

Una aproximación a las plazas actuales del Centro Histórico de San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas

*The current squares of the Historical Center in San Cristóbal de Las Casas,
Chiapas, an approach*

*Uma aproximação para as praças atuais do Centro Histórico de San Cristóbal de
Las Casas, Chiapas*

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Resumen

Muchas de las plazas en las ciudades hispanoamericanas fueron creadas con base en la mezcla de las culturas prehispánica y española que dio lugar a un nuevo modelo urbano adaptado para cada una de estas ciudades¹. El caso estudiado en este artículo es el de la ciudad de San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, la cual, por contar con un Centro Histórico protegido, ha conservado sin alteraciones significativas las plazas que la conforman —a diferencia de otras ciudades, donde la transformación en la composición de sus plazas propició el cambio de uso de estas. Este conjunto fue conformado inicialmente por medio de una plaza principal que se ubicó en el centro; y más tarde, cuando creció la ciudad, fue rodeada por otras plazas construidas en el núcleo de cada barrio. Por lo tanto, se llevó a cabo una recopilación de los datos históricos del surgimiento de estas y los

¹ Variación que se generaba a partir de la traza ya existente y a la topografía del lugar. El modelo resultó un intento para compatibilizar la tradición presente con la norma oficial (Terán, 2002).

cambios que las han llevado a su consolidación actual. Finalmente, con la información recabada, se elaboró una clasificación que engloba sus funciones y características.

Palabras clave: centralidad, Centro Histórico, plaza, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, símbolo de poder.

Abstract

Many of the squares created in Spanish-American cities were based on a mixture of pre-Hispanic and Spanish cultures, which gave rise to a new model adapted for each of these cities². This article studies the case of the city of San Cristobal de Las Casas, which, due to its protected historical center, has preserved the places that make it up without significant alterations - since in different cities the change in the composition of its squares led to the change of use of these -. This set was formed by a main square located in the city center, which was surrounded by other squares built in the core of each neighborhood once the city started to expand. Therefore, a compilation was made to get historical data of the emergence of these squares and the changes that have led to its current consolidation. Finally, with the information collected, a classification was made to encompass its functions and characteristics.

Keywords: centrality, square, Historical Center, San Cristobal de Las Casas, power symbol.

Resumo

Muitos dos lugares nas cidades hispano-americanas foram criados com base na mistura de culturas pré-hispânicas e espanholas que levaram a um novo modelo urbano adaptado para cada uma dessas cidades. O caso estudado neste artigo é o da cidade de San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, que, por ter um Centro Histórico protegido, preservou sem alterações significativas as praças que o compõem - ao contrário de outras cidades, onde a transformação na composição de seus quadrados levou à mudança de uso destes. Este conjunto foi inicialmente formado por meio de um quadrado principal localizado no centro; e mais tarde, quando a cidade cresceu, foi cercada por outras praças

² Variation that was generated from the already existing trace and the topography of the place. The model turned out to be an attempt to reconcile the present tradition with the official norm - Ordenanza de Felipe II - (Teran, 2002)

construídas no núcleo de cada bairro. Portanto, uma compilação dos dados históricos do surgimento destes e das mudanças que levaram à sua consolidação atual foi realizada. Por fim, com as informações coletadas, foi elaborada uma classificação que engloba suas funções e características.

Palavras-chave: centralidade, Centro Histórico, praça, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, símbolo do poder.

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Introduction

In Latin American cities, an urban element stands out in the view of the spectator because of its planimetry with respect to the built space. This element called plaza vestibulates the most representative buildings of the city. Its symbolism led it to gather power, and its inhabitants offered the possibility of interacting with each other.

From Ancient Greece served as a model of order that allowed to divide the city and group buildings with similar functions so that these were not scattered throughout the urban layout. Different cultures continued using this ordering throughout later periods. The variation between each of them was recorded in the composition that governed that space, but in its centralizing and hierarchical nature there was no change.

In Latin America, the base model present in the squares of today is the tax imposed by the Spaniards in the period of the conquest, which still retains some of its original characteristics. These can be appreciated mainly in cities that have managed to preserve their historical monuments. Within the municipalities of Chiapas it highlights the city of San Cristobal de Las Casas for two reasons: the first one for being Spanish capital in the sixteenth century, from its founding in 1528 (Aubry, 1992) -what led to be a clear example of the "novohispano model" -; the second to preserve to date a vast catalog of historical monuments, which are framed by a set of squares that were built as a measure of control and territorial ordering, establishing a neighborhood centrality.

Because there are no detailed studies about this public space in Chiapas, we proceeded to conduct this research paper to give a classification and collect the most important data so far known of its structural elements of urban design. For a better understanding is exposed, in the first section, the classification that at a global level has been given to this space from its use or design. Also, to provide a vision of the evolution of this public space, general historical data about its characteristics and functions for which it has been used are detailed. Also, the reason for the emergence of places in Latin America is explained, in addition to the context that was lived in that period. Then you begin to particularize the issue, focusing on the study area, the city of San Cristobal de Las Casas, to explain how it was carried out urbanization, because of location separately from each of these places and how it influences its location and configuration in the life of the citizens of each neighborhood. All this to have a catalog approach based on the aforementioned aspects.

Types of places in history

There are different types of places that formed the trace of various settlements throughout history. In most of them important celebrations took place and they became a fundamental part in the daily life of the inhabitants of the places where they were built. Next, the places according to their historical structure are detailed:

- Greek square or agora: it was a place that served to join different buildings that shared the same function; the Greeks divided these spaces for three functions: public, political and commercial use. This represented a symbol of order in the acropolis (Pérgolas, 2002).
- Roman Square or Roman Forum: Pérgolas (2002) expresses that it was a rectangular, uncovered space, surrounded by sculptures, colonnades, exedra and porticos that vestibulated buildings that do not have a relationship in terms of their use. Normally these were closed between two representative buildings (basilica and temple). Due to its size and importance, the buildings managed to provoke tension in space.
- Medieval square: for Pérgolas (2002) was formed by the widening of streets. It is divided into three types: civil (for the municipal palace); religious (for the cathedral), which, moreover, represented the space that separated the celestial from the earthly world, and the commercial one (for the market), usually located on the outskirts of the city.

- Renaissance Plaza: appeared as an articulation of public space in relation to the seat of power. Located centrally, it was customary to start from this the main streets that led to other squares (Pérgolas, 2002).
- Prehispanic Plaza: it was a large central space that had small buildings (this type was consolidated before the Spanish colonization). It was developed in open and central spaces, since the center represented the origin of life. Its use was religious, for activities of society, administrative functions, military and housing, that is, they were polyfunctional. Also, they were delimited by monumental stone buildings. According to Díaz (2000), "the plaza represented the human level and the height of the building the divine level" (page 155).
- Plaza of the meeting between two worlds: space with esplanade on land (Parodi, 2010).
- Plaza de la Ley de Indias: created from the Royal Certificate of Felipe II that contained the characteristics of colonial urbanism. Parodi (2010), in the squares of the Historic Center of Guadalajara, describes it as "a space with an esplanade, composed of few elements constructed as (piles, rolls and pitchforks)" (p.17).
- Place of Enlightenment or of the Enlightenment: refers to a formal and hierarchical order, integrating central monuments. It is worth mentioning that, with the aim of consolidating political power, statues were installed as a symbol of this in the squares commemorating illustrious figures (Fernández, 2000).
- Mudéjar Plaza: for Paniagua (2010) "it is an atrium. Closed, it is an extension of the temple, isolates it, and makes it the unifying sign of the axis of urban life, "thus allowing the congregation of the people and the passage of images. For this reason, there is a vacuum (p 188).
- Baroque Plaza:
 - It is designed to look like the monument that it frames. The fantasy and the movement of the facade should be admired, nothing should hide them, from afar they should invite to approach. The ornament is therefore not the square but the building to which it serves as a frame. The garden here is anachronistic. The baroque lords mineral squares, whose floor is a drawing or a mosaic of slabs and paving stones, a "bare base" case with a statue (Paniagua, 2010, page 188).
- Neoclassical Plaza:

- Its beauty lies in the detail, in capitals, triglyphs, denticles that can be seen up close and disappears from afar. The garden or mall are not obstacles, on the contrary they offer comfort to detail the fineness of the style, between flowers and bushes, they are in harmony in the neoclassical project, where the criterion is not the human prowess of the baroque that challenges nature (Paniagua , 2010, p 188).
- Plaza de la Independencia: it has the same characteristics as the Plaza de la Ilustración, but with new symbols (Parodi, 2010).
- Plaza del Nuevo Orden: it presented a radical change and a transformation towards a garden square (Parodi, 2010).
- Modern Plaza: it was a continuity with respect to the previous space, the Plaza del Nuevo Orden.
- Postmodern Plaza: it was framed as a search for new elements and was characterized by the loss of symmetry and centrality.
- Contemporary Plaza: it changes its use, its function and the conformation of this space to be adapted to the new conditions of society. "This almost never has a specific function nor does it depend, strictly speaking, on a building or a monument. Its purpose is to constitute an attractive meeting and meeting place. "(Favole, 1995, p.10).
- Also, some places are characterized by their use, such as the following:
- Plaza de armas: represented the governability and all the hierarchical values associated with this concept. Around this type of plaza, the powers of the government, the cabildo, the church and the military hierarchy (Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán [UADY], 1999) were established.
- Resting place: they are those of stay or rest, they are equipped with kiosks or pavilions so that events take place there (Parodi, 2010).
- Traffic square: widening in the concentrations of streets where traffic accumulates (Parodi, 2010).
- Bullring: closed area where bullfighting shows are held. Juárez, Merchant, Morales and Roldan (2008), in their writing Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum) "the power of an empire", state that the basic model for this type of square is the Roman Colosseum for performing similar functions, namely, for the entertainment of the population.

- Garden square: that where most of its surface is composed of vegetation.
- Main square:
 - It is a creation of Western society, which was born with the intention of offering a broad and central space, the city in which it sits, to serve as a meeting place for its inhabitants, a representative space in which they show their finery, and of central administrative place where the functions of authority, justice and rite are concentrated (Sancho, 2015, page 1).
 - a) Ordinary major square: those that have been developed spontaneously. They began their transformations and improvements at the beginning of the 16th century and they continue to develop and transform with the passage of time. This, being a modification of what already existed, had as a distinguishing element a larger dimension than the programmed, since it contained features of the pre-Hispanic monumental scale (National University Pedro Henríquez Ureña [UNPHU] / Michoacán University of San Nicolás de Hidalgo [UMSNH], 2001).
 - b) Programmed main square: they are built completely again, fulfilling a fixed program, always conceived with a non-religious profane sense, being configured as a single and complete piece (UNPHU/UMSNH, 2001).
 - Plaza monumental: su función es dar la visión de todo el conjunto en donde se encuentra, resaltando un monumento o edificio principal (Parodi, 2010).
 - Plaza utilitaria: son las que permiten el fácil acceso a edificios de importancia. No se encuentran en relación directa con una vía principal de tránsito (Parodi, 2010).
 - Plazoleta: plaza pequeña, que suele haber en jardines y alamedas.
 - Plazuela: espacio de menor dimensión que una plaza, sirve para divertimento, ceremonias y resalta la dignidad del edificio público (Paniagua, 2010).

Historical background of the places in Latin America

From pre-Hispanic times, the cities were ordered so that the center was arranged as a place of hierarchy for the temple or place of worship of the population. This central part was surrounded by a square that allowed a balance between the large volumes destined to the temples and the emptiness. This space also served as coexistence and exchange of products, so it was customary for the market to be in the square and its surroundings; the homes of the upper classes (priests, lords and individuals with greater power) were located and the houses of the lower classes were the most remote (Cordero, 2015).

At the time of the arrival of the colonizers in America, as well as during the conquest, the Spaniards set out to make changes in the layout of the towns. The model they used was the grid or checkerboard, according to the Ordinances of new discoveries and populations, dictated by the Council of the Indies of 1573, which were characterized as follows:

A large public space in the center, usually rectangular or square in shape - due to the grid pattern of the streets. It was usually landscaped and served for public or popular congregations. On the sides of this square were available buildings that corresponded to different powers; political -palacio of government-, religious - catholic example that replaced the polytheist temple, as a strategy for evangelization- and commerce -commercial establishments— (Cárdenas, 2012, p. 23).

