

TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACE IN PORTO ALEGRE DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The proposal of this paper is to discuss the transformations of urban space in Brazilian cities during the first half of the XX century. These transformations are approached according to a spatial and social historical dimension. The prevailing current ways of thought about cities and urbanism in the developed world during the period of study, reached Brazil by both contracted foreign specialists or Brazilians specialized in foreign countries. The subject is developed through an analysis of the urban transformations in the central area of the city of Porto Alegre, significant mark of social and economic activities since the first decades of the XX century in the south of the country. According to the hypothesis outlined by this work, the study of the instruments, plans and projects which conducted actions carried out by both private and public on urban space, followed in each period the dominant ideas about cities and urbanism in the country and in the world. At last, the transformation of the central area of the city in an historical center and its meaning in the present time is examined as well as the alliances between the private and public sector to its qualification in the search of a rescue a place to all citizens.

Keywords- urban spaces, urban evolution, Brazilian cities

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the transformation of public and private spaces, as well as urbanism and its practice, during the period in which an authoritarian and dictatorial government took power in Brazil, a government which had as its goal the modernization of political, economic, administrative, and physical territorial structures of the country. The paper evaluates the circulation of ideas regarding city, urbanism and their resonances, the form in which currents of urbanistic thought were adopted as instruments of power for imposition of values in new times, and the promotion of territorial spaces as well as development of new activities of the so-called “modern man.” A primary topic is the evaluation of the principal actors that, through their ideas and practices, made Porto Alegre’s great transformation possible.

The dictatorship led by Getúlio Vargas, initiated in 1937, dominated Brazilian politics for nine years. This period, known as the “New State”, is recognized for the installation of an authoritarian government that intended to centralize power in order to serve as the pillar for a new model of nationwide development, with the expansion of an already existent industrial base. Included in this process, as a principal directive, was the weakening of the autonomy of state and municipal

spheres of power inherited from the Old Republic period (1889-1930). The emptying of state political power presented itself as an indissociable aspect of the expansion of national economic control and the process of centralizing power in the federal sphere. An administration with a vertical orientation, as Vargas intended, demanded a new internal structure of the public machine in order to satisfy the yearnings for modernization intended by the New State, which would not be possible under the structure inherited from the Old Republic.

The state of Rio Grande do Sul entered a new time period, leashed to the same agricultural farming model developed until then: low-cost foodstuffs supplier. Rio-Grandense industry, although presenting lower growth since the 1920s in relation to the rest of the country, was still growing at expressive rates (Singer, 1968). The growth of Porto-Alegrense industry predominated in the state, conferring to the capital its status as principal production pole of the country's South region. The commercial sector, developed since the beginning of the 20th century, serving the city as a storepost for regional products, reinforced its position as the state's economic center. The 1940 demographic census showed a city with 275,658 inhabitants, a growth rate of 54% in relation to the previous decade. This growth emphasized the hegemonic position of the capital within the state and proffered a concentration of investment capital as well as a commercial and industrial elite class. At the same time, the city's outskirts increased in size and severity of poverty, due to the incapacity of generated jobs to absorb the increased demand from natural population growth and migration from countryside to city that began to accentuate during this period. The countryside exported laborers to the city, those who worked in subsistence agriculture as well as in larger-scale farming and ranching, where successive crises or introduction of new technologies in production processes left many workers unemployed.

The nominated mayor of Porto Alegre, José Loureiro da Silva, lawyer by academic formation, took office on October 22, 1937, before the declaration of the New State. Getulian authoritarianism was already evident, having generated divergent currents in local politics with severe repercussions for the course of events. The opposition to Vargas' new political strategy generated within Riograndense politics several conflicting lines of interest.

Porto Alegre, and Rio Grande do Sul, had just left behind a cycle of 40 long years of domination by a single political party in administration - Rio-Grandense Republican Party (PRR) - depositary of positivist ideals since the last decade of the 19th century. The party's tremendous strength maintained three administrators in city government from 1897 to 1937: José Montauray de Aguiar Leitão (1897-1924), Otávio Francisco da Rocha (1924-1928), and Alberto Bins (1928-1937). Loureiro da Silva, a faithful coreligionist of Vargas, took over City Hall with strong political and popular support.

