

From Portal to Urban Play: Contemporary China and Brazil

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Abstract:

This research builds on the conversation about the relationship between space and people, with the focus on the anthropology of space and the introduction of state of play (engagement) which in the framework of BRICS, as described in the case studies of Brazil and China. The modern colonial geographies' viewpoint may urge us to rethink these notions with the emergence of alternative functions of some spaces, and the re-imagination of urban space by what it may be named global modernity. At the local, regional, national and global context, space is not an empty element, but is complicated mixture of social and public relations and meanings. The intend contrast between the Sao Paulo site - Parque Minhocão and Shanghai space - Redtown was to identify some key factors regarding why one space "works" for play and one does not. Redtown can be defined as *the still birth of an incubator*, and as such provides a means for investigating the reasons as to why it does not work as a planned arts hub, including the reasons it never worked as a site of play. The Parque Minhocão in contrast is an urban phenomenon that can be considered in the context of the urban space of São Paulo, and as a spontaneous emergence of urban construction with the planned interactions between residents in the surrounding areas, visitors and place.

Keywords:

Urban Space, Public Place, Interaction, Play, Visual Anthropology, Brazil-China

1. Introduction

Urban agglomerations and the emergence of new urban spaces have become more important than ever before. In cities, such as Shanghai and São Paulo, a certain situation prevails with public spaces. In Brazil, growing social and economic disparities, deteriorating living conditions, spatial and environmental conditions, discrimination (based on race and migrants), policies (for the polarization of the community) and civil strife have given rise to new dynamics for an urban place-making and the interaction of residents within.

In the case of Chinese cities, the opportunities created by urbanization have already formed various kinds of urban spaces where the role of social interaction affects the improvement of the city as a whole [24]. Recently, the concept of "smart city" has

gained popularity. It is an ever-evolving idea, constantly tested by various stakeholders, which suggest that, with proper discussion, design and application, it can help overcome many of the city's problems [11].

This research paper is concerned two main points: public place and state of play (leisure) as an interaction in terms of the cases of Brazil and China. The idea focuses on constraints on public space (and class stratification) as a "loss of habitat" (that has had a democratizing social effect) of free play between adults. How did development in Brazil destroyed other forms of public space? How did the phenomenon of public leisure in Chinese art hubs zones act as a re-emergence of interactions? The idea of play does provide a particularly interesting base for analyzing the use of public space, activities for utility the place create a common sense and everyday "good shape" [22].

The main objects of this research are public spaces (parks, public squares) and interactions between place and people. There are some generalizations comparing types of public space where people play with account and equalize for climate, transportation culture infrastructure and urbanization in Sao Paulo and Shanghai. The main research questions are what influence does spontaneous play have on public place? What levels of special dynamics of public places are shaped by the interaction of play?

The State of Play is the use of a public built space for activities other than those for which the space was designed; specifically, social interaction, communication and leisure. The State of Play also signifies manners of interaction, games or public ceremony conditioned by or arising out of a utilitarian public space. The big city needs to cultivate "micro plazas" to solve the possible problems in countries of 'no place to play', and assumes the "problematic" point is the lack of play space available for free integrated interaction between various groups.

In January 2003, the Government of Brazil established the Ministry of Cities to develop national housing, environmental sanitation and urban policies that have a strong impact on urban development. The National Secretary for Transport and Urban Mobility, SeMob, was established and the CBTU, the Brazilian city railway company that was part of the Ministry of Transport which is part of the Ministry of Justice, was included by the Ministry of Cities to develop and implement a policy of mobility in cities [4]. SeMob formulated and discussed the concept of "Sustainable urban mobility" to respond to the mobility crisis faced by major urban centers because of the inadequate collective transport networks, reduction of population and income, high tariffs and model of urban construction [3].

Sustainable mobility and sustainable urban design in Brazilian and Chinese cities (São Paulo and Shanghai for example) are shown as a result of a series of policies on urban development, transport and circulation that aims to provide broad and democratic access to urban space by prioritizing non-motorized and collective transport regimes efficiently, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable manner based on treatment of people, rather than vehicles [10].

2. Methodology

As we know, it is not unusual for an ethnographic account to have a story about an ethnographer on the field, and an anthropologist with different theoretical orientations can use a similar written strategy of this kind [1]. In so doing, the anthropologist as an author creates, among other things, an ethnographic authority that rests on the

fundamental assumption, implicit or explicit in writing that these experiences are out there in reality [17].

This work uses qualitative approaches and analysis that reveals and looks at the intangible relationships. The subjective and interpretative, elements of the approach were used to understand why people behave in a certain way (blurred boundaries with user-centered design and applied ethnography). It required immersing in the context of interest to develop and conduct research sessions and in-depth conversations, to gather stories that were mapped and processed to inform the innovation process.

