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THE SENSE OF PLACE IN STANDARD DESIGN SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF CAIC IN PELOTAS/RS, BRAZIL

O SENTIDO DE LUGAR EM ESCOLAS PADRÃO: O CASO DO CAIC DE PELOTAS/RS, BRASIL

EL SENTIDO DEL LUGAR EN LAS ESCUELAS ESTÁNDAR: EL CASO DE CAIC EN PELOTAS/RS, BRASIL



Figure 0. EMEF Francisco Caruccio
gymnasium. Source: Collection of the
authors from 2022.

ABSTRACT

Person-environment relationships are a fundamental pillar in the construction of individual and collective identities. In this context, the insertion of new symbols and meanings from a project of standard school architecture and design can cause a rupture in the identity of the subjects who inhabit these spaces. The standard design consists of repeating an architectural design across different locations. This work aims to identify the way in which students of an educational institution with a standard design perceive the school environment in which they live. The research has a qualitative and phenomenological character and uses the Poem of Wishes as a method applied in a case study at the *Centro de Atenção Integral à Criança* (CAIC) in the city of Pelotas/RS, in southern Brazil. The results show how the transformation of the space took place in the studied school and how the architectural characteristics are related to the formation of the place.

Keywords: architecture, perception, standardization, school buildings, modern architecture

RESUMO

As relações pessoa-ambiente constituem um pilar fundamental na construção das identidades individuais e coletivas. Neste contexto, a inserção de novos símbolos e significados, provenientes de projetos padronizados de arquitetura escolar, pode provocar uma ruptura na identidade dos sujeitos que interagem com esses espaços. O projeto padrão consiste na repetição de um projeto arquitetônico em diferentes localidades. Este trabalho tem por objetivo identificar como os alunos de uma instituição de ensino construída a partir de um projeto padrão percebem e se relacionam com o ambiente escolar em que habitam. A pesquisa possui viés qualitativo e fenomenológico e utiliza como método o *Poema dos desejos*, aplicado em um estudo de caso no Centro de Atenção Integral à Criança (CAIC) na cidade de Pelotas/RS, no sul do Brasil. Os resultados apresentam como ocorreu a transformação do espaço na escola estudada e de que forma as características da arquitetura estão relacionadas à formação do lugar.

Palavras-chave: arquitetura, percepção, padronização, edifícios escolares, arquitetura moderna

RESUMEN

Las relaciones persona-ambiente son un pilar fundamental en la construcción de las identidades individuales y colectivas. Así, la inserción de nuevos símbolos y significados, colocados a partir de proyectos de arquitectura escolar estándar, puede provocar una ruptura en la identidad de los sujetos que lo habitan. El diseño estándar consiste en repetir un proyecto arquitectónico en distintas ubicaciones. El objetivo de este trabajo es identificar cómo los estudiantes de una institución educativa con un diseño estándar perciben el entorno escolar en el que habitan. La investigación tiene un carácter cualitativo y fenomenológico y utiliza como método el Poema de los Deseos aplicado en un estudio de caso en el *Centro de Atención Integral à Criança* (CAIC) de la ciudad de Pelotas/RS, en el sur de Brasil. Los resultados muestran cómo se produjo la transformación del espacio en la escuela estudiada y cómo las características arquitectónicas se relacionan con la formación del lugar.

Palabras clave: arquitectura, percepción, estandarización, edificios educacionales, arquitectura moderna

INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, throughout the First Republic (1889-1930), the understanding of education as a tool for social development was consolidated, leading to the emergence of the first buildings for exclusively educational use. Thus, during the 20th century, especially after the first half, the need for new teaching units was met by standardizing projects and rationalizing construction processes (Azevedo, Bastos & Blower, 2007).

The standard design is based on the repetition of an architectural project in different locations (Frampton, 2003). The use of these models, often applied in public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and daycare centers, seeks economy and speed in their implementation. The standardization of institutional buildings also reflects and identifies the political context of a given time (Azevedo, Bastos & Blower, 2007). However, the technical reproducibility of projects is not limited to formal issues; it can also influence how people perceive and interact with the space.

The built environment generates stimuli for users, who, in turn, respond with sensations and behaviors (Cavalcante & Elali, 2011). Therefore, a dynamic interaction between the person and the environment is observed, which transforms the space into a place. While space refers to a neutral, purely geographical location, place is the result of its inhabitants' interpretation. In this context, the concepts of meaning and identity of place refer to users' appropriation of space and their representation (Castello, 2007).

