PART 2　Theory and context

2 Visibility as a conceptual tool for the design and planning of democratic streets[2]

ABSTRACT   Democratic public spaces are open spaces - such as streets, parks, playgrounds and marketplaces - which are accessible to all and allow different cultural expressions for individuals and groups. They can be characterized by their vivid and active public life. This paper focuses on the visual features of public spaces at street level and understanding visibility as the condition of seeing and being seen in public space. It analyses how visibility can be useful to assess and promote democratic public spaces. This paper considers the visibility of immigrant amenities, such as shops, restaurants and communal places with distinctive signs, languages, and spatial practices. Describing the main features of democratic public spaces and democratic streets, this paper explains how the concept of visibility is associated with observable features of democratic streets. It claims that visibility can be used as a tool to analyse the democratic character of public space. This suggests that planners and designers need to be aware of the usefulness of taking into account visibility issues to promote inclusive public spaces and cities.

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2.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the visual features of public spaces; more precisely, visibility on the street, as a useful tool to plan and design democratic public spaces. Visibility is understood as the condition of seeing and being seen in public space. "Democratic streets" are those streets that are "open and accessible to all people, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age and socio-economic level and reflect the social and economic diversity of the city both at neighbourhood and city level" (UNESCO, 2018). A main assumption is that the visibility of distinctive urban groups on the street manifests the rights of these groups to participate in and appropriate their urban environment (Brighenti, 2010; Cancellieri and Ostanel, 2015).

The main question of this paper is: how can the concept of visibility be used as a tool to plan and design more democratic streets? The visual presence of immigrant amenities was selected to better understand the role of the condition of seeing and being seen in creating the diverse and inclusive character of democratic streets. The reason for this selection is because the observable features of these amenities— signs, marks, languages, products and spatial practices — enable the visibility of immigrants' cultural practices in the broad public of the city, at both neighbourhood and city level. The visibility of amenities also relates to the everyday engagement of immigrants to their receiving cities, which requires additional attention, as the inclusion of immigrants is still a challenge in many cities (King and Lulle, 2016). Additionally, the visibility of immigrant amenities gives insight into different ways in which public space is produced by immigrant groups. This can usefully inform urban planning and design practitioners and improve the elements of physical environment to satisfy the needs and expectations of different city inhabitants.

The conceptual framework considers four important aspects of democratic streets: their levels of participation and appropriation; their use and user diversity; the encounters and civility they promote; and their physical setting. Visibility in public space is approached according to the political, symbolic, social and physical aspects of the production of public space.

This article is organized in three parts: first it presents the concept of democratic public spaces and subsequently democratic streets. The next section focuses on the relation of visibilities of immigrant amenities to democratic streets. The last section presents the main findings and conclusions about using visibility as a conceptual tool.

2.2 Democratic public spaces and democratic streets

2.2.1 Democratic public spaces

Public spaces are at the core of everyday life, as they are the spaces where people interact with other people who are unfamiliar to each other. In this paper, the everyday life of the city is defined as 'the relatively routine functioning of those spaces in the city, to those patterns and routines that performatively emerge from their regular usage.' (Simpson, 2011). Public life – produced by the daily encounters with other people – takes place in public place. Public life offers urban dwellers a diverse and complex experience of living together in the city which may stimulate acceptance and respect among different social groups; or may raise unease among urban dwellers, which may not necessarily lead to civic bonds (Sennett, 1998; Gehl and Gemzøe, 2000; Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998; Watson, 2006; Amin, 2008).

In the western urban literature, a rich and vivid public life has been associated with the democratic values of public space. The term democracy originated from the Greek *demos,* 'the people' and *kratia* 'power'. Democracy can be understood as "the power that humans have to act into the world, the capacity […] to make a tangible impact in (their) surroundings" (Purcell, 2016:392). In political theory, democracy refers to "a way of making collective decisions about the distribution of resources, and the interests and power relations that structure that distribution." (Parkinson, 2012:24-26). In such way, democracy is about the manifestation and negotiation between different thoughts and interests on 'who gets what', which might be about distribution of products or services, but also about the rights to access to, use of and appropriate public spaces (Parkinson, 2012). Consequently, democratic public space refers to spaces, which are accessible to all - physically and conceivably – and enable an expression of differing choices, views or conflicting interest of inhabitants of all social groups (e.g. gender, age, economic status, and ethnicity). The presence and the social encounters between these various urban dwellers, and their related activities and amenities, constitute and enrich the public life of public spaces (Montgomery, 1998).