The model brought by the colonizers (Renaissance design) was complemented with the existing one, forming a mixture between both, denominated as "Novohispano model" (Terán, 2002). This model meant a change of restructuring of the pre-Hispanic squares, since they were subjected to "dismantling". Spaces that had always been composed of a wide esplanade with buildings of monumental scale, were reduced and subjected to the demolition of their temples to build colonial buildings of lesser proportion (UNPHU / UMSNH, 2001). This dimensioning differed between both cultures, as already suggested, since the pre-Hispanic ideology dictated that the size of its squares must be, according to Puppo (1992), "of gigantic scale because it becomes a kind of container of the world, it is the place where gods congregate, where everything that matters takes place" (p.84). The location of the central square only came to vary in the port cities, since in these cases the square was placed precisely in the port, and served as a means for the

exchange of products, at the same time a maritime defense. Consequently, they were integrated walls that delimited them. An example of this is currently seen in the city of Veracruz (Terán, 2002).

In such a way that, in most cities, although the new trace was created from the one already established, because the Spanish builders lacked specialized equipment and hand, it also meant the opportunity to try out the Renaissance model (checkerboard or grid), because in Europe it had not been possible to carry it on a large scale because its trace was already well established (Díaz, 2000). Of the few European cities that had a Renaissance square, one can mention the main square of Warsaw, dating from the fourteenth century (Camacho M., 1994). However, despite the modifications, the restructured spaces continued to be larger than those in Spain. The largest extension within the Hispanic countries is that of Mexico City, currently known as the Zócalo, which has an area of 45,000 m² (Villasana and Gómez, 2017).

On the other hand, there were also central squares created from scratch. The first in the Mexican territory was Valladolid, built in 1561 (UNPHU / UMSNH, 2001). Around the main squares, the Spaniards built their houses, thus forming "the nucleus of Spanish power" or "white city", a term given by Mario Camacho (1994) in his writing Structure of the cities of New Spain. Consequently, it was necessary to distribute the conquered population through a grouping in neighborhoods. Each of these neighborhoods had, then, its own urban centrality generated around a church or parish, which, in turn, had its own square or square, a quality that served to highlight the clerical character of the city (Díaz, 2000). This phenomenon arose in different cities around Mexico, such as Morelia, Zacatecas, Puebla, Mexico City, and so on.

After the colonial period was concluded and when the New Spain seats were consolidated, they remained with the same features that characterized them - once more as a symbol of clerical power. Later, when the ideas of the Enlightenment (the eighteenth century) were disseminated - whose main objective was to subtract power from the clergy, since traditionally he was in charge of making the most important decisions in the city and had great influence in the population, and to transfer said power to the State-, in Latin America a series of modifications was carried out in the urban spaces. These transformations consisted in the fact that the squares were landscaped and transformed into malls, creating walks -trails for public use- and in some cases integrating power figures (monuments) and kiosks for the realization of various recreational activities (Fernández F.,

2000). Another tactic used at this time was the change to public use of the squares of each church, adding an atrium to develop religious activities there (Díaz, 2000).

Then, in the XIX and XX centuries, during the Porfiriato³, The president of Mexico made a series of remodels in public spaces. On this occasion the goal of the changes was to modify the ceremonial character of the squares and adapt them to modern uses so that they could carry out civic and social activities -without forgetting history-, so that monuments were placed inside the squares to commemorate historical facts (Díaz, 2000). But, also, and Western ideas and as a symbol of modernity, space was available around commercial buildings, banks, departmental buildings and luxury restaurants (Gómez, 2013). Examples of these changes occurred in the Zócalo of Mexico City, which became a garden⁴ (Villasana & Gómez, 2017); In the city of Mérida, its central plaza was equipped with street furniture and the Alameda de Mérida was built, as well as the promenades of Las Bonitas, San Antón or Merino (Díaz, 2000).

A short time later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new Porfirian ideology emerged. And again these urban spaces were modified. The current ideology was to separate each space by its function. This would cause the plaza to lose its integrating and community character and begin to be used as an element to highlight a building, monument or becoming a park (Pérgolas, 2002). In certain cases, the square that used to be a resting place was used for transit, given that the previously narrow roads were opened due to vehicular demand (Gómez, 2013). Despite the changes suffered, there were places that did not lose their symbolism and continued to be a meeting space, only suitable for the realization of various popular activities and tourism.

Contrary to this trend, in recent years, many places have undergone renovations that have led them to lose their historical contribution; this is the case of the central plaza in the center of San José, Costa Rica. Its modification was to become a point of tourist attraction - despite the disagreement of the community; Several elements of its composition, such as its kiosk, were demolished and replaced by modern elements (Low, 2005).

