GARDEN CITIES AND SUBURBS IN BRAZIL: RECURRENT ADAPTATIONS OF A CONCEPT

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What is the contribution of the garden-city idea to urbanisation in Brazil? Focusing on several layouts for new towns and suburbs designed along garden-city lines all over the country throughout the twentieth century, this paper will show that the garden-city concept was adapted to various purposes and different contexts and will present a panorama of recurrent adaptations. As a conclusion, the paper will stress that the fashionable garden city was mostly and extensively used as a way of achieving modernity, a civilising instrument, a real-estate venture, a potent regional planning tool. It was adopted not because of effective urban-reform initiatives or genuine social problems; it was mainly embraced for stylistic convenience, ideological principles, and as a marketing strategy.

Keywords
planning diffusion, planning models, new towns, urban development

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INTRODUCTION

The garden-city idea invigorated planning initiatives in Brazil while swept through the world. The garden suburb was the first version of the idea to be locally disseminated in the 1910s; two decades later, whole new towns were being designed upon the garden-city layout and a huge private land-development enterprise was considering the social city scheme for a regional planning proposal; later on a capital city and spa town were also designed following the same path. Afterward, private and governmental colonisation schemes in pioneering agricultural zones adapted the satellite town concept.

While major projects for urban improvements in the most important Brazilian towns evoked images of Paris, new residential areas were also being designed according to the formal principles of the garden city. Moreover, an outward-looking economic orientation within South America had also brought about an association by local elites of ‘modern’ with everything foreign, whereas ‘traditional’ remained associated with activities linked to domestic production. Furthermore, the creative and dominating role played by world metropolises endorsed urban globalisation to the point that cultural deference and native aspirations encouraged local initiatives for foreign models, reinforcing the international circulation of ideas.

Though resulting from a specific set of historical circumstances, the garden city ended up being re-used in different contexts and for new reasons. From its initial appearance in Howard’s book, Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform (1898), and its ‘classic’ implementation at Letchworth, the garden-city idea found fertile soil worldwide, though its international dissemination did not strictly follow the original proposal. The garden-city movement thus popularised ‘country’ aesthetics; the lanes and cul-de-sacs designed by Raymond Unwin ‘became the exemplar for hundreds of “garden-type” suburbs and developments catering to this need to partake of “country” in territory that was by no stretch of the imagination any longer countryside.’

As a point of fact, Atlantic crossings provided a kit of planning tools, some of which lay unused while others were eagerly taken up, and others still were transformed. The garden city’s dissemination proved that Howard’s model was capable of being reinterpreted to suit local climates and cultures. As noticed elsewhere, a selective application occurred during its process of global diffusion, as well as a shift in emphasis from social reform to physical planning. In fact, ‘the more that the original blueprint was mediated through various disciples of the cause, and the more that cultural factors came into play, the greater was the degree of deviation’. For planning ideas are not imported and put into use as easily as a material object; it rather involves emulation, rejection, combination, and transformation. Indeed, the movement of ideas – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another – necessarily involves processes of representation and institutionalisation, which are different to those at their point of origin. More commonly, foreign cultural aspects are partially accommodated, partially rejected, and transformed by their new uses and their position in a new time and place.

With no specific association in Brazil, the garden-city concept was mainly disseminated through isolated personal attitudes and international intercourse. In 1917 Victor da Silva Freire, the engineer responsible for São Paulo city planning, lectured on the garden city idea at the local engineering institute after having visited Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb in 1910 – probably one of the earliest references to the British planning idea in Brazil. In that very year Barry Parker disembarked in São Paulo, where he designed some new residential areas, including Jardim América. However, from 1930s onward Brazilian planning culture also assimilated the garden-city idea through less direct sources, particularly via imported specialised texts (such as those published by Werner Hegemann, Karl Heinrich Brunner-Lehestein, and Georges Benoît-Lévy besides those by Ebenezer Howard himself, Raymond Unwin, Thomas Adams and Charles B. Purdom); international conferences and fairs; the contact with foreign consultants (namely Joseph Antoine Bouvard, Alfred Agache, Giacomo Palumbo, Father Lebret, Josep Luis Sert, Paul Wiener, Robert Moses and Constantinos Doxiadis); the knowledge of French,
German, Italian and American planning practices as well; and, more importantly, the roles of (national and international) model cities and native aspirations, which helped stimulate the mirroring of progressive ideas and modern practices.

