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ETWEEN CONCEPTS AND PRACTICE:
BUILDING IDENTITIES AND
METROPOLITAN PLACES THROUGH
THE PLANNING PROCESS IN THE
METROPOLITAN REGION OF BELO
HORIZONTE

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ABSTRACT

The planning of the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte, set in motion in the late 1970s, underwent an important process of transformation: after a hiatus period in the 1990s, the metropolitan project was resumed along with the University, seeking to overcome the experience of technocratic bases of the military period and to assume an increasingly participatory basis. This new model of metropolitan planning is based on the idea that it is the **planning process** (perhaps more than the final plans) that allows a democratic management of the territory of the metropolis. To that end, the UFMG, in the elaboration of the Master Plan of Integrated Development of the MRBH, relies on the creation of a **metropolitan identity** and the recognition of **metropolitan places** in which the metropolitan citizen can share a daily life endowed with rules built and shared locally. The purpose of this article is to further discuss these concepts that are important references to the current metropolitan planning process, based on the practical experiences that have unfolded so far in order to broaden the debate about the possibilities and limitations of each one of them.

KEYWORDS

Regional Territorial Planning. Metropolitan Areas. Citizenship. Identity. Place.

ENTRE CONCEITOS E A PRÁTICA:
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RESUMO

O planejamento da Região Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte que teve início no final da década de 1970 vem passando por um importante processo de transformação: após um período de hiato na década de 1990, o projeto metropolitano foi retomado junto à Universidade, buscando superar a experiência de bases tecnocráticas do período militar e assumir cada vez mais uma base participativa. Esse novo modelo de gestão metropolitana é pautado pela ideia de que é o **processo de planejamento** (talvez mais do que os planos finais) que permite a gestão democrática do território da metrópole. Para isso, a UFMG, na elaboração do Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Integrado da RMBH, apoia-se na criação de uma **identidade metropolitana** e no reconhecimento de **lugares metropolitanos** nos quais o cidadão metropolitano pode compartilhar um cotidiano dotado de regras construídas e compartilhadas localmente. O objetivo deste artigo é discutir um pouco mais esses conceitos que são referências importantes ao atual processo de planejamento metropolitano a partir das experiências práticas que dele se desdobraram, no intuito de ampliar o debate sobre as possibilidades e as limitações de cada um deles.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Planejamento Territorial Regional. Áreas Metropolitanas. Cidadania. Identidade. Lugar.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (RMBH), the metropolitan planning dynamics anticipates in a few years the enactment of the Metropolis Statute (Law no. 13.089/2015). This pioneering experience in Brazil was consolidated in 2009 with the Integrated Development Master Plan (PDDI), in which the construction of a continuous process of planning within democratic bases is one of the main guidelines. In practice, such directive signifies going beyond an institutionalization of the metropolitan territory based on technical and political bases, seeking its construction by society in an extended way.

It is evident that the dynamics of the metropolis' territory are felt in the daily lives of all of those who live in it. However, as announced by the PDDI, bringing these actors to the discussion forums on this expanded scale, in order to establish its democratic management, requires the support of a likewise expanded sense of identity. In view of the background of socio-political disarticulation in which the RMBH was constituted, the PDDI foresees the reconstruction of a *metropolitan identity*, through the establishment of *metropolitan places*.

The purpose of this article is to further discuss these concepts which are references to a continuous process of metropolitan planning, departing from the practical experiences that have unfolded from them, and mainly from the implementation of the Places of Metropolitan Urbanity (LUMEs), in order to expand the debate about their possibilities and their limitations. Specifically, it seeks to evidence two valuable issues to the new model of metropolitan planning: the articulation around the making of a *metropolitan citizenship* based on the planning process; and the importance of recognizing/creating *metropolitan places* as catalytic locus in the search for a more diverse and less asymmetrical metropolitan territory.

In order to achieve its goal, the article is divided into four parts. In the first part, we present a brief history of metropolitan management in Brazil and Minas Gerais, focusing on the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte, highlighting its heterogeneous composition and socio-political disarticulation. In the second part, we present the concepts of metropolitan identity and place, that guide the discussions of the Integrated Development Master Plan, as well as the proposal of the Places of Metropolitan Urbanity which places the development of a metropolitan citizenship as a fundamental element for planning in the RMBH. In the third part, we reflect on the maturation of LUMEs from the practical attempts for its implementation. In the fourth and last part, we address the reflections of this maturation in the current phase of the planning process and highlight its potentialities and limitations for the construction of a metropolitan citizenship.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING IN THREE MOMENTS

From the 1950s and during the 1960s and 1970s, the process of rural-urban migration is accentuated in Brazil, and along with it, around the territories of the main capitals, areas of conurbation with the surrounding municipalities are

consolidated. This new spatial reality prompts the debate about urban problems in a metropolitan scale, pointing to the need for an alignment of the political-administrative relations of neighboring cities in favor of cooperative actions. According to Sérgio Azevedo and Virgínia Mares Guia (2000), the emergence of the concept of metropolitan management as a model of urban planning in Brazil goes back to this period.