Despite the economic aspect and speed inherent in standard design, its use leads to a loss of characteristics of the local community where the building is installed, either in terms of comfort in the use of the construction (Kowaltowski, 2013) or the identity and cultural dimensions (Gaite, 2003). The research problem of this work concerns the recurrent adoption of standard architectural projects for public schools, often conceived without considering the sociocultural and territorial characteristics of the school communities that use them, which raises questions about how these spaces are appropriated, used, and attributed meaning by their users.

Thus, the objective is to identify how students of a standard design school perceive the educational institution they inhabit and if they configure it as a place. For this, a case study was conducted at the Comprehensive Child Care Center (CAIC) of Pelotas/RS. This article is an excerpt from Cordeiro's master's dissertation (2022), which used a physical-architectural survey, observation, a poem of desires, and interviews. To fit the scope of the text, only the results of observation and expressive activity are discussed here, given their direct relationship to the analysis of the place's dimensions. Although the complete triangulation is detailed in the dissertation, the findings presented remain consistent due to the convergence between observational data and symbolic productions of the participants.

Environmental perception and sense of place

The environment acts as a constant matrix of sensory stimuli for the individuals who inhabit it, maintaining a bidirectional, interdependent, and reciprocal relationship with the subjects. The interpretation of these stimuli depends on physiological and psychological factors intrinsic to each person, which influence how they use, understand, and represent space. This relationship is cultural and dialectical, since the environment shapes human behavior, which, in turn, causes changes in the environment itself and in the social relations within it (Cavalcante & Elali, 2011).

Human identification with places occurs through living experiences in these spaces and through their representativeness and significance. The place is where the human being exercises their existence. The projection of meanings in the built environment transforms spaces into places. While "space" refers to the physical environment as a neutral geographical location, "place" refers to the interpretations and meanings attributed to space by the inhabitant. A place is an environment with enough perceptible elements to be identified as a reference structure, endowed with value, meaning, and identity (Castello, 2007). The place refers to the stability of the environment, as a refuge of being, and is associated with safety and comfort, in contrast to the vulnerability and freedom of space (Tuan, 1983).

The individual's bond with the environment is established through the relationship between the four dimensions of the place: (i) physical, (ii) symbolic, (iii) relational, and (iv) functional. The physical dimension refers to the attributes of identification and representation of the space. The symbolic dimension involves the interpretation of the meanings that the environment can refer to the individual. The relational dimension considers the environment as evocative of social relationships, while the functional dimension recognizes the physical environment as an element that performs a role (Cavalcante & Elali, 2011).

The person-environment relationship is established by integrating diverse human sensations into a complex structure that involves the appropriation of space, attachment to place, and place identity. These abstract feelings can be grouped and referred to under the unifying term "sense of place". The sense of place encompasses the connection between individuals and space, built from identification, feeling of belonging, attachment, and engagement with the place (Shamai, 1991).

Characteristics of the school as a place

The school environment comprises a complex interaction among its creators, managers, employees, teachers, students, and the built space, encompassing both material and immaterial aspects. The school building requires specific environments for its purposes. The configuration, sectorization, and dimensioning of these enclosures influence the way individuals use the building and interact with the environment and with each other (Azevedo, 2002).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The spatiality of the school building stems from its location, the arrangement of its rooms, the organization of the lot, and the elements that define the transition between the school's interior and exterior. Thus, the aspects of architecture that form the school built environment can be classified into four groups: (i) contextual-environmental, which refer to the geographical and cultural characteristics of the site, prior to construction; (ii) programmatic-functional, which relate to the performance and role of the built environment; (iii) aesthetic-compositional, related to the image and appearance of the construction; and (iv) technical-constructive, which involve the materialization of the built object (Azevedo, 2002).

These four groups of characteristics are not exclusive to schools; Mahfuz (2004) calls them the “contemporary quaternary of architecture” – place, program, formal structures and construction – whose interaction shapes the built environment. At the school, the program defines its identity as an educational institution, combining pedagogical and training objectives (Kowaltowski, 2013), and is guided by political-pedagogical ideals and local demands. This configuration highlights the duality of the school space as a role and symbol (Cabral, 2020).

The standard design in school architecture

The standardization of architecture aims to unify design methods and buildings. The standard design, widely used in Public Works, seeks economy and construction speed through the use of a previously established program of needs and the repetition of an architectural project in different locations (Frampton, 2003). The strengthening of the governmental image through the reproduction of the built object in highly visible locations in the city is another important aspect of the adoption of standard projects (Azevedo, Bastos & Blower, 2007).

