


The relationship between the city and buildings

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the topic of old buildings and new constructions and how both have their value within the city, both in the sense of memory and spirit of place, as well as in the economic relationship. The central theme is this reflection on how the mixture of uses and diversity of activities can be positive and a means of attracting both new developments in old buildings and a new dynamic for these areas. Urban centers need to treat the passage of time and the relationship between the new and the old in a more sustainable way and explore this potential, because the city is nothing more than this mixture of what was, what is, and what will be. In this investigation, some examples are explored within the city of Caxias do Sul, which actively prove that the mixture of age, genders, typologies and uses of buildings is what can guarantee a more intelligent and lively city dynamic, where its users are directly active in the process of building this memory linked to the activities that are carried out on the street. With this, the thought of an urban project that respects and values this construction and modification of cities in a more conscious way and linked to a process where people can recognize their history and thus preserve it and even so, without harming development.

Keywords: Buildings, Former, New, Urban, Vitality, City.

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INTRODUCTION

CITY CONTEXT

Caxias do Sul, is a municipality located in the northeast of Rio Grande do Sul, with an approximate population of 500 thousand inhabitants, is strongly represented by Italian culture and customs. The city is a very important industrial hub for the region and basically has its entire economy focused on this market, however in recent years, there is a large population of young people that has been growing in the city and is causing a constant need for occupation and appropriation of the street.

However, despite these new changes, the city still has many characteristics that do not allow this direct relationship with the street, but the study of this article shows that one of the major morphological characteristics of the city can enhance urban vitality.

The study is mainly based on the analysis made by the author Jane Jacobs, in chapter nine of her book entitled "Death and Life of Great Cities", which shows the advantages of valuing and appropriating the variety of buildings, new and old, and thus bringing a great potential to relate to the city and people.

REFLECTION ON ANALYSIS METHODS

According to Jacobs (2003), Gehl (2010), the term urban vitality refers to the life of people in public spaces, those that are of common use to all, and this can occur both in spaces of squares and parks, but also on sidewalks. However, many times, the streets are treated only as spaces of passage and are not properly explored with this potential to promote encounters and human relationships between those who pass by and the uses that are happening in the city.

According to Pesavento (1996), public spaces are like "microcosms of life", which are part of our memory of the world, and with them bring the big and the small events, making these spaces places with great affective power for their users. From this point of view, streets have great potential to promote life in cities, as they are present throughout the city, organizing it and allowing displacement. However, what we see, in most contemporary cities, is that this potential is wasted by an overvaluation of vehicles and enterprises that are not related to public space.

Once again, Jacobs (2003) argues that there are some factors that can contribute to this resumption of sidewalks, such as safety and the encouragement of the use of space not only as a passage but also as a permanence. Both, when worked together, according to the author, promote "peace on the streets and sidewalks, generating public order, which is not maintained only by policing, but by the unconscious way in which people use these spaces and appropriate them, generating continuous surveillance".



What this means in practice is that the very uses that take place on the ground floors of buildings play an essential role in this aspect of urban vitality. According to Jacobs (2003), the infrastructure of organization of the types of uses on the ground floor that enhances the "eyes on the street", which would be this surveillance of those who are inside the buildings (private), for those who are circulating on the sidewalks (public), makes the dynamics of security work better. At the same time, people start to walk more "on foot" on the sidewalks, because they feel safe, in a space that shows diversity of activities and pedestrians that move and make this city a more alive space.

The establishments themselves also have this role in the logic of the relationship between the internal and external of the buildings, Jacobs (2003) calls this system "citizen surveillance", which with the mixture of uses, having spaces for living, leisure, commerce and services, make this sector never totally unassisted, it will always have some kind of movement, whether of residents, whether it is from those who work or who use local services and businesses.

Within this relationship of enhancing the public space, which for the purposes of this work, we will treat the streets and sidewalks, Gehl (2010) talks about the need for the most inviting space and that people feel encouraged to walk, cycle or stay, spontaneously, in these spaces of the city. These strategies work to intensify pedestrian activity on the streets and enable people's right to experience streets and sidewalks as a quality public space.

When it comes to street level, Gehl (2010) suggests 12 criteria to evaluate the quality of a city in relation to urban life:

1. Protection of pedestrians from traffic and accidents, which eliminates the fear of traffic and leads to a sense of security.
2. Protection against crime and urban violence: it depends on there being a lot of activities on the street – day and night – on the street being under the eyes of a lot of people and having good lighting.
3. Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences, caused by wind, rain, heat/cold, pollution, noise, dust, etc.
4. Walking opportunities: sufficient space without obstacles, good surfaces, accessibility for all and interesting facades that offer something to see.
5. Standing spaces: attractive areas for sitting and/or standing at the edges of spaces and supports for standing.
6. Having a place to sit, taking advantage of the advantages that the place offers.
7. Possibilities to observe: interesting views, reasonable distances, no obstacles, lighting.
8. Opportunities to talk and listen: low noise, adequate furniture and leading to it.
9. Places to play and exercise: an invitation to creativity and physical activity, at all times and in all seasons.



