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FROM REGIONAL CENTRALITY TO LOCAL IDENTITY

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Abstract: Faced with the problematic generated by imbalances between urban centralities derived from regional dynamics, the general objective of the investigation is to propose the valorization of local identity from the reduction of strong vectors of centralization in metropolitan regions. With a multi-method structure, qualitative approach, exploratory character and applied feature, the work was structured in three main phases. The first was oriented to the interpretation of theoretical postulates, while the second was directed to the appreciation of local contexts - historical-cultural perspective, political-geographical scope, demographic-population panorama, socioeconomic framework, and urban-territorial scenario - of the study area, corresponding to the municipality of Campo Largo, part of the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil. The last phase was directed to analytical results, systematized by techniques both diagnostic, related to the elaboration of a matrix of main strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats of municipal districts and other relevant spaces, in addition to mapping the diagnosis synthesis of the identified urban *continuum*, as well as prognostic, derived from previous information and reflections on urban theories, concepts, and thoughts. As answers to the investigative question of how to value identity representations for central localities, the essay proposals formulated are based on specialized centers for the configuration of participatory, walkable, and sustainable cities, among various other possibilities of qualification modalities of contemporary cities.

Keywords: Central localities. Identity representations. Metropolitan Region of Curitiba. Campo Largo, Paraná, Brazil.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Normally, regional dynamics promote imbalances between urban centralities.

Reinforcing this **problematic**, Miranda, Silva, and Costa (2020) state that, in different situations, urban guidelines dictate measures that are not, by themselves, capable of promoting the development of cities.

This reality is found in the Brazilian case also, based on a model resulting from accentuated urban growth, especially in large metropolises, originally with monocentric structure (MELLO; MELLO; ORRICO FILHO, 2016). The **justifications** for the present work fall, therefore, on the need for socio-spatial changes that reduce the trend of concentration of cities-regions in the country (SASSI, 2019).

Associated with this process, there is a weakening of identities of urbanized areas in metropolitan regions, often transferred to the central city. Analyzing elements necessary for the construction and consolidation of the image of contemporary cities, Paz, Gevehr and Jung (2021) conclude that greater attention has been given to this theme in the last two decades, notably in the context of cultural aspects.

The previous statements lead to the following **investigative question**: how to value identity representations in localities subject to strong vectors of centralization in metropolitan regions? Aiming at the formulation of answers, the **general objective** of the investigation is to propose the valorization of the local identity from the reduction of these factors.

To achieve this goal, it is adopted the **case study** of the municipality of Campo Largo, part of the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba (RMC), Paraná, Brazil, subject to the problems highlighted above. Specific steps for the work development are also outlined, which are detailed below.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

With a multi-method structure, qualitative

approach, exploratory character, and applied feature, the study was structured in three main phases. For the first, referring to **theoretical postulates** focused on structuring themes - centrality and identity, exploratory methods were adopted, in association with techniques for reviewing secondary sources, corresponding to books and academic works, as well as articles and scientific publications, among others.

The second, related to **local contexts** of the study area – municipality of Campo Largo, was developed through exploratory and descriptive methods, together with the same previous techniques, this time applied especially to institutional sources. Thereby, brief information was gathered on historical-cultural perspective, political-geographical scope, demographic-population panorama, socioeconomic framework, and urban-territorial scenario.

Finally, the third phase, pertinent to **analytical results**, was based on analytical methods, and on diagnostic and prognostic techniques. Initially, the first one was linked to the elaboration of a matrix of main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the relevant areas. The first two words refer to the internal environment, while the others are related to the external one.

A diagnostic synthesis mapping of the urban *continuum* identified in the municipality of Campo Largo was also prepared, based on institutional sources (PMCL, 2015). Grounded on this information, the prognostic techniques were derived from reflections on theories and concepts related to the topics discussed below, complemented by other urbanistic thoughts derived of the **propositional essay** conducted.

THEORETICAL POSTULATES

For Lacoste (2003), **centrality** is generically conceptualized as the property of what is central in a space, including the

place of dominion over what is peripheral to it. This concept is also interpreted by Castells (2020[1972]) as the temporary or permanent combination of human activities, administrative functions, social practices, and collective representations, in interactive arrangements of territories with individuals, full of communitarian content (OLIVEIRA JÚNIOR, 2008).

