
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SANTO ANTONIO DISTRICT, RECIFE, BRAZIL (1938-1949)

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The city of Recife became a privileged field of experimentation for the new ideas of Urbanism, with a series of proposals, studies, and suggestions, widely published in the press and specialized journals. Most of the debate was concentrated around the transformation of the administrative and commercial centre of the city, the island of Santo Antonio. This discussion resulted in a brutal intervention in the district, destroying eighteen blocks of the city and creating a new large avenue. The intention was to modernize the old centre, transforming it into a monumental ensemble. The replacement of the colonial urban fabric by the new vertical pattern was due to the establishment of building codes regulating building codes determined alignment of facades, volumetric unity of blocks and concordance of heights and architectural motifs. The new urban design communicated an intense image of power and discipline through its architectural mass, monumental scale and vast open spaces. It was clearly intended to form of urban scenery, expressing Vargas Regime corporatism, social control, and state regulatory interventionism. This article analyses the Avenue building process, its precedents, and the conflicts between the desires of customers, bureaucrats and architects in the search for a modern image for the city.

Keywords

urban remodelling, modern urbanism, modern architecture

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1930s and 1940s, the debate over urbanism thrived in Brazil, with an astounding number of publications and plans. The ideas of French Urbanism, incorporated in the plan made by the French Alfred Agache for Rio de Janeiro (1928-1930), particularly the classically inspired architectural compositions and urban design, were influential in this debate created by the renewal of urban centers during the early 1940s. Stimulated by the Vargas Regime (1930-1945), a new planning mentality emerged and the profession of urbanist had great prospects. The public administration incorporated many urbanists and a more diverse network of institutions promoting urbanism. A generation of experts in urbanism emerged in the early 1930s, which included many of Agache's assistants, such as Attilio Corrêa Lima, Arnaldo Gladosch, and Affonso Eduardo Reidy.¹ Concerns about efficiency, zoning and circulation traffic solutions were introduced and the city was conceived as a system and organism. Urban space started to be seen as a network of men, machines, goods and services that should be regulated and modernized.

The dictatorship inaugurated by Vargas in November 1937, the *Estado Novo*, stimulated even more expectations among urbanists. Industrialization, nationalism and a strong state were seen as an inseparable formula to lead the country toward modernization. Urbanism was also seen as an important part of social modernization, since the building of a new man also meant the building of a new city. Modern avenues were seen as important steps in the progress of the country, orienting the new Brazilian man to be part of the masses. Hygienic, functional and beautiful cities were supposed to represent the “national effort” of the regime for the development of the country. The governmental approach towards urbanism, however, relied much more on images than on the real construction of modern city. The regime initiated an aggressive propaganda campaign to shape a national identity and to inculcate civic pride and patriotism in the youth. Adopting the theatricality of fascist regimes, the *Estado Novo* promoted parades and civic commemorations. It was important for the *Estado Novo* to create an image of an urbanized country, but this does not necessarily mean that cities were effectively modern.

The city of Recife, in the Northeast Brazil, became a privileged field of experimentation for the new ideas of Urbanism, attracting the interest of the most important urban planners throughout the country, particularly from the 1920s to the 1950s. The debate included a series of proposals, studies, suggestions published in local and national journals and newspapers. Most of the debate was focused around the transformation of the central district, the island of Santo Antônio, the administrative and commercial centre of the city.

The transformation was reduced to a single large avenue, *10 de Novembro* later renamed *Guararapes*, and its neighbouring blocks of buildings, which was intended to modernize the old centre, transforming it into a monumental ensemble. It was one of the best examples, along Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, of the urban remodeling processes expressing the Vargas Regime in the early 1940s, a topic which remained unexplored by the historiography. This paper analyses the precedents, the conflicts, the urban design and the process of building the avenue.

The first section presents some background on the Recife's growth, urbanistic debates and the plans preceding the construction of the Avenue. The second introduces the major cleavages provoked the proclamation of the *Estado Novo*, when the new Mayor supported new directions to the work. The third introduces the construction of the avenue, the strategies, processes and the conflicts between the desires of customers, bureaucrats and architects. Finally, the fourth section explores role of building codes regulating building codes determined alignment of facades, volumetric unity of blocks and concordance of heights and architectural motifs.

RECIFE DURING THE 1920S AND THE ARGUMENT FOR URBANISM.

The modernization of Recife along the 20th century did not occur in a single episode, but through a long multi-staged process. First, a vast program of modernization implemented between 1909 and 1915 included the modernization of the port and of its adjacent Recife district, and the implementation of new sewage system. Second, during 1922 and 1926, the attention was focused in the peripheral areas, such as the creation a modern residential district inspired by the garden city ideas and a fashionable coastal avenue district adorned by palaces for the rich. The third one occurred in the early forties, with the remodelling of the Santo Antonio district.

