

LIFE OUTSIDE THE WALLS: THE SPANISH LIVEABILITY OF ITS PUBLIC SPACES

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes the importance of public spaces as structuring element of sociability and organization of the territory in Spanish cities. Taking as a case study a path and a plaza in the city of Madrid, it aims to explore how these different typologies and scales of public space influence the spatial organization, the mobility and the sociability of these cities. To perform the analysis of these spaces were explored the concepts of *imageability*, *liveability* and *local management*, through the methodologies developed respectively by Lynch (1960), Gehl (2013) and Carmona (2008). The paper looks to comprehend how each typology of public space contributes with local dynamics, and which are the characteristics that should be more studied in order to achieve dynamics public spaces in the city.

Keywords: public space – Spain, public space rehabilitation projects – Spain, public space dynamics – Spain

1.- Introduccion

The web of strategic actions in public spaces undertaken in Spain from the 1980s consolidated an urban renewal model widespread in professional circles and debated by the academic community, making it an essential reference for rehabilitation studies of central areas. The intervention in public spaces and the implementation of urban infrastructure to host the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona (during the 1980s and 1990s), the renewal of underused industrial areas along the Nervion River in Bilbao (from the 1990s), and more recently, the burying of the M-30 highway in order to achieve Madrid-Rio linear park (2006-2011), in Madrid, have become reference cases for renewal studies of central areas all around the world and improved the discussion about the importance of public spaces to the spatial organization and dissemination of the image of cities on an international stage.

The relationship between public space and urban vitality, safety and social dynamics has been explored since the 1960s, especially by the studies of Jane Jacobs (1961), Jan Gehl (1971) and Bill Hillier (1984). In recent years, however, some studies (Carmona: 2004, 2008, Jan Gehl: 2010, 2013, among others) and practical manuals (Paumier: 2004; Barton, Hugh et al: 2003, NYC Transport Department: 2013; among others) have also examined public spaces as structures effectively able to improve the local economic base, provide the necessary support to tourism, help to enhance urban heritage, expand the specific offer of culture, art, leisure, entertainment, gastronomy and improve public health and mobility in cities.

In the urban sustainability framework, recent studies (Farr: 2007; Slone: 2008; Higuera: 2006, 2009, among others) also relate interventions in public spaces with management of urban heritage y improvement of vitality, thermic comfort, legibility, identity and urban connectivity. In general, it's considered that the public domain spaces are composed by different typologies - streets, plazas and parks - and that the scale, quality, quantity and combination of these typologies contributes in a very specific way to determine the local dynamics: encouraging or not opportunities for social interaction, commercial activities and searching of open spaces for leisure and rest. It also considered that the influence of public spaces – either negative or positive - tends to spread around in an action of *metastasis*, which actively affects the adjacent urban fabric.

In an effort to understand the specific relationship between public space and local dynamics in the Spanish context, especially how it affects the sociability, the retail activities and the spatial organization of the city, this study presents the analysis of two different scales and typologies of public space: a *path* and a *plaza*. Taking Madrid as a case study, this paper aims to identify the role of these open areas in the spatial and social structure of the metropolis. The hypothesis is that each typology of public space contributes in a very specific way to the local dynamics y that the strategic combination between two different scale and typologies perform a system with great potential of organization and transformation of the city.

The studied areas (fig.1) will be Paseo del Prado (*path*), one of the most iconic public spaces in Madrid, full of cultural and historic meaning, located in the east board of the city's historic fabric, and Plaza Tirso de Molina (*plaza*), a very traditional place in Embajadores neighborhood, settled in the central area of the historical fabric.

In order to verify the especial dynamic public space insert in both areas, the research sought reference in the methodologies of spatial analysis proposed by Kevin Lynch (1960), Jan Gehl (2013) and Mathew Carmona (2008), to explore the respective concepts of *imageability*, *liveability* and *local management* presented by theses authors. The purpose is research the relation between identity elements and spatial

structure; people affluence, facilities and urban design, and also the management dimension of these places.

The spatial structure of these places, as well as the identity concept they present in the city scale, was described following the concepts of *path*, *edge*, *district*, *node* and *landmark* settled by Kevin Lynch (1960); people affluence was measured concerning the spatial structure and the offer of amenities and facilities, in order to understand the relation between use of public space and urban activities studied by Jan Gehl (2013); and the behavior of users in public spaces and how it relates to physical and management constraints was observed following Mathew Carmona's (2008) method to study management issues of public space. Apply the combined analysis of these methods to both case studies aims to understand the dynamics of its spaces and to explore the relationship between shape, social appropriation and management of public spaces in the Spanish context. The analysis of two different typologies of public space - a *plaza* and a *path* – has the purpose to explore the specific characteristics concerning the influence of these two structures in the adjacent urban fabric. The park, as a typology, was not included in this investigation because it presents a different spatial interaction with the city. Despite its fundamental importance as a large scale free space for leisure and rest purposes and the importance of its vegetation to the climatic comfort and to prevent heat islands, the relation between its borders and the city structures is different of the other typologies and depends on variables such as enclosures, accessibility and vegetation types. Thus, the implementation of Gehl's (2013) and Carmona's (2008) methodologies could also present distortions, showing more dates about the spaces inside the park than the ones in the intersection with the city.

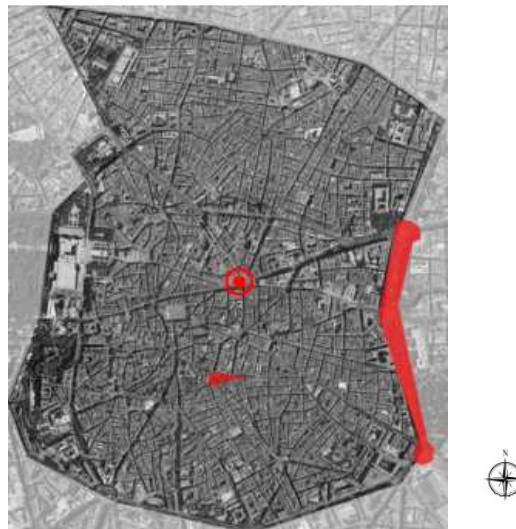


Fig. 1 “Central área of Madrid, Plaza Tirso de Molina and Paseo del Prado”

2.- Plaza Tirso de Molina

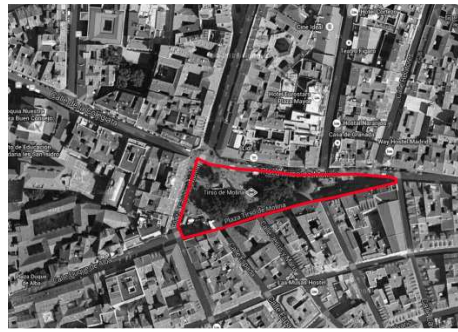


Fig. 2 "Position of Plaza Tirso de Molina"

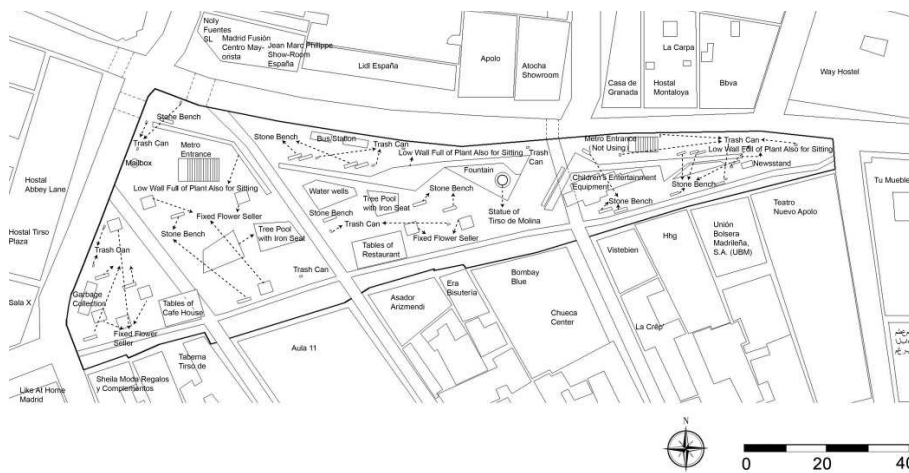


Fig. 3 "Plan and facilities, Plaza Tirso de Molina. Methodology: Carmona(2008)."

2.1- General overview of this plaza and its components

La Plaza Tirso de Molina (40°24'44.23"N; 3°42'18.04"W) is located in the central area of Madrid. The plaza is the northern boundary of Embajadores neighborhood and has a triangular shape that extends toward Magdalena Street. Despite its small size, about six thousand square meters, it symbolically represents the center of this neighborhood, once it's the only public open area inside this very dense urban fabric and concentrates the major leisure equipment and neighborhood services, as well as promote people gathering and provide a comfortable place for public activities.

The current form of the plaza is the result of a renewal project accomplished by Haiku Studio in 2006. The main objective of the project was to recover a pedestrian dimension of the space and reduce the impact of wholesale trade which presented, at that time, a great movement of trucks around the plaza. In 2005, during the presentation of the project, Mayor Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón said that "the project was necessary to end the square island feel" and the plaza "could not continue identifying marginalization and degradation of the city." [16] The redesign clearly favored pedestrian over the cars, once it has increased substantially the sidewalks of the streets around and restricted access of vehicles on two sides of the plaza. Public transport was also prioritized, as the project fosters modal integration between buses and subway in the plaza level.

With the aim of promote the attractiveness of the plaza and create an identity element, was seated the first permanent flower market in Madrid, achieved by 14 wooden boxes designed by Galán Lubsacher. The redesign has also considered the existing attractions - it provided a flat pavement in front of Teatro Nuevo Apolo, to highlight its presence, and also a new entertainment area for children. Most of the plaza was paved with a combination of flat stone and cement, and the vegetation areas are concentrated in the central and west part, counting with four types of plants

throughout the area: a large size of tree, a small size one, shrubs and grass near the pool water.

In 2006, with the inauguration of the plaza, the *20 minutes newspaper* published the following testimonies. "I always lived here and the neighbors have never been able to enjoy the place. I love the way it is now, but the best are the kids that can now play safely (...) .The plaza has caught joy, children play during the afternoon ... there is a joy that we didn't see before"^[17] said Carmen Lopez, 74, revealing the appropriation of the plaza for the community after remodeling.

Following Lynch's concepts of *imageability* of this *plaza* would be described as:

- Path: The plaza is surrounded by a row of residential buildings in the south and by streets in the north part. There are three pathways passing through the plaza, a main road for motor vehicle, and pathways are for pedestrian. Except for the entrance on east and west direction, the three pathways also add six entrances to the plaza, three of them are next to the main road, the other three are extended to residential buildings. During daytime, a great number of people go into the plaza, flowing from northwest through the main street and from the metro station through into the plaza. Flowing from Dr. Cortezo Street to the south passing by the statue next to the trail then into the plaza. After entering the plaza, people flow is divided into two directions: one to the west, into the neighborhood, one to the east, in the theater direction. There are also people flowing from the east to go into the plaza, most of them head to the bus station or the subway station directly.
- Edge: The plaza has its existence since 1840, occupying the ancient site of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios Convent (also called Convent of Mercy), so the edge comes from history. Taking the main road as the boundary in the north and take the residential line as the other boundary in the south.
- District (Fig. 4): The plaza is divided in four zones by the pathways. Each zone has its own characteristics. Zone 1 is surrounded by fixed flower boxes which sell flowers all day time. Zone 2 is next to the Acadimia Santillana, and it is involved with the metro station that always gather people around it. Zone 3 is the water area, it has two water paved space separating the east and west side of this zone. The water area always gets people sitting and talking together, especially the area with sunshine in the winter morning. Zone 4 is the paradise for kids: there are many kinds of games, facilities in the playground. The pavement in this area is very user-friendly settled by soft plastic for avoiding harm to the children effectively.

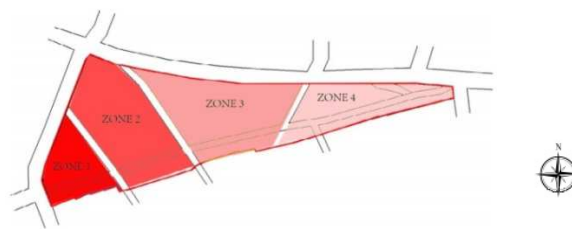


Fig. 4 "Districts of Plaza Tirso de Molina. Methodology: Carmona(2008)."

- Node: Three obvious nodes are concluded in this plaza. One intersection in northwest, one entrance in west, and the other is the theater on the east. Each node has its own legibility. One intersection connects the two main streets in the

center of Madrid, line of sight from the northwest side towards the plaza, you will see a very striking subway sign. If you come from west, the unique flower house will block your sight and let you thought it is the end of the road, however when you get closer, you will find there is an open space for people to rest, to shopping or to have fun. It can be seen as a big surprise for tourists or people who were here for the first. The other is Nuevo Apolo Theater. It is at the east entrance of the plaza.

- Landmark: Tirso de Molina is named in honor of the Spanish playwright of the seventeenth century, his statue is in Zone 3.

2.2- Micro-analysis about spatial composition

Zone 1 (Figs. 4 and 5): It is the most western part of the plaza. It contains two benches, with each bench designed to be used for four people. There is a sunshine area in the winter morning next to the flower house in the north. Combining with the retailers, they all contribute to the commercial area of the neighborhood. The flower houses are open from 10:00 to 18:00 in workdays. The cafe house opens until midnight except on Sundays. The cake shop and the shoe store are open from 10:00 to 18:00, and they are both closed on weekend. The municipal staff collects garbage at the same point twice a day, separately in morning and evening. The flower house in the ground floor and the cafe house are the most attractive places, hundreds of guests make consumption here. These places also provide people a private path from west to east in order to avoid the street's cars noise.

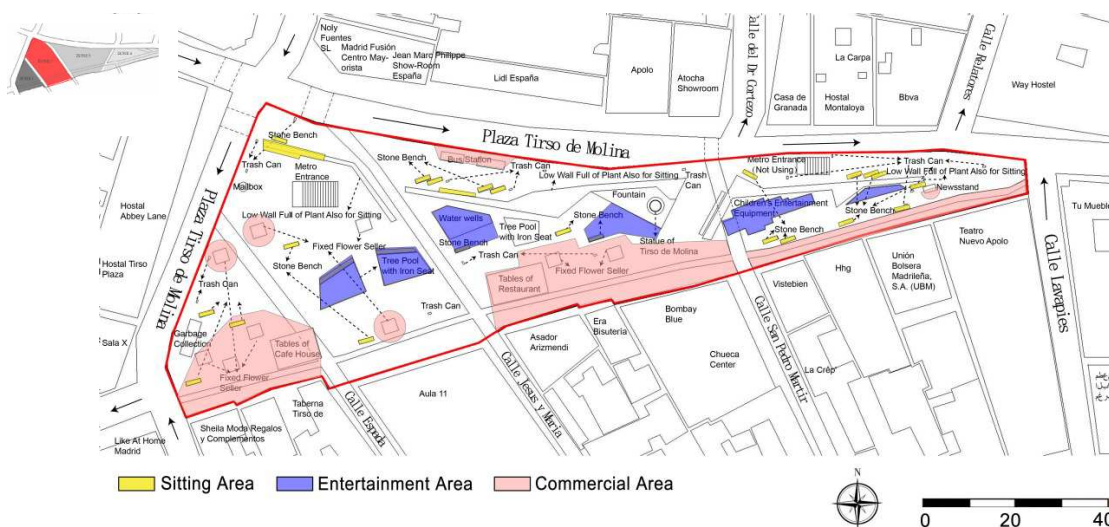


Fig. 5 "Sitting, entertainment and commerce in Plaza Tirso de Molina. Methodology: Carmona (2008)."

Zone 2 (Figs. 4 and 5): The most obvious characteristic of this zone is that it provides a lot of sitting area: iron benches around the tree pool which provide shelter in summer, low green wall in the north, and stone benches next to the line of buildings. Through their position, it creates a focus for activities in this space. The amenities conclude one ad board and one mailbox. There is also the *Academia Santillana*, which was never open during the investigation. This area is the favorite place for bibbers, they always sit on the tree pool and drink till midnight. Besides, there is a great number of people go in and outside the metro station.

Zone 3 (Figs. 4 and 5): In this part, water is the main element. Two water areas attract people to gather, sit and chat. At this corner, in northeast, is placed the statue

of Tirso de Molina, whose base is a water pool. There are seven stone benches, some of them settled in front of it. This is an interesting area because it can help reducing temperature in summer, giving people environmental comfort for playing. The water along the low green plant wall can also relieve the heat island effect. Another strong visual feature of this space is the existence of many shops at the ground floor of the building line area. The most popular place is the restaurant, with consumers all day long. It effectively activates the dynamic of the area through an economic activity. At the same time, there's a very complex and crowded traffic interchange along the bus stops. It is an important nodal structure with a metro station 20 meters away from it. So it is a classic transport interchange structure happening in the ground level of the plaza. The retail in the ground floor, the tables of the restaurants and the connection between metro and the bus stop, make this area the most attractive in the plaza.

Zone 4 (Figs. 4 and 5): Playground for children and theater for adults characterizes this zone, plus a newsstand, and diversify retails at the ground floor of the buildings. This area is more dynamic at weekends and evenings, especially on holidyas. Eight stone benches set in this zone. It provides resting area for parents to sit and take care of their kids. The area next to the street for motorbike depositary lacks of management. There are a lot of bikes and motorbikes in a completely disorder sense. It seems to be necessary a supervisor to maintain the spatial order. The integrate human behavior (Tab.1) and the amount of people (Fig. 6) below:

Event/Behavior in Zone 1	have food in Cafe house and restaurants
	buy shoes and cakes or other things
	sell or Buy flowers
	sell things in temporary table
	sell fruits temporarily
	sit on stone benches
	policemen maintain security
	garbage collection car
	entertainers
	take pictures
Event/Behavior in Zone 2	sit around Tree Pool and chat
	go in or out of Metro
	sit on flower bed
	crowds of people drinking and in large groups
	hawker selling things next to mailbox
paste leaflets on the wall of Academia Santillana	
Event/Behavior in Zone 3	wait for bus
	shop in Cussi
	go in and out of 5 N
	buy things in mobile shop
Event/Behavior in Zone 4	play skateboard and stroller
	young people and children play the entertainment equipment
	see Metro map
	wait for the start of theater(movie) and inquiry the time table and ticket price
	buy things in Alementacion
	buy things in UBM(Wallpaper)
buy newspaper	

Table 1 "Event and behavior in Plaza Tirso de Molina (investigation between 4/12/2014 to 10/12/2014). Methodology: Carmona (2008)"

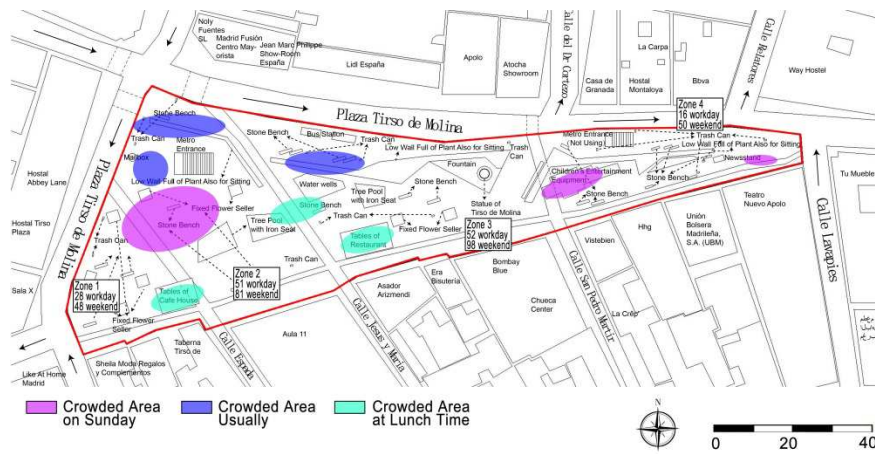


Fig. 6 “Frequency of people and crowdest areas. Average of 7 days, at 14:30 P.M. Methodology: Gehl(2013)”

2.3.- Considerations

Plaza Tirso de Molina plays a key role in the spatial organization of this neighborhood. It not only provides people a rare free open space to spend leisure time, but also improve the organization of daily activities. It can either be a system which people use in free time – for entertainment or resting – or a system that structures transport mobility and spatial orientation. It’s iconic importance comes of its free space status, but also as e place that promote the agglutination of commerce, amenities and facilities, like theater, bank service, café houses, restaurants, groceries, newsstands, cloths and flower in a neighborhood scale.

3.- Paseo del Prado

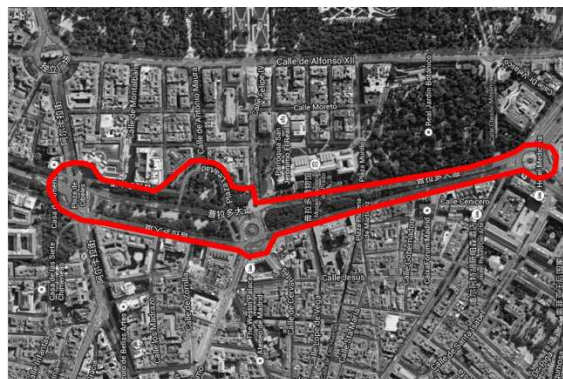


Fig. 7 “Position of Paseo del Prado”

3.1.- General overview of the path and its components

Paseo del Prado is one of Madrid’s most important *paths* located in the east border of the ancient city center. It has its origins in the second half of the eighteenth century with the improvements and landscaping works promoted by King Charles III. *Salón del Prado*, as it was known then, was designed by José de Herosilla as a large and wooded boulevard, linking *Glorieta de Atocha* to *Plaza de Cibeles*. Along this path were installed noble palaces, cultural and leisure buildings, such as the Cabinet of Natural History, current Prado Museum, the Astronomical Observatory and the Royal Botanical Garden, setting up a *path* strongly related to leisure activity, feature that remains today. The last major redesign project for this *path* was presented in 2002 by Alvaro Siza, aiming the enlargement of the pedestrian walks, plant density and the creation of special esplanades near the most prominent buildings. However, after several controversies, it was not yet taken to end.

Actually, both sides of the venue are covered with tall, lush trees, it dress up an ordinary street to be in a boulevard style. Paseo del Prado starts at Plaza de Cibeles in the north part of the central city and ends at Plaza Charles in the south part. The distance between Paseo del Prado and Plaza del Sol, the geographic center of Madrid, is almost equal to the distance between Opera or the Royal Palace to Sol. Head off southwest direction along Alcalá, it's possible reach the Almudena's Cathedral, the most famous church in Madrid, and walking along the Gran Vía to the northwest, it's possible reach Plaza de España. Spain's largest and most famous imperial garden is also adjacent to Paseo del Prado: Real Jardín Botánico. Beyond the cultural facilities, there are also many major government departments and Spanish educational institutions set up along this boulevard: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, Ministry of Education, Congress of Deputies, Instituto Cervantes, Instituto de Estudios Bursátiles – UCM and Real Academia Española. They are all important landmarks of the city. Besides, Paseo del Prado is part of a very important and historic north-south axis that structure de development and mobility system of the city. This axis begins in Atocha train station and follows through Paseo del Prado, Paseo de Recoletos and Paseo de la Castellana. As much as its first stretch is marked by historical and cultural buildings, the following stretches were expanding together with the city, and lodging, in the process the business areas of the city. This first stretch of the axis, Paseo del Prado, is the most important landmark of the city, known as "Golden Triangle of Art" by connecting three of the most important art museums in the word: Museo Nacional del Prado, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza and Museo Reina Sofía. They make art as a significant feature of the avenue and a place of "must-visit" for art lovers.

3.2.- Micro-analysis about spatial composition (Fig. 11)

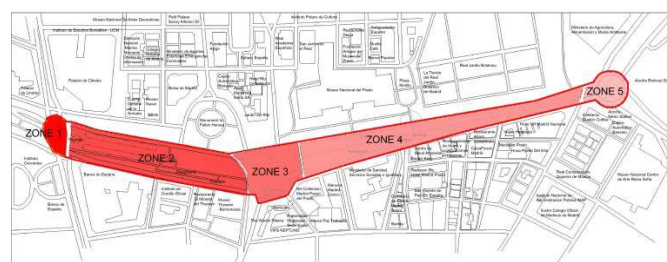
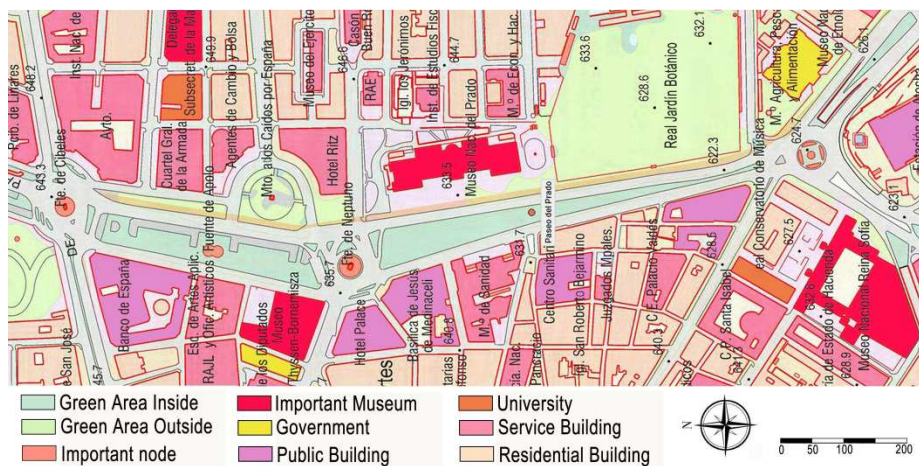


Fig. 8 "Plan and zoning of Paseo del Prado"

Zone 1(Fig. 8): Plaza de Cibeles. Taking Paseo del Prado as a whole area of study, Plaza de Cibeles is the first node of it. It is an intersection that leading the street from north. A fountain stands in the middle of the plaza with the statue of "Cibeles" which

surrounded by 8 flags and flowers with bushes. It also leads to the other three directions ways. Besides, the space also contains a subway entrance/exit and three bus stations in the corner. This is a very important *node*, connecting Paseo del Prado to other main paths of the city: Calle Alcalá/ Gran Vía and Paseo de Recoletos. Its classical implantation, in the middle of the boulevard, also contribute to the monumentality of the path and offer free space and perspective to observe the monumental façade of Palacio de Cibeles. During the research period, along the autumn and winter season, this is the area with major pedestrian movement observed.

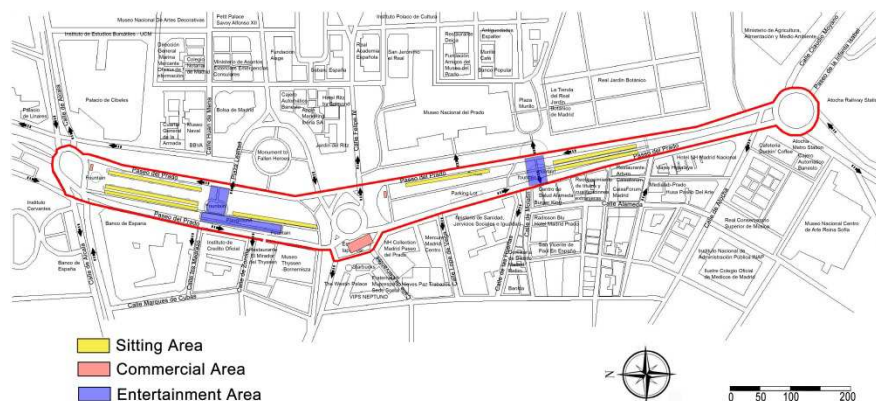


Fig. 9 “Sitting, entertainment and retail áreas at Paseo del Prado. Metodología: Carmona (2008).”

Zone 2 (Fig. 8): If Paseo del Prado is the “crossroads of the world”, then zone 2 is physically where it is focused on. Thus the space contains so many factors to attract people’s interests. The begin of this space is three opening doors with big nice-shaped fountain, in front of the fountain are two big tree pools on both sides of the middle line. Walking down, a long stone bench with wide-paved plaza at the east side of the *path*. Pass through an accessible ramp, is another fountain as a new node of this space. Behind the fountain, there is a large playground with equipment for children. At the end of playground, there’s a small fountain hiding in the west tree-lined road. It is a whole system with many kind of facilities for people to spend leisure time. *Museo Naval* and *Plaza de la Lealtad* which is landmarked with *Monumento a los Caídos por España* is on the east side of the street and *Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza* is on the other side. Besides, there are seven different kinds of plants in this area, and two bus stations concluded it.

Zone 3 (Fig. 8): It is the second node almost in the middle of the whole street, called “Plaza Cánovas del Castillo”. Feathered by Fuente de Neptuno, it contains two bus stations, five small tree pools and one big rotatory in the middle which are full of two kinds of large arbors, one kind of bushes, flowers and lawn. Four directions are led by the turntable.

Zone 4 (Fig. 8): Moving south from Zone 3, Zone 4 is the space which is narrow down with green area in the middle of street. There is a newsstand and an ads board in the northeast part of it. Then is a parking lot beside the green area. On the east side of the street, a statue stands right in front of Museo Nacional del Prado, it is the landmark here which reminds people with a wide plaza across the street. Keep moving south, next to the pathway, there are two fountains on both side of this space which stands a statue in front of Plaza Murillo - it is the entrance/exit of Real Jardín Botánico - a large area of green space with abundant kinds of plants. On the west side, there are three four stars hotels providing support for tourists.

Zone 5 (Fig. 8): It is the end of Paseo del Prado with a station of Madrid-Atocha which is the largest railway station of this capital city of Spain. It sets high-speed rail trains to Barcelona, Zaragoza, Seville and Valencia - all the major cities in Spain. It also contains two bus stations. Three directions of streets led by it. One of them is connected to Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. There is a big well-paved fountain in the middle of the plaza. Standing in front of Atocha, you can see the prominent road signs and ads board in opposite side. Few trees in the plaza provide a wide perspective for people, especially for cars. Besides, it is one of the most popular “photo opportunity” space, as Atocha is another important *landmark* in Madrid. The integration with human behavior below (Tab.2):

Event/Behavior in Zone 1	Cars go across the intercourse
	People take pictures
	Visit Banco de España
	People talk to each other
Event/Behavior in Zone 2	Sit at stone bench and chat
	Pedestrian
	Children play in equipment area
	Go for information
Event/Behavior in Zone 3	Take pictures around fountain
	Eat at restaurant
	Go across the intercourse
Event/Behavior in Zone 4	Pedestrian
	Sit at stone/wood bench and rest
	Play around fountain
Event/Behavior in Zone 5	Buy things in grocery
	Take pictures in front of train station
	Buy things in newsstand
	Play around statue

Table 2 “Event and behavior in Paseo del Prado (investigation between 28/1/2015 to 30/1/2015). Methodology: Carmona (2008)”

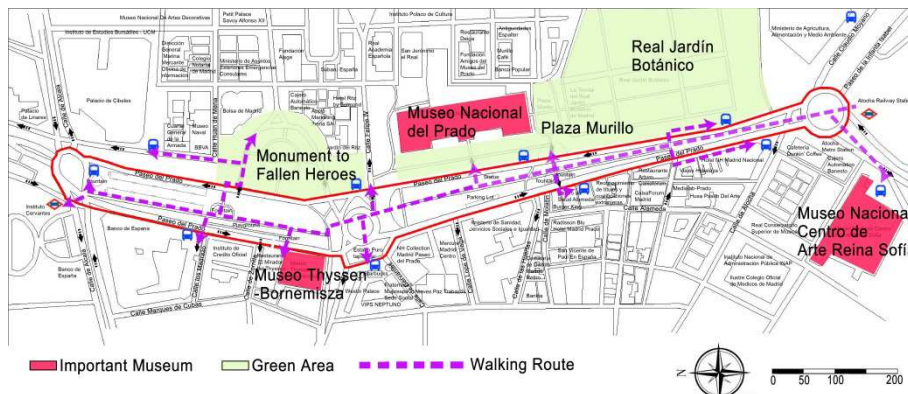


Fig. 10 “Movilidad sistem and main attractives at Paseo del Prado. Metodología: Carmona (2008).”

3.3.- Considerations

Paseo del Prado is an important public space in Madrid central area, which can be mainly characterized for organizing one of the most important cultural paths in the world. It not only link five important museums as provide support for the touristic function of these area: along its path is the main train station of the city and also hotels, cafes, restaurants and souvenirs stores that configure a micro-structure for the tourists. Benches, fountains and diverse kinds of vegetation create a comfortable environment and beautiful landscapes for people to stay, to play, and to have a rest. At the same time, it linked bus stations and train station which give people

convenient transportation to arrive or leave here. Paseo del Prado could be read as a micro-system of public space that offered all needed support for tourists, and where they can enjoy great service from all aspects.

4.- Conclusions

The analysis of these two scales of public spaces in the central area of Madrid allows us to understand the relationship between them and the local dynamics as well as the importance of these free spaces for the spatial structure of the city. Either in a neighborhood scale, as Plaza Tirso de Molina, or in an international one, as Paseo del Prado, regarding its cultural importance on a global stage, these public spaces presented spatial structures with great power of organization in the city.

It is evident the importance of Plaza Tirso de Molina to the spatial organization of Embajadores neighborhood: it's the only public open space in an area with very dense urban fabric. This unique free space status gives the *plaza* its main identity and is also its main strength as an element of organization. It improves the *liveability* and supports the collective and public live by offering 1) a good design area of leisure, rest and gathering people; 2) an important space for kids' entertainment; and also 3) a place for cultural manifestations and traditional events, such as *Rastro Market*, that takes place in the streets and plazas of the neighborhoods of La Latina and Lavapiés, the popular name of this area. The *imageability* of the place is also fostered by the plaza, since it concentrates some important facilities and amenities of the neighborhood, giving them support and an important visibility. In one of the plaza's edge is settled Teatro Appolo, an important cultural reference in the surrounding area, in another corner is the Centro de Moda al Mayor, as a reminiscence of the wholesale used to occupy the area, and the space around the plaza in the ground floor also concentrate bank services and an important and diversify retail. There's also a good offer of cafes, bars and restaurants that spread their tables in the plaza floor and in the sidewalks around, offering an important support for the cultural facilities and the social life, and fostering the area's night life, a very important issue concerning the local management.

This public space also improves the mobility system of the neighborhood. As an open area, it's a spatial reference for both pedestrians and vehicles. The public transport is also boosted by the plaza, since it perform a good design open air connection between the metro and the major bus stops along Magdalena Street.

But public open space itself is not the only motor of this system of organization. The good design has an effective role in this process. The remodeling project undertaken in 2006 was decisive for the good indicators of this area in the issues of *liveability*, *imageability* and *maintenance*. By promoting the transference between two public transport systems in an open space, restricting vehicle transit in both sides of the plaza and enlarge the sidewalks around, it clearly privilege pedestrians above cars, promoting human scale and public life. The flower market in the plaza also improves the identity image of the place, considering the positive visual impact of the flower's colors and textures. The flat and free of obstacle pavement in front of the theater gives the necessary support and visibility required for a cultural facility, and the space for kids entertainment with water and playground, provide entertainment for all ages.

The importance of *Paseo del Prado* transcends the national scale. Madrid's image as a global city is connected to this public space more than any other monument or prominent architecture in the city. Created in the eighteenth century as a privileged space for leisure and entertainment, it still follows today with this function, promoting the connection of the most important museums in the world. Along its 1.2 kilometers of extension are placed the museums of Prado, Reina Sofia, Thyrsen Bornemisza, Naval and Caixa Forum. Complementing the attractions of this route there is also the

Real Jardín Botánico, Palacio de las Cibeles and Atocha Station, the main train station in Madrid and an important gateway to the city. It should also be emphasized the importance of Paseo del Prado as the initial stretch of the most important economic axis of the city formed by the Paseo del Prado, paseo de Recoletos and Paseo de la Castellana along which develops one of the major business areas of the city. With so many focuses of interest, all Kevin Lynch's landscape attributes could be fully applied in this *path*, thus proving the undeniable *imageability* appeal of this public space.

The generous width of the *path* and the possibility of linking the different museums across a wooded and comfortable boulevard are not its only attractions. The specificity of its implementation provides a spatial organization of great importance for the city, especially for tourism, since it offers a microstructure able to spatially organize this activity. A tourist wishing to visit the city's main museums could, for example, focus all its permanence along this axis, since it provides the minimal necessary infrastructure to accommodate this activity: displacement of large distance from Atocha station, possibility of displacement by walking through an comfortable public spaces and with good quality of design; cultural attractions; architectural monuments; multiple offer of hotels, restaurants, bars and cafes of all scales support this central promenade and establish the connection to the adjacent town. The *liveability* of this site has the same characteristics as found in other iconic touristic places of global cities. It loses some human scale and turns an impersonal place, with the passage scale of the tourists, that have a different approach to the city comparing with a local citizen. Although in the case of Paseo del Prado small-scale plazas attached attempt to establish these comfortable places to rest and leisure, this path seems to be more for tourist than local citizen. In days of celebration, however, the scenario is different: the big terraces of the path and the pavement around the fountains become a perfect stage for the celebration of sports titles, traditional festivals or popular demonstrations, especially in the vicinity of Cibeles' fountain. Citizens of all parts came to gather in the monumental space of this path.

The last major intervention in the Prado promenade happened more than two decades ago and since 2006 has been discussing the implementation of a new project, carried out under the direction of Alvaro Siza, which lowers the car traffic lanes, widens the pedestrian paths and creates pavement extensions that improve the access to museums. This, however, does not appear to have significant influence on the daily flow of people who attend it, perhaps for the great strength of the cultural appeal of its surroundings. The wide dimensions of the path and the regular floor maintenance guarantee the constant presence of tourists and the success of the adjacent commercial and cultural activities, which seem to ensure the dynamic of this area, positively contributing to local management. The analysis of public spaces presented here based on the methodologies developed by Lynch (1960), Carmona (2008) and Gehl (2013) allows us to understand the influence of these two typologies in the spatiality and sociability of the city. The combination of public spaces with quality and the Mediterranean climate, with mild temperatures and sunny days in most of the year, allow Madrid presents an intensive use of its public spaces, including along the months of autumn and winter, as verified in this research. The intensive use of urban public spaces gives vitality and boosts commercial activities, especially the ones related with culture and entertainment. Understanding how public spaces can structure the local dynamics in different scales is an important step to guide urban policies thought more dynamic and sustainable cities.

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