenomenon.

Consultation of the foreign literature therefore became essential, much more than a mere option. But I do regret that there may appear to be excessive consultation of the foreign literature, particularly that from North America. This is due to the phenomenon of the new places, particularly in their current format, pivoting on the United States, spreading from there to the rest of the world. Countries of Europe and the Asian Pacific have already been fully infected. We here in the other Americas are being affected now. There seems no better way of preparing the ground, therefore, than by benefiting from what has already been produced, particularly by the North Americans, for they have now had some time to mature and construct more developed arguments.

My immersion in the current world of places begins at quite a steady pace. To guard against misunderstanding I begin with an 'Introduction to Place' – that is, the type of place forming the specific object of this study. I describe what this place is in Chapter 1, providing detailed information about all the places I am

interested in examining. I discuss their perception, genesis and the typology in which I feel comfortable to approach them. I situate them in time and space and establish what I understand by urbanity and place of urbanity. And I introduce the issue of designing a place of urbanity, a task almost as much desired in our field of architecture-urbanism as it is difficult to materialize. Once these elements have been raised, their interaction leads to a hypothesis: that *the new places created in cities at the turn of the millennium* (which I refer to as ‘places of cloning’) *may become places endowed with that quality understood as ‘urbanity’*.

Chapter 2 is focused towards a broader understanding of what place is. Thinking on the topic of place is introduced from the diverse range of disciplines addressing the theme to help lead to this understanding. It is in this second chapter that I consult the authors appearing in the literature closest to my place, as a way of expanding the ‘Conceptualization of Place’, making it broad enough to allay my concerns about the immobility the concept encounters in our particular field. I do not aim to make this consultation exhaustive, but rather, discerningly selective. I have chosen to pick out from the points approached by these authors those that more directly approach the tenor of my own discussions, as would be expected from someone arguing a point. It is worth remembering that in reviewing what the disciplines involved in the topic of *place* have to add to the modernization of its conceptualization, my view will always remain that of an architect-urbanist. What I bring to the topic is the vision that an architect-urbanist like myself *assimilates* as being an anthropologist’s vision of *place*, for example. The construction of this vision is much more interesting, because that is what helps to form the transdisciplinarity that the field of architecture-urbanism needs to learn to incorporate into its ambition of creating *places*.

In Chapter 3, I am more open to discussion of how the ‘Investigation of Place’ can be developed. I therefore engage in a ‘dissection’ of place, now examining it from a theoretical-practical approach, based not solely on ideas and theories but also on empirical evidence previously acquired as a researcher. Almost as an official duty, I present summary versions of research I have coordinated and which lends support to many of the aspects and ideas discussed here. I look for places of urbanity in their empirical sources and do so with eyes open for scrutinizing their manifestations, principally in the central areas of Porto Alegre, my home city. I do the same in relation to places of cloning, now casting my gaze out towards the world, once again with open eyes (although careful to apply a filter against the occasional excess glare). Many of these world places at the turn of the millennium are generated with the aim of attracting visitors. The architects responsible for them are in a large part star names – ‘design’ architects – called in especially to add an extra touch of glamour to the places they design. The philosopher Alain De Botton believes there is nothing particularly new about this either, mentioning (De Botton 2004) that more than 150 years ago John Ruskin observed that architecture had two missions: on the one hand to provide shelter, and on the other to glorify. And it is this latter form that can well describe the new places and their portentous forms, created as a way of adding status to the cities that employ them. They thus

become attempts at conferring dignity on their environments, which is surely a traditional and serious function for architecture and urbanism. Chapter 3 proceeds almost naturally into notes related to the ‘Design of Place’, leading to the idea that we may be faced with a process similar to that of cloning.

I am however interested in going a little further than this: I wish to speculate on the consequences that might result from the practice of creating places of cloning – of constructing places for people. There seems to be room for a further step in the discussion of the ideal of *constructing places for people*. And Chapter 4 attempts to take this step, proposing the broader scope of investigating the possibilities of *constructing better places for people*. With this idea in mind, the chapter addresses the variations that may result from attempts at cloning urbanity and indicates a possible occurrence of a ‘Variation in the Perception of Place’, using it to expand the specification of the urbanized environment.

Predictably, the next step is to enter the real world of Rio Grande do Sul towns, but influenced by what has been assimilated from the preceding chapters. I therefore move on to introduce an ‘Illustration of Places in Rio Grande do Sul Cities’, in Chapter 5.

Finally, following a brief route through the world of places, I formulate my views on *learning from the places of cloning*, in an attempt to raise that reasonable doubt I mentioned previously about the quality of invented places and their relevance in the urban contexts we live in. I do so at least to establish that obdurate and unrelenting rejection of them is by no means unanimous. After all, the 500 million people who had visited Disneyland by January 2004 cannot have all been wrong (and if they were wrong, I would not put myself forward to teach them the correct way to lead their lives).

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2009

# Acknowledgements

And the adventure continues.

It started with my retirement. At the same time as this event, known to be one of the most feared and shattering times of life, my research grant was renewed. CNPq, the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, at that time carried out one of its most commendable and incisive initiatives by continuing to award grants to lecturers who, even retired, retained an interest in continuing their academic output. I am grateful for CNPq for not letting me stop.

Shortly afterwards, and following the course of events that made this book possible, PROPARG, the Research and Postgraduate Programme in Architecture of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, convincingly ‘invited’ me to complete my doctorate. This I did. And I enjoyed it so much that organizing my academic background to produce the final thesis was a pleasure. I thank PROPARG for their decisive push. I also thank Professors Carlos Leite de Souza, Carlos Eduardo Comas, Celia Ferraz de Souza and Vicente Del Rio, for their bold suggestion of writing a book. Somewhat dubiously, I did. And it worked well: it was another event filled with new though pleasant challenges.