10. Human scale in buildings and open spaces: that they are designed for the person who walks and not for those who pass by in a car. It's a matter of size and density.
11. Opportunities to take advantage of the positive aspects of the weather: sun/shade, warmth/coolness, breezes.
12. Positive sensory experiences: good architectural design, good materials, views, trees, plants, and water.

According to Domingos (2015), the discussion regarding the interfaces between the ground floors of buildings and sidewalks can also be a factor of great importance for the promotion of life in these spaces. The author states that "although urban vitality is desirable for the city as a whole, tranquility is also desired and valuable in an active city." So, in order for this balance to exist, it is necessary to have design strategies, and the author proposes some questions, such as:

1. Cohesion or closure: The way in which the bilateral relationship between the buildings takes place, allowing the continuity of the facades, giving a sense of organization to the pedestrian when making the street route. In addition to the feeling of welcome generated by the horizontal extension of the buildings.
2. Permeability, transparency and layout of ground floors: Physical permeability, which usually occurs in commercial establishments or from residential doors and visual permeability, from windows and shop windows that look at the street. Front closures that allow visual permeability and the way in which the program of the buildings is distributed on the ground floor, to prevent sectors of intimate use from happening at the interface, causing the openings of the environment to remain closed or uses such as parking lots that generate blind facades.
3. Adequate treatment of frontal areas: According to Gehl (2013), 11% of life on the street refers to the movement of displacement, while 89% corresponds to the activity of permanence. Therefore, any and all public spaces that allow the stimulation of people's use must be taken into account. In this sense, the treatment of front setbacks is essential, not only in commercial areas, but also near homes. Any public space that can be sat allows urban life, so it is essential that, whenever possible, there are spaces with possibilities for the pedestrian to sit, whether in shaded walls, parklets, tables in commercial establishments or sitable spaces in the private area of the lot, such as balconies, balconies, terraces or awnings that allow the resident sitting in front of his house to create a direct visual relationship with the street.
4. Sensory stimulus: Short rhythms, richness of details, personalization: discusses how the experience in walkability and use of public space, from sidewalks, happens.



5. Diversity of activities, size and age of buildings: deals with the importance of the diversity of complementary and varied uses. In relation to the size of the buildings, the width of the tested one matters more than its height, because from the fourth floor onwards the visual connection of the pedestrian is diluted, and too wide can bring homogeneity and excessive monotony. In addition to the different sizes, different ages and conditions result in different commercial values, being vital for the reception of diversity.

With this, we can conclude that for Gehl (2010) the public/private interface should have facades that predominate, vertical lines that express short rhythms, and many details that awaken pleasant experiences along the way. Regarding the diversity of activities, size and age of buildings, Jacobs (2009) defends the idea of diversification of uses, also enabling the diversification of the public that will use public spaces.

In short, urban vitality concerns the life of public spaces, but it is much more comprehensive, because sidewalks and streets cannot work and play this role alone, they need the buildings in their surroundings to be thought out and encouraged to have ground floors that support these purposes. Because the street only becomes interesting when it enhances socialization and generates security and promotes everyday and commercial activities, it is a cycle, where people walk, the uses of the ground floors attract and the city becomes more dynamic.

THE RESUMPTION OF LIFE ON THE SIDEWALKS

According to JACOBS (2000), cities need old buildings so much that it may be impossible to get living streets and districts without them. This proves that an area of the city that only favors new buildings ends up bearing a very high cost, as these buildings need to have their costs amortized and reverted into profits for those who invested there. However, at the same time that this can bring strategic benefits to this location, such as urban thinking, it ends up limiting the profile of users and the activities that have been established there and consequently whether or not there will be vitality in these spaces.

The mixture of the temporality of the buildings allows for different people, mixed uses and thus a greater use taking into account the various hours throughout the day. We can think of a new, strictly commercial building that operates only during the day, next to it a building with a commercial ground floor, which houses a restaurant and on the upper floors residential.

Taking into account this hypothetical block, where there are commercial, residential and leisure spaces, what will be the result for the city? A space with a lot of urban vitality, because during business hours the streets are occupied by those who are using local commerce, going to and from



work; At lunchtime, office workers occupy the sidewalks for their breaks and in the late afternoon, the street is the stage for those looking for an hour of leisure.