According to Barreto (2010), it can undergo variations resulting from technical-territorial, socioeconomic, or political-institutional changes, as well as being modified by spontaneous causes or by territorial planning guidelines. For Albernaz (2021), this characteristic of ephemerality is conditioned by the urbanistic-regional dynamics themselves, producing flows, convergences, and nodes (GASPARI; SILVA, 2018).

Bovo and Oliveira (2014) claim that centrality can influence metropolitan regions, as it does not depend on legal boundaries. Coelho (2017) adds that, in certain circumstances, it assumes the role of regional connection. Lacoste (2003) reiterates this notion, relating it to the ideas of convergence and irradiation of activities, reasons why polycentric models have evolved (MELLO; MELLO; ORRICO FILHO, 2016), generating the “poly-centralization” (GONZÁLES, 2017).

However, this phenomenon can compromise the **identity**, conceptualized by Faria e Souza (2015) as the articulation between equality and difference. Cheshmehzangi (2015) explains that extensive socio-spatial transformations have altered characteristics of tradition and distinction of social environments.

Costa (2002) highlights an identity paradox in the context of globalization, because, instead of their disintegration, distinctions tend to proliferate, due to the prevalence of some in relation to others. On the other hand, Kaymaz (2013) argues that the identity of the place constitutes a fundamental dimension

of social and cultural life in cities, with its continuity strongly linked to the attachment to the place and to the plural attempts of belonging (BAUMAN; MAY, 2019[1990]).

Hall (2020[1992]) points out three conceptions of identity: individualistic, centered on the “I”; sociological, directed to the relationship of the “I” with society; and postmodern, shaped by the various “I’s” and their relationships with meanings and representations. Like these approaches, Kaymaz (2013) states that urban identity is also flexible and evolving; thus, the varied socio-spatial dimensions must be considered in urban planning and design guidelines. It is based on this thought that the characteristics of the study area are contextualized in the sequence.

LOCAL CONTEXTS

The etymology of Campo Largo is related to the extensive terrain of the region, covered by grassy-herbaceous vegetation. In a brief **historical-cultural perspective**, its origin dates to the gold cycle, in the mid-16th century, followed by the tropeirismo movement (MOCELLIN, 2019).

The locality of Campo Largo da Piedade was elevated to the category of judiciary district, in 1841, belonging to the County of Curitiba. In 1870, the municipality was created from its dismemberment from the capital of Paraná, with its official installation the following year (IBGE, 2022).

Under the ethnic influence of Polish and Italian immigrants, the municipal culture is related to a series of artistic, religious, and sporting manifestations, in addition to an expressive set of heritage assets, such as monuments, churches, squares, historic parks and hydromineral resorts. At the beginning of the last decade, the municipality was established officially as the “Capital of Dishware and Porcelain Tableware and

Ceramics” of the state (PARANÁ, 2010).

In the **political-geographical scope**, with a territorial extension of 1,244 km² 24.1% of which in urban zones and 75.9% in rural areas, Campo Largo is one of the twenty-nine municipalities that integrate the MRC (Figure 1). In addition to the municipal Main District, it comprises the following others: Bateias, Ferrara, São Silvestre, and Três Córregos (COMEC, 2022; IBGE, 2022; PMCL, 2015).

Its **demographic-population panorama** corresponds to a density just over 90 inhab./km², with an estimated population of 135,678 inhabitants for 2021, with about 85% of them, that is, approximately 115 thousand people, installed in urban areas (IBGE, 2022), with the formation of an important urban *continuum* close to the Main District (Figure 2). In the last decades, the municipality has absorbed citizens from other regions due to its bordering location to Curitiba. For this same reason, there is an intensification of interurban dynamics, especially those related to the frequent pendulum movement to the metropolis in search of work, study, or specialized infrastructure (PMCL, 2015).

With a high municipal human development index (IDHM), equivalent, in 2010, to 0.745, the **socioeconomic framework** of Campo Largo reveals that, in 2020, the average monthly salary of the municipality was 2.4 minimum wages (about US\$ 200). In 2019, its gross domestic product (GDP) *per capita* was R\$ 35,770.78 (approximately US\$ 6,800), with economic activities distributed across the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors (IBGE, 2022).