At the end of the 1920s, the central district of Recife (Santo Antônio, São José, Boa Vista e do Recife boroughs) became denser and bigger. The radial roads connecting the centre to the suburbs gradually started to lose their tentacle-like primitive form, and the central and peripheral clusters began to merge. The tramway system grew reaching and connecting the entire city, contributing to the development of the suburbs.

Also during the 1920s, cultural and intellectual activities boomed in Recife, with the presence of the most notable modern artists and intellectuals, such as Vicente do Rego Monteiro, Cicero Dias and Gilberto Freyre, Luis Nunes and Roberto Burle-Marx. The city also showed itself as an important centre for engineering. The foundation of the *Engineering Club of Pernambuco* in 1919 marked an important step toward the involvement of engineers with city problems². In the pages of its *Bulletin of the Engineering Club*, articles began to appear about zoning, traffic, the need for plans and surveys, and limits on the buildings heights, turning the Bulletin in a major forum for urbanism.

A long discussion about the transformation of Recife into a modern metropolis initiated. At the end of the decade, there was a great demand for urban improvements, and many voiced concerns about the growth and the orderly future of Recife. The debate was centred on the Santo Antonio District, the administrative and commercial centre of the city, with many public buildings and shops. From the 1920s on, due to the first tall buildings and the traffic congestion, the narrow alleys of the district, were seen as problem. A campaign to remodel the Santo Antonio District which initially emerged in the pages of the *Bulletin of Engineering*, being the object of discussion and intense dispute among urbanists and intellectuals, appearing in pages of newspapers and radio broadcasts for the following 25 years. The questions included: Should Santo Antonio be the major civic centre of the city? What character should it have? How to solve its problems? How to create a space of significance? Should be preserved or transformed into a traffic corridor? Should avenues converge to its centre or surround it without entering in its core? The central question was which image of modernity was to be achieved. The visit of the French Planner Alfred Agache in 1927 contributed to the debate, framing it in new ways according to ideas of modern urbanism.

Four major plans were made throughout this time to guide the remodelling the Santo Antonio District: Domingos Ferreira (1927), The Engineering Club Commission (1930), Nestor de Figueiredo (1932) and Attilio Correa Lima (1935). The last two plans were also concerned with the entire city³.

Heavily influenced by Parisian images, the Engineer Domingos Ferreira, from the Municipality of Recife, proposed the building of avenues through the densely built central area. From an étoile shaped plaza facing the river, four avenues would depart linking the major points of the district, thus connecting to the major roads of the city(fig.1). The buildings facing the square, the colonnades and the huge clock-tower/obelisk reveals the desire for visual and scenic effects⁴.

The Mayor invited the Engineering Club of Pernambuco to provide a technical report about the remodelling of the Santo Antônio District. This commission, formed by the engineers Antonio de Moraes Rego, Eduardo Jorge Pereira and José Estelita, adopted an alternative solution for the problem of traffic congestion, a more modest plan according to the financial condition of the municipality⁵.

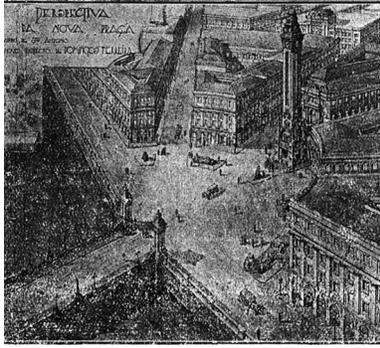


FIGURE 1 Domingos Ferreira, Plan for the Santo Antonio District (1927).

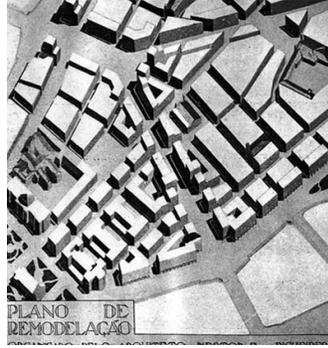


FIGURE 2 Nestor de Figueiredo, Recife Extension and Remodelling Plan (1932), Byrd Eye Views

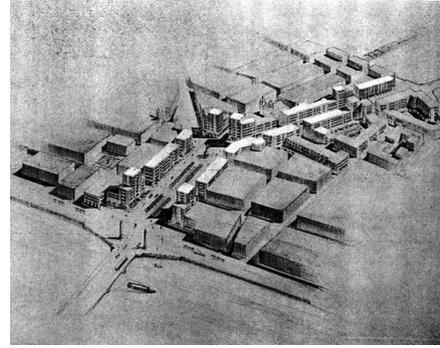


FIGURE 3 Atílio Corrêa Lima, Plan for Recife, Santo Antônio District (1936) Byrd Eye View.

