
Rights And Responsibilities Of Citizens, Those Living In A City

Since the earliest civilizations, the city is perceived as a direct product of human actions. The city is born and evolves, it reinvents itself, adapts and expands; thus, in this context, the city can be understood as a living organism which sole purpose is to respond to the needs of the citizens. To achieve such an end, citizens have an enormous impact over the space surrounding them whether by creating it, organizing it, transforming it, and, as a result, adapting it to their day-to-day experiences. Over the course of years, actions known as Urban Interventions have taken place as local or regional measures which primary goal is to improve the quality of life of the citizens; however, the accelerated need of development of cities is demanding bigger and greater interventions on the urban space which are extremely affecting the relationship between cities and their citizens, for the range of some interventions can be radical to the point of not only eliminating entire neighborhoods, but also creating entire areas from square one. The result of such drastic interventions can only be the loss of the sense of belonging of the population which also affects the relationship between city and citizens. Nevertheless, the much-needed Urban Interventions can only be truly considered successful when the voices and needs of all interested parties such as population, city councils and real estate agents are taken into due consideration during the development stage of such projects.

In terms of space, the city is the main stage for human action, and it consists of different scenarios which change during time according to society's constraints. The fragments on the scale of living, working, studying, producing and entertaining leave traces throughout the city that, when connected, create a large grid known as Urban Space. On the other hand, in terms of a social organization a city is formed by the gathering of human beings and the common need of survival not only in the context of the environment surrounding them, but also for the continuity of the race. Dalank (2007) states that people not only inhabit the city, but the clusters of people constitute the city. The city itself is the producer and the product, the cause and the result, the performer and the stage. As a result, the relationship between the social organization and the space cannot be understood on a superficial manner, for one is intrinsically related to the other through the level of use of the space by the people.

The way that people use the city and make it their own is certainly the most important aspect when considering the production of urban space, for it is during such period of use that the social and spatial relationship is cultivated, and, as a result, a sense of identity of the population with a specific space is developed. This identity is built upon the small gestures that compose the day-to-day experiences of the population which on a larger scale condition the changes on the Urban Space. An illustration of such identity can be observed on the streets of the Historical Center of Lisbon where among many tourists, the presence of locals remains eminent. Locals that for years have been walking through the same streets on a daily basis, that for years have been going to the same bakery on the corner, that for years have been reading the newspaper on the same park and that for years have been passing that identity to the new generations and will continue to do so as long that there is a place to be identified with.

During the course of history, significant changes on the way that people interact with the urban space have taken place due to the growth of conditioning external factors, and as stated by

Benevolo (2009), the twentieth century brought to surface a concern related to the weakening of the social bonds in cities, and, consequently, the loss of the value of the urban space as a place of gathering and social changes. Moreover, the Modern Urbanism gives its contribution to production of the Urban Space by introducing an extreme zoning of human activities such as working, living, moving and recreating. A good example of this type of urban space is the city of Brasília in Brazil where the concepts of zones for each activity were strongly applied and dense areas which had specific functions were created. However, the undoubtedly beautiful city produced a fragmented space, and, consequently, a fragmented relationship between population and urban space, for on a project in which much attention was given to the scale of the physical space, the human scale, the scale of the interactions and social changes, the scale of the natural multiplicity of functions was simply left out of the equation.

As a product of a fast-paced society, the accelerated process of development and growth of cities inevitably modifies on an equally fast-paced rhythm the urban space. Such transformations often lead to conditions in which people no longer dominate the urban space, but find themselves being dominated by the space as he changes the way they use it. Meeting points such as streets, plazas and urban parks are being replaced by new, modern and indoor recreation areas as parts of neighborhoods or even entire neighborhoods are modified or demolished to give place to new installations to attract investment and boost the economy.

The emergent Real Estate market constitutes one of the biggest agents when addressing to the changes on the urban space. Once a specific area captures the attention of these agents, a new set of transformations begins to emerge with the implementation of new real estate developments which gradually change and condition the use of the space (Carlos, 2007). The once quiet street gives place to fast lanes, the old bakery gives place to an enticing electronic store and the central plaza is now home for the shining and new business building. Such events lead to a weakening of the collective memory within the citizens as the connection of the population with a space disappears.

Another essential point is segregation in the urban space which can occur whether on a location level or on a social level. In terms of location, when a certain area becomes saturated as a result of Real Estate interventions, a percentage of the population of those areas will most likely flee to more distant and calm neighborhoods. On the specific case of some cities where the majority of services from which citizens can benefit on a daily basis are located within the city Centre, the distance between population and such services will quite often generate segregation of the citizens that need to cover these distances in order to reach those spaces and services. Segregation on a level of location does not only affect the population, but can also affect the space itself; specifically, areas such as business district become segregated when the work hours are over and the streets are emptied creating isolated, idled and deprived of life areas with no citizens.

Next, on a social level, the increase of the privatization of urban spaces exposes the reality of social and economic differences, and citizens with low incomes are unable to financially gain access to the new set of services and goods that took the place of where once was the public plaza that gathered families, the bay where a father freely fished with his children or even the viewpoint from which neighbors came together to observe the city. Such areas become hostile as a result of that only part of population can afford to use those spaces creating a social segregation on the urban space. Therefore, in various aspects the urban space loses terrain as the primary stage for human activities while transformations, interventions and even segregation

disrupts the previously established harmony between city and citizen.

Whereas a considerable part of the problems related with the changes on how population and urban space interact with each other, the answer still remains in the sphere of Interventions, Urban Interventions. In the context of the major transformations that occur over the years, one that stands out for its modifying feature of the urban space is defined as Urban Intervention which considering the city as a living organism acts as a surgery as it attempts to solve the manifested problems in this organism. Vargas & Castilho state that “Intervention and Surgery are synonyms, and an organism is generally subjected to an intervention in three situations: for health recovery or life maintenance, for damage compensation and most recently to meet the demands of esthetic standards” (2006, p. 3).

Over the course of years, cities have been subjected to various interventions to heal them from the problems from which they were suffering. The need of an intervention on the urban space arises when a level of degradation of certain areas is reached due to the lack of use by the population and traders or simply driven by the need to attract new investments for the area in to boost the economy of the region. In this context, interventions act as the basis for the transformations a city needs to be valued by a group of stakeholders. The main goal of an Urban Intervention is to restore the use of an area by adding value to that space in a way that improves not only the quality of life of the population, but also the business conditions for real estate and economic agents.

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