Disciplining society through the city

*The genesis of city planning in
Brazil and Argentina
(1894-1945)**

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Abstract

This paper looks at the genesis of a discourse on *urbanismo* (city planning) in Brazil and Argentina between 1894 and 1945 using the ideas of Michel Foucault on discipline and his concept of bio-power. The demographic pattern of the major cities in both countries from 1890 onwards and the renewals of the centres of these cities are also discussed. Other sections are dedicated to the plans proposed for the same cities in the 1920s and to urban representations, such as ideas about social reform, the role of hygiene as a point of departure for planning, and the relationship of ideas on Taylorism (scientific management) and the city. The paper also discusses the planners' opposition to elections, when they claimed that they were the only ones qualified to deal with urban problems and therefore they should be employed in the state apparatus.

Other concerns of the paper are the use of planning as an element of nation building and ideas defining eugenics (race betterment) as an important aspect of city planning. I conclude by arguing that, if implemented, city planning was a way of creating an industrial culture, disciplining society through the city, although the industrial proletariat has never made up the majority of the population in Brazil or Argentina. Even if many aspects of the plans proposed for both countries were not implemented, the discourse of planners can be seen as a will to discipline society through the city. This discipline would affect the freedom of movement of human bodies, and is therefore approached through Foucault's concepts of bio-power and discipline.

Keywords: cultural relations, international history Foucault, city planning, Latin America, Brazil, Argentina, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, São Paulo.

Resumen¹

Este artículo observa la génesis de un discurso sobre el urbanismo (planeación de la ciudad) en Brasil y Argentina entre 1894 y 1945 utilizando las ideas de Michel Foucault sobre la disciplina y su concepto del bio-poder. Son discutidas el patrón demográfico de las grandes ciudades en ambos países de 1890 en adelante y también las renovaciones de los centros de estas ciudades. Se dedican otras secciones a los planes propuestos para las mismas ciudades en los años de 1920 en adelante y a las representaciones urbanas, tales como las ideas sobre la reforma social, el rol de la higiene como un punto de partida para la planeación, y la relación de ideas del Taylorismo (dirección científica) y la ciudad. El artículo también discute la oposición

1. Traducción Elías Huamán

* For a more developed analysis of the movement for the genesis of city planning as a new profession and knowledge in Brazil and Argentina in the first half of the twentieth century see Outtes (1993). The author thanks Christian Topalov for the supervision of that thesis, and Colin Clarke, Mariano Plotkin, Nancy Leys Stepan, Mark Whitaker and Leslie Bethell for a previous reading of this paper. The author also wants to thank Claudio Lomnitz and the graduate students in Latin American History at the University of Chicago; Peter Marcuse and the Graduate students in Urban Planning at Columbia University; Odete Seabra, Heinz Determan, Amélia Damiani and Ana Fani Alessandri Carlos at the Laboratory of Urban Geography at the Universidade de São Paulo; and Luiz de la Mora, Ciro Monteiro and the students in the Program in Urban and Regional Development at the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, where this paper was discussed. This paper was also presented as a special lecture at the 7th Annual Meeting of Finnish Latin Americanists in Helsinki, May 22, 2003. For a detailed and complete analysis of city planning as a new profession and knowledge in Brazil only see Outtes (1999). I thank David Harvey and Colin Clarke for the supervision of this last thesis. All translations from Spanish or Portuguese were mine. I did use gendered language in reference to authors in accordance with their gender. This means that every time the masculine pronoun is used it refers to male whereas, every time the feminine pronoun is used it refers to a female author.

ción de los planificadores a las elecciones, cuando ellos exigieron que fueran los únicos calificados para tratar con los problemas urbanos y, por consiguiente, ellos deberían ser empleados en el aparato estatal

Otras preocupaciones del artículo son el uso de la planeación como un elemento de la construcción de nación y las ideas que definen las eugenesias (mejora de la raza) como un aspecto importante de planeación de la ciudad. Se concluye que si se llevó a cabo la planeación de la ciudad, fue una manera de crear una cultura industrial, disciplinando a la sociedad a través de la ciudad, no obstante el proletariado industrial nunca ha constituido la mayoría de la población en Brasil o Argentina. Aún cuando muchos aspectos propuestos por los planes para ambos países no se llevaron a cabo el discurso de los planificadores puede ser visto como una disciplina impuesta a la sociedad a través de la ciudad. Esta disciplina afectaría la libertad de movimiento de los cuerpos humanos, y por consiguiente estaría próxima a los conceptos Foucaultianos del bio-poder y la disciplina.

Palabras clave: relaciones culturales historia internacional, Foucault planeación de la ciudad, Latinoamérica, Brasil, Argentina, Río de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, São Paulo.

Introduction

In Brazil, the rise of city planning took place in the same period in which government began to intervene in social questions through the creation of labour legislation and welfare policies. According to Foucault, knowledge, discourse and power are strongly associated (Foucault, 1977:4-5). Foucault's thought contains features that could be applied to or developed for the history of city planning. According to Foucault there is no truth in any discourse. There are what he called effects of truth (results) produced within the discourses that are neither true nor false (Foucault, 1968; Foucault, 1977). In the case of city planning, the creation of institutions such as City Plan Commissions or Boards charged with planning and controlling urban growth inside

the state apparatus can be seen as these effects of truth. There were changes from the turn of the century to the 1920s in the South American planning movement. In just a few years the concept of planning expanded from isolated interventions in specific parts of the urban territory to the planning of the city as a whole and the control of urban growth. Instead of repairing what had developed in an unsuitable way, there appeared the idea of creating rules to force things to happen in a pre-defined way

Foucault criticised some traditional interpretations of power either because they were centred on the question of sovereignty or in juridical aspects, or because power was analysed from the Marxist viewpoint in terms of the state apparatus. The problem of how power was exercised in concrete terms, in its details, with its specific

ity, its techniques and tactics, was not taken into consideration in previous explanations. It is from this consideration that Foucault develops his concept of bio-power, a concept of power related to concrete constraints over aspects of the human body such as movement, freedom to come and go, health, youth, age sexuality and so on. This concept at least partly explains his interest in themes such as prisons, hospitals, asylums, and work-houses where such an idea could be checked, observed and measured.

On the other hand, the use of this concept just for the analysis of relationships within these kind of institutions shows the weakness and limitation of such a proposal. The question that remains from the perception of this limitation is whether or how far this kind of approach could be used for the analysis of city planning. In fact, city planning decisions have a direct impact on the human body. The closure of certain areas for certain activities, for instance, is a limitation on the freedom of movement. A decision of such a type is an infinitely small level of restriction on the body, being therefore a kind of bio-power. In other words, zoning decisions, such as restricted use of areas, prohibition of parking in certain streets allocation of parts of a waterfront for discharge of freight from ships instead of swimming—all have an effect on individual freedom. If a prison is the place in which freedom is completely suppressed, a restrictive zone is a place in which freedom is slightly diminished.