Nestor de Figueiredo, an architect from Rio de Janeiro proponent of the neo-colonial architecture who became involved with urbanism, presented in 1932 his *Plano de Remodelação e Extensão da Cidade do Recife*, which also included a new zoning and a new scheme of avenues (fig.2). Two major boulevards met right at the core of the district, the *Independência Square*, instead of surrounding the borough, implying brutal demolitions⁶. The imposing and scenic aspects, the perspectives, Y-shape avenues, monumental groups of buildings and squares reveals the influence of Agache's Plan for Rio de Janeiro. According to him, harmony and beauty would be major characteristics of this city⁷. These tall new office buildings of eight to twelve floors would create a new silhouette for the city, outshining the old one marked by church spires⁸.

Figueiredo's plan was harshly criticized by planners such as Washington de Azevedo, Francisco Prestes Maia and Atílio Correa Lima, invited to provide technical reports about it. In short, they criticized it for its financial aspects, the shape of the blocks, the dimension of internal courtyards, and the lack of research about the city and for the convergence proposed at *Independência Square*, which would bring more congestion. However, nothing was implemented.

In mid-1935, the new mayor, João Pereira Borges, commissioned Atílio Corrêa Lima, one of the most notable Brazilian planners, to make a plan for the entire city and for the Santo Antonio district (fig.3). Taking advantage of the demolished areas and of the existing urban pattern, Corrêa Lima decided for a more modest arrangement,

promoting little street widening and avoiding as much as possible costly alterations in the urban design. He proposed seven-floor buildings with galleries on the ground level, maintaining the slightly irregular design of existing blocks. He aimed to reduce the excessive convergence of the trolley system in the central areas of the Santo Antonio district by decentralizing traffic, creating circular trolley lines, and relocating terminals and parking lots to the periphery of the district. In addition to the plan for the district, he also proposed a new plan of avenues and a new zoning system for the city⁹.

In these proposals, there were many converging points, such as the radial-concentric model and the zoning for the entire city. The major divergence can be found in their approach to Santo Antonio district, and particularly *Independência Square*. While Figueiredo, insisted the centrality of the *Independência Square*, accentuating its monumentality, Corrêa Lima attempted to break the excessive convergence of this square (and of Santo Antonio district), decentralizing traffic and proposing alternate streets in the periphery.

Correa Lima's project was discussed and approved with minor changes in early 1937. However, in the events of November 1937, when Vargas proclaimed himself dictator, inaugurating the *Estado Novo*, provoked a rearrangement of the local elites. Lima Cavalcanti supported presidential elections that were to be held in 1938 and saw his prestige shrink in the Vargas administration. His fall was immediate after the *Estado Novo* coup. Vargas designated Magalhães as the new governor, who named a new mayor for Recife, Antonio Novaes Filho. This had important repercussions in the local discussion of urbanism.

THE ESTADO NOVO AND THE NEW ORDER

Educated as a lawyer, but a politician and journalist in practice, Agamenon Magalhães came from the hinterland of the state to achieve national prominence as a central figure in the Vargas regime. Advocating strong intervention by the State in the economy and social life, he had a pivotal role in the creation of Vargas social and labour legislation, particularly the unionist organization of workers under state patronage. As a Vargas loyalist, Magalhães entirely incorporated the authoritarian premises of the *Estado Novo* and based his government in the co-optation and indoctrination of the masses. In order to assure his power, he named new mayors to many cities in the State. In a few months, he replaced the old political establishment with a new elite ideologically engaged with the *Estado Novo*. According to him, the *Estado Novo* was inaugurating a new stage for the country:

The new regime, inaugurated in November 10, was not an imposition. It was a national decision, an attitude of defence against the evils, which were affecting our social structure¹⁰.

As soon as Magalhães assumed the post of governor, he named Antônio de Novaes Filho as the new Mayor, who remained as the mayor from December 3 1937 to October 29 1945, during the entire *Estado Novo*.¹¹ The municipality worked as an arm of the government, as Novaes Filho himself recognized:

I am just a modest assistant of the man who is the true patriot, the *interventor*, the man who is solving the most difficult problems of our land¹².

Actually, this work is not mine, it is neither from my assistants, this work belongs to that one who masterminded it, who provided precise directions and successful rules, the *interventor* Agamenon Magalhães.¹³

He had autonomy to choose his assistant and secretaries and fully supported the technical body of the municipality, always recognizing publicly their competence and ability. His program of works included important suburban thoroughfares, street paving and the creation of parks¹⁴.

