

AN EVENT AND SOME TUGS-OF-WAR: THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR CREATION OF NEW CITIES, 1958

*Paula Dedecca**

*Escola da Cidade, Sequência de História, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

Abstract

This article discusses the International Seminar on the “Creation of New Towns”, held in Rio de Janeiro, in 1958, promoted by the Instituto Brasileiro de Educação, Ciência e Cultura [Brazilian Institute of Education, Science and Culture], with the collaboration of the International Union of Architects, the Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil [Brazilian Institute of Architects] and the Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital [Urbanization Company of the New Capital]. Through this transnational, multidisciplinary and interinstitutional event, this article seeks to understand some of the disciplinary tensions in the dispute to legitimize the ways of thinking about and creating new cities, focusing on the strategies mobilized by architects and urban planners. The analysis is mainly based on official records of the seminar and on news items published by the daily press in Rio de Janeiro, which provide us with multiple versions of what took place.

Keywords

Urbanism; Institutions; New Towns; Brasília; Ibicc; UIA; IAB.

UM EVENTO E ALGUNS CABOS DE GUERRA: O SEMINÁRIO INTERNACIONAL CRIAÇÃO DE NOVAS CIDADES, 1958

Paula Dedecca*

*Escola da Cidade, Sequência de História, São Paulo, SP, Brasil

Resumo

O artigo analisa o Seminário Internacional “Criação de Novas Cidades”, promovido no Rio de Janeiro, em 1958, pelo Instituto Brasileiro de Educação, Ciência e Cultura, com a colaboração da União Internacional dos Arquitetos, do Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil e da Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital. A partir desse evento transnacional, multidisciplinar e interinstitucional, busca-se apreender algumas tensões disciplinares na disputa por legitimidade de modos de pensar e fazer as cidades novas, com foco nas estratégias mobilizadas pelos arquitetos e urbanistas. A análise ancora-se, sobretudo, em registros oficiais do evento e em notícias veiculadas no jornalismo cotidiano carioca, que nos fornecem versões múltiplas sobre os acontecimentos.

Palavras-chave

Urbanismo; Instituições; Cidades Novas; Brasília; Ibccc; UIA; IAB.

AN EVENT AND SOME TUGS-OF-WAR: THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR CREATION OF NEW CITIES, 1958¹

Paula Dedecca

In October 1958, the International Seminar on the “Creation of New Towns” was held in Rio de Janeiro, the then capital of the country, and in Brasília, which at that time was in the advanced process of construction. From the perspective of its organizers, the theme was proposed because of its urgency: the “tragic situation” of the existing cities and the drama of their populations clearly exposed the need for urban and regional forms more suited to their aspirations. According to the agenda, without the inclusion of specific citations, efforts from all over the world were turned toward confronting the “decadence, the incapacity of current cities, the drama of dispersed populations, or rather, those thrown together without the slightest attention to their needs”² (IAB- RJ, 1958a, p. 97)³. Promoted by the Instituto Brasileiro de Educação, Ciência e Cultura [the Brazilian Institute of Education, Science and Culture] (Ibccc),⁴ with the collaboration of the International Union of Architects (UIA), the Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil [Brazilian Institute of Architects] (IAB)

1. Part of this text originates from the doctoral thesis *Arquitetura e engajamento: o IAB, o debate profissional e suas arenas transnacionais (1920-1970)* [Architecture and engagement: the IAB, the professional debate and its transnational arenas (1920-1970)]. The author thanks Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Capes) and Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Fapesp) for their financial support, as well as Amália Cristóvão dos Santos, Glória Kok and Pedro Lopes for the opportunity to discuss its content in a preliminary version.

2. This and all non-English citations hereafter have been translated by the author.

3. IAB-RJ: Brazilian Institute of Architects – Rio de Janeiro Office.

4. All the acronyms used throughout this article appear in the language of their country of origin.

and the Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital [Urbanization Company of the New Capital] (Novacap), the intention of the event was to contribute to a broad, open debate on the theme – an intention that, little by little, became redesigned with more pragmatic determinations (id., Ib.).

Despite being small in size, the seminar was reported extensively by the daily press, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, which conveyed the preparations, expectations, debates, conclusions and personal impressions – a somewhat intense interest that stood in contrast to the lack of attention paid to the event by the specialized periodicals aimed at professionals in the fields of architecture and urbanism. This article, based on official records of the meeting and on a diffuse myriad of news, which expresses multiple versions of what took place, intends to situate, in a relational manner, the actions, agents, discourses, and strategies fighting to find a voice regarding the planned new towns.

While this was not a new issue, it was in the order of the day, both in Brazil and internationally, given that, at the end of the 1950s, it involved an expressive national urban production that went far beyond Brasília: from the new state capitals to the resort cities, from cities to occupy the territory to those directly associated with agricultural or real estate ventures, from workers' villages to company towns (TREVISAN, 2020).⁵ Considering the profusion and quality of the recent work that has been produced on new towns from the viewpoint of intellectual history, the primary objective here is to apprehend some of the intra and interdisciplinary tensions within the dispute to legitimize ways of considering and creating new towns, based on the examination of a transnational, multidisciplinary and interinstitutional event.⁶

If these were years in which architects were socially legitimized as a professional group that was capable of assuming the huge tasks of urbanism, partially occupying the place that had previously belonged to engineers and the

5. There are numerous cases that could be cited here to illustrate this variety, such as Belo Horizonte, as the state capital of Minas Gerais; the resort town of Águas de Lindoia (SP); Nova Veneza (GO) as a colonization settlement; the city of Paulo Afonso (BA) built around the grounds of the dam and hydroelectric plant; of Caraíba (BA) and Serra do Navio (AP) as worker villages and company towns (TREVISAN, 2020).

6. This article is mainly interested in contributing to a reflection on the history of professions, examining the struggles through delimiting the attributions and borders within a perspective of field, as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, but also the internal disputes surrounding the validation of the modes of action. In order to delve into the historiography of new cities, much of relevance has been written on the subject, by researchers such as Carlos Roberto Monteiro de Andrade, Ricardo Trevisan, Rogério Quintanilha, Telma de Barros Correia, Maria Cristina Leme, among others, on the national scene, or like Donatella Calabi, Françoise Choay, Jean-Louis Huot, Pierre Merlin, Rassem Khamaisi, among others, within an international scope.

know-how of the *Beaux-Arts*, on the one hand, they had to reconcile their usual mode of operation – closely associated with liberal, generalist identity and individual genius – with a perspective of specialization and multidisciplinary in producing urban plans, and, on the other hand, to negotiate their place with professionals from other disciplines, who also sought a voice within the debate (DURAND, 1972).

1. Between the free encounter and the pragmatic seminar

In the first place, it is interesting to perceive the oscillation of the objectives attributed to the seminar. In January 1958, when it was still imagined that it would take place in São Paulo, the communiqué of the IAB São Paulo office announced the event as a meeting of intellectuals coming together on issues that “would inject new life into the study of traditional communities, from the viewpoint of the habitat, demography, psychology, and the effects of industrialization”, among other possible approaches. The wager was that such a variety of problems, “of a cultural, artistic, philosophical, sociological, economic and legal nature”, would shift the discussion away from a technical standpoint by considering the “various human aspects” (IAB-SP, 1958a, p. 2).

From the very beginning, by distancing itself from technicians and approaching the intellectuals, the seminar had excluded a section of the professionals who until then had been responsible for a substantial slice of the task of thinking about the new settlements: the engineers. It should be remembered that, since 1933, with the professional regulation established by Decree No. 23,569 (BRASIL, 1933), the design, management and supervision of urban planning services were commonly attributed to architects and engineers, among other overlaps. Dissatisfaction with this legal coincidence and the dispute to establish a social and legal viewpoint of the specificity of the profession were, in the late 1950s, on a central agenda of the architects’ struggle, so much so that we are unable to ignore the apparently intentional absence of engineers at the event (OLIVEIRA, 2011).

After news was released that indicated setbacks in the organization of the meeting, the column by the art critic Jayme Maurício in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, on August 5, 1958, announced the new plans, agreed in a meeting at Itamaraty (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), with representatives from the institutions involved – among them was Oscar Niemeyer, probably representing Novacap, and who, according to Maurício, seemed to have taken over the reins of the discussion. With the withdrawal of financial support from the Matarazzo Foundation and the almost total subsidy assumed by the Brazilian Federal Government, the event would be transferred to Rio de Janeiro and its organization passed from the hands of the IAB-SP to those of the IAB-RJ. Moreover, previously called a meeting or symposium, and

thought of in a more ambitious manner, it was to be relegated to the simpler status of a “roundtable for architects and urban planners” (MAURÍCIO, 1958a).

If it was intended that the architects and urban planners were to be the majority, the tone that justified the meeting also took on another connotation. Sociologists, economists and public health workers were invited only as observers, since the “excessive dispersion”, beyond urban and architectural issues, would result in a debate that was “excessively vague” (MAURÍCIO, 1958a). According to Ary Garcia Roza, the then national president of the IAB, it was not a question of initiating a debate, which had already been discussed in countless other moments, but of assuming a series of conclusions as a starting point for a pragmatic discussion on new cities and for outlining objective plans, “necessary for practical action” (SEMINÁRIO..., 1958a).

It is true that, just in that year of 1958, there had been events that, in some manner or another, had addressed the new settlements. We can mention the IV Congress of the UIA, held in Moscow, with the theme “The Construction and Reconstruction of Cities” (the proceedings of which were distributed to the participants of the seminar); the 24th Congress of the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP), in Liège, Belgium, with the theme “Problems of town planning and housing within the framework of the region”; or the Seminar for Technicians and Officials in Urban Planning, in Bogotá, Colombia, organized by the *Centro Interamericano de Vivienda y Planeamiento* of the Organization of American States [Inter-American Center for Housing and Planning] (CINVA/OAS). To these we may also add the final and conflicting edition of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (Ciam), held the following year (MUMFORD, 2002; OUTTES, 2015; VAGO, 1998).

And so, based on such meetings, it is therefore of interest to problematize the expectation of pragmatism and consensus proposed by Garcia Roza: if, in these events, there were multiple approaches to the issue of territorial planning, there was a definite absence of pacificatory points concerning the paths to be followed, especially with regard to the creation of new cities. Intentionally created human settlements, even though they predate the establishment of the discipline of architecture and urbanism, have been a topic dear to such professionals ever since the late nineteenth century, especially from the mid-twentieth century onwards in the context of European reconstruction and the demographic explosion of American, African and Asian cities. If in geographic terms it was a phenomenon that went beyond the scope of Northern Europe, in the field of urban theory, the debate on the new towns in England and the *cités nouvelles* in France were the foundations for an understanding, associated with the perspective of controlling

the expansion of large cities through the creation of new centers, which had a huge circulation worldwide as a result of the creation of intellectual networks, with different agents and spaces for dialogue (TREVISAN, 2020). Thus, it is of relevance that the seminar took place precisely in English and French.

Among the various specialized forums that brought about a complex intensification of the professional critical perspective on the subject, the numerous stances assumed over the course of the Ciams in relation to new cities – from the Athens Charter to the Habitat Charter – resonated greatly throughout the professional field in terms of appropriating the ideas defended by the entity, including in Brazil (MUMFORD, 2002). Although this close correspondence may be put into question today, for many, at the time, Brasília was one of the few concrete examples of the functionalist city, built at the precise moment when this ideal was being strongly questioned.

Indeed, added to the pretense of rationality and functionality were proposals of mixture and diversity. To normativity and generality, a search for identities and individualities was proposed, counterpointing the perspective of the *tabula rasa* with the consideration of pre-existences. From the modern idealization of truth, simplicity and homogeneity, a wager emerged on the complexity and heterogeneity of everyday life; and with the wager on technique, on technocracy, on the authority of the State, on large-scale intervention, so the human scale, the small cross-section and participation were resumed. The centrality of the individual architect was set against collective work, multidisciplinary and the convening of multiple knowledges for thinking about the city.

2. Brasília: a latent discomfort

Thus, held on Brazilian soil and on the eve of its inauguration, it was only to be expected that the seminar, even if it did not intend to deal solely with the new capital, would almost become a referendum on its validity. Brasília was a fresh, controversial topic. At the same time that it became a “vedette” in Europe and a central instrument of Brazilian cultural diplomacy, intensely discussed by the Brazilian public at large, Brazilian architects had assumed a certain silence with regard to the subject, following the widespread controversy that had erupted after the transfer of the capital had been announced, the negotiations for it to materialize and the tumultuous and hurried competition in order to choose the plan – in which it is important to highlight the solitary opposition to the judgement of Paulo Antunes Ribeiro, the IAB representative (DEDECCA, 2018; TAVARES, 2004).

It may be stated that a considerable part of the repercussion in the press concerning the result was negative, calling into question the validity and competence of the competition, as well as the quality of the winning project.

However, despite the position of its representative, the IAB did not give vent to these discontents, marking a turning point in the growing tensions, which went beyond the subject of the new capital and opposed Brazilian professionals regarding their aesthetic and political positions. Soon after, in 1957, the institution adhered to a pacifying discourse, led by architects from São Paulo, recommending an end to the controversies and of re-establishing the union between Brazilian professionals, in line with the new coordinates, which led to an alliance surrounding national development and the struggle for autonomy and protagonism of the profession. Ultimately, it was necessary to maintain cohesion to ensure strength in the public debate (DEDECCA, 2018).

Nonetheless, the discomfort was still latent: at the abovementioned meeting at Itamaraty, Niemeyer issued a warning, reproduced by Jayme Maurício, concerning the decision to transfer the responsibility for organizing the seminar to the IAB-RJ. Revealing the instability of the truce, especially among his peers in Rio de Janeiro, Niemeyer declared, in a barely conciliatory tone, that it was necessary to clarify that Lúcio Costa and he no longer belonged to the Institute, therefore, they could not submit to the decisions taken there (MAURÍCIO, 1958a). It is not irrelevant that the two authors of the New Capital made a point of announcing, in the mainstream press, that they were no longer associated with the IAB, precisely when the entity was expanding its representation, scope and territorial adherence on both a national and international level.

In the end, even though it had been announced, Costa and Niemeyer did not take part in the seminar. However, although its composition of prominent participants included several architects who had submitted proposals for the new capital, such as Maurício Roberto e Marcelo Roberto, Henrique Mindlin, Vilanova Artigas and Milton Ghirardi, for example, the event does not seem to have been intentionally organized to resume the controversy over the competition, either because of its original link with Unesco, or because of the stance taken by the architects at the meeting, as will be seen. There is no doubt, however, that the debates played a role in giving thought to the theoretical debate on new towns far beyond what had been proposed by Lúcio Costa for Brasília, most notably with regard to a belief in design as the supreme instrument of control over the urban environment, thereby repositioning the discussion in terms of process planning and management.

In respect of the warning given by Niemeyer, the jurist Themistocles Cavalcanti, then president of Ibecc, former attorney general of the Republic and future minister of the Federal Supreme Court, immediately clarified: “I accepted the Institute of Architects because it is an organized entity, how could I accept another, with no preferences”. He went on: “The meeting we are going to promote is for

UNESCO, Ibecc and Itamaraty and for all those who wish to study the architectural and urban problems of new towns” (MAURÍCIO, 1958a, p. 18). This is an equally revealing response to another ongoing dispute: which professions were responsible for planning a new city or discussing the conditions and choices of this enterprise?

Most certainly,⁷ Kubitschek sought to support the transference of the Brazilian capital through different professional opinions, the range of arguments for which included the necessary process of interiorization, the modernization perspective of the nation’s infrastructure and industrialization, always permeated by national-developmental ideologies. Many other intellectuals raised opposing arguments. However, the fact is that, despite this diversity of knowledge, according to the public notice for the competition to select the Plano Piloto, only teams directed by professionals qualified to practice engineering, architecture and urbanism could participate - this prerogative, after all, was a historic struggle of the IAB (DEDECCA, 2018; TAVARES, 2004).

It would be up to the architects, therefore, to convoke other knowledge or not, and many did so by composing multidisciplinary teams. Lúcio Costa did not even summon his peers. A single architect, a report significantly smaller than the other submissions (“skimpy” in the author’s own words), a project that, without going into the merit of its quality, also stood out because of valorizing, on Brazilian soil, at that very moment, the idea of genius and the discourse of genius – precisely when other modes of action, in networks, multidisciplinary, more collective and specialized, gained relevance (BRAGA, 2010; LIERNUR, 2004). “It was not my intention to compete and, in fact, I am not competing, I’m just throwing out a possible solution, which was not sought after, but that emerged, so to speak, already prepared”, Lúcio Costa would state, when intentionally distancing himself from the position of a “properly equipped technician” (BRAGA, 2010, p. 164).

In the case of the seminar on the creation of new towns, the balance of forces was different. The IAB and the UIA would nominate the guests, who would either be accepted or not by the Ibecc. There is little available news on the intricacies of the process of composing the tables, but it is known which nominees were left out, either because the Ibecc discarded them or because of personal unavailability – Lewis Mumford, Sigfried Giedion, Clarence Stein, Josep Lluís Sert, Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius. It is also known, as will become apparent below, that new figures from other professional fields entered the composition, thereby breaking away from the initial plan of restricting the debate to architects and urban planners (ENCONTRO..., 1958a; IAB-SP, 1958b).

7. The president of Brazil from 1956 to 1961.

3. Tensioned institutional networks

It would be interesting to conduct a brief overview of the substantial range of institutions involved in organizing the event, considering its relatively small size. The Ibecc, founded in 1946 and linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), was constituted as the national commission of Unesco in Brazil, with the aim of managing its projects at a local level, in which professionals from different disciplines were involved, such as natural scientists, mathematicians, folklorists, educators, and sociologists. With substantial backing through a subsidy from the Federal Government, it aimed to support the production and exchange of knowledge, especially internationally, to stimulate basic education and culture and to safeguard heritage, in its broadest sense, taking on science as the development axis of nations and mobilizing notions such as the “construction of the free man” and “pure, disinterested knowledge” (ABRANTES, 2008).

