

The morphology of Manaus downtown

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Abstract

This essay focuses on Manaus City, with 1,7 million inhabitants, located in the centre of the Amazon Rain Forest, in Brazil, that has suffered an influence from British people from 1880 to 1913 when iron bridges, the downtown planning, the customs building, the downtown sewage farm and the complex of the harbour quay, (Rodway) which have been preserved so far, were built. It focuses, upon, the integration and intelligibility of the architectural spaces, with the purpose to contribute towards research into urban centres, mainly those with a certain historic value.

Manaus has been the main focus for discussion and developed research in several areas. In the following analysis, we are going to adopt the Space Syntax theory, in a study about the nature of the social-spatial universe in the centre of the city, and, like this, we will show how aspects of the physical shape of the facilities that have been found might establish prerequisites to define a certain way of life.

The essay contains the maps of settlements of the city, the axiality maps and the maps of connection, for an investigation of the city expansion, considering, as well as, the author's knowledge of the city.

The study of the morphological variables is related to convex spaces – parts of the streets, squares – that are very different from each other in the same area of the centre of the city.

The system of open spaces may – or may not – be intensely fed via transitions born in the interior spaces. At the center of the city, the “vernacular” settlement, with a well made-up street system, displays a great number of entries and, consequently, the constitution becomes bigger.

Comparatively, modern cities, like Brasilia, the Federal Capital, do not display a great deal of entries, being like this ample and discontinuous, whereas the traditional city of Manaus, in its colonial origin, is dense and continuous.

The integration indicators show, through the axiality map, that a certain street integrates the centre of the system, and, in this way, we need to turn a few corners to get to another street.

Keywords

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The centre of Manaus, in relation to its intelligibility indicators and “vernacular” system, is seen as a well-intelligible system, consequently, with more urbanization. It is known that the more intelligible, the system is, the more predictable is the co-presence, that is, the presence of pedestrians alongside the axial lines is not rambling, and the framework contributes to a clear difference among the places considering the co-presence.

The essay shows that Manaus is predominantly urban, in the particular area of the centre of the city. The great rate of the co-presence and the strong visual identity are undeniable, making us conclude from the analysis that Manaus is a dense, profound city, where the space functions as a mixing mechanism with respect to the life of the city’s people’s.

The intense levels of co-presence on the streets are more related to everyday life than to the leisure activities in public spaces; the great space constitution, a balanced structure, and centered activities at the most integrated areas make Manaus be considered a city whose way of life is unique.

This way, this research can contribute to our understanding of the urban space in Manaus, and to serve as a basis for proposals for future architectural interventions or preservation of the historic centre.

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