Editorial

Designing Spaces and Services in Contemporary Cities

Some questions accompany us very closely throughout our experiences and professional years. They may become a constant topic in our educational path, a gap to answer within research. Or they could become the lenses through which we glance and understand the world around us. According to Marina Waisman [1], the practice of architecture is based on relationships built from the conditions of a given time and place, and it is these conditions that will allow us to think and practice architecture reflectively and critically.

On the other hand, traditional literature has often attributed value to stories from the Global North production, more specifically to the great references produced in the most renowned cities in Europe and the United States. This was fundamental to developing and disseminating a dominant architectural practice and discourse over the past decades [2]. Within architectural historiography, authors like Zevi, Montaner and Ghirardo [3-5] have acknowledged the collaboration of "peripheral" countries to the world's architectural production. In only a few publications, it is possible to confirm the presence of some resistance against the "totalizing vision that erases differences" [6] and the presentation of alternative perspectives, as in the works of Severiano Porto, Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Eladio Dieste, Jørn Utzon and a few more.

The acclaimed novelist Chimamanda Adichie has warned us, in her brilliant TEDGlobal talk [7], that relying solely on a single narrative about a person or a nation can lead to serious misconceptions. She emphasized that our lives and cultures are shaped by a multitude of intertwined stories. In the same way, our cities and their stories are definitely not homogeneous. Nor should our publications in architecture, urbanism and design tell a single story.

Being a Brazilian architect and scholar, a person who has lived in very different urban contexts since my childhood, the sense of being an outsider has always been my companion. Over time this sort of discomfort fed new questions that, ultimately, have become a PhD thesis concept: the *pericentric context* [8]. The research was about design education in architectural schools situated outside the central regions of Brazil, those that concentrate a larger population, combined with greater economic, industrial and service development. A *pericentre* means a context that is not geographically far from the centre and not marginal enough to be considered peripheral, which also establishes zones of exchange and/or influence between those places. Nevertheless, a pericentric place is not considered to be relevant. The rule by which we measure what is worth, significant or has merit in A&U derives from the centre. Everywhere else is small or remote, marginal or peripheric.

Today, remoteness is relative due to digital connections, however, it also depends on knowledge and connections (human and spatial). What happens to those places that are not metropolises nor are situated in the vicinity of the so-called global relevant cities? What sort of urban design research and practises take place there?

The concept of a *pericentric context* was created exactly to accommodate a specific situation since most places around the world are very distinct from what A&U literature and information often publish. It is necessary to be able to dialogue with current topics, published works, and the production of the dominant architectural discourse, practice and

innovation in Architecture and Urbanism from the lenses of an outside place. The architectural and urban design scene I have been experiencing does not figure in magazines, books or websites. As a professor and researcher, I soon realized there was a huge gap to be addressed. There is a myriad of architectural and urban situations to be discovered, studied, published and discussed. They are part of our everyday life within cities that are not well known; nonetheless, they also have value and should be part of an architectural and urban culture.

The present publication is committed to shed light on some architectural and urban situations that escape from the canons of most published works. This special issue brings together reflections, ideas and research expecting to contribute to the creation and development of a sustainable future with quality of life for our small and remote or pericentric territories. We embrace the collaboration from three "places outside the centre": Minneapolis (USA), Makassar City (Indonesia) and Tehran (Iran).

Cities are complex organisms but also laboratories for understanding how we inhabit spaces and use their services. Over the years, our public spaces have lost their original function as the place of political and social life - virtual space and social media have replaced physical spaces and face-to-face social exchanges. On the other hand, the COVID-19 situation demonstrated the importance of social interaction for physical and mental health, exposing the human need to experience outdoor spaces in the metropolis, in pericentric contexts and in small and remote places. In the latter, the pandemic made their territories even more fragile.