It should be remembered that it was only after 1945 that Brazil’s foreign cultural policy was structured in a more organized manner, gaining importance in different governmental instances, expanding its concept of national culture, diversifying its recipients, modifying the content of its actions and the elected values for promoting the country abroad (DUMONT; FLÉTCHET, 2014). In a context marked by the Cold War, by decolonization and by the diversification of economic and cultural exchanges, the Cultural Division of Itamaraty, created in 1946, expanded its attributions, incorporating agreements for technical and scientific cooperation, for the dissemination of language, Brazilian arts, literature, music and architecture, based on the understanding of cultural diplomacy as a political tool for nations with secondary power (SUPPO; LESSA, 2012). Although the role that MRE played in activities in the field of architecture and urbanism in Brazil still remains little evaluated, it is recognized that, in the case of interactions with the IAB, its logistical and financial support is linked to a flurry of events, especially during the 1950s and mid-1960s – among which, the present seminar may be included. Considering the intense traffic of Brazilian architectural production abroad during this period, it is unlikely that the complex irradiation of positive criticism and this systematic government effort, which replaced a still precarious network of dialogue, is a mere coincidence (DEDECCA, 2018).

Perhaps because of its governmental link, the Ibecc, when it first emerged, was already widely included in the Brazilian intellectual and institutional environment. At the time, the UIA and IAB were also important nodes in the national and international networks of institutional dialogue among architects. Founded in 1948, the UIA was already establishing itself as an institutional reference point for both private and state-owned large-scale solicitations, in

matters of architecture and urbanism. Although remaining a small organization from the viewpoint of its administrative structure, the entity explored the polarizations of the Cold War and established itself at an influential place of mediation (GLENDINNING, 2009).

The involvement of Novacap in the seminar is not so strange, since a visit to its works was part of the seminar's program. The IAB and the UIA were responsible for preparing the meeting, suggesting guests and producing documents to assist the debate. The Ibecc took care of electing the members of each table.

Understanding the institutions involved in preparing the seminar is no small matter. Each one, at that moment, had established legitimizing strategies in their respective fields of action and had specific interests in the way the topic would be treated and by whom. Thus, this article is also interested in discussing how the debate on new towns operated within this political network of institutional relations of validation and appraisal of ideas and ideals.

The impression is that, at this meeting, games of tug-of-war were being played: between architects and non-architects; between architects who intended to tension the fragile consensus surrounding Brasília and those who sought to mobilize the event as an instrument of legitimation; and even between generations. Once the congress had become installed, diplomacy reigned, but not without the critic Jayme Maurício, who was closely following the events, realizing the latency of discontent:

A cordial atmosphere presided over the opening session and drinks. The wide diversity of currents, the most antagonistic positions, grievances, resentments, all disappeared within a concern to make the meeting effective. The high intellectual standard and acute awareness of the architects, more than in any other class, led to an elevated level of discussions and relationships. However, a number of doubts remained. There were certain sensitivities on constant alert: there were countless claims awaiting the opportune moment; there was also an apparent skepticism; and there was a group of young people terribly attentive to the speeches of their seniors, but also thinking that the "old guard" was somewhat sluggish, and that it was time for some new blood to come onto the scene. A considerable number of young architects are waiting to repeat the exploits of the pioneers – but, they say, they just won't get out of the way. (MAURÍCIO, 1958c, p. 18).

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nalor: Ver a 3ª. Finalmente vem ainda a assinatura: Verba 3.

NO SENADO

Ainda ontem não houve sessão no Senado. Compareceram apenas 13 representantes, declarando o sr. Freitas Cavalcanti que assumiu a presidência, a impossibilidade de abertura dos trabalhos.

Hoje, igualmente, o Monro não funcionou, porquanto é dia de veto no Congresso, às 14 horas. O veto que vai ser apreciado refere-se ao projeto que abre crédito especial para socorrer vítimas da explosão verificada em Gramacho, município de Duque de Caxias, Estado do Rio de Janeiro, e de incêndio em Guaratinguetá, São Paulo, bem como reparar prejuízos resultantes do desabamento do Edifício São João Rei, nesta Capital.

Ler na 9.ª página

MARCA DO PLEITO NOS ESTADOS

Chozes Freitas 11.403
Menezes Côrtes 9.638
Veradores mais votados:
Raul Bruni (UDN) 3.376
Geraldo Moreira (PTB) 2.334

TURISMO NO IBIRAPUEIRA

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MAIS VOTADOS

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"QUELUM"

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AGÇÃO VALEScentes

il Londres

0080 — GAVEA

INSTALADA ONTEM NO MAM A

REUNIÃO INTERNACIONAL DE ARQUITETOS

Técnicos discutirão o planejamento das novas cidades — Três mesas correspondentes a: Programa, Plano e Realização — Possível uma "Declaração de Brasília" destinada a ampla repercussão internacional — Gente séria, competente, numa reunião de alto padrão artístico-social

Reportagem de Jayme Maurício

Instala-se oficialmente ontem no Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio, o Seminário Internacional de Arquitetos e Urbanistas, reunião de profissionais de vários países promovida pela Unesco e pelo Itzeu, com a colaboração do Instituto Brasileiro de Arquitetos do Brasil, do Conselho do Instituto Brasileiro de Arquitetos e da Divisão Cultural do Itamarati. Objetivo: suscitar o debate, amplo e livre, em torno dos problemas ligados à criação das novas cidades. Trocadas em: reuniões; debate em torno de Brasília, em obra isso não tenha sido declarado. Vamos

ver essa o problema que enfrenta o presidente Juscelino Kubitschek, estudado por profissionais competentes a luz de experiências e teorias amplamente discutidas no mundo inteiro.