The completion of the Santo Antonio remodelling was given highest priority by his government. The open building site in the heart of Santo Antonio district was seen as an embarrassment for the new mayor. In his search for a symbol for the Estado Novo, he demanded the rapid conclusion of the remodelling. The message was very clear: it was necessary to stop endless discussion and planning and to provide an appropriate image of the modern city, particularly a major avenue lined with high-rises buildings. Urbanism became a representational feature.

Dissatisfied with the length of the process of the remodelling of Santo Antônio district, the new mayor created a new City Planning Commission (CPC) in December 1937. This commission was charged with evaluating the work that had been done (mostly demolitions) and proposing a conclusion that took advantage of that. This new commission included representatives from the Municipality (Domingos Ferreira), State (Paulo Guedes), Engineering Club (Tolentino de Carvalho), Professional Association of Engineers (José Estelita) and Pernambuco Press Association (José Campello), all of them engineers excepting the last, a journalist. The commission rejected Corrêa Lima Plan and revived Figueiredo's work, who was rehabilitated as the author, although the new project drastically reduced his original proposal to only a single avenue and the adjacent blocks. The proposal was immediately approved by the Mayor and ceremonially presented in the major theatre of the city¹⁵.

The association between the urbanists and the mayor brought fruits for both of them. Approving the works of urbanists, Novaes Filho created a technical façade that legitimized his public works without following the often-tortuous path through the political negotiations typical of democratic states. The urban planners, now behind a technical commission, had more opportunities to concretize their ideas. The CPC turned into an instrument of the municipality and not a mere consultant. Novaes Filho clearly expressed his sympathy for authoritarian regimes in his speech at the presentation of the plan:

Mussolini... this man became a great leader in the contemporary world and a true artist in the art of public management ... He opened the old Rome, widening streets and alleys... That is exactly what Recife needs¹⁶.

THE REMODELLING OF SANTO ANTONIO DISTRICT AND THE BUILDING OF GUARARAPES AVENUE

The commission's plan called for the construction of one of the avenues designed by Figueiredo. This avenue, called 10th of November to celebrate the date of the *Estado Novo* coup, started in *Independência* Square and continued diagonally over 400 meters in the direction of the main bridge to the mainland. On the mainland side, the avenue starts 60 meters width, decreasing to 40 and to 30 in the middle and reaching the 20 meters when arriving at the *Independência* Square. The new avenue was a brutal intervention in the district, destroying eighteen blocks of the city. On the south side, financial constraints prevented more expropriations and the project resulted in only a single line of big blocks, which varied from a quite narrow and long block facing the *Independência* Square to a broader one facing the continent. Along this length, these volumes are separated by two narrow streets, which are barely perceptible; when one is on the avenue these streets cannot be seen due to the masses of these volumes. On the northern side, where there was more open space from demolitions, the intervention was greater with the construction of more blocks with huge irregular courtyards. As in the southern side, only a single narrow street intercepts these blocks. The opening up of the dense urban pattern for the building of the other avenue, which would make a cross in the heart of the district according to Figueiredo's plan, was continued, but the efforts were directed to the 10 de November Avenue, seen as a celebration of the *Estado Novo*.

Guided by this plan, the municipality initiated work as soon as the plan was approved. In October 1938, the City Planning Commission was reorganized as a permanent commission. The building of the new avenue was extremely rapid and destroyed many narrow alleys, old buildings and historical landmarks. The most important buildings destroyed in this enterprise were the *São João de Deus* Hospital, the Artillery Regiment, and the *Paraíso* Church, from the 17th and 18th centuries.

This process displaced a traditional central neighbourhood of lower middle class and small commerce. As soon as the plan was approved, the Municipality compelled owners of the lots to sell.¹⁷ Some tenants resisted the decree stipulating that they must leave the old slums (*cortiços*) in forty days¹⁸. A campaign in the newspaper supported the Municipality, citing the precarious state of the buildings. A process of exclusion forced the low and middle class population to leave the district, and generating a housing crisis¹⁹. As the new lots were much bigger (and more expensive) than the older ones, former residents were unable to return. On the new lots prominent, tall buildings were built for offices, the federal and state bureaucracy, banks and cinemas.

The new avenue, later called Guararapes, was intended to modernize the old centre, transforming it into a monumental ensemble. Its verticality, greater density and concentration closely resembled the business-centre proposed by Agache for Rio. In the blueprint, one perceives velocity and fluidity, as converging lines and the cornices of the buildings conduct eyes to the vanishing point. The buildings were not there to be individually seen or admired, but to compose scenery (fig.4).