TOC

The modern use of the word 'public' appeared in the European bourgeois society in the eighteenth century, linked to the new public spaces—urban parks, boulevards, cafés, theatres, etc.—that emerged to serve more diverse groups of society (Sennett, 1990). But the original idea linking democracy and public space came from the uses associated to two significant spaces of the ancient Greek polis, Athens; specifically, the agora and the Pnyx (Sennett, 1998). The agora, the main square of the city was a marketplace and a gathering place for ceremonies and spectacles (Sennett, 1998). Concentrating civic activities, it generated the public life of the city for all its inhabitants, including those who were not eligible for full citizenship at that time, such as women, slaves and foreigners (Madanipour, 2003). The Pnyx was a bowl-shaped open-air theatre located in at a hill of central Athens in which only the Athenians with a 'full citizenship' gathered, debated, and took decisions about the city. Unlike the agora, it was a highly ordered space in which the audience focused on the stone platform in which the speaker gave his speech. The differences in the physical organization and the functions of the agora and the Pnyx shaped different practices of democracy; the former stimulated people to experience and observe the presence of other people and their needs, while the latter functioned as a place for decision-making (Sennett, 1998).

Influenced by the public spaces of the ancient Greek, the modern ideal of democratic public space has been envisioned as a common space for society, a place of political realm, which stimulates practices of free individuals through which collective meaning and action can be produced (Arendt, (1998 [1958]); Parkinson, 2012). This ideal of democratic public space has been inspired by Habermas' (1989[1962]) thinking about the 'public sphere' as an arena of public debate in which individuals exchange views and knowledge (Nielsen, 2019).

In real life, public space has never been entirely free and democratic, nor was it ever equally available to all, because it is closely related to political power and control considerations (Simpson, 2011). Unavoidably, different claims to the control and ownership of public space may bring conflict between the different actors and users (Francis, 1989; Madanipour, 2010). The politics of public space determines "who and what come to count as being truly 'public' and/or 'political' as well as how and where they can come to count" (Lees, 1998:232). Even in democratic spaces, an over-presence of one group in public space, for example men, might be less welcoming for other groups, such as women (Massey, 1994). Since ancient times, 'various social groups—the elderly and the young, women and members of sexual and ethnic minorities—have, in different times and places, been excluded from public space or subject to political and moral censure.' (Jackson, 1998:173). Likewise, movement and migration of people have generated conflicts and contestation between newcomers and old residents, and individuals and institutions (Hou, 2013).

Besides this contested nature of public space (Zukin, 1995; Mitchell, 1995), the debate regarding democratic public spaces has received more recent attention due to increasing concerns about the commodification and privatization of urban space (Madanipour, 2010; Loukatiou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1993). In many cities, the processes of commodification of urban development, and, more specifically, of urban revitalisation of central neighbourhoods, have brought public spaces under pressure, producing gentrification processes. In an effort to make public space safer and more attractive for investments and the settlement of wealthier groups, these processes reduce the diversity of public space by pushing out some urban groups (Smith, 1996; Lees, 1998; Madanipour et al., 2003). These issues are reflected in the ways in which public space are managed and policed. Exclusion of specific groups and the *de facto* segregation of urban society is an example of a strategy that authorities frequently use (Allen et al., 1998).

Nevertheless, democratic public spaces offer multiple opportunities for negotiation and exchange, providing mechanisms for the recognition and expression of the voices and perspectives of vulnerable groups. This perspective on democratic public spaces is clearly associated with academic discussions of Lefebvre's (1996) 'Right to the City'. The right to the city is defined as the right of citizens to the participation in and appropriation of their shared urban environment (Purcell, 2002). The right to participate entails that citizens should play an integral role in any decision that contributes to the design or making of urban space. The right to appropriation is the right to occupy and use urban space, as well as the right to produce urban space so that it meets the needs of its inhabitants.

2.2.2   Democratic streets and their main features

Streets are important cases to study democratic public spaces, due to their capability to generate a rich and active public life in the city. Streets constitute the core of public space, linking homes and buildings to all the open spaces in the city. Thus, the street grid is the basic infrastructure of the city for the circulation of people and goods (Appleyard, 1981; Marshall, 2005). A democratic street is "one that reflects the history as well as the social and economic diversity of the larger neighbourhood and the city" (Francis, 1989).