Standard public-school projects operate based on the elements that identify them as benchmarks for behaviors and communications (Cabral, 2020; Cabral & Cordeiro, 2022). The visual elements of the built environment allow their identification, anticipating behaviors and languages associated with this environment, from political and pedagogical discourses (Cabral & Cordeiro, 2024). It is through social representations that public power concretizes the vision of the school and of education in school buildings, and standard-design schools reinforce this representation (Del Rio, Duarte & Rheingantz, 2002).

The school building, laden with meaning, integrates the pedagogical process; however, standard designs conceived as emergency solutions tend to reduce it to a mere shelter, disregarding local needs and compromising its identity (Pascua, 2008). By ignoring cultural specificities, these models weaken the sense of belonging and spatial diversity, since standardization restricts user participation and can generate environments without identity (Gutiérrez, 1989). Promoting the transformation of the space into a place requires understanding the meanings built over time in the relationship between the environment and its inhabitants.

The personal and subjective nature of the transformation of space into place evokes, for this research, a qualitative and phenomenological approach. Thus, a case study was adopted in a standard design public school in southern Brazil. This decision was made to allow observation and direct contact with the object of study. This enables the analysis of contemporary phenomena in school daily life, allowing for the verification of the problem's real existence and its analysis in an exploratory, descriptive, and qualitative manner (Gil, 2008).

For data collection and analysis, in addition to observation, the following method is proposed: *the Poem of Wishes*. From this method, participants have the opportunity to express their needs, emotions, affections, symbolism, and desires in relation to the environment in question, through texts and/or drawings. This allows for a deeper understanding of how individuals perceive space, as well as their expectations and aspirations for improvement (Rheingantz et al., 2009).

The CAIC of Pelotas / RS, Brazil

In 1990, the Federal Government of Brazil initiated a program to create full-time educational institutions to intensify social activities in neighborhoods without municipal government throughout the country. Thus, actions for health, education, and social development related to children and adolescents were combined in a single space comprising preschool, daycare, full-time first-grade schooling, childcare, living environments, and sports facilities (Sobrinho & Parente, 1995).

To meet this demand in the short term, the architect João Filgueiras Lima was invited to develop a standard architectural project for these schools (Kowaltowski, 2013). Thus, a first version of the CAICs was conceived, inspired by the experiences with park-schools and classroom-schools of the Bahian educator Anísio Teixeira, as well as in public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Azevedo, Bastos & Blower, 2007).

After the crisis that plagued the Brazilian government in 1992, culminating in the impeachment of then-President Fernando Collor and the inauguration of Vice President Itamar Franco, the ministries were reorganized, and some government programs were changed. With these changes, the CAICs were definitively rolled out in 1993. The program kept its initial goal - the social development of underprivileged young people - experiencing only minor changes to mark a distance from the previous government (Sobrinho & Parente, 1995).

The CAICs (Figure 1) included a variety of activities, such as school education, early childhood education, special protection for children and families, sports, culture, health, education for work, food, technological education, as well as management and mobilization, which strengthened the program's social and support nature (Sobrinho & Parente, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

