Dissolving silences and stereotypes about differences in organization studies of the city

Desfazendo silêncios e estereótipos sobre diferenças nos estudos organizacionais da cidade

Disolviendo silencios y estereotipos sobre las diferencias en los estudios organizacionales de la ciudad

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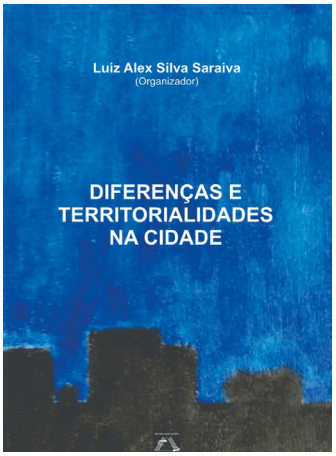

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Based on an organizational approach and on the philosophy of differences (Deleuze, 2006), the book *Diferenças e territorialidades na cidade* (Saraiva, 2020) (Differences and territorialities in the city) can be defined as bold and creative in terms of content and form. It is also bold and creative when it comes to the literature in the field of administrative sciences, particularly organizational studies emphasizing the plural organization of the city (Mac-Allister, 2004). The book published in 2020 reflects different issues related to the neighborhood of "strangers" who inhabit the spaces of cities, organizing and signifying their territorialities through discontinuities and differences, challenging the concept of "normality." Discussions on the issue of differences in territoriality through storytelling motivated this review and my recommendation. This book helps the reader to understand the different aspects related to the citizen-centered organization of cities.

The book uses language based on different historical plots, as a "story to be told." Because of this style, it is accessible to different audiences, including researchers in the area of organizational studies – especially organization of the city – and scholars interested in urban management and philosophy and sociology through "production of difference." The book also suits psychology, arts, literature, and geography scholars, due to the interdisciplinarity observed throughout its chapters, helping researchers understand the use of urban spaces. The discussions portrayed can be studied and further enriched in the light of other publications, such as Michel Agier's works, *Do direito à cidade ao fazer-cidade. O antropólogo, a margem e o centro* (Agier, 2015) (From the right to the city to city-making. The anthropologist, the margin, and the center), and *Antropologia da cidade: lugares, situações, movimentos* (Agier, 2015) (Anthropology of the city: places, situations, movements).

The book, freely available in electronic format, comprises six chapters written in narrative style by different researchers from the *Núcleo de Estudos Organizacionais e Sociedade* (NEOS), the center for organizational studies and society of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Under the organization and guidance of Professor Luiz Alex Silva Saraiva (UFMG), this publication problematizes how differences in cities are manifested and territorialized through aspects related to i) madness,

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ii) contemporary art, iii) urban *quilombos*, and iv) subordinate work. Its guiding principle is the perspective of organized social life to understand the experience of the unexpected and the "strange" as an issue existing and resisting in the urban environment. These related aspects draw attention to discussions that do not make up mainstream administration studies, allowing to broaden the scope of the relationship between "difference" and "city" under the aegis of studies that present the theme of diversity and minorities in organizational studies.

The authors of each chapter were invited to create a character to problematize the different social groups. The characters represented the chapters' theme and were inspired, at the level of analysis, by the ideal types of Max Weber (1973). The research works were based on actual data embodied in fictional characters to reconstruct the Weberian heuristic sense of comparability. They portray the experiences and tensions within these groups in the shadows of the city.

Professor Ana Sílvia Rocha Ipiranga, from the State University of Ceará (UECE), writes the preface, presenting different conceptions of the philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin. Professor Ipiranga proposes a reflection on the cities developed following a perspective of modernity and seeking "progress," becoming divided while receiving the different social groups discussed in the book. The author approaches this question based on one of Benjamin's most famous works, *Passagenwerk* (Arcades Project), which portrays critical historiography of the "modern" city of Paris.

The first chapter was written by Saraiva. The author explains some of the main concepts covered in the book, such as organized social life, the issue of differences, territoriality and the problematization around the idea of disputes as coexistence with other groups, and the idea of a diversified territory. Also, Saraiva presents the methodology – which was based, as mentioned before, on the Weberian ideal type – and the elements inspiring the publication. The other chapters address the paths taken by social groups considered "different" in cities.

Chapter two is a contribution by Fabiane Louise Bitencourt Pinto. The author finds inspiration in the Brazilian writer Jorge Amado's narrative to discuss the position of the in-between in the figure of the foreman from the first two works by Amado related to the cocoa economic cycle in Brazil: *Cacau* (Amado, 1933) (Cocoa) and *Terras do sem-fim* (Amado, 1943) (The Violent Land). In light of the conceptions of Brazilian peripheral modernity and the relationship among literature, history, and organizational studies, the author introduces her fictional character, Algemiro. Algemiro is a foreman, a subordinate worker who works in the context of the cocoa area of southern Bahia, and his story touches on themes such as oppression, adaptation, and domination.

Algemiro makes the reader reflect on the in-between place of a proletarian and questions his position in the colonel's shadow as a subordinate, a minor bordering position between the real and the imaginary. This character reveals itself as a reflection of the hierarchy of hegemonic groups, in which different social strata are placed in a situation of inequality and social segregation.

Chapter three presents the story of Vicente, an artist experiencing the tensions between aesthetics and the commodification of art. The author, Felipe Mateus Assis Soares, produced a text outlined by the dynamics of the artist's professional ethos in the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais) and its reflection in the development of the disputed space. The story portrayed by Soares helps to understand this group differences and how it territorializes the space of the city.