Legislation produced the desired profile of the avenue, as will be seen in the next section. Seeing from above in the early 1950s, the new avenue reveals itself as a corridor of compact high-rise buildings that faced each other, contrasting with the traditional buildings of the district (fig.5).

Although demolition and construction proceeded rapidly, occupation was not immediate due to the lack of municipal funds and to the fragility of the local bourgeoisie. Before September 1939, no building was erected in the avenue, and only a few lots were sold to the private sector. Novaes Filho worked painstakingly to attract investments to build his avenue, but left in doubt the real necessity of this avenue:

To Getúlio, the city of Recife should be very grateful. As a Mayor, I demolished all that district of Santo Antonio, I built the Duarte Coelho bridge and the Guararapes Avenue (formerly *10 de Novembro*). (...) Then, when I destroyed everything, a great bombing, who wants to build? Who had the money to? , (...) I was going to be the crazy mayor who bulldozed everything and left it worse, left the ruins instead of the old houses.²⁰

Using Agamenon's prestige with Vargas, Novaes Filho appealed directly to the President in June 1940 in order to obtain funds to complete the enterprise:

I went to Rio de Janeiro, to meet the President Vargas... I was promptly received. I explained to him that I had entered in an administrative adventure. I bulldozed everything in the Santo Antonio district, the major commercial centre of the city, and I did not have means to conclude it. There was nobody to buy and build; everything was reduced to a wreck! I asked him to authorize the Institutes (national pension funds) to build something there. The Postal Service headquarters, which was going to be built in Recife district... It was not appropriate. I wanted everything built in the Santo Antonio. I would donate the land.

After he listened me, he said: 'I am impressed with your tenacity, with your wish to make Recife a modern city'.(...) Finally, Getúlio said to me: 'Dear Mayor Novaes, I'll take care of it. I will instruct te presidents of the institutes to make dignified and beautiful buildings on your avenue saying that you will donate the land' And that's it! He called everyone and gave them orders... Everything was made by the institutes of Getúlio. The few remaining lots were soon bought.²¹

Novaes Filho makes clear that the goal, not explicitly stated, was to create an image for the Estado Novo. The avenue belonged to a representational rather than practical dimension, since the building code established minimum heights instead of maximum heights. Instead of necessary schools and hospitals, office buildings for the bureaucracy and private companies were built to symbolize Brazil ascension to modernity. The commitment of all governmental levels was clear in the completion of the avenue.²² Novaes Filho's program was ample, but the transformation in the Santo Antonio district appeared to be the major postcard, imprinting on Recife the marks of the Estado Novo:

The monumental November 10 Avenue, which replaced a cluster of tortuous and tiny alleys and streets, is a paradigm for the future Recife with broad arteries and majestic architectural masses²³.

Many of the unsold lots were donated to federal and state administration, such as the case of the Postal Service. Many other buildings were occupied by the growing federal bureaucracy, particularly those financed by the Pension Funds Institutes created by Vargas' labour policy.²⁴

A loan from the Brazilian financier Martinelli S.A obtained by the previous mayor João Pereira Borges in March of 1937, financed this venture. It fuelled the demolition and expropriation during that year, but, after assuming power, Novaes Filho decided to cancel the loan and continue the works with the ordinary resources of the municipality, with the help of state and the federal governments²⁵. The municipality pushed new owners to build, establishing deadlines for the start of construction. The participation of Brazil with the allied forces in World War II led to delays in the construction of these buildings due to the scarcity of steel and iron, directed to the war effort. In 1944, the last lots were sold to a local businessperson who completed the avenue by the end of the decade.²⁶

BUILDING CODES AND THE DESIGN OF THE CITY

Verticality was a symbol of modernization and the buildings facing the avenue were carefully designed to achieve this effect. The new building profile was enforced through legislation, which aimed to coordinate the new construction to create a stage. The city of Recife had adopted a new modern building code in 1936, made by members of the Engineering Club²⁷.

The new 1936 legislation established zoning and regulated construction in all of Recife. It divided the city in four zones, following a concentric pattern according to their distance from the city centre, each with different patterns of occupation. The code permitted higher buildings and densities in the centre and lower densities and heights in the periphery. In the centre, the alignment of the facades was kept on the outer limits of the lot, while setbacks from the street were required in the suburbs. The high, dense and vertical central area, reserved for offices and business, sharply contrasted with the less dense suburbs²⁸. The decree also showed great concern with the appearance and shape of buildings and architectural effect, particularly in the central area. It encouraged the verticality of the centre, establishing minimum heights. It also maintained the traditional city configuration with the buildings aligned with the outer limits of the lots and facing the streets. New buildings had to conform to these rules. It also established maximum heights depending on the width of the streets²⁹.