Foucault states that if power was just repressive, if it just said 'no' every time, it would not be obeyed. He says that what maintains power and makes it acceptable is the fact that it produces

things, induces pleasures, shapes knowledge and produces discourses. It should be considered as a productive network that crosses the whole social body rather than a negative instance that has repression as its function. According to Foucault, repression is more costly and less effective than implementing technologies for inducing behaviour. Even if he does not give any statistical or quantitative evidence of that, for which he has been criticised more than once, especially by historians,² some suggestions are given that are appropriate for city planning. The implementation of city planning is an acceptable form of power which produces things and shapes knowledge. The whole set of city planning texts and techniques is proof of that. I will develop these ideas for the case of Brazilian city planning starting with the following quotation:

*Urbanising is facilitating, disciplining, embellishing, giving man the elements of a life that distinguishes him more and more from the initial inferior eras of the human community. The urbanisation of the city will give the town hall the means for raising the standard of life of the people, building houses and protecting the city from shameful slums (Campello, 1938: 3).*³

2. For a critique of Foucault's work by a historian see Poster (1982) and Léonard (1980). For a discussion of Foucault and the French historians see Foucault (1980a). For a brilliant response to Léonard's critique see Foucault (1980b). Other references of relevance for this piece include Driver (1994); Eley & Kield (1995); Nozick (1994) and Palmer (1990).

3. Urbanising here is used in the sense of intervening in the city to improve its general conditions.

With these words, José Campelo, journalist and member of the City Plan Commission of Recife, celebrated the delivery of a plan for renewing the centre of this Brazilian city in 1938. The ideas in his speech do not belong just to him. Let us take another example. Another social reformer, another city, another date: Marcelo Mendonça, engineer and one of the founders of the *Instituto Central de Arquitetos* in Rio de Janeiro, presenting a paper in São Paulo at the *Primeiro Congresso de Habitação* in 1931, thought the same:

Visiting the slums of the Federal Capital is sufficient to give a clear view of this problem. From them, one can say, come all moral and material miseries and all vices. In the slums there is tuberculosis and alcoholism. Low instincts are developed there. Fighting against slums is taking part in a battle for raising morality and improving the physical health of the race. This milieu is usually occupied by the working class, the class that especially needs more moral and physical hygiene. In this repulsive environment, the worker constitutes his family and establishes his home. If his home is in this condition, nothing is more desirable than escaping to forget and looking for entertainment in the bar; he goes more and more, giving himself over to vices like gambling and drinking. Back at his house, he finds a repulsive home that frequently makes him think that he is excluded from society. From this, envy comes and hate grows against those he thinks responsible for his misery. This environment has disastrous consequences for childhood. Children live mixed without distinction of sex and adopt the worst behaviour, which they bring to school and the workplace. They become vagabonds, because they prefer the street where they can take breath

and spend most of their time there rather than in their repulsive room. The girls in this environment lose all notions of honour and dignity. In short, the slums are the direct causes of the working class's lack of organisation; they are an absolute obstacle to the physical and moral uplifting of the working class. They must be demolished (Mendonça, 1931: 141).

This view of urban problems through the eyes of two professionals deeply involved in the genesis of the South American city planning movement is striking for prejudice and fear of the crowd. This essay explores the genesis of a discourse on city planning, placing it in the heart of its contemporary cultural landscape. In order to do so, an overview of urban growth, changes in the cities and the intellectual conjuncture of the period, are explored.

The Growth of Cities

From the late nineteenth century, South American cities experienced great demographic growth. Rio de Janeiro doubled its population in 16 years, with a growth of more than a quarter of a million inhabitants between 1890 and 1906. Buenos Aires experienced the same process, with its population growing two-fold-a increment of half a million inhabitants (543,360). São Paulo witnessed a similar process. Its population rose by almost four-and-a-half times in seventeen years, between 1890-1907. This meant an increase of almost a quarter-of-a-million people living in its territory, working in its economy, living in its dwellings, and producing its wealth, with part of it subjected to poverty

Recife in Brazil and Rosario in Argentina, cities less important than those aforementioned, also recorded undeniable demographic growth. Cities of a similar size, both with around 100,000 inhabitants at the turn of the century, they experienced comparable demographic curves, at least between 1900 and 1920. Recife doubled its population in that period, when it surpassed 200,000 inhabitants. Rosario doubled in size within ten years (1900-1910). When Recife reached 233,000 inhabitants in 1920, the population of Rosario remained larger, with a quarter-of-a-million inhabitants. Even with a reduction of its rate of growth from 100% between 1900-1910 to 25% in the following decade, that signified a considerable increase.

If one continues by comparing the three metropolises-Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Buenos Aires-after 1906, the rate of demographic growth is still high. Between 1906 and 1920, Rio, which grew less than Buenos Aires, had an increase of 42.5%. The population of Buenos Aires, slightly smaller than that of Rio in 1890, surpassed it by

20% in 1906, with a total of more than one million inhabitants, and has remained larger than that of Rio since then. In 1920, the so-called "Paris of South America" had a population growth of more than half a-million. That meant that almost 700,000 additional inhabitants lived in Buenos Aires three times the size of the second-ranking Argentinean city in that period - Rosario. Thereafter, Rio underwent a population growth of 65% between 1920 and 1928, incorporating more than three quarters of a million people into its space. That meant that in just eight years it absorbed a number of inhabitants almost equivalent to the population of the second largest Brazilian city at that time, São Paulo itself not a small city anymore, with a population of more than 800,000. Between 1905 and 1930, São Paulo tripled its population, adding more than half a million inhabitants and growing from 279,000 to 822,400. In the same period, the Argentine capital, which grew less rapidly than these two Brazilian cities, doubled its population again, adding almost 1,200,000 more inhabitants.

Table 1. Population of the major cities in Brazil and Argentina 1890-1928 (x 1.000 inhabitants.)

City/Year	1890	1893	1900	1906	1910	1914	1920	1928
Buenos Aires (2-4)	520	678 (4)		1063		1577 (3-4)	1738	2230
Recife (1, 5)	112 (1)		100/113 (5)				233/239 (5)	346
Rio de Janeiro (1, 6)	523		(688)	811			1158	
Rosario (4, 7)		92	100		200	223	250	
São Paulo (1)	65		240	279			579	822,4

(1) Interpolation. Cities: Buenos Aires, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Rosario & São Paulo.
Sources: 01) Connell, Hendrix & Nohlgren, 1971; 02) Bourdieu, 1977; 03) Walter, 1982; 04) Laks, 1971; 05) Baltar, 1951; 06) Agache, 1929; 07) Prestes Maia, 1930.

The Renewal of Central Districts

The enormous demographic growth experienced in South America created an overburdening of services. The city centre, a place where the industry, commerce and consequently the jobs were located, received a significant part of this population increase. Densification of the urban core originated mainly from the wish of the population to live in the centre, close to jobs (Sargent, 1974:29). Such concentration of population created a deterioration in the housing stock and urban conditions as a whole. The unemployed and the most dispossessed fractions of the working class found two ways of housing themselves. First there were the *cortiços* or *casas de cômodos* in Brazil or *conventillos* in Argentina, a kind of housing consisting of former upper middle class houses with many overcrowded rooms. A further possible variation of the *cortico* were various houses assembled in a quadrangle built on the same plot. The second alternative comprised the *mocambos* (shacks) and *favelas* (slum settlements), self-constructed, ephemeral, insalubrious houses built either with natural materials such as sand, coconut leaves, with bits of traditional materials such as bricks and tiles or a mix of all this. These houses were built on plots not belonging to the dwellers themselves and often in places where it was difficult to implement urban services and infrastructure, for example, hills and marshlands.⁴

4. For a description of the favelas and mocambos see Maranhão Filho (1939).

When the economy reached a certain stage of development, the question of circulation was raised. The urban structure became an obstacle to economic development. In South America, in order to speed up the circulation of people and commodities through the transport system as well as for public health reasons, the state intervened in the cities. This intervention was characterised by the renewal of central districts in the largest cities. In Rio there was a renowned renewal of the city centre, undertaken during the administration of the engineer Pereira Passos (a Tropical Haussmann according to the diplomat Barão do Rio Branco) during his tenure of mayor (1902-1906)⁵ (Benichmol, 1982). This renewal was characterised by the demolition of Senado Hill as well as many buildings, including *cortiços*, which was essential for opening avenues (Abreu, 1988:63). This was accompanied by huge sanitation works carried out under the direction of the hygienist Oswaldo Cruz, which resulted in a significant reduction of mortality due to contagious illness for certain social groups, especially yellow fever for the European population (Bodstein, 1986)⁶.

5. The renewal was based on a plan proposed by a committee in the 1870s, of which Passos was a member. For the reports of this committee see Comissão de Melhoramentos da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Jardim, J. R. de M. & Silva, M. R. da, 1875 and Comissão de Melhoramentos da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Jardim, J. R. de M. & Silva, M. R. da, 1876. The two reports provoked a debate with engineer Vera Souto. For his comments see Souto (1875) & Souto (1876). For a study of the plan in the context of the period in which it was proposed see Santos (1993).

6. Other pieces dealing with the reform during Passos' period include Barbosa (1990), Carvaiho (1984, 1988); Kesse (1983); Needell (1983, 1987-1995); Mezde (1997); Pechmann (1983); Pechmann & Fritsch (1985) & Pereira (1992).

Evidence that circulation was fundamental during that period is the fact that the port was also reformed and enlarged, southern districts like Copacabana and Jardim Botânico were linked with the centre through the construction of the Leme Tunnel, inaugurated in 1906, and technological changes took place in the system of public transport with the replacement of animals by electrical power through the electrification of many tramways companies such as *Companhia Jardim Botânico* in 1904 and the companies *São Cristovão*, *Carris Urbanos* and *Villa Isabel* in 1905. These three companies were united under the Canadian enterprise which held the concession for the supply of electricity to the city, the *Rio de Janeiro Tramways, Light and Power Company Limited* (Abreu, 1988:63, 66-67).⁷

São Paulo also underwent public works. During the administration of the mayor Antonio Prado (1899-1911), Angélica Avenue was opened, among others, and the transport system was technologically improved, becoming electrified. During the administration of Raimundo Duprat (1911-1914), other streets were enlarged, such as Libero Badaró and Boa Vista, as well as squares like Praça da Sé and Praça de São Francisco. At that time, Santa Efigênia flyover was constructed alongside the enlargement of São João Avenue to permit the construction of a ring road (Osello, 1983: 82). These improvements were part of partial projects proposed alongside a debate on the organisation of the city centre held between 1906 and 1911 in São Paulo. The point of departure for this discussion

7. For a study on that company see McDowall (1988).

was the construction of the *Teatro Municipal* (1903-1911), an eclectic building designed by the architect Ramos de Azevedo and a symbol of the European modernity implemented by the governmental élite. The construction of the theatre beside the Anhangabahú Valley, where an infected stream received the sewage of a slaughterhouse, but where there were still rural features such as vegetable and tea plantations originated a series of proposals for the embellishment of the valley and its landscape (Simões, 1990:79-80). The first of these proposals was presented to the city council by the ex-Director of Public Works of Rio, Augusto Carlos da Silva Telles, who became city councillor in São Paulo. It was characterised by aesthetic preoccupations, and the wish to solve circulation problems related to the narrowness of Libero Badaró street, and was forwarded for analysis by the committee of works, justice and finances of the council (Simões, 1990:80-83).

The proposal was forgotten for a year-and-a-half despite the support of other councillors, when it was re-adopted by Silva Telles in 1908, presented as a bill and studied by engineers Victor da Silva Freire and Eugênio Guillem, Director and Vice-Director of the *Direção de Obras Municipais* respectively (Simões, 1990:84-86). The project received amendments in the commissions of the council and became a law in which the ideas of Telles were simplified for financial reasons because of expropriations and private interest, losing its aesthetic ideals and becoming merely an answer to traffic problems.⁸ With the

8. Law 1,3331 of June 6 1910, cf. Simões (1990): 88-93.

passing of the bill, the council negotiated with the state government to get support for the improvements and to be included in its budget for 1911 (Simões, 1990:92). At the same time, the provincial government promoted another project for the city centre designed by architect Samuel Augusto das Neves from the *Secretaria de Agricultura, Comercio and Obras Publicas*, which was published in the newspaper *Correio Paulistano*. This project answered the interests of landowners in the region and was probably designed in accordance with them, permitting the reconstruction of their buildings in Libero Badaró street in exchange for the donation of land for its extension and alignment with other streets (Simões, 1990: 98-99).

Neves' project proposed a large Haussmann-like boulevard at Anhangabahú Valley, in opposition to the ideas put forward by Victor da Silva Freire and Eugênio Guillem, which were close to the ideas of Camilo Sitte (1843-1903) in his book *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen grundsätzen*, which valued the conservation of the existing spontaneous design instead of straight boulevards. More than just a confrontation between state and municipal administrations, the two proposals led to a debate that had as its most important moment the lecture given by the engineer Victor da Silva Freire at the *Escola Polytechnica* after an invitation from its association of students. Published in the *Revista Polytechnica*, the technical and scientific magazine of the students association, that lecture is considered one of the founding texts of Brazilian city planning, at least in São Paulo (Freire, 1911).

Remarkable for its reference to developments in city planning on an international level-includ-

ing teaching-this lecture mentioned foreign planners like Charles Bull, Baumeister, Hénard, Charles Mulford Robinson, and last but not least Camilo Sitte, his main source of inspiration. On that occasion, Victor da Silva Freire used foreign experience to make an important point: instead of the adoption of partial projects such as those being discussed, a *plano geral* (general plan) needed to be drawn up for the whole city (Freire, 1911: 101 & 110). A few months after Victor Freire's lecture, the mayor engaged the French landscape architect Joseph Antoine André Bouvard to analyse the concurrent projects. In his report, Bouvard proposed a conciliatory solution, adopting ideas contained in both proposals and sharing the execution of his project between the authors of the previous schemes. The urban project was to be undertaken by municipal engineers, while the buildings would be designed by the architectural office of Samuel das Neves. These proposals were finally executed in the city centre of São Paulo during the period when Raimundo Duprat was mayor (Osello, 1983: 60-63 & Simões, 1990: 116-126).

