

The role played by the architect-engineers from the city of São Paulo in defining the field of urban planning. São Paulo - Brazil: 1920-1960*

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At the first meeting held by the then recently founded Urbanism Department at the São Paulo's Engineering Institute on August 21st, 1929, engineer-architect Luiz de Anhaia Melo laid out what he dubbed "Urbanism's True Goal". The lecturer recalled when, according to Fustèl de Coulanges, "families, brotherhoods and tribes" gathered in Antiquity to found a cult with its attendant sanctuary - the city. He ascribed to some of his colleagues the task of overcoming a certain gap, since "cities are now being founded without rites and poetry and, for that reason, they might not be grounded in the citizen's soul". He then urged his colleagues to adhere to Lethaby's motto: "Let us start off by creating an urban psychology and fostering the civic impulse", thus spreading "the guiding principles of Urbanism and preaching this new gospel: the gospel of the social and physical regeneration" (MELLO, 1929c).

Anhaia Melo was at that time the Director of the Institute of Engineering, as well as the vice-director of São Paulo's School of Technology¹, and he had expressed in his classes and lectures the firm belief that Urbanism should consist of cooperation, and that in trying to solve the problems posed by the urban growth one should enlist the indispensable support of the citizens. During the period between September and December, 1928, he devoted six lectures to this topic - the first one held at the Rotary Club in São Paulo and the following ones at the Institute of Engineering itself - and argued for the necessity of "regarding the shaping of the environment as the primary concern of urban culture". He firmly took this stance in the 1920's and kept standing for it during his long professional career, believing that "projects, laws and regulations", as good as they might turn out to be, were useless without the people's support. The cooperation should provide the basis for urban planning, since this new field of studies, called "science of urbanism", demanded not only the engineer's expertise, but also "the input from sociologists, lawmakers, jurists, politicians, administrators, economists and citizens in general" (MELLO, 1929).

The complexity of the problems related to the urban space made it essential for planners to put interdisciplinary practices into effect; urban planning was only feasible to the extent to which it could benefit from a vast program of knowledge about interventions carried out in other cities, in Brazil and abroad. Such extensive knowledge was to be complemented by the efforts for enlightening public opinion; a task that "responsible men" should be accorded. He kept arguing for these ideas up until the end of his teaching career, marked by his "A Course on Urbanism. The elements of the regional composition" - an extension course he taught with the support of the Student Council of the Institute of Technology (Grêmio Politécnico) in 1957. The course underwent a third edition in 1961.

Anhaia Melo had an intense work schedule for about fifty years, which makes the study of his professional career an enormous challenge, since it demands the careful reading of material coming from a specialized field of knowledge and expressed in many different languages. He graduated from the School of Technology of São Paulo in 1913, and began his teaching career in this school in

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¹ The School of Technology (Escola Politécnica), founded in 1893 through an initiative of the State Government of São Paulo, was State of São Paulo's first school of engineering and was integrated into the University of São Paulo in 1934. The Institute of Engineering of São Paulo was founded in 1917.

1918, strongly emphasizing the urban studies; he kept on teaching at the School of Technology up until his retirement in 1961.² He expressed the same interest in “spreading urbanism” when he held the office of Mayor of São Paulo in 1931; an interest which was later reaffirmed by his call for the creation of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of São Paulo in 1948; he eventually became the first director of the Faculty. At the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of São Paulo (FAU-USP) he taught “Theory of Architecture” for second year students and “Urbanism” for fifth year students. (RIOS, 1942; *Anuário da Escola Politécnica*, 1932, 1934, 1938, 1946, 1947). It was through one of his initiatives that the Center for Research and Studies on Urbanism [Centro de Pesquisas e Estudos Urbanísticos, CEPEU-FAU-USP] was founded in 1958 at the University of São Paulo. Still within the academic environment of the University of São Paulo, he actively engaged, from 1944 on, in the project for, and the construction of, the Campus which was to harbor the university city of São Paulo³. Alongside his teaching activity he held some public offices and worked in the private sector too (F. P. Ramos de Azevedo e Cia, Companhia Iniciadora Predial e Companhia Cerâmica Vila Prudente); he featured less prominently, though, in architectural plans (FICHER, 2005:143-152; FELDMAN, 2005; ARASAWA, 1999:11; LEME, 2000: 58,95,96; CAMPOS, 2002: 235 -243; SCHICCHI, 2002; XAVIER, 2005; TIMÓTEO, 2008).