However, the most challenging event was yet to come. While attending a conference in Rome, Italy, I was suddenly introduced to Professor David Canter, a keynote speaker, by my colleague Professor Circe Monteiro from the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco. Rome is a place that does unimaginable things to people, one of which was my mentioning my research to Professor Canter. Out of the blue, he suggested I send him an abstract describing my book. And I did!

A stimulating acquaintance with the people at Ashgate Publishing followed, firstly with Valerie Rose, the Commissioning Editor and then Jude Chillman, the Editorial Administrator, to whom I am also grateful for their friendly receptiveness to my work.

Then began a most tricky procedure: the excruciating task of finding a translator who could understand my words in Portuguese, so full of the flamboyance typical of Brazilian writers. Which led to another event: my contact with Nick Rands, who proved patient enough to accompany in minutiae what I found difficult to express even in my mother tongue, let alone in English. He succeeded, and I am extremely grateful for his effort.

Before I finish, and now on more familiar grounds, I also express my gratitude to the students who work (and worked) with me – my colleagues – who kindly provided the missing photographs for this book. I am also grateful to my daughter Melissa for her constant assistance and support. And to my wife, Iara Regina Castello, I dedicate heartfelt thanks for her unimaginable dedication and especially

her enormous liveliness in salvaging what was left of my old colour transparencies and formatting this text.

Last but not least, I convey my appreciation to Porto Alegre, my home city, for the splendid information she has provided me about urban places.

# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to Place

To familiarize the reader with the main conceptualizations of place invoked throughout this book, together with the interpretations adopted of such concepts, they are introduced jointly, always according to the understanding of *place* in the terms of this present text. More extensive than a simple glossary, this 'Introduction to Place' includes excerpts from definitions which are further developed and returned to throughout the text. Prior definition of these conceptualizations is given here to encourage a fuller view of the text as a whole. This preliminary view will generally only address those components playing a more active role in the hypothesis of this book, whose key premise is that the new places created in cities at the turn of the millennium – referred to here as 'places of cloning' – may become places endowed with the quality understood as 'urbanity'.

### Why Does this Issue Need to be Discussed?

This investigation arises from the personal concerns of a researcher who clearly hates not understanding things, and who, while coming across people enjoying the experience of living in the new places of contemporary cities today, also finds fierce critics who reject these places as mere products of consumption, classifying them as unable to instil the minimum of consistent existential values. This study therefore seeks to investigate the issue, to then be able to construct a point of view on the topic and raise the possibility of a second opinion – giving some *benefit of the doubt* to the existence of places of cloning.

It seeks to appraise as impartially as possible the range of contributions to the quality of life of people in cities introduced by the construction of new places and the associated degree of urban development, and to eventually contribute to expanding this quality of life, believing the improvement of life in cities to be imperative. Not by trying to revive an idyllic way of life often stimulated by mere nostalgic aspiration, but rather through trying to find out with increasing coherence what the inhabitants of urban environments want, what kind of place would be most welcome to them, even if these places are sometimes offered indirectly or along lines involving commercial procedures.

Approximately 80 percent of the population of Brazil lives in urban surroundings: the search for a better quality of life in these surroundings is an aim which no one involved in the study and design of the built environment can ever consider avoiding; and at the same time it is thought that a well articulated availability of urban places might open beneficial prospects for improving this

quality. It is therefore hoped that this study may be the stimulus for further research into the subject of urban places and particularly into the new types of places being introduced into the urban environment. And that it can contribute to the establishment of bases for working with such a clearly controversial subject, which needs to be addressed through investigations that can avoid stultifying preconceptions, facile apriorisms and hasty prejudice, revealing what it is like to live better in cities in the 21st century, while taking advantage of the benefits offered by places that can be perceived as laden with urbanity.

How can that be done?

## The Perception of Place

Although there is a clear physical correspondence between people and spaces, the relationships also involve a strong psychological component. People *feel* better in certain spaces. In other words, certain spaces stand out within the greater Space in which people circulate and, by standing out, are perceived differently. These are generally spaces perceived to contain certain qualities. Thus it can be said that these *spaces* are perceived as *places* by their users. They possess qualities that allow them to be perceived as a place, defined within the greater space of the city as a whole. Which means: they allow a place to be distinguished from a space.

It can therefore be accepted that behind the identification of a place lies a whole process of appreciation of the space, which may well be attributed to the perception that people have (or will acquire) about that space. But from what basis does this perception develop? From the presence of environmental stimuli. From the widest range of stimuli of environmental features retaining a relationship not just with the objective and material nature of the elements of the environment, but also with its subjective nature – immaterial and imponderable. And – substantially – expressed as a product of people's interactions with the environment.

The urban research projects employed in this study have favoured the use of methodologies and techniques from the field of environmental perception, a field seen to be most valuable in better revealing what happens in people-environment relationships. One of the routes towards identification of places offered by the field of environmental perception comes from expression of the phenomena perceived by users in their existential experience. Studies have therefore acquired a strong phenomenological connotation, referring to the early-20th century philosophical doctrine of phenomenology advanced by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. As is common among philosophical doctrines, phenomenology also acquired different emphases, styles and schools, principally through the contributions of philosophers like Martin Heidegger (1979) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1996), who introduced considerable changes by moving from the prevailing *transcendental* direction implanted by Husserl, towards an *existential* direction.

In the considerably synthesized view of David Seamon (2000), phenomenology is the exploration and description of phenomena relating to things or human experience. In this case,

Any object, event, situation or experience that a person can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, intuit, know, understand, or live through is a legitimate topic for phenomenological investigation. There can be a phenomenology of light, of color, of architecture, of landscape, of place ... of jealousy ... of economy, of sociability, and so forth. All of these things are phenomena because human beings can experience, encounter, or live through them in some way (Seamon 2000: 3).

The phenomenological approach has been applied to topics in the field of architecture-urbanism and has made useful contributions in detecting the phenomena affecting the perception of this quality known as 'place', so ardently sought by urban designers. This methodological approach acquired stronger emphasis following re-examination of the paradigms forming the distinctive outlines of the modernist visions from the first half of the 20th century. A considerable increase in new paradigmatic theorizations began to flourish alongside these revisions in thematic discussions in the realm of what is known as postmodernism, many of which have been imported from other disciplinary fields. As Kate Nesbitt has noted in a substantial anthology on the theory of architecture,

One aspect of this interdisciplinarity is the reliance of architectural theory on the philosophical method of inquiry known as phenomenology. ... this philosophical thread underlies postmodern attitudes towards site, place, landscape. ... Recent theory has moved towards ... the body's interaction with its environment. Visual, tactile, olfactory, and aural sensations are the visceral part of the reception of architecture, a medium distinguished by its three-dimensional presence (Nesbitt 1996: 28).

## The Genesis of Place

Accompanying the pioneering approaches of Kevin Lynch (1968), in 1960, the highlight of which was to isolate the important environmental quality he termed 'imageability',<sup>1</sup> some revisions and new propositions have been tested in other disciplinary fields, all aimed at constructing a definition of *place*. One of the most celebrated comes from psychology, with David Canter explaining on the first page of his famous book *The Psychology of Place* in 1977 that the discussion

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1 According to Lynch, '... that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer ... It might also be called *legibility*, or perhaps *visibility*, in a heightened sense, where objects are not only able to be seen, but are presented sharply and intensely to the senses' (Lynch 1968: 9-10).





**Figure 1.1** Rome, Italy

‘... is about those units of experience within which activities and physical form are amalgamated: places’ (Canter 1977: 1), in other words, place would be a socio-physical unit of environmental experience, forming an eco-behavioural pattern in the environment. Another equally well disseminated contribution comes from geography, with Edward Relph (1976) observing that the significance of place, although anchored into physical configurations and activities, is not the property of these features, but rather of the intentions and experience of the people who occupy them.

It can therefore be stated that place is a qualified space, or rather a space that comes to be perceived by the population through the motivation of human experiences based on the apprehension of environmental stimuli. These stimuli can be very diverse – as diverse as the relationships between people and the environment. Nonetheless, a few brief examples can be introduced to help illustrate how a place may come about. A place may therefore come about in the following ways.

*Through a narrative:* Comments about the pleasure of having visited the ‘Fontana di Trevi’, in Rome, Italy (Figure 1.1) may become a point of common interest, for example.<sup>2</sup>

*Through reputation:* The sum of many narratives may result in one city space acquiring a reputation, of which quite a rich example can be provided by Copacabana Beach, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Figure 1.2).

2 Unless otherwise stated, all photographs are the author’s own.



**Figure 1.2** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

*Source:* Photo by Melissa Castello.



**Figure 1.3** Bombinhas, Brazil

*Through natural assets:* enjoyment of the beautiful scenery of Bombinhas, a small beach in southern Brazil, provides plenty of natural stimuli to assist in the occurrence of a favourite place (Figure 1.3).

*Through association with a historic building:* public markets in most major cities, like the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, Turkey (Figure 1.4), are located in historic buildings and generate a highly concentrated point of social contact and activities.

*Through association with political actions:* rallies and demonstrations have been tested in Tian'anmen Square, Beijing, China (Figure 1.5), stimulating the perception of this 'political space' of the city as a place.

*Through association with local tradition:* the 'Englischer Garten' in Munich, Germany (Figure 1.6) has become a traditional meeting place for locals and visitors alike.

*Through a building with emotive connotations:* such as that experienced by people when meeting at the Pyramids and Sphinx at Giza, Cairo, Egypt (Figure 1.7), a place full of emotion and highly evocative of human culture and civilization.

*Through the construction of a fantasy, an illusion, an 'image':* Bavaria is a magic name, full of associative imagery. To stand in front of the fantastic fairy-tale 'Schloss Neuschwanstein', near Füssen, Germany (Figure 1.8), creates an image closely evocative of fantasy, transforming that space into a place impregnated with romantic illusions.



**Figure 1.4** Istanbul, Turkey



**Figure 1.5** Beijing, China



**Figure 1.6** Munich, Germany





**Figure 1.7**    Cairo, Egypt



**Figure 1.8**    Bavaria, Germany



**Figure 1.9** San Francisco, USA

*Through the availability of sensory enjoyment and comfort:* enjoyment of the waterfront breeze, the sounds of seagulls and sea lions, the clear sunlit views and seafood aromas together suggest provision of a place for sensory pleasure, such as the Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 39 in San Francisco, USA (Figure 1.9), famous as one of the most appreciated places in the city.

*Through the availability of goods, services or technological facilities:* finally, the custom of frequenting convenience facilities, such as the ubiquitous AM/PM stores in any major world city may lead to the creation of places of intense social contact.

A list like this can of course very easily become endless. To avoid excessive development, however, we can concentrate on some of the categories, approaching them through their mutual affinities. It can therefore be said that the perception of a place may for example occur through apprehension of *socio-cultural* stimuli (which would cover such sections as narrative, history, tradition); or *morphological-imaginary* stimuli (natural assets, beauty, reputation, representation of fantasy, among others) or finally, *enjoyment-functional* stimuli (services, utilities, sensory enjoyment, comfort, pleasure).

In this way we would have three groups of source stimuli for three main stems, tentatively classified as socio-cultural; morphological-imaginary; enjoyment-functional; but all resulting from the *interaction between people and environment*. It is particularly interesting to consider places perceived through an association of

these *types* of stimuli, to thus be able to approach them more systematically, and consequently attempt to establish more acute theoretical reflections.

## Types of Places

One group of interactions between people and their surroundings features the role of the spatial dimension, involving phenomena relating to the physical nature and material constitution of places, their objective morphology – accentuating the experiences related to an ‘aura’ surrounding the place, even if this is sometimes just an ‘abstract’ aura, no more than an invisible halo caused by interactions between people and surroundings, yet sufficient to leave a mark on the place. Material or abstract, this aura will have been acquired as a result of natural, enjoyment, sensory or landscape qualities, and will therefore be an aura stimulated by elements of the local *spatial* collective imagination.

In another situation the relationships between people and their surroundings will involve more subjective phenomena, which absorb the histories of a place – originating from the popular tales and stories flowing from these subjective interactions – and which underscore the role of the temporal dimension, a dimension which, although laden with imponderables, also involves the material forms containing these abstractions. The places in this category are qualified by evoking people’s collective ‘memory’ of the phenomena of the surroundings, evoking the historical formation of their town, forms constructed according to the prevailing architectural patterns of different historical periods, and evoking legends which after all result from phenomena of memory stimulated by elements of the local *temporal* collective imagination.

And there is a situation which is shared by the two previous ones, but which originally comes from the interaction between people themselves, where the social dimension is predominant, involving phenomena associated with interpersonal contact and underscoring elements of the local *social* collective imagination.

We shall term the type of place originating from spatial stimuli as places of Aura. Places leaning towards the temporal dimension we shall term places of Memory. And the type of place tending towards interaction originating from interpersonal relations in the environment, we shall term places of Plurality.

Each of these terms originates from the interaction between people and environment, even if the initial focus of the latter is concerned with interpersonal relations. They therefore have a common source and are related. Nevertheless, a subtle distinction can be noted: the places of Aura and Memory cover a *continuum* of gradations which, although slightly different, end up by converging, through one characteristic which precisely ties them together: they are all *plural* places, centres of diversity, places where, because they are inherently collective, things are offered, things are exchanged, there is a construction of Plurality.

The role of the categories previously selected for creating a place now becomes clearer. Plurality becomes the determining phenomenon, the condition *sine qua*

*non* for the constitution of the place, in view of the fact that, as the place is a social construction, its plurality is what will necessarily ensure the indispensable social dimension of experiencing it. And Aura and Memory, in turn, intervene in this process by enabling the formation of mental *images*, emphasizing the elements of the spatial and temporal collective imagination in the minds of their users.

These latter are the mediating phenomena that evoke images, consolidate the imagination, introduce perceived images to the memory – or form new images through the combination of ideas – through which the place will convey its existence. These are the dimensions involved in constituting a place, beginning with the collective experience of the plurality present in the place and concluding with the images stimulated by the aura and/or memory that model the configuration of that place.

It should be added that these phenomena are not mutually exclusive, as can be seen. On the contrary: they accumulate and pervade each other. A mark of the city's collective *memory* that stands out for its historical significance may also stand out for the *aura* of sensory pleasure attributed to it; while the halo conveyed by the phenomenon of aura surrounding that place, associated with the strength of the historical roots acquired by the place as it evolved, come together to produce the *plurality* that will definitively mark the perception of that space as a *place*.

This aspect alone substantially increases interest in the subject, since it reinforces the intense social connotation of the concept of place: the social character presented by places, the social construction that marks their origin and the plurality that feeds them and keeps them alive, the plurality with which a place is socially constructed, are of utmost interest.

One of the most rigorous and recent examinations of the theory of place, 'Textures of Place', postulates from the book's initial pages that '... place is socially produced and constructed and, moreover, ... imagination plays a critical role in that construction' (Adams, Hoelscher and Till 2001: xxi). In other words, formation of place includes a social construction, involving phenomena that are part of the repertoire of the social collective imagination. In fact the authors are in this way only confirming a statement previously made by David Lowenthal in an article that has become 'One of the seminal essays of the past half-century, [it] argued for the role of experience and imagination in the shaping of geographical knowledge' (Ley 2001: 6).<sup>3</sup> This argument is in fact most important, for it indicates the shared role of experience acquired socially (Plurality) and the formation of the imagination (through Aura and Memory) in the construction of 'placeness'.

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3 The article Ley refers to is by the English Emeritus Professor of Geography: Lowenthal, David. Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology. In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51, 1961, p. 241-260.





**Figure 1.10** Porto Alegre, Praça da Alfândega. Home of the Annual Book Fair  
 Source: Photo by Marcos Petrolí.

### *The place of aura*

The place of aura returns to the most classical acceptance of the idea of place, associating it with what is known in the literature as *genius loci*.<sup>4</sup> The ‘spirit of place’ is in fact a concept from ancient Rome which came to great prominence in the literature of modern architecture-urbanism following the detailed and poetic approach of the Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Scultz (1980) in his famous work *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. Our idea of Aura as stimulating the perception of place in the city of today starts with the *genius loci* naturally present in the place and extends to the reputation people attribute to the place. So, in theory at least, the tested categorization of places of Aura can start by recording a place of natural aura, with a predominance of natural *genius loci*, and progressively proceed in gradations towards a place of cultural

4 From the Latin: *genius*, *spirit* + *locus*, *place*. The term concerns the special atmosphere of a place and the spirit contained within it. Cf. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th edition, 2000, updated in 2003: Houghton Mifflin Company.

aura, with a predominance of the marks left by human actions. We can therefore distinguish two tenuous nuances of aura: those with a predominantly natural bias and those where the bias is more strongly cultural.

