

THE FRENCH TRADITION IN BRAZILIAN URBANISM:

The Urban Remodeling of Rio de Janeiro, Recife and Porto Alegre during the *Estado Novo* (1937-1945)

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The emergence of urbanism in Europe and United States in the early 20th century and its spread to many parts of the world is one of the powerful examples of the transference and diffusion of ideas. Latin America was a rich laboratory for the application of these ideas, which were introduced, diffused, adapted and mixed by local professionals. The French tradition, represented by *the Société Française des Urbanistes*, had a powerful role in the spread of the ideas of urbanism in South America and particularly in Brazil. The climate of discussion of urbanism initiated in Brazil in the early 1920s, in which new professionals created associations, published articles and books and traveled throughout the country giving speeches and making reports, favored the reception of these ideas.

Alfred Agache's Plan for Rio de Janeiro, elaborated between 1928 and 1930, was a hallmark in the evolution of Brazilian Urbanism. This plan, encouraging a new global vision regarding the city, was particularly influential in the local debate on modern urbanism and established a new pattern for central areas reforms in Brazil. Some years later, the plans for Recife and Porto Alegre, by Agache's pupils Nestor de Figueiredo and Arnaldo Gladosch respectively, followed closely the principles of the Rio de Janeiro Plan. These three plans were partially realized in three extensive urban reforms in the core of Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre and Recife cities during Vargas dictatorship, the *Estado Novo* (1937-1945). Through the analysis of the three plans and their realization in these cities, this paper aims to clarify how the French urbanism was transferred to Brazilian cities and how an image of modern city was pursued, based on ensembles of monumental modern blocks and symbolic features. The introduction and diffusion of these ideas in the country and their relation with a different tradition of building cities is important to a better understanding of the shaping of the modern Brazilian city and also to the understanding of the spread of modern urbanism.

SFU, MODERN URBANISM AND THE BRAZILIAN CITIES

Donat-Alfred Agache was a key figure in the institutionalization of Urbanism in France and worldwide.¹ Formed by the *École des Beaux-Arts* of Paris in 1905, Agache was one of the founders of the *Société Française des Urbanistes* (SFU) and its first secretary. Despite reluctance to apply the new ideas in its own cities, France had an important contribution to the spread of modern urbanism worldwide through the work of many city planners grouped around the movement. Founded in 1911, from the Hygiene Section of the *Musée Social*, the SFU addresses the spread of the ideals and proposals and the legitimization of Urbanism in political circles.² The SFU gathered the best of the French urban planners, such as Eugène Hénard, J.C. Forestier, Henri Prost, Leon Jauselly and Alfred Agache.

The SFU brought together professionals with a multidisciplinary formation in order to be able to manage the complexity of the modern city. These professionals, mostly architects from the Beaux-Arts

¹ About Agache's trajectory see: Tougeron, Jean Christophe. Donat-Alfred Agache, un architecte urbaniste: un artiste, un scientifique, un philosophe. In: *Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale* VIII, 1981, p.31-48; Bruant, Catherine. Donat Alfred Agache: urbanismo, uma sociologia aplicada. in: Ribeiro, Luiz Cesar, Pechman, Robert (editors) *Cidade, povo, nação: gênese do urbanismo moderno*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1994.

² On the history of the SFU see: Wolf, Peter. *Eugène Hénard and the Beginning of Urbanism in Paris 1900-1914*. The Hague, 1968; Beaudoin, Eugene. La Société Française des Urbanistes. In: *Urbanisme* n.77, 1962, pp.19-20, Wright, Gwendolyn. *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, ch.1.

tradition, became increasingly concerned with cities.³ They integrated this tradition with French rationalism and elements of sociology. Agache's conception of modern society, for example, came from his sociological background, based mostly on Emile Durkheim and Gabriel Tarde, which includes these notions of social functionalism, universal progression, bureaucratization and ordered society.⁴ Agache was one of the most perfect examples of this new professional.

The new discipline of urbanism attempted to formulate a new discourse and a new form of thinking about cities, establishing a new knowledge, vocabulary and methods of observation and analysis. According to the SFU's program, this new science had the role of coordinating different disciplines and applying them to the city. Urbanism was supposed to be a synthesis of many sciences, an operational science, which integrates different approaches to the city. According to Agache:

“Urbanism is a Science as well as an Art, and above all a social philosophy. Urbanism is a set of regulations and rules applied to the improvement of buildings, street system, traffic and circulation. It is also the remodeling, extension and beautification of a city executed according to surveys and studies on urban geography, topography, taking into account financial considerations.”⁵

It could be argued that there was a sort of Modern French Urbanism, which was characterized by a conception of the city as a whole, by the integration of many disciplines, by the adoption of surveys and attention to traffic solutions, and, more important, by its Beaux-Arts approach with the adoption of classical urban patterns expressed in impressive designs of cities as unified compositions.

The French Urbanism, winning international competitions and receiving commissions, was also part of the exportation of French culture worldwide. The French colonies proved to be the best place for experimentations, such as Morocco under Lyautey.⁶ These ideas also found their way in Europe, in Leon Jausselly's plan for the post-Cerdà Barcelona, and in North America, in Jacques Greber's Benjamin Franklin Parkway of Philadelphia. Latin America was also considered a vast field of experimentation: Forestier worked in Buenos Aires and Havana and Maurice Rotival made a plan for Caracas. These ideas found echoes in Brazil during the 1920s, a moment in which many transformations were taking place in Brazilian cities and an 'urbanistic' culture was being formed in the country.

After great urban reforms of the first decade, which followed haussmanian patterns, many transformations occurred in major Brazilian cities during the 1920s.⁷ The enlargement of systems of electric trolleys, the straightening and paving of streets and the introduction of the automobile fostered urban expansion and the first suburbs. The construction of tall buildings, thanks to technical innovations such as elevators, telephones, and new techniques in construction, made the central cores of cities more dense and vertical. On the other hand, the original sites of most of Brazilian cities, originally harbors and mountains, made 20th century expansion very complicated. The cities had to expand over a troubled topography digging tunnels, razing hills, and building viaducts.

³ Regarding the Beaux-Arts heritage in the new planners, Gwendolyn Wright discussed the growing interest on the modern metropolis of the winners of the Prix de Rome, including Henri Prost and Tony Garnier. See also: Tougeron, *ibid*, p.33; Gaudin, Jean Pierre. *L'Avenir en Plan: Technique et Politique dans la Prévision Urbaine- 1900/1930*. Paris: Camp Valon, 1985.

⁴ The sociological background of Agache is extensively discussed in Underwood, David. Alfred Agache, French Sociology and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil. In: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* June 1991, p.133-140.

⁵ Agache, Alfred. *Cidade do Rio de Janeiro: remodelação, extensão e embelezamento*. Paris: Foyer Brésilien, 1930. p.4. (my translation)

⁶ See Wright, Gwendolyn, *Ibid*, chapter 3.

⁷ It can be argued that these haussmanian reforms were dissociated from ideas of modern urbanism. These urban reforms were a response to some problems posed to the traditional Brazilian cities by the process of modernization of the late 19th century: lack of sanitation, epidemics, insecurity, lack of public services, housing shortage and poor living conditions. Aiming to show to European nations the image of a prosperous and civilized country, the local elites tried to forget the colonial past, their Portuguese origin and, consequently, the colonial pattern of the city. During the first two decades of the 20th century, in addition to hygienic campaigns, regulation of public services and modernization of ports, ample urban reforms took place in the central areas. These interventions were characterized by the construction of large avenues through old parts of the city. The classic example was the large program of urban improvements carried by mayor Pereira Passos in Rio de Janeiro (1902-1906), but it occurred in other large cities at approximately same time. Recife, for example, had its port area and the old Portuguese neighborhood completely redesigned.

Also during the 1920s, urbanism started to be discussed in Brazil.⁸ Ideas about modern urbanism born in the North-Atlantic basin came to Brazil through printed media and the visits of Brazilians to these countries and of foreigners to Brazil. These visits became an important way to introduce new ideas. Preceding the more famous visits of Agache in 1927 and Le Corbusier in 1929, Joseph Bouvard and Barry Parker had visited Brazil and designed plans and garden-suburbs in São Paulo.

A long discussion about the Brazilian city and its transformation into a modern metropolis emerged, establishing definitely modern urbanism in the country. At the end of the 1920s, there was a great demand for new plans and the discourse regarding the city was transformed with the introduction of foreign terms and the appearance of new specialized professionals, some of them trained abroad. In engineering technical journals, articles about urbanism began to appear discussing zoning, solutions to traffic, the necessity of plans and surveys, buildings codes, the growth and future of the cities and actions to specific districts of each city.⁹ This debate generated a series of plans, suggestions, proposals, and theoretical formulations attracting the attention of a larger public reported even by general circulation periodicals and radio programs. It was a naissance of a 'culture of urbanism' that initiated in Rio and São Paulo, was soon followed by other cities. Many architects and engineers, such as Atílio Corrêa Lima, Prestes Maia, Washington de Azevedo, Ulhôa Cintra, Nestor de Figueiredo, José Estelita and Armando de Godoy, discovered this specialization, creating and institutionalizing the profession of urban planner in the country.

In this new approach, the city began to be conceived as an organism and as an entity. The city started to be perceived in functional terms, in a much more complex way than a generation before. Urban space was now seen as a network of men, machines, goods and services that should be regulated and modernized.

The opportunity to apply this knowledge was only offered by the Vargas Regime. A complex and intricate mix of new forces, spearheaded by the industrialist bourgeois, toppled the old regime in 1930 and launched a program of modernization, attempting to reform the political system and to create a modern and industrial nation under state patronage. The expansion of the bureaucracy required new official buildings, factories, schools, and other structures. If the goal of these reforms was to form a new country and a new Brazