

# THE IMMINENT REDISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CITY

*Posted on 29/03/2023 by Alex Atxa*

# First stop: from the road network and open-air parking to recovering spaces designed for coexistence and social interaction

Cities have been planning and growing in parallel to times of industrial boom accompanied by the migratory movement from rural areas to the city. The urgent residential demands of that time were appeased through urban developments designed to accommodate a population mass eager to find job opportunities and meet their vital expectations.

Cities grew in height and density on the one hand, and with large road axes on the other, two variables linked by an idea of that time: a place to sleep and another to travel by car. At the other extreme, the urban centers agglomerated the activity, the facilities and services, the cultural and leisure goods, the dynamism and attractiveness of the city as a whole, acting as a center of gravity for the population that did not have these services or possibilities in their closest environment.

In a simplistic way, it could be said that this urban duality has dominated the city, generating a high occupation of public space by roads and an urban imbalance in terms of dynamism and neighborhood activity.

These urban deficiencies or weaknesses can be combated, thanks to the fact that the city behaves in some way like a living organism due to its capacity for growth, but above all due to its capacity to regenerate its internal tissues. This **regenerative quality of the city gives rise to new transformation opportunities** to incorporate aspects of increasing importance once forgotten such as pollution, noise, human health, economic activity, social interaction, environmental quality, among others.

This liveliness of the city makes it possible to "repair/mature/evolve/metamorphose" those existing fabrics that have not had or have not been able to take into account important keys from the point of view of urban planning and city creation.

To do this, the first step is to reclaim our streets from cars. According to the OECD, **50% of the public space in European cities is dedicated to cars**, being parked on average 95% of the day. It is time to end the constant struggle for the conquest of public space between cars and pedestrians. One of the objectives pursued seeks to completely change the proportion of public space:

*> Redistribution of public space in favor of natural mobility: 75% of public space for people within a maximum period of 10 years.*

**As we move cars off the streets to return public space to the public** we will be able to count on a larger area of a public nature and address the challenges of the city starting from a greater capacity for intervention.

The new people-centred urban design can be **furthermore enriched if it is combined with the**

**appearance and/or densification of green areas and trees, as well as with the introduction of nature-based solutions** such as elements designed to improve air quality, regulate temperature, increase well-being in general, reduce stress levels, and advance the process of reconciliation between the urban environment and the natural environment.

Europe is promoting this necessary transformation through European Directives such as the [ZBE](#); European funds for the implementation of [NBS](#); or the [Bauhaus](#) movement; which shows that we are facing the ideal moment to redesign our streets and public spaces and update the urban space according to the new standards of the city and quality of life.

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Main image: [BolivarHoy](#)