Porto Alegre's Praça da Alfândega ('Customs Square') can provide some illustrations of aura as a stimulus for the perception of this type of urban place. The place of the Praça da Alfândega was established in what was originally a place of *natural* aura. Initial occupation of the land now housing the Praça da Alfândega began through an association of natural bases: it was the area indicated by the spirit of place as suitable for the port needed by the first inhabitants for their experiences of life in the city. The axis established to connect the square with the port, Avenida Sepúlveda, is the place still perceived today as evocative of the presence of water in Porto Alegre city centre.<sup>5</sup> This is in all probability associated with the aura that the place had acquired. The same square of the Praça da Alfândega interestingly takes on a strong aura of *cultural* place during the Book Fair, an annual event during which the square – even today – is transformed and functions as a real city *agora* (Figure 1.10).

Norberg-Schultz teaches us that the built environment is not just the result of the arbitrary actions of human beings, but that it reveals the presence of a structure and the record of existential meanings: 'These meanings and structures are reflections of man's understanding of the natural environment and his existential situation in general' (Norberg-Schulz 1980: 50), stressing that '... it is of great existential importance to come to terms with the genius of the locality where his life takes place' (Norberg-Schulz 1980: 18). Aura can nevertheless be created: 'genius' can be instilled in a place through acts of language and gesture, as Yi-Fu Tuan teaches us when he describes

... the deliberative acts of creating and maintaining place for which speech, gesture, and the making of things are the common means. Words have great power in creating place. ... City people are constantly 'making' and 'unmaking' places by talking about them. A network of gossip can elevate one shop to prominence and consign another to oblivion. ... in a sense, a place is its reputation (Tuan 1980b: 6).<sup>6</sup>

### *The place of memory*

Before further development, it is worth remembering that it is people and the use that people make of the built environment which, over time, can confer the distinctive

5 According to research using methodologies of environmental perception in the place, in which this author actively participated: See, for example, Castello, L. (1996a), Castello, L. (1996b).

6 See also: Tuan, Yi-Fu. Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach. In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* [online], 81(4), 1991: 684-696.

status enjoyed by urban places in cities. Emphasizing the hypothesis of associating place with the passage of time, this of course aprioristically implies considering that phenomena are woven into the notion of place associated not just with the history but also with the memory of cities. So, as Lynch seems to desire so fervently, the place of memory will be representative both of the built heritage commonly identified by the *cognoscenti* – commemorating its historical and architectural importance – and also by people's memories '... giving a locality a memorable and specific character to which the user may attach himself and his thoughts and feelings. ... Then we might begin to commemorate the histories of ordinary people in ordinary places' (Lynch 1975 in Banerjee and Southworth 1991: 630 and 633). Once again two biases can be indicated: the place of *traditional* memory; and the place of *historical* memory.

Porto Alegre's Praça da Alfândega can again be introduced as representative of places of memory. Intervening between the materiality of its historic buildings, conserved for their architectural value, are the ethereal memories of past events in the city, evoked by places that connect the historic buildings with the memory of common deeds by common people in common places (more or less as Lynch describes above) – to the memory of myths and traditions of urban life. Many residents will recall that one of the most notable places in Porto Alegre was associated with the façade of the old Imperial cinema in the square, for example, marked strongly by the entertainment conveyed not just by the films showing inside the cinema, but also by the buzzing atmosphere often created by the illuminated pavements and wonderful cinema entrance porches of the mid 20th century. As one of the leading cinema architects of the 1930s Art Deco period in Los Angeles, USA, S. Charles Lee, observed 'the show starts on the sidewalk' (Valentine 1994 apud Marling 2001), in other words, the place of the building is part of the fantasy, and the sidewalk is a *place*.

These and other experiences, like watching the parade entering the great balls with which the neighbouring Clube do Comércio fascinated the population in those days, may go unnoticed by many of those currently frequenting the square: mainly staff from the tall, modern buildings surrounding it and elements from the more popular strata of society, in a harmony of executives, professionals, unemployed and the marginalized.

The hurried crowds of today eating their quick snacks in the local McDonald's or sneaking between the undesirable vagrants disturbing the everyday life of the square may only have heard of these legendary events. Except that, perhaps even without knowing, they are constantly fabricating new memories which in the not-too-distant future will be incorporated into the repertoire of *memorabilia* making up the *place of the Praça da Alfândega*. And which will be transformed into a place like that, having at some time in the square's history perhaps been a place of Aura and now being a place of Memory. A place of Memory consecrated through community experience, since, when constructed 'by the buildup of overlapping memories of individual and shared experience, a place becomes sacred to a community' (Carr et al. 1995: 20).



**Figure 1.11** Av. Sepúlveda, the old Tax Office and Post and Telegraph buildings

This is a place of memory whose relationships with memories of the legends and traditions of everyday life is so strong and so direct that it allows a small distinction to be explored, urging these types of places to be called places of *traditional* memory.

In parallel, another type of phenomenon can be seen in action on another site in the same Praça da Alfândega: this corner of the square is home to a more fertile place of memory for revealing the history of the square. This place is where the square meets the city's first public services, the Tax Office and the Post and Telegraph buildings, separated by Avenida Sepúlveda (Figure 1.11), whose imposing design connects the square with the city old quayside, where one can see the history of Porto Alegre represented by a place materially constructed from bricks and stone. A further gradation of places of memory can thus be discerned. These other places can be called places of *historical* memory.

### *The place of plurality*

The place of leisure, pleasure, mixture, contrast, 'others' and of difference is in other words that desired diversity that Jane Jacobs (1972) so vehemently demands of Modernist planners, or the spatial sociability for which William H. Whyte (1990; 1990b) always fought so ardently, or even the materialization of the spaces



**Figure 1.12** Praça da Alfândega. Facing Rua da Praia, the main street

Source: Photo by Marcos Petrolí.

forming the gregarious scale of the entertainment centre intended in Lúcio Costa's (1962; Castello 2005: 99-100) urban plan for Brasília.