With reference to the **urban-territorial scenario**, considering the population growth trend of Campo Largo, by 2030 there will be new consolidations of them, making investments necessary, especially in infrastructure (FIEP, 2013). As governmental guidelines for development for that time horizon,

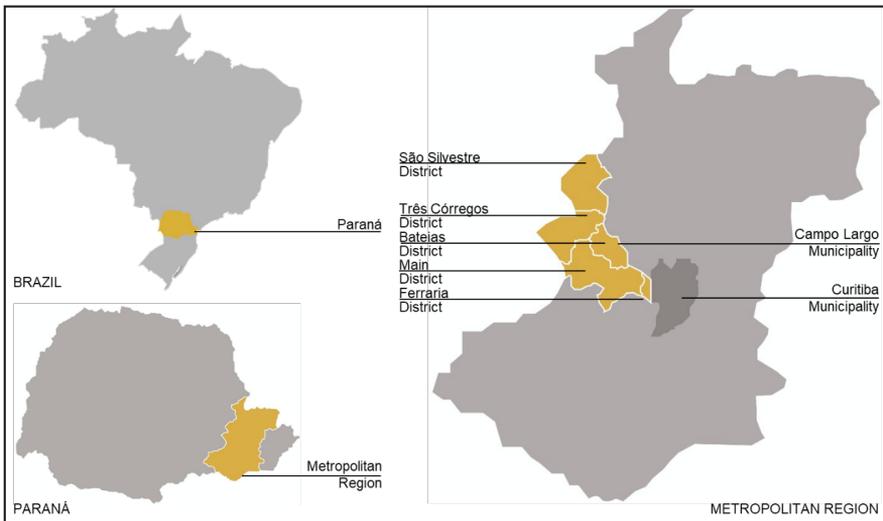


Figure 1: Location maps of the municipality of Campo Largo in the country, state, and metropolitan region

Source: Adapted from COMEC (2022) and IBGE (2022).

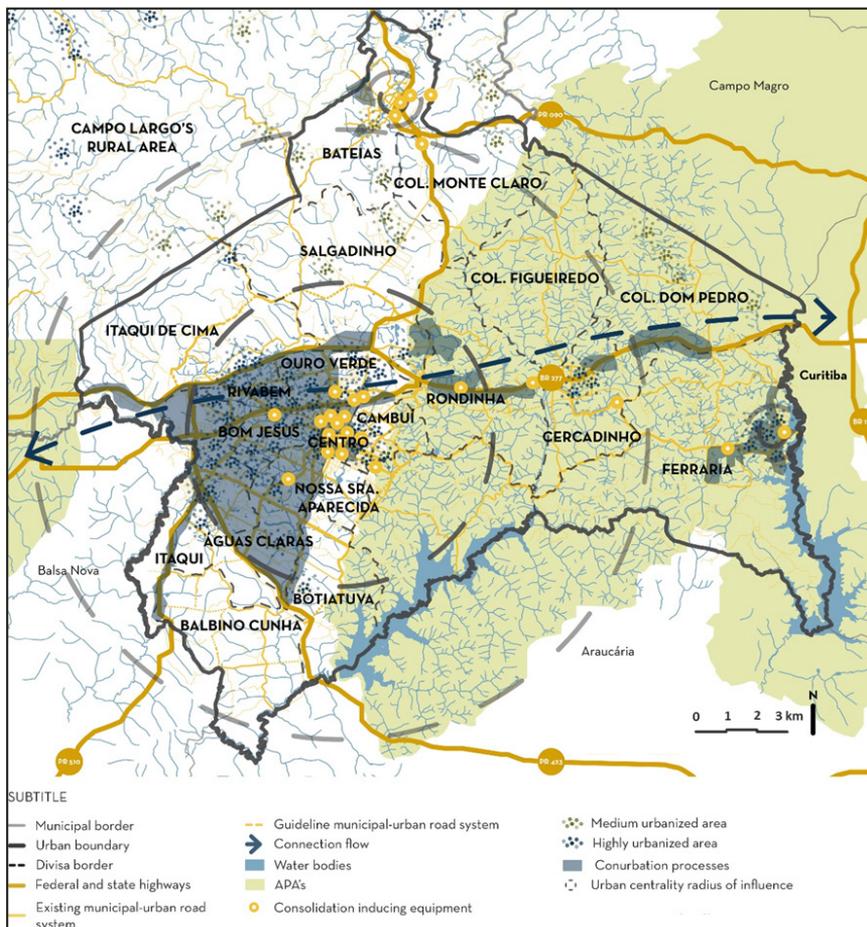


Figure 2: Map of the urban *continuum* of the municipality of Campo Largo

Source: Adapted from PMCL (2015).

note:

APA = *área de proteção ambiental* (environmental protection area)

the following premises are highlighted: conception of commercial regions distributed throughout the municipality for greater urban diversity, construction of cultural connection centers, and attraction of activities.

