

A SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD IN VITÓRIA AS THE NEW DOWNTOWN

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows aspects of the urbanization process in Vitória, the main city of Espírito Santo, Brazil, in order to specially debate two periods related to its urban modernization. As method, the research was based on documents such as urban projects, studies about the local economy and the data on the evolution of the urban infrastructure. The first period begins in 1896, when Saturnino de Brito, a then remarkable sanitarian engineer, designed a new suburban neighborhood in Vitória, called "Novo Arrabalde". It was five or six times bigger than the existing city and intended to change the ancient and small village appearance of Vitória. This project would allow urban growth without sanitary problems. The period ends in the 1920's when the tram system was installed to better connect the new neighborhood and Vitória. The second period begins in the 1950's when the suburban neighborhood was already completely urbanized and started to lose its suburb's character. At that time four-storey buildings began to be part of the "Novo Arrabalde's" landscape. In the 1970's, at the end of the second period, it was the favorite place to construct skyscrapers in Vitória. Emphasizing the urban and landscape's transformations it is also worth mentioning the enormous landfill added to the east, at that time. The urban process occurred during the two periods, 1896-1920's and 1950's-1970's, is related to modernization. At the first one, the modern landmark was the sanitary neighborhood, with large avenues and all the urban infra-structure, built in the same rhythm as that of coffee exportations. The second one shows its modern face in the height of buildings, attracting downtown's functions. The economic activity was no longer the coffee business, but the iron industry exportation. It is interesting to notice that in both cases the port maintained its place as a modern urban element. Keywords: urbanization, modernization, land use.

INTRODUCTION

The urbanization process associated to modernization is a constant theme in studies of a city's history and urbanism, considering several different approaches - economic, social, demographic, among others - and allowing the emergence of different elements of characterization, which can be recognized as landmarks or urban modernization (such as a *boulevard*, a urban park, a building)in general, related to a certain period of time or place. Time in this context may include not only some years, but also decades or centuries, while place may include a wide variation, from region to international environment.

This study aims to examine the urbanization process of Vitória, Espírito Santo's main city, highlighting two significant periods in the relation between urbanization and modernization, focusing on the transformation of the garden suburb into a new metropolitan center. While researches on urban history of Vitoria have made considerable progress, the study about the meaning of this new metropolitan center constitutes a work in process. Thus, this paper adopts a rather descriptive approach, offering contribution to the understanding of Vitoria's and Brazil's urban history.

The time mentioned here refers initially to the period between 1896 and the 1920's, beginning with the creation of the project of this new neighborhood to the tram rail extension, including the implementation of the infrastructure of the streets and water supply. In this context, the period characterizes the full establishment of the garden suburb: from the project to the full realization of its installations and operation. The second period happens between the 1950's and 1970's, beginning when the new suburb really consolidated itself as a residential neighborhood and received its first buildings until it became the favorite place of the real estate market for constructing buildings in the city. This second period, that involves in itself the passage of the garden suburb to the function of residential neighborhood, announced at its end the hints of another passage, this time to the condition of the new commercial and services' center.

So, the time approach presented in this study involves, even if it is a specific case, problems related to urban issues of the XIX and XX centuries. This happens due to

the sanitarian principles that guided the garden suburb project to the metropolitan expansion, verticalization of the buildings and the site condition of new center. These aspects among others, characterized the changes in the urban dynamic during the last centuries in several regions, not only extended the reach of the periods established for this study but also confirmed their validity in this investigation of Vitória.

The area object of this study, although humble in importance in the Country and not well known internationally, is inserted and articulated in the urbanization process and similar to the ones happening in the world, according to the technical, esthetic and urbanistic solutions included in urbanist projects, as well as in the elements that signaled this modern urbanization.

It is in this context that this study will show, examining each of the mentioned periods, the characteristics of urbanization of Vitória and its relations with modernization.

CONSOLIDATION OF A SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD IN VITÓRIA: 1896-1920'S

When proposing a garden suburb for Vitória, as the first great expansion project designed for the city, the sanitarian engineer Francisco Saturnino Rodrigues de Brito evokes and anticipates what would have become in the first decades of the XX century, according to Andrade (1992), *one of the fundamental paradigms of modern urbanization*. Andrade (1992) refers to the diffusion of this model of residential neighborhood, from the spread of the idea of a garden-city gathered in Ebenezer Howard's work, named - *Tomorrow: A peaceful Path to real reform* published in 1898. For Andrade(1992) the model would be comparable, in terms of importance, to two other paradigm of similar worth: *Le Corbusier's radiant city and the Germans' 'siedlungen'*.