It is clear that the 1936 code pursued a specific model of city: a vertical, symbolic and densely built centre and a periphery of freestanding houses or small buildings, with certain areas of transition laying among them. The code curiously adopted modernist assumptions for the suburban areas, while keeping qualities of the 19th century city, with its unity, alignments, volumes, and facades, in the centre.

The aesthetics of facades was strongly emphasized in the code with an entire chapter devoted to this issue. These guidelines did not specify architectural styles, but defined rules, that made impossible the establishment of modern architecture. The rules required that the major lines of cornices and the architectural motifs should be in concordance with neighbouring buildings; article 112 affirmed: "in adjoining buildings, the new building should have its major architectural lines subordinated to the existing lines, with architectural motifs in concordance..."³⁰.

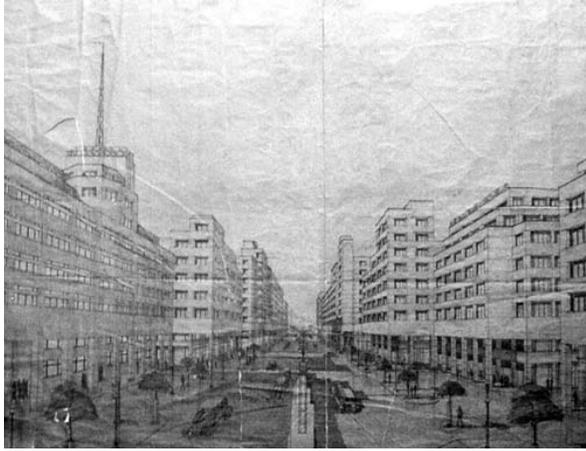


FIGURE 4 City Planning Commission (Recife), 10th of November Avenue (1938) Perspective



FIGURE 5 Recife, Aerial view (early 1950s)



FIGURE 6 Guararapes Avenue, 2003



The legislation required a minimum height of eight floors, with setbacks in the upper floors, and five-meter wide covered walkways (galleries) at the street level, corresponding to ground-level shops and a mezzanine, beneath the projection of the buildings. Controls governed the alignment of the facades, volumetric uniformity of the blocks and concordance of heights and architectural motifs (fig.6). Built between 1939 and 1949, these office buildings were the tallest and most modern in the city, using advanced technical resources³¹.

Favouring circulation of vehicles, setbacks at the corners were required in order to provide visibility for drivers³². Architects took advantage of this requirement, exploring innovative solutions for corners, using cylindrical, corner-cutting, concave forms and other architectural motifs. The main entrances of the avenue received remarkable architectural treatments. Facing the mainland side, the *Trianon* and *Correios e Telégrafos* buildings with their play of concave and convex elements face one another. This play of concave and convex is also present in the opposite entrance of the Avenue, in the *Sulacap* and *Santo Albino* buildings (fig.6)³³.

The Beaux-Arts modulation and composition is present in the facades, The buildings adopt the compositional tradition of base, body and crown. The office units are clearly seen from the outside because of the rhythm of openings as well as the division between floors, always marked by pronounced cornices. The absence of classical capitals and the generally nude and abstract classicism contributes to the alignment and unity of the ensemble. The major lines of the galleries, with their uniformly spaced columns, also contributes to this unity. The narrow

streets entering at the sides of the avenue does not interfere in the composition. These buildings seem to be a single entity, made by different architects, who were forced to suppress their individuality in order to create an impressive ensemble. The wish to reconcile innovation and tradition, modernism and classicism is evident in these buildings. Architects emulated Agache's office towers with galleries and shops and redent-like upper floors. The plans - essentially symmetrical, developed around axis and divided in parts - also reveals a strong presence of Beaux-Arts culture. They are a result of a compromise between obligations dictated by the urban condition and internal functional requirements.

The rigorous control promoted by the building code led to curious solutions. The façade of *Correios and Telegrafos* was required to obey the classical modulation and the rhythm of the avenue. Great verandas appear on the façade, while following the lines of the avenue. On the other side, however, he had freedom to propose a stunningly modern façade entirely composed by *brise-soleil*. The reconciliation of these two traditions, classical and modern, proves the ability of architects in addressing urban conditions. The alignment and unity of facades and volumes provided harmony to the central area and contributed to its transformation into a symbolic space. Concerned with the overall aesthetics of the city, the regulations were unable to create expressive isolated buildings, but they did create an ensemble with a pleasing uniformity in the centre - a modern city that retained the pedestrian scale and the qualities of the traditional city. Principles of decorum, monumentality, symmetry and modulation were preserved from a Beaux-Arts culture.