Focusing on several layouts for new towns and suburbs designed on garden-city lines all over the country along the twentieth century, this paper will show that the garden-city idea was adapted to various purposes and different contexts in Brazil and will present a panorama of its recurrent adaptations. The paper is divided into three different sections according to the design scales: the suburb layout, the regional planning and the design of entire new towns, so that their physical and symbolic aspects can be noticed.

**NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS IN TRADITIONAL URBAN SETTINGS**

Early Brazilian garden suburbs are related to urban modernisation, healthier environments and ‘aristocratic’ way of living. The ‘modern’, greener and ‘chic’ new neighbourhoods boosted the real state market, inspired the creation of company suburbs and occasionally served as governmental propaganda.

Jardim América, probably the first garden-city initiative in Brazil in 1917, was originally ‘a middle-class enclave, not a comprehensive endorsement of the Howardian ideals of a self-contained settlement’, and the local requirement for detached houses mitigated the enclosed spaces created by groups and terraces, found in the English interpretation of Camillo Sitte. Its original semi-public internal gardens were progressively being eliminated for Brazilians tended to consider gardening in a different light to Britons: as descendants of a slavery society, there was no dignity in outdoor manual work; besides, neither homeowners nor the municipality felt responsible for the Victorian gardens laid out by Parker, which led to the re-parcelling of the areas, eliminating the original internal gardens. As a result, plots ended up being walled off, leaving just a few aspects of the original garden-city layout intact – the winding tree-planted streets and the substantial green areas. Moreover, the affluent people who could afford to live in such a remote area tended to be fond of French-style luxury palaces rather than of the house styles seen in Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb. Yet, the first Brazilian garden suburb affirmed the successful transference of British garden suburbs to a tropical milieu, and its adaptability to the local conditions.
Many speculative builders and land developers were inspired by the Jardim América venture, and Pacaembu (1919), Alto da Lapa (1921), Jardim Japão (1922), Chácara da Moóca (1923), Jardim Europa (1923), Vila Maria (1923), Vila Nova Manchester (1924. Figure 1), Parque Edu Chaves (1926), Jardim Saúde (1938), Vila Campesina (1947) and Vila Formosa (1947) are just a few garden suburbs create in São Paulo city. Jorge de Macedo Vieira, who was an intern of The City of St. Paul & Improvements Freehold Land Co Ltd when they hired Barry Parker to lay out Jardim América, designed most of those new neighbourhoods; actually, Vieira was responsible for the layout of 1,300 ha of new residential areas, besides the design of four new towns (Águas de São Pedro, Pontal do Sul, Maringá and Cianorte, which make 2,800 ha), as we will present later on. Likewise, in the increasing urbanisation and modernisation context of early twentieth-century, other Brazilian cities sprawled by adding the unusual, contrasting and thus modern layout of garden suburbs to their more traditional urban forms; this was the case of Cidade Jardim Fazenda Velha (late 1930’s) in Belo Horizonte; Vila Recreio (1929) in Rio Grande do Norte; and Vila Balneária Nova Belém (1927), Vila Cristo Redentor (1930), Balneário de Ipanema (1930) and Vila Concepção (1940) in Porto Alegre.

Company suburbs also evoked garden-suburb aspects. Pioneer Vila Operária was created in 1919 in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, for the employees of Companhia Commercio e Navegação. The new district designed by Ângelo Bruhns de Carvalho included school, church, medical facilities, warehouse and accommodation for bachelors, among 158 houses for employees: single or double-family chalets in a picturesque scenery of winding roads. Bruhns de Carvalho followed Unwin’s planning manual while Port Sunlight was among his planning models.

