# The Metamorphosis of Popular Question among Brazilian Architects in Recife, 1959 - 2009

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The economic, social and political transformations which Brazilian society went through during the 1950ies and 60ies have caused Recife´s architects to become progressively more aware of social, low-income concerns, especially in the countries Northeast region. This tendency followed thee broad social initiatives that took place throughout that time period, engaging diverse politically-oriented individuals, local elite members, proffessional groups, among different and varied demanding groups. As a matter of fact, those movements have apparently shared a clear, cross-cutting focus on social and low-income themes. Furthermore, important public planning agencies and other major university-bound research centers have also been set up during that time. Those institutions in turn have since then issued most major publications and projects highlighting social and low-income concerns. At the same time, all those converging interests and actions have stepwise constructed and consolidated a new career perspective to architects within Brazil, which actually diverged from the common representations usually disseminated by the regular architecture culture at that time. The facts presented above led me to identify two existing mainstream teaching models in architecture schools: on the one hand, the classroom mainstream, which reflects more closely the free-trade, private office practice representation and 'big-monument-oriented' architecture; on the other hand, the research mainstream, which incorporates mainly social low-income concerns. Important contributions made by architects in line with the research, urban & regional planning mainstream have helped to bridge the gap between the vernacular social architecture language and the formal scholar one - this has not however invalidated its definition as an artistic expression, as I will demonstrate later on. Anyway, during an initial first phase, representations related to popular themes seemed to be overall linked to major social issues like migration flows, disaggregation of native communities and sprawling in urban outskirts. All in all, this represented actually just an initial period, a starting point from which architects contributed to shape up a brand new work field later on. More recently, architects have further on sharply transformed the representations they now entertain on social concerns. As a matter of fact, whereas beforehand social architecture representations repeatedly referred back to themes such as community popular culture and some necessary public intervention, now they seem to privilege individual-citizenship - based and market - centered strategies instead. Indeed, current broader participatory decision-making processes involving urban issues from the 1990s onwards tend to replace past strategies restricted just too poor communities and local territories. Citizen-individuals now stand under the focus of the present participatory discourse and the whole city geography becomes the relevant territory instead. Likewise, mutual-aid groups set up to construct new housing units sort of turn away from old community representations and reshape themselves over as apprenticeship construction sites to serve city's unemployed labor instead. Meanwhile, as old community representations fade away, social architecture themes incipiently start to make their way into the classroom mainstream. The present prevailing intellectual atmosphere is the result of several major economic, social and political changes, but especially the permanence of left-wing groups on the top of public power positions for more than a decade now.

KEY WORDS: Brazilian's architects; low-income housing; self-constructed dwelling units; popular participation in urban decision-making processes.