CASE STUDY

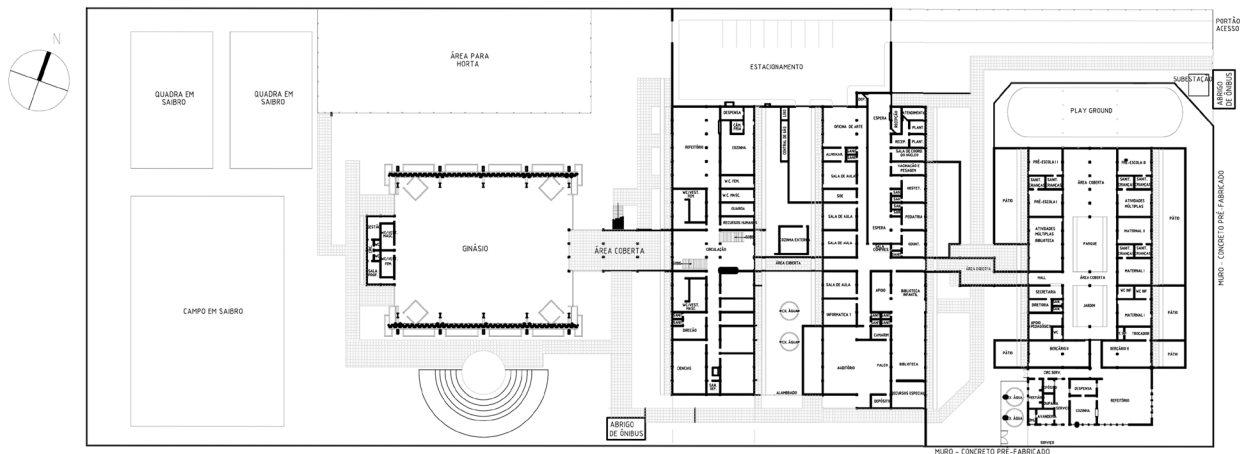


Figure 1. Floor plan-CAIC.
Source: Cordeiro, 2022.

Figure 2. Location of Pelotas in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.
Source: Wikipedia Pelotas (2026).



The case study concerns the CAIC of the city of Pelotas in the extreme south of Brazil, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (Figure 2). This city is a benchmark in public education in the south of the state, with 94 municipal schools, 53 state schools, a Federal Institute, and a Federal University. Among these institutions, three are examples of standard design, and the CAIC is the only one that originated in a federal program and was implemented at the national level. The CAIC of Pelotas (Figure 3), inaugurated by the Ministry of Education in 1996, quickly abandoned its initial proposal for a full-time school and, instead, adopted the already existing municipal Francisco Caruccio Elementary School (Cordeiro et al., 2021).



Although Comprehensive Childcare Centers (CAICs) constitute a specific public policy of the Brazilian context of the 1990s, their analysis goes beyond the national setting. In Latin America, institutional projects using standard architecture or replicable typologies, including schools, have been widely adopted as a strategy for rapid infrastructure expansion in contexts of socio-spatial inequality (Gaité, 2003; Gutiérrez, 1989; Cardellino, 2022). In the European context, although there are no directly equivalent contemporary programs, the literature records the historical dissemination of standardized school typologies, associated with the rationalization of public construction and state social formation projects, especially in the late 19th century and in the interwar period (Helfenberger & Schreiber, 2019; Vilkončius, 2023). This background places the study of CAICs in the recurrent international debate on architectural standardization, constructive efficiency, and social adequacy.

Observation

Seven visits were carried out to observe both the school building and its surroundings on the following dates: 09/04/2019; 03/07/2019; 26/11/2019; 31/07/2020; 27/03/2022; 29/03/2022; and 04/08/2022. All visits took place in the mornings. The tours were guided by employees of each school institution operating in the CAIC building. The intent was to act discreetly and non-intrusively, interacting only with the person who accompanied the presentation for each room of the building.

The fieldwork was conducted systematically, based on previously defined categories of analysis based on the specialized literature, which guided the researcher's view and the recording of information. The categories of analysis

Figure 3. Francisco Caruccio Municipal Elementary School, in Pelotas. Source: Collection of the authors from 2019.

were structured in five lines: (I) contextual-environmental characteristics, (ii) programmatic-functional characteristics, (iii) aesthetic-compositional characteristics, (iv) technical-constructive characteristics, and (v) signs of transformation of space into place. For each category, registration units were defined, such as topography, vegetation, built environment, spatial organization, sectorization, access, materials, construction techniques, territoriality marks, reforms, and uses of the school space.

Data were recorded through a systematic photographic survey and annotations on observation sheets, organized according to the adopted analytical categories. This procedure made it possible to identify the physical, functional, and symbolic elements of the school space, as well as signs of appropriation and daily use that contribute to understanding the building as a place.

Poem of Wishes

The method was applied in two classes of the 8th Grade of EMEF Francisco Caruccio, a total of 40 students aged between 13 and 17. The sample was selected because it is in an age group that presents greater capacity for critical reflection and symbolic expression about the lived space, maintaining a daily bond with the school. On 04/08/2022, students were invited to reflect on their experiences at school by answering the following questions: “What do I like about Francisco Caruccio school?” and “How would I like the Francisco Caruccio school to be?” Participants expressed their thoughts through drawings and texts, without the need for technical elaboration.

Each student received sheets of A4 paper, colored pencils, No. 2 pencils, an eraser, and a sharpener for the activity. An environment free of criticism or judgment on the works produced was ensured. Conversations with the students during the application of the method were recorded and transcribed, forming the corpus of the data collected. All students who participated submitted a participation consent form signed by their guardians. To preserve students’ identities, they were identified by an acronym consisting of a letter and a number.

