

Networks and anchors: from morphology to the strategy of urban cohesion

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The fact that we often encounter weaknesses at the level of urban space cohesion, led us to develop the concept of **urban cohesion** (Pinto et al. 2010), in order to analyze the set of factors which directly influence urban development processes. The developed concept derives from the territorial cohesion one, introduced by the European Union (CEC, 2004). Both are based on the premise that the concept of cohesion evolves not just the factors associated with the physical form of the city and its connections, but also the ones regarding social, economic and cultural issues, which actively influence urban identity, being closely related to the quantity and quality of public space, and in particular its continuity or segmentation.

The development of the urban cohesion concept arises from the need to move from the strategic definition of territorial cohesion to concrete measures which enable the promotion of urban space cohesion. Thus, the concept of territorial cohesion is more general and abstract, with a clear strategic approach, while the urban cohesion one down to a range of more specific and concrete scale of action, by equipping itself with a more operational approach.

In this context, we believe that **public space** plays a decisive role in the processes of urban cohesion (Borja, 2003 and Portas, 1999), organizing themselves in a systemic way, structuring the whole city, promoting the physical connectivity of the urban fabric, but also driving social, economic and cultural dynamics. Therefore, public space should not be understood as a sum of isolated spaces, but instead, as a coherent structure that encompasses different territorial scales (from the neighborhood to the metropolitan city), forming a "network [1] of networks [2]". "Network [1]" that covers the metropolitan scale (in terms of overall coordination of the city's territory) and networks [2] that operate at more local scales, sometimes with a certain autonomy in relation to the general public spaces network of the city.

Indeed, this understanding of public spaces as a integrated network allows us to consider the structure and articulation of the city's territory at different levels (formal, economic, social and cultural), at the same time that allows a interdisciplinary overview, favorable to the design of strategies and a balanced management of the processes of concentration / urban sprawl,

promoting relations between different territorial scales - Busquets (1991) and Roca (2000), Castells, Borja (1998).

However, what defines a **network of public spaces**? In order to answer the question, and with the goal of studying the networks of public space, and how can they contribute to urban cohesion, we studied the evolution of the public spaces network in the city of Lisbon since 1858. This study allowed us to verify that the set of public spaces derived from the system of convents of the old city was the articulation basis of the public spaces network, these spaces still play, today, a central role in the network of public spaces in the city of Lisbon.

This statement raises the question: are there public spaces that, through the connections they establish, the functions they perform or the socio-cultural dynamics they promote, act as "anchors" structuring the entire network of public spaces?

The operative concept of anchor space, widely used in the context of commercial urbanism refers to the space which enables the system / network of supply, establishing the attractiveness of the shopping area, defining their potential to attract the flows of public (Pereira, 1999).

In fact, also in a certain neighborhood, or even a city, there are public spaces that stand out due to the connections they establish, the uses which provide or the activities that promote, these way they can also play anchor roles, structuring the entire network of public spaces. These spaces, which are of great diversity, not only morphological but also functional, are the key elements to promote urban cohesion within the urban network of public spaces, but also the links between this network and its surroundings, making it a "network of networks".

In order to study the public space networks, how are they structured and promote urban cohesion, two radically different case studies in the city of Barcelona are analyzed:

- The first, the neighborhood of Barceloneta - a historic neighborhood, characterized by a regular morphological structure. This is a consolidated neighborhood and seamlessly integrated in the city's urban fabric, thus allowing to analyze the articulation processes between an area of the city and the rest of the system, ie, to evaluate the link between the local network and the general public spaces network of the city.
- The second, the neighborhood of Baró de Viver - which is a segment of the suburban industrial town on the outskirts of the actual city. Public space projects and strategies are developed aiming to create elements of continuity, contributing to break its isolation.

The study of these specific cases allows thinking over the role played by the setting of urban design, as well as the definition of different scales and functions, not only at the morphological level, but also at the socio-economic and socio-cultural ones. At the same time allocates the reflection about the role of spaces and buildings which function as "anchors", working as central elements, structuring the network of public spaces, both locally and in its articulation with the general network of public spaces. Through the analysis of these two case studies we can identify good practice which will then be implemented and tested in suburban spaces, unconsolidated and in transition, in Lisbon's Metropolitan Area, in order to formulate hypotheses and guidelines for the promotion of urban cohesion.

Keywords: Public Space; Urban Cohesion; Network; Anchors.

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