A sessão de abertura foi presidida pelo professor Tomastock Cavalcanti que saudou as presenças em nome do presidente da República, fazendo o louvor das pessoas e entidades



Alguns flagrantes da sessão de instalação do Seminário Internacional de Arquitetos e Urbanistas, ontem, no Museu de Arte Moderna. Da esquerda vê-se parte da mesa com o professor Tomastock Cavalcanti, professor Jean Thomas, vice-presidente da Unesco, embaixador Paulo Carneiro (italiano); Alfredo E. Reidy, Pierre Vago (francês) e Henrique Mindlin; Maurício Roberto e Hélio Modesto conversam com o inglês J. M. Richards; Marcelo Roberto saúda o venezuelano Raul Vilanova

Figure 1. News about the Seminar (1958)
Source: Maurício (1958c).

The seminar was structured into two moments: the debates at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, between October 6th and 9th, 1958, and a visit to Brasília, between the 10th and 12th of the same month. In Rio de Janeiro, three tables were organized based on the themes of "Program", "Plan" and "Realization", "tout court" proposals by Niemeyer, since "greater minutiae would not fit into the allotted time" (MAURÍCIO, 1958a). These tables were organized non-simultaneously, in order to enable the full participation of everyone in the event and were interspersed with ceremonial and sociability moments. Even so, there were still criticisms of the limited amount of time in view of the broad agenda. At the end, a plenary session was held based on a report on each of the themes (IAB-RJ, 1958a).

Alongside the guests, there were 76 participants, according to a list transcribed in the IAB-RJ Bulletin. The seminar took place in English and French – which in itself was an impediment for some of those attending. While there was a huge presence of Brazilian architects, 80% of whom were from Rio de Janeiro, there were also students, ecologists, engineers, urban planners (without the prefix of architect) and representatives from the institutions involved (IAB-RJ, 1958a). For Garcia Roza, the absence of young people and engineering institutions was regrettable. For Jayme Maurício, while there were not many, there was a select few (MAURÍCIO, 1958d).



Figure 2. Henrique Mindlin during the opening speech of the seminar (1958)
Source: IAB-RJ (1958a).

The welcoming wishes were under the responsibility of Henrique Mindlin, an architect greatly involved in the Brazilian diplomatic environment and a member of the newly created IAB commission in charge of permanently dialoguing with the MRE (DEDECCA, 2018). When opening the event, the architect, once again, reiterated the intention to avoid “long and indefinite resolutions, or vague, pretentious declarations” (IAB-RJ, 1958a, p. 96). More than that, when discussing the growing legitimacy of the architectural profession in Brazil and the modernist ideology in its intrinsic relationship with the State, he indicated the willingness of professionals to “retrace the path and attempt to penetrate the core of the basic problems that affected the population” (id., ib.).

3.1 Table 1: Program

On the table dedicated to the first theme – Program –, discussions took place regarding the reasons for creating new towns; the elements needed for analyzing the conditions involved in such an enterprise; and the policy of urban agglomeration and of regional organization. A number of questions were put forward beforehand,

which needed to be given consideration in view of the different economic and social realities: Which factors are involved in the formation of new cities? What would the most appropriate urbanization policy be? Which policy should be adopted for the reorganization of existing cities – enlargement or decentralization? Which elements should be considered when evaluating the creation of a city? Is it possible to establish a minimum standard? Would it be feasible to have a program that was not framed within a regional or national plan? (IAB-RJ, 1958a).

As may be observed, the agenda was broad and the questions were hardly consensual, especially when considering the composition of the table, with members from different backgrounds and perspectives with regard to approaching the proposed central question. There were three non-architects: the Brazilian geographer, Hilgard Sternberg, the Dutch sociologist, Sjoerd Groenman, and the British historian, Ronald Syme. The other members were James Maude Richard and Max Lock, British architects, and Hélio Modesto, Harry James Cole and Fernando Menezes, Brazilian architects (IAB-RJ, 1958a).

Sternberg, the moderator of the table, was, at that time, a full professor in the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Universidade do Brasil, the first vice-president of the International Geographical Union and, until 1956, had taught Geography to diplomats at the Instituto Rio Branco. His area of research was regional development, especially the Amazon, and he defended the integrative function of geography and the possibility of holistic thinking in order to analyze the region and focus on the interface between human societies and the environment (KOHLHEPP, 2015). Groenman, a sociologist providing advisory services on public policies for the European reconstruction, was then engaged in an ambivalent attitude towards the urbanization process: building organic peasant communities, artificially created by scientific methods and with the help of specialists (COUPERUS; KAAL, 2016). Quite what Ronald Syme, the ancient history researcher, was doing at the table is a mystery to the author of this article. However, it should be considered that he was, at that time, secretary of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS) and that same year, had published *Colonial elites: Rome, Spain and the Americas*.

As is well known, James Maude Richards, editor of *Architectural Review*, was allaying his fierce struggle for modern architecture, and becoming more open to considering the vernacular and the pre-existing urban landscape, especially concerning the debate on *Townscape* (AITCHISON, 2012). His “concentrated physiognomy”, with little affection for the “tropics”, contrasted with that of his countryman Max Lock, “one of those good-natured Englishmen” and who did

not hide his “enchantment for having finally crossed the Equator” (MAURÍCIO, 1958d). An urban planner responsible for the new town of Middlesbrough, Lock was an advocate of incorporating sociological research into the planning process, of multidisciplinary work, of combining physical and social aspects in the project and, above all, of community involvement through a broad consultation process (MOTOUCHI; TIRATSOO, 2004).

The other architects at the table were not totally detached from the British debate on urban and regional planning and already maintained a close relationship with one another. They were also much closer to the idea of a specialist architect than that of a generalist. Hélio Modesto, author of the plan for Volta Redonda (1955), completed a postgraduate degree in urban planning in London between 1949 and 1951, and approached the Town Planning debate. Harry James Cole, Modesto’s former intern, had just returned to Brazil, also after undertaking postgraduate studies in London, on Modesto’s recommendation, and working at the London County Council (LUCHESE, 2014). Fernando Menezes, from Pernambuco, who had been the first president of the IAB-PE, was an employee at the municipal administration of Recife and professor of the Architecture course at the Escola de Belas Artes.