Recife also faced a similar process. One of the city's central districts was renewed, with the improvement of its traffic conditions through the reform of its port between 1909 and 1913. This project was also undertaken for public health reasons. In fact, a sewerage and water supply project was proposed by the sanitary engineer Francisco Saturnino de Brito and executed between 1909 and 1917.⁹ The period was

9. For the renewal of the port and the district see Lubambo (1988). For the sanitation project see Brito (1917).

also one of significant changes in urban circulation. The tramways of companies such as the *Recife Street Car Company*, which were originally drawn by animal traction, became electrified in 1914, slightly later than in the other large cities, when the concession for this service was taken over by the *Pernambuco Tramways, Light and Power Limited*, a company owned by English shareholders, which had acquired the concession to supply electricity to the city.¹⁰

On the other side of Paran River, in Argentina, similar developments took place in the capital city. Earlier than in Brazilian cities, and after the approval of a project by the city council in 1889 during the administration of mayor Torcuato de Alvear (1880-1887), the opening of Avenida de Mayo was implemented (Bragos, 1991: 8; Hardoy, 1955: 105), linking the Plaza de Mayo, where the *Casa Rosada*, the presidential palace lies, to Plaza Lorea, where the National Parliament building was constructed and inaugurated in 1906 (formerly it was located at Plaza de Mayo) (Scobie, 1974: 109-113). The Avenida de Mayo was inaugurated in 1894 and completed in 1896 (Hardoy, 1955: 100). Buenos Aires had a project drawn up by Bouvard as well. In 1906, before his trip to São Paulo, Bouvard was engaged in this task when a committee was appointed to work with him.¹¹ The French planner also drew a plan for Rosario (San Vicente, 1986).

10. For the history of the animal traction tramway and its influence in the development of the city and vice-versa see Zaidan (1991). For data on the electric tramways see Mota (1985).

11. This commission was composed of the French landscape architect Carlos Thays, Director of the *Servicio de Parques y*

As in São Paulo some years later, Bouvard's project for Buenos Aires reconciled previous studies proposed by local professionals. In the early twentieth century, a debate took place, related to the celebration of the centenary of Argentina's independence, regarding the physical transformation of the capital. On one hand there were the defenders of perpendicular avenues following the iron grid design, characteristic of Hispanic American colonisation, which already existed in the city. On the other hand stood the defenders of diagonal avenues as a solution for circulation problems. This debate took place in the national parliament in 1905. The project of perpendicular avenues was defended by deputies Eugenio Badar and Canton, while the project of orthogonal roads was supported by three deputies —Miguel Desplat (author of a work on urban improvements in 1906) (Desplat, 1906), Varela and Prez (Novick, 1990: 4).

Other proposals were presented during this debate. A third project was designed in 1906 by the architect Henrique Chanourdie, director of *Arquitectura*, the journal of the *Sociedad Central de Arquitectos* (Chanourdie, 1906-1907). This was the range of planning ideas when Carlos Torcuato de Alvear, mayor of Buenos Aires (1907-1909), invited Bouvard to draw up a project for the city. The parliamentary debate ended in 1912, with the promulgation of expropriation laws to open two diagonal avenues departing

Paseos de Buenos Aires, of the engineer Carlos Mara Molares of the city councillor Fernando Prez, member of the *Comisin de Avenidas* and of the Director of the *Comisin Nacional de Obras Pblicas Higiene y Seguridad Social*, the engineer Anastsio Iturbe, cf. Novick (1990:5).

from the Plaza de Mayo as well as a large north-south avenue. One year before, a building code had been approved with control of the regularity of façades as its main goal.¹² Despite their diversity and wealth, all these projects proposed in both countries were characterised by a partial and fragmentary approach to planning, never taking into account the whole urban territory as a unit for intervention.

The Genesis of City Planning

During the first two decades of the twentieth century the idea of city planning, defined as a project taking the whole city as a site of intervention, was established in both Brazil and Argentina. In Argentina, in 1906, the architect Christophersen claimed the need to elaborate a plan for Buenos Aires, and in Brazil, the engineer and architect Victor da Silva Freire, when invited by students of *Escola Polytechnica* to give a lecture in 1911 on two concurrent partial projects proposed for the centre of São Paulo, talked about the same need. In 1917, Saturnino de Brito, a sanitary engineer engaged in the planning and construction of Recife's water supply and sewerage systems, echoed the same idea.

In both countries, the 1920s signalled the birth of the first modern plans proposed for their cities. In 1923, a committee was created in Buenos Aires, the *Comisión de Estética Edilicia*, charged with proposing a city plan and in Rio de Janeiro, Alfred Agache, a French city planner was

appointed for the same purpose four years later (Agache, 1930). The same year the State Parliament of Pernambuco voted in a law entitling the governor to employ Agache to draw up a plan for the capital, Recife (Ottles 1997: 67-70). In 1929 the engineer Prestes Maia was also working on the so-called Plan of Avenues for São Paulo (Maia, 1930).¹³ These cities, despite differences of population, had the same preoccupation in the same period: planning their growth and controlling their expansion. This new attitude proved a turning point in the paradigm of thinking about, and intervening in, cities. It was no longer merely a question of opening new avenues to improve the circulation of traffic or renewing slum infested city centres as in previous cases.

Within the 23 years separating the claims of Christophersen and the publication of Agache's plan, city planning was born in Brazil and Argentina, changing practice in this field in just a few years. New procedures were created in this practice. Gathering detailed knowledge of urban conditions before planning became a novel preoccupation, from which originated surveys of demographic growth, public health and past epidemics, systems of transport, the municipal budget and the life story of the city. New institutions were proposed to monitor and guarantee the implementation of the plans. After being approved, the plans always resulted in a law establishing new, more complex and restrictive building codes.

13. Maia discussed the implementation of his plan during his term as mayor (1938-1945); in Maia (1941, 1945). The growing literature on Maia includes Anonymous (1996) Campos (1996) Nunes (1996), Ponle (1996), Toledo (1996) & Zmitrowicz (1996).

The implementation of the plans and the institutionalisation of city planning as an autonomous discipline took place in both countries under interventionist and anti-liberal political regimes, such as the Vargas years in Brazil (1930-1945), especially the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* (New State) (1937-1945); and in Argentina under the military governments of General José F. Uriburu (1930-1932) and presidents Augustín P. Justo (1932-1938), Roberto M. Ortiz (1938-1940) and Ramon S. Castillo (1940-1942) (Scobie, 1971:260-261). Under these governments some of Agache's proposals for Rio de Janeiro were implemented and the *Plano de Avenidas* (Plan of Avenues) in São Paulo was executed, as well as part of the proposals contained in Nestor de Figueiredo's plan for Recife. In Buenos Aires the *Oficina del Plan de Urbanización* (Urbanisation Plan Office) was created in 1932, followed by a plan proposed in 1935 by the German city planner Werner Hegemann and the Argentines Kalnay and Carlos María della Paolera.