In order to keep track of all these lines of research, the focus of which has always been on the questions regarding urbanism and urban and regional planning, I think that the notion of “professional trajectory” serves a useful, strategic function as a means of approaching the subject. In adopting this approach I don’t postulate any kind of continuous line of development and refinement of a certain original idea or stance. I think that Kevin Lynch’s notion of “wayfinding”, adopted by Phillipe Panerai as a procedure for reading the urban landscape, can be properly applied in this study, and I drew upon it (LYNCH, 1988:58-59). The reading of the path does not presuppose a fixed and stable point, but rather a series of dislocations through which, whether in terms of either urbanization or professional trajectory, the most relevant elements and the more prominent questions or doubts can be identified. Such questions and doubts, in the words of Panerai, “are not necessarily continuous or related to each other; there remain some blurry zones which often reveal historical ruptures.” (PANERAI, 1999:33-34).

Anhaia Mello’s extensive written work comes from a variety of sources, such as lectures, academic debates and seminars on urbanism, in which he presented, and argued for, his conceptions of urban intervention, drawing upon a vast knowledge acquired through the critical analysis of works by seminal authors; by so doing, he was able to catch up with the latest works done in the field.⁴ In short: the diversified range of activities undertaken by him in the fields of the theory and teaching of urbanism, as well as his effective presence in the public sphere - both with regard to his professional and political life and to his work in civil organizations - and the private sector, in which he directed many enterprises, formed a set of questions whose answers are to be found only scattered and incomplete in studies on punctual questions linked to his ideas in one way or another; studies in which Anhaia Mello’s life and work do not feature, however, as the main subject matters.

ENGAGING THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

² He taught Aesthetics, Civil Architecture and Housing Hygiene, and in 1926 he took on the recently created discipline of “Aesthetics, General Composition and Urbanism Modules I & II”, which became one of the required disciplines for graduating as an engineer architect after the 1925 school reform.

³ He was charged with putting forth the program for the creation of new facilities for the School of Technology, and from 1948 on he presided over the Commission for the Planning and Building of The University City; he was the main figure behind the approval of the project for the University City in May, 1949. He was a member of the Commission until 1951.

⁴ 42 titles are featured in LEME’s list from 1999, some of them having more than a single edition; in FICHER’s list, from 2005, there are 70 works - of which 54 are articles and 16 are books, comprising either texts which had not been published before or articles published in journals. One has to add to this number the writings published in the mainstream periodic press.

Important aspects of Anhaia Mello's work have been addressed by Cláudio H. Arasawa (1999) and Jhoyce P. Timóteo (2008) in their master's dissertations, both of which in History. As to the field of urbanism, although there's a consensus about the importance of his professional activity in the area as the main authority on urbanism theory in São Paulo during the period spanning half a century in which he formed generations of professionals who defined the urbanism thinking in São Paulo, his activity is studied as part of broader issues. (LEME,1999,2000⁵; SOMECK,1997; FELDMAN,2005; FICHER,2005; MEYER,1992; CAMPOS,2002; SCHICCHI,2002). The dialogue with these authors allowed me to discern arguments, areas of agreement and disagreement, and also allowed me to define the goal of this study, which I hope will contribute to the collective enterprise of having a better understanding of the foundations of urbanism in São Paulo and in Brazil in general.

