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Private control and public openness. The development of London's public spaces since the Mayor's 2009 manifesto

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Abstract: This research aims to analyse the ongoing privatization of public spaces in London. It also seeks to explore the impact of the 2009 Mayor's policy document named 'A Manifesto for Public Space - London's Great Outdoors' in this process. The manifesto argues in opposition to the growing 'corporatisation' and exclusion of privately controlled spaces and in favour of spaces that are open 'for all Londoners' and with a planning process overseen by the Public Sector. In order to understand if these goals were achieved, an initial inventory listed all the developments after 2009. The projects' examination made it possible to identify the most important cases in each group. This article analyses whether these developments are private public spaces or whether they remain genuinely public, thus examining the manifesto's effectiveness on London's lived spaces. In order to do that, a critical approach was constructed upon the literature review, in order to confront the ideas of public space with the spatial experience. This dissection demonstrated how recent complexity of urban space production has created new phenomena in the city, that can be assembled in the concepts of Velvet Ground, Tangled Orbits and Repeated Compulsion of Space Consumption. The concepts clarify the relationship between social control, the democratic openness of public space, and citizenship. The study concludes that a new form of privatized space is taking over the city, and the proposed policies were unable to stop this tendency.

Keywords: public space; urban policy; London; democracy; privatization.

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Public Space and City Life

In order to answer whether the Mayors Manifesto (Boris, 2009) had any impact on London's spatial production or not, a dialectical reflexion about public spaces will be conducted. The premise, on which this reasoning proceeds, is that perceptions are commanded by *a priori* ideas (or the so called 'natural interpretations', cf. Feyerabend, 1989). Firstly, we will investigate the relation between city life and public space, or the politics within the polis. Secondly, we will analyse how the city space role has changed, forming different public experience over the years. This analysis leads to the formulation of three concepts to describe the 'publicness' of the current spaces produced in London. Ultimately, the analysis reveals how these new spaces in contemporary London are producing an urban experience that eliminates the confrontation with difference, and instead, they are producing a constant feeling of shining, blurred, yet soft, stimulation in a new velvet social ground, controlled by entanglement and directed towards a compulsive form of spatial consumption.

The political role of public space in modern society is controversial and has been part of a historical process formed of both a history of ideas and a history of societies. For Neil Smith and Setha Low (2006), the definition of Public Space has been constructed as the opposite of Private Space. Therefore, both social constructions are the result of modern capitalist society. In this sense, this phenomena is the result of social struggles against the former feudalist spatial order, and it is even a progressive development from the Greek polis, which did exclude both slaves and women from its political space, the Agora. Thus, public space arises as a new set of social relations, articulating the power of civil society, the market and the modern State (2006: p. 4).

Sharon Zukin (2010: p.129) argues that public space has had an important role in the democratization process. For instance, even before the French Revolution clashed against the previous classes' privileges, the mixture, promoted by the markets' space, was creating the basis for modern democracy and for city space to be open for all. Moreover, Zukin highlights that London and New York created public spaces in the 19th century, such as libraries, parks and museums, even before the right to vote was available to everyone. Rather than just an effect or image, public spaces were also generating democracy and are, therefore, politics in praxis.

Specifically in London, the public ownership of the streets was the outcome of a long dispute that happened towards the end of 19th century (Minton, 2012: 19-21). By this time, major squares of the city were enclosed, guarded by private security and surrounded by sentry boxes. After a conflict with guards resulted in a murder, social unrest and the involvement of the printed media resulted in two major parliamentary inquiries. These inquiries resulted in streets becoming 'adopted' by the local authorities, which were growing into power by this time. In this sense, the rise of the public space coincided and represented the construction of local democracy in London.

The end of the 1980's saw the birth of a new kind of space, as a result of political and economic reconfiguration. The metropolis in central economies faced a process of deindustrialization, with the increasing flexibility of work relations, the collapse of the Welfare State, which reframed the mass production economy into the so called toyotist economy (Harvey, 1992). For this new neoliberal economy, a new form of space was produced.

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In London, the paradigmatic example was Canary Wharf. Developed in an old industrial area, a vast new financial centre was designed from scratch, where the streets and squares were no longer 'adopted' by the weakening Welfare State, but, were controlled by a new entity: the corporation. For Smith and Low (2006: 14-16) as we watch the collapse of basic rights, public space emerges in the centre of the contemporary debate on democracy, as the production of space is a central strategy for the implementation of neoliberal concepts. For Smith and Low, this is the reason why political movements are always attached to places (the archetypical mass in a public space). As we will see, changes in the production and control of public spaces will also have implications on the political potential of those places.

Zukin (2010: 222) state that this is a long process that took place in the period after the great wars, creating what she called the 'corporate city'. This city has been produced by specific arrangements of: private capital investment, State specific policies and rules design, media image construction and direction of consumer's tastes (Zukin, 2010: 30). This new configuration of social space (capital, state, media) excluded civil society from the formula. Not surprisingly, the collapse of public spaces are accompanied by the collapse of democracy itself, as empirical studies demonstrate that political decisions are defined by corporation interests, and are no longer influenced by the public opinion (Gilens and Page, 2014).

