
THE IAPI HOUSING ESTATE IN HONÓRIO GURGEL: ELEMENTS OF PERMANENCE AND TRANSFORMATIONS

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One of the major contributions by modern architects and urban planning specialists has been their concern with housing. A good example of the trend of building housing estate is the Honório Gurgel IAPI housing estate, inaugurated in 1947. The story behind this housing estate and its relation with the North Rio de Janeiro City district is linked to its origin related to the train service and the industrialization projects then blooming in the country and in the city. Nowadays, there is important community participation in its transformations. An attempt is made to understand how the local history was influenced by this housing estate and how it continues to relate with this architecture and the urban implementation. It is also based on the observation of its public and private spaces, in the intentionally built domains and those found in the residual areas, especially along the railway. The work seeks to relate these spaces with the living experiences of their dwellers. It proposes not only an observation of the district and of the use given to its public spaces, but also the history of the housing estate and that of the entire district.

Keywords

adaptation on housing estates, modern urban planning, history of the cities, Rio de Janeiro

How to Cite

De Almeida, Daniel Athias; Moraes Rego Fagerlande, Sergio. "The train, urban mobility and tourism regarding the revival of the history of Guapimirim". In Carola Hein (ed.) *International Planning History Society Proceedings, 17th IPHS Conference, History-Urbanism-Resilience, TU Delft 17-21 July 2016, V.04 p.201, TU Delft Open, 2016.*

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7480/iphs.2016.4.1291>

INTRODUCTION

Rio de Janeiro City is always looked at from the perspective of its marvellous aspects. Its image was built on its natural and architectural monuments, lush landscape with beaches and mountains, and a history that seems to be restricted to the historic downtown area and South Rio, where the high-income districts and the tourist sights that draw the world's attention are concentrated. Many times, even from a study interest perspective of its formation, the city seems to be restricted to that territory or, at the very most its opposite, the favela, place that defies urban order. Against this thinking and practice, this article deals with a small peripheral area of the city: the Honório Gurgel district, located in North Rio. Departing from a study on its initial historical formation, considering the railroad presence in the configuration of Rio suburbs, the development of Brasil Avenue (Avenida Brasil), and the construction of an important housing estate, we can examine the area's history, the transformations and permanences, with special focus on public use space and local community initiatives in these public areas. In this context, we can have a perspective of how a modernist-inspired building has been appropriated by the local residents.

This small stronghold has been little studied. It is not a slum area, but part of the suburbs, with a huge working class population, human and cultural wealth. Referring to books by Bonduki (2014) and Bonduki and Koury (2014), we can examine in more depth the design of the Honório Gurgel IAPI housing estate, one of those built in the 1940s, as a draft for housing social policies, aiming to meet the increasing demands for industrialization.

The district's history, written by one of its oldest dwellers, was another important source for this article. Souza (2013), one of the pioneers in the housing estate, is an active community leader and, in writing the book about her affective memories of the district, posed a challenge for both city researchers and local residents, so that the theme can be more deeply explored. In addition to writing the book, the author was responsible for creating a community movement in the 1980s that up to present has stimulated many of the local residents to rescue the local identity, value the history and the people who live there.

The article seeks to recuperate the history of the district and of its housing estate, reflecting on how its architecture and urban design have been appropriated by the local community. With this objective, we analyze the occupation of two public spaces, which have been appropriated as cited by Gehl (2013): the garden, which was not in the estate's original design and was created by community decision and initiative, and the square, in the original design, occupied by private use constructions, and recreated in another area serving to promote community integration.

We also seek to bring up an analysis of the relations that the dwellers of this modernist-inspired estate developed with its public gathering spaces, especially in the last few years, when community participation has become quite strong. The appropriation of public spaces shows a renewed history, yet revealing how spaces that were not in the original design were created and have been more and more important to the lives of local residents who show commitment to discover, build, and reveal a new social and cultural identity, through community work to recuperate small urban areas and cultural community initiatives, in a movement in which music, cinema, literature and culinary interlace, contributing eventually to building this local resident's identity as a dweller of that same marvellous city described here earlier.

THE CITY'S URBAN EVOLUTION, THE RAILROAD AND THE CREATION OF HONÓRIO GURGEL

Until the beginning of the 19th century, the urban area of Rio de Janeiro City was rather limited, and most of what the city is today was a rural area, occupied by villas, and sugar cane and cattle farms. These areas yielded great economic outputs, contributing to the city's supply (Cavalcanti, 2004, p.65). From the 20th century on, the population increased significantly, leading to urban sprawl in several directions. As a result, the existing paths, such as cattle trails that served the existing properties, started having trade points, generating an urban network [Abreu, 1987, p.37].