Streets admit a wide variety of expressions of public life, from everyday activities—like working, shopping, travelling, passing-by, or socialising—to extraordinary events, such as festivals, parades, rallies and demonstrations (Appleyard, 1981). People experience and identify the city through its streets (Lynch, 1960;

Ingold, 2000; Mehta, 2008); children learn about the world through their first-time experiences on the street (Appleyard, 1981; Francis and Lorenzo, 2002). Furthermore, streets also play a vital role in the social and economic life of the city in multiple ways by connecting people "in a significant [way], enabling practices of neighbourliness, community and place-making" (Hubbard and Lyon, 2018; Jacobs, 1961; Whyte, 1980).

Taking into account the physical, social and symbolic dimensions of public space, the academic literature has identified several inter-related features of democratic streets. The most significant are: use and user diversity; participation and appropriation; encounters and civility; and physical setting.

Use and user diversity refers to a balanced combination of commercial and residential functions on the street as well as user groups from various backgrounds (e.g. religion and ethnicity), social status (e.g. age, gender, and income groups) and connections with the street (e.g. residents and visitors). Such diversity indicates the ability of the street to embrace differences that produce a richer and more vivid public life. At the street level, some indicators of use and user diversity include: variety of land uses, a balanced proportion of independent shops and businesses, diverse patterns of opening hours, and active street facades (Montgomery, 1998; Francis, 1989).

Participation and appropriation are understood as the ways that the city inhabitants transform and personalise the street to satisfy their needs and demands, which helps to develop a sense of ownership and belonging. These features can be achieved in several ways. First is the spatial appropriation of the street by its inhabitants, through distinctive spatial practices or symbolic features such as cultural signs, languages, and symbols (Lynch, 1960; Bentley, 1985). Second, street inhabitants might directly participate in design and management processes of the street (Francis, 1989; Bentley, 1985). A third way is the possibility of interest groups to gather and express their views in order to, for example, challenge government measures (Bentley, 1985; Madanipour, 1998) or to organize parades and festivals to express the cultural values of a group (Zukin, 1995).

Encounters and civility refers to the role of democratic streets to promote a sense of mutual respect and recognition among different urban groups without neglecting differences (Young, 1990). Democratic streets promote casual encounters between different social groups with variations in race, class, gender, age, sexual preference, ethnicity, and ability, who may be unknown and unfamiliar to each other. These encounters offer opportunities to see and to be seen, observe and to be observed, noticed and recognized, as well as enhance opportunities for socialization among

different groups in a city. These characteristics have led researchers to consider democratic streets as cosmopolitan, and a ground for democratic civility, which fosters tolerance and empathy, enhances intercultural awareness and understanding (Lofland, 1998; Anderson, 2011; Nell and Rath, 2009).

The physical setting of the street, refers to the design of the street in ways that encourages use and user diversity, participation and appropriation, and encounters and civility, for which three relevant criteria have been identified:

— The *legibility* of the street is the quality by which the built environment gives a clear sense of place, either through its physical form or by its activity patterns (Lynch, 1960).

"Urban dwellers orient themselves by constructing an imagined city, and that city is located and continually reproduced in different ways through a wide range of common daily practices. It is through daily social practices that the city comes to be meaningful spatially, as a place of home, as a cluster of symbols, and as site for the reproduction of personal and group identities" (Shutt, 2015:117-118).

— *Permeability* is the condition of good physical and visual accessibility of the street, which improves people's awareness for different choices of street use. Visual permeability is particularly relevant for this study to analyse the relation between the street and ground floor uses and functions of buildings. Dead uses of ground floors, such as facades without windows, create an unattractive and unsafe street scene and negatively influence the public life of the street. Alternatively, active windows can offer a welcoming and attractive street environment (Montgomery, 1998; Carmona et al., 2008 [2003]).

— *Robustness* is a quality that allows new uses and appropriation of the street beyond the planned and designed ones, opening streets for multiple choices and socialisation possibilities without limiting each other. This could be, for example, through the availability of street furniture, wider pedestrian sidewalks, environmental comfort and the relationship between different modes of mobility, which might promote certain street uses (Francis, 1989; Bentley et al., 1985).