On the one hand, there was a new practice related to urban management. On the other, there was the birth of a new kind of knowledge: urbanism or what was called 'the science of city planning'. This so-called 'new science' implied the creation of new producers of this knowledge, new intellectuals and professionals, the city planners. Such knowledge was institutionalised, becoming an autonomous profession through the teaching of city planning in the universities. In 1929, the first professorship in city planning was created in Argentina at the *Facultad de Ciencias Físicas y Naturales* of the

Universidad de Rosario, when della Paolera was appointed to the post. In Brazil, lectures on city planning were instituted in São Paulo in 1923 at Mackenzie College and in 1926 at the *Escola Polytechnica*, (Ficher, 1989:1:230), in Rio de Janeiro at the *Universidade do Distrito Federal* in 1935 and in Recife at the *Escola de Belas Artes* in the following year.

The proposal of plans for the whole city signalling a new spatial dimension for solving urban problems, was followed by a new rationale. This rationale included features such as Taylorism, technical rationalism and the re-creation of the city as a mirror of the factory reflecting its functional logic, even if these countries had agricultural rather than industrial economies, for the majority of the population was living in rural areas, in spite of the Argentine concentration of population in Buenos Aires. From the 1920s to the 1940s there was a change in the representations of the city. Following the discourse of city planners, technical rationalism and scientific logic should regulate the attitudes and behaviour of society through the city. Engineering, a technical profession *par excellence*, took over important posts in the municipal administration. A significant number of the mayors in the most important Brazilian cities had engineering degrees during the years 1930-1945. The hegemony of technoscience resulted in the idea that city planning was scientific and according to the planners it was considered of general interest to the whole society. The discourse of engineers and city planners included the idea that representative institutions, typical of democratic societies, were not efficient. In their view, politics was in opposition to the

12. The laws for opening the avenues had the numbers 8854 and 8.855, cf. Novick, A. (1990: 4-5).

needs of the modern city. This authoritarianism became a reality, at least at the municipal level, under the interventionist and anti-liberal governments of the 1930s and 1940s.

The movement for urban and housing reform was part of a larger one: the movement for social reform. In this sense, city planners, doctors, engineers, lawyers, mayors and activists in the housing movement must be seen as social reformers. Before the institutionalisation of city planning and the adoption of housing policy by the state, these social reformers frequented organisations such as professional associations, philanthropic entities, charity societies, anti-alcohol leagues, clubs of engineers, institutes of architects and medical federations. In these spaces, the reform ideal appeared, was debated and developed. The language and the discourse of the new knowledge was forged in these institutions, where professional competencies were also legitimated.

The discourse of city planners in this period included a project for disciplining society through the city. This project was invested with the current ideas in the cultural landscape of the period, such as positivism, social hygiene and eugenics. As the aim therein was to modify the daily behaviour and attitudes of the population through the induction of certain rules and patterns, it can be seen as a disciplinary practice similar in some respects to imprisonment as analysed by Foucault (Foucault, 1975a).

Urban Representations

The discourse of the city planners produced a portrait of the city, society and political power. A

coherent line of thought was constructed in the mind of the professionals, who invented a social question that arose in the cities and built a representation of daily life called "urban problems". Like every line, this one was an ensemble of points very closely linked in order to be visible. The point of departure was housing. In the view of the planners, the dwellings in which the poor or even the working class lived were dirty and dangerous. If the house was seen as unhealthy, undesirable, unsuitable, how would those who looked at it this way look at the ensemble, the city? Did those who viewed the house as unsanitary view the city as healthy, clean, beautiful? The picture of the city they give is dual: one in colour, the other, black and white—both developed on the same aged, distressed and dirty photographic paper. On one hand, the exuberance of nature—its light and the tonalities of rainbows—appears in the colour pictures:

The Brazilian cities, with their funny avenues, their expressive mountains, their seductive beaches, their picturesque palaces, their clear and blue sky, have something magnetic, fascinating and absorbing which makes one drunk and enchanted when one sees them for the first time (Oliveira, 1940a:187).

This is not the entire picture of the city. The light is turned off, the colours are erased, and even the magnetism, the fascination, the wonder and the pleasure of drunkenness is transformed into repulsion, distance and depression when the same photographer turns the face of the same paper to show a black and white picture:

Unhappily, there is also, as in cities of other countries, the other side of the coin, the opposite of the beauty, the shadow of the magnificent painting. In the Brazilian cities, there is also, as in cities of other countries, ensembles of slums, blighted areas and all kinds of miserable dwellings (Oliveira, 1940a:187).

From many pictures like this, a panorama is built establishing a link, a sequence and a coherence between each slide. This link is the determining effect of the environment on man, woman, family and society. The environment was thought to influence man and determine his behaviour, but this same environment could be transformed by man, changing the preconditions of its influence. Such a reflection is found in the minds of South American planners:

The main goal of city planning is salubrious housing, hygienic working places, airy entertainment houses and aesthetic taste for the happiness of man. Public power shall provide large free spaces, for the practice of sports, gardening and leisure for the poor, because it has been proved through statistics that where there are parks, swimming pools, squares, playgrounds, health and hygiene are improved so that morals are changed and child delinquency diminishes in a notable way (Prado, 1941:42).¹⁴

Social Reform

Despite determining physical and moral behaviour, the environment could itself be changed,

14. For another statement of a very similar content see Estelita (1935).

transformed, and reshaped; if decadence takes place, there is at least a hope of improvement, and this improvement can take place just through a change in the living conditions of the people, re-education of the poor, and a social reform. This solution to the social question was proposed on both sides of the rivers Plate and Paraná. The deputy Juan Cafferata, delegate of the municipality of Córdoba (Argentina) at the *Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de la Vivienda Popular* (First Pan American Low Cost Housing Congress) said so very clearly in his opening speech in 1939:

Welcome to this assembly of peace and fraternity, which has brought us together in the common effort of seeking for social justice with the intention of improving life through work that brings dignity, for a just wage, and for a home that is fitting for the human family (Cafferata, 1939:163).

The social question is an ensemble composed of diverse elements: housing, health, vice, alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness, criminality; in short, the social question is a complex of social problems. Turning to the planners, the social problems to which they had to give answers were social housing and especially the city. In their eyes, the city was chaotic, problematic, and it degraded the younger generations. According to them, the population lived in overcrowded housing, the streets in the slums were insufficiently wide to let in the hygienic solar rays to shine and such unsanitary conditions facilitated the diffusion of epidemics. All these things happened because the cities grew

spontaneously and it was necessary to plan their development and control them. The instrument through which the cities had to be improved was considered to be the plan. In Brazil, from 1911, during the discussion about the renewal of the city centre of São Paulo, this idea was already alive:

[...] a project of this nature can not be proposed without a general plan, and the consideration of just one facet of the problem can lead to potentially fatal mistakes, risking a higher cost later (Freire, 1911:110).