Also worthy of mention are the guidelines of resolution of accessibility and road flow problems, and organization and incentive to different modes of mobility, especially the most recommended, such as cycling and walking (FIEP, 2013). These measures reinforce the congruence in propositions of qualification of the most central area, in addition to the offer of new equally qualified centralities in the municipality, explained below, to diversify uses and users in each portion of the territory.

ANALYTICAL RESULTS

Resulting from the application of the SWOT technique, for the recognition of strengths and weaknesses of the internal environment, and opportunities and threats of the external one, Table 1 summarizes the reading of some of the most relevant points of interest for the formulation of propositional guidelines aimed at the development of urban identities in Campo Largo. From its interpretation, it appears the feasibility of consolidating the centralities in the districts components of the urban *continuum* (Main, Bateias, and Ferrara), including the support for the ancient district areas of Três Córregos and São Silvestre, which are inferior in the municipal hierarchy (PMCL, 2015).

Municipalities with high rates of repulsion and low rates of attraction do not have sufficient economic dynamics to serve their population, transforming them into peripheral, overdependent, and overpopulated localities. In this context, it is worth remembering that, generally, the peripheries show relevant socio-spatial inequalities in relation to centralities (D'ANDREA, 2020).

Thus, for the development of the Campo

Largo territory in a planned and autonomous way, it is necessary to structure proposals focused on the diversification and qualification of its most important centralities. In addition, it is essential the decentralization in new central units to balance the offers of urban equipment and neighboring services by the entire municipal space, based on the diagnosis illustrated in Figure 3.

Starting from the stated premises, the present **propositional essay** is based on the configuration of identities for central regions – already consolidated or under development – of each of the three districts of the urban *continuum* (Figure 4), predicting the evolution of the municipality as a whole in its relations of intra and inter-regional independence. In general terms, the main goals are:

- a) to structure the central district areas under the principles of qualification of the pedestrian landscape set out by Gehl (2015[2009]);
- b) to expand the supply of prescribed equipment at each centrality, according to the premises of Moreno (2020) to a “city of 15 minutes”;
- c) to generate activity centers in support of the characteristic performance identified in the analyzes of each district.

For the **Main Centrality**, due to the need to eliminate the high educational disinterest of the young public present in the surroundings, the conjectures are linked to the restructuring of the central street (Rua XV de Novembro), with its identity linked to a leisure and living center. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the quote by Speck (2016[2012]) that the central region is the space of the city that belongs to everyone and that investing in it produces advantages for all citizens. In a participatory urban setting, Jacobs (2011[1961]) remembers that the diversity generated by urbanized areas comes from the proximity of people.

In the **Bateias Centrality**, irregular

		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES		<p>Main District: for hosting the principal center, it maintains its hierarchy of greater importance and for the development of leisure and living.</p> <p>Bateias District: its proximity to the principal center represents a great advantage for cultural and knowledge relations.</p> <p>Ferraria District: the concentration of logistics services in this territory – due to the proximity of the BR 277 – transforms it into a typological development pole not observed in the others, for coexistence and professionalization.</p>	<p>Main District: its more central location in the urban <i>continuum</i> and its physical link with two other districts permit balanced relationships, but still in a hierarchical way.</p> <p>Bateias District: its need for progress, focused on its transformation into a secondary centrality, allows for complementary economic and logistical interactions with the first central area, in addition to supporting the ancient districts of Três Córregos and São Silvestre.</p>
	THREATS	<p>Ancient districts: although inferior in hierarchy relations, these places can be well supplied by the Main and Bateias centralities, when necessary. In addition, its current configurations favor the development of rural and ecological tourism activities, among others.</p> <p>Curitiba: the proximity of the Campo Largo municipality to the capital prevents its full development since the search for specialized services in the metropolis occurs with significant frequency.</p>	<p>Ferraria District: it is the most dependent on Curitiba as it is closer to the capital than to the Main District, making it difficult to communicate directly with the center of its own municipality.</p> <p>Ancient districts: due to the constant declines in population growth rates, Três Córregos and São Silvestre were reclassified as reference portions of the territory, losing district importance.</p> <p>Curitiba: the progress in municipal specialization based on its centralities generates dependence on part of the rest of the metropolitan region.</p>

Table 1: Matrix of the most relevant strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats of interest by districts of the municipality of Campo Largo

Source: Prepared based on information from PMCL (2015).