Besides showing a privileged vision about the most adequate urbanistic solutions for the place in discussion, Saturnino de Brito also presented himself as a fully updated professional. This can be seen in the idea of garden suburb that although already tried in the United States and some European countries, only received wide publicity in the first decades of the following century. Other aspects of his modernity are also seen in the accuracy of the sanitarian techniques and in the esthetic sensibility of his urbanistic proposals (Andrade, 1992).

For Saturnino de Brito's career ,the project developed for the city of Vitória has the special role of being the first urbanistic project from a wide series of projects developed for Brazil. As an engineer Brito had already shown his professional competence in building railroads. In the urbanistic field, his experience prior to the "Novo Arrabalde" for Vitória, send us ,as pointed in Andrade (1992), to a short participation in Aarão Reis' team, in Belo Horizonte's project, just a short time before Vitória's. Thus and considering that Brito had already showed in this garden suburb project for Vitoria innovating and important principles, perfected along his career, it highlights the project's value and consequently the study about it.

As already pointed, it was the first expansion proposal projected for the city of Vitória, outlined in a historic moment, linked to the beginning of the republic system in Brazil in 1889. This period also corresponds to the economic development resumed by Espírito Santo, state located southeast of Brazil. This development consequently doubled up its capital urban development. For a short historical information it is worth mentioning that Vitória was one of Brazil's first colonial villages whose foundation goes back to 1551. It is noted that until the Jesuits left Brazilian soil in the XVIII century, the city of Vitória had an important position of economic and regional headquarter due to this religious group activities. From then on Vitória and Espírito Santo submerged in a long period of economic stagnation, process that began to revert in the beginning of the XIX century, with the insertion of the immigrants' occupation of the countryside and more specifically in the coffee plantations (Novaes, s.d.; Oliveira, 1975; Bittencourt, 1984).

The high price for coffee in the foreign market gave the state governor of that time, 1892 to 1896, Muniz Freire , the idea for an audacious government plan. His goal was to transform Vitória in the State's economic center, empowering its already existing political-administrative function (Campos Júnior, 1996). To reach this goal, the government guidelines were aimed at three main elements from the project: the railway, the harbor and the garden suburb. Thus it is important to

highlight that although the state capital, Vitória was not the only and main gateway for products, only being responsible for the output of production generated in the central region of Espírito Santo. The south region production was exported through Itapemirim's port while the production from the north was exported through São Mateus' harbor. So, Muniz Freire's program designed the building of a railway to bring to Vitória the state's and part of Minas Gerais', a neighboring state, agriculture production. Continuing with the idea of a state economic centralization in Vitória, the proposition of re-equipping the port aimed to create condition for outputting compatible with the volume production expected (Campos Júnior, 1996).

Therefore, the idea of a garden suburb acquired then, a complementary character to the physical modernization demonstration of the city of Vitória, from an urbanist project point of view. The new neighborhood is then proposed taking into account the sanitarian principals of the time, in flagrant contrast to the sanitarian context of the existing urban nucleus (Mendonça et alii, 2009). The "Novo Arrabalde", in project (figure 1), included five or six times the urbanized area of the city of Vitória at that time, comprehending three nucleuses: a working class, a vegetable garden and a residential, that since that time is foreseen as the prime part of the city (Brito, 1996). To start the new neighborhood it was necessary to undertake a great engineering work, due to the necessity to build a road that kept it connected to the city. Along this road three nucleuses were developed, being the residential the largest. Its outline included the superposition of two long avenues (in sharp angle, diagonally) to a screen system, to provide picturesque sights because the paths of these avenues were proposed directed to prominent scenarios (Mendonça et alii, 2009).



Figure 1 Vitória and city expansion by Saturnino de Brito. Vitória, 1896. Arquivo Público Estadual do Espírito Santo

Although a lot could still be told about the project, its urban characteristics and its technical value, this is not the aim of this paper. There are many studies that have already dealt with this issue in an adequate way (Andrade, 1992; Mendonça et alii, 2009). What we have tried to demonstrate here, with the brief description of the project, is that it was an enterprise of great value, well conceived in the technical and urbanist aspect and that consequently needed great financial resources.

As already mentioned the urban development of the state's capital mainly depended on the success of the coffee exporting market (Novaes, s.d., Oliveira,

1975, Campos Júnior, 1996; Bittencourt, 1984; Derenzi, 1995). The so called improvements and the modernization elements of the urbanization implanted in Vitória along the first half of the XX century were directly related to the periods of high value of the product. Thus, the great difficulty in carrying out the project in question was due to the big economic crisis that happened at the end of the XIX century related to the low value to the coffee price in international markets (Campos Júnior, 1996). Even so, it is remarkable that the project has always been used as reference for urbanizing the east region of Vitória, following a slow but constant implantation (Mendonça et alii, 2009). As part of the economic overturn that happened, Torrens Company, at the time owner of the area and in charge of installing the infrastructure work, lost its ownership because it didn't meet the established deadlines for accomplishing the job (Campos Júnior, 1996). So the State repossessed the area installing, in a slow but constant flow, the urban infrastructure that in the future would favor the occupation of the site (Mendonça et alii, 2009).

The effort spent in the gradual venture of the road, sometimes demanding the extraction and breaking rocks, sometimes requiring grounding soil at the shore allowed, during the first years of the XX century (1905), the implantation of a tram line, east of Vitória and as far as Praia do Suá making the access and consequently the occupation of the created neighborhood easy (Campos Júnior, 1996; Mendonça et alii, 2009).

Another stimulus to the new neighborhood urbanization was the succeeding allotment ,officially granting not only for the acquisition of plots but also for building houses. Between 1910 and 1927 these grants were significant including among others, taxes reductions and reduction on the public transportation fare not only for neighborhood residents but also for swimmers that came to the site (Campos Júnior, 1996; Mendonça et alii, 2009). Although still not expressive, the measures described had an effect on the development and occupation of the site. The contrast between the urban infrastructure of the new neighborhood and the city of Vitória justified the sparse occupation (Mendonça et alii, 2009).

However, in the second part of the 1920s, the implantation of the infrastructure related to the opening and paving of streets, as well as the ones related to water supply contributed decisively for the growth, in the next decade, in the interest in building in the area (Campos Júnior, 1996; Mendonça et alii, 2009).

It is in this context that it became viable along the analysed period, from 1896 to the 1920s, the configuration of the projected garden suburb project. The straight and large paths and the buildings in the middle of the plots generated a new urban atmosphere (figure 2), similar to the hygienist principals and differentiated from the ones that characterized the urban environment of Vitória with narrow plots and intense occupation. These aspects as well as the beginning of the tram services, which favored the occupation of the site, constituted the characteristic elements of modern urbanization, present in the area studied, and an example of what happened in other cities in the passage of the XIX century to the XX century. We can still observe the gradual configuration of this garden suburb, as a health-resort, favored by a special attribute, which was its location by the sea. This same attribute later on, together with the other elements, also contributed for the change of function of the region as it can be seen in the approach shown next.



Figure 2: Moacyr Avidos' Street. Novo Arrabalde. Vitória, 1930's.
Arquivo Geral do Município de Vitória

THE GRADUAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW DOWNTOWN - 1950'S - 1970'S

The strengthening of this garden suburb as a health resort is also present in the studies of Pimentel (2006), who analysed architectural projects approved by the municipality in the first decades of the XX century, for ground plots in the new neighborhood. There were several mentions in the project to the consignment of buildings direct to maritime recreation built or not. Reinforcing this characterization, concomitantly, the colonial urban nucleus developed its centrality. This was labeled, since the beginning of the XX century, by assimilation of the characteristic elements of modern urbanization, as it was happening in the main cities of the world, besides the diversity of functions : residential, commercial, institutional, port.

Among these elements, we can find the urban park represented by the construction in 1912 of Parque Moscoso (Muniz, 1985), as a privileged place for visits and public expositions, stimulating the development of new social habits in the city. At the same time the park built on landfill area, in a drenched plot and considered insalubrious by diagnosis of the urban medicine of that time, became also a solution for some serious urban epidemiologic problems, besides becoming a new option for socializing. Other public spaces of similar nature were built in this urban nucleus. One of them, built even before Parque Moscoso was the João Clímaco square, in the high city, near the most important religious and civic space of Vitória. Another example, built in the 1920s was Costa Pereira square. This even in a smaller dimension, followed orientation similar to Parque Moscoso's in reference to the recreational and contemplative use and on the over position of a drenched plot.

Around this square, that already sheltered cultural activities, became an even better place for these functions, with the opening, in this same decade, of two theaters. The opening of the *boulevard* touching the square and the construction of the city first buildings, with five and seven storeys, also in the square scope, were with the other aspects, decisive to characterize Vitória's modernization and at the same time, the centrality of its original urban nucleus.

At that time, the building as a landmark of urban modernity already characterized Chicago and Nova York (Hitchcock, 1970; Porteous, 1996) and it wouldn't take long to be seen in Brazil, associated to big cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Vaz, 1994; Somekh, 1994; Feldman, 1996). In this aspect, with the development of the verticalization process in buildings in Vitória, from the second half of the 1940s on, the building reached an outstanding position before the other elements, strongly conveying modernization and centrality.

Other element allusive to this same context of modernization and centrality and that can not be forgotten, comprehended the conclusion of the harbor work between 1940 and 1950 (Siqueira, 1994) achieving the end of the XIX century , the project of outputting through Vitória the goods produced in the state. Besides its own function in the regional economy, it was observed that the port, as well as the park, the squares and the *boulevard*, already mentioned as icons of modern urbanization, became in Victoria, promising addresses for the construction of buildings, highlighting their symbolic character as well as their location.

The preference of placing buildings in the city's original urban nucleus characterized the verticalization process of the constructions not only in Vitória but also in several Latin American cities. This situation was kept in Vitória until the 1970s when the city reached expansion in its own territory to the east and northeast and on the neighboring towns in a conurbation process. But before this happened, while the city original nucleus was kept predominant in its central function, the "Novo Arrabalde", whose modernity was expressed by its wide and straight avenues, was constantly and slowly fed of urban infrastructure. Thus there are the public transportation and the social equipments, such as clubs and schools, in a way that along the 1950s and 1960s it was possible to perceive how minimized the idea of garden suburb was and at the same time it strengthened the notion of the place as a neighborhood (figure 3).

It is interesting to observe that in 1950s when the transition from garden suburb to neighborhood was incipient in the "Novo Arrabalde", the presence of some buildings could be seen. It was a small amount of low buildings located scattered in a complete different situation from what happened in the then downtown. There, the buildings were higher and concentrated, forming a true focus of verticalization in places which urban attributes, as already mentioned, were considered attractive (square, park, *boulevard* and port). Anyway, this prognostic of verticalization tested the new environment and allowed to foresee the possibilities that only came to be true in the future (Mendonça, 2001). For Campos Júnior (1993), the expansion of verticalization of constructions in Vitória, to the east, was stopped by the landfilling of a wide esplanade nearby downtown. In fact, there ,it was set the best urban conditions, be for infrastructure or for urban improvements or beautification. So it seems logic to say that the creation of an area from the landfilling immediately close to this place would have contributed for maintaining for more than two decades, from the 1950s to the 1970s, the preference for verticalization in Vitória's own downtown area.



Figure 3: The "Novo Arrabalde". Vitória, 1950's. Acervo Francisco Moraes

So, the 1970s was period of transition of the real estate interest between downtown and the area east of Vitória. During this period, downtown was still a favorite place, while the new area became more attractive. Beside the constant improvements in the urban infrastructure which capacitated more and more the market interest, this area had a special attribute that the downtown area lacked:

the beach. It is interesting to point out the late real estate interest in Vitória for verticalization of the beach (Mendonça, 2001), aspect found and consolidated in Rio de Janeiro, with the verticalization of Copacabana beach since the 1920s (Vaz, 1994; Ribeiro, 1997). It is possible to associate this late interest to the also late action of the real estate incorporator, what in Vitória refers to the same occasion - the 1970s. There are many studies about the verticalization of the constructions that confirm the real estate boom since the insertion of the incorporators to the market (Vaz, 1994; Ribeiro, 1997, Somekh, 1994, Campos Júnior, 1993; Souza, 1994). Thus, the new area in Vitória verticalized under the action of a new and dynamic real estate, more lucrative and nimble.

Since the second half of the 1960s, great entrepreneurships began to set up in Vitória's continental area. Among them there is Espírito Santo Federal University Campus, Tubarão port, 'Companhia Vale do Rio Doce' and during the 1970s, 'Companhia Siderúrgica de Tubarão'. These equipments when locating themselves farther from downtown, to the east and northeast of the new neighborhood, attracted the expansion of improvements and public investments, consequently considering the new neighborhood.