In Argentina, this idea had appeared earlier, at least as early as 1906, when Alejandro Christophersen, president of the *Sociedad Central de Arquitectos* (Central Society of Architects), expressed his ideas about the public works for the celebration of the centenary of Argentine Independence:

The study of a general plan for the capital is undoubtedly convenient, placing the new avenues, the squares, parks, alleys and gardens according to a logical, aesthetic and practical design. With this design, we can start the study of various monuments, buildings, with which the committee wishes to celebrate the historical date of 1910 (Chanourdie, 1906-1907).

The totalising conception that might be achieved in the plans cannot be perceived by everybody. In order to appreciate it, it is necessary to have had a professional education, or at least practical experience, to be prepared to simultaneously consider the various questions which might

be conciliated to plan the city. A specific kind of professional might be in charge of this task. He has to be specialist. This consensus is temporary, as a struggle will take place between diverse professionals to be this specialist.

Hygiene as a Source of Inspiration

The way the hygienists looked at the city in the nineteenth century was crucial to the legitimisation of city planning as a new discipline. The view of the hygienists about the urban territory was linked to discoveries developed in the medical sciences. When medicine became social medicine, the city emerged as an object of hygienic interest. When physicians became interested in the environment, medicine became social. Social medicine, preoccupied with the environment, where the city is one of its possible forms, was, in its genesis, linked to a specific scientific theory developed at the time, miasmatic theory. According to this theory, the cause of illness and epidemics was the state of the atmosphere: the quality of the air. The air could be poisoned by miasma, invisible atmospheric substances which resulted either from the putrefaction of organic matter or by emanations from the body, such as sweating. The environment became the very heart of social reform, thereby incorporating the problem of spatial organisation into the reform agenda. Slums and tenement houses, for instance, were considered dangerous places. Because of the overcrowding and the proximity of so many people living together, there was not enough space for the dissipation of miasma. This condition,

in the view of contemporary observers, facilitated the spread of physical and moral disease.

That belief was fundamental to the genesis of social medicine. If the origin of illnesses was air corrupted by decayed emanations, attention should be given to the city: the place where people lived at high density. Previously the task of medicine was to cure, but from this period, when one mistrusted the environment, the air included, forecasting became the great task. Avoiding contamination was at that time more important than to cure; instead of treatment, prevention became the key word. This turning point, where medicine becomes social, can be identified with the genesis of institutions charged with specialised practices: the control of epidemics, vaccination and the institutionalisation of the medical profession (Foucault, 1974). The birth of social medicine signifies new fields of expertise, those of the hygienist, a kind of urban doctor who witnesses the legitimisation of a new profession: his own. From the viewpoint of representation, the city is seen as a place of filth and disease. Despite the changes in the scientific bases of medical knowledge around 1870, with the replacement of the miasmatic theory by the microbial one, corresponding to a development in experimental research in bacteriology and microbiology, the representation of the city as a place of illness persisted. A good example of the power of this representation is that in all cases of renewal of city centres at the beginning of the century, as well as later in all the plans proposed for cities, a hygienic discourse was presented.

The strength of this representation was so powerful that urban functions were presented

through an organic metaphor. According to this, the city was seen as a living organism whose functions corresponded to those of animal biology. These ideas were used, among others, in the plan proposed by Agache for Rio de Janeiro as well as in that proposed by Correia Lima for Recife. The engineer Baptista de Oliveira used this metaphor as well:

The circulatory system of the cities is constituted by streets and avenues, that work as arteries and veins. This system brings and distributes the substances necessary to life to all points of the urban body. The heart is the centre of the city, to which point all the currents of circulation converge. The muscular system is represented by the network of electrical lines that contain the energy necessary for industry and its system of transport. The lungs of a city are their free spaces, avenues, places, gardens, parks, playgrounds etc. In the same way that cells extract oxygen from the human body through contact with the veins of the arterial system, the houses receive the air and the light, indispensable to their sanitation, through the openings of the windows. The water and sewerage network are perfectly comparable to the digestive organs. The large food markets constitute the stomach of the city [...] Like all living organisms, the city must rigorously obey the rules of hygiene, in order to avoid illnesses that destroy and put cells out of order, threatening its existence. The parallel between the city and an organism can be made constantly because every day one verifies an analogy between them. Health: The most precious of all wealth, essential condition of beauty and happiness for the agglomeration as well as the human being (Oliveira, 1940c:213).

Another indication of the power of this idea is that the word *diagnóstico*, of medical etymological origin, is still used to designate the phase of the identification of problems in urban planning in Brazil. The city is a sick organism, for which urban doctors, the city planners, might offer the prescription necessary to cure it.

The Productive City: Taylor as a Model

In the cultural landscape of South America in the early twentieth century another idea played an important role: positivism.¹⁵ The idea that science might rule human activity and the hegemony of reason in decisions concerning society was very much alive in the debate about city planning. The physician Américo Pereira da Silva, for instance, criticised the government during the *Primeiro Congresso de Habitação* (First Housing Congress) at São Paulo, accusing it of:

[...] always being timid in the realisation that what science has established as fundamental is absolutely necessary (Silva, 1931:149).

The engineer Armando Godoy adopted a similar viewpoint when, eight years earlier he defined city planning with these words:

[...] the human spirit that concentrates on the study of the complex life of the big urban centres permitted by the observations accumulated in the many documents that history offers us

15. For a study of this question in Brazil see: Nachman (1977). For Argentina: Biagini (1985). For a comparative approach: Hale (1988).

and especially in the data given by statistics, since ancient times, we can say, successfully founded the basis of a new science, which starts to fructify and deliver undeniable services to mankind (Godoy, 1923:39).

The city planners' representations go further, to be just scientific being considered insufficient. It was necessary to push science to its limits, apply it to all fields. In this endeavour to enlarge reason's scope for action, the ideas developed by Taylor had an important role. The participation of the engineer Enrique Doria in the *Congresso de Habitação* (Housing Congress) in 1931, a year of recession and therefore of shortfalls in the production of goods and services, now that the penury of the 1929 crisis was still in the air, is like a pearl in the crystalline waters of this sea of positivism:

*Everything will depend on scientific organisation, on Taylorism in action.
Science instead of empiricism;
Harmony instead of discord;
Co-operation instead of individualism;
Maximum profit instead of reduced production;
Preparation of each man;
to give him profit and maximum prosperity* (Dória, 1931:53)

Taylorist rationalisation had another great moment with Brazilian city planners. Ten years later, the *Jornadas de Habitação* (Housing Workshops) sponsored by IDORT, the *Instituto de Racionalização e Organização do Trabalho* (Institute for the Rationalisation and Organisation of Work), took place simultaneously in two different cit-

ies. The name of this institution, founded in 1931, revealed its intentions: to rationalise building methods and bring Taylorism to the construction sites. Taylorism was a central idea in the practice of city planning. From the end of the 1920s there was no city plan in which its application, zoning, was not employed. This kind of instrument, selecting parts of the city for particular functions, has implications on body movement in as much as only certain activities are allowed being therefore a kind of bio-power as discussed by Foucault.