Zukin (2010: 145) argues that schemes of private city space management are a new form oligarchy. For instance, the votes and decisions in Business Improvement Districts are balanced by the size of ownership in the local arrangement, and usually the vote is proportional to the size of the property. Therefore, based on the argument that the State does not have funds in a moment of economic crises, those who have capital should rule. For instance, in this equation both homeless and unemployed simply do not exist. Smith and Low (2006: 15) reinforce the argument stating that this is the formation of a new apartheid, excluding the poor, the homeless and the immigrants out of the city spaces.

In the middle of this debate, in 2009, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, published a policy paper named 'A Manifesto for Public Space: London's Great Outdoors'. In this text he argues:

> "*There is a growing trend towards the private management of publicly accessible space where this type of 'corporatisation' occurs, especially in the larger commercial developments, Londoners can feel themselves excluded from parts of their own city. This need not be the case.*' (Boris, 2009: 8)

He then sets a series of strategies, which should be enforced in order to avoid this type of city space corporatization. The proposed strategies can be summarised as: (1) the respect of the London Plan's priorities; (2) the process overseen by the public sector; (3) the improvement of the urban context connection; (4) the flexibility and inclusive character ('for all Londoners'); and (5) the equity and affordability of developed spaces. Nevertheless, a new policy draft has been submitted to change London's Housing Strategies (Johnson, 2013). This new document has strong contradictions with the former manifesto. The new policy aims to produce a great number of houses focusing on big developments, and strong partnerships between State and corporations, financing only big schemes. In order to bring forward land for development, the strategies articulate tactics

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of compulsory purchase and land assembly that overlaps the local scale. All those solutions setup a scale for the spatial production. As Zukin (2010: 222) asserts, we may have not seen the end of history, but we are certainly seeing the end of 'place-bound culture'.

The Metropolis and Public Life

In addition to the relationship between public space and democracy, many intellectuals have also observed a causal link between the production of city space and social freedom (Sennet, 2002; Berman, 1990; Simmel, 1903; Baudelaire, 1995; *inter alia*). Although this connection could hardly be dismissed, there is a great deal of complexity in the topic. This relationship has changed in different historical moments, and cities have had different roles in the formation of modern citizenship. It is important to understand these subtle differences and conceptualize the role of metropolitan space in the construction of contemporary public life. Consequently we should avoid simplifications and uncritical propositions, which are so common in contemporary architectonical technicism.

Charles Baudelaire is perhaps the most cited author on the account of the modern construction of freedom through the experience of the city. In his literature he was able to express how the modern metropolis became an instrument to create an ephemeral and free spirit in the modern man (cf. Baudelaire, 1996). For Baudelaire (1995) the modern man is like the modern painter, who is able to design his own life, as freely as an artist design his paintings. This freedom was enabled by the sudden transformation of the small, closed and stable traditional space, into a multitude, and the constant changing fashion. This atmosphere was founded in the city itself, and was experienced by the flaneur attitude: a modern man that would engage in the news and movement of the city, connecting freely with the street's 'family of eyes', and swimming in the stream (Berman, 1990: 148-154).

Marshal Berman (1990) examines how different cities in the 19th century transformed the citizens' social perception. Contrasting the boulevard's experience in Paris with the Prospect's experience in Saint Petersbourg, Berman demonstrates the intimate relation between the social awareness and the city forms. Those spaces transformed the urban experience into a direct clash of different city's classes, into a social experience of the human condition in contrast with the social situation. For Berman, the city was the fundamental trigger of the most important social movements of that century.

Moreover, Georg Simmel (1903), in a different perspective, analyses how the experience on the metropolis changes the modern men consciousness and, therefore, social relations. For Simmel, the modern city creates an intensification of 'nervous stimulation', a continuous confrontation with the unexpected, a highly impersonal relationship with others, an abstract mode of mediation (money) and, therefore, the necessity of fast reactions. That situation leads to the unconditional use or rationality. In other words, by these new features, the modern man is ripped apart from the old 'orbit' of the Feudal village, where he was guided by emotions and closeness. This orbit holds back individual progress, as they are founded in constant equilibrium, centrality and hierarchical order. Therefore, it is the metropolitan rupture that creates the modern man, guided by the use of rationality, rather than his heart.

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Therefore, Simmel argues that freedom is the fundamental achievement of the metropolis experience. But, this freedom is only achieved by an active operation of transcending this condition of displacement. According to him, it is not just because of mobility, the distance of the prejudices from the country, or the elimination of 'philistinism', but is also because the metropolis urges to the 'particularity' of each person to be 'actually expressed', confronting the citizens with the laws of his 'inner nature', confronting him with what makes his 'irreplaceability'. Simmel summarizes it as the condition that makes one sure that his mode of existence was not imposed upon him from outside.
In this sense, Monte-mór (2006) argues that the relations between urban experience and human condition are expressed by the common origin of many words. For instance, the notion of *citizenship* has an intricate relationship with *city*, as the condition of belonging to a *civilization*, sharing rights and rules. As the idea of *urbis* is connected with the *urbanuum*, the economic infrastructure that maintained the roman cities, and as the idea of *polity* is connected to the Greek *polis*. Therefore, when Henri Lefebvre (2001: 27-36) argues that, as philosophy and the polis had a special relation, where the former constructed the sense and the meanings of the experience of the second, we must make a similar effort to comprehend the contemporary city. Nevertheless, a philosophical system is not enough, as the contemporary conditions are formed by diversity, reflexivity, relativity, and its political complexity.
The modern metropolis has represented, therefore, the possibility of self-creation, awareness of social condition, the formation of a rational experience of the world, the accountability to each 'inner laws' and the possibility of encountering and existing among difference. Nevertheless, the ongoing process of privatization of public space threatens exactly the constitution of this freedom of modern urban life. Simmel argues that the feudal village was formed by a social 'orbit', i.e. a central and ordered overall rule. For him, this order was overcome by the free space of the metropolis. Nevertheless, today we are moving towards a new synthesis of those 'orbits', forming an urban space of several tangled social orbits, where several different rules overlap each other on the space, similarly to a Tangled Orbit. Therefore, as we will discuss next, the boundaries of the cities' spaces becomes a "blurred" impressionist picture, where the self is only completed through consumption.

Beyond the Access Principle: Repeat Compulsion of Space Consumption

The changes in contemporary metropolis' spaces can only be understood by the dialectic between the physical arrangements and the economic, political and social doctrines. The openness of the public space is not just a matter of barriers, cosy benches or fancy comfortable materials, but how the objectified social relations (Lefebvre, 2001; inter alia) awake citizenship roles in the space. These are the social codes and interpersonal rules that are graved in spatial elements. These objectified relations can be made by fences, doors, tables, or even grass and pavement, provided that they somehow direct behaviour. Citizenship roles are the activities people are expected and accepted to play in a specific place. Beyond the apparent accessibility of privatized public spaces, and beyond its physical beautification, the metropolitan space, once symbol of difference, rationality and freedom is being transformed into a space of fragmented orbits of control (social rules

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and behaviour control graved into fractal and cosy objects). In this new space, the only available roles for citizens are founded by consumer actions. Therefore, these spaces are now only mediated by a repeated compulsion to consumerism.

Despite all this contradiction, Latham and Koch (2013) argue that the ongoing process of transformation of the public space is the 'hard work of domestication'. They use the concept of domestication, against its former critical use (cf. Zukin, 2010). For them, the space has never been 'wild', because it is an artificial product. In this sense, it has neither been tamed, as it already is. Therefore, ignoring dissent, social conflict, politics and the history of mankind, they propose the domestication of urban space as "home-making", by blurring any social difference between private and public.

Whilst the use of the concept of domestication has a 'delightful' aspect, it is self-evident that it also has connotations of control, hierarchy and, even, the creation of domesticated specie of citizens. Nevertheless, despite domestication delightfulness, there is another powerful effect of the current trend. As Simmel (1903) asserted, the foundation of the modern rational freedom in the metropolis is based on the experience of abstraction, distance and difference that are made possible by the big city. In opposition to this modern space, the feudal city was exactly formed by a domesticated space, fully experienced by emotional relation to the place, mediated by the 'heart' and tradition, with the sensation of a cyclical and eternal stability, that can only be felt home. Therefore, the proposition of transforming the modern city into a home is, by logical conclusion, the proposition of destructing modern freedom as experienced in the metropolis.

Therefore, the domestication advocated by Latham and Koch (2013), is both the beautification by delightfulness and the elimination of the abstract distance and solitude among the multitude that is so important to create the uncomfortable encounter with freedom. As Simmel argues, "For here, as elsewhere, it is by no means necessary that the freedom of man reflect itself in his emotional life only as comfort". In that proposition, architecture becomes the engineering death of city's freedom, as their enumeration of strategies to create comfort conditions, sounds like a Machiavelli project of difference and dissent anaesthesia. It is in this sense that these strategies transform the city spaces into a 'velvet ground': formed by comfortable, shining and blurred spaces.

On one hand, the domestication argument can be used to explain how intimate relations can be created between humans and other forms of life, or how animals used to social structures can adapt to live humans' relations. On the other hand, different approaches in ethnography and biology present a much more critical point of view. Velden (2009) argues that ethnocentric views of domestication have a particular conception of society, where public life is conceived as a hierarchical construction built aggressively, and the domestic and family life is conceived in a patriarchal structured order, taken to be the natural harmonic patter of human social behaviour. Therefore, sarcastically, the naive use of the domestication concept suits as a glove to the ongoing process: the blindness created by the concept towards the big picture alternatives *mimesis* the blindness created by the new public space towards the political dissent.

For instance, let's take the example of dogs in the Amazonia to create an alternative view of different species relations. Many studies have demonstrated how it is hard for dogs to adapt to these circumstances, as they became genetically addicted to human control (Velden, 2009), and totemic societies have a 'horizontal' cosmogony of they relations with

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animals (Vigne, 2011). Moreover, Velden (2009) argues that in the Amazonas rainforest wild animals were never domesticated, but introduced into the village life by the process of 'familiarization', in which the animals maintain their autonomy, in a non-subdued relation with humans. According to Vigne, domestication is a 'symbolic shift' with prehistoric origins, and overlaps the origin of divinities: the representations of people praying to a vertical order in the sky, as superiors to humans, happened in the same moment as other species were directed and controlled. For Vigne this is no coincidence: there is a spiritual and symbolic human thought in the origin of animal domestication. As domestication of animal do have many paths (Larson and Burger, 2013), the domestication of urban spaces also does, and during this process, not only the spaces change in itself, but also the citizens who inhabit it. Much in the sameway that cattle domestication transformed human genome into lactose tolerant genes; today spaces are transforming democratic citizenship into control tolerant codes.