The transition of the real estate interest from downtown to the new neighborhood in the east, already named Praia do Canto, during the 1970s, resulted during the second half of the 1980s in the transference of interest for the location of buildings to this area (figure 4). After 1984 it became rare and isolated the construction of buildings downtown. On the other hand it was possible to see a kind of path outlined by the construction of buildings, rapidly occupying the territory, in the east-northeast extension, along the coast, reaching the continental area.



Figure 4: The "Novo Arrabalde" as Praia do Canto. Vitória, 1988. Acervo A Gazeta

The industrial and port enterprises already mentioned, among others installed in towns near Vitória, as well as the agriculture economic crisis that happened in the state country side, stimulated the population migration to the capital and its surroundings, forming a metropolitan agglomeration. As a consequence of the metropolitan development, downtown gradually lost its predominance with the emergence of new centers in Vitória and in the other metropolitan towns.

It is in this context that the old garden suburb, now a neighborhood began its transformation process of a new metropolitan center. The slow migration of institutions, from the historic center to the new area and the real estate interest in constructing new buildings contributed to this process, stimulated by the 'discovery' of the sea shore. In addition and complementation there was the set up of commercial activities and offices, mingling with the residential context of the neighborhood. As it happened in the central area, this new area also received in the 1970s an extensive landfill that it is still under a process of occupation, keeping the real estate interest alive on the vast region polarized by this new centrality.

THE EFFORT FOR MODERNIZATION IN TWO ACTS

Analyzing the two periods approached it is possible to highlight aspects that can be considered inductors of the urban development process and the changes of the functions of the area in question.

In the first period, from 1896 to the 1920s, the value of coffee in the foreign market, although oscillating made it possible to establish the urban infrastructure, allowing to set up in Vitória a garden suburb, idealized in hygienist patterns, whose wide paths and construction in the middle of the plots, besides the sanitary apparatus, corresponded to what was planned in urban terms based on the technological advances of the time.

The tram, the park, the square, the *boulevard* were characterizing elements of modernization. Since then, the urban expansion, verified in a stronger way decades later, was signaled with the garden suburb project and prepared with the continuous, although slow set up of the urban infrastructure. All these elements and proceedings characterized the effort for modernization undergone in the city of Vitória, as it was happening in all major cities of the world at that time. The link that somehow contributed to match Vitória's limited urban environment to the great world centers, referred to the possibilities opened by the port operation. This has always been an important element in the insertion of Vitória in the international ambiance. This insertion happened in the assimilation of epidemics from far away places as well as in the assimilation of ideas from abroad, which became technical solutions, completely usable in the local reality, contributing to adaptation of a modern suburb environment.

During the second period, between 1950 and 1970, the transition in the state of Espírito Santo, from agro-exporting industry to the one related to big industry (Rocha e Morandi, 1991) marked a new order of development in which the port once more had a fundamental role. In the beginning of this period, the port restructured operated in Vitória's central area as a magnificent gateway for the outputting of the products of the wide hinterland, already articulated to it by the railway. Naturally it was through this channel that Vitória's contact with the world happened, receiving all kinds of news.

Although the park, the square and the *boulevard*, characterized urban Vitória in the previous period, and were still elements of prominence in the urban modernity, this modernity became more expressive by the buildings that used this ambiances and also the port as address.

While in the first moment here studied, the urban distances began to be traveled by tram, in this second period, the urban road transport is what began to have the role of reducing time and distance in traveling. In this new urban context expansion was replaced by metropolization, favoring the formation of several centers. The garden suburb studied was still on top in accordance to local urban modernity in becoming, in this second period, a neighborhood and receiving the connotation of the new metropolitan center.

It is also noted that, the landfilling in the beginning of the second period, right by the downtown area, and in the end of this period, in continuity of the new neighborhood, allowed in each moment the restraint of the most valuable areas to real estate interests for the construction of buildings. Consequently, this proceeding also allowed the perception of the sense of transition and later transfer of interest, from downtown to the new neighborhood. It is observed that a new port built in Vitória's continental areas, east of the new neighborhood, attracted the interest for industrial entrepreneurships. These, along the other big equipments, installed in intermediary positions, contributed for the urban infrastructure expansion. This situation, as well as the others already mentioned, also favored the creation of a urban metropolitan structure.

Thus it is worth mentioning that although the economic functions have modified, the port stays highlighting Vitória's greatest function and naturally relating the modernity of a new era.

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