Methods that were applied for this research included interviews (recorded in Chinese and in Portuguese and transcribed in English), participation, observation and translation. Interviews are done with experts about the targeted spaces and the visitors (users of the space) about their relations to the public place, how active is interactive, what that dynamics of the play, their environment. The difficulty of doing ethnography in the space such as Redtown which is art creative zone which is going to be torn down, is that they want to continue their work/leisure and you want to ask them questions about the problems of "no place to play" or "art zones public failure". The work requires what anthropologists call tacking between smaller questions for informants and larger questions for analysis [9], the concrete and the abstract and the space in between. The project aims to include investigating how people make place and what they relate to it; here the place is constructed by art, through a particular kind of labor.

This research builds on the conversation about the relationship between space and people, especially with the introduction of state of play/interactions, or the anthropology of the place [8]. It is expected to present the qualitative conclusions about the main research question, data of statistic and interactive map of visual findings in localities with anthropological/ethnographic analysis. The research approach intends to build an urban-anthropological map of interactive photographs with analysis of interaction between public place and people co-existing there [5].

Combining the visual anthropology method, and observations informed by methodology of pattern language which was developed by Cristopher Alexander [6] and using pattern language such as affordances with the visual anthropological approach as a basis for a systemic to outline the monitoring of creative urban spaces and indicator of city health [15]. The pattern language method can be used for the observation of data dynamics as the part (in the case of interactions between space and people) of the systemic approach necessary to understand the commitment of society to complex systems of sustainable development [19].

To analyze the Asian social phenomenon and investigate it for Brazilian realities in terms of the transformation of idea of public place the study will use the theory of cultural particularism established by Franz Boas. This approach develops the idea about culture itself without embedding it in the general world cultural map, looking at particular culture specifically with ethnographic and participant observation methodology. As Boas argues that some phenomenon or tendency in culture depends on local context and staying or moving of people always influence the place where they are [2]. Anthropological context shapes the understanding how environment around can be changed or remains as unplanned or fixed space [1].

For over seventy years' anthropology has been studying the concept of transculturation, how the specificity of multiple, variable, dynamic and unequal

statement identity of the modern man clearly manifested, located in the complex relationship with the general known and legitimized acculturation (cultural contact) model. Most scholars interpret transculturation as a process of changing the material of culture, customs and beliefs of a particular socio-cultural group, which takes place when it is a prolonged close contact with another group – an adept of their cultural traditions. In the term "*transculturation*" there is the important Latin prefix "trans" which means "above", "super", "through", "on the other side." [1]. The last two values are particularly relevant, because they imply the inclusion of none, but several cultural reference points, the intersection of several cultures, between them and the running of a special state of cultural state- according to the individual that experiences this condition. By Ortiz's definition, "acculturation" is the acquisition of culture in unidirectional process and transculturation involves two phases - the loss or deculturation and the creation of a new culture (neo-culturation). Thus, it is equally important the destruction of cultural elements and the creation of the new cultural alliances [20].

It would be fair to say that by living in the city, no one can avoid the use of public places. Furthermore, this means that it is impossible not to visit them as social scene, although it is not focused, and sometimes unwillingly. Urban public space is a constitutively social situation, especially considering the interactions among urban residents.

3. Cases: Sao Paulo and Shanghai

The great discussion at the moment is not between maintenance as a highway and park, the polarization is between the group of activists who believe in the re-signification and reuse of Minhocão as an exclusive area for pedestrians and the group of demolition that believes that the best solution for All the problems of the place would be the return to an idealized city of the past. During the periods that works as a Park, the Minhocão is used for sports (such as racing, soccer, cycling, skateboarding), yoga, leisure (walking with dogs, hiking), public demonstrations, educational actions and projects, community gatherings, Bookshops, food trucks, art collectives, fashion productions, music, theatre and video projections and book launches (including my "A Viaduct Called Minhocão").

Cristina Gossmann notes in 1960, São Paulo was a modest town of about two to three million people, but the movement has been a problem even then [12]. Then-Mayor Paulo Maluf proposed corridor movement that literally raises the issue: increased a highway. In 1969, it was the largest project of reinforced concrete in all Latin America. The Parque Minhocão is an example of this urban phenomenon, which is considered in the context of the public space of São Paulo, as the urban construction without the involvement of residents of surrounding areas. Such an urban planning gave a result of this temporary transformation from the highway into the interactive and recreational space for thousands of *paulistanas*, who assigned this place as an informal and spontaneous. The devaluation and deterioration of properties bordering Parque Minhocão was immediate and still without improvements for living spaces around. The big city needs to cultivate "micro spaces" to solve the possible problem in Brazil of 'no place to play'.