Diversity is an attraction, and with that a network of support services begins to be established in this area, functions such as grocery stores, pharmacies, bookstores, cafes, banks, basic necessities and everything that can give even more life to this ballet that happens daily on the street. The greater the variety present in the buildings, the greater the possibility of diversified uses, the activities to gain a "status" of greater importance within the daily life of the cities, need to be installed in places that represent them, that foster them before the users.

It is very common in a block where there is a lot of life, represented by business and office services, which are more private and do not need so much direct relationship with the people who use the street, usually settle in new buildings, in the same way as good bookstores, coffee shops and stores that seek to establish an experience between users, city and shopping, often prefer to settle in buildings that are part of the history of this street. This, in addition to being dynamic, brings with it a sense of belonging and identity to the place, because even if it transforms over time, the buildings are the marks of this history and a constant account of what urban life is.

It can be said that this relationship between the mixture of activities and the reuse of old buildings, in the urban context, contributes a lot to safety and the "eyes on the street", according to JACOBS (2000).

Even companies that are able to finance new construction in cities need old buildings in the neighborhood. Otherwise, they will be a unique attraction in a unique environment, quite limited economically - and therefore with many limitations, from a functional point of view, to become busy, interesting and useful. The flourishing of diversity anywhere in the city presupposes the mix of high-, middle-, and low-income companies. (JACOBS, 2000, p. 208)

What must be taken into account is that one of the disadvantages of old buildings is exactly the fact that they are old, have limited infrastructure resources, in short, everything that comes with the passage of time for any building that is present in the city. What can help ensure the renovation of these areas is very much linked to this culture of mixed uses, since old residents do not want to invest in these buildings, for the most varied reasons (they do not see more attractions in them or do not want to spend on a renovation when they can buy a new development), the fact is that, Often what some don't like is a great investment for others.

The search for constant renewal and recovery is directly linked to generating value for these places, abandonment can indeed turn into a failure, but the old cannot, the old can be an opportunity for new beginnings.



CAXIAS DO SUL AND ITS PECULIARITIES

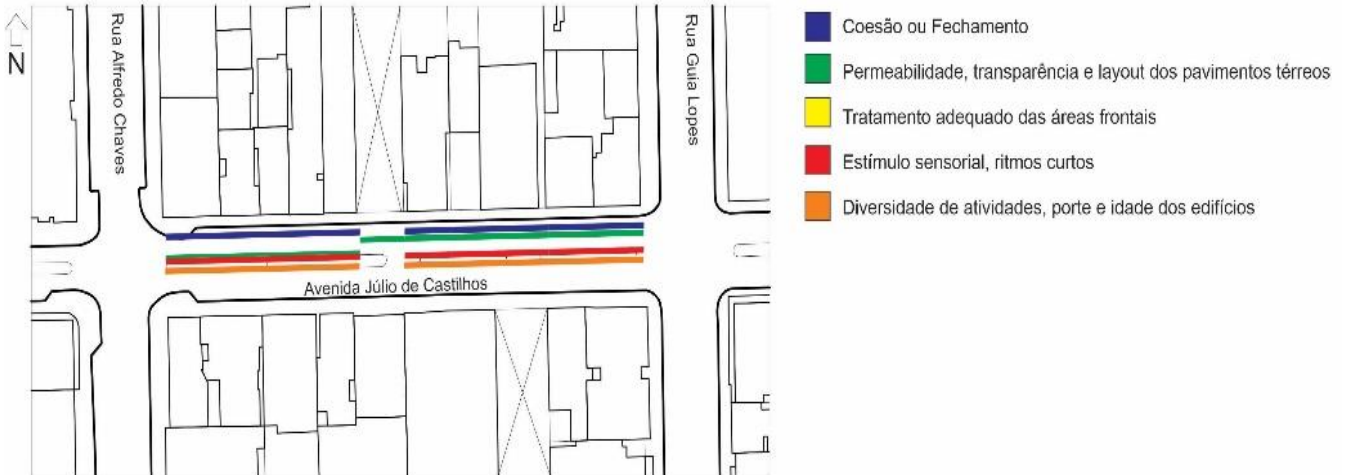
In many cases, an area can be so economically and culturally productive that it becomes capable of awakening a new look, which does not exist in other places in the city, because this value, often immaterial, is not possible to reproduce in any other space, it is there, in those buildings, with those activities, with that experience.

In the long term, what is expected is that these activities and uses of these buildings become so sustainable, to the point that time goes by and everything acquires other uses, renovations or even being replaced by new buildings, but as the "place" as *genius loci* is well structured, which turns out to be a dynamic and natural process.