By contrast, other authors defend the recalcitrant nature of public space in democracy. For Zukin (2011: 130) democracy is intrinsically loud, unruly, unpredictable and dangerous. Therefore, the calm business friendly environment of today, only exists through negation and disciplinary imposition of work ethics and state power, in order to hide any sign of its fragile social order. Rancière (2005: 18-26) stated that the *Agora* had and fluid existence sustained by the live words of the interlocutors, as a breath of life. The reality of the polis itself was like a dancing chorus, a dancing choreography made by the changing pace of *Agora* speakers. Richard Sennet (2002) also challenges the idea that the city should be seen as a uniform and calm space. For him, this idea of comfort is a social construction, which conceives citizens as passive elements, rather than the city as an instable arrangement and the citizens' individuality as an incomplete condition:

> *Intense civic bonds arouse from the very play of displacement (...) Yet the ancient city was itself not like a monument to stability. (...) It is a modern habit to think of social instability and personal insufficiency as pure negatives.* (Sennet, 2002: 371)

Therefore, to live in cities, is to confront ourselves with contradictory experiences that reveal our incompleteness and the cognitive dissonance of our senses (2002: 371). He argues that, the move from Christianity to Modernity, changed rituals for labour and self-discipline, where comfort was directed to home and fatigue to the workplace, suspending the sensory of body. A passive relationship to environment was built by anaesthesia in home, on one hand, and discipline punishment in the street, on the other. Today we see the emergence of a new kind of sensory suspension, formed by both: a velvet discipline. Therefore, Sennet argues that the urge for comfort in the cities is a dangerous game. Too much protection of 'stimuli' can create a 'sickness of lack'. He argues that pleasure can only emerge as a distension of unpleasurable experiences, and that we need to confront ourselves with the 'reality principle', in order to acknowledge to which extension our mind is playing with our senses of pleasure and 'unpleasure'.

This idea is founded in Freud text 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'(1962) where Freud argued that, although unpleasure and pleasure are important elements to understand mental life, it is the process of 'repression of desires' that is the key principle. Freud asserted that 'Most of the unpleasure that we experience is perceptual unpleasure',

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because our instincts and desires are repressed inside our unconscious by our social experience. This perceptual unpleasure is formed, in that case, by the 'expectations of unpleasure and dangerous', or by the pressure of 'unsatisfied instincts'. Therefore, a conflict emerges between the 'unconscious repressed' and the actual experience, creating a compulsion to repeat the manifestations of that repressed desire. Those manifestations can emerge as painful experiences or accepted social games. He explains this condition by describing a game played by a child. The child repeatedly threw a toy behind the bed, in order to enjoy the reencounter with this toy. By incessantly repeating the disappearance of the object and its reencounter, the child achieved a form of revenge and the feeling of mastery over his destiny. Therefore, the child regains control from the passivity of his experience only through the 'game activity' (Freud, 1962: 17).

As Latham and Koch (2013: 6) presents, in domesticated spaces, the passivity of the urban experience is overcome in their recount of the 'piano' happening. In a London regenerated square, a man sees a piano in the street, and asks the waiter if he can sit on the chair, only to be shown a sign 'Play Me. I'm Yours!' After playing some music, and being applauded by surrounding customers asking for "one more", the man leaves embarrassed. The passivity of his experience is overcome only through the game activity. Yet, a more subtle game is in play. In Privatized Public Spaces the anxiety of the experience (generated by the lack of publicness of public spaces) is only regained by consumption. The feeling of belonging is carefully orchestrated so one only feels suited to the space as he is engaged in the consumption game. Tables and chairs, views and pianos, are coordinated by business. In Simmel's metropolis, the mediation of relations was, indeed, commanded by money, that became 'the common denominator of all values'. However, in the modern metropolis, money worked as an abstract element to intermediate differences. In the contemporary space, money is not only the condition of existence in the space, but it is consumption (the act of expending money) which is the only valid platform of place bound. The former blasé abstract distance is transformed into domestic closeness through the repeated game of consumption (in other words, repeating incessantly the disappearance of money and its re-encounter, as a form of consumption and felling of place mastery).

For some authors there is no reason to be 'overpessimistic', and those who are have an 'idealized' concept of Public Space (De Magalhães, 2010: 560). It is just a matter of recognizing the natural necessity of the current developments, as the bankruptcy of welfare state is a fact. Therefore, the remaining action is to technically understand process and, therefore, control it. For De Magalhães, the ongoing process can be described as a simple 'contracting-out' of the public character of the cities' spaces, and the matter is to know how to make good contracts, balancing rights and duties. For him, this is not a history of 'corporate take-over' or 'exclusion' but a 'complex redistribution of roles'.

This multi-orbital space, formed of fractal rules, fragmented domestication and blurred shining aspect creates a paralysis of effective difference. Dissent, as the basis of the real polis (as Jacques Rancière, 2005, argues), is one of the first targets of these many rules. This de-politicization of public spaces, the forbiddance of politic in the polis, became evident during the occupy movements and is a fundamental shift in the character of public space, that cannot be undermined. Nevertheless, anesthetized by the constant vibration

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of the intertwined rules (tangled orbits), the wandering citizen repress his 'inner values' through experiencing the place only by repeating consumption, and he regains control only by playing games.