Differently though, Vila IAPI, in Porto Alegre (Figure 2), stands out as a result of the federal government policy for social housing in late 1930’s along with an adaptation of the garden-suburb ideal. President Vargas aimed at boosting an urban-industrial, capitalist society by strongly intervening in many aspects of Brazilian economic activity. Thus, national retirement funds (IAPIs) were destined to foment real estate market by financing the mass-production of social housing. The sixty-seven-hectare new neighbourhood for working class presents single and double-family chalets and multi-family three-story buildings arranged in an organic layout, among tree-lined winding roads and parks that, according to the engineer Edmundo Gardolinski, would ‘permit the development of an integral and healthy life’.

In general, informal pattern of roads and greenery represented both modern and healthy environments for residential areas. However, certain City Beautiful features can be noticed when the bucolic, countryside image of garden suburbs did not solely correspond the longed image of progress. That is the case of Campina do Derby (1922-1926. Figure 3), in Recife: a new neighbourhood created to expand the town, occupy an inhospitable area and accommodate a new military base; the grand project was used for governmental propaganda as a sign of progress.

The ‘discourse of distinction’ was usually applied to the launching publicity of these new suburbs, mostly eminent upper and upper-middle class neighbourhoods. The posh Jardim América was described as a ‘chic suburb’ (bairro chic) and a ‘noble suburb’ (bairro nobre), enabling each of its residents to become a ‘privileged man’. Likewise, Shangri-lá (a suggestive name for a garden suburb) was marketed in 1952 as the first ‘aristocratic residential neighbourhood’ in Londrina, a new town created in 1931; interestingly its houses were styled according to mid-twentieth century modernist/rationalist taste. Thus, these new neighbourhoods clearly embody what Robert Fishman has called the bourgeois utopia. All in all, somewhat distant from the idea of Howardian social reform and more closely related to lush green planned residential environments, Brazilian garden suburbs can be understood as the emulation of a stylish image.
FIGURE 3 Campina do Derby, 1922-1926.
PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENTAL COLONISATION ENTERPRISES

Along with the proliferation of garden suburbs all over the country, accelerated urban growth and industrialisation forced the ‘reconstruction’ of town planning notions and practices put into use in Brazilian cities in 1930s, which included aspects that are rooted in the garden city model. The two most eminent planners of São Paulo, engineers Francisco Prestes Maia and Luiz Anhaia Mello, albeit in different periods, somehow employed ideas from the garden city movement in their planning proposals for the city’s metropolitan growth. Maia, in his 1930 Plan of Avenues, emulated the ‘park ring’ proposed by Barry Parker; he also brought up the satellite towns scheme as ‘remote agglomerations of limited area, but complete in themselves,’ which ‘receive preferably the character of the garden city, according to the land price;’ at the same time he criticised urban sprawling and concluded that ‘garden cities are only appreciated by intellectuals’. Mello, on the other hand, proposed the construction of two garden cities, each of 60,000 inhabitants, in order to solve the problem of metropolitan growth. For him, it was time to ‘choose between making 120,000 citizens materially and spiritually happy in the graceful and confortable environment of the garden city, or simply increase the number of victims of the metropolitan chaos, a path to national suicide by negligence’.

These two engineers – as well as Macedo Vieira – graduated from, and taught at, São Paulo polytechnic school, where modern planning ideas were lively debated. Two other engineers graduated from that school belonged to Companhia Melhoramentos Norte do Paraná board of directors, a company responsible for a huge private settlement enterprise that founded dozens of new towns in a pioneering agricultural frontier. Their urbanisation policy adapted the English satellite-town scheme, comprising a hierarchical system of urban settlements.

Companhia Melhoramentos’ colonisation scheme and planned settlement venture in Paraná state were initiated in 1924 by a British company, which adapted the garden city repertoire to a new agricultural region and, less than five decades later, had settled one million people in 1,200,000 ha, in what was considered to be ‘the greatest private colonisation experience in Brazil’. Originally it adapted Ebenezer Howard’s regional planning scheme (Figure 4), namely the social cities concept, which was later on turned into a satellite towns’ scheme in which Maringá was to be one the regional centres.

Companhia Melhoramentos’ successful results turned it into a planning model for other colonisation enterprises, which also featured hierarchical, inter-connected urban settings, closely related to rural areas, and green belts. In northern Mato Grosso state, a cluster of new towns founded by a private company in early 1970s was based on that regional planning concept. In unison, a governmental plan targeting land reform via settlement and colonisation in northern Brazil agricultural frontier proposed an urbanisation scheme along the Transamazionan highway that featured similar regional planning. The colonisation scheme for the Amazonian region, named Rural Urbanism [Urbanismo Rural], built a series of hierarchical, connected, regularly spaced urban settlements that were to stimulate agriculture in small rural plots and bring the benefits of town life to the countryside. Thirty rural villages and one small town had already been built by 1973, eleven more villages were being created and a medium-sized town was under construction in Pará state, along nearly 1,200 km of highway, in an area of roughly 2,400,000 ha.

While in the Amazonia settlement new towns were designed according to post-Brasília functionalist planning ideas in northern Paraná two regional centres were laid out upon garden city lines: Maringá and Cianorte.
URBAN SETTLEMENTS IN PIONEERING AGRICULTURAL ZONES, A CAPITAL CITY AND A SPA TOWN

The layouts for Maringá (1945-1947) and Cianorte (1953). Figure 5) clearly reproduce Unwin’s recommendations to artistically design a new town. When Macedo Vieira designed those towns he already had a reputation as a designer of modern, garden-city-like towns and suburb layouts. According to Vieira himself, in Maringá he intended ‘to design a modern town. A town whose street layout didn’t obey the grid that the Portuguese had taught us, had bequeathed in the colony’\(^\text{31}\) – which meant the picturesque, irregular street pattern taught to him by Parker.

The layout of Maringá presents different influences combined in a harmonious style. Combining with planning notions by Camillo Sitte, Saturnino de Brito, Werner Hegemann, Nelson Lewis, Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier, and Frederick Law Olmsted, it depicts the image of the garden city’s physical model and, consonant with it, features of the City-Beautiful movement, particularly the placement of a civic centre at the core of the urban form and Beaux-Arts characteristics in the design of the public gardens. Regarding the city as an organism, the layout reveals a functional hierarchical street system, with the unusual roundabouts, wide winding avenues, principles of zoning (especially for residential and industrial areas), and multi-nuclei urban structure.

Nevertheless, the most impressive element of the plan was certainly the civic centre: a symmetrical grouping of public buildings at the end of a wide palm-tree-planted boulevard that connected the train station to the main, central public area. Crowned by a crescent, the main square was to be adorned with fountains and parterres. In fact, the implemented layout actually depicts a fairly functionalist square layout surrounded by avant-garde modernist buildings. Around the civic centre, positioned on a plateau, the gridiron endorses the convenient classical formality of the administrative and central commercial area of a regional capital city; beyond it, residential areas present a picturesque image as street patterns are irregular and less formal, leading to small and intimate secondary commercial centres with enclosed squares. Vieira, once again, insisted on large residential, single-house lots with a conspicuous number of public squares, rather than on internal semi-public gardens, which were not viable in a land speculation enterprise.

The grandiloquent layout for the new capital city of Goiás state had also combined garden-city notions and City Beautiful features. Attilio Corrêa Lima designed Goiânia in 1933 according to site conditions, traffic improvement recommendations and zoning specifications, as well as Beaux-Arts principles of formal composition.
Goiânia’s classic central arrangement of three convergent boulevards (Figure 6), inspired by the layout of Versailles, Karlsruhe and Washington,36 clearly set the civic centre at the core of the new capital city, with the expected pomp arising from the grouping of governmental buildings. On the grand boulevard, whose exceptional width and luxurious aspect would suit parades and civic festivals,37 tropical palm trees were to enhance the monumentality, while a transversal fourth avenue would define the commercial area. Clearly the focal point of the town layout, the civic centre was set on the highest area of the site for aesthetic and symbolic effect.