Even if the countries in question did not yet possess industrial economies at that time, with the majority of their population still living in the countryside despite the enormous size of their largest cities, the zoning idea was highly indicative of the transposition of the rationality of the industrial production system to city planning. As in a factory, where with Fordism each step of the production process is undertaken separately, the city, through zoning, would have each urban function taking place in specific parts of its territory:

A new order is necessary, because we can not continue with the stove in the living room, the bed in the dining room and the wardrobe in the kitchen; our cities look like this with the factory in the housing district, the hospital in the commercial zone, and the school on a shaky and tumultuous surface. In domestic life, this is anarchy and disorder. In urban life this is noise, trafficjam, lack of hygiene or in other words 'deficit', pandemonium and lack of sanitation (Cavalcanti, 1942: 45).

Planners and Power

Parallel to this process, another movement had taken place, one of criticising urban administration and through it the government. An engineer at the *Primer Congreso Argentino de Urbanismo* (First Argentine City Planning Congress) in 1935 observed:

Frequently, we find ourselves in the municipalities with people who have very personal criteria regarding all the problems inherent in the city. Influenced by political factors, they authorise concessions or implement certain works, sometimes inopportune or precipitate, without taking into account the priorities [...] obliging the same village to pay an exorbitant amount to the detriment of its economy because of a nonsensical direction [...] (Suffriti, 1935:131).

One of the most commonly employed justifications for criticising municipal government was the turnover of those in power. The change of mayor in a municipality meant an interruption in public works and their abandonment. The implementation of long-term ideas such as those characteristic of city plans could never take place that way. Representative institutions, typical of democratic societies, were considered inefficient in the eyes of the planners. In Brazil, in 1940, a chronicler of *Urbanismo e Viação* pointed out that:

The most important thing, anyway, is not to draw the plan but to reach the execution phase[...] the worst thing is when administrators change and no one wants to follow the rules adopted by

their predecessors. Let's draw a plan, if necessary; but let's claim also the convenience of a new mentality, which can see the benefits of single-mindedness. The ideal, in a measure of this kind, is not wasting efforts in piece-meal activities but defining the general rules and following them inflexibly, for decades and decades (Anonymous, 1940:237)

The criticism of inefficacy therefore becomes a refusal of democracy. In the mind of the planners, a model of government is built. This government was supposed to be strong, authoritarian, and centralised with only professionals in the main posts. Elections, the way by which those who sometimes represent the interests of the population but are not specialists can climb to power are not seen as a positive element in politics. Someone who had been sitting in the room of *Grêmio Polytechnico* in São Paulo in 1911, would have listened to these very ideas professed by an invited lecturer who would profit from his erudition on the international experience to feed his argument:

The municipal administration, in Great Britain, is taken in charge by businessmen: the city councillors are recruited almost exclusively from traders, industrialists and company bosses. To be elected a city councillor is considered as a true distinction, awarded by the classes that represent the role of the agglomeration in the economic forces of the nation. This choice is traditionally independent of any difference in political beliefs. The election procedure is very easy [...] the law states that when there is just one candidate he shall directly be considered elected, the percentage of elections that go to a ballot is low,

even in times when there is more effervescence in the party struggle. In this way, the designated names are trusted by the citizens [...] It is very common to find a mayor that remains twenty or thirty uninterrupted years in the post [...] This competence factor is what allows English and German municipalities to solve the most complicated questions in a rapid and efficient way. In each post there is the right man. Polemics about the service offered are rare: the one who is in government is the one who knows more [...] During this time the Parisian City Council made itself impotent with long debates. That is because, despite the precise nature and the intelligence of the race it is very easy for an incompetent to reach the post of councillor (Freire, 1911:95-96).

It is not difficult to see which kind of political regime would be appreciated according to these thoughts. In a government in which there is complete continuity there is no space for democracy or need for elections. The political regime corresponding to this picture is a dictatorship. In fact, history showed that it was exactly this kind of government that took over in Brazil with the coup d'état in 1937, inviting city planners to become mayors, and, in so doing, gaining their support. José Estelita, Director of the *Secretaria de Viação e Obras Públicas* in the State of Pernambuco, saw this process in the following way:

In the past, before the coup d'état of 10 November 1937, politicalism (bad politics) dominated the cities; where politics grew and developed there could not exist either discipline or respect for the law. Urban lack of discipline was a reflection of the general lack of discipline of the country. Before the Estado Novo, talk about city plan-

ning, the science which can be defined as disciplinary co-ordination, the science which is the perfect relationship between things, would have been utopian. Today, anyway, the ambience is different and we can already exchange ideas in congresses and adopt with advantage measures to sanitise the cities (Estelita, 1941: 44)

Building the Nation

The *zeitgeist* of that period was invested with another element: nationalism. On the Brazilian side one can quote as an example of this nationalist wave the scholarship of Alberto Torres, characterised by books like *● Problema Nacional Brasileiro* and *A Organização Nacional*, the foundation of the *Liga de Defesa Nacional* created in São Paulo by the poet Olavo Bilac, who claimed an educational role for the army, the foundation of *Revista do Brasil*, the foundation of the Communist Party in 1922; the lieutenants revolt; the week of modern arts in São Paulo; and the *integralista* movement, a Brazilian version of fascism.¹⁶

On the Argentine side similar events took place, such as the foundation of the *Liga Patriótica Argentina* in 1919; new historical studies from the 1930s centred on a critique of the British imperialism in the country; the foundation in 1935 of a young nationalist movement, the *FORJA, Fuerza de Orientación Radical de la Juventud Argentina*, and the political opposition to the

monopoly of the tramway service in Buenos Aires by English companies.¹⁷

In the planners' discourse, nationalism appeared in at least two different ways. The first was the idea of a national, regional and even indigenous architecture and city planning. One can find this view in one of the papers presented at the *Primeiro Congresso Brasileiro de Urbanismo*:

Our professionals, based in foreign literature, are used to think with European and American data, identifying themselves with the solutions of these countries. They travel to study and sometimes acquire a spirit of contempt for our backwardness and, not rarely, the joking spirit of the scientist that knows the great solutions, resulting always in a disregard for the study of our milieu. We do not accept the absurdity of condemning travel or foreign culture, —we know they are indispensable and enlightening— but what is necessary is that with these travels and with that culture we profit from the foreign experience not escape from ours. We should not forget that solutions must be given to our needs, according to our resources and adapted to the habits of our population and not just copied from abroad (Bueno & Bueno, 1941: 33).

The idea of a national city planning, Brazilian, adapted to the beaches, forests and plains of its territory, according with the habits and traditions of the country, was very clear in the dis-

16. For a general discussion on the subject see Hobsbawm (1990). For a description of some aspects in Brazil see Pécaut (1989): 15-19. For an analysis see several chapters in Fausto (1977: 2nd part).