Within this focus, the interface of the Praça da Alfândega (once again) with the Rua da Praia forms a fairly clear example of what becomes a place of plurality (Figure 1.12). Like the places of Memory and of Aura, places of Plurality may also contain some distinctive subtleties. Places of *heterotopic* plurality can be distinguished from places of *privatopic* plurality, an obviously theoretical dichotomy which is nevertheless relevant for the development of this study.

The term heterotopia is used in the sense given it by Michel Foucault (1997), signifying the use of a place by different ethnic or social groups converging as 'others', in places such as shopping malls, museums or large public-transport stations. Foucault singles out heterotopias as places that can provide sharper perceptions of the social order.

In contrast there are other plural places, 'privatopias', consisting of one-dimensional worlds, frequented by homogenous groups of people, like those found in residential districts, on a university campus, or cocooned in gated condominiums, for example. The issue of private cocooning has even been addressed individually, pointing to what the theory of urbanism is beginning to study under the term 'privatopia', from the title of the book by the urban planner Evan McKenzie (1994), which most systematically disseminated the phenomenon. Quite unlike the heterotopic interfaces instilling change, transgression and breaks



in behaviour, the space of homogenized everyday life would be defined by the fetters of excessive community restrictions. The places of these individualized communities are frequently exclusive, constructing defensive barriers, developing means of repression, creating surveillance equipment and becoming, in the end, spaces defined as ‘against’ the ‘others’; acting in opposition to otherness.

Having described the typologies that may characterize places, let us now further individualize what ‘our’ place may be.

## The Place under Discussion

What kind of place is being considered here?

The variations in spatial scale of places are so many and so diverse that it would be presumptuous to choose only one to work with. This study will therefore consider two from the multiple options of scale of place.

One of them concerns places on the scale of urban plazas – or the public place surrounded by buildings. And the other is on a regional scale, which is called upon by Lynch as essential for the study of places, since ‘Our senses are local, while our experience is regional. So the discussion will cover things as large as air basins and freeway systems and as small as sidewalks, seats, and signs’ (Lynch 1978: 10).

Finally, the place being considered is a place *constructed socially*: it is a collective place and is perceived collectively.

### *The time of this place*

In terms of time, the place discussed in this study is recent – the time of the turn of the Third Millennium – located between 1984 and 2004, which coincides with the period of this author’s empirical research related to the topic.

Aldo Rossi<sup>7</sup> has alerted us to the crucial role of *time* in urban studies. His concise reflection could almost be paraphrased by saying that *the form of a place is always the form of a time of places; and there are many times in the formation of a place*.

The time of place considered here is today. And the characteristics of today help to explain the types of place we can find in the city of today. A city reflecting a system of life adopted by a globalized world, a system progressively spreading to all latitudes of the globe and containing changes deep enough to characterize a social mutation, as François Ascher (2001) has observed, explaining that the mutations that society is experiencing in its evolution to a new phase of Modernity imply a real revolution in the way of living in cities. In fact,

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7 Aldo Rossi, in his famous text *The Architecture of the City*, suggests that ‘The form of the city is always the form of a particular time of the city; but there are many times in the formation of the city, ...’ (Rossi 1999: 68).

These mutations imply and necessitate important changes in the conception, production and administration of cities and territories; they make a new modern urban revolution the order of the day, the third one after those of the classical city and the industrial city (Asher 2004: 8).

In this third revolution sketched out by Ascher, it will also be necessary to address places – those qualified parts of the city – under this prism of important changes being established in the *conception*, *production* and *administration* of the new places, as he puts it. Ascher (2004: 21) claims that the places of previous urban models (the ‘classical’ and the ‘Fordist-Keynesian-Corbusian’ model) logically have to make room for a new place, the place of the ‘hypertext’ model of society, a society moving from a stage of industrial capitalism into an economy acknowledged as cognitive capitalism (Ascher 2004: 42). Certainly, some of these new places will no longer contain those portentous works consciously designed as a whole, at times when

... squares and public spaces (e.g. the Place Vendôme and Place des Vosges in Paris); street systems (e.g. Sixtus V’s plans for Rome, Haussman’s remodelling of Paris); extensions to existing cities (e.g. Edinburgh New Town, the Cerda plan for Barcelona); and the redevelopment of fortifications (e.g. the Ringstrasse in Vienna) (Carmona et al. 2003: 20), ... became to a greater degree a work of art, conceived, perceived, and executed as a whole

as Gehl (1996: 43 apud Carmona et al. 2003: 20) puts it.

The works of today – or the places of today – will reflect the trends most influencing cities *today*, including those trends recognizably attributed to technological and market changes and those which are part of the influences brought in by the ‘creative class’. This term, developed by Richard Florida, defines a class of new *urbanites* creating new ideas that profoundly alter our styles of life and work, arguing that the presence of members of this new class becomes fundamental for qualifying a city (and, by extension, a *place*):

... as the fundamental source of creativity, people are the critical resource of the new age ... It’s often been said that in this age of high technology, ‘geography is dead’ and place doesn’t matter any more. Nothing can be further from the truth: Witness how high-tech firms themselves concentrate in specific places ... Place has become the central organizing unit of our time ... Access to talented and creative people is to modern business what access to coal and iron ore was to steelmaking (Florida 2004: 6).

*The spirit of the time* also stands out as important in relation to the processes of *identification* of a place. Even the phenomenological method itself becomes debatable, needing to be re-scaled in relation to the new temporality of the present, including a reassessment of the more orthodox views concerning place,

whether in terms of their perception itself, or in relation to the stages of the process enabling it to be revealed. Kim Dovey's (1999) contribution is quite apt in this respect, considering phenomenology as a 'necessary, but limited' way of perfectly understanding a place. He justifies his doubts by calling on Jürgen Habermas himself, who makes 'a useful distinction between the "life-world", the everyday world of place experience, social integration and "communicative action" and the "system", the social and economic structures of the state and the market' (Dovey apud Carmona et al. 2003: 96). Of course Habermas's displeasure is provoked by phenomenology being concentrated in the world of everyday things (the 'everyday world'), to greater exclusion of the conditions of the *system* we are living in today, imposed by the actions of the State and the Market. Nevertheless, it remains an interesting pointer to the weight that should be given to these actions in analysis of contemporary cities and the permanent creation of their places.