To govern the city in dictatorial times was to govern with ample powers in the absence of legislative jurisdiction. The mayor was accountable only to the state governor (whom he owed his nomination) for his actions. He administrated through

decrees that had the force of law. His administration was marked by renewed goals in the direction of city modernization. To modernize refers to renovating installed structures and infrastructures, designing medium and long-term plans and projects, reorganizing the administrative machine, and balancing municipal finances. The stated goals were achieved little by little, favored by the political prowess of the mayor and the easy access to financial resources made available by the federal government.

The mayor introduced a form of government that privileged collegiate actions, institutionalizing two councils linked directly to his office: the Technical Council of Municipal Administration and the Municipal Master Plan Council. The first council joined the administrative board of City Hall under his presidency. Besides making bureaucratic decisions, the council served as a channel for passing forward the average citizen's demands. The Municipal Master Plan Council was part of the mayor's strategy to mount a long-term plan of city development, following the example of other Brazilian capitals such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. It would be the effectuation of a master plan whose denomination was already posted: Urbanization Plan of Porto Alegre. (SILVA, 1943 - ALMEIDA-2005).

The new administrative structure implemented at the beginning of his government determined that attributions in the sphere of urbanism would be effected by the General Board of Public Works and Ways, in the Division of Patrimony and Registration. In this division, the work of engineers Luiz Arthur Ubatuba de Faria and Edvaldo Pereira Paiva began to stand out; they were public figures who made names for themselves in the historical process of the capital's urban planning, who since 1926 and 1928, respectively, became part of the technical staff of City Hall (ROVATI, 2001), and were already elaborating plans and projects with renovation and modernization in mind.

At the core of these ideas, the new administration created two primary goals. A conglomerate of short-term operations was created that transformed the capital into a giant public works zone. These works were understood as necessary, and many of them were already outlined by the Improvements Commission, displayed in the plan coordinated by engineer João Moreira Maciel in 1914. (SOUZA-2008; MACIEL-1914).

The ideas in circulation regarding urbanism and city development reached key technical and political environments and were disseminated in City Hall, in the university, in the class organs, and in the local press. In order to complete an urbanistic plan, consequence of this circulation of ideas, the architect and urbanist Arnaldo Gladosch was hired in 1938, provenient from the team of French urbanist Alfred Agache, elaborators of the Extension, Remodeling and Beautification Plan of Rio de Janeiro¹.(AGACHE,1930). The hiring of an urbanist outside of local means

¹ Arnaldo Gladosch, born in São Paulo in 1903, graduate of the Technical University of Dresden, Germany in 1926, came under the dominant influence of the French school of urbanists such as Eugène Hénard, Georges Risler, and Donat Alfred Agache, with whom he worked on the Rio de Janeiro plan, and British urbanists Geddes, Howard, and Burnham,

resulted in an estrangement, especially from the local technical group, and in resistance concerning the propositions and plans for the city. However, the platform made available to him by City Hall - the Municipal Master Plan Council - served as a means for ample divulgation of his ideas in the years that he stayed in Porto Alegre.

ANTECEDENTS

In discussing public works and plans during this period, it is necessary to refer to the year 1936 in order to analyze with precision the dominant urbanistic thought and idea currents within the technical spaces of City Hall. Engineers Ubatuba de Faria and Edvaldo Paiva deserve special mention, for they were in harmony with the most advanced proposals of their time. The knowledge of public works of Agache and his predecessors is clear in his written documents, plans, and projects. These engineers became the first local urbanists in the modern sense of the word. The exposition held by them in 1936, from November 21st to December 4th, was something completely new for the city, even in all of Brazil. This Urbanism Exposition² was the great orienteer of the city planning process, held during the period of the New State. When Loureiro da Silva took office in 1937, there was already a sufficient base of studies of technical and theoretic content to begin public works of city modernization.