On one hand, the discussion is not about reaffirming the States' lost control of space. As Zukin (2010: 30) asserts, in the current situation the State plays a strong role in guaranteeing that big business gain control over the city. As she demonstrated in the case of WTC in New York, the State control can be even more repressive, ideological and even less representative than other kinds of spatial intervention (Zukin, 2010: 150-158). On the other hand, there are two dimensions of this 'contracting-out' of the public space. In one dimension, the social actors involved in the contract are very well informed about the elements and the rights been sold. And if this situation took place in the first place, it was certainly because of that awareness/consciousness. Therefore, the academic' formalization of the praxis has no effect into that reality. In the second dimension, the lived space, the reality is that the fragmentation of rules, promoted by these contracts transforms the public space in a tangled orbit of unconscious domesticated rules, which changes from place to place, square to square, street to street.

Arguably, in this condition, when a person walks through the city of London, his experience is not one of confrontation with difference, but a constant metamorphosis of its own character, becoming constantly more or less free, more or less at home, more or less active, more or less controlled. For those in the streets, the feeling is a constant shining, blurred, yet soft, stimulation of a velvet ground. This condition creates a new dimensionality to the city, which founds a new form of comfortable estrangement.

Next, we will present how this process is happening in the city of London, representing this new way of experiencing public spaces with five representative examples. As we will see, this new experience of the public space is a mix of comfort through serenity and belonging through consumption, compulsively repeated in each step of the way.

New Spaces in Town

Pragmatically, the 1st stage of the research started with a quantitative analysis, based on two main themes (the impact on public realm, and the scale of privatisation of the public space). There is a conceptual difficulty in defining public space and how it relates to the promotion of social relations, and the related literature presents multiple methodologies that assess the 'publicness' of a place into divergent grids and concepts (Varna and Tiesdell, 2010, Benn and Gauss, 1983, Kohn, 2004, Németh and Schmidt, 2011, Németh, 2012, Lessing, 2001, Staeheli and Mitchell, 2008, Iveson, 2007). Thereupon, in a second phase, 20 representative spaces were investigated with a qualitative field investigation.

The first phase of the research was accomplished by an initial inventory, conducted by combining information from various entities, including the planning portal of the UK government, the Greater London Authority website, the British Property Federation website, the New London Architecture organisation, and the websites of major property corporations and local authorities. From an initial list of 1024 projects, 708 developments were already completed. After that, the approval dates of the projects were searched. It was not possible to determine the approval date of 32 projects; therefore, these were eliminated from analysis. 101 projects fit the criteria of having been approved after the

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mayor's first policy documents were drafted. Of those, 25 were found not to enter the realm of public and private boundaries (being mainly internal refurbishments). The research combined this assessment with the analysis of the new strategies for 'public spaces' (Johnson, 2009) and the 'housing' policy proposed by the mayor of London (Johnson, 2013). The formulation of the investigation in these terms allowed investigation of how punctual actions related with the big picture.
The remaining 76 cases were initially analysed through their projects' online information. The following figure represents the degree of enclosure of these spaces. The first bar represents the scale of the public realm impact: 31 projects (40.8%) made a large enclosure impact on the surroundings (red), 31 projects (40.8%) made small impacts (yellow), and 14 projects (18.4%) did not impact the openness of the public environment (green). The second row represents the public space privatisation: 42 projects (55.3%) resulted in large privatisations (red), 27 projects (35.5%) privatised few aspects of the space (yellow), and 7 projects (9.2%) privatised no aspect of public spaces (green). The last bar represents the sum of the two indexes (for each project), resulting in a diagram of the public space's 'coefficient of conversion' into privatised public space.

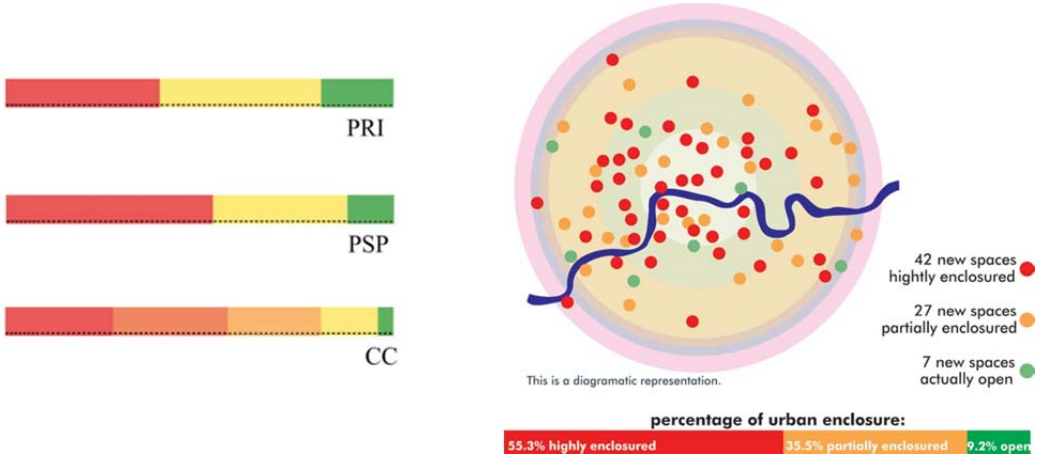

Fig. 1. On the left: Public Realm Impact/ Public Space Privatization/ Conversion Coefficient.
Fig. 2: On the right: The degree of reification of public spaces in London.
Source: the author.

