

Urban planning and politics

Contradictions, continuities and ruptures during the 1960s in Brazil

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Abstract

This paper aims to reflect on the relationship between urban planning and politics in Brazil from the 1930s through to the beginning of the 1970s. During this period, it is possible to observe a number of processes in the field of urban planning: a gradual, complementary link established between the field of knowledge and professional practice; an expansion of the area covered by studies, analyzes and proposals; and a link between plans, proposals and State actions. A number of different institutions were organized with the aim of elaborating, discussing and executing plans, and were central not only to the process of building and legitimizing different aspects of exercising the professions of the urbanist and the urban planner, but also for the diffusion of a new conception of plans and urban instruments. The period, with its political and economic determinations, was not homogeneous, and also presented significant differences, including periods with authoritarian and democratic governments, thereby rendering a strong impact on the political and intellectual environment, focusing on political structures and on political and civil rights. We therefore propose to address the slow institutional construction of formulating urban policy, the contradictions between a progress project and a new social order, and finally the ideological crisis of urban planning in the 1970s and the signs of its transformation.

Keywords

Urbanism, urban planning, politics, Brazil

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INTRODUCTION

When analyzing the field of urbanism and the activities of urban and regional planning during the extensive period between the 1930s through to the beginning of the 1970s, it may be observed that a number of processes took place: a gradual, complementary link was established between the field of knowledge and professional practice; an expansion of the area covered by studies, analyzes and proposals; and a link between plans, proposals and State actions.

Throughout both the states and municipalities, different institutions were organized with the aim of elaborating, discussing and executing plans, and were central not only to the process of building and to legitimizing different aspects of exercising the professions of the urbanist and urban planner, but also for the diffusion of a new conception of plans and urban instruments. They constituted a group of institutions that expanded during the 1950s and 1960s within a new institutional framework marked by industrialization and growing urbanization

The timeframe adopted, with its political and economic determinations, was not homogeneous and demonstrated significant differences during the period of the Getúlio Vargas government, between 1930 and 1937, and the brief democratic period between 1945 and 1964. The civil-military coup of 1964 initiated a period of profound political transformation, which became radicalized over a five-year period in a crescendo of intervention and violence, rendering a strong impact on both the political and intellectual environment, thereby affecting the political structures and political and civil rights.

URBANISM: THE GRADUAL, COMPLEMENTARY LINKS BETWEEN THE FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE.

In Brazil, teaching urbanism did not precede the practice of urban planning, but was rather a posteriori, with the clear aim of legitimizing it. It was made up of experiences gained from remodeling central areas, sanitation projects, opening and extending highways and from drawing up urban legislation.

From the beginning, links could be observed between the activities of educational institutions, public administration, and firms, in developing plans and projects for cities and carrying out work contracted both by the government and by national and foreign companies¹.

It is possible to observe the specificities that teaching urbanism has acquired within the different institutions, and which may be attributed to the technical, political and cultural environment into which education is inserted. This relationship was presented in a differentiated manner in cities throughout the twentieth century.

A contributing factor towards these processes was the growing consolidation of this field of study from being strongly rooted within educational institutions, thereby defining a space on

undergraduate and graduate courses, which was complemented by professional regulation. The slow incorporation of other fields of knowledge into engineering and architecture took on new forms during the late 1960s, with the creation of postgraduate courses in economic development and urban planning.

The specialization of teaching urbanism was accompanied by a more precise definition of professional regulation. The labor legislation, proposed and implemented by the Getúlio Vargas government, introduced a move for detailing and increasing the regulation of professional practice towards holders of university degrees.

Amongst the regulations, Federal Decree No. 23,569, on December 11, 1933², defined that the “design, direction and inspection of urbanism services” were the exclusive responsibility of a civil engineer, architect engineer and architect. In 1946³, the profession of urbanist became regulated and a specific training in urbanism was defined at a federal level.