In 1858, the inauguration of the first section of the Central do Brasil Railroad (EFCB – Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil) changes the city's growth pattern, and old rural areas could be occupied by workers of the central area, due to the transportation facilities to their working places [Abreu, 1987, p.43]. The train became an important element of the city's urban expansion and the definition of what would be called "railroad" suburbs [Abreu, 1987, p.53]. Honório Gurgel Station was inaugurated in 1905.

The district's agropastoral roots since the 17th century is shown by Cavalcanti (2004). The city expansion from the 19th century on, the railroad development, and the suburbs' occupation appear in Abreu's work [1987]. Brasil Avenue's development, in 1946, the beginning of the road system, and the area's industrialization are presented by Gerson (2000, p.162) and Abreu [1987], who show the importance of this process to the residential occupation by the working class, lodged in housing estates such as the one in Honório Gurgel. Abreu (2006), in his study on the city, shows how the railroad was a fundamental element to this expansion, along with the construction of new roads such as Brasil Avenue.

The area's profile begins to change with the arrival of industries in the 1920s. The city had started being industrialized in the late 19th century, but only then industries began moving out of the central areas close to South Rio and downtown, seeking more distant areas – but close to the railroad system, the port and the roads that connected to other states. The lower real estate prices will be a major factor in this process, in addition to the increased population presence, providing cheap and plenty of labor force [Abreu, 1987, p.80].

It is pertinent to highlight that Brazil's industrialization in the early 20th century happened in a relatively autonomous manner, not being a part of the government's policies, which privileged the idea of an agricultural country, due to the rural oligarchies' influence that dominated the power system [Abreu, 187, p.96]. Therefore, there was no public policy to stimulate industries that could impact on the city, contributing to its development. When choosing to establish in a certain area, the only activities that interested the industries were those that took advantage of the proximity to cheap labor force and consumers, and with no transportation issues involved.

Only from the 1930s on, public policies began changing, stimulating industrial diversification. The crash of 1929 and World War II were important factors in this process that would change the country's profile, especially in the 1950s, with the implementation of new industrial policies. The 1940s saw great increase in industrial production in Rio de Janeiro City [Abreu, 1987, p.96], and that impacted on housing and urban policies, both in the local and the national spheres.

Built by the Industrial Social Security and Welfare Institute, IAPI (Instituto de Assistência e Previdência dos Industriários) in 1947, the estate was part of the housing policies of President Getúlio Vargas administration. As a result, the housing issues went to the top of the agenda, with the construction of several similar estates, leaving a mark on this important moment for national architecture and urban design (Bonduki, 2014). The estate in Honório Gurgel was one of the first in the process of creating social housing (Bonduki, 2014; Bonduki and Koury, 2014).



FIGURE 1 Honório Gurgel's location in Rio de Janeiro City

The 1940s brought about important novelties to the district. The main changes initially took place with the construction of Brasil Avenue, by Mayor Henrique Dodsworth, inaugurated in 1946. This large road is an important example of the new policies connecting Rio de Janeiro State to the industries. The new road axis was conceived not only to connect Rio-São Paulo and Rio-Petrópolis Roads to the city, but also, and above all, to establish new areas for industry development closer to circulation areas, people and goods [Abreu, 1987, p.103]. The occupation of all this area around the new avenue was partially successful: along with the industries, sprawls into vacant areas occurred leading to favelas, solution found by the population attracted by the chance of employment but with no housing [Abreu, 1987, p.103].

HOUSING AND INDUSTRIALIZATION: THE HONÓRIO GURGEL HOUSING ESTATE

The 1940s gave rise to new initiatives in the city also related with investments in housing policies. Until the 1930s, there was no government concern to guarantee housing for workers. In the beginning of industrialization, industries were stimulated to build house condos and housing estates to their workers near the textile units [Bonduki, 1998]. However, this was not a government policy but an investment alternative for industry owners, in addition to being a way to have control over workers [Bonduki, 1998, p. 49]. Vargas extended the idea of omnipresent state in the means of production to housing production. As a result, public power sought to transform society in different aspects, attracting political support from the working class. Social housing went to the top of the agenda, along with the creation of a network protection by establishing a string of labor rights before inexistent. Parallel to the rising industrialization, Vargas believed housing was decisive to the formation of this new man [Bonduki, 1998, p.73].



FIGURE 2 Public square in front of IAPI housing estate main building in 1962



FIGURE 3 The IAPI housing estate in the 1950s, before construction of the wall alongside the railroad tracks

Between 1937 and 1964, 66 IAPI housing estates were built all over Brazil (Bonduki, 2014, p. 180). In addition to the residences, most of the original designs included urban equipment, such as schools, daycare and medical centers, and shopping and leisure areas. The Honório Gurgel IAPI was one of the few which included only shopping and leisure areas. This urban model reached its prime in Brazil with the inauguration of Brasília, in 1960, where the superblocks develop Clarence Perry's concept of neighborhood unit.