### *The space of this place*

*Our place is semi-public* Focusing in a little closer, the paradigm adopted in this study concerns the type of place generally referred to in English texts as the 'public realm'. Denise Scott Brown (1990) explains her understanding of the public realm in reference to an article by Mark Lilla (1985 apud Scott Brown 1990: 21), in *The New Republic*, which illustrates more clearly the extent of the term. Lilla distinguishes between what would be public places and civic places, including among the former '... those, like the shopping mall, marketplace and beach, that "serve our shared but still private needs" whereas civic places are where we "share places and purposes", by virtue of sharing citizenship'. In one, he says, we enjoy private pleasure even while in public, while in the other we act more politely and perhaps more conventionally. But, as both are encompassed by the public realm, the term therefore proves broad enough to include a shopping mall, a beach or a municipal building, making it equally correct to include semi-public (or semi-private) places within the confines of what is termed the public realm, as places where one can observe intense public appropriation.

That is the scale of place adopted in this text.

It is important to remember that Kevin Lynch's observations have inspired the introduction of a less common extension to the study of place: the place considered here can also encompass the extent of a region. And not just in Lynch's sense of it being necessary to include motorways, pavements and benches alike in the discussion, as we have seen, since our senses are local, while our experience is regional (Lynch 1978: 10). But also in the sense that extending the scope of the concept enables acceptance of the idea of creating a network of places,



with Edward Casey<sup>8</sup> assuring us ‘... creation consists in the production of particular places out of preexisting regions’ (Casey 1998: 35).

Even more specifically, the place considered here constantly reflects the conditions of Brazil, a place based within the urban structures faithfully depicting the typical urban patterns of Brazil at the end of the 20th century which, having undergone drastic changes during the initial period of the country’s accelerated urbanization in the early 20th century, have reached more stable conditions while continuing to display the characteristics found in most cities of the world – presenting a fragmented territory in which it is however still possible to make out the persistence of a central foundational framework surrounded by areas of older intensive urbanization.

As we saw in the ‘Introduction’, this study makes use of previous empirical studies to develop conjectures about the frameworks of young cities – such as Porto Alegre – but cities that have lived long enough to overlay diversified experiences of both planned growth and spontaneous organic growth. They are cities which, in the Brazilian context of the years around the end of the 20th century – hence a little after the country’s modernist architectural-urbanist peak represented by the construction of Brasília in 1960 – have already experienced the traumas caused by a crisis keeping them in a constant state of tension, swinging haphazardly between the paradigms of the traditional city and the functionalist city of modernism. It is only with the arrival of the 1980s that revisions to these paradigms begin ‘... in a process which echoed the theoretical revision experienced by the First World in the 1960s and 1970s. ... In any case, the new interest in history, context, tradition, brought with it, or came together with a new interest in “place”’ (Fiore 2000: 110-111). This is the period when the qualities of the traditional city start to be reconsidered and the ‘*precisão morfológica e polivalência funcional que caracterizam os seus componentes bairro, rua, praça, quarteirão, lote, tecido repetitivo e monumento singular*’ (Comas 1990: 92). [... morphological precision and functional polyvalence that characterize its components of district, street, square, block, plot, repetitive fabric and singular monument]’ once again become the subject of academic research, and the role of those elements in forming what would be the ‘figurative city’,<sup>9</sup> starts to be appreciated afresh.

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8 We shall return to Casey’s philosophical approaches in the next chapter. For now, it will suffice to note another of his statements in which: ‘*Chōra* translated both as “region” and as “space” ... connotes occupied place, for example, a field full of crops or a room replete with things. ... A choric region is substantive without being a substance: rather than a thing, it is a locatory matrix *for* things’ (Casey 1998: 34). This will be particularly useful when studying places in the ‘Serra Gaúcha’ region, in Chapter 5.

9 In contrast with the urban paradigm of the Functional City promoted by the Athens Charter of 1933 one might call Figurative City the city of multifunctional districts made up primarily of corridor streets and closed blocks, where monuments or landmarks stand out against a continuous and solid built fabric and a discontinuous web of public and private open spaces. In Comas’s view, as expressions go, a contemporary *figurative city* is much better than a contemporary *traditional city*.

## The Place of Urbanity

*Urbanity* is a typical and unique quality of the built environment, understood as that quality related to the dynamic of existential experiences acting on people when using the public urban space, through the capacity for exchange and communication implied by this space.

The concept of urbanity is quite diverse, having also motivated attempts at quantitatively and qualitatively measuring its manifestation in a city through its connection of density and diversity, the connection of the most diverse social things in the smallest space (Lévy 1997: 58). It can generally be stated that urbanity runs through the feeling of plurality distinctively provided by some urban spaces, but that it also goes beyond this feeling to reach a more advanced stage of plurality on a level of broader existential tangibility.

Originally, for Max Weber (1967), who left us an approach to the city as a sociological category, the greatest emphasis of urbanity would be located in the cosmopolitan nature of the urban experience. Urbanity would be the condition in which the urban environment would provide its citizens with a variety of ways of life, opportunities for choices, options, exchange, interaction and interchange.

The exception obviously arises that this *urbanity* is what develops in the 'public realm' of cities, as the result of the intense interaction of the typical phenomena of urban life, the dynamic clash of social and economic relations, of otherness, adventure, of venturing, discovery, a web of events and experiences.