It may be observed that an understanding was underway regarding the insertion of urbanism into the field of architecture. Some evidence appeared in the recommendations of international forums, such as the Pan American Congress of Architects. From the time of the second meeting, held in Santiago de Chile in 1923, there was much debate on expanding the field, with recommendations for teaching urbanism in architecture schools. When comparing the themes covered in the Pan American Congresses of Architects to those of the Ciam (International Congresses of Modern Architecture), Atique (2014, p. 12) observed the contrasts between the themes addressed and the adherence of problems in very different contexts⁴. At the seventh congress, held in Havana in 1950, the thesis of architecture and urbanism was proffered explicitly as a single discipline, in order to train urbanists and planners so that they were “capable of understanding the changes in scale between the building and the city”⁵ (ATIQUÉ, 2014, p. 12).

On another front, a movement for the autonomy of architecture in relation to engineering and the fine arts and defending the creation of independent courses also received support from the then recently founded regional departments of the Brazilian Institute of Architects (known in Brazil as IAB)⁶.

In São Paulo, a movement towards autonomy began in 1947, when the Faculdade de Arquitetura Mackenzie was created. One year later, at the Universidade de São Paulo, having broken away from the Escola Politécnica⁷, the Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo made a proposal to link the two degree courses: a five-year undergraduate course in architecture and a postgraduate course in urbanism, for those who had graduated in architecture or engineering, lasting two years⁸. The proposal at the Universidade de São Paulo to separate undergraduate courses in architecture and postgraduate studies in urbanism was a precedent that had been set by other Brazilian cities and by examples in the UK, US and Latin American cities⁹.

With a similar format, taught over two years and aimed at graduates in engineering or architecture, in 1948, lato sensu postgraduate courses in urbanism were created, with the objective of training technical staff at the Faculdade de Arquitetura at the Universidade de Minas Gerais¹⁰, in 1952, at the Faculdade de Arquitetura in Porto Alegre; and a year later at the Uni-

versidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro.

However, as Birkholz (1967) observed, there was a paradox between training received through postgraduate studies in urbanism and being attributed as a professional. This inconsistency may explain the short duration of some of these courses: restricted only to those with degrees in engineering and architecture, a specialization in urbanism did not add any professional advantage to the provisions of the decree.

When the Center for Urban Research (CPEU)¹¹ was created in 1955, it established a new perspective for the architecture course regarding the traditional manner in which urbanism had been taught in engineering schools, and aimed to conduct research, analysis and preliminary inquiries for executing partial or general urban planning; organize master plans for those municipalities that desired them; create plans and studies related to housing, land use, regulations and programs; enable students to practice and work on the architecture course and on the urbanism course at the faculty; and enable advertising, education and dissemination in order to facilitate the solution of urban problems¹².

The performance of the abovementioned center reveals how the activities in urban planning expanded, which until that moment had been greatly restricted to capital cities and to a few medium-sized cities. It confirmed the growing political importance of municipalities in the 1950s.

The CPEU was not an isolated experience in establishing links between teaching and technical assistance for municipalities. In 1962, Antonio Bezerra Baltar formed the Center for Urban and Regional Research (CEPUR) at the Faculdade de Arquitetura at the Universidade de Recife.

After redemocratization and the 1946 Constitution, the municipal mobilization through the Brazilian Association of Municipalities (ABM) gained visibility, which, at the II National Congress of Municipalities, in 1952, launched a manifesto addressed to the mayors and city councilors throughout the country, with a proposal to create a technical guidance agency, the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration (IBAM) (MELO, 1993). In response to the protagonism of the municipalities and demands for the urban modernization of Brazilian cities, training courses other than the traditional ones began to appear, provided by engineering and architecture courses. As an example, Melo (1993) cited the creation in 1952, of the Brazilian School of Public Administration (EBAP) at the Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), which received the support of the US technical cooperation program, Ponto IV within the scope of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

As a counterpoint, Melo (1993) continued, the research institutions created by the Economy and Humanism Movement¹³, led by the French Dominican priest Louis Joseph Lebret, was responsible for training researchers and political activists in the Catholic milieu¹⁴. The approximation of Lebret to politicians from the National Democratic Union made it possible to establish a support network for the ideas of Economics and Humanism. Lebret achieved in Brazil what he had not managed to achieve in France during the 1940s. His influence came through integrating the State apparatus, at a state level rather than a federal level, into teams formed by contact with the movement.