17. For Argentine nationalism in general see Rock (1988): 228-231 and Baily (1967). For the *Liga* see McCoie (1984) & Rock (1975: 181-189). For the opposition to the English tramways see Walter (1974).

course of the engineer Jeronimo Cavalcanti during a send-off lunch for his travel to Belém, in the Amazon region, where he was appointed to take charge of the town hall. The new mayor observed:

I am not going to do imported city planning. I'm going to do indigenous planning, based on the anthropogeography of the city, with the tendencies of its people, its history and its habitat, and draw up a plan founded on its past and tradition, that will satisfy the present needs and open the way to the future (Cavalcanti, 1943:34).

Another way of expressing nationalist feeling is by tapping a country's working capacity. In nations just 400 years old, the future is still to be built. Huge territories have to be populated and virgin lands colonised. The bases of a great country might be founded through the construction of new centres of civilisation: the cities. In this sense, the role of the national worker might be reconsidered. The construction of a new town, Goiânia, was a good opportunity for this kind of nationalism:

From this viewpoint we can say - and be proud - that using our own capabilities, we can perform lots of things that sceptics consider utopian. When we started Goiânia everybody laughed with sarcasm and doubt. This disregard, this sarcasm, provoked numerous disappointments. Many lost faith in the victory, abandoning the struggle half way and deserting the caravan. On the other hand, the same sarcasm, the same disregard, the same struggle strengthened the cohesion of the little group that fought on to build Goiânia. We weren't too many in that group and we gave a

very lively example of what we Brazilians can do with our strength alone if we decidedly want to fight (Bueno, & Bueno, 1941:33).

The City: Place for Degeneration?

Racial issues were also taken into account as an element in the construction of national identity. Especially in Brazil, where there is a racial mix of the black slaves imported from Africa, the indigenous population and the white Portuguese colonisers, the national project was constructed through an attempt to justify this melting pot under the aegis of the false idea of racial democracy and the absence of discrimination. Even if the ethnic mix of the people was considered positive, the idea of improving the national race was not absent.¹⁸ Eugenics, the idea of a racial betterment, constituted a frequent feature in the urban discourse. From the most general viewpoint of public health, particularly after the *Terceiro Congresso Brasileiro de Higiene* held in 1926, eugenics became one of the most powerful keywords of the hygienic movement. In 1929 the *Primeiro Congresso Brasileiro de Eugénismo* took place.

These ideas poisoned the planner's discourse. The betterment of the race required the overthrowing of obstacles to racial isolation, which was seen as a possible return to primitive life and tribal habits. This issue sometimes comes together with a psychiatric analysis of the society. Among the planners, the most direct allusion to this was that made by the members of the Rotary Club of Rio de Janeiro:

¹⁸ On racial betterment see Stepan (1991).

The dominant ethnic element in the favelas are the blacks, to which other alienated elements ally themselves. The tendency of the blacks to isolate themselves from white civilisation, to which they don't want to be subjugated, is a current observable fact in South American republics. Among us, it is manifested in an ostensible way, due to the absence of coercive measures. Back to its rural expression, it satisfies violent impulses from the unconscious. The return to primitive life enables the blacks to satisfy their racial tendencies, their fetishist practices, their dances and the macumba. The favelas of Rio as well as the mocambos of Recife are rare African survivals [...] (Mariano Filho, Amarante, & Campello, 1941:53).

If the favelas and the insalubrious dwellings of the poor were depicted as negative and having racial bias, planning and housing policy were portrayed as the other side of the coin:

Social housing doesn't simply solve the problems of the inhabitants. The question might be seen from a social viewpoint. The development of the race also depends on it. From the promiscuous life in the cortiços grew up gangs of pervers and delinquents, contaminated by terrible illnesses. The individual house, aired and enlightened, salubrious and restful, is the célula mater of the strong races (Albuquerque, 1931:22).

The concept of degeneration was part of the early twentieth century South American cultural landscape, being employed in the construction of the city as a social problem. The social question was represented through the metaphor of a progressive hereditary illness that contaminates

a body. Life under certain physical conditions was supposed to weaken human health and energy. According to this representation, from one generation to another, descendants become increasingly weak, sick, unwilling to work, useless to society.¹⁹ Again the ideas on the social question are found in the planners' discourse:

Insalubrious housing has many inconveniences: moral decadence, physical decadence and biological decadence, transmitting to the following generations the calamitous mistakes for which those who acquire them in the present are not responsible. A family which lives in the promiscuity of a house lacking the most rudimentary comfort, perpetuating the senzalas drama in the twentieth century, degenerates physically and morally (Oliveira, 1940b; 195).²⁰

Such a representation is such an influential one that in the text written by Carlos Maria della Paolera when he created the symbol of city planning, the idea is expressed through its opposite -improvement, regeneration:

The conquest of nature by the city is a promising gift of health and beauty for the planners. The following generations will appreciate the results of the planners' prodigious efforts in this crusade to regenerate the living conditions of human society (della Paolera, 1940:223-224).

¹⁹ For a discussion of these ideas see Borges (1993) & Zimmermann (1992).

²⁰ Senzala was the place where the slaves lived in the farms of colonial Brazil.

Conclusion

As in the case of prisons, discussed by Foucault, the birth of city planning was linked to a project for transforming individuals. The way in which criminals are described in the discourse of criminology, or even in the related pages of the newspapers, it closely resembles the way that the slum-dwelling urban poor were described by the city planners. Foucault explains the depiction of criminals as a way of constituting the people as a moral body separated from delinquency in an industrial society, in which part of the wealth is required not to be in the hands of those who own it, but in the hands of those who make it work, thereby permitting the extraction of profit: the constitution of the people as a moral body is seen as a way of protecting this wealth (Foucault, 1975b:132-133). Similarly, the depiction of the urban poor as degenerate is a way of protecting the wealth invested in the city, which is sometimes located in unprotected spaces and could easily be damaged. It is also a way of justifying intervention in blighted areas in order to improve them through the construction of a newly built environment in accordance with the needs of capital accumulation.

Answers to these questions were found through a genealogy of city planning, which I did through "a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledge, discourses and domains of objects" (Foucault, 1971:15-38). Foucault, writing about prisons, states that delinquents are depicted as dangerous and immoral, thereby to make the working class feel afraid and keep far away from them. He points

out that the role of crime pages in newspapers is as a tool for the construction of this image. If we compare this with the representation of city planners, we see that those who live in slums in unplanned cities are depicted in a similar way. Propaganda was part of the city planning movement. The presence of journalists in city plan commissions, as was the case in Recife, as well as the coverage of certain newspapers presenting the state of the city planning discussions, seems to be good evidence of this. Interviews with city planners were published in newspapers and many of them gave broadcast lectures setting out city planning principles. The speech quoted in the beginning of this paper, for instance, was broadcast. It is important and fascinating to study the discourse of city planners. For me, it partly reveals how society was thought to be shaped according to the principles of industrial logic, or, at least how some attempts were made to shape it this way, as was the case with city planning.

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