For the table, when summarizing their conclusions, it was important to highlight that a lack of time should not justify a lack of planning. That the execution of the plan was the beginning of a long process, and that the planner, “at first somewhat doctrinaire”, should gradually recognize, “with humility, the primacy of the dignity of the human person”, complete and free, and not be guided by inflexible norms. Thus, planning, for these professionals, was something organic, so that cities should not be thought of in isolation. Real estate speculation, state bureaucracy and excessive state intervention were also criticized. They considered that there was an urgent need for interdisciplinary work and a reform of the university curriculum, which was lagging behind with regard to the diversity and dynamics of planning. Lastly, if it was fundamental to consider “pioneering communities” in regional planning, an appeal was made for agrarian reform and for a radical change in property standards – a conclusion that, without doubt, gained most space in the daily press (IAB-RJ, 1958b, p.104-105).

3.2 Table II: Plan

The second theme – Plan – should be thought of as an objective and as a norm for action, based on considerations concerning its basic elements, its scope, its relationship with the region, as well as in the responsibility attributions

for its formulation. The suggested questions were many and complex: Would it be necessary to distinguish dynamic and static parts of the plan? Would it be convenient to abandon long-term structural concepts or to focus the plan on more precise, long-lasting definitions of the composition of its elements? Why was it so important to set deadlines for completion? Would the partial conception of an urban community be valid, or would the plan need to cover its entirety? Would it be feasible to plan without including the complementary elements of urban life? Thus, how far would the interference of the plan go? Should it be limited to the four functions of the Charter of Athens? How accurately should the natural and human factors in the plan appear? Would a minimum standard be necessary for its acceptance? If yes, directed by which entities? Should a minimum regional scale of coverage be required? To what extent should subsequent decisions be entrusted to authorities, private interests and legislative deliberations? If the plan affects the community, would it be possible to grant it authority without going through the democratic processes of public scrutiny? (IAB-RJ, 1958a).

There was considerably more uniformity to the second table than to the first, from the viewpoint of the disciplinary composition. Chaired by Ary Garcia Roza and moderated by Rino Levi, the conversation took place between architects and a sympathizer. It was as if, once the program had been established, the definitions of the plan were the sole responsibility of these professionals. Almost all of them were more dedicated to the design of buildings, even though on a large scale, than to the practice of urban planning, and assumed similar design strategies with great formal experimentation, as Niemeyer then scribbled Brasília: the Venezuelan Carlos Raúl Villanueva, whose work on the Cidade Universitária de Caracas and the Conjunto Habitacional 2 de Dezembro [the 2nd of December Housing Complex] had recently been completed; the Ukrainian Arie El-Hanani, architect for the municipality of Tel Aviv and responsible for many of the new public buildings in the city; the Japanese Takamasa Yoshizaka, awarded twice during that decade at the Bienal de São Paulo, author of the Japanese Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, in 1956, and a collaborator of Le Corbusier in the Unité d'Habitation projects in Marseille and some of Chandigarh's works in India. Alongside these three were Marcelo Roberto, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, the engineer Augusto Guimarães Filho, head of Novacap's urban planning division during the development of the Plano Piloto and someone very close to Lúcio Costa, and the Italian Luigi Piccinato – who had been responsible for several regulatory plans for Italian cities (IAB-RJ, 1958a).



Figure 3. Model built for the seminar by Brazilian and foreign students (1958)

Source: SEMINAR on new cities for a better world. *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, Year 58, n. 239, October 12, 1958, p. 5.

It is interesting to note, through the example of Luigi Piccinato, and of Van Eesteren, who took part on the last table, a common trait to many of these professionals who referred to themselves as urban planning specialists: their intensely associative activities, especially in defending the personage of the urbanist and of the construction of specialized spaces for the debate, which transformed them into a kind of node between various instances of professional dialogue on a national and international level. Piccinato, graduated in the early 1920s, had been an active member of Ciam and the IFHTP and, in 1958, held the post of vice president of the INU (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica). He had previously been fully aligned with the perspective of the functionalist city, but from the end of the Second World War he had joined the *Associazione per l'Architettura Organica*, wagering on the organicism agenda. During the 1950s, like many other members of the Ciam, which

at that time had been corroded by conflicting views on what the theoretical-design agenda for architecture and urbanism should be, he took part in the activities promoted by the UIA, with a particular interest in establishing connections with Latin America, especially with Argentina (BASILE, 2020; MUMFORD, 2002).

Thus, it is important to highlight that the UIA, one of the institutions organizing the event, was configured as a new type of international architectural organization, molded more by the conventions of cultural diplomacy and international goodwill than by intellectual debate, focusing on more consensual objectives of the profession (GLEDINNING, 2009). Therefore, it is interesting, although not surprising, that this intense, tense debate in relation to the project of new towns, which was then emerging nationally and internationally, made a subtle appearance in the conclusions of that specific table, which were significantly more objective and general, although not so much consensual.

The conclusion established that it was imperative for urban planning to correspond to “the economic planning of all the factors that intervene in the life of cities”, including, therefore, the planning of the process and the management as primary issues of urban control. Every plan should provide for its realization in stages, stages that should subsist in themselves without aiming to achieve unity. Thus, the table positioned itself as being contrary to rigid plans and in favor of the possibility of organic expansion – something that was not new, but that had become distanced from the plan of the capital then under construction. Lastly, no local plan should prescind from a broader plan, whether regional, national or continental (IAB-RJ, 1958b, p. 107-108). Perhaps, the speech of Marcelo Roberto, a member of the table, defined the purpose and temperature of the conversation. After discussing the problems of Brazilian cities, he declared:

We are aware that the determinations of the subject matter of this meeting cannot be exhausted just in the few established meetings. But, in all sincerity – we talk among friends, so we may be totally frank – what interests us are statements that we are able to use as a weapon, both to sway the authorities and to precipitate the formation of an urbanistic conscience within the population. Similar statements have already been made at other meetings. Those we are now soliciting, however, contain the strength of having been signed and sealed in our country. The need for total planning should be emphasized by professionals representing various parts of the world: so that with the objective of satisfying the basic, superior needs of man, planning will necessarily be the work of architecture, falling upon, obviously, the architect to be in charge of the elaboration. However, in order to be valid, the plan will have to be based on the thorough and extensive work of a number of experts. [...]. We cannot, since time is inexorably short, seek to convince one another. Let us focus on what we agree upon. (ROBERTO, 1958).

Marcelo Roberto's speech demonstrates that, more than approaching new ideas on the subject, the interest in establishing a dialogue with foreigners also involved the need to validate locally discussed agendas, reinforcing the competence of his own discourse. This was a kind of strategy to transform institutional ambitions into universal desires. Thus, it seemed that the intention was equally to instrumentalize the event, in order to attest to its positions and procedures, to legitimize and potentiate the positions defended by Brazilian architects in moments of public debate, especially with the political environment and the public at large. The architect's observation of being "among friends" should be seen much more as a rhetorical strategy than as a fact. Indeed, the second table was relatively cohesive, with a predominance of architects. However, if we recall the preparatory comings and goings of the event and the composition of the other tables, we realize that he was among some who did not intend to seal a consensus in favor of affirming the profession and tasks of the architect, as will be observed.

3.3 *Table III: Realization*

Lastly, the third table – Realization – focused on executing the plan. The debate needed to concentrate on points related to programming, integration with economic planning, financial operations, raising the necessary resources, institutional problems, new policies on property, direct government action and private initiative, and the preparation of specialized personnel. The following questions were suggested: To what extent is the foundation of new towns related to developmentalist policy? Is this an important element for the industrialization of the country? Which would be best suited for taking charge of its construction: private initiative, the public authorities or the autarchies? Which governmental sphere should be in charge of planning them? How may the principle of local autonomy be reconciled with the obligation of planning new cities? Which land tenure regime is the most suitable? To what extent is private property compatible with large-scale urban planning? (IAB-RJ, 1958a).

The non-architects were again invited to take their place at the table, moderated by Themistocles Cavalcanti, mentioned above, and composed of the Swiss, Jean-Pierre Vouga, editor of the journal *Habitation* and director of the UIA's working committees; the French Pierre Vago; general secretary of the same institution; and the Dutch Cornelis van Eesteren, head of Amsterdam's urban planning department. Alongside these three architects were the Swiss Antony Babel, dean of the University of Geneva and a Unesco representative, and Diogo Lordello de Mello, director of the Instituto Brasileiro de Administração Municipal [Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration] (Ibam) and an important figure in Brazilian municipalist thinking (IAB-RJ, 1958a).

The presence of Lordello de Mello reveals the ongoing institutionalization of municipalist thinking in Brazil and its defense of local autonomy. One of the sessions of the I Inter-American Seminar on Municipal Studies, also held in 1958, discussed the issue of regional planning based on the perspective of articulating knowledge focused on urban thinking and the problem of cities. Within this network of circulating ideas, there is a clear approach to municipal development that was not restricted to the urban disciplinary field, but already linked with law and planning in its broadest sense (FARIA, 2020).

Indeed, the issue related to the municipality gained prominence in the conclusions of the third and final table, which recommended the necessary participation of the community in formulating and, above all, in approving the plan, guaranteed by the creation of democratic institutions. Urban planning should be not considered a prerogative, but a governmental duty fulfilled on all levels – municipal, state and federal – with the respective creation of competent entities and with legislation on urbanism that defines the duties and limits of the municipality's competence. Lastly, the panel highlighted the need for the State to preserve the rights of the collectivity, particularly in the fight against land speculation, indicating the possibility of assigning the right to land for a determined period and fixing prices before planning (IAB- RJ, 1958b, p. 109-111).

After closing the table, Cavalcanti told the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*: “[...] within the theme of Planning New Cities, architecture and sociology are intertwined, since, in addition to the exclusively technical problems of urbanization, the study of human factors must be taken into account as being paramount”. And then: “[...] the Planning of New Cities, which is not adapted to the conditions of the human element, will be of very little value” (ARQUITETURA..., 1958, p.8). His decision to shed light onto the role of sociology when talking about new towns is interesting, especially because it was not the central point of the discussion, or perhaps precisely because of that.

Architects and sociologists were at very different points with regard to institutional representation and professional regulation. In a seminal text published the following year, “A Sociologia no Brasil” [Sociology in Brazil], Antonio Candido ([1959] 2006) took stock of the point at which the discipline of sociology found itself nationally. If until 1930 it had been practiced by non-specialized intellectuals, focused on thinking about theoretical principles and on interpreting Brazilian society in a more global manner, the 1940s corresponded to its consolidation and generalization as a university discipline and socially recognized activity, marked by regular production in the field of theory, research and application. Candido also mentioned that, despite the recognition of this science and profession, of

its rapidly expanding production, specialized sociologists were unable to count on a structured associative life or on the legal protection of their professional attributions (CANDIDO, [1959] 2006).

At the seminar, however, the sociologists had the support of Ibecc. This institution, which in its first composition of delegates had included, for example, Gilberto Freyre, in accordance with UNESCO guidelines of the early 1950s, signaled its intention to support initiatives to create research and training in social sciences, viewed as an important element for understanding local problems, especially in the face of growing urbanization and industrialization. Indeed, under the presidency of Themístocles Cavalcanti, Ibecc supported, for example, the inauguration, in Rio de Janeiro in 1957, of the Centro Latino-Americano de Pesquisas em Ciências Sociais [Latin American Center for Research in Social Sciences] (Clapcs). Among its first projects were the *Problemas de urbanização na América Latina* [Problems of Urbanization in Latin America] (1960), a bibliographical listing on the subject; some studies on agrarian structure, stratification and social mobility in Latin American cities; and the documentary and bibliographic survey on immigration and colonization across the region (ABRANTES, 2008).

It is also interesting to note one further point raised by Candido: that the expression “Brazilian reality” was typical of the moment, becoming a commonplace to which “journalists, politicians, writers and scholars resorted indiscriminately” – and, without doubt, we may also add architects (CANDIDO, [1959] 2006, p.284). Candido’s mention of this fact is interesting because, at the same time that he mentions his optimism with the intense demand for social studies and with the atmosphere of receptivity and expectation surrounding Sociology, it also indicates a certain discomfort, elegantly expressed, with the indiscriminate use of the idea. Undoubtedly, among the architects, it was almost a watchword at that time, but rarely did architectural-urban thinking manage to scrutinize in a concrete manner the reality to which it referred.

None other than Gilberto Freyre would take the conclusions of the event as a motto to condemn the exclusion of social scientists from this “cause in which the whole of Brazil felt committed body and soul” and as confirmation that Brasília should be thought of in an interdisciplinary manner and as a team, in search of a systematic integration of new cities in the natural, social and cultural space. For him, the seminar proved that, by incorporating sociological and ecological considerations, it would be possible to elaborate a new, more dynamic and plural articulation, “of Brazils within Brazil, with Brasília as its center”, as opposed to the uniquely sculptural city, conceived by “princes of the highest nobility” – in this case, the architects – and disintegrated from an inter-regional system (FREYRE, 1968, p.173-197).

“Individually, excellent, and collectively, something very delicate, capricious, difficult, even impossible.” This is how Jayme Maurício, in one of his columns on the event, refers to architects, described as an “absolutely impracticable” class (MAURÍCIO, 1958b, p. 11). However, it is remarkable that, despite the many differences described here and the “excessively controversial tone” that the columnist noticed throughout the seminar, the official records of the meeting have consolidated generalist consensus and submerged the various ongoing disputes, which we seek to indicate herein, with the support of the most accidental records of the daily journalism of the city. For Maurício, the reigning conformity was superficial, and, deep down, things were “extremely tumultuous” (MAURÍCIO, 1958d, p. 11).

Thus, from the contact, in which different perspectives met and clashed, different experiences and evaluations resulted. In contrast to Freyre, the success of the meeting seems to have been indisputable for the foreigners – especially for the architects, who provided the local press with testimonies regarding their good impressions, in which comments on the meeting and enthusiasm for Brasília merged. Other Brazilians, such as Carlos Lodi and the engineer Paulo Novaes, despite praising the quality of the debate, expressed their reservations on how the conclusions had lacked originality and on the need to translate general consensual ideas into practical terms, since, when applied in precise circumstances, ran into disagreements (LODI, 1958; IAB-RJ, 1958c).

Perhaps this is the reason why the seminar caused little repercussion in the periodical press aimed at professionals in architecture and urbanism. Despite the fact that this article has focused on material collected in the daily press, the repercussion of the meeting in such specialized vehicles seems to have been small, but it is a hypothesis to be faced through more detailed research. In addition to the previously mentioned news items to regarding the event in the official bulletins of the São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro IAB, which assumed the air of official reports, such as the minutes that were also complimentingly reproduced by the journal *Habitat* soon after, no major discussion was found concerning the points discussed throughout the seminar (SEMINÁRIO..., 1958a). There is no mention of the seminar in the journal *Acrópole: Módulo* published just two very short, merely informative, notes (SEMINÁRIO..., 1958b, ENCONTRO..., 1958b); the journal *Brasília* reproduced the speeches of the ambassador Paulo Carneiro on his visit to Brasília and the impressions of the guests after walking around the city under construction but failed to examine the merits of the debate itself (ARQUITETOS..., 1958; OPINIONS..., 1958). As a point of investment for future research, it is possible that this debate may have taken place in vehicles with a more limited circulation, especially in the municipal scope of Rio de Janeiro.

4. In Brasília

At the end of the debates, the guests flew to Brasília. There, they were welcomed by President Juscelino Kubitschek, who gave an impromptu speech, resorting to well-known arguments – a victory for the country, an integration of the territory, sovereignty –, but calling for a topic not addressed at the seminar: “Brasilia will have a worldwide impact, because we have been concerned with making it a work of art” (IAB-RJ, 1958c, p.119). It is interesting that, among the various topics covered by the seminar, urban planning recognized as an artistic activity had been left out. The fact that, in the following year, another international event, with a much greater repercussion, was held on the same theme, but with a different sub-theme, is curious: the Extraordinary International AICA Congress (International Association of Art Critics), entitled “New City: synthesis of the arts”. This is a counterpoint yet to be explored.⁸

No less interesting is that, once the official speeches were over, Marcelo Roberto handed the President of the Republic a document that had been formulated over a period of months: the new bill to regulate the profession of architects, which proposed the total separation of its attributions from the practice of engineering. Continuing with the strategy, his brother, partner and then president of the IAB-RJ, Maurício Roberto, a few days later, in an interview with Jayme Maurício, declared that: “[...] twenty-five years of work, study and architectural progress” gave architects sufficient authority to “direct themselves”. For him, it was a separation that, despite the coincident legislation, was already guaranteed by the practice at that time. This fact reveals that there was, indeed, a second agenda of architects associated with the seminar, which revolved around constructing a discourse of legitimacy for the profession, and that maybe had imagined the event as a ritual of affirming the category and of universalizing its desires. It should be noted that, despite Kubitschek’s promises, the project was not approved. After all, at that moment, there were two thousand architects against 28 thousand engineers in dispute (MAURÍCIO, 1958e, p. 14).

Hence, it has not been the intention of this article to place sub judice the credentials of professional groups with regard to the know-how of cities, but rather, when examining the seminar in focus, has sought to situate them in relation to their positions in the game to legitimize their practices. If it is evident that the authority

8. One interesting pathway, unexplored by this article, would be to look at the seminar as a node, through which individual and institutional trajectories, points and different ways of thinking and making new planned cities crossed. There are several news items in the daily press on echoes and derivations of the seminar debates in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and abroad.

of a certain group on the problems of the city has been historically variable, it is interesting to note, at the same time that architects reached an unprecedented position during those years with regard to the State and the public at large, how they sought to consolidate and guarantee the frontiers of their performance, and how they placed themselves in open dispute with other disciplines.

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Paula Dedecca

Professor of Architectural History at the Associação Escola da Cidade (AEC-SP). Architect and urban planner, graduated from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the Universidade de São Paulo (Fauusp), 2006. She holds a master's degree (2012) and a PhD (2018) from the same institution in the area of History and Fundamentals of Architecture and Urbanism.

Email: pauladedecca@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-0931-5837

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