It may be observed, however, that the aspects analyzed by Melo (1993) were not isolated and were linked during this period, as demonstrated by Freitas in a chapter in this book, when analyzing the training of municipal technicians and autonomous professionals on the Methodology and Design Course of Municipal and Urban Development (CEMUAM), at IBAM.

PLANNING, INDUSTRY AND DEVELOPMENT

At the end of the Estado Novo, the activity of planning was expanded into other spheres of government, resulting from a combination of factors. The economic policies, initially formulated by Getúlio Vargas to sustain the country's industrialization cycle, were expanded and restructured during this new phase by taking on the issue of regional differences as a problem needing to be addressed by an agenda that associated planning and development with industrialization.

This trend corresponded to what Lafer (1972) denoted as a belief in the possibility of economic development in capitalist societies based on industrialization and which confers a central role onto the State, not only as a political agent, but also as an economic agent. An analysis of agreements, covenants and financial support signed by the Brazilian government during the period immediately after World War II enables the identification, albeit in a simplified manner, of new alignments both in foreign policy and in the scope of the federal government, which reveals the tensions in the international context of increasing political polarization.

In the political framework of multilateral relations, and as part of the political role assumed by the United States within the context of the Cold War, economic missions established diagnoses and recommendations that aimed to signpost the obstacles to development between regions. As Lafer (1972) observed, initial attempts at planning the economic system were only reports, such as the Simonsen Report (1944-1945), or diagnostics, such as those by the Cooke (1942-1943) and Abinck (1948) missions. Studies by the Brazil-USA Joint Commission, which operated between 1951 and 1953, were more ambitious and reveal the progressive cooperation between the two countries. The intention was to create conditions to attract public and private, national and foreign investments to the electric energy and transportation sectors, considered strategic for the economic development of Brazil.

The "Goals Plan", formulated and put into practice under Juscelino Kubitschek's government, is of a different nature when compared to the studies and reports of the previous period, both because of the complexity with which it was formulated and the impact it had in political and economic terms. It was the first plan to link private initiative with the State, which substantially increased its participation in investments. It was also the first to undertake a formal monitoring of the established goals, through a Development Council created in 1956.

Two concepts formulated by the Brazil-USA Joint Commission were taken up in the Goals Plan: the choke point and the germination point. In the Plan, the first concept not only reaffirmed the commission's conclusions in identifying sectors that constituted barriers to economic development, but also expanded economic policies in the sense of creating a more complex,

linked production and support chain for industry. The concept of the germination point, as opposed to that of choke, identified new potentialities, such as that called the goal synthesis - the construction of the new capital, Brasília, which was not initially part of the Plan. According to Lafer (1972), this goal, by proposing to construct highways integrating connections with the new capital, enabled the interior of the country to become developed¹⁵. According to Ribeiro and Piquet (2008), a worsening of regional inequalities was attributed to the results of the economic policies of the Goals Plan based on income-concentrating mechanisms - not only by social strata but also by regions - and which tended to benefit the Rio-São Paulo axis.

During this period, two distinct agendas were formulated: a planning concept aimed at focusing on regional inequalities and the link between a housing policy and an urban policy.

URBAN AND HOUSING POLICIES: THE SLOW INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRUCTION

A number of scholars have observed that the generalization of the urbanization process in Brazil, starting in the 1950s, when industrialization in cities became the center of the productive apparatus, was accompanied by a deepening of regional inequalities. An article by Francisco de Oliveira, published in 1982 by the journal *Espaço e Debates*, proposed a different interpretation for what was qualified as the urbanization process without industrialization, and the consequent swelling of cities. It was what he called the “autarchization of cities” (OLIVEIRA, 1982), in which industrialization needed to be entirely urban, without counting the previous existence of a network of productive units, and required a complex social division of labor within each industrial unit, resulting in urbanization rates far beyond those that would be required to fill jobs. A study by Paul Singer (1968) on economic development, viewed from the angle of the formation and growth of five Brazilian cities, corroborates Francisco de Oliveira’s thesis. The research covered a wide temporal arc beginning in the colonial period until the 1960s, when this process of urban growth became widespread across the country. A description of the attributes of the selected cities reveals the role of each during the research period and the importance attributed to the potential of economic development:

São Paulo, one of the two industrial metropolises in the country; Blumenau, representative of one of the economies of peasant origin in the South; Porto Alegre, the economy of which reflected the contradictions between the peasant structure in the north of Rio Grande and the landowning structure in the south; Belo Horizonte, a city built with deliberation and a certain amount of planning and with an economy that mirrored the agro-mining virtualities of central-eastern Brazil; Recife, the capital of the Northeast, a repository of both its problems and potential (SINGER, 1968, p. 17). The research highlighted the worsening of regional inequalities that took shape after the Second World War.

The formulation of an economic policy to deal with the issue of development in the immediate post-war period mobilized intellectuals, politicians and professionals from Latin America countries¹⁶. The belief in planning was linked to the perception that it would be possible to

avoid following the same path as the more advanced countries in which the development of urbanization had taken place in an undesirable manner, regulated only by the spontaneous forces of the market. In developing countries, on the other hand, “intelligent, cautious planning” could avoid the costs that developed countries had been discovering since the post-war period. The expectations could be summarized, as Gorelik (2005, p. 6) noted, to “merely reveal the problems and formulate questions, train the technicians and study the appropriate answers, to situate on this solid basis - scientific - the plans with which governments hoped to act”.

The deterioration of urban conditions and the housing crisis as a phenomenon that occurred similarly throughout the countries of Latin America mobilized intellectuals, urban planners and municipal technicians. In order to understand the significance of the simultaneity of the processes as a demographic, social and political problem, educational and research institutions along with forums for reflection and analysis were formed, with the virtuality to address an expanded reality. This involved forming a network of professionals and institutions to respond to certain expectations or, more promisingly, to formulate a new agenda so as to focus on transforming the problematic situations that were occurring within cities.

With the support of the OAS, two institutions based in Latin America countries stimulated the circulation of professionals and the organization of inter-American networks. These were the Centro Interamericano de Vivienda y Planeamiento (CINVA), created in 1951 at the Universidad Nacional de Bogotá, and the Sociedad Interamericana de Planificación (SIAP), created in 1956. CINVA brought together teaching, research and an exchange of professionals for developing the area of planning and housing assistance. It was responsible for addressing the issue of social housing in Latin America and for a postgraduate course on the subject (RESTREPO, 2003).

SIAP activities focused on topics related to planning and development. Congresses were held every two years in a Latin American city, and were important forums for debating topics of special interest in the urban and regional fields. As Gomes (2009, p. 8) observed, it was an important counterpoint “between what was disclosed about South American production in Europe and the USA, and what was actually discussed by local professionals in forums, congresses and journals, on the South American continent”.

In 1961, a technical mission from SIAP¹⁷ visited 54 centers in South American countries¹⁸. The report of this mission, “La enseñanza de la planificación en América Latina” (SIAP, 1961 apud BIRKHOLZ, 1967, p. 83), outlined a picture of growing specialization in planning aimed at architects, engineers, agronomists, economists, sociologists. In addition to post-graduate courses, they reported research and advisory activities for municipalities in the preparation of master plans.

In the professional context, aimed at technicians and municipal employees from Latin and Central American countries, the Seminario de Técnicos y Funcionarios en Planeamiento Urbano was held in Bogotá in 1958. The topics addressed reflected the issues faced by cities due to precarious housing conditions and an absence of public services. The conclusions of the seminar were gathered in a document signed by representatives from Latin and Central America, called “Carta de Los Andes”, addressed to “A los pueblos de América”.

It may be observed that, from the 1940s, an institutional framework for formulating urban and housing policies at a federal level began to be created in parallel, but showing signs that they were linked, thereby signaling an understanding for the need of a complementary approach.

Amongst the initiatives, we highlight the Primeiro Congresso Brasileiro de Urbanismo held at the Centro Carioca in Rio de Janeiro, from January 20 to 27, 1941, which shows the expansion of the forum of interested parties on issues related to urbanism in public departments as well as in civil society.