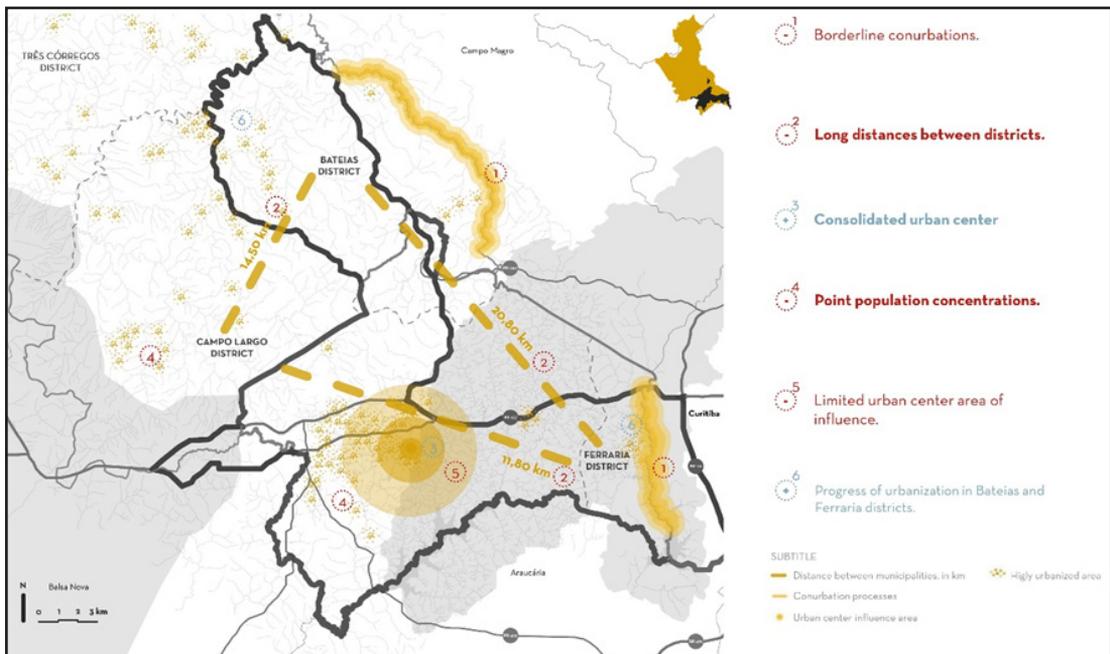


Figure 3: Diagnostic synthesis map of the urban *continuum* of the municipality of Campo Largo

Source: Based on information from PMCL (2015).

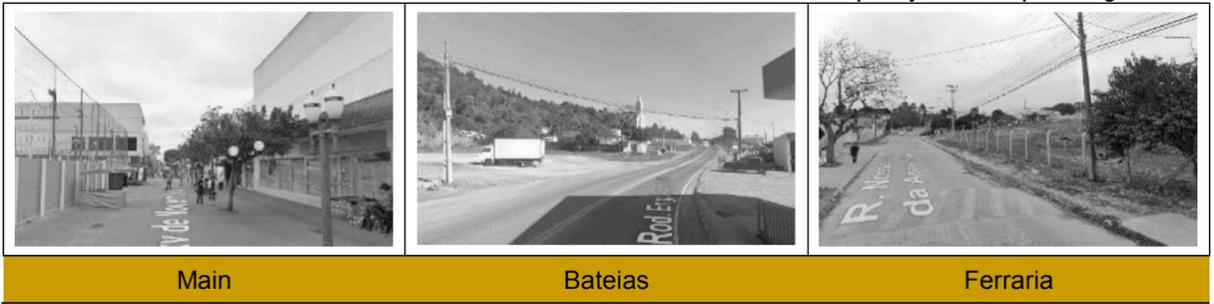


Figure 4: Views of the district centralities of the urban *continuum* of the municipality of Campo Largo
 Source: Google Street View (2022)