The analysis of the poems of wishes followed Bardin’s (1977) content analysis methodology, identifying record units that were categorized thematically. The categories included the dimensions of the place (Castello, 2007; Cavalcante & Elali, 2011), the contemporary quaternary, and the characteristics of the architecture (Mahfuz, 2004; Azevedo, 2002). The thematic categories of analysis are presented in Table 1 below. Although the two proposed questions present a similar formulation, the resulting thematic categories partially differ, since they reflect, respectively, aspects of the lived space – belonging to the present time – and projections desired by the students, related to future expectations.

Question	Thematic categories
What do you like about EMEF Francisco Caruccio?	People
	Environment
	Activities
How would you like EMEF Francisco Caruccio to be?	Environment
	Management
	People
	Activities
	Equipment

Table 1. Thematic categories of the poems of wishes. Source: Adapted from Cordeiro (2022).

Figure 4. Rua Dezesseis, no number, Pestano. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.



The alignment between thematic categories and place dimensions is not rigid, and the same category can express more than one dimension depending on the context of speech or drawing. It was also observed that the item “what I like” shows dimensions already consolidated in everyday experience, while “how I would like it to be” reveals deficiencies and expectations. In this way, the dimensions operate as an interpretative structure of the emerging categories, allowing us to understand how the school space is transformed into a place.

The analysis of the case study was organized from the characterization of the place, followed by its four dimensions – physical, functional, relational, and symbolic. The participants' productions (Poem of wishes and transcripts) were examined through thematic analysis, and the identified themes were classified according to their correspondence to these dimensions.

The CAIC de Pelotas building is located in the north of the city, in the Pestano microregion, an area marked by socioeconomic vulnerability. Far from the center, the community faces challenges such as a lack of paving,

DEVELOPMENT



Figure 5. Aerial view of the building that would be the CAIC of Pelotas. Source: GeoPelotas, 2022.

Figure 6. EMEF Francisco Caruccio. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.



inadequate pavement, and open sewerage (Figure 4). The building, located on a flat, rectangular plot (Figure 5), occupies a prominent position at the very beginning of the lot. Following the national logic of implementing the CAICs (Sobrinho & Parente, 1995), the building was installed in a peripheral neighborhood to serve as public equipment for the region's social and urban development, in a historically underserved place.

The building was built with prefabricated reinforced mortar elements, as determined by the standard design. The project was divided into four sequential blocks, connected by covered walkways. The architectural language of the CAICs has a modern identity (Figure 6), and the Pelotas building was no different. All the blocks, except the gymnasium, had a rectangular modulation, with the spaces arranged around the corridors and



Figure 7. EMEF Francisco Caruccio gymnasium. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.

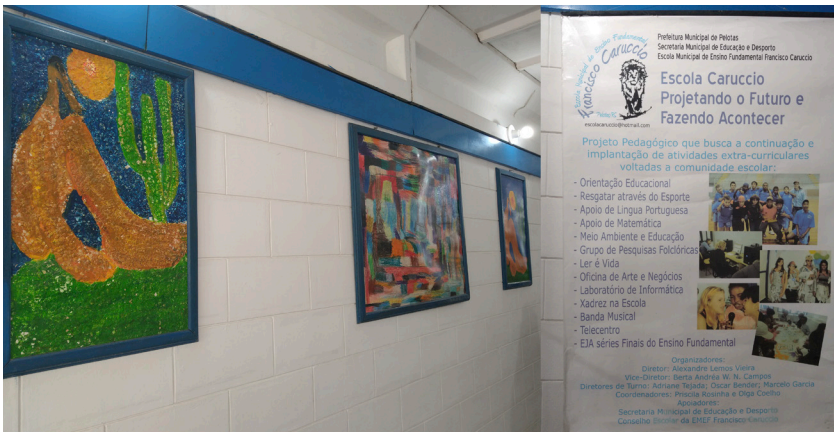


Figure 8. Signs of appropriation at EMEF Francisco Caruccio. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.