In his opening remarks, engineer Ubatuba de Faria conceived of urbanism as art and science: “Artistic and Scientific Urbanism!” he said: “Science, when it solves problems of a technical order, and art, when it presents solutions of beauty with aesthetic sensibility.”³

The Urbanism Exposition showed the general topographic survey of the city, elevation lines, registry of city blocks and triangular registry, as well as projects from the Board of Registration. Also, blueprints and mock-ups were shown that composed the entitled General Plan of Urbanization of Porto Alegre that included the Avenues Plan, with the complementation of projects of Extension and Remodeling, Sanitation and Beautification. Several blueprints and schematics showed the creation of new radial and perimetrical avenues, linked to a rational system. These links had a theoretical basis in the studies of Éugène Henard and Prestes Maia⁴.

The projects of Extension, Remodeling, and Sanitation Works encompassed residential and industrial neighborhoods, aquatic parks, as well as the channeling of Dilúvio Stream and its affluent, Cascatinha.

The exposition had a panel with the title “Evolution of the City” which contained a graphic map of the urban evolution of Porto Alegre, as well as

linked to the Royal Institute of British Architects. See: Canez, Anna Paula Moura. *Arnaldo Gladosch: o edifício e a metrópole*. Porto Alegre: Uniritter, 2008.

² Data utilized regarding the Exposition were obtained by architect José Geraldo Vieira da Costa for an internal seminar about the New State, coordinated by SOUZA, C.F. – held by Gedurb -UFRGS, 2007

³ Correio do Povo newspaper article from November 22, 1936. Title: Studies on Urbanism.

Subtitle: Interesting exposition inaugurated yesterday, in this capital, organized by the Board of Registration of City Hall.

⁴ E. Henard, French urbanist, who like Agache, founded the Societe Française de L’Urbanisme, (DUBOIS-1985, p.41-51) author of the book ---Études sur-les transformations de Paris, Et autres écrits sur l’urbanisme. Paris, Equerre, 1982.

Prestes Maia, engineer of City Hall of São Paulo, and later mayor, wrote several reports about the urbanism of São Paulo, and created the Avenues Plan in 1930.

graphics that demonstrated the services performed by the administration, certainly inspired by Marcel Poëte or Patrick Geddes⁵.

After its closing, the exposition was taken to Rio de Janeiro, for the Brazilian Statistical Congress.⁶ Ubatuba de Faria emphasized that the principal contribution of Porto Alegre City Hall would be in the area of statistics, and would bring an innovative proposal in urban matters, for a better quality of life of its inhabitants, as well as divulging projects of hygiene, sanitation, and beautification, to transform the city into a grand touristic center with improved life conditions for its dwellers.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF LOUREIRO DA SILVA

Loureiro's administration took place within a climate of urbanistic consciousness. Porto Alegre inserted itself in the national politics of urban renovation. The new mayor took on the completion of a conglomerate of public works that transformed the city in a definitive manner. With large-scale financial investments, avenues were opened and low-lying areas were sanitized, eliminating old alleys and narrow streets, opening new spaces for the emergence of the vertical city.

The works elaborated by the hired urbanist, Arnaldo Gladosch, from 1938 onward, were aided by the contribution of previous plans and studies. He made references not only to the Improvements Commission of 1914 and its proposals, but also to the studies of Faria and Paiva. His ideas and propositions can even be identified through the reading of the meeting minutes of the Municipal Master Plan Council. Widely published by the local press and by the Municipal Bulletin, the urbanist's discourse and the graphic material presented allow for identification of the content of his ideas, since the original sources, until now, have not been located. A graduate of THD - Technische Hochschule Zu Desdren (1921-26), the urbanism of Gladosch can be inserted, according to Canez, "in the universe of Formal Urbanistic, manner of actuation common among professionals that completed innumerable urban plans for cities all over the world, at the beginning of the 20th century".(CANEZ-2008 p.172) The so-called Formal Urbanistic, with roots in the French school of "haussmaniana", influenced all urbanistic production during the first decades of the 20th century.