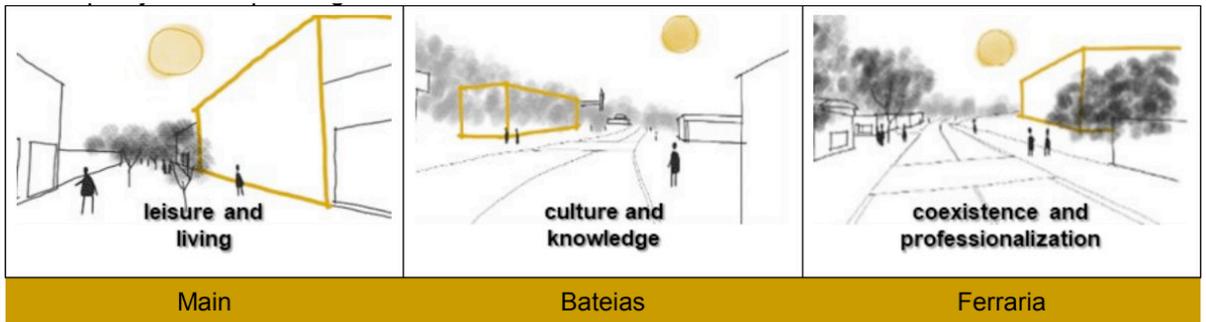


Figure 5: Sketches of identities proposed for the district's centralities of the urban *continuum* of the municipality of Campo Largo
 Source: Based on the essay proposals.

situations are found due to the insufficiency of constructive parameters (PMCL, 2015) and the demand for social assistance and secondary and elementary education equipment exceeds the supply. Thus, the essential proposals are related to the regularization of land use and occupation legislation, structuring of walkability along the Engenheiro Ângelo Lopes Highway and formalization of identity associated with a center of culture and knowledge. In this direction of a walkable city, Gehl (2015[2009]) comments that in people-oriented cities, the prerequisite for the quality of urban life is to offer good opportunities to walk. Speck (2016[2012]) adds that it is better to spend a few minutes walking than to spend more time looking for a parking space.

The occupation of the **Ferraria Centrality** is also characterized by irregularity, both by the relative lack of definition of its regions and zones, and by the appropriation of places of environmental fragility. Thus, it does not have a well-established central portion. The high population density of the Curitiba's neighborhood and its proximity to BR-277 favor the establishment of a focus on social assistance programs. From this, the intentions are the installation of a "pole" in the vicinity of that neighborhood and realization of identity related to a center for coexistence and professionalization. In a context of a sustainable city, Campos Filho (2010[2003]) states that a maximum comfortable distance should be defined for walking to places of interest, which is endorsed by Speck (2016[2012]) when he mentions that adequate economic conditions in urbanized areas depend on an efficient road network.

This set of proposals for the identity representation of central localities in the municipality of Campo Largo, illustrated in Figure 5, is in line with the assumption stated by Hardt, Hardt, and Hardt (2017) of the city as a place of memory of past times, legacy

of the current era, and reference for future periods. Therefore, it admits incalculable spatial and temporal dimensions and allows conclusive reflections on the subject, which are forward summarized.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As subsidies to face the problematic of imbalances between urban centralities originated by regional dynamics, the answers to the investigative question, of how to value identity representations in localities subject to strong vectors of centralization in metropolitan regions, allowed the achievement of the general objective of the research, including the proposition of valuing local identity by reducing these factors.

The adopted methodological procedures supported the development of the case study on the municipality of Campo Largo, based on theoretical postulates on the subject. Reinforced by other urbanistic thoughts, these conceptual contributions highlight the need for deepening of theories to support planning and design practices in urban and regional spaces.

The local contexts from the historical-cultural perspective, political-geographical scope, demographic-population panorama, socioeconomic framework, and urban-territorial scenario allowed the diagnosis of the study area, indicating strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats of municipal districts. Under these conditions, they reveal their potential for the (re)construction of identities as centralities in the municipal urban *continuum*.

The findings of the prognosis, associated with the proposals formulated, reinforce that specialized centers based on identity representations enable the configuration of participatory, walkable, and sustainable cities, among countless other urban modalities. As a corollary, the propositional essay of reducing regional centrality by valuing local identity is validated.

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