

Anita Joussemet (Ed.), La recherche sur la ville au Brésil: Actes des journées franco-brésiliennes du PIR Villes, Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1997, 284 pp. Bibliography by Chapter.

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This is a very good book, encompassing historical and contemporary accounts of the Brazilian research and thought on cities. It is the result of a workshop on the subject held in Paris between 28-29 November, 1994. The work is divided in parts and contains articles written by Brazilian geographers, architects with a training in sociology and political science as well as sociologists. Indeed, the authors belong to different regions of the country, escaping the vice of books concentrating on the so-called axis Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo.

Part I deals with the history of urban research and urbanistic thought. Here one finds a masterful essay by geographer Mauricio de Almeida Abreu from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (hereafter Rio) entitled “Thinking on the City in Brazil: Sixteenth-Eighteenth Century” (pp. 13-36). Abreu divides his history in basically three stages: the role of military engineers during the colonial period (until 1822, the independence), the hygienists in the Nineteenth century and the growing role of civil engineers from 1870 until the developments that originated the urban renewal of Rio during the administration of mayor-engineer Francisco Pereira Passos, an episode which is by now classic in Brazilian urban history. The article shows a knowledge of recent scholarship on the field such as the discovery that Brazil had planned cities in the colonial period and there was a territorial policy, a fact that has been denied for several decades on Brazilian history because of the influence and importance of the work of Sergio Buarque de Holanda (a kind of Brazilian Braudel): *Raízes do Brasil* (The Roots of Brazil). This findings were already pointed out by Nestor Goulart Reis Filho (*Evolução Urbana do Brasil*, 1968) and most recently and in more detail by Roberta Marx Delson (*New Towns for Colonial Brazil: Spatial and Social Planning of the Eighteenth Century*, 1979). Indeed, Abreu is updated with new turns in Brazilian historiography such as the discovery of the urban economic dynamism during the same period, a fact equally denied for a long time. From the Nineteenth century onwards, the essay concentrates mostly on

Rio, the consultation of a medical commission in 1798, the medical preoccupation with urban epidemics in the context of the miasmatic theory and the rise of the importance of civil engineers after the implementation of the first railway in 1850.

Chapter two is a statistical analysis of urban research between 1940-80 undertaken by Licia Valadares, an urban sociologist from Rio who got her PhD from the University of Toulouse in France and is well known for her works on favela (slums) cleaning and literature reviews. Valadares is the co-ordinator of URBANDATA- a database on Brazilian urban research which is based at her institution, IUPERJ. The author shows the decline of geography and anthropology as the leading disciplines on the city in the 40s and the rising of disciplines such as sociology and planning as the most important although she acknowledges that Brazilian urban research became very inter-disciplinary nowadays. Indeed, the reader will perhaps be surprised to know the importance of the national production compared to the foreign, 89% of the output being in Portuguese, 6% in English and 3% in French, although part of the literature not in Portuguese was also written by Brazilian scholars. However, the classifications used are a bit unclear or too vague. The kind of subjects or approaches used within categories such as urban planning, social movements or urban evolution are not discussed. Indeed, the geographical attention of the studies were not seized in numbers here.

Part II deals with urban policy and local government, the first article being on recent history, urban spoliation, social struggles and citizenship. This is a piece by one of the leading urban sociologists in Brazil, Lucio Kowarick, an specialist in marginality and social exclusion from the University of São Paulo. The author deals mainly with his previous scholarship and discusses the non-correspondence of poverty and social exclusion with political militancy, concluding that marginality is growing and political participation is not fostering social change, a great disappointment given recent events such as the civic movement for direct elections in 1984 and the official end of the military regime in 1985. The conclusion is that Brazilian citizens, the few that deserve this title, earning more than ten minimum salaries (c. 120.00US\$) paying taxes and not using public services because of its quality (c. 10% of the population according to him), are *citoyens privé* (private citizens) in the double sense of the French world: deprived of social benefits and socially isolate in a country which “does not find the direction of its own development” (pp. 82).

Chapter two in this part was written by two architects and planners (Norma Lacerda and Sueli Leal) and sociologist Breno Souto Maior, all of them from the Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife. The article

treated local government in the Northeast and the new paradigms, discussing alternatives in the context of globalisation and showing that clientelistic and corporatist practices are dominant in the relationship of City Halls and Councils with the population. This feature is particularly strong in small municipalities where the budget is almost a secret. The Brazilian Northeast contains 20% of the Brazilian population and 55% of the indigents. Other sources point out that this region encompasses one-third of the population. The conclusion suggests popular participation, administrative transparency and the progressive introduction of pedagogic improvements in the local culture. Therefore, Robert Cabanes, who wrote the introduction to this part, is right to say that all the articles share a “lack of optimism with social movements” (pp. 70).

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