The average of these three analyses creates the overall coefficient of privatization of public space; thus, the following diagram represents the general degree of enclosure of those public spaces in London.
In the second phase of the assessment, 20 spaces with different private/public arrangements were subjected to a field investigation that collected the information on 36 criteria developed upon state of the art research on public space[1]. For this reason, the field analysis involved a multi-layered methodology, registering different aspects of the space, aiming, on one hand, a rigorous analysis, and on the other hand, the observation of regular experience of common users. In this sense, the case studies were a mixed methodology, involving dialectical investigation, analytical techniques, behaviour and

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aesthetical observation, and critical synthesis. The observations of each case study were filled in a form, which divided the criteria in 5 main aspects:

(1) Descriptive and Informative elements
General information and data collection is important to interpret the impact of the developments in the city. This data was undertaken in a straightforward spirit and is the first moment of analysis, where the accumulation of pragmatic facts helps the observer to engage and get closer to the object of analysis. It also helps to keep the final conclusion in tone with the concrete experience, avoiding any excess of speculation and idealism.

(2) Aspects of Territoriality
In the field investigation, aspects of the construction of the site and the production of the territoriality are observed. Those aspects involve the production of a character/difference of the object in relation to its surroundings or regular spaces in the town. It is a subjective analysis not because of its imprecision, but because it depends on the interpretation of the impact of the object in the subject that observes it. It is an analysis of how the object presents itself as a phenomenon. It is specifically concerned with forms of creating boundaries and managing flows, as those aspects create the relation to the overall system of the city.

(3) Mechanisms of Heteronomy
This aspect is interested in how a series of apparatuses and 'invisible' machines are set into the place, transforming the territory in an instrument of controlled and directed experience. Signs, indications, directions, and regular furniture silently work together, creating patterns of behaviour and affecting a spatial protocol of exchanges and flows.

(4) Observation of Public Experience
This aspect is concerned with elements of affect involved in the sense of publicness of a place. It aims to assess how different perceptions and patterns indicate and create expected behaviours, how the space, the use, and the events indicate forms of possible subjectivities, actions, and actors, much in the sense of an althusserian 'interpellation' of space. Although it is a subjective element of experience, it can be registered through different concrete elements.

(5) Personal experience through photographical register
Finally, a personal experience, using critical and aesthetical techniques, aims to synthesize the overall experience of the site.

Following the collection of data, a series of "constant comparative analysis", as proposed in the Grounded Theory approach (Guest et al., 2011, Glaser & Strauss, 1967), aimed to develop theories on the basis of rigorous observation. This process of "grounding the theory" means the identification of main "codes" (patterns in general behaviour, segments of data, preliminary categories, and so on) in the case studies. The observations were assembled into preliminary main themes. Later, these themes were subject to field confrontation and debates with peers.

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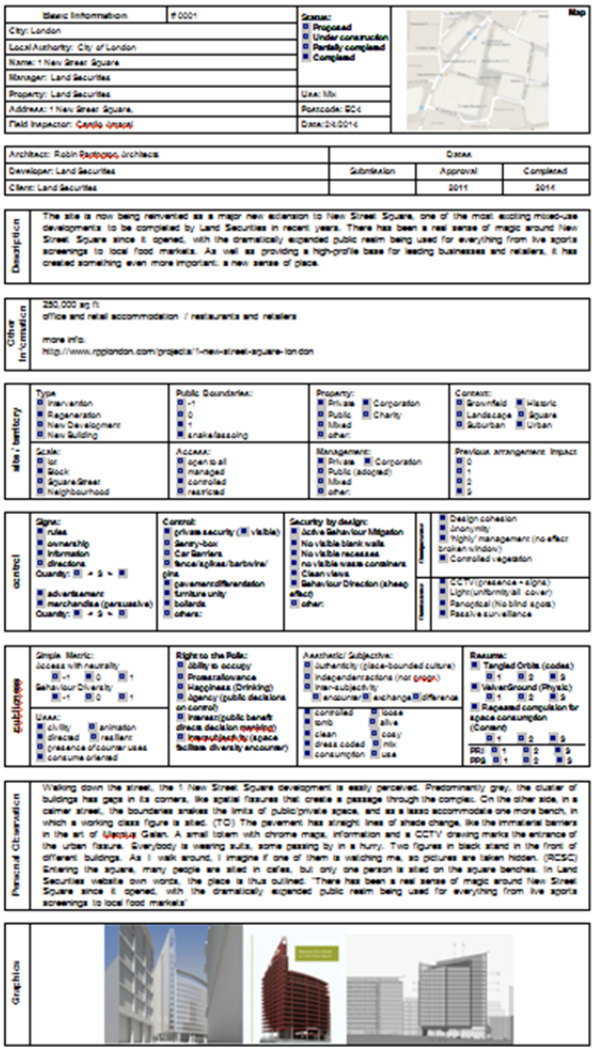

Fig. 3: Example of a Field Investigation form.

Finally, the systematization of this data made possible the development of three concepts to describe the new dimensions of these spaces:

(a) the sensation of a *velvet ground*, formed by a shining, soft and comfortable feeling, that transform the former freedom hard experience of cities into an anaesthetised soft experience;

(b) the formation of intertwined rules, in the form of *tangled orbits*, transforming the city spatial rules into a fragmented atmosphere, as if the 'lens' (*a priori*) we use to see a place have to be changed in each step of the way, maintaining a constant feeling of inability to use ones 'inner nature' to experience the space and, thus, handing control towards the place automaton fractal structure;

(c) and the anxiety produced by a new kind of displacement, where the architecture is no more appropriated by distraction (cf. Benjamin, 1986) as in the modern metropolis, but it happens only by the consumption of the place, where a subject only regain control of place experience through the game activity of consumption (what may be called the *repeated compulsion of space consumption)*.

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The following lines will delineate these concepts among five of those spaces' experience, representing and describing five "gradations", from the most privatized space to the most public place (N.B.: the concepts do not emerge on the last example).



Fig. 4. 1 New Street Square. Photos: Camilo Amaral.

Number 1 New Street Square is utterly privatized. (Concept 'a') Walking down the street, the development is easily perceived. Predominantly grey, the cluster of buildings has gaps in its corners, like spatial fissures that create a passage through the complex. On the other side, in a calmer street, the boundaries snakes the limits of public/private space, and as a lasso accommodate one more bench, in which a working class figure is seated. (Concept 'b') The pavement has straight lines of shade change, like the invisible barriers in the art of Marcius Galan. A small totem with chrome maps, information and a CCTV drawing marks the entrance of the urban fissure. Everybody is wearing suits, some passing by in a hurry. Two figures in black stand in the front of different buildings. As I walk around, I imagine if one of them is watching me, so I take hidden pictures. (Concept 'c') Entering the square, many people are seated in cafes, but only one person is seated on the square benches. In Land Securities website own words, the place is thus outlined: "There has been a real sense of magic around New Street Square since it opened, with the dramatically expanded public realm being used for everything from live sports screenings to local food markets".



Fig. 5: Aloft Hotel. Photos: Camilo Amaral.

The Aloft development is also highly privatized. (a) In order to arrive at the Hotel, at the London's Docklands, pedestrians coming from the DLR must walk through a suspended platform, fluidly connected to the station and the Excel exhibition centre. A long smooth perspective connects the entrances without any stairs. In the way, the walker can see a square underneath. (b) A profusion of signs are attached to lampposts, with information rules and CCTV drawings reminding you are been watched. The myriad of bollards creates boundaries without barring you, composing a strange spatial choreography. In the same sense, benches seem to dance out of cracks in the pavement. The place appears

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overdesigned, as if the invisible hand of the architect was being corrupted by the dirty leaved by each footstep. (c) As a jewellery on display, the place seems more an object to be desired from the DLR windows, than a space to be actually consumed.



Fig. 6: Renaissance Development. Photos: Camilo Amaral.

The Renaissance development is moderately privatized. (a) Coming from the station, before arriving at the place, we first reach a square, passing through old brick arches. The reminiscence creates a tactile historicity, warming up the senses as we approach the colourful glass and metal building. (b) The shapeless of the square is subtly coordinated by a grid of squares in the pavement, giving command to what otherwise would be interstice. As in other places, the snake lines in the pavement are lassoing small objects, twisting from one side to the other of walker's trajectory. Furniture also presents itself as an omnipresent gesture of design. While pins in benches avoid skaters, massive totems are announcing information and the private/public partnership, nailing in the ground its own sense of place. (c) As many other new developments, Renaissance is a mix-use complex. In front of the cultural complex, a poster, from the Lewisham Borough in partnership with the Fusion Management Organization, proudly announces 'The great outdoors 'Now even greater'. Now, consumers can pay for group exercise class in the park backstreet. The Granary development is subtly privatized. (a) The analysis of public/private spatial relations on housing projects is of a more cautiously kind. House spaces are essentially domesticated, and this development is placed in a surround of calm streets, filled of smooth changes between public and intimacy. (b) Nevertheless, the streets on the new buildings have clear signs, showing its different private nature. The buildings in the block arrange an incisive frontier of prevailed pattern of solids and voids. (c) Another idiosyncrasy of the building among its neighbours is the fact of been connected to the Malthouse Creative Industries that, according to its website, work with 'ownership of ideas' and 'intellectual property'. The place is managed by an Arts Education charity, making it hard to simplify. Yet, we have the introduction of work into a domestic field.



Fig. 7. Woolwich Squares. Photos: Camilo Amaral.

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The Woolwich are public spaces. Although, the massive screen gives a first impact of the squares becoming more or less equal to private public spaces, many aspects are different. The pavement has no snake patterns or shades of grey. The divisions are evident only between street and sidewalk. The square is unusually busy, with many kids, passers-by and people seated. The benches are formed of long plain lines emerging from the ground. Many people are seated. Two uniformed guards are on the street. Kids run on the fountain water, as parents tries to bring them back to their way. The stores in the side have merchandise and box in the sideway, causing a sensation of chaos. A sign in the lamppost indicates that dog walkers cannot take more than 4 dogs. A market is on the street, but market traders are not uniformed, and they chat more than work. A group of thirty-somethings drink beer seated on the benches, right in front of the officers, forming a strange combination with many others eating they own lunch.

Conclusion

The present article made an exercise of conceptual reflection on the practical experience of the new public spaces produced in London after the 2009 Mayor Manifesto. The analysis demonstrated a great trend towards the corporatisation of public spaces. The investigation demonstrated that the changes are not a simple contracting-out of roles between private and public actors, but a fundamental change in the experience of the city, suggesting a direct interference in citizenship conditions and in the freedom experienced in London.

These new spaces homogenize difference, transforming confrontation into game. Without a constant frame of reference, these multiple-layered spaces create a constant metamorphosis on the citizens' character, transforming the anxiety of the urban experience into a device for controlling diversity and directing social forces towards consumption. The urban space becomes a soft velvet ground, tangled by invisible rules. These spaces produce alienation by means of disorientation and comfort, repeatedly metamorphosing on each step one takes in his way through this new "velvet ground". Thus, the current production of social space is shaped by the dissolution of the rational and abstract conditions of the metropolis, provoking the accommodation of differences into an ethnocentric and hierarchical society. A new kind of domestication emerges from the corporations' bodiless. These contemporary spaces are formed by a new continuum of dissimilar repetition. As the examples demonstrated, the repetition of patterns does not build continuity, but displacement and anxiety, resolved only by spatial consumption. Therefore, citizenship is reified into consumerism. Therefore, theoretical approaches focused on the 'delightfulness' of urbanism cannot deal with the complexity of space and society. In contrast, it is important to investigate spatial alternatives: to imagine difference, autonomy and inner ruled citizenship; to imagine wilder and uncomfortable otherness similar to the 'familiarization' process.

The recidivism of Velvet Grounds and Repeated Compulsion of Space Consumption, do not represent a new uniformity. In contrast, creates an unpredictable 'heterogeneity' of sameness, by preventing the manifestation of inner values, and pragmatically autonomous interrelations other than consumption. The recidivism of Tangled Orbits occurs without formal centrality (as in Simmel's feudal cities, or in its metaphorical origin, the solar

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system). This new kind of circularity is timeless, perpetually cyclical, obscure and undetermined (blurred). Its complex knotted and twisted rules create a new kind of *bird nest prison*, which differs from the former means of control (panoptical and gridded). Cosy and kind, domestic and comfortable, this new form of control operate through disorientation and refuge, rather than discipline and punishment.

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Notes

(1) The aspects and considerations derived for the observations came from the following studies: (1) Varna and Tiesdell (2010) characterized the conceptualization of publicness in two major effort groups: (a) Inductive: the quality of being public comes from external elements, physical properties, material elements, and barriers; (b) Deductive: comes from internal issues, symbolic interpretations, rules, and socially constructed meanings (in the eyes of the beholder). They propose a model for publicness interpretation by measuring: ownership, physical configuration, control, civility, and animation.

(2) Benn and Gauss (1983) propose three dimensions for the publicness examination: (a) Access: the ability people have to occupy the space, i.e., appropriate the space and recreating its function; (b) Agency: the examination of who defines how the space is controlled, i.e., if the rules have social accountability; and (c) Interest: the examination of the space management decision, interpreting if the 'rules' benefit the public or particular interests.

(3) Kohn (2004) uses three criteria for publicness: (a) ownership; (b) accessibility: the freedom, control, and neutrality of access; and (c) intersubjectivity: how the elements of the urban space facilitate or make difficult the encounter and interactions of people, allowing differences to emerge.

(4) Németh and Schmidt (2011) has used three axes to analyse publicness: ownership, management, and uses/users.

(5) Staeheli and Mitchell (2008) argued that a space is public when it can integrate the inhabitants into the creation and use of the space. For that, is important to analyse the receptivity, welcome, and comfort provided.

(6) For Iveson (2007), spaces become public through a process that engages people in the debate of the space's proprieties. Therefore, a place is public when subjected to public assessment or if it becomes a means of public conscience.

(7) Lessing (2001) creates a model of interpretation of the space, creating an interpretation grid drawn upon information networks' society. He uses three 'layers' for that: (a) Physical: the hardware are the material elements and infrastructure (as cables, mediums, objects); (b) Code: the laws, codes, protocols, and rules that mediate the exchanges; (c) Content: the actual information and elements involved in the transaction between people.

(8) Németh (2012) asserts that a 'truly public forum is characterized by (relatively) open access, unmediated deliberation, and shared participation (...) Nevertheless, publicness is always

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subjective: whereas some might feel a space full of homeless persons is "truly public," this sight might drive other users away. (...) A simple metric might examine public space vis-à-vis' [a] Free Access and [b] Behaviour Freedom. He suggests a complete analysis should consider the following aspects: Physical (spatial programming, mobility, restrictions and aesthetic); Code (laws, regulations, policing, norms, language and guidelines); content (use, behaviour, symbolism meaning).

(9) For Zukin, S. (2010), culture used to be place-bounded, and Public Space was connected to its history, but it is not anymore. Rather than preserve only the buildings, Public Spaces should also preserve the community that created the authenticity of the place. Domestication by cappuccino is a form of controlling the space by consumption taste. One should not miss the big picture: The issue is about capital granting incomes, controlling workers, associating with state to make profitable rules, and using media apparatus for managing consumers' tastes. Authentic democracy is loud, unruly, unpredictable, dangerous, undisciplined, independent, and non-programmed behaviour. Therefore, Public Spaces are understood as spaces free for protest, as the political aspect is one of most important elements of the polis.

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