Despite formal historical references, the layout also depicts modern, functional town planning values, particularly those expressed by the circulation system put forward by Eugéne Henard. Nevertheless, a parallel primary target was the creation of a green urban environment. Lima had laid out a network of parks and parkways in order to preserve natural environments and improve the quality of urban life, and, according to his plans, tree-lined streets and squares were to be widely planted. This would tame the searing heat during the extended dry season that normally affects the region.38 Tree-planting and landscaping were essential elements of the English garden-city image, and its idyllic, healthy, park-like appearance was a recognised model for Lima’s design for Goiânia.

Partially implemented, Goiânia’s layout was revised in 1936 by the civil engineer Armando Augusto de Godoy, who had just replaced Lima as the town planner in charge of this governmental enterprise. Godoy was primarily known as an advocate of modern town planning ideas, whose writings helped to disseminate the garden-city model by arguing that Howard’s idea was ‘an admirable project for the people, raising them to the level of a modern civilisation, educating them and guiding their activities in the right direction’. And the garden city, according to him, was ‘the most perfect creation of our time’ for establishing, among other things, the most extended contact between town inhabitants and nature.39 Godoy reinforced the garden-city aspects of Goiânia’s original plan, preserving much of the initial proposal, though he believed that classical layouts could no longer withstand the demands of modern cities. The town expansion proposed by Godoy depicted a new middle-class residential neighbourhood whose layout was based upon an irregular, organic urban tissue, unusual super blocks, cul de sacs, and the total separation between cars and pedestrians – as had happened in Radburn, USA – a ‘garden city for the motor age’.40
However, Godoy neglected a major local cultural aspect in the design of the new neighbourhood: the habitual relationship between the house and the plot area, with the front door facing onto the street. In his layout, the main entrances to detached single houses were to be positioned facing the superblock interior parks, while back entrances would face the internal lanes. The foreign pattern was not compatible with the local tradition of providing houses’ main façades with straight, visual and physical communication to the street, which led to a distortion of the plan right from its implementation. Thus abandoned, the remaining marginal semi-public green areas became the destination for illegal waste-disposal and illicit activities, and the eventual location of the surrounding buildings left no sign as to their original purpose.

Otherwise, Águas de São Pedro presents a more picturesque townscape. For aspects of British villages were traditionally found in spa towns in Brazil, notably the usual cottages and the ‘arranged disorder’ of the jardín anglais, and the marriage between town and country offered by the British garden-city idea was an additional, important promotional force for this sort of development as long as it could appeal to a select public interested not only in cures and leisure, but also in the benefits of a high-quality environment. Bearing that idea in mind, the developers of Águas de São Pedro intended in 1936 to build a new health-town model for South America in São Paulo state based upon modern principles of medicine, sanitation, and town planning. Thus, the garden-city model was applied to the layout of the Águas de São Pedro spa town in order to enhance the relationship between nature and urban settlement, setting up vast green areas, park-avenues and tree-lined boulevards as a means to attract tourists. The foreign planning model added greatly to the building of scenery befitting the needs of quietness and contemplation, and the local newspaper proudly announced a town designed according to the ‘patterns of famous European spa towns’.

A park system was the backbone of the town, settled in a valley, proving Macedo Vieira’s ability of enhancing the sites’ particularities. Águas de São Pedro was located close to the spring between two parks, which were connected by a 100-meter-wide avenue, set alongside the open canal. The upstream park surrounded the main buildings (hotel, casino, spa, swimming pools, gazebos, etc.) and offered a picturesque four-kilometre path through English-style gardens, while the downstream park was created to avoid flooding. Tree-lined winding streets meandered from the town centre and the commercial zone and continued throughout the main residential area, where plots accommodated single or semi-detached houses, no higher than two stories, set back from the front boundaries of the plots; and carried on up to a posh residential neighbourhood, where larger plots bordered streets on both their front and rear boundaries. Residential lots were to be enclosed by either hedges or low, discrete fences in order to maintain the garden-city style. Initially, residential lots were 600 square meters, but later, unfortunately, they were halved, interfering with the overall picturesque aspect of the town.
CONCLUSION

The garden-city concept contributed to the changing image of Brazilian towns in a period of intense urban modernization and expansion. The local planning culture absorbed physical aspects of the garden city, as well as other planning notions.