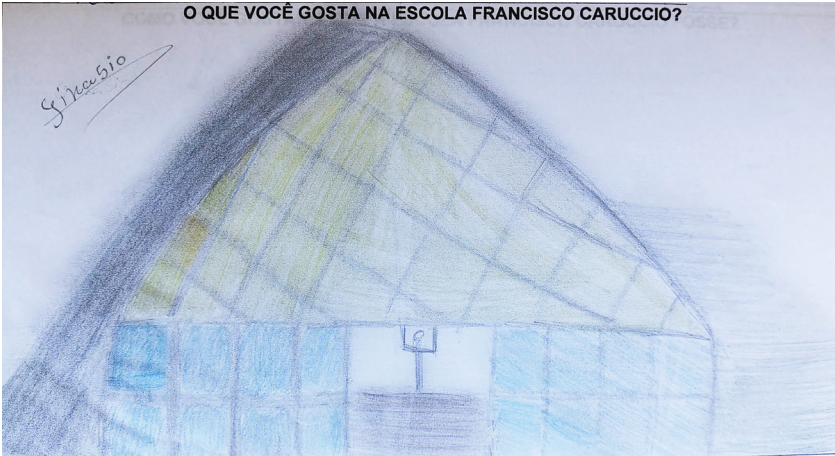
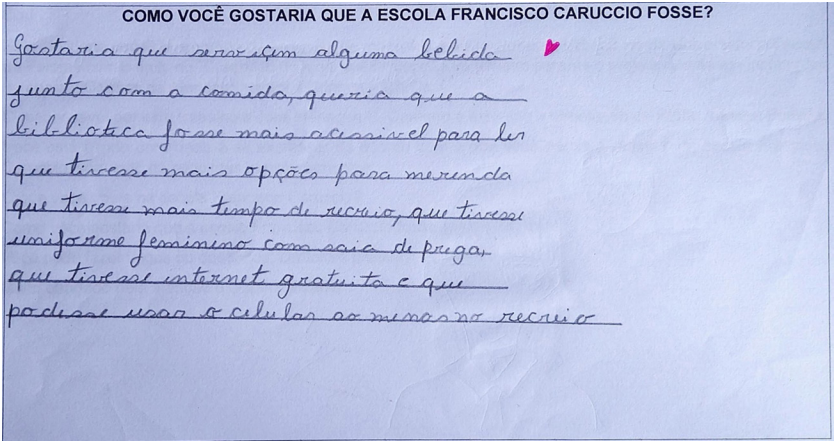
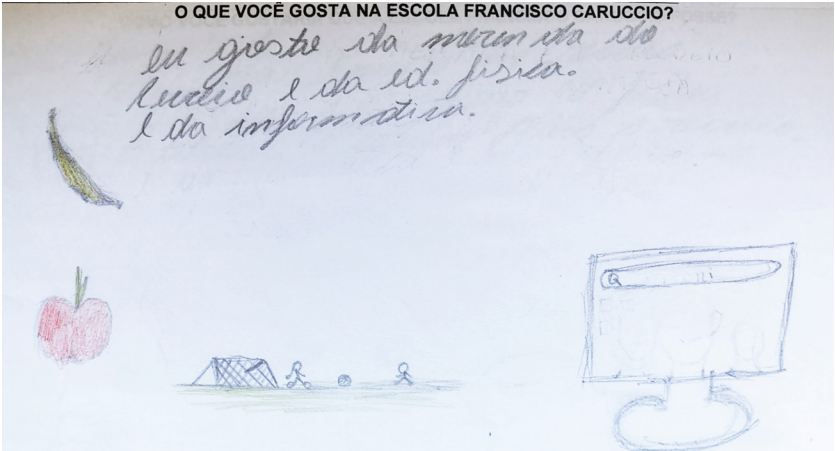
walkways. The gym block (Figure 7) has a greater hierarchical appearance than the rest of the building due to its trapezoidal shape and size.

Currently, the building houses two municipal schools, EMEI Herbert de Souza and EMEF Francisco Caruccio, which expands its programmatic diversity. In addition to the classrooms, the complex comprises a gymnasium, auditorium, laboratories, library, cafeteria, and sports areas, configuring an educational and sociocultural building of great functional complexity for the neighborhood. The appropriation of space and attachment to the school are evident in the speech of the research participants, as well as in the corridors and classrooms of the institutions. According to one of the students (A8B6):

Figure 9. Poem of wishes – A8A 8. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.

Figure 10. Poem of wishes – A8B 4. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.

Figure 11. Poem of wishes – A8B 10. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.



"[...] I like the entire school [EMEF Francisco Caruccio]." In the entrance halls and corridors of the schools, panels depict their history, featuring photographs and students' work, reinforcing the identity of the spaces (Figure 8). These can be considered traces of the transformation of space into place.