2.3   Visibility in public space

The concept of visibility in public space can be helpful to create and promote more democratic streets. In a broad sense, visibility refers to the condition of seeing and being seen. In academic literature, visibility has been studied from different perspectives associated with topics such as group and place identities, recognition, surveillance, control, and media representations (Knowles, 2012; Shields, 2003; Brighenti, 2007; Hall, 1997; Tagg, 1998; Hatuka and Toch, 2017). In this paper, visibility is understood as the visual perception of the observable features of individuals or groups in public space, which gives evidence of their lived experiences, or how they engage with, shape, and construct the built environment and more particularly public space, within the course of everyday life. These observable features can be expressed through bodily expressions (e.g. clothing, hairstyle) and performances (e.g. gatherings, events, festivals) of individuals and groups or through the features of amenities and neighbourhoods, which are characterised through distinctive signs, languages and/ or spatial practices (Knowles, 2012; Cancellieri and Ostanel, 2015).

In urban literature, a particular attention is given to visibility in public space, as public spaces are characterised as spaces of "appearance" and "exposure" (Arendt, 1998 [1958]; Sennett, 1990). Public space is seen as a stage in which individuals and groups see others but also make themselves available to be seen by the public. In this way, visibility and inter-visibility are understood as key features of the "public" character of spaces that are open and accessible to all, which are different than "private" spaces, which are often invisible, unseen and intimate (Arendt, 1998 [1958]; Sennett, 1990; Brighenti, 2010; Lofland, 1998).

The concept of visibility, or seeing and being seen in public space, emerged as a fundamental aspect of modern city life in early writings about urban social life (Simmel, 1903; Wirth, 1938). Visibility in public space is understood as an opportunity, which offers individuals the experience of diversity in the city; more specifically, "experiencing differences of class, age, race, and taste outside the familiar territory of oneself, in a street" (Sennett, 1990:126). The city's public life is considered, on the one hand, as emancipating and as providing a sense of anonymity (Simmel, 2002 [1903]) . On the other hand, it is considered as provocations of otherness, surprise and stimulation (Wirth, 1938). Public life teaches individuals how to cohabit with people who are different from themselves, something which may not always occur in harmonious ways and which requires accepting its inherent "disorder", yet it is central for developing civility among city inhabitants (Sennett, 1970; Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009).

The concept of visibility was originally about actual (or 'primary') visibility, based on direct experience or observation (Goldsmith, 2010). But the development of other kinds of visual representations of individuals and groups – such as photographs, films, and advertisements – in mass circulation newspapers and magazines produced another form of visibility (or 'secondary visibility') which crucially influences how individuals and urban groups perceive, think about and interact with each other (Tagg, 1988; Hall, 1997; Aitken and Lukinbeal, 1998; Shields, 2005). This may have negative consequences, such as stereotyping and marginalisation. An example of this is media representations of immigrants in relation to crime and poverty issues, which creates negative stereotypes of immigrants and contributes to the fear of and unease towards the presence of immigrants in public space (Brighenti, 2007; Cancellieri and Ostanel, 2015).

Secondary visibility has immensely intensified due to developments in visual recording technologies and the spread in ownership and use of mobile phone cameras (Goldsmith, 2010). The circulation of such images has led to what has been labelled as 'hypervisibility' (Brighenti, 2010), or 'new visibility', in which 'the visibility of individuals, actions and events is severed from the sharing of a common locale: one no longer has to be present in the same spatial-temporal setting in order to see the other or to witness an action or event.' (Thompson, 2005:31).

In this way, the role of visibility in relation to public life is 'extended beyond what can be seen with the eyes to the practice of "being exposed and known" through various technologies' (Hatuka and Toch, 2017:986). This has several implications: the role of visibility in shaping the public and private quality of public space is becoming blurred (Brighenti, 2010); and 'the idea of public space as a place that provides relative anonymity is shrinking' (Hatuka and Toch, 2017:13). More importantly, this new form of visibility has the capability to transform the relations between visibility and power (Thompson, 2005).

Nevertheless, visibility in public space provides solid empirical evidence of the lived experiences of urban groups by providing insight into the ways that these groups produce public space. Visibility reveals the "tactics" of urban groups to make sense of the city for their own needs, which may be different from what urban planners, designers and policy makers suggest in their schemes, visions and programs (De Certeau, 1985; Lefevbre, 1992, 1996; Shields, 2005).

Visibility relates to four key dimensions of the production of public space: symbolic, physical, social, and political. The symbolic dimension refers to the ways that social groups assign meaning to public space, appropriate it and guard it as part of their identities by manifesting their ethnic, linguistic, and other collective differences

(Backer, 2018; Cancellieri and Ostanel, 2015). This contributes to set up and to strengthen the necessary social networks to develop group identity and attachment to a place (Sandercock, 1998; Göle, 2011; Yücesoy, 2006).