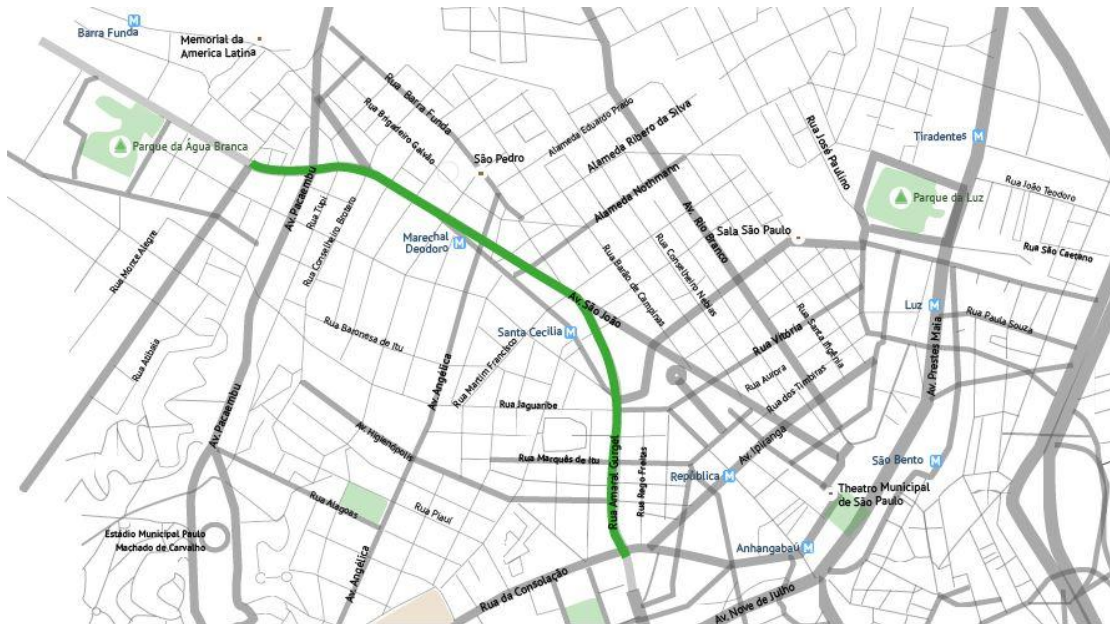


Figure 1. Localization of Parque Minhocão. Fonte: ARARUNA, 2015.



Figure 2. The Parque Minhocão.

At the local, regional, national and global context, space is not an empty element, but is complicated mixture of social and public relations and meanings. Modern urban situation is full of spatial dilemmas and variety of leisure choice in it. We are facing the impact of the ever-increasing inequality of income and wealth, as well as the evolution of the multi-ethnic and multicultural city, where aging society becomes dependent. The growth of urbanization and urban growth due to the housing market and local politics makes a utility of the public place as an important question. The space as the place for activities and interaction is luxury even for the middle classes [10].



Figure 3. Parque Minhocão during the week. Illustration by Paulo von Pozer



Figure 4. Parque Minhocão at weekends.

Spacious zones and people doing activities in a space that was not intended to be a park? And designed only for a walk after museum visit? A lot of low middle-class picnicking, teen couples courting and skateboarding on the grounds or special areas like in front of Long Museum- new private space in Shanghai. **Redtown** remains of the old Shanghai No. 10 Steel factory in Hongqiao area now houses the Shanghai Sculpture exhibition hall and a collection of cafes, art studios and offices related to design and art. Pitched as a "creative zone," it has become popular with families and weekenders who come to picnic among the freestanding sculptures in the grassy central areas [21].



Figure 5. Redtown during the day

This is the example of leisure in a frame of commercial art and design public space surrounded by private buildings, where so called free play demonstrates the utility of these spaces by visitors and locals who live there. What unintended uses does Redtown have? A geographic landmark, a portal from one street to another, a place to walk dogs, a party site for party members? Did Chinese real estate companies use the gallery spaces for storing stationary? I suppose I could contrast the Brazilian site and Redtown and try to identify some factors regarding why one works for play and one doesn't. Redtown can be defined as The Still-Birth of an Incubator basically looking at the site and the surroundings and identifies reasons why it does not work as a planned arts hub and all the reasons it never worked as a site of play.



Figure 6. Redtown entrance for the Sculpture Exhibition Space.