CONCLUSIONS

The planners working in Recife were attentive to the most recent ideas and proposals from the United States and Europe - through readings, congresses, and personal contacts - and made frequent references to international theories and work in their writings. The aesthetic dimension was the most important influence from Agache and French planning. These planners understood the city in morphological terms, continuing the nineteenth-century city-building tradition and using classically inspired architectural compositions and urban design (block, squares and perspectives) in their solutions. The building codes enforced building patterns (galleries, receding upper floors, unity of the architectural lines).

A modern, hygienic and efficient city, urbanism was an important piece in the *Estado Novo* program. The belief in the technical character of the plan also assured the legitimacy of the urbanists. As it addressed the interest of an entire society and was based in scientific and technical methods, urbanism would be apolitical; a logic which rejected any kind of popular participation. After the installation of the *Estado Novo*, the remodelling was redirected and rapidly finished. The wishes for modernization of urbanists and politicians transformed the traditional city, not because it was strictly necessary in functional terms, but because this traditional city contained signs of the past to be eliminated.

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Endnotes

- 1 The ideas of Le Corbusier and those from CIAM, began to be introduced to Brazil. Le Corbusier's visits to Rio de Janeiro in 1929 and 1936 influenced a group of Brazilian architects, which would be known as the Carioca School in the following decades. Although their buildings were profusely published in the international architectural press between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s, was not yet in the position of having commissions in urbanism. This situation changed only in the late 1950s with competition of Brasilia and the wider acceptance of CIAM's ideas.
- 2 The Club was a place of meeting not only for these engineers but also for an elite of industrialists, local politicians and public servants. "Acta da Sessão de Instalação do Club de Engenharia de Pernambuco" *Boletim de Engenharia* 1 (1923): 23.
- 3 The contents of each plan cannot be fully explained here, due to the lack of space, but more details about this discussion can be found in: Fernando Moreira "A aventura do urbanismo moderno em Recife" in *Urbanismo no Brasil 1895-1965* (São Paulo: Nobel/Edusp, 1999), 141-166; Fernando Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation" (PhD diss, University of Pennsylvania, 2004), p.354-369; Joel Outtes, "O Recife pregado à cruz das grandes avenidas" (Ms diss., MDU/UFPE, 1991); Virginia Pontual, "Ordem e Progresso: O pensamento urbanístico no Recife dos anos 30" (paper presented at the biannual national meeting of ANPUR, Brasília, 1995), 797-810.
- 4 Domingos Ferreira "A urbanização de Recife" *Diário da Manhã*, Recife, 14 May 1931; Joel Outtes, "O Recife pregado", 77.
- 5 Antonio Moraes Rego et al, "Bairro de Santo Antônio" *Boletim de Engenharia* 5, 9 (February, 1931):
- 6 This first avenue, later called Dantas Barreto, was actually built between the 1950s and 1960s involving extensive destruction of the urban fabric. The second became the Guararapes Avenue, built during the Estado Novo.
- 7 "O Plano de Remodelação do Recife" *Diário da Manhã* (5 February 1931): 1
- 8 Nestor Figueiredo, "Anteprojeto do plano de remodelação e desenvolvimento sistemático do Recife", manuscript, (1931): 3.
- 9 Atílio Corrêa Lima "Plano de remodelação da cidade do Recife" *Urbanismo e Viação*, 11 (1940): 42-47, Joel Outtes, "O Recife pregado", 151-152.
- 10 Agamenom Magalhães, "A Verdade de um Regime" *Folha da Manhã*, (9 August 1942):1.
- 11 Born in an old family of sugar cane aristocracy from the southern coast of the State, Novaes Filho had little involvement with the city. He was also senator and Minister of Agriculture in the 1950s. For a synthesis of his career see: Novaes Filho, Novaes Filho, Antonio, *Depoimento, Entrevistas-História Oral* (1976)1980, Virginia Pontual, *Uma cidade e dois prefeitos* (Recife: EDUFPE, 2001), 65-67.
- 12 Quoted by Virginia Pontual, *Uma cidade e dois prefeitos*, 76.
- 13 "A inauguração, hontem, do parque 13 de maio- discurso pronunciado por Novaes Filho" in *Folha da Manhã* 31 August 1939. Quoted by Virginia Pontual, *Uma cidade e dois prefeitos*, 77.
- 14 For a synthesis of these initiatives see Novaes Filho's correspondence to Agamenom Magalhães after his nomination, when established the goals of his tenure. AGM c1937 12.11/1 (microfilm). Correspondência de Novaes Filho a Agamenom Magalhães. CPDOC/ Getulio Vargas Foundation, Rio de Janeiro. See also PMR, *Seis annos de administração municipal*, 1944.
- 15 "Entregue à municipalidade o plano definitivo de reforma do bairro de Santo Antônio" *Folha da Manhã* (24 April 1938): 3.
- 16 "Entregue à municipalidade", 3.
- 17 Municipal Acts in *Official Diary of the State of Pernambuco*, April 20 1938 and April 23 1938.
- 18 Joel Outtes, "O Recife pregado", 183.
- 19 Marcus André Melo, "O Estado, o boom do século e a crise de habitação" in *Cidade e História*, ed. Marco Aurélio Gomes, Ana Fernandes (Salvador: UFBA, 1991), 153-154.
- 20 Antonio Novaes Filho, *Depoimento*, 10.
- 21 AGM c 1940.06.04; AGM c 1940.06.06/1; AGM c 1940.06.08/3; AGM c 1940.06.15. Rio de Janeiro: CPDOC/FGV. Microfilms in the Getulio Vargas Foundation.
- 22 In another occasion, Novaes Filho appealed to Vargas intervention. An Italian businessman was committed to build a modern cinema around the avenue, but his assets were frozen by the Bank of Brazil as a war measure. The businessman had his money liberated and the cinema was built. Novaes Filho, *Depoimento*, 12-13.
- 23 PMR, *Seis annos de administração municipal*, 1944, 36.
- 24 In addition to the Postal Service, these buildings were donated to the different pension funds, Institute of workers from banking, commerce, port and shipping, and the Institute of State Workers. These institutes rented offices in order to recover the public money invested.
- 25 This loan was fruit of a complicated financial operation, which involved public titles to be sold and retaken twenty years later. However, the company was unable to sell these titles, due to instability of Brazilian market of capitals. The Municipality was able to eliminate the contract. Joel Outtes, "O Recife pregado", 165-170, 175, PMR, *Seis annos de administração municipal*, 1944, 17-21.
- 26 The buildings were Almare, Arnaldo Bastos, Conde da Boa Vista, all of them designed by Hugo Marques.
- 27 PMR, *Regulamento de Construcções do Município do Recife*. 08/12/1936. Decreto n.374 (Recife: Imprensa Official, 1936).

