Urbanity and crisis

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Throughout the 20th century, housing issues were at the root of many of the academic movements in Architecture, Urban Planning and Design, ensuring the expansion of their frontiers to include economic and policy strategies which determined the social space of most Western countries. The problems which emerged whilst following this trajectory were not trivial: the housing sector, above all the area of collective housing, had to respond on a global scale to the growing demands of large industrialized centres, and those still under the process of industrialization by seeking new forms of technical expression, spatial conception and representation - heralded by the Modern Movement.

Some of the solutions to the conflicts surrounding the need for housing involved methods such as mass production, associated to modern design and/or innovative governance guidelines. Recent history shows that the social, technical and cultural factors which made it difficult to achieve solutions are still being discussed. Similarly, critiques to space rationalization in the home are still debated. By accepting the (formal, legal and social) autonomy of the domestic unit, they endorse the theory of a generalized anti-urbanity.

In the last decades of the 20th century neoliberal economic policies were implemented. In countries where the first cycles of industrialization were incomplete, lack of housing has become one of the main urban issues, specially in large cities. If the *siedlungen* or the *grands ensembles* created structural problems, representing the limits of esthetic and technical rational architecture - as well as the limits of Modernity itself - in the so-called peripheral countries, economic cycles and state policies meant that urban planning mechanisms which could have mitigated the precarious housing situation of low-income populations could not be implemented on a large scale. Furthermore, the financialization of the production system in general and of the housing sector in particular, which gathered pace in the 1980s, further increased the distance between the urban need to *live* and the simple production of housing as a de-territorialized commodity. Housing proved to be a precarious asset, as the global crisis that started with the crash in September 2008 revealed.

In the case of Brazil, from the pioneering experiences of the IAP [Institute of Retirement and Pensions] to the MCMV [My House, My Life] Program, progress in housing provision for workers with little or no income were not sufficient to overcome the national housing deficit, currently estimated at approximately 5 million homes. On the one hand, there are limitations in urban policies associated to the strategic demands of the private sector, such as civil construction. Particularly when regulating mechanisms are restricted to managing financial issues so as to be able to raise public and private funds, exclusively based on quantitative criteria. Without a clear objective common to all cities - such as that of a desired urban *virtuality* based on user value - little can be expected from sophisticated and well intentioned economic instruments, particularly when land relations, aligned to national funding structures, are taken into account. On the other hand, without the involvement of academics in the reformulation of theories and methods, progress in planning spatialities responsive to national and local contemporary characteristics is limited. In other words, without a project that minimally integrates form and *social space*, the reproduction of modernity, which brings together a real desire for radical transformation of the territory and society, is

threatened by the acceptance of *generic* models imposed by large contractors in assocation with transnational capital.

The association of real estate interests and those of financial agents have led both to new housing *standards* for the low-income market and to large areas occupied in an irregular way, defining what was previously known as "Favela Planet" where large numbers of people live in extremely precarious conditions.

The reaction to this process is clear. In recent years, topics related to Architecture, Urban Planning and Design sought to understand the potential of these sectors within a context of global economic crisis which is aggravated by the fact that the values accepted by modern societies, such as democracy, freedom, civil and labor rights, have been undermined. The dizzying values of the era of easy money no longer dominate the scene and the academic community, governmental sectors and professional bodies are moving toward conciliating our social structures with the greatest of all spatial conquests: the *city*.

As an example, the article *Nexus between Population Redistribution and Real Estate Residential Production in Districts of the Municipality of São Paulo* by Anderson Kazuo Nakano, seeks to understand the changes in the demographic structure of the São Paulo metropolitan region, a consequence of the housing expansion cycle which took place between 1998 and 2008. Nakano analyzes census and market data to identify population changes which occurred as a result of collective vertical housing in certain districts of São Paulo. The result corroborates a common hypothesis that central regions, concentrating services, employment, cultural activities and infrastructure, have become more populated in recent years, reversing the cycle of vacating the center which lasted for a number of decades. Meanwhile, the population levels of peripheral areas have suffered little alteration, despite an increase in verticalization.

Interest in the history and criticism of Brazilian housing development, in particular the IAPs experience, is the main focus of the articles by Nilce Aravecchia Botas and Maria Isabel Imbronito. The article *Traffic of Ideas and Forming Practices: Architecture and Urbanism in Housing Action of Iapi* by Nilce Aravecchia Botas seeks to highlight the unique points of the IAPI projects and the conceptions on which this pioneering Brazilian modern architecture venture was based. The author observes that the specialists committed to developing new theories of land occupation for working class housing sought both to align the unique characteristics of the national project to center-European models and identify new theoretical foundations, useful to the Brazilian reality. Particularly, when taking into account the challenges faced by the desire for social transformation evoked by the Revolution led by Getúlio Vargas - such as the possibility of the emergence of an original workers' spatiality based on a wish to renew the political and social order.

Maria Isabel Imbronito, in her article *Santa Cruz Housing Complex: from the Beginning to the Present*, seeks to highlight the process of urban structural dismantling of the original Santa Cruz IAPB complex, planned in 1947 by the engineer and architect Marcial Fleury de Oliveira. The study includes historical data and a project analysis which provide a framework for the conception process of this unique experience and subsequent tranformations which took place due to new funding, political and social arrangements. It reveals that the modernizing urban significance behind these and other housing complexes of the time were not successful in face of the spatial reality adopted by the city of São Paulo from the second half of the 20th century, where market forces and extreme population growth imposed new arrangements and demands which have so far been left unresolved.

Manfredo Tafuri is one of the main critics and historians of 20th century architecture and his work remains vibrant and essential to understand the recent contraints faced in this field. Rafael Urano Frajndlich, in his article *Two Projects: the Formative Years of Manfredo Tafuri*, seeks to analyze the relationship between the author of *Theories and the History of Architecture* with his short and intense career as a project architect. The dilemas contained in Tafuri's definitive professional decision seem to have been essential for the development of this outstanding intellectual. He saw criticism as a possibility for transformation, while history provided him with values which would bring complexity, meaning and relevance to the contradictions permeating architecture.

On the other hand, technique, and not history, is the starting point for Maria Isabel Villac's article *Technique, Art and Fundamental Issues of Existence. Thoughts on Paulo Mendes da Rocha's Discourse*. By analyzing Paulo Mendes da Rocha's texts, Villac seeks to identify the foundations of his reflexive rationality which transforms architectural projects into essays and discourses on human knowledge with its esthetic dimension. Here, the work of the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale winner of the Golden Lion Award reveals formal solutions, where social and ethical awareness is based on the universality of his technical rationality which, in turn, lives up to his artistic endevors.

Concepts and methodologies related to project development in architecture and design are discussed in Bruno Massa Rocha's article *New Perspectives and Complex Challenges in Design Epistemology*. The author revisits the arguments of renowned theorists such as Donald Schön, Herbert A. Simon, Christopher Alexander and Nicholas Negroponte to analyze the role of improvisation in project practices. His study points to the potential learning contained in the tension between theorectical knowledge and daily practice, capable of fostering the integration between the abstract world of the *design process* and its empirical objectives.

Finally, the article *Patrick Geddes and the Italian Territorialist School: Conceptual and Methodological Approaches. Reflections On the Participation of Children in the Representation of Heritage Values at Santa Leopoldina City – Espírito Santo State / Brazil,* by Bruno Amaral de Andrade and Renata Hermanny de Almeida, reveals the relevance of the Scotish philosopher and biologist, Patrick Geddes, to environmental and urban education issues. Amaral de Andrade e Hermanny de Almeida seek to highlight the importance of developing a critical awareness of the landscape and the region as essential elements to space in the life of mankind, achieved through a unique pedagogic experience.

Although the set of articles selected for this edition of the Revista Pós are not interlinked by an editorial structure based on a specific topic, they demonstrate that thinking about practice in times of crisis has become a complex task for those who are committed to producing knowledge in the fields of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design. This continuous and structured reflection could lead to new alternatives to deal with the adversities present in contemporary urban daily life. We hope you enjoy this edition.

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