Thus, social housing becomes a necessity that connects several knowledge fields of the time to find solutions. Public transportation experts, sociologists, entrepreneurs, geographers, and architects start studying the theme seeking solutions for the housing issues [Bonduki, 1998, p.75]. From 1941 on, architects like Carlos Frederico Ferreira and Rubens Porto start developing projects in the Ministry of Labor and the Pensions and Retirement Institute (IAP - Institutos de Aposentadorias e Pensões) which start building important housing estates, such as the one in Realengo, in 1941 [Bonduki, 1998, p. 75].

When deciding to build estates intended for workers, leaving theoretical debates aside, the government emerged as an innovator in the field, generating alternatives to the housing issues of the time. It was a time of innovations in Brazilian architecture, when the Ministry of Health and Education (MES -Ministério de Educação e Saúde) building, Palácio Gustavo Capanema, hallmark of a new world architecture, was constructed by a team led by Lucio Costa from an initial idea by Le Corbusier. In the midst of these abundant novelties, architecture and urban design also turned to the working class, in search for urban solutions that could serve not only the elite but all society.

The idea that workers should have a home of their own arises at a moment, when they were still discussing the housing offer model, which could be rented, remaining as property of the State [Bonduki, 1998, p.83]. By enabling every worker to own their home, housing comes up as a new element to value the workers' role in society, confirming a radical change in course at the time. This is made clear by observing the importance that property still has to most Brazilians, who consider owning their homes an essential society value. The search for the individual, single-family housing is another factor that consolidates as the workers' aspiration base at that time.



FIGURE 4 Public-use strip alongside the railroad wall, in 2016, with trees planted by the community

For that to occur, it would be necessary to create a mortgage-credit system, something unheard of at the time. Moreover, other measures would be necessary, such as lowering construction costs. This was one of the objectives involved in the solution to this problem. The construction rationalization should support the process, building housing groups to make the building unit cheaper. Another factor was limiting construction variety, creating few building standards to facilitate construction. The houses should be horizontally positioned, in low-cost real estate areas, with cheaper land purchase price.

Regarding finance to social housing, the creation and development of the IAPs played a key role in the process. These were the first major public institutions to tackle the housing issues [Bonduki, 1998, p.101]. The institutes had been created in the 1930s, either with the idea of providing full social security or as an instrument of capitalization, with no social ends. From 1933 on, several IAPs were created, such as the maritime (IAPM), the bank employees (IAPB), the commerce (IAPC), the industry (IAPI), the oil companies employees and vehicle drivers (IAPETEC) and the longshoremen (IAPE) [Bonduki, 1998, p.102]. Thus, each institute had its members and were important to the fundraising within the country's industrialization program, financing great constructions and national projects, such as the National Steel Mill Company (CSN - Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional), the National Motors Factory (Fábrica Nacional de Motores) and the construction of Brasília, capital of the country since 1960. The use of their resources for social housing was a major advance, made the construction of housing estates possible in several country regions.

In the midst of all these innovations, in a distant suburb, the Honório Gurgel IAPI Housing Estate was constructed. Different from others built in Rio de Janeiro that became famous for their pioneering spirit and size, this estate has a rather modest scale: 156 residential units, being 60 3-bedroom houses, with two floor plan models, and blocks of 3-story buildings, with shops on the ground floor.

Inaugurated in 1947, it was designed by architect Eduardo Pereira de Carvalho in collaboration with engin

eerAdolpho Constant Burnay, both in the IAPI's Engineering Department. Each unit had an area between 49 and 57 square meters, all with an external area – including the apartments. The urban equipment included a square and a shopping area on the ground floor of some buildings. The estate's total area was 40.882m², with 21.157,38m² of constructed area (Bonduki; Koury, vol.2, 2014).

LIFE IN THE HOUSING ESTATE, FROM 1947 TO PRESENT

As a part of the social housing program for the working class, which spread “modest and comfortable” proletarian homes, as classified by President Getúlio Vargas in a 1938 speech [Bonduki, 1998, p. 213], the Honório Gurgel IAPI Housing Estate had in its design a public school (never constructed) and a recreation center (no longer existing).

A central point in this study, the garden we referred to is a common public space entirely appropriated by the residents and it demonstrates their relationship with the district. It is important to note that, in this estate, the local community relationship is strong, since a great number of the residents come from the first families of dwellers, who acquired homes there and have been their owners for many years. It is important to highlight this, because we believe, it marks a profound difference between the low-income districts and the favelas – despite the similarities between them. With estimated population of 21.989 inhabitants (IBGE, 2010), Honório Gurgel has one of the lowest human development indexes (HDI) in the city, lower than in some favelas: 0,804 in 2000 (<http://portalgeo.rio.rj.gov.br>, 2015).