The consensus on Anhaia Mello encompasses various aspects of his activity: his efforts to form the field of urbanism, both in the academic sphere and in the public administration, where he served as municipal representative, Mayor and secretary of State in São Paulo, as well as in civil and professional organizations, such as the Institute of Engineering and the Society of The Friends of The City; the "coherence and consistence of his stance" regarding such fundamental questions as the defense of "regulation of industrial activity"; his role in "defining the field of urbanism and urban planning in the structure of the public administration of the city of São Paulo" (LEME, 2000:58). Establishing a connection between social concerns and scholarly goals was an important strategic and programmatic point of his proposal to improve the life conditions of working-class families by, for instance, building parks where people without access to clubs and sport associations could enjoy a pleasant leisure environment (TIMÓTEO, 2008). The introduction of certain fundamental themes into the field of urbanism during the period of its making was also attributed to him, especially with regard to such ideas as zoning, multi-centered city, and the need for limitation and balance in the growth of the capital city of São Paulo - in that he ran against the current of the growing real estate speculation; he managed to introduce these themes drawing upon his inquisitive knowledge and his acquaintance with the latest works in the field which were being published abroad. When defending his views, he engaged in controversies with other Brazilian professionals working in the field of urbanism, especially with his colleague and engineer-architect Francisco Prestes Maia, who championed the unbridled city growth and the radial-concentric zone model.⁶

There were other divergences that placed them both on opposite sides of the debates on urbanism. Anhaia Mello argued for an "improvement tax" or else the sharing of the costs of street paving, criticizing monopolistic structures and defending state control over private companies providing public services. Prestes Maia, on the other hand, was against the improvement tax and barely, if at all, questioned the formation of monopolistic companies. Some of the controversies between them arose from political and party stances and commitments took on by Anhaia Mello during his mandate as municipal representative for the Democratic Party (1919-1921) and the two brief periods he was ahead of the public administration of the city of São Paulo⁷ (6.12.1930-25.7.1931 e 14.11-4.12.1931); some of these controversies resumed when Prestes Maia became mayor of São Paulo (1938-1945).

In the midst of all the proposals put forth by Anhaia Mello to rationalize the civil administration the following are especially remarkable: the reorganizing of the urbanism sector of the Board of Public Buildings (*Diretoria de Obra*), which was further divided into two segments - the urbanism section and the enrollment

⁵ LEME has been a leading scholar in the field ever since the 1980's, and in 1999 he published a groundbreaking study entitled *Urbanismo no Brasil. 1895-1965*, in which he presents part of Anhaia Mello's texts.

⁶ The points of disagreement between Anhaia Mello and Francisco Prestes Maia were expressed in widely spread controversies and have been studied by many urban scholars from São Paulo. One can highlight amongst them the doctoral dissertation presented by Regina Maria Prosperi MEYER, entitled "Metrópole e Urbanismo. São Paulo nos anos 50" (FAU-USP,1992).

⁷ Anhaia Mello, who had been appointed through the intervention of João Alberto, was the first of a series of mayors appointed through the intervention of the Federal Government; this situation of limited state autonomy lasted until the end of the so-called "New State" (Estado Novo) in 1945.

section (Act [Ato] n.50: 09.01.1931); changing in Artur Saboya's Code (11.1929) aiming at limiting the growing density of the occupation of lands (Act [Ato] n.25: 23.12.1930); the creation of the Commission for Aesthetic Censorship Of Buildings, aiming at exerting architectural control over urban buildings and the adequacy of their shape and color" (MELLO,1929c:109), (Act [Ato] n.58: 15.01.1931). Anhaia Mello established the zoning through the Act n. 127, from 20.03.1931, which would only be consolidated as a means for delimitating differentiated spaces and enforcing the urban regulation in the 1940's, when the "plans are no longer carried out and don't serve as an instrument to interfere in the shaping and production of the city space (of São Paulo) anymore" (FELDMAN, 2005:32,97 and ss.; CAMPOS:2002:474-476).

In 1931, during Mello's first mandate as mayor of São Paulo, the first Congress On Housing in São Paulo took place through an initiative of the Urbanism Division of the Institute of Engineering⁸, which was presided by engineer-architect Alexandre Albuquerque⁹ and marked by the nationalistic ideas from that period, although it harbored some modernists, such as architects Warchavchik and Flávio de Carvalho.¹⁰ It is generally believed that he worked informally for engineer Fábio Prado's administration (September 1934-January 1938), when the Ministry of Culture was created and its direction entrusted to Mário de Andrade; many public construction works were initiated around that period - the Nove de Julho avenue, the Municipal Library (Biblioteca Municipal) and the Pacaembu Stadium (Estádio do Pacaembu) - and inaugurated during Prestes Maia's mandate from 1938 to 1945 (DUARTE,1976:210 apud CAMPOS,2004:465-48, 499-518).