The physical dimension relates to the ways in which social groups shape and modify the physical scene and setting of public space through their visibility. This can be in several ways: first, corporeal performances in public space, such as street vendors appropriating sidewalks; second, architectural styles, such as mosques in European cities (Knowles, 2012; Gale, 2006); or third, locations with distinctive names or spatial practices, such as Chinese shops and restaurants within major western cities. The physical design of public space is another significant aspect that influences the visual experience of people—and thus visibility in public space—by limiting or increasing the visual perception of public space. Important elements are the organisation of physical features—like streets or building blocks—that increase or block the view in public space (Hillier, 2007); street furniture and the lighting of streets and plazas may also influence visibility (Thibaud, 2001).

Visibility relates to the social dimension of public space by offering 'everyday urban engagement' with the 'diversity of "otherness" composing contemporary public life' (Knowles, 2012:652). Though it is not a direct process, visibility might generate awareness, apprehension and recognition of the co-presence of groups different from one's own group. However, "the very act of seeing and interpreting the other is dependent on the viewer and his or her point of view." (Sen, 2013:21). This is called 'relational visibility', a condition, which is produced when people meet in public space, leading to the physical perception of others, which is not the same for each perceiving individual. As Arendt (1998 [1958]: 57) explains 'being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position'. This is because not everybody has the same visual-spatial awareness and ability to understand and perceive the spatial cues and relations in (public) space (Knowles, 2012). Understanding the language of shops signs form part of visibility. Ethnic groups may introduce new elements to public space in the form of flags, symbolic colours and clothes – as wearing black, or white or very colourful dresses – which also form part of visibility, and may be differently perceived by different individuals and groups.

Finally, visibility in public space is also about the political construction of public space. Social groups compete for space, therefore they compete for public visibility and presence. Public space is a critical arena of the political, where different forms of visibility are practiced, changed and negotiated. In order to become visible, people, things, and objects must be present either physically or symbolically in public space (Gorter et al., 2012).

2.4 Visibility and democratic streets: a focus on immigrant amenities

Visibility in public space can also be helpful to study and analyse the features of democratic streets. This can be illustrated through a focus on immigrant amenities, which offer multiple possibilities to observe and experience immigrant cultural expressions (Nell and Rath, 2012; Watson, 2006). Their visible features are not limited to signs, languages, or merchandises; they also include immigrants' symbolic, social, physical and political manifestations in the city (Hall, 2015; Göle, 2011). These manifestations are most visible in immigrant quarters, those parts of the city in which immigrants have settled and developed their business and social networks. The most salient examples include the Chinese and Jewish neighbourhoods in major western cities like London, Paris, Berlin and Amsterdam.

The visibility of immigrant amenities gives evidence for the *use and user diversity* of the streets in which they are located. Immigrant shops and restaurants are very often small-scale independent businesses with singular features. Originally, immigrant amenities catered to immigrants, but depending on their location and specialisation, their client groups may diversify. For example, immigrant restaurants located in the historical centres of Amsterdam and Paris mostly serve tourists, as evidenced by the availability of food menus in English besides the local language. This is not the case for immigrants' communal amenities in Europe. Mosques, synagogues and temples in European cities, generally manifest their distinctive uses in public space with their own architectural styles and spatial practices; however, they don't welcome diverse user, as they cater to very specific groups. There may be some exceptions if these religious amenities combine several functions. For example, the Grand Mosquée de Paris, located in the central Latin quartier of Paris, welcomes both mosque prayers and other visitors, who can enjoy its small café, which is situated within the mosque building.

The visibility of immigrant amenities also relates to the *participation and appropriation* aspects of democratic streets. Through their distinctive amenities, immigrants use public space for their own needs and participate in the symbolic production of public space. A wide variety of functions, businesses, unconventional street uses, active street frontages, and time schedules of these amenities create an active and recognizable public space and contribute to immigrants' "imagined [cities]" (Anderson, 1986). In their "imagined [cities]", immigrants orient themselves by building their social and business networks, developing feelings of home and

belonging, and establishing identities (Gale, 2004; Kuppinger, 2011). Studies on immigrant amenities in London and Berlin show that these everyday participatory practices of immigrants are highly creative but also constitute a political process exceeding the local boundaries and reconfiguring immigrant identities and belongings (Hall, 2015; Kuppinger, 2011).