But it was during the brief government of President Jânio Quadros, in 1961, that the institutional framework began to be structured, and two institutions of very different natures were created: the National Service for Municipal Assistance (SENAM) and the National Planning Council for Popular Housing¹⁹. SENAM, as an advisory and consultancy sector on various topics of interest to the municipalities, established administrative contacts between the municipal authorities and departments of the federal executive branch.

Also, during the government of Jânio Quadros, a bill was drafted to create a Brazilian Housing Institute, with attributions that included the conduct of housing policy and leadership in urban matters. Its actions included both the financing and execution of urban works and regional development, as well as real estate investments linked to housing plans.

THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN A PROGRESS PROJECT AND A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

A series of events marked the period, beginning with the suicide of Getúlio Vargas, followed by an attempt by Marshal Lott to take over the presidency. Juscelino Kubistchek's government was relatively calm, but the new election in 1960, because of electoral rules that allowed independent and often opposing political factions, opened up the opportunity for new conflicts, both at a federal level, between Jânio Quadros and João Goulart, as well as across the states.

After Janio's resignation and the period of parliamentarianism was turned back, Jango assumed the presidency of the republic in a context of international political polarization and strong turbulence at home.

It was within this context of political forces being radicalized (the Cold War, US aid to Latin American countries and the Cuban Revolution) and the strengthening of conceptions of planning, democracy and social justice by more progressive segments, that João Goulart proposed basic reforms as a government plan.

Resonating this reformist climate, the SHRu (Seminário de Habitação e Reforma Urbana: o homem, sua casa, sua cidade)²⁰, in the second half of July 1963, in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, brought together representatives from government agencies, private and professional entities - mostly architects, sociologists, engineers, social workers, and journalists. It was promoted by the Instituto de Previdência e Assistência dos Servidores do Estado (IPASE) and the IAB regional departments of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

More detailed analyzes of the conclusions of SHRu demonstrate the importance of the event as a new level of possible convergences. Amongst the documents delivered to the participants²¹, in addition to the rules and conclusions of the working groups, there were also others, diverse in theme and provenance, but which, due to their unofficial character, provided an indication of the diversity of positions of the seminar participants.

Although with popular resonance, the housing issue lost priority to land reform during the presidential period of João Goulart.

POLITICAL CENTRALIZATION AND URBAN PLANNING AFTER THE 1964 CIVIL-MILITARY COUP

In 1964, the military coup that ousted President João Goulart became radicalized in the short space of five years. The publication of the five institutional acts, between 1964 and 1969, defined the dissolution of congress, the elimination of political parties and the imposition of indirect elections. They deprived civil and political rights by withdrawing the right to habeas corpus and approved the death penalty for a political crime of terrorism.

At the same time as the political rupture and the expulsion of professionals, politicians, technicians and intellectuals, prohibited from staying and taking part in the activities of the country, cracks in the process were gradually becoming apparent. These were manifested both in the permanence of previous forms of political and technical actions and in the emergence of forms of resistance that would gradually create tension and break the system.

The deposition of Jango Goulart radically interrupted the promising but conflicting process of formulating urban public policies supported by a new institutional framework that presented the potential for social transformation. Several political positions quickly emerged that had already been taking shape, albeit in an embryonic manner, during the previous period. Five months after the coup, under Law no. 4,380, in 1964, BNH and SERFHAU²² were created.

THE CRISIS OF URBAN PLANNING: SIGNS OF TRANSFORMATION

During the periods of authoritarian government, three processes - expansion of the professional field, expansion of the area of urban planning and the links between planning and State action - took place in an increasingly intense manner due to the political centralization, the expansion of the structure and the absence of instances of political representation and manifestation. The combination and intensification of these processes is one of the explanations for the acute ideological crisis of planning that took place during the 1970s, as well as for containing the signs of its transformation.

Is it possible to consider that continuities, contradictions and ruptures occurred on all sides during this period? And therefore, is it possible to consider the two authoritarian periods as being continuous, only interrupted by a brief democratic period, when ideals of political, social and urban reform erupted in proposals that were still embryonic?

Or conversely: it is possible to perceive continuities and advances between democratic periods and interruptions - and even ruptures - in a more fierce and forceful manner due to the

rise of authoritarian movements and the 1964 military-civil coup. Thus, if we were to examine this from a political viewpoint, the intensification of differences and contradictions, the restrictions on individual freedoms with imprisonment, exiles, premature retirements and the increasingly frequent use of various forms of violence such as arrests and torture, often resulting in deaths, may indicate that the conquests and advances in the democratic period were greater and therefore led conservative sectors to take increasingly harsher, more overpowering measures during the authoritarian period.

This is our hypothesis, stating that it is precisely this dialectical development that has enabled us to perceive these periods each as a separate unit, in continuities, contradictions and ruptures.

ENDNOTES

1. Urbanism plans and projects are briefly described in the source guide published in *Urbanismo no Brasil 1895-1965* (Coord Maria Cristina da Silva Leme, São Paulo Ed Nobel FUPAM, 1999).
2. Article 28, letter i, regulated the design, direction and inspection of urban planning services for engineering graduates and Article 30, letter c, for architectural engineering and architecture graduates.
3. Decree-Law no. 8620, in 1946. Regulates the professions of engineer, architect and surveyor, governed by Decree no. 23,569 / 1933.
4. *Atique* refers to the second meeting, when the problem of housing and buildings, in general, and of proletarian and economic houses, in particular, was included as an issue specific to American cities.
5. This and all other citations hereafter have been translated from Portuguese by the author.
6. This movement, started in the 1920s, took on a new format in 1936, with the creation of the first Brazilian Institute of Architects (IAB). In 1943 the IAB Regional Departments of Minas Gerais and São Paulo were created.
7. For a detailed description of this process, see Sylvia Fischer (2005).
8. This course did not materialise. Only the Urbanism course remained in the fourth and fifth years of the Architecture course. The teaching reform in 1962 changed the name of Urbanism to Planning I and Planning II, parts 1 and 2, for third, fourth and fifth-year students, according to Birkholz (1967 p. 218-259).
9. Birkholz presented a circumspect survey and described the two degree courses in architecture and postgraduate studies in urban planning. In the UK and the US, training took place through graduate school, while in Latin American countries such as Panama, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, training in urbanism was part of the curriculum on the Architecture course (BIRKHOLZ, 1967).
10. The first class of the course received the degree on December 12, 1951, with fourteen urban planners graduating (as described by Lima in a chapter in this book).
11. Law no. 3233, in 1955, defined the regulations of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, at the Universidade de São Paulo, which had been created in 1948 by Law no. 104.
12. Article 6 of Law no. 3233/55 defined the objectives of CPEU.
13. See Leme (2001) on the importance of the Economy and Humanism Movement and the actions of Lebrét in politicizing urbanism in Brazil.
14. The Centre Economie et Humanisme was formed by Lebrét on September 24, 1941, in France. In 1947, he came to Brazil with the aim of creating a center for researchers to study and train.
15. Jorge Henrique Hardoy (1972 apud GORELIK, 2005, p. 6) noted that some policies implemented during this period demonstrated a new Latin America, which detached itself and expanded its old frontiers and sought the expression of its modernization in the ideas of integration - which enabled the inclusion of policies from the Goals Plan in a broader aspect of changes in Latin American countries.
16. The creation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948 enabled new political action in Latin America. Within this political framework of multilateral relations, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), as a UN body for Latin America, proposed studies, plans, seminars and encouraged economic cooperation amongst its members. One of the theses supported by ECLAC was to defend industrialization as a way of overcoming the underdevelopment of countries.
17. The commission was formed by Cesar Garcéz V., José Vera L., Humberto J. Spinoza with Rafael Picó, John B. Brandford and Francis Violich acting as advisors (BIRKHOLZ, 1966, p. 81).

18. Birkholz (1967) highlighted the presence of planning institutions in the main cities
19. The conditions for building urban and housing policies are analyzed in the chapters by Farias and Feldman in this book.
20. The Housing and Urban Reform Seminar: man, his home, his city.
21. A set of various documents from the Seminar on Housing and Urban Reform, FAUUSP Archive.
22. The National Housing Bank and the Federal Service for Housing and Urbanism.

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