The creation of the Urbanism Department in 1947 opened up for civil administration engineers the possibility to assimilate some of Anhaia Mello's ideas and practices, such as the use of "comprehensive zoning" as the main tool for laying out a comprehensive planning of the city complex and the establishment of a clear distinction between the "line" function, devoted to acting in the context of decisions taken on a daily routine basis and dealing with everyday problems, and the "staff" function, designed to deal with a whole set of activities like planning, research, investigation, inquires, forecasts, and the interpretation of data; the "staff" function was "directly subordinated to the Mayor and to the Urban Planning Commission for the city of São Paulo [...] it was a kind of "super-secretariat"¹¹ (FICHER,2005:146-147; FELDMAN, 2005¹²). The proposals put forth by this Commission, as well as its composition, highlighted the clash of opinions on questions which were fundamental to the undertaking of the activities assigned to the Municipal Department of Urbanism. Prestes Maia remained convinced of the idea that the management of the urban space should be assigned only to professionals coming from the Municipality's urbanism sector; that was the prevailing idea among engineers working for the Public Construction Works Department of the City of São Paulo and had already been espoused in the 1910's by Victor da Silva Freire, who had been the responsible for this area during the long

⁸ Mayor Anhaia Mello's support for the initiative and his decision to take part in the conference on "Problems of Urbanism bearing directly on the City of São Paulo" stand in sharp contrast to the stance adopted by eight engineers of the Municipality, who claimed to be "uninterested in the works to be presented at the Conference"; this attitude highlights the engineers' resistance to Federal Government intervention after 1930 (*Annaes do 1º Congresso de Habitação*, maio 1931, p. 20, 23 e 33). On the Congress, see also: CARPINTÉRO,1997.

⁹ Upon launching the meetings, Alexandre Albuquerque emphasized the fact that it was the first Conference on Housing to be carried out in Brazil (*Annaes do 1º Congresso de Habitação*, maio 1931: 21).

¹⁰ The Annals (*Annaes*) report visitations to several public works, such as the "Works of the City. Construction works by architect Gregori Warchavchic" ("Obras da City. Construções de architecto Gregori Warchavchic", 325-327).

¹¹ Check out the lecture entitled "O Plano Regional de São Paulo. Uma contribuição da Universidade para o estudo de "Um Código de Ocupação Lícita do Solo" (8.11.1954 - Dia Mundial do Urbanismo) and "Elementos Básicos para o Planejamento Regional de São Paulo". The latter was presented to the Urban Planning Commission for the City of São Paulo and was also representative of the University of São Paulo (Monografias, USP-FAU 711.43098161-E2. Quotation pp. 3-4).

¹² The Feldman PHD Thesis (1996), published in 2005, presents much information quoted in later works, apart from providing other invaluable information and a strategic guide for the study, as it doesn't offer dualist explanations which usually attribute to the "elites" or the "bourgeoisie" the intention to take decisions only for their benefit and aimed at deliberately relegating the working-class or the low-income families to degraded or suburban areas. .

period from 1899 to 1925. Freire and Prestes Maia thought that the presentation of the plan to the population through the media should occur only after the plan had already been developed and elaborated by the engineers working for the Municipality.¹³ Anhaia Mello could anticipate what this way of doing things would result in: the shaping of public opinion before the plans came to light and could be more widely discussed. That is the reason why he argued for the creation of a multidisciplinary Commission formed also by members from the outside of the municipal public administration.¹⁴