There is, however, an absolutely different organization in the district, in particular in this estate, which becomes quite evident as we approach the study field. The risk of favelization, it is worth noting, was what united the residents in the 1980s, when a wall was raised to separate the railroad from the street, giving place to an area around 250 meters long and less than 10 meters deep. Concerned with eventual illegal squatting to build houses or sheds, the residents pitched in to clean the area and plant baby trees, transforming it in a garden, as shown by Souza (2013).

To realize these initiatives, they organized through the Community Association and the Honório Gurgel Housewives' Association (ADCHG, in portuguese), created in 1985, by Zuleika de Souza. Thirty years later, the baby trees have grown up into tall shade trees and the estate has gained a green area hardly ever found in the city's low-income districts, where there are few vacant urban spaces as they have become more and more densely populated. In a sort of tacit agreement, which established the terms for use of that public space (Santos and Vogel, 1981), each resident who owns a house across from the garden is responsible for the conservation of the area in front of their homes. The community organization, which took over the space and the area, preventing squatting, protected the trees and kept the area clean and also prevented attempts of private use of the area.

The result of the strategy is that in the area there is only one commercial establishment – a bar named Beira da Linha (Railway's Edge). The other constructions are a covered area used as a party/meeting hall, called Década de 60 (The 60s), and two constructions proposed by the President of the Housewives' Association, at the street corner she lives at: a shrine in honor of Our Lady of Aparecida, built where once was a garbage container, and next to it, open-air, the Professor Darcy Ribeiro Cultural Space. Throughout the year, several activities are organized along the garden area, in a community events calendar that might have religious, civic or recreational nature.

Not being part of any public planning whatsoever, the garden along the wall, raised to separate the railroad from the street to meet a community demand, serves as a gathering space for residents around the social and cultural equipment they created themselves.



FIGURE 5 Inauguration of the shrine to honor Our Lady of Aparecida, in 1990, in a public-use area



FIGURE 6 Public square across from the Housing Estate main building in 2016

To this day, the area's original modernist urban design makes it different from the occupations that surround it, where there was no planning but spontaneous occupation. The breadth of the streets, the original partition pattern and the use of open space, although residual, result in quality of life not found in other districts of the region, where the spaces were not planned, the streets are narrow, there are few common-space areas, and partitioning of lots had little uniformity and excessive density.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since the families that moved into this IAPI were not coercively settled there by favela removal policies, as conducted in other housing estates built in subsequent decades in Rio de Janeiro, the hypothesis raised here is that the fact that most of its dwellers had their deeds of the property, which usually remains in the hands of the same families for many generations, is determinant to establish the emotional ties, partnership and solidarity among neighbors and towards the estate, which result in the care that can be observed in the common public spaces maintenance. It may have been so that these solidarity ties enabled, 40 years after inauguration, the conception and realization of a cooperative project to create and maintain the public space, whose vocation for common use was agreed on by the residents.

By the use they give to the estate today, over a half century after its inauguration, the dwellers seem to put in practice the modernist principles that inspired its architecture, and were explicated in Carlos Frederico Ferreira's speech, "the architect of IAPI": "(...) I did not only mean to create housing. To them, housing meant building a house, that 2-bedroom house, with a living room and that's all. Done, leave the rest for later! But not me. I wanted to make real housing, housing the way I thought it should be, with a school, apartment buildings with shops. I even planned a circus" (Bonduki, 1998, p. 228).

The vocation for integration is in the concept genesis of the housing estates of the 1940s and the one in Honório Gurgel seems to prove the success of the architect's formulation. Moreover, from the technical angle, this estate's history also reveals its construction's success:

The wealth of architectural and urban solutions provided by this small estate is exemplary of the IAPI's capacity to develop quality projects from a typology mix (Bonduki; Koury, 2014, p. 28)

When we discuss creating and maintaining public spaces as common areas, we must relate this fact to the importance of what owing a home represents, as examined above, no longer from the technical angle, but from the angle of the people who were benefited from this enterprise. Reading what Zuleika de Souza (2013) recounts in her book, one can learn that more than just a combination of bricks and cement, a house is part in the lives of people who, ultimately, create a district.

The action in public spaces transformed and maintained as common areas reinforces the strengthening of the local identity, through the creation and maintenance of the sociability, solidarity and reliability networks, made possible due to social relationships weaved over the years. The space reflects, then, important aspects about the Rio suburbs dweller, offering an interesting counterpoint that deserves reflection in the context of the whole city, where stigmas that hierarchize Rio residents, due to their addresses, still persist.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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- Figure 2: Author's collection
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