³ Durante este periodo, se consolidaron los espacios urbanos y se crearon otros nuevos a través de la lógica de continuidad del espacio colectivo orientado al disfrute masivo de calles, avenidas y plazas (Campos, 2011)

⁴ A partir de los años 50, se decidió liberar el espacio para que regresara a su función de plaza política y social (Villasana & Gómez, 2017).

Historical background of the plazas in San Cristóbal de Las Casas

Officially, San Cristóbal de Las Casas was founded by the Spaniards on March 31, 1528. Its layout, however, was made until April 24, 1528, at the hands of Europeans rather than Spaniards, since not all were compatriots (Aubry, 1992). The first track comprised a total of 18 blocks and 12 streets in addition to the central plaza, which was surrounded by the government palace, the cathedral and the homes of Spaniards, with those closest to the center being those of the highest rank (Aubry, 1992).

The Indians were displaced from the center and divided into neighborhoods around the Spanish core. A church was established for each neighborhood led by evangelical friars to inculcate the Catholic religion. It should be noted that the church was connected by streets to the central square, which also served as part of one of the six defenses⁵ that were taken so that there was no friction between both sides, thus avoiding uprisings and generating a control by the Spaniards towards the Indians. "This union that the New-Hispanic model caused to connect the neighborhood squares, with the central one, reinforced the omnipresence of power" (López, 1989, 56).

The neighborhoods were conforming in different dates; in 1528, for example, the neighborhoods of Mexicanos and El Cerrillo -on a small hill behind the convent of the friars preachers-, and in 1577 that of San Antonio. The last neighborhood to emerge was that of Cuxtitali, in the sixteenth century (Camacho, Lomelí, & Hernández, 2007). However, as the population sprawl grew, new ones emerged, such as, at the end of the 17th century, La Merced; in 1669 that of Santa Lucía and, in the 19th century, Barrio Guadalupe (Chanona, 2010). Although this last one does not correspond to the Spanish conquest, it is one of the most representative neighborhoods, since it respected the tradition of having a church with square or plaza dedicated to its respective patron, where up to date festivals and events are held every year.

⁵ La primera consistía en un colchón protector de campos al descubierto; la segunda eran los ríos con interdicción de construir puentes; la tercera era el colchón protector de las parcelas de cultivo de los barrios; la cuarta, las vigías periféricas indígenas (los seis barrios), y la quinta defensa consistía en el colchón protector o área verde entre barrio y centro. Posteriormente, existió una sexta defensa que consistía en los conventos que hacían de embajadas ante los indígenas (Aubry, 1992).

Main squares within the Historic Center

The set of 16 squares that are scattered in different latitudes of the city represent points of interest for both national and foreign tourists who come to observe the colonial buildings or enjoy the landscape that surround them (See Figure 1). However, mainly, they are a space of coexistence between the neighbors of each neighborhood, which carry out festivities or fairs in them. Within the composition of the squares, located within the limits of the Historical Center, are vestiges of the lifestyles of the ancient settlers. Next, a characterization of the most representative:

- **Plaza 31 de Marzo.** Also known as Plaza de Armas; Historically, it has been called Plaza Mayor, Plaza Principal, Plaza del Mercado - since, until 1890, the Public Market remained there-, Jardín de Reforma, Parque Benito Juárez, Parque de la Federación, Parque de Vicente Espinosa and Parque Dr. Manuel Velasco Suárez (Camacho, Lomelí and Hernández, 2007). At the time, it became the Central Plaza of Ciudad Real de Chiapas, where traditionally the power activities of the provincial church, the town hall and the commercial establishments were developed in its surroundings. Also, at that time, it was a point of concentration of the Spanish caste (García, 1990), without the Indians settled in the vicinity of the Spanish settlement entering it.

Figura 1. Mapa con la ubicación de las plazas dentro del Centro Histórico



Fuente: Elaboración propia

For this reason, the conqueror and founder of this city, Diego de Mazariegos, built his house on one side of the square and, as a design tactic, the church was erected on a higher embankment so that it could be appreciated and observed at a distance. (Jiménez, 2015). In addition, the plaza was equipped with some portals for the comfort and protection of the traffic of the neighbors, but over time these were disappearing, leaving today those on the east side (Jiménez, 2015).