It was only in the 1950's, after the demise of Vargas' dictatorial state and the end of Prestes Maia's mandate, that the professionals from the Department of Urbanism, staffed by a generation which had graduated in the 1930's and 1940's, started incorporating Anhaia Mello's teachings. The lectures presented at the Municipal Library between November 8th and December 15th, 1949, organized by the secretary of Public Construction Works and sponsored by the Society of Municipal Engineers of São Paulo expressed this change in attitude rather well. (1951) The drive to sponsor such event was justified by the municipal engineers' intention of "enlightening the public opinion and cooperating more closely with the people in order to solve the urban problems". In this lecture, engineer-architect Carlos Alberto Gomes Cardim Filho, director of the Urbanism Department, presented a scheme of the administrative organization of the Public Construction Works Office that was marked by the guiding principles which had been put forth by Anhaia Mello - an influence which is especially strong in such projects as the creation of the "Commissions for the Aesthetics and the Guiding City Plan" [Comissões de Estética e Orientadora do Plano da Cidade] (CARDIM:1951:7-17). These commissions concerned with the aesthetics of, and the guiding plan for, the city began their works only in 1954, during Mayor Jânio Quadros' mandate (FELDMAN,2005:65-76;FICHER,2005:149).

The need for a Guiding Plan designed by a technical staff sufficiently "equipped and free of everyday routine tasks related to the administration of the city", which had been defended by Anhaia Mello, is expressed in an article entitled "General Planning", written by engineer Carlos Lodi, who was the Chief of the Planning Office of São Paulo. He credited the prevalence of very particular interests for "the fast and profitable entrepreneurship, the reason why the city has developed so irregularly" to the lack of a guiding plan for the city. He reasserts Anhaia Mello's main ideas in his critique to the "tendency to conceive of the planning only in terms of transportation", a vision shared by "Eugène Bouvard, Victor da Silva Freire, Eugenio Guilhem, Barry Park, João de Ulhoa Cintra, Silva Teles, Prestes Maia, and others". He followed Anhaia Mello's steps in understanding the planning as a "set of norms, measures and projects bearing on all aspects of urban life", and the only means by which the objective of "limiting the indefinite and disordered expansion of the city [of São Paulo]" could be achieved. According to Lodi, the planning should encompass even the production and agricultural centers of the highlands and the Paraíba Valley, thus de-centralizing the industrial activities, the higher-level schools, the cultural institutes and creating interest and points of attraction in other places as well, not only in the capital city of São Paulo". (LODI,1951:1-42)

¹³ Victor da Silva Freire had a wide audience outside the Municipality which made it easier for him to spread his ideas. He drew on his students at the School of Technology as well as on lectures published in the Journal of Technology (*Revista Politécnica*).

¹⁴ Anhaia Mello and Prestes Maia expressed in several occasions their disagreement over the tasks, and the way of exercising, their own profession activity. Anhaia Mello's article "Engineering and Urbanism - profession and personality" ["Engenharia e urbanismo - profissão e personalidade"] both synthesizes and comments on the lecture given by M.I.T Professor Arnold Tustin, highlighting the importance of the humanistic aspect or dimension of any engineer's training and formation, which was still pretty much, according to him, oriented towards the intellectual specialization. Prestes Maia's "Architecture and Art" defines "three complementary fields which are important in forming the perfect professional: the scientific, the political and the artistic field, all of them to be understood in the broadest sense". Short after making this remark, however, he separates these fields according to specialized disciplines: the scientific field should be the concern of engineers in general, regardless of what they specialized in; the political field should be a matter of concern for industrial engineers and urbanists; finally, the artistic field should be the concern of the architect. (1955, *Revista de Engenharia Mackenzie* 124, Jan.-Apr.; 125, May-Aug.; 126, Sept.-Dec.).

There's another complicated and widely held consensus, which is pervasive in most studies on urbanism in Brazil: the notion that in the urbanism practices of São Paulo (and Brazil, more generally) there's a significant distance between the enactment of laws, the making of projects and plans, on the one hand, and the effective enforcement or execution of such laws, projects and plans on the other; a gap which, according to this consensus, is due to the fact that these are foreign models and ideas, and therefore inadequate to deal with the local situation. This interpretation is based on the recurrent argument about the migration, copy or import of conceptions, ideas and ways of organizing the practice and the thinking in the field of urbanism from foreign scholars or theories and models formulated in more developed countries; imported or copied ideas which urbanists from São Paulo adhered to and often applied uncritically, as in Anhaia Mello's defense of the garden-city model for the new neighborhoods of the city of São Paulo, of the zoning as a basis for regulating urban growth, of the cell-city model and the "neighborhood unities", all of them essential in his thinking as a means of decentralization and a way of reverting the one-center model which was by then characteristic of the City of São Paulo. While both the information and the technical analysis of Brazilian urbanists' ideas and proposals featured in the studies mentioned above bring fundamental elements to bear on the knowledge of the contents and discontents of urbanism practices in the capital city of São Paulo, on the one hand, it's also true, on the other, that they lose a good deal of their value by adopting the line of interpretation already mentioned here, known as the theory of the "misplaced ideas", which has been asserted and reasserted for over thirty years in Brazilian studies - and not only in the fields of architecture and urbanism.¹⁵