Initially, inter-municipal cooperation initiatives had an “academic and experimental” character, as reported by Raquel Rolnik and Nádia Somekh (2000, p.85):

The organizational need did not have as a solely inductor the public administration, it went alongside and responded to questions from civil society's representative sectors. An example of this mobilization was the Seminar on Housing and Urban Reform promoted by the [Brazilian Architects Institute] IAB in 1963. [...] Even before there was a legal basis for the creation of metropolitan regions in Brazil, there were embryonic experiences of metropolitan administrations. [...] These were all state governments initiatives and expressed their recognition of specific administrative treatment demanded by metropolitan management. In the absence of legal impediments, state governments began to set up their own metropolitan administration sectors according to their regional particularities and the organizational capital they had at hand.

¹ Belo Horizonte, Betim, Caeté, Contagem, Ibirité, Lagoa Santa, Nova Lima, Pedro Leopoldo, Raposos, Ribeirão das Neves, Rio Acima, Sabará, Santa Luzia and Vespasiano.

² João Pinheiro Foundation (FJP) is an institution linked to Minas Gerais State government Planning and Management Secretary. In addition to offering graduation, specialization and masters courses in Public Administration, FJP's activities include the production of statistical, economic-financial, demographic and social indicators, the evaluation of public policies and the provision of technical services through contracts and agreements (João Pinheiro Foundation, s.d.).

³ PLAMBEL was the State Autarchy responsible for RMBHs metropolitan planning during the military regime. In its period of greater activity and dynamism (1975-1980) the entity acted mainly in road and transport system planning, in metropolitan land subdivision, use and occupation regulation, and in the elaboration of ample diagnoses and studies on RMBH (TONUCCI FILHO, 2012).

The perception of metropolitan areas economic and political importance led to the constitutionalization of the matter in 1967, conferring exclusively to the Union the prerogative of instituting metropolitan regions (MRs). The basic rules for the constitution of these regions were defined seven years later, with the enactment of Complementary Law (LC) No. 14/1973. As argued by Sol Garson (2009), the safeguarding of resources to the new federated entities that was envisaged in this legislation subordinated urban infrastructure investment policies to federal control and therefore reaffirmed the power of the Federal Government over the most dynamic areas of the country, overlapping itself to state experiences.

In Minas Gerais, seeking to comply with the provisions of LC No. 14/1973, the RMBH is created, initially formed by 14 municipalities¹. However, as described by Ronaldo Gouvêa (2005) since the 1960s, the “Great Belo Horizonte” area already accumulated efforts to establish an integrated planning process, initially carried out by the João Pinheiro Foundation (FJP)². In 1975, the technical group previously allocated to FJP became part of the Development Superintendence of RMBH – PLAMBEL³. As a state autarky, PLAMBEL developed the Plan for Social-Economic Integrated Development of the RMBH (PDIES-RMBH) in the same year, and its activity shows great dynamism throughout the 1980s, especially in the area of transportation.

This period of strong technocratic activity that marks the first moment of metropolitan planning in the RMBH occurs mainly from an institutional perspective, without much reflection from civil society groups or their demand agendas. Much as a consequence of this scenario, there follows a period of metropolitan management weakening from the beginning of the 1990s, when, in reaction to the marked centralization observed during the period of dictatorship, the municipalist movement ends up delegitimizing metropolitan planning at the national level, understanding it as an authoritarian practice.

⁴The original 14, and in addition: Baldim, Brumadinho, Capim Branco, Confins, Esmeraldas, Florestal, Igarapé, Itaguara, Itatiaiuçu, Jaboticatubas, Juatuba, Mário Campos, Mateus Leme, Matozinhos, Nova União, Rio Manso, São Joaquim de Bicas, São José da Lapa, Sarzedo and Taquaraçu de Minas.

This inflection marks the beginning of the second metropolitan planning moment. The Federal Constitution of 1988 transfers the responsibility for the creation and management of metropolitan regions from federal government to the states. Without any guidelines or criteria being defined for this transfer, its permeability to political pressures is greatly favored, resulting in the configuration of metropolitan regions with a large number of municipalities and extremely heterogeneous compositions (GARSON, 2009).

In addition, with 1988 Federal Constitution, municipalities are recognized as federate members, with a position similar to that of the states, creating a clash in the legitimacy of state actions for metropolitan management. The municipalities are granted significant political autonomy (expressed especially in the possibility of editing their own laws) and administrative autonomy (expressed in the attribution of executing basic services such as health care, education, urban infrastructure, housing, sanitation and waste collection). However, municipal financial revenue is restricted to taxes on urban property, urban services and property transfers. Most municipalities become thus dependent on financial transfers from their States and the Union (MACHADO, 2010).

With the 1989 State Constitution, the RMBH is expanded from 14 to 18 municipalities and continues to grow with the entry of six other municipalities in 1996 plus another eight municipalities in 1999. In 2001 it reaches its current formation, with 34 members⁴. In spite of all the action in the Legislative Assembly in order to enable the entrance of new municipalities in the RMBH, there was practically no government actions throughout the 1990s aimed at establishing a policy of equalization for issues of common interest in the metropolis (GOUVÊA, 2005).

In the beginning of the 1990s, in the context of federal government's distance from the metropolitan issue, along with the economic crisis and consequent lack of resources, PLAMBEL's performance declined, likewise other metropolitan entities in the country, culminating in its extinction in 1995. Its potential successor, the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Assembly, established by the 1989 Minas Gerais Constitution, had the purpose of promoting a series of pluri-municipal actions. In practice, such a committee met only to approve price adjustments of intercity bus routes administered by the Departamento de Estradas e Rodagens (DER) (translated as Department of Roads and Highways). In this context, as described by Gouvêa (2005), the benefits to groups linked to the subject of transportation also seemed to motivate requests submitted to the Legislative Assembly for admission to the RMBH:

The entry of certain municipalities into RMBH seems to be related to the interest of some transport businessmen and political leaders, regarding the possibility of including, in the Metropolitan Tariff Compensation Chamber, bus lines that interconnected their municipalities to other RM municipalities, especially Belo Horizonte, in order to provide, with such inclusion, cheaper fares. However, if they actually started to operate at lower fares, these "metropolitan" lines could compete, on the main transportation corridors, with lines of shorter routes, leading in one hand to an increased number of

transported passengers and operational revenues - values which were to be subtracted from the other lines - and, on the other hand, to predatory competition between lines that, in most cases, should operate in an integrated manner in both physical and tariff terms (GOUVÊA, 2005, p.106).

From this second moment, marked by an *hiatus* to metropolitan planning and by the formal expansion of RMBH - motivated by interests distant from any social articulations - it is noticeable the establishment of a context of low synergy between the various actors in creating socio-political and cultural conditions for integrated actions on a metropolitan scale. As Rolnik and Somekh (2000) alert, the localism that characterizes this moment along with the fiscal war between states and municipalities creates perverse effects of competition between cities, which establishes therefore a multiplicity of disarticulated local identities.

The third moment, in its turn, marks the resumption of planning in the RMBH. It occurs in the 2000s from the constitution of a new institutional arrangement of metropolitan management and the process of elaboration of a Master Plan for the metropolis. This new arrangement, which began to be articulated in 2003 with the Seminar on Metropolitan Regions organized by the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais, was formally established in 2004 by Constitutional Amendment No. 65 and later regulated by Complementary Laws 88 and 89 enacted in 2006. From these recent legislations four new institutional instances are created: The Metropolitan Assembly (a collegiate decision-making entity with state and municipal participation), the Deliberative Council for Metropolitan Development⁵ (collegiate and deliberative entity) the Metropolitan Agency (a technical and executive authority), and the Metropolitan Development Fund (MINAS GERAIS, 2006).

The new metropolitan arrangement is crowned, between 2009 and 2011, with the elaboration of the Integrated Development Master Plan (PDDI) by the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), a project coordinated by the Metropolitan Agency and executed with funds from the Metropolitan Development Fund. In general terms, PDDI's objective was to:

construct a process of metropolitan planning in the RMBH involving its municipalities, the state of Minas Gerais, the necessary federal agencies, the organized civil society in its social movements, business associations and popular associations and also, complementarily, the municipalities that make up the immediate Metropolitan Collar and its surroundings. It is a question of constructing a perennial process of discussion, collaboration and integration of knowledges, in short, medium and long term, and of establishing information networks that allow permanent analysis, criticism and monitoring of the multiple actions of the various agents that work in metropolitan spaces and territories (UFMG, 2011a, p.6).

The plan was conceived by means of two organizational and methodological structures. Initially, the works were oriented by three thematic cores (Economic, Social and Environmental) composed by ten "Cross-Sectional Thematic Areas"⁶ and complemented by six "Complementary Priority Studies".⁷ This structure, which was maintained until the diagnosis stage of work, was later imploded and the team was reorganized into two "Structuring Dimensions" - Territoriality and Institutionality - intersected by four "Integrational Axes" - Accessibility, Safety, Sustainability and Urbanity. The implosion of the thematic areas and their

⁵ Composed of 5 representatives of the State Executive Branch; 2 representatives of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Minas Gerais; 2 representatives from Belo Horizonte; 1 Count representative; 1 representative of Betim; 3 representatives of the other municipalities of the RMBH and 2 representatives of organized civil society.

⁶ Demographic And Environmental Aspects Of Social Demand (ADAMS); Cultural Environmental Complexes (CACs); Culture, Education, Food Security, Labor And Income (CEAT); Institutional Capacity Of Planning And Management (CIPLAG); Production Structure, Knowledge, Technology And Energy Alternatives (ETC); Daily Life, Housing And Quality Of Life (HVQ); Mobility, Communications, Transport And Road System (MCT); Socio-Environmental Risk, Social Vulnerability And Public Safety (SMARHS); Land Use, Real Estate Dynamics And Metropolitan centrality scales (USDEC). Further information on the works involved in each of the areas can be obtained from the website: <http://www.rmbh.org.br/pddi/> (accessed on 31 Oct 2017).

⁷ Tax and Fiscal Complementary Study; Evolution of the Epidemiological Profile in the Municipalities of RMBH - 1998 to 2006; Public Health Equipment System; Climate changes; Citizenship and Digital Enlightenment and Spatial Analysis.

reorganization into integrating axes started from the necessity to contemplate a desired transdisciplinarity in the planning process, especially with regard to the final policies and proposals.

The four integrating axes, which guided the propositional stage of work, can be briefly explained as follows: Urbanity integrated ideas for recovering the right to the city project as a central element of the new metropolitan citizenship; Accessibility, aimed at guaranteeing the rights to mobility within the metropolis and the assurance of access to basic urban services; Security provided protection not only in terms of public safety, but also in terms of food security, land tenure security etc.; and finally, Sustainability reinforced the proposal for sustainable development in environmental, economic and cultural-political scopes. Besides the integrating axes, the two structuring dimensions referred to Territoriality - with proposals for territorial restructuring - and Institutionality - with the design of new institutional arrangements (UFMG, 2011a).

Based on this new organizational and methodological structure, the final report of the PDDI, titled *Proposals for Sectoral Policies, Projects and Priority Investments* (UFMG, 2011a) and presented in six volumes, systematized 28 policies for the planning of RMBH, distributed among the axes and dimensions outlined in a series of programs, projects and actions. Among the proposed programs, two were later implemented and will be discussed later: The Metropolitan Macrozonning Integrated Program (MZ-RMBH) and the Program of Support to Elaboration and Revision of Municipal Legislation, both part of the Integrated Metropolitan Policy for Regulation of Land Use and Occupation.

The development of PDDI reinstates and consolidates a new moment of planning on a democratic basis, having as one of its presuppositions the involvement of civil society (TONUCCI FILHO, 2012). The participatory process was carried out through three cycles of public workshops and three metropolitan seminars. In total there was twenty-three events of participation throughout the process, which subsidized the entire process of work, from the diagnosis stage to the formulation of proposals for the Plan:

Cycle A recorded mainly the perceptions of civil society and public entities about the metropolitan identity and about the problems, challenges and possibilities of the RMBH, constituting a fundamental subsidy to the Integrated Sectorial Studies [...]. Cycle B constitutes the joint discussion of the first proposals organized around the Integrating Thematic Axes. [...] In Cycle C, four workshops were organized in Belo Horizonte, one for each of the Integrational Axes, in which the proposals for policies were deepened and detailed, besides a specific workshop to discuss the Proposal for Metropolitan Territorial Restructuring and another focused for the main institutional proposals and programs related to the implementation of the Plan (TONUCCI FILHO, 2012, p.180).

It is precisely from the perceptions about metropolitan identity, elaborated along with civil society, and from the concept of a *metropolitan place*, construed by the university team during the development of the plan, that we intend to analyze the possibilities and limitations of a permanent process of metropolitan planning in RMBH.

ABOUT METROPOLITAN IDENTITY AND THE METROPOLITAN PLACE

The construction of a sense of *metropolitan citizenship* is presented as PDDI's main reference for the development of an integrated metropolitan planning. According to its Final Report:

*It was a matter of unquestionably considering the centrality of the subject in the civitas, absolute and local, but also and especially in the amplified urban space - the "metropolitan civitas" - implying **the construction of a sense of identity** and the strengthening of citizenship practices, now on an urban-regional scale (UFMG, 2011a, p.16, emphasis added).*

In the Plan, metropolitan citizenship is defined as a way of recognizing (and acting) as part of a political space in two scales: a local one, corresponding to the condition of resident, and a broader scale, belonging to the metropolitan citizen. The construction of such political space takes place through the extrapolation of the traditionally recognized limits of local identity and the expansion of supra-municipal processes of cooperation and articulation (UFMG, 2011a). The great challenge was, therefore, to think about how it would be possible to extrapolate the municipal identity that historically defined socio-spatial relations in the RMBH and to imagine what would be the possible actions and guidelines for a more democratic metropolitan integration.

The idea of identity, in this case, was central to the initial discussions of the project, thought of as a process in constant production, constituted within relations and never through representations, as proposed by Stuart Hall (1990). The author outlines two perspectives from which identity can be fostered, although he asserts that the concept itself can be transformed in different historical times. The first perspective defines cultural identity in terms of unity, a shared culture that unites subjects under the same framework. By this definition:

our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as "one people", with the stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning (HALL, 1990, p. 223).

The second perspective, which is of interest here, refers to a cultural identity that recognizes, in addition to points of similarity, also the points of difference that constitute who we are. Thus, identification becomes a matter of "becoming" and not exclusively of "historical being" and belongs not only to the past, but also to the occurrences of the present and the future (HALL, 1990). From this notion, it is possible to imagine the construction of **metropolitan identity** through the PDDI as follows: if in the *theoretical-propositional* dimension of the Plan, this identity was the starting point for the elaboration of programs, policies, projects and actions, in practice, identity would be strengthened by means of a *continuous planning process*, which should therefore become increasingly participatory and inclusive, seeking to gradually insert the metropolitan practice in the local daily life.

One of the programs proposed by the PDDI that provided such continuity for metropolitan planning consisted in the implementation of Places of Metropolitan Urbanity (LUMEs), an constituent project of the Integrated Metropolitan Policy for Democratization of Public Spaces within the Urbanity

Axis (UFMG, 2011b). The purpose of these LUMEs was to create spaces (both physical and virtual) of articulation between University, State and Civil Society, for an ongoing discussion of Metropolitan Planning. In that context, it was intended to keep active the articulation built around the elaboration of the Plan and, mainly, to broaden it to more social actors, through three fronts of action: dissemination of information related to the metropolitan planning process; technical and community training in accordance with local demands; and monitoring support, especially for civil society groups, to keep track with the implementation of this planning process (UFMG, 2011b).

Taking as a starting point the proposal for the implementation of LUMEs, we hope to extend the reflection upon the relationship between *identity* and *place*, based on the work of Doreen Massey (1991). The *place* in its broader conception is also subject of discussion of the Plan (UFMG, 2011a) and in this sense we seek to analyze the possibilities and limitations of creating a **“metropolitan sense of place”** along with the creation of a new metropolitan identity.

According to Massey (1991), we still maintain an idealized notion of the connection between place and community, which leads us to always imagine it as a space of homogeneous and coherent relations, full of sentimental traditions and adverse to differences and externalities. From this perspective, the place would necessarily be a reactionary, hermetic and historical space. The geographer, however, provokes us to think of another sense of place, asking whether it is possible to imagine it as a space *“which would fit in with the current global-local times and the feelings and relations they give rise to”* (MASSEY, 1991, p.26). The first consequence of this progressive understanding of place is its dynamic character. It means a comprehension of the “character” of place, which can only be constructed by connecting it with others.

Like people, places also have multiple identities that can simultaneously be a source of wealth and conflict. Communities can exist without being in the same place. In fact, the author proposes that, in addition to physical movement, invisible communication, or even a long and internalized history, it is through social relations and the connections between people that it becomes possible to imagine an alternative interpretation of “place”. Thus, instead of thinking of places from their current notion, that is, as delimited frontier areas, one can imagine them as moments articulated in networks of social relations and understandings. This is an expanded notion of what we used to define as the place itself, that is, not just as a street, a region or a continent. This other understanding allows for a sense of place that is extroverted, which includes an awareness of its connections with the world at large and positively integrates the global and the local.

For Massey (1991), the identities of such progressive place may be multiple or may form a single complete identity that engenders the complex mixture of all others, as Hall (1990) argues. It is possible, therefore, to imagine metropolitan identity as a heterogeneous mixture of several other identities, which, seen from the prism of an “institutionality scale”, might be municipal, state-bound, local, regional, national, etc. and do not necessarily have to accommodate only

consensual relations, but also disputed and conflictual ones, which form, to some extent, a sense of enlarged citizenship.

Based on such considerations around the concepts of identity and place, and their implications in the metropolitan context, we attempt to rethink the proposal devised by PDDI for a metropolitan identity and its promotion through LUMEs. If metropolitan citizenship requires the formation of an identity, this new identity is formed from a metropolitan place that goes beyond its spatial and scalar notions:

If places can be conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which they tie together, then it is also the case that these interactions themselves are not motionless things, frozen in time. They are processes (MASSEY, 1991, p.29).

In designing the creation of Metropolitan Places, the PDDI already sought to highlight the planning process as an element of citizenship construction, thus approaching the concept as proposed by Massey (1991). However, the LUMEs proposal originally had a certain link to a territorial and physical notion of place. Even if a place were to be conceived away from homogeneity, the first practical conceptions of what these spaces would be like were projected into well-defined environments, since it was understood that in order to function a LUME would need a room with a computer and an employee (UFMG, 2011b, p. 809). It should be clarified that its initial inspiration was Brazilian Cultural Points project⁸. During the project development, the possibility of establishing LUMEs in Municipal Public Libraries was also considered, but the proposal quickly encountered institutional obstacles and went no further.

We suggest, therefore, that the understanding of place as a process, as proposed by Massey (1991) and presented in PDDI (2011a), and the construction of a metropolitan identity in the multiple and heterogeneous sense as explored by Hall (1990), was more greatly envisioned with the actual implementation of LUMEs practical experiences. These experiences advanced from the initial proposals of PDDI and bring important reflections for the continuation of the ongoing metropolitan planning process.

THE LUMES EXPERIENCES

After the end of the PDDI in 2011, the implementation of a continuous metropolitan planning process was guaranteed, as mentioned in the first part of this article, by means of two programs proposed by the Integrated Metropolitan Policy for Regulation of Land Use and Occupation. The first of these programs was the Metropolitan Macrozonning Integrated Program (MZ-RMBH), which, according to its name, elaborated the macrozonning of the territory through the identification of Metropolitan Interest Zones (ZIMs).

During the elaboration of the MZ-RMBH (between 2013 and 2014), the LUMEs implementation proposal was resumed and, on this occasion, reformulated and expanded. Participatory moments allowed for the discussion of LUMEs constitutive principles with civil society collectives and social movements and brought essential transformations to its configuration. The first

⁸The cultural manifestations of cultural groups, entities or groups, as certified by the Ministry of Culture, are established as Cultural Points, based on the establishment of an interlocking agreement of responsibilities and rights between government and civil society (NUNES, 2011). It is an integral project of the Live Culture Program whose focus is the social protagonism from a model of shared management articulated in network.

⁹ More information is available at <http://www.rmbh.org.br/mapa.php>.

¹⁰ The disciplines related to the LUMEs have been offered for three semesters. During this period, the following groups or actions were advised: Casulo, project to strengthen the Ribeirão das Neves art scene; Parque Barroão, a group that fights for the implementation of a park in an Ecological Reserve in Matozinhos; Fair outside the Line, in Vespasiano; Santa Martinha, an association of weavers in Ribeirão das Neves; Coopervesp, Garbage Collection Cooperative in Vespasiano; Vila Vicentina, articulation for the recovery of a space to house groups of Raposos and the activities of a metropolitan boarding school; Metropolitan Guide, a guide that seeks to map the main metropolitan references from interviews and talk wheels; Booklet on Executive Plans; In Focus, technical education school and Popular Solidary Economy in Esmeraldas; and Espaço ConVida, a local incentive project for citizenship, solidarity and social responsibility in Sarzedo.

of these was the extension of the themes addressed by the LUMEs going beyond metropolitan planning in a strict sense. For a real articulation between University, Civil Society and Public Sector, as intended, it was noted that these themes should remain flexible, thus encompassing the complexity of emerging demands and discussions. Another realization was the urgency of an articulation between groups acting at multiple scales - municipal, metropolitan, state - and themes - environment, mobility, education, housing, etc.

Under such new guiding principles, the first practical LUMEs experience was the virtual mapping RMBH's cultural identity⁹. The project took place between 2015 and 2016 and was aimed at mapping and cataloging municipal facilities related to the promotion of social, educational, cultural and sports development. The presence of local leaderships, NGOs, associations, media, events and parties, cultural features and other curiosities were also mapped (ROCHA et al., 2015). Along with this process, other information such as plans, legislation and municipal documents were collected to form an updated database. From this experience emerged the idea of creating virtual platforms that would serve as support to physical spaces, to concentrate information collected and systematized throughout the process.

Other LUMEs experiences were linked to courses offered in UFMG's faculties of Architecture & Urbanism and Economy. These experiments, in the spirit of university extension, were developed based on the support to demands brought to the university by external groups and collectives. The groups involved were mostly formed by civil society, although occasionally with support from members of city government or council representatives. As expected, a varied number of issues were raised, at first glance perhaps distanced from the metropolitan planning subject, such as supporting a group of embroiderers or implementing a cultural space in an abandoned building¹⁰.

A recurrent perception acquired during participatory processes is that territorial planning discussion alone can be extremely based on technical knowledge which can sometimes make it unavailable and uninviting to the general public. The LUMEs' experiences broadened the possibilities for overcoming this "limitation" by demonstrating that a multiplicity of everyday issues connected to community interests can set off the construction of a metropolitan identity, thus contributing to the continuity of planning and its grassroots emergence.

LUMEs are now seen as flexible spaces, with special attention to the promotion of multi-scaled, multi-thematic networks, sometimes developed in parallel to the institutionalized planning process, but always seeking to integrate itself to metropolitan planning in a broader way. What we note here is the transformation of the meaning of place, as proposed by Massey (1991). Insofar as places are understood as moments of articulation of networks, composed of multiscaled social relations, we can abandon the previous notion of a place linked to a determined spatiality as an imperative for its constitution.

POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF LUMES INSTITUTIONALIZATION FROM THE MONITORING GROUPS (GAS) EXPERIENCES IN THE MUNICIPAL MASTER PLANS REVISION PROCESS

The most recent stage of metropolitan planning began in 2016 with the implementation of the Program of Support to Elaboration and Revision of Municipal Legislation, another project proposed by PDDI that involved the revision of the Municipal Master Plans (PDs) of eleven of RMBH's municipalities¹¹. At this stage, a new possibility for LUMEs implementation came to be, this time fostered by the learning of previous experiences, counting with an effective public-sector involvement (executive and legislative) along with civil society members and, also, presenting the theme of territorial planning as catalyst for such articulation.

This program, still in progress, is executed once more with UFMGs intermediation and contribution, prompted by the previous metropolitan planning experiences and the dissemination of its proposals and concepts. The program's objective is to detail the guidelines, policies and programs developed by PDDI and MZ-RMBH in the process of advising Municipal Representatives (mayor and technical team) on the revision of their own local Master Plans. It is, therefore, a process of metropolitan and local planning compatibilization that seeks to enhance both scales and their specific dynamics.

The local identity expansion, its articulation with the metropolitan scale and even the deconstruction of the competition spirit among municipalities noted by Rolnik and Somekh (2000) remain as challenges to the process. As expressed in public hearings and other participatory moments, there is still a strong desire for greater municipal autonomy with respect to facilities, services, attraction of investments and the like (universities, hospitals, etc.). However, the emergence of certain discussions and networks that address the importance of "multiscalarity" can also be observed, particularly around certain themes.

One of these catalytic themes is, for example, urban mobility, especially in regards to public transport. Like many of the Brazilian metropolises, RMBH is characterized by an excessive centralization of services and facilities in the capital (Belo Horizonte) attracting intense flows of people and goods from the peripheral municipalities. Thinking about and fighting for mobility effectively implies, therefore, an enlargement of scales, a perception that seems to be slowly consolidating amongst the actors involved in the theme. Other issues that stand out from this perspective include water resources and preservation areas, especially when their limits transpose municipal boundaries (such as river basins, for example) and more so when their benefits and/or impacts are felt in a generalized way.

In addition to the traditional participatory process that integrates the procedures for a Master Plan revision, a relevant particularity of the project in question was the creation, in each of the advised municipalities, of Monitoring

¹¹The municipalities contemplated are: Baldim, Caeté, Capim Branco, Itatiaiuçu, Juatuba, Mateus Leme, Nova União, Rio Manso, São Joaquim de Bicas, Sarzedo and Vespasiano.

Groups (GAs), defined as official parity bodies formed by members of the municipal Executive and Legislative sectors and by civil society members¹², whose duties are:

to participate in public hearings related to the Municipal Master Plan revision process; to promote the dissemination and publicization of the information produced during the works development; to discuss with the sectors they represent about any and all information of public interest related to the Master Plan revision process and [sic] to provide, if there is any, data and information produced by different instances of public sector and organized civil society that can subsidize the revision of the Plan (MINAS GERAIS, 2016, online).

The eleven municipal GAs presented different levels of involvement throughout the planning process. It was possible to notice an heterogeneity of representations within them, expressing the diverse interests and also the different identities that forms the RMBH. These differences are particularly expressed in the local community's ability to articulate civil society participation in the forums and workshops carried out by UFMG and in the GAs' own initiative to undertake activities that exceeded those proposed by the technical team. For example, the initiative of some GAs in carrying out additional participatory workshops - taking ownership of the methodologies applied by the technical team - or the promotion of internal thematic discussions and complementary mapping to those already available at the municipal level. Despite the disparities, a continuous agenda of weekly meetings was established in all GAs. These meetings were open to the whole society and biweekly accompanied by a trainee of the technical team.

A simultaneous process of eleven Master Plans reviewed within the same metropolitan region made possible, in an intensified way, the expansion of the local social imaginary and the overcoming of strictly municipal planning. The process allowed for moments of encounter between the different GAs, such as the Training and Evaluation Workshops, and encouraged the presence of the GAs in the participatory moments of other municipalities, which sometimes occurred. It is our understanding that such process potentializes the construction of networks from the recognition of common challenges and from learning through the sharing of experiences, which, in turn, contributes to the development of more articulated identities.

The Monitoring Groups established themselves as articulators between UFMG's technical team and local demands, knowledges and desires. With the prospect of finalizing the Master Plans revision, these groups future is uncertain, yet they carry the potential - desirable and encouraged - of continuity. This continuation can take place, for example, by their transmutation into Municipal Councils, a path for institutionalization with all its pros and cons. On the other hand, its maintenance as a LUME has the potential to strengthen local identities, enabling articulations in the metropolitan scale and contributing to the implementation of a continuous discussion process concerning planning. In the short term it can be

¹² A shared coordination of the review process through the formation of a group composed by public sector representatives and civil society is guided by resolution 25/2008 of the Ministry of Cities.

accomplished by the following process of approval of the revised Master Plans in the Municipal Councils, but in the mid and long term, it can be sustained as a way of social control throughout the implementation of all the different guidelines and proposals collectively agreed and systematized in these Plans.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The planning of the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte, which began in the late 1970s, underwent an important process of transformation: after a period of hiatus in the 1990s, the metropolitan project was resumed, seeking to overcome the technocratic foundations of the military period and increasingly implement a participatory basis. As we have seen throughout this article, the new model of metropolitan management conducted by the Federal University of Minas Gerais was based mainly on the idea that it is the **planning process** (perhaps more than the final plans) that allows for the democratic management of the metropolis' territory.

This ongoing planning process has revealed the need for both the creation of a **metropolitan identity** and the recognition of **metropolitan places** in which its citizens can share a daily life with rules agreed upon and shared locally. The objective of this article was to discuss these concepts further, on the basis of the practical experiences that have unfolded both in the disciplines offered by the University and in the development of MZ-RMBH, as well as in the creation of the GAs, in the current process of Revision of Municipal Master Plans.

In general, we understand that the planning process initiated in 2009 has contributed to an in-depth understanding of the territory of the RMBH, to establish common development bases and to build uniform proposals in its treatment, even if adapted to local realities. However, although we believe that such planning process has catalyzed moments of intermunicipal articulation and fomented intermittent metropolitan places, in accordance with the concepts discussed here, it is also noted that the University still assumes a prominent role in the maintenance of the networks of social relations that constitute these metropolitan places.

Although some advances can be observed, it is possible to argue that the municipalist thinking overrides the perspective of a multiple and heterogeneous metropolitan identity and that a solid process of continuous planning, as conceived by the PDDI-RMBH, has not yet been fully achieved. However, the establishment of these ideals are, in themselves, *processes* that contribute disjunctively to the recognition of the importance of multiple-scales efforts for a democratic management of the metropolis.

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