The functional dimension is related to the role that the building performs for its inhabitants and can be observed from the emphasis given to the

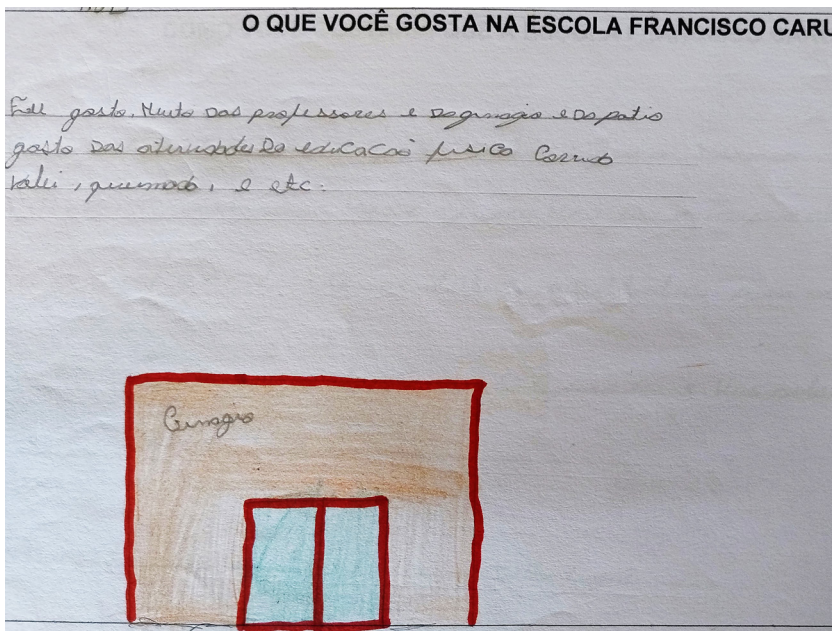


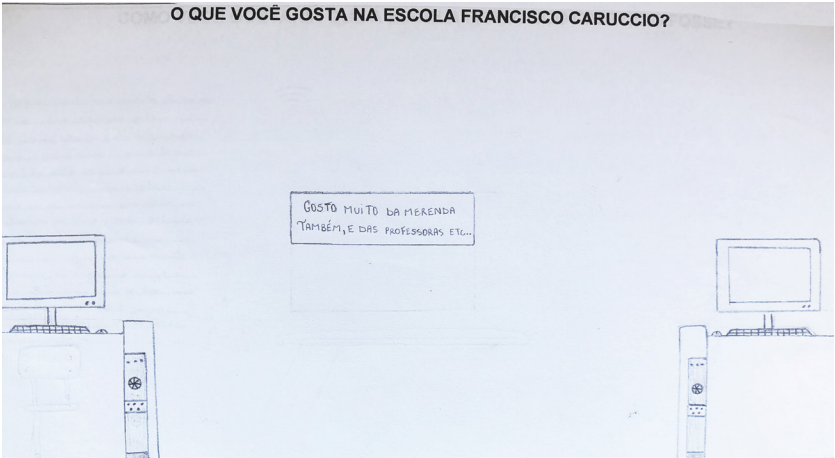
Figure 12. Poem of wishes – A8B 3. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.

program of EMEF Francisco Caruccio, presented during the activity of *poems of wishes*, especially concerning the gym, the football field, the computer room, the library, and cafeteria (Figure 9). In responses to the question “What do I like at school?”, the functional dimension recurred, especially regarding meals, access to Information Technology, the gym, and cultural activities. These elements were mentioned as experiences already part of daily school life, which indicates that the social impact of the institution is not limited to future expectations, but is realized in the present. The provision of adequate food, internet access, and participation in extracurricular activities were described as positive aspects of the school. Although in the question “How would I like it to be”, some students have requested improvements in these same aspects – such as increased access to technology or a greater frequency of cultural activities (Figure 10) –, the answers show that such functions already play a relevant role in students' lives.

The students have also mentioned the gymnasium as one of the spaces in the school that they appreciate. However, not all students who mentioned the gym did so for the same reason. Some drew it very similarly to the real building, with the same shapes and colors (Figure 11), while others represented it as a square with colors different from those in the building (Figure 12). To this fact, it is attributed that the former described it by its image and the others by the activities that took place inside it, which evidences the particularity of the formation of the place for each individual and the way in which its dimensions are intertwined.