On the other hand, it is also necessary to consider that new urban environments may condition new ways of expressing *urbanity*, one of which being the intense interaction possible today in dual systems: analogical and digital. Some authorities exaggeratedly claim that in these conditions urbanity can even occur in the face of non-architectural solutions, where social contact takes place without the physical presence of people, without the intermediation of territory: the urban realm would consist of heterogeneous groups of people communicating amongst themselves through a space that could be virtual rather than real.

Changes in urban habits can be noted along similar lines. One interesting example can be found in Tokyo, a megalopolis in which everyday life dynamics has changed the structures of sociability and public/private relationships, bringing disruptions in hierarchical routines and time structures. In this context, combining consumption and time, the *Konbini*<sup>10</sup> chains provide increasingly important infrastructure. Their main clients are individuals with no nuclear family structures and students with nomadic after-hours lifestyles, and the Konbini extends beyond the store itself to be understood as an interactive physical interface: a terminal for virtual purchases and sales, a terminal for public services, ATM, cybercafé, download centre. At the same time it is a new space of sociability, one of the spaces where an inversion of the interior/exterior of the public space occurs: it functions

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10 *Konbini* is a multifunctional convenience store supporting the new everyday lifestyles.

as an intimate living room, a meeting place, and also as a place for passing time, where a new type of closed *flânerie* occurs (Moreira and Yoshimura 2003).

## The Design of Place

The field of architecture-urbanism<sup>11</sup> has decisively incorporated and entered the framework of preconditions mentioned above through the design of place.

The design of place can use the strategy of stressing or simply *employing the stimuli perceived* previously as the most striking in the space where the design is to be developed, using them as components of the environmental structure – be they natural, cultural, material or immaterial. On the other hand, designs of place may also use the tactic of *stimulating a certain perception*, intentionally introducing new elements which will integrate and be integrated into the planned environmental structure, introduced through design proposals. Two dimensions of related perceptual phenomena can thus be distinguished: from perceived stimuli; and from stimulated perception. Having said this, we can now point towards a fairly common occurrence in the design of places at the turn of the millennium: the greater and direct presence of stimulated perception.

Planned stimuli aim as a rule to reinforce the image of urbanity that a place has to contain and can convey to people, be it visually, sensorially or informatively, with stimuli being inspired by the more evident signs of urbanity, and especially what can be provided in terms of *plurality*, a necessarily intrinsic quality of an *urban place*. Perception of plurality is in fact one of the great qualities sought in plans for new places: deep down, perhaps their greatest *raison d'être* is precisely that of *locating* – allocating, making room for – the festival, the meeting, exchange, leisure, pleasure, mixture, contrast, mingling with ‘others’, comfort, solidarity, difference; in other words, that desired diversity – of people, activities, forms and images – that only enriches the propensity for demonstrating the phenomenon of urbanity, and which every city takes pleasure in being able to create and provide for its citizens.

It is noted here that when this intended perception not only emphasizes the manifestation of *plurality* but is also seen to be stimulated by phenomena associated with *memory* and/or *aura* surrounding the place, this urban space contains conditions for being considered as a new urban place for the city.

And so the initial outlines of the hypothesis are defined: that the employment of stimulated perception in the design of new places – here termed ‘places of cloning’

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11 Considering that the topological dimensions of place range from a simple park bench to a building, district or region, the precise localization of knowledge about place in one or other branch – architecture or urbanism – or even in urban design, urban planning, or regional planning, does not seem sufficiently accurate for more demanding scholars, which is why the composite term architecture-urbanism has been chosen when referring to the field of design disciplines encompassed by those fields of knowledge.

– may produce places rich in urbanity for the urban society of the early 21st century. In other words, this study conjectures that the use of stimulated perception allows one to assume that when places of cloning are consciously designed in such a way as to effectively stimulate the perception of the characteristics present or wished for in the urban environment, good opportunities arise for this design to achieve objectives aimed at qualifying or re-qualifying the image of the city.

### *‘Placemaking’ and ‘placemarketing’*

The term ‘placemaking’ is widely used in this field, meaning precisely the construction of place. While ‘placemarketing’ is more recent and less commonly used, with the field of architecture-urbanism perhaps a little hesitant in accepting it as a common term. It has nonetheless become quite a constant complement to the process of creating new urban places. One of the better-known contributions on the role of marketing in the construction of *place* as a product or service of the consumer market, is attributed to Michael Sorkin (1997), whose notable *Variations on a Theme Park*, together with a constellation of writers raising important issues on the conditions of urbanity – and the lack of it – in North American cities in the late 20th century, attributes many of the gaps encountered to the fact that ‘The architecture of this city is almost purely semiotic, playing the game of grafted signification, theme-park building. ... such design is based in the same calculus as advertising, the idea of pure imageability ...’ (Sorkin 1997: xiv). Moreover, underlying the idea of advertising is also the idea of competitiveness, through which ‘... cities and regions must market themselves: their “imageability” becomes the new selling point’ (Boyer 1997: 193).

The marketing of this ‘imageability’ is in fact just another characteristic of contemporary society, in which various types of marketing have been incorporated into the ‘everyday life’ of this society. Some of them are unusual, such as:

1. *Green* marketing (or ecological marketing that aims to meet the demands and requirements of a growing number of consumers who support environmental conservation);
2. *Social* marketing (marketing promoting changes in social behaviour, particularly in the areas of health, education, environment, social development, etc.);
3. *Institutional* marketing (aimed at strengthening the image of a company, organisation, government, city, etc.);
4. *Cultural* marketing (in support of cultural and arts activities);
5. *Political* marketing (aiming to favourably disseminate the public image of a political party or candidate – not so unusual and relatively well known).

‘Placemarketing’ can thus be considered from a particularly pragmatic view: of having become a *modern* instrument. And – closer to this hypothesis – a modern

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