As mentioned, this space was equipped to be used in different functions, becoming a fundamental site for the routine life of its inhabitants. In that sense, in 1555, every Thursday afternoon he began to use it -for the Indians- as a market; Later, it would change place since it generated an agglomeration of posts (De Vos, 2004).

Throughout the years in this square modifications were made that caused a change in its size and composition. Data of Paniagua (2010), in his writing *Memorable Voices of the Resistance*, reveals that the house of the sirens -construction adjacent to the square- when intervened, caused the square to be reduced a bit in size. In 1737 a battery was added for the distribution of water, because at that time they did not have public water networks (Esponda, 2010).

Figura 2. Plaza 31 de Marzo y su quiosco morisco



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

After some time, the square was equipped with equipment (See Figure 2) so that a greater number of people could use it:

In the period that includes the years 1884-1897, a series of modifications was carried out in the Central Plaza. Modernizing its Government Palace, changing the pile for a kiosk, the esplanade was landscaped, its platform was covered with calicanto and covered with flagstone. (Paniagua, 2010 p.188).

These changes turned it into a neoclassical plaza that was and is currently the scene of the main events of the community life of the inhabitants of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, and an iconic place within this city.

- **Plaza de La Paz.** It is located next to the Plaza Mayor, in front of the cathedral (Figure 3). In the beginning this block was occupied by the episcopal palace, then it was a barracks and in the period of President Lázaro Cárdenas (in 1935) it became the first technical institution known as the School of Arts, Industries and Trades. However, this building was the cause of disputes, since its facade of two floors obstructed the facade of the cathedral. So it was demolished in 1981 and it was decided to return this block in a public space, now known as Plaza de la Paz.

Figura 3. Plaza de La Paz, con sus elementos arquitectónicos: la catedral y el Museo de la Ciudad

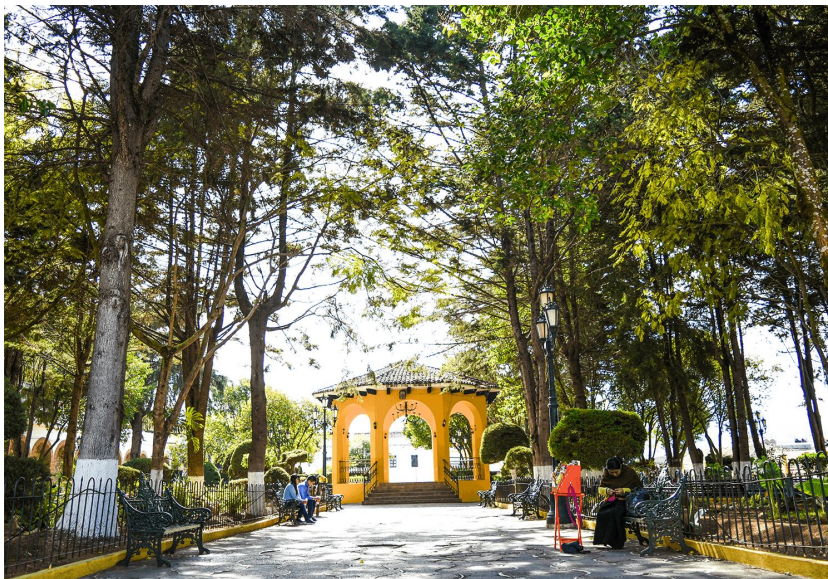


Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

This is a large square, since it is not equipped with so many architectural elements; it is usually used as a stage for important events, whether festivals or cultural events and political and social events. In 1882 the section of the street that passed in front of the cathedral was closed and two thirds of its surface was destined as parking (Fernández & Artigas, 1985).

- **Plaza de la Merced.** In the time of Porfirio Diaz, this place was visited by the military; Because of this, at the end of the 19th century, a tower was added to accommodate these visitors (Jiménez, 2015). This tower is located in the building that functioned as a barracks, now converted into the Amber Museum.
- This neoclassical square has important buildings, such as, in addition to the aforementioned museum, the church of La Merced (See Figure 4). It is surrounded by gardens, tall trees and a central kiosk. This urban space was transformed into a bullring during the neighborhood fair, thus it served as the first bullring in the city (Chanona, 2010). It has a retaining wall made of stone that closes the perspective to the hill of San Cristóbal. Also with apparent brick arches on your floor, stairs and bridge (Fernández y Artigas, 1985).