When reading Vicente's story, a point of tension in the relationship "gallery versus studio" reveals an ambiguity in the form of a dilemma in the artist's life. Vicente leads the reader to reflect on how the subject's action can change and claim certain spaces in the city. Exploring these elements, the author manages to present a connection that explains the dispute in the urban space. However, the author could have provided a more specific look, examining issues that were left out of the discussion. Among the issues left out, the author could approximate the concept of "aura" addressed by Walter Benjamin, which is a valuable aesthetic element that inspires reflections on art reproduction, commercialization, and exclusivity (Benjamin, 2013).

Although Vicente studied at one of the most renowned art schools in the city, he was pushed to the urban margins. Thus, the following reflection may be proposed: what is the place in the city for artists like Vicente, but who did not attend art schools or teaching environments? How do they signify and territorialize their spaces?

Chapter four entitled *Meu nome é Pedro, mais conhecido como Pedro Louco* (My name is Pedro, better known as Crazy Pedro) is Fabiana Florio Domingues' contribution. The author deals with a specific group of excluded people in the city: those considered crazy or deviant, addressing the history of madness and the power relations inherent to spaces of confinement

of bodies (Foucault, 2012). The author presents different reflections, leading the reader to contemplate the story of people considered invisible in society and who, instead of giving up, find ways to exist in the urban environment within their own conceptions of life, rebuilding ways of living in the city.

Before telling Pedro's story, Domingues presents the history of Cachoeiro de Itapemirim – a city in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo – and the construction of a large psychiatric hospital in the city center in the 1970s. Therefore, the author allows an approximation with Pedro's story, the character's dilemmas, and the countless times he was admitted to the hospital and experienced the horrors in that place. The reader is led to assume that the logic used in these environments is more common than one would think: that kind of hospital is a place to deposit and hide the unwanted, strange, and different, thus silencing those who do not adapt. As these groups do not belong anywhere, they end up territorializing the space by wandering about (the author uses the word *perambular* in Portuguese). This term reflects how this group experience and perceive the city.

The highlight of the chapter is the author's discussion on these different elements when addressing the issue of cities' sanitization and social cleansing by removing those considered exotic, drifters, and crazy. This discussion instigates me to stress, add, and compare these issues with the urbanization process based on the belle époque, which translated the European euphoria of urban beautification through which several Brazilian cities undertook, in which there was aesthetic beautification of the streets, avenues and squares, and everything that appeared to be ugly, different, abnormal, and dirty was removed, including people. The text ends by questioning who the city is really for.

The fifth chapter was written by Elisângela de Jesus Furtado da Silva and tells the story of Ana Luiza Silva, a 45-year-old black and *quilombola* woman. She is the leader of her people and lives amidst conflicts due to her skin color, gender, social class. Because of these characteristics, she is marginalized in the city of Belo Horizonte.

The author's path while telling Ana Luiza's story permeates the movement of the Brazilian *quilombo*, the tense relations of the urbanization process in the neighborhood where she lives and acts as a community leader, the relationship with the quilombo, and the different social conflicts. The author explores the character's personal contradictions, culminating in issues related to racism and intolerance to differences in the territorial dimension. Also, Silva presents different racial, political, religious, cultural, historical, and educational elements to understand how *quilombos* territorialize their space in the city and challenge the use of space and urban policies.

Saraiva also wrote the sixth and final chapter, synthesizing potential paths for the research on differences and territorialities in the city. The author presents a research agenda based on three of the main themes of organizational studies about cities: i) territoriality; ii) sociability, symbolisms, and cultures; and iii) social inequalities and urban segregation. All these themes somehow approach the ideas discussed in the book. The interdisciplinarity is considered one of the first points on the agenda, and the author stresses the need for openness and flexibility to dialogue with other sources of knowledge and the importance of developing studies centered on differences and not on hegemonies. Saraiva ends his proposal on a research agenda by problematizing the use of more sensitive and humanized new methodologies in organizational studies. The book assumes a counter-hegemonic view of organization, enabling organizational studies to advance by considering the city and its complexity also as an organization (Mac-Allister, 2004).

This provocative publication and its content indicate the immersion in themes silenced and marginalized in administration studies. The book points out the need to expand the knowledge on the issue of differences and their forms of territorialization. The authors build a bridge between the topic addressed and the different possibilities of using such a debate in the field of organizational studies, by relating the topic to other areas of knowledge through an interdisciplinary look at the city, especially regarding the imminent need for a philosophical and critical problematization in organizational studies (Cooper, 1976). The book opens new horizons by instigating paths for future and innovative management studies based on a critical point of view, considering identity and diversity and expanding the discussion of themes such as race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and neurodiversity, for example, also including debates with relation to the issue of power and subjectivity (Souza, 2014), in their territorialization processes. Therefore, this work contributes to the advance of organizational studies as a field of knowledge.

Furthermore, the discussion about the differences in organizational studies regarding the city may lead to new perspectives on the process of signifying differences in the spaces of cities and, above all, signifying their relationship with the center through the problematization between the public and the private, and between the population living in the impoverished areas and those living in privileged neighborhoods. Thus, this debate broadens the scope of the organizational studies, designing new urban configurations by rethinking the relationship between the center and/or the margins (Das & Poole, 2004).

Therefore, this book represents the authors' effort to problematize issues that undo some of the myths linked to social groups on the margins of cities and offer a mosaic of great potential for advancement in the area. At the same time, the authors reveal the challenge of discarding stereotypes while producing knowledge.

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