The students perceive the school's monumentality as an imagistic reference for the place. It is noted, in the poem presented above, that the student not only represented the different format of the gymnasium, with its colors and textures, but also that the drawing occupied almost all the space available on the sheet, evidencing its monumentality. In another poem,

Figure 13. Poem of wishes – A8B 7. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.



a student mentioned that she “quite likes the size of the school” (A8A 5). Another aspect present in the students ‘ imagination is that it represents a technological environment, due to computers and the possibility of Internet access (Figure 13). Although these technologies are related to computer class activities, for example, and can make up part of the functional dimension of the place, the technological environment also represents part of the physical and imagistic dimension of the place.

It is thought that the esteem for the project’s monumentality and architectural language is related to the welcoming feeling created by the implementation of the standard project in the locality. The architectural language of prefabricated elements refers to industrialization, development, and progress, while the project’s monumental scale refers to shelter, safety, and visibility. The physical dimension of the place is formed in the identification of the environment as an imagistic reference. It is linked to the individual’s mental projection of the space. In the research participants’ imagistic reference, there is a representation that combines grandiosity with welcoming, technology with teaching, and culture with community development.

Among the research participants, the functional dimension stood out as the most expressive in the case study, reflecting the supporting nature of the schools, essential to the Pestano community. This dimension manifests itself in two stages: immediately, by meeting needs such as education and meals, and in the long term, with subsequent benefits from cultural, sports, and professional training activities. It is perceived that, despite the importance of the physical dimension in the formation of the place, the participants considered it subordinate to functionality, valuing more the practical usefulness of the space than its image.

The relational dimension of the place is shaped by the interactions and activities that occur in the space. In the study, all participants recognized the school as a meeting point. Rooms such as the computer room, the amphitheater (Figure 14), and the gym are valued not only for their specific



Figure 14. Poem of wishes – A8B 8. Source: Collection of the authors from 2022.

roles but for enabling coexistence, conversations, and moments of relaxation. According to one of the students (A8B 8), “here [...] this is where we talk...” actually, the whole school is beautiful, but I like it more there because I am with my friends.” It is from the place’s relational dimension that the cultural plurality of the environment takes place, so that part of the appreciation for space is provoked by the encounters that take place in it.

The symbolic dimension of the place deals with people’s memories and the meanings linked to the environment where they live. Therefore, it is a more subjective, individualized dimension of place. In the case study, it was observed that the affective connection to memory among the participants encompassed not only the schools analyzed, but also the neighborhoods in which they are located. The history of EMEF Francisco Caruccio and EMEI Herbert de Souza is related to the development of Pestano; thus, participating in educational institutions is also part of the neighborhood’s construction. As memories and recollections are formulated differently for each individual, this is the most personal dimension of the formation of place.

From what has been presented, it can be seen that the place’s dimensions lack well-defined boundaries between where one ends and where another begins. The transformation of a space into a place depends on the interaction of the four dimensions of place, which coexist continuously throughout this process, though with varying intensities and relevance. The roles each individual plays in a community are distinct, resulting in different assessments of place. The experience of space, which occurs through the perception of the four groups of aspects presented, will serve as a reference for the individual regarding the built environment. It is the interpretation of these factors that transforms space into place.

The standard design of the schools, with their monumental scale, broad program of needs, and strategic location, reflects a national program of public education and generates in the vulnerable community of Pestano a feeling of valorization and protection. Despite the standardized character, the

CONCLUSIONS

space was appropriated by the local population, being seen as an instrument of reception and development. The CAIC in Pelotas demonstrates how the dimensions of place – physical, symbolic, functional, and relational – influence and are materialized in the characteristics of the design, reinforcing its relevance in the geographical and cultural context.

Schools in Pestano also have characteristics that dialog with social progress and community integration. The rooms' organization promotes interpersonal interaction and symbolizes cultural and social values, while construction techniques, such as the use of prefabricated elements, enhance the space's functionality and economic efficiency. Thus, the architectural project combines functionality, aesthetics, and symbolism, consolidating itself as a milestone of progress and strengthening the ties between the community and the built environment.

This study contributes to the debate on standardization in school architecture by demonstrating that adopting repeatable projects does not necessarily entail the homogenization of spatial experience or the weakening of the sense of place. In the case analyzed, standardization ensured scale, programmatic diversity, and institutional visibility in a vulnerable area, creating material conditions for the construction of social and symbolic ties. The sense of place did not emerge from the building's formal uniqueness but from the everyday appropriation, the functions performed, and the relationships established in the space. Thus, the case of the CAIC of Pelotas suggests that the impact of standardization depends less on typological repetition and more on the equipment's ability to respond to local needs and be incorporated into the territory's social dynamics.

CONTRIBUTION
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