- 28 This preoccupation with the architectural composition in the centre was not equally present in for the periphery. For the construction on new parcels in the suburbs, larger lots, wider streets and longer setbacks from the street were established, reflecting the preoccupation with hygiene, illumination and ventilation. In each suburban zone there were separated commercial and residential areas, drawing from ideas proposed by Figueiredo and Corrêa Lima. The same zone could have different percentiles for occupation: denser in the commercial area and less dense in the residential areas. PMR, *Regulamento de Construções*, Art 72, paragraphs 1,2,3, and 4;
- 29 In the center, the height of the buildings could reach 2,5 times the width of the streets, but this limit could be exceeded by recessed floors if it follow an angle of 60°, taken from the other opposite sidewalk. These restrictions aimed to provide insolation to the first floors. PMR, *Regulamento de Construções*, Art.54, Parag. 2, 26;
- 30 PMR, *Regulamento de Construções*, Art 112.
- 31 The major buildings of the avenue and their dates of construction: Sulacap (1941), Caixa Economica Federal (1942), Trianon (1942), Seguradora (1943), Correios e Telégrafos (1943), Almare and Almare Anexo (1944), and Arnaldo Bastos in (1949).
- 32 PMR, *Regulamento de Construções*, *Regulamento de Construções*, chapter IV, Art 18, 16.
- 33 The Trianon presented a huge concavity at its corner that takes up one third of the facade. The *Correios and Telégrafos*, in the opposite corner had a concave glass element running from the ground to the roof, reflecting expressionist tones. In the other entrance, the Sulacap, designed by Roberto Capello, presents a slightly convex facade standing side by side with the Matriz de Santo Antônio Church. This baroque masterpiece had dominated the district skyline until the Sulacap arrived at its side announcing the new times. The Sulacap facade has a tripartite division with pronounced pediments and cornices, which compensates for the anonymity of its extensive lateral facade. Curves suggesting the velocity of modern Recife also appeared in the Santo Albino building in the opposite corner. The rounded body, projecting from the building, introduces the avenue but easily adapts itself to the rest of the building and to the ensemble.

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Image sources

- Figure 1: Revista da Cidade, Recife, n 54, II, July 09 1927.
- Figure 2: “Plano de Remodelação para o Recife” *Arquitetura e Urbanismo*, (March/April, 1940): 21.
- Figure 3: Corrêa Lima, Atílio. “Plano de remodelação da cidade do Recife” *Urbanismo e Viação*, 11 (December, 1940): 43.
- Figure 4: Jordão Emerenciano State of Pernambuco Archive
- Figure 5: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco [JPC 3111],
- Figure 6: Photo by the Author.