Figura 4. Plaza de La Merced



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

- **Plazuela de San Francisco.** It is located in the neighborhood of Santa Lucía and has a Baroque style, since only few elements are found that do not demerit the façade of the San Francisco church (Figure 5). These are a pile that was rescued from the rubble of an ancient property of the seventeenth century containing relief engravings of indigenous symbols and a cross previously destroyed in the Zapatista movement and restored by residents of the neighborhood (Jiménez, 2015, p. 156).

Figura 5. Plazuela de San Francisco



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

- **Plazuela de Santa Lucía.** Framed by the church of Santa Lucía (See Figure 6), it is frequented mainly by older people and is a point of identity of the homonymous neighborhood where it is located (Bustamante y Díaz, 2005).
- **Plaza Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas.** Located on Insurgentes Avenue, in front of the state secondary school, it has a total of 2.38 ha of extension (Bustamante and Díaz, 2005). This square that commemorates Fray Bartolomé (Figure 7) has a statue of this located right in the center, which was donated by Bishop José Francisco Orozco y Jiménez (Jiménez, 2015). Since this is a garden square, there are sports and recreation activities.

Figura 6. Plazuela de Santa Lucía



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

Figura 7. Plaza Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

- **Plazuela de Santo Domingo.** It joins the church of Santo Domingo with the former convent, now the Museum of Santo Domingo (See Figure 8). It is located on the north side of the Alameda General Utrilla. It is accessed by means of a staircase, it has gardens and crafts stands are grouped around it.
- **Alameda General Utrilla.** It covers three blocks between the church of Santo Domingo in the North and the House of the Indigenous Woman in the South (Figure 9). Inside, there are monuments, gardens and terraces that were warlike testimony of the founding struggles (Paniagua 2010).

Paniagua (2010), in his book *Voces Memorables de la Resistencia*, he explains that

In its beginnings this mall was the square of the Church of Charity, it was from the nineteenth century that it was transformed and incorporated green areas. This remodeling not only served to create a pleasant space for the residents, it also allowed communication between the plaza of the Cerrillo neighborhood with the streets of Mexicanos and the Poniente street of the Plaza Mayor, by means of a retreat of the southern face of the Church of the Charity. This communication is internal since this "alameda" or "garden square" of neoclassical origin, works as a point of union between the square of Santo Domingo and the Church of Charity, generating a set that is perceived as "unified" (pp. 31-37).

The Alameda also has a kiosk, composed of a series of semicircular arches on pillars with bases attached to some walls. In the festivities dedicated to the Virgin of Charity, it is used by musical bands (Bustillo, 2007). However, at present this square is invaded by stalls selling handicrafts.

Figura 8. Plazuela de Santo Domingo



Fuente: Issac Jonathan Cordero Hernández (2011)

Figura 9. Alameda General Utrilla



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

- **Plaza del Cerrillo.** It has a central kiosk (See Figure 10); and it is surrounded, on the east side, by the church of the Lord of the Transfiguration, and on the west side there is a market (which, it should be clarified, does not obstruct the visibility of the Catholic temple, due to the fact that one more level is located under that the church).

Figura 10. Plaza del Cerrillo



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

- **Plaza de Mexicanos.** It is a quiet square because it is not on a main road; on the contrary, it is surrounded by houses that are mostly one-story and colorful (Figure 11). It has a kiosk in the center, raised one meter from the floor level of the square, on the north side, to the center of the block, facing the church. This kiosk was built by the inhabitants of the neighborhood (Maza, 2014). There, activities such as the representations of the Last Supper and the crucifixion of Jesus are carried out, just as, in the month of August, the celebration of the Virgin takes place in its three transitions: transit, assumption and coronation (Maza, 2014).
- **Plazuela de San Antonio.** It has little urban furniture, only a paved path that leads to the church of the same name, adorned with trees (Figura 12).

Figura 11. Plaza de Mexicanos



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

Figura 12. Plazuela de San Antonio



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2014)

- **Plaza de Cuxtitali.** Landscaped, it has a central kiosk (See Figure 13). Jiménez (2015), in his writing *Dissertations on San Cristobal de Las Casas, The Ciudad Real de Chiapas, Mexico ...* And other interesting things, he says that previously, not far from where the plaza in question is located, two hydroelectric plants were built. during the time they worked they were primary sources of energy for the city. To the north, there was a path

that led to a wheat mill popularly known as La Pera, which currently exists, as well as the Peje de Oro spring.

Figura 13. Plaza de Cuxtitali



Fuente: José Francisco Gómez Coutiño (2017)

- **Plaza del Carmen.** Plaza Mudejar joins by means of its walkways and gardens the Carmen temple, the Mudéjar Arch, the House of Culture, the Convention Center, the Fine Arts classroom and the Public Library (Paniagua, 2010). Data from Mendiguchía (1998), in Reconstruction and Restoration of the Temple of Carmen in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, say that, in the 1974-1975 period, it was decided to restore this square: first, four back-to-back buttresses were eliminated; that generated that the space that comprised was freed more, and to avoid future damages they were placed protections in the arc, also with the purpose of avoiding the passage of vehicles (See Figure 14).
- An interesting fact about this square is that the School of Plastic Arts that was built on its eastern side was the refuge of Subcomandante Marcos in 1994, during the stage of dialogues for peace between the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Government. Federal (Jiménez, 2015). Currently it is surrounded by a series of busts of illustrious men who frame the square.

Figura 14. Plaza del Carmen



Fuente: tomada por José Francisco Gómez Coutiño.

Results and Discussion

Analyzing the data described in each section, it can be seen that both in Mexico and in Chiapas, the same conditions for the creation of places were developed. The proportions of these spaces in Latin America were greater than those of Europe, because of the attempt to adapt the pre-Hispanic monumental square to a Renaissance square. However, the characteristic of building around it the most important buildings within the city prevailed.

For both cultures (pre-Hispanic and Spanish), the square meant an element of power that served to organize the composition of the city and to differentiate existing social classes. Since, in spite of the continental separation, in both cases the proximity to the central square was considered the space for the class of highest rank. This way of ordering the city not only served aesthetic purposes, but also as a means of control by the Spanish, who, being concentrated in the center of the city, had to find a way to not lose control.

This is how it is intuited that the implementation of the squares around the Historic Center of San Cristóbal de las Casas was due to a model created from the precepts of the Renaissance ideal city, since reticles, symmetrical proportions and squares were used as means of connection, and the existing prehispanic model. As a result of that, the churches are created with their squares in each neighborhood and the use of the Main Square of San Cristobal de Las Casas became daily

for the inhabitants, carrying out commercial activities, festivals and events of a religious or political nature.

Because its original composition changed in the periods following colonization, some of the plazas within the Historic Center are not known or in some period they were called parks or malls. The fact that the period in which most of the modifications were carried out corresponds to the 19th century and, referring to what Sergio Díaz said about the urban development that Mexico suffered, it is inferred that the same happened in San Cristóbal de Las Houses.

The political initiative of subtracting power from the Church led to squares being equated and landscaped; cultural buildings such as museums and workshops were erected for the population to make use of them. This is how the Central Plaza of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, in previous years, changed its name to Dr. Manuel Velasco Suárez Park, for example. Also, the Plaza del Carmen became a tourist route in which you can appreciate the architecture of the buildings that adorn it; the Plazuela of the Church of Charity was extended and became the Alameda General Utrilla, among other cases.

Commemorative places were also built for illustrious individuals such as Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Square and small squares of neighborhood churches, where they currently have chairs, trees, kiosks and stalls, which makes them today resting places visited by both local people as well as national and foreign tourists.

Conclusions

Derived from the classification of squares that exists in a large part of the country, these spaces that today survive in the traditional cities and neighborhoods, despite the great or small changes that they suffered, these equipments, their architectural and religious symbolism are still present for its inhabitants as a place of convergence where religious celebrations and festivities are held. This is due to its colonial past and its interest in preserving the history of its buildings, avoiding its modernization. It is also due to the fact that in the city that was studied in particular there was not so much influence of modern currents due to its location and the magnitude of its dimensions; for not being a main city like, for example, the capital of Mexico, where more cultural exchanges and knowledge that came from different countries were developed. In spite of all the above, there is currently a period of privatization in all its orders and there is a tendency to introduce rental spaces within the squares for the private business sector, so it is expected that, in the near future, the squares will once again be transformed.

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