According to the examples discussed, the garden-city model fashioned by the prestigious British thus came to be used in Brazil as a way of achieving modernity, a civilising instrument, an efficient planning tool, a real-estate venture. Derivatives of the garden-city image were adopted not because of effective urban-reform initiatives or genuine social problems: they were mainly embraced for stylistic convenience (as the most aesthetically and functionally appropriate image for an exceptional urban settlement such as a spa town); for ideological principles (as the best modern prescription for a healthy and high-quality urban form); as a marketing strategy (as the novel, modern town layout in contrast to the traditional, ordinary grid); and as a potent regional planning scheme for colonisation enterprises where new towns were to be created.

The sophisticated way the garden-city idea dealt with nature within the urban form also suited different proposals and local interests. Urban parks, abundant open spaces, and parkways were tools for building an uncommon urban beauty – be it in a bucolic spa town, a modern capital or even in a private settlement town built in a deforested area. The copious green areas and tree-lined streets not only created pleasant townscapes but also improved tropical urban climates. The conformation of the urban settlement according to site conditions was indeed a technical improvement. And along with low population density and larger lots, the irregular street layout was to produce a trendy, modern urban environment.

Nevertheless, physical town planning was a welcomed sign of progress usually associated with industrialisation and urban overcrowding, and the picturesqueness of the garden city ultimately conveyed a rural aspect to the townscape, threatening the ‘civilisation’ process. But this did not compromise the supposed image of progress of the garden cities and suburbs, for combining different planning traditions and ideas they ended up being better balanced with formal arrangements, modern wide avenues and boulevards, functional roundabouts, park systems and a touch of beaux-arts urbanism and City Beautiful monumental grandeur and elegance.

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Endnotes
1. A preliminary version of this paper was published in Journal of Planning History 13, no. 4 (2014).
2. See Leme, Urbanismo; Segawa, Prelúdio; and Toledo, Prestes Maia.
3. Rego, As Cidades; Segawa, Prelúdio.
5. See Almandoz, “Para Una Reseña,” and Nasr and Volait, Urbanism.
7 See Rodgers, Atlantic; see also Sutcliffe, Towards, and Ward, “Re-Examining.”
8 Miller, “Garden Cities.”
9 See Ward, “Ebenzer.”
12 See Andrade, “A Circulação.”
14 See Paula, A Cidade.
15 See Bacelli, Jardim Amér.ica.
16 Miller, “Barry Parker,” 12.
18 Ibid., 12 and 13.
19 Bruna, Os Primeiros, 119-120; see also Bonduki, “Origens.”
21 See Moreira, “A Construção.”
22 Segawa, Prelúdio, 115-116.
23 Fishman, Bourgeois Utopia.
28 Tavares, Considera and Silva, Colonização, 32.
29 See Rego and Meneguetti, “Planted Towns.”
30 See Rego, “A Integração.”
31 Katzman, Cities, 80.
32 Camargo, Urbanismo, 2 and 28.
33 Vieira, Entrevista.
34 Ribeiro, Goiânia, 61.
35 Leme, Urbanismo, 227.
36 Pires, Goiânia, 227.
37 Godoy, “A Cidade.”
38 Miller, “Garden Cities,” 18.
39 Franco, Cidades, 150-151.
40 Ibid., 168-169.
41 See Bonfato, Macedo Vieira.
42 See Birescian, “Imagens.”

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Figure 3: Revista de Pernambuco 2, no. 9, March (1925).
Figure 4: Museu da Imigração.
Figure 5: Museu da Racia do Pará.
Figure 6: Pires, 2009.