4. State of Play

Recent concepts of quality space formed in the gap on the shortcomings in the modern urban planning. Concerning concepts of Henri Lefebvre, the relevant visions it was aimed at implementing quality space in terms of "human scale", "diversity", "facing" or "creativity" and to promote the concept of mixed type urban spaces where people find identity and feel "at home" [16]. These concepts, however, seems to belong to an idealized historical interpretation of urbanity. Visual strategies and rules on aesthetics became predominant in the life of the law; their goals have switched to the production of atmosphere and emotion. Quality space has become associated with the atmosphere, the works, and the image of urban sites.

The new housing market brochures and guidebooks, maps show certain image of the places of interest in the city. On the one hand, both to create a representation of the medium about the center, which displaces the official city center, making it thus more desirable. Looking at factors that allow spontaneous play in streets and public spaces is a qualitative indicator of city and social health and democracy.

An analysis of the modalities of play in public space is an underexploited sociological tool that can indicate essential economic/social/cultural and political forces. The research is contrasting matrix: play on the highway in Brazil -- how does it work, what does it say about social status/economy culture/urban planning and so forth -- and then the same in Chinese city in a so-called “office park”. Lay out tentative theoretical correspondences between varieties of play and various social dynamics [14].

“Summing up the formal characteristic of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means” [13].

According to Huizinga the idea of play that all these phenomena individually and collectively can be understood through a single cognitive construct of “play” (sub specie ludi), and accordingly, contains some inherent structure corresponding to this construct. He approaches to the determination of the structural nature of the “play” as the category of “representation”, allocated as a universal (paradigmatic) construct culture. Anticipating the observation of subsequent chapters, we note that the notion of “representation” clearly emerges the idea of “reflection” and special psycho-physical state of “pleasure”, “disinterested pleasure”, etc [13]. In this context, the term “representation” can easily be reinterpreted in other categories, trying to grasp certain concepts using the same construct the essential.

By constructing the “statoofpla” method of the situation with São Paulo and Shanghai, they reflect many of the manifestations of a vibrant local life that are being etched out of Parque Minhocao, for example, during the reconstruction and appearance of a new urban space, but with the conservative views of many of the inhabitants of that space. The initiators of different Sao Paulo NGOs supporting Minhocao as a park place testify how in public spaces arrays of power are articulated, conditioned by ideological and economic goals. Architecture as political technology [7], used to create “obedient bodies”, on De Serto and Bourdieu, to use everyday activity and walking around the city as a tool for actualizing space, strategies for responding to coercive attempts.

A similar situation in the public spaces of Chinese cities. Redtown Shanghai, as our case study of this research, is a zone of cultural and political struggle, as well as the concentration of democratic manifestations. Attempts to “produce spaces” are carried out both from below and from above: the state and developers form their appearance and character, in the event of a social conflict, citizens can openly express their protest or eventually “seize” the place, but in the process both winners appear and defeated, who will be expelled from the plaza and lost after a while [18]. Low in her book “On the plaza: the politics of public place and culture” studies public spaces in the capital of Costa Rica, San Jose and implicitly speaks of life as a conflict between two cultures - obsolete, marginal, folk culture and a new, global, bourgeois, tourist-commodity, which is also supported by power discourse [18]. The plaza for it is an empty shell, the form of which is most often determined by the state based on its goals. But the content of this shell largely depends on people, local residents, who use it at

their discretion, thus forming a complex interaction. The walls inside this form can be filled in different ways, sometimes in the most bizarre ways. Sometimes the inner mass can exert different pressure on the form or, rather, use space as a springboard or scaffold for initiating open political activity [18].

5. Preliminary Results

Thus, we assume that main problem is no place to play or fewer places to play. In the face of restrictions on public and undefined space -- what are some personal improvisations carving out "free-play public space" from private property or zones that have never been considered for leisure in the past [23]. The problem is the economic and political tendency to regiment all activity in public space (for example China's sudden need to regulate public square dancing) or the elite profit motive imposing a shopping or TV mediated lifestyle everywhere people gather. Also--free public space or 'play space' is not the same as "green space" free play needs to happen where people meet by chance in the city, it cannot be designated by planners or ghettoized in sectors -- it is not something is commuted to (like a stadium).

In case of China Shanghai has many parks that operate as squares in terms of leisure activities and people' interactions within the space. The main contradiction is restrictions in public places (limitations for geriatric dancing for example), while in Brazil this problem reflects the use of public place in general. In China, the problem is runaway development eliminating little spaces -- indeed little neighborhoods and in Brazil, for example, Sao Paulo needs not to integrate but to fragment with small spaces.

Parque Minhocao as a new space with planned activities while disappearing Redtown is an incubator zone for unplanned leisure in planned space.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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