The word "influence" has become almost a commonplace in these studies as a way of explaining the adoption by Brazilian professionals of widespread theories and concepts in the international specialized literature. The same happens with the notion of "appropriation", according to which foreign ideas have been adopted by Brazilian professionals in a very often inadequate and uncritical way. This notion is also expressed as "import", "transfer", "translation", "copy", or "spreading" of ideas and theories formulated in Europe and the United States. This line of interpretation runs against the views held by the professionals themselves who, as Anhaia Mello already claimed in his early writings from the 1920's, highlighted the international nature of urbanism and, now quoting Anhaia Mello in his rather poetical way of putting things, affirmed that "ideas today have an enormous power and an almost unlimited and immediate reach, encompassing the whole globe, and one day they will eventually resonate in other planets" (MELLO, 21.8.1929). He details this view of things when talking about the need for knowing "how other people have resolved their urban problems; and we shall try to apply, with intelligence and discretion, and not in a servile attitude of merely imitating, the methods and procedures which may be adapted to our local conditions" (MELLO, 1929).

My point of view is that the resort to the argument of appropriation or import of models and ideals severely restricts and limits the scope of the research by giving the answer or interpretation in advance; it halts the reflection and blocks a more careful observation about the making of the conceptual field of urbanism as a "field of common knowledge" made up of different kinds of knowledge and experience; a field of knowledge which can be spread, applied and adapted to specific situations in different countries, offering alternative approaches to the discipline, which has a very clear pragmatic character. I'm adopting, therefore, the notion of an international and common field of knowledge as the theoretical axis for this research.

Anhaia Mello's proposals continue to be taken into account, either explicitly or implicitly, in the recent literature on urbanism in the city of São Paulo. In an

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The main trend of interpretation of Brazilian History adopted by scholars from various disciplines has been the one proposed by Robert Schwarz, in keeping with Antonio Candido's studies on the Brazilian cultural and literary production - this trend is known by a sentence which synthesizes the notion behind it: the theory of the "misplaced ideas" - that is, ideas that are reproduced out of the context in which they make proper historical sense. (SCHWARZ, 1976) This line of interpretation has been rebuked by Maria Sylvania de Carvalho Franco (FRANCO, 1976). A recent and comprehensive work on modern urbanism models and urban parks in Brazil follows the mainstream line of interpretation by applying the notion of "influence" (OLIVEIRA, 2008: 296).

article from 1996, Adalgiza Spozati, for instance, resumes the discussion of certain aspects of critiques made by urbanists in the past. She attributes the fact that São Paulo is “consistently identified with urban chaos” to the urban planning adopted by the city, which favored the integration of the suburbs into the center through transportation in detriment of the notion of a “multi-centered city”, where “each region would be a city in the fullest sense of the term”.¹⁶ Like other authors, Spozati challenges us to see in the differences between alternative proposals the extent to which the public administrators’ interests, both at the municipal and state level, have been linked to academic attitudes and/or interests of private companies in the erring ways taken by this troubled city throughout History. The studies which do acknowledge the important contributions of scholarly works lead us to reflect on, and agree with, author Campos’ assertion that the dominant pattern of urbanization “is not the single one, nor is there anything inevitable about it; it is rather the result of clashes over the modernization of the cities throughout the last century” (CAMPOS,2002:631). This view has also been defended by Feldman in his argument for the politicization of the urban practice and the shaping of a new profile for professionals working in the field of urbanism; in his own words: “a new cycle of changes in those areas of Brazilian cities’ public administration dealing with urbanism”. Besides, the advancement of such cycle has been made possible by the provisions of Brazil’s 1988 Constitution and the “Statute of The City”, approved in 2001. (FELDMAN,2005:284)

I tried to present in this text a theoretical framework for the study of architect-engineer Anhaia Mello’s trajectory, or “wayfinding”. His strong engagement in shaping the conceptual guidelines of urban thinking in São Paulo; the continuous dialogue he held with his Brazilian colleagues, as well as his references to foreign professionals in the field and debates taking part on international level, will be analyzed in the light of the assumption or hypothesis that there was, among engineers and engineer-architects linked to the municipal Public Construction Works Office, on the one hand, and Anhaia Mello, on the other, some points of disagreement over the way of thinking and planning the interventions in, and the expansion of, the city; there were also disagreements over the proper extent of interventions in the city and the pace and scale of the city’s expansion.¹⁷

Victor da Silva Freire, who was for 26 years responsible for the Public Construction Works Office of the city of São Paulo, worked in 1911 in a project aimed at reducing the traffic congestion in the city’s central area and, on a different, smaller scale, at dealing with houses as urban units which should be planned according to the principles espoused by the hygiene and sanitary movements, by then already incorporated into the field of engineering; these principles were to be adapted to resolve the “problem of social output”. In his “*A Plan Study for São Paulo’s Avenues*”, Prestes Maia presented a road design predicated on the radial-concentric scheme, and suggested architectural blocks for the city. Anhaia Mello defined larger scales, ideally comprising the whole of the country, and based his approach taking the region as a planning area, with the goal of solving the “discontents brought by exaggerated centralization” through the strategy of building “regional cities, sets of satellite garden cities, according to Ebenezer Howards’ plans”. Bent on recovering the balance between city and field, he proposed the building of new factories in the capital of the State of São Paulo so as

¹⁶ The occupation of the physical space of the city shows that almost 20% of the population lives in slums, and that the number of precarious housing complexes has multiplied, and they haven’t even been taken into account in the “re-census”. The city has been made waterproof by asphalt, although more than a thousand kilometers of rivers and streams run throughout the city. It lacks in infra-structural components such as proper draining, transportation, water supply, health and environmental quality, displaying huge areas where irregular occupation prevails and a sharp contrast can be noted between the “private city”, with its domestic items, from refrigerators to computers, and the “public city”, lacking in squares and parks. From this contrast arises the “low standards of living, depredation, violence and destruction”. Apart from academic studies, one can also resort to the press to attest this reality - the section entitled “Megacidades”, published with, and by, the newspaper *Estado de São Paulo*, undertakes in its edition from 08.03.2008 an analysis of the problems plaguing the metropolis and presents the very different life conditions among the population, with an emphasis on the people living in less privileged areas. (Cf. BRESCIANI, 2009:119-140)

¹⁷ In his analysis of Anhaia Mello’s (1954) *Regional Plan for São Paulo*, Meyer (1992) sees the relationship between macro and micro urban areas as scales used by the author to guide the National Council For Urbanism in coordinating and promoting cooperation, as well as in “linking the efforts of federal, state and municipal institutions”(97-99).

to limit its growth and better plan the allocation of economic activities in the state; in 1954, he'd come to extend this proposal to all the country. On a different scale, he also worked with issues concerning housing, highlighting, in doing so, the importance of sanitation and ecological questions. The projects for the "superquadras" [residential apartment blocks], as well as the building of neighborhood units coupled with urban parks, would ensure the easy access of inhabitants to "the essential goods: sun, fresh air, a view of the vegetation, quietness, intimacy and silence". (MELLO,1929b:46;1954:42, 1929c:108 e 1929a:147)

I think it is essential to consider the different scales of the projects from this period as two distinct kinds of rationality and to point out the conflicts and the theoretical references; the gap between the abstract urban projections and their effective execution; the political resistance; the interests of real estate owners and civil construction companies, which favored the occupation of areas that had already benefited from infra-structure, thus leading to the concentration and verticalization of the urban space.

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