Time turns the high-cost buildings of one generation into bargains in the next generation. Time pays off the initial value of the money invested, and that depreciation can be reflected in the returns they expect from a building. Time renders certain structures obsolete for certain enterprises, and they begin to serve others. Time can turn the space suitable for one generation into superfluous space for another. What is commonplace in the buildings of one century becomes an aberration in the next. (JACOBS, 2000, p. 210)

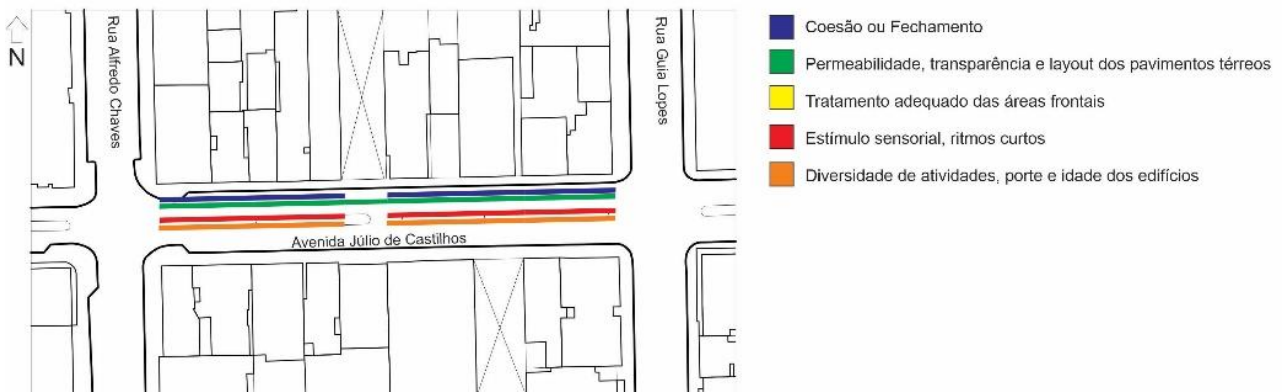
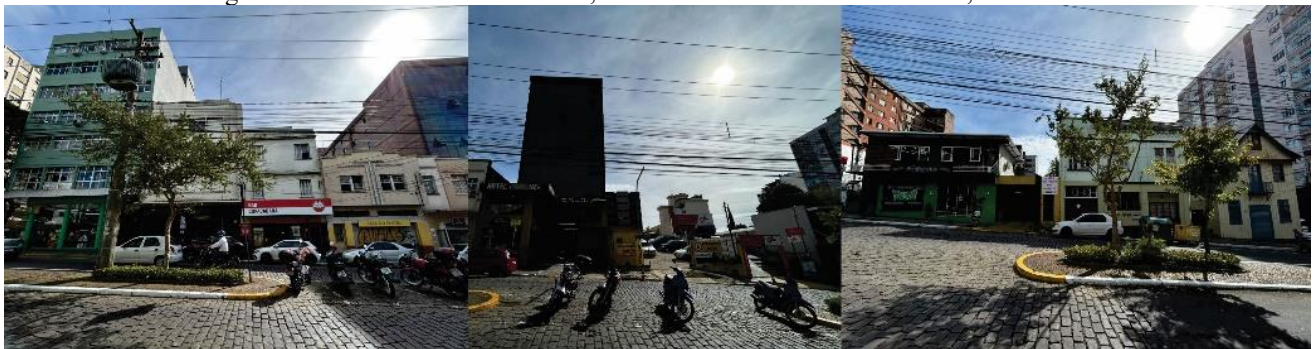
To represent this relationship between new and old buildings, a stretch of one of the main streets of Caxias do Sul, Avenida Júlio de Castilhos, was chosen. Traditionally, one of the main streets of the city, where the most important shops were located, crosses the central square of the city, the Dante Alighieri, and was also the symbol of where people did the famous "footing" on weekends. Today, it still has symbolic and morphological value within the city, first due to its central median and its wider sidewalks, its road box allows only one vehicle to pass in each direction, and speaking of urban relations, along its entire length (it crosses the city center in an east-west direction), Most of the shops and services still have this connection with the street, there are large storefronts, cafes and banks that make the pedestrian the great protagonist in this area.