The visibility of immigrant amenities provides opportunities for immigrants and other groups to interact with each other, promoting *encounters and civility*. These encounters raise awareness of immigrants' presence in the city. This contributes to the recognition of immigrants by wider groups, although the relation between visibility and recognition is not always direct (Watson, 2006; Iveson, 2007). Parochial and public urban realms contribute to different forms of encounters among people. The parochial realm refers to places that promote close and regular social contacts between individuals, such as social bonds between neighbourhood inhabitants, immigrant groups, employees in a workplace, or acquaintance networks. The public realm exists in places where all people have access, such as streets, squares and parks that promote more limited contact between strangers (Lofland, 1998; Kusenbach, 2006). Immigrant amenities contribute to both types of contact. Daily chats between, for example, immigrant shop owners and their clients or among clients exchanging daily life matters, are played within a parochial realm. But the streets of immigrant neighbourhoods where immigrant amenities are located constitute a typical example of a public realm.

The visibility of immigrant amenities is related to the physical setting of democratic streets from the aspects of *legibility, permeability and robustness.*

— In terms of *legibility*, most immigrant amenities have colourful window displays with a variety of ethnic products or advertisements of events, such as concerts and community gatherings. Along with exterior signs and types of products, their entrances have differences in terms of legibility suggesting their functions. Communal amenities, such as mosques, may be less legible if they belong to a small community and lack financial means to rent, buy and/or construct their own buildings and uses.
— The *visual permeability* of immigrant amenities is a key aspect of their visibility at street level, which promotes or limits people's awareness and recognition of inside uses and functions. There is generally a clear difference between the permeability of commercial and of communal amenities in immigrant amenities. The former tends to be open to welcoming potential clients, while the latter is introverted, catering to a specific group.
— Immigrant amenities promote *robustness* by stimulating a large variety of unplanned street uses, influenced by their opening hours. A typical example is women gathering

in front of immigrant food shops. During evenings, immigrant night shops are also gathering places for immigrant youth. The availability of sitting furniture and the existence of wide sidewalks promote these informal social gatherings.

2.5 Conclusion

This paper introduces visibility as a useful concept to assess the democratic character of streets. I understand visibility as the visual perception of the observable features of individuals and groups in public space. For urban planners, visibility can provide and empirical register of groups' everyday engagement and participation in the political, symbolic, social and physical production of public space.

To answer the main research question—how can the concept visibility be used as a tool to plan and design democratic streets? —the paper focused on immigrant amenities. The arguments presented in this paper show that visibility is useful in providing empirical evidence for four important aspects of democratic streets: participation and appropriation; use and user diversity; encounters and civility; and physical setting.

The visibility of immigrant amenities can show the level of participation and appropriation of public space by immigrant groups through the amenities' distinctive signs, languages and related spatial practices, which mark the public space and make it recognisable. Immigrants' roles in the shaping of streets and open space – making it their "own" space – are a clear expression of the political production of public space.

The visibility of immigrant amenities enriches street diversity in terms of the types, functions and opening times of the shops and amenities, as well as users—residents and visitors—from different social groups. Both the participation and appropriation and diversity aspects of public space are linked to the symbolic production of public space.

The visibility of immigrant amenities is also central in social bonding and in bridging differences among and between immigrants and other groups. It promotes encounters, which aids in developing civility, mutual awareness and recognition between different groups. By doing so, visibility promotes the social construction of the street.

TOC

And finally, certain physical settings facilitate the visibility of immigrant amenities by blocking or opening up the visual perception on the street and in turn, the visibility of immigrant amenities also shape the physical settings of the streets through their legibility, permeability and robustness.

These arguments lead to three main conclusions:

Visibility in public space can provide solid evidence for the most important aspects of democratic streets, which is difficult to obtain through conventional statistical methods. Even though this study focused on immigrant amenities, the conclusions can be broadened to include other distinctive urban groups, such as sexual minorities or vulnerable groups, as well as other forms of visibility, such as festivals, parades and events.

Consequently, visibility can be a useful assessment tool to measure the democratic character of streets before and after urban interventions. This can be useful to inform designers, researchers and policy makers, for example, in cases when urban renewal interventions and/or real estate trends would influence demographic profiles of neighbourhoods and consequently the visibility of some distinctive groups. An analysis of visibility would be useful to assess whether proposed interventions would be a fair course of action or not.

Training and education for the design and planning of public space should incorporate visibility to examine diversity and inclusionary features and to promote the main components of democratic streets.