The article "**Post-Pandemic Public Space: How COVID-19 May Permanently Alter the Public Realm**" explores the impact of pandemics on urban environments, with a particular focus on the post-COVID-19 era. It builds upon existing research by delving into the historical and contemporary implications of pandemics on architecture, public health, and urban design. The COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a renewed interest in public health within the urban design community, prompting discussions about the future of public space in light of evolving societal needs and technological advancements. This research aims to inform urban planning and design practices to create more resilient, equitable, and sustainable cities. Ultimately, it seeks to address the challenges posed by pandemics and foster healthier, more inclusive urban spaces for future generations.

The article "**Designing an Inclusive City with Chrono-Urbanism Principles**" discusses the concept of Chrono-urbanism, one that has emerged in response to global challenges, aiming to streamline city functions, lessen reliance on cars, and prioritize people-centred development in line with C40 Cities' sustainability guidelines. This approach, epitomized by the "15-20-minute city," gained importance during the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging practices like social distancing and remote work. Chrono-urbanism focuses on maximizing the efficient use of time within a city, improving access to essential services. While it shares similarities with New Urbanism's neighbourhood unit, Chrono-urbanism specifically emphasizes the accessibility of facilities. By incorporating mathematical models, spatial analysis, and activity planning, it facilitates better management of traffic and pedestrian flow. Chrono-urbanism also aligns with post-pandemic inclusivity objectives, as seen in places like Indonesia. The Tallasa District in Makassar serves as an example of how chrono-urbanism can promote inclusive urban development. Moving forward, urban planning should adopt comprehensive strategies that address health, housing, education, and accessibility to foster inclusivity. The authors emphasize the need to validate the adaptability of chrono-urbanism principles across various urban contexts within further research, ultimately enhancing inclusivity and sustainability.

The article "**Morphology of the Urban Phenomenon and Its Relation with Urban Livability**" points out that cities' documented history shows how urban morphology shapes human behaviour and city function. Urban livability, a qualitative measure, can be improved by enhancing city structure for sustainability, safety, and attractiveness. This study examines how urban morphology influences livability, defining both terms and assessing their relationship quantitatively. While urban morphology focuses on physical city aspects, livability encompasses various elements like sustainability and walkability. Methods like entropy and MXI measure urban multi-functionality, but challenges persist. The study proposes the Livable Block Index (LBI) to quantify livability, considering mixed-use areas and their distribution within blocks. Tehran is studied as a testbed due to its rapid urban growth. Analysis reveals correlations between urban block form and livability, emphasizing the importance of considering multiple parameters for accurate assessments.

Quality aspects in cities consider a variegated set of analyses. Gehl [9] suggests a set of twelve urban quality criteria, divided into three sections: protection (against traffic and accidents, harm by others and unpleasant sensory experience); comfort (options for mobility, to stand and linger, for sitting, for talking and listening/hearing, play, exercise and activities) and enjoyment (scale, opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate, experience of aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experiences).

Carmona [10] has determined ten principles for designing successful public spaces, which should be: evolving (whether formal or informal in nature); diverse (avoiding one-size-fits-all); free (with secure rights and responsibilities); delineated (clearly public in their use); engaging (designing in active uses); meaningful (incorporating notable amenities and features); social (encouraging social engagement); balanced (between traffic and pedestrians); comfortable (feeling safe and relaxing) and robust (adaptable and distinct in the face of change).

Design actions may involve placemaking and/or tactical urbanism interventions in marginal areas (urban furniture in public places, places for socialisation such as parks, playgrounds, game corners, squares, and rest areas), the creation of landmarks (pieces of art to exhibit the values of particular areas), urban regeneration, place identity by design, cyclable and walkable communities and other aspects of raising the quality of urban life.

The three articles present in this issue add other criteria to the urban quality of contemporary cities: health, time, livability and inclusiveness. More than determining a closed answer, they evidentiate the multiplicity of tools at our disposal nowadays and the complexity of design situations that require interpreting particularities to craft unprecedented answers. And yes, we can all learn from the experiences of small, remote and pericentral places to forge solutions and improve the quality of contemporary cities.

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