The German formation of Gladosch, his contact with European production at this moment, his recognition of ideas disseminated by the French Urbanism Society (SFU), and his work with Alfred Agache's team demonstrate his insertion in the urbanistic thinking publicized by the vanguards of his time. In the urbanist's contract, signed by Porto Alegre City Hall on December 21, 1938, his duties were stated as "the organization of the Municipal Master Plan of Porto Alegre, relevant to sanitation and expansion of the city, orientation and regulation of the outline of its means of communication, distribution of free spaces, and enlargement of the port".(SILVA - 1943 p.215)

⁵ Marcel Poëte, the first historian that made the study of Paris a new scientific domain (CALABI-1997.p.7). Created the discipline of Urban Evolution, and taught at Sorbone. Organized the Social Museum at the beginning of the 20th century.

Patrick Geddes understood the city as an urban organism containing a social essence in itself; what Poëte called city science, he called "civics" (CALABI-1997)

⁶ The Congress was installed on December 15, 1936.

During his time with City Hall, Gladosch produced four general studies and some projects for special areas of the city, reformulating the system of public ways that covered the city center and adjacent neighborhoods. Among his directives, the urbanist recommended, besides widening public ways, control over building codes, stating that "... the widening of streets will be only a transitory solution, a momentary relief, because, as long as the defect is not corrected at its point of origin, that is, limiting the density of buildings and habitations, the defect will never be definitively corrected". (SILVA, 1943 p.129).. The proposal for beautification of the city inspired the implementation of a system of greens, forming lanes of gardens and parks.

Along the margins of Guaíba Lake, a public green lane was supposed to be extended from Praia de Belas (Beautiful Beach) neighborhood all the way to the rural south zone. The city would have benefited greatly if this directive had been adopted. The existent lane is short and discontinuous. Many parts have been privatized. The presence of a protective dike against flooding ended up creating a barrier, extending from the north neighborhoods to the front of the horse track in the south zone. The city lost contact with its waters in several places.

The idea of urbanism as science and art, present in Agache's discourse, was repeated by Gladosch in his discussions with the Municipal Master Plan Council. His discourse extolled the adoption of instruments such as zoning, the reparcelling of grounds, and control over urban occupation. He extolled even further on the problem of sanitation in inhabited areas. The excessive extension of the city towards its outskirts was criticized for its consequent losses in relation to the costs of urbanization. As a counterpoint, he pointed to the inconveniences of high population densities in the most central areas, affirming that: "the exaggerated and uncontrolled urban concentration not only bothers but also damages the social economy, demanding, among other things, extremely expensive solutions for the transit of its inhabitants". (SILVA, 1943 p.136)

Many of these ideas, which had already been incorporated into previous studies, came to influence posterior plans. The Gladosch Plan, as it became known, would never be effectively implemented for various reasons. Among them was the difficulty of implementing his design, which demanded large-scale land expropriation and regulation of city blocks. The process of redivision extolled by the urbanist, seen as of interest to property owners and bringing benefits to collective interests, would be possible with the elaboration of specific legislation.

In 1940, previewing the continuing necessity of these works, after his separation from City Hall, Gladosch suggested to the mayor the further training of his technicians in specialization courses conducted abroad. With this objective, Paiva traveled to Uruguai and enrolled in the College of Architecture, where the Institute of Urbanism was located, coordinated by the urbanist Mauricio Cravotto. (SOUZA&ALMEIDA-2009). This professor exerted a strong influence over his Brazilian student. Paiva returned the following year bringing a new methodology of completing urbanization plans for cities. It was composed of the following steps:

the elaboration of a pre-plan configuring a first stage; then, an investigative phase with historical and statistical data in which the city should be completely revealed in all of its aspects (social, economic, populational, institutional and physical. Finally, the definitive plan would be elaborated with its directives.