Figure 1: Avenida Júlio de Castilhos, corner with Rua Alfredo Chaves, north



Source: Authors

Figure 2 : Júlio de Castilhos Avenue, corner with Alfredo Chaves Street, south tested



Source: Authors

In this particular photo, taken on a day during the week, it can be seen that there is a relationship between the establishments on the ground floor directly and the street, which favors people's walking and at the same time the interest in using this route instead of another. There is another peculiarity in this section, which in a way spreads along the entire Avenida Júlio de Castilhos, the mixture of buildings of three types: the old, the new and the renovated. This meeting is one of the main riches of this area, because at the same time that we see clothing trade, we have a small market, a pharmacy and so on. The mixture of uses is what provides the richness of the space and, consequently, its effective and consolidated use. People use Avenida Júlio de Castilhos, for the memory it brings, for its history, reflected in the buildings and for its multiplicity of functions and attractions for the city.

Figure 3: Avenida Júlio de Castilhos and its mixed uses



Source: Authors

The relationship between a sidewalk with only new buildings and commercial points that do not relate to each other in any way, and another with diversified facades that blend in with the movement of the street represents a great difference within the spontaneous occupation of the city by people. A very curious fact is that many of the old buildings house in themselves a mix of activity, which generates constant movement on the street, some with the commercial ground floor and the following floors of housing, guarantee the movement of arrival and exit at certain times and the public area takes care of the other shifts.

We have as a very different example of the same situation, another point in the city of Caxias do Sul, on Rua Dr. Montauray, next to the city's Forum, and a set of commercial buildings with the ground floor dedicated to commerce. It is noted that at the same time that this entire area has a

quality in the treatment of sidewalks, ornamented landscaping, there is no direct appropriation of users.

Figura 4: Rua Dr. Montaury



Source: Authors

The lack of variation of architectural typologies, as well as their uses, does not make the space inviting for use at different times. Even people who come to do some activity at the Forum, do their chores and end up not staying in the area. What is more curious is the fact that many services should serve a varied population, as there are beauty spaces, shops and cafes, but what you see is only the movement at the arrival and exit times of the commercial buildings. And besides, the largest flow in the region is made by people by car, where they either arrive and leave their workplaces in their vehicles, or park, do their activities and return, there is no direct and effective relationship between people, the street and buildings, there is no urban vitality.

Figure 5: East tested. Ground floor of the buildings with commerce and good quality of public promenade, but no people circulating.



Source: Authors

Figure 6: West tested. Ground floor of the buildings without any kind of relationship with the public promenade.



Source: Authors



The varied age of the buildings, in addition to uses, allows a great potential for the real estate market, as no type of planning that prioritizes only new constructions, allows for a variable cost, both for rents and for buying and selling. The benefit of this, once again, is to make an area highly efficient and sustainable.

The age of the buildings is very relative in terms of usefulness and convenience. Nothing in a district that has vitality seems old enough to be chosen by those who have that power – or to the point of eventually being replaced by something new. (JACOBS, 2000, p. 213)

What is worth mentioning in this thought is that when the area of the city itself is also responsible for maintaining the quality of its buildings, there is not a building or a house that has a certain "age" that does not become an object of desire for renovation or an investment opportunity for a new business. The whole issue of urban vitality is very much connected to how people relate to buildings and how they maintain them in relation to the city. Making an analogy to clothes, it is like that well-cared for "vintage" piece that when it comes back in fashion can be reused and thus draws attention for its authenticity and beauty.

With the buildings it is no different, the old still attracts the eye when it is well cared for, these buildings have a great potential to highlight and promote what is being implanted in them, a characteristic that is not built, it is only conquered over the years and with the vigor of a good old architecture that composes in a valuable way with the city.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Thinking about the morphology of the city and that it is an organism in constant modifications, it is interesting when this connection transcends and shows itself in the relationship between the façade and the street itself, when often what was a living room of a house, becomes a shop window, or when a basement becomes a barbershop.

In our brief comparison between these two areas within the same city, what differentiates them is not so much their geographical distance from the center or the lack of an attractor element, what makes them different is the way people relate to it and how this benefits or harms a space. What's the point of places with new buildings, well-maintained public sidewalks if people don't use them, what's the point of planning buildings that don't relate to the street, the city is what we live at the level of the observer, it's the direct relationships between the roads, the buildings and especially the people, that's what makes this urban space so rich.

What would the city be if it weren't for its multiple possibilities, transforming two small apartments into a larger one, combinations of old and new buildings, different living costs and motivations in a space of real diversity and active life, active people, people on the streets.



[...] What we want, and many others want, are old buildings, in a neighborhood full of life, which some of us can make even more full of life. (JACOBS, 2000, p.214)

Cities need these diversities so that they can house the most varied flows, uses and styles, new and old constructions when together in the same environment generate this type of movement, which attracts people, which brings more commerce and with that an exchange, a movement that is the real expression of what cities should be.



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