The existence of a pre-plan, in Porto Alegre's case, starting with the work of Ubatuba de Faria, and adding Gladosch's studies and plans, served as subsidies to create the first phase. The Urban Expedient, corresponding to the investigative phase, was polished from Uruguai, utilizing survey data from the 1936 exposition. For the third phase, although there already was an official plan created by Gladosch, it was still considered a pre-plan. What was lacking was to pass forward the definitive plan, with its new directives. This movement, however, did not take place. At the end of the 1940s, this plan was submitted to a Revisory Council instituted by City Hall that ended up recommending the completion of a new master plan. Concurrent with the studies of Gladosch and Paiva, a series of public works was being undertaken based on existent plans and projects. Thus, the government finished its mandate, leaving behind a prominent urbanistic and architectural inheritance.

The completion of public works demanded legislation both adequate and practical for their rapid implementation. The mayor, with ample powers in the absence of a legislative branch, had his task facilitated with the enactment of numerous decrees that supported the execution of these works and the occupation of urban territory. These decrees legislated the processes of expropriation of properties, the outline of new ways, the proper form of property occupation, and the maximum height of buildings. These instruments and the available financial resources allowed for completion of a significant volume of public works that marked this period. This fact is only comparable with another period of public work execution during the military regime from 1970-1980.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITY

The mayor's achievements, described in the document "A Plan of Urbanization," testify to the large volume of completed public works.(figure 1) A new road system, superimposed over the old one, did not just stay on paper, but became reality: new avenues, plazas, equipments, neighborhoods, water and sewage networks, sidewalks and gardens, all changed the city's physiognomy and the quality of its environment. This public works program was associated with concepts of the modern city, evidenced in the mayor's speeches, such as when he referred to the opening of the extension of Borges de Medeiros Avenue southbound; according to him, this extension offered "the spectacle of a modern artery, where skyscrapers alternate the contour of their vigorous lines". (SILVA-1943; p.86)

There was a concern over habitation, causing Paiva and Ubatuba de Faria to think about new residential areas, having done so since their exposition in 1936. Praia de Belas neighborhood was one of the presented proposals, first mentioned in one of

Paiva's speeches, that same year, at the Society of Engineering. Edvaldo Paiva perceived the great potential of this urbanistic area, currently empty ground. The main creek, once it was sanitized, would bring proper hygienic conditions to the region. Its location near the city center favored the creation of a new residential neighborhood, along the length of the new Praia de Belas Avenue. Regarding the necessity of transformation, he justified: "Praia de Belas is an outstanding example, for in spite of its incomparable situation, it grew old prematurely, because it continued throughout time with its defective division of blocks and its difficult link to the city center due to local topographic conformity; only time changed this in part, with the opening of Borges de Medeiros Avenue. (Figures 2 and 3). We need to frame this beach within the beautiful frame that surrounds it. To do so we need to adjoin it to public works of civilization".⁷

Paiva proposed a fill for the new neighborhood, demonstrating its technical and economic viability: he showed the necessity of, at the same time, channeling the stream for perfect sanitation of the future neighborhood, affirming that "they will have in the future the same role that the beach neighborhoods have in Rio de Janeiro"⁸. Associating the idea of modernization with the domain of technical and theoretical references, showing examples, Edvaldo Paiva sensitized the technicians from the Society of Engineering in showing the real necessity of occupying that area as a form of economic growth and development of the city.

The creation of a new Industrial Neighborhood to the north of Porto Alegre was also defined in this plan (FARIA&PAIVA-1943). Ubatuba de Faria continued to defend this idea, showing that the dynamic of industrial growth would take the city to the north, reason for which he proposed the creation of a new neighborhood.

At the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, several divisions of lots began to appear in Porto Alegre, as a function of its growth. New, planned neighborhoods began to appear in all directions. The most careful divisions of lots, with differential outlines, sought better quality of life for their residents. It was at this moment that garden city urbanism was introduced in Porto Alegre, with two significant examples: IAPI Vila, of a state-owned character, and Assunção Vila, built by the private sector. These two areas demonstrate, even today, the morphology of their organic outlines, garden retreats, large green areas, and tree-lined streets. The presence of urbanism in the garden cities is quite visible from English origin, such as the examples of Letchworth and Welwyn, associated with the suburban American project of Radburn in 1929. The trendiness of concepts and the rapid transference of ideas in spite of the communications of the period are very perceptible. (SOUZA-2000)

⁷ From *Correio do Povo* newspaper, under the title: "A New Residential Neighborhood at Praia de Bellas", December 17, 1936, highlighting the technical character of Paiva's speech, regarding the proposals in the remodeling plan of Porto Alegre.

⁸ From *Correio do Povo* newspaper, December 17, 1936. Title: A New Residential Neighborhood at Praia de Bellas". Subtitle: Regarding this topic, yesterday at a conference at the Society of Engineering, Dr. Edvaldo Paiva presented.

CONCLUSION

The above text, as it analyzes Porto Alegre's history during the period of the New State, reveals the transformation process that the city underwent in its physical space, as well as the agents of this transformation, their practices, and the instruments with which they worked. It is quite evident that during this period, urbanism accomplished the mayor's political desires in relation to his goals of modernization and the total support of the media in publicizing the government's public works projects.

Loureiro da Silva involved himself intensely with the city and the new methods of its modernization. He participated in the entire process of discussing plans, projects and works and personally attended the meetings of the Municipal Master Plan Council, giving ample publicity to the ideas under debate. He showed himself to be a great enthusiast of new processes, techniques, methodologies, and possibilities of new ideas regarding urbanism for the future of Brazilian cities. He accompanied all the debates and examined closely all possibilities of application of new instruments, even suggesting to the federal government the creation of a new law of urbanism. The elaborated pre-project regulated these principles over the entire national territory, for cities with more than 40,000 inhabitants as well as capitals and hydro-mineral stations. He understood that: "the master plan of urbanism, conveniently elaborated, systematizes solutions for existing problems as well as preventing arbitrary development, thus disciplining recommendable corrections such as future harmonic expansion"⁹. (SILVA,1943; p.295). He also stated that this was the orientation adopted by "all countries of elevated culture". This pre-project was extremely detailed, informing which items should be attended to, achieved within available resources, and elaborated by specialized technicians of recognized professional competence. Silva thus anticipated that which would be enacted by the Federal Constitution of 1988 in articles 182 and 183, later established the Statute of the City in 2001¹⁰, nearly 70 years after Silva's work.

The perfection of a technical staff, concern for the city's future development, publicity and execution of plans defined Silva's term in office and gave a liberal stamp upon his actions, seeking the city's modernization. The presence of a technically qualified staff, the availability of studies developed in previous periods and the circulation of new actors on the local scene permitted a circulation of ideas regarding city and urbanism in harmony with the national and international vanguard. Ubatuba de Faria, Edvaldo Pereira Paiva and Arnaldo Gladosch were extremely important names that contributed in a decisive manner to this phase of the city's development.

It is undeniable that during this period, the application of new urbanistic concepts, the disposition of the mayor, and the available resources made Porto Alegre into a new, modern city. In just seven years, the urban landscape was transformed. Within this context of public works and transformation, destruction, and

⁹ Silva, Loureiro da, 1943, op.cit. p. 295.

¹⁰ Law nº 10.257 of July 10, 2001.

permanence, modernity and authoritarianism were two distinct movements that became part of the same process.

Today the transformation of the central area of the city in an historical center and its meaning in the present time gets in evidence the alliances between the private and public sector to its qualification in the search of a rescue a place to all citizens.

Figure 1



Figure 1 - Porto Alegre: Public works executed by the Loureiro da Silva administration.

Source: SILVA, J.L da - A Plan of Urbanization, Porto Alegre, Graphic Workshop of Globo Bookstore, 1943 p.

This synthetic map, part of the volume "A Plan of Urbanization", shows the works completed by City Hall during the period of 1937-1943, such as Farrapos Avenue, November 10 (Salgado Filho) Avenue, finalization and extension of Borges de Medeiros Avenue, widening of November 3 (Av. André da Rocha) Avenue, Jerônimo de Ornelas Avenue, plazas and gardens of Farroupilha Park, sports fields, channels

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and bridges above the creek, as well as equipments and arborization of avenues and the treatment of Petrópolis neighborhood.

Figure 2 Borges de Medeiros Avenue- - 1938



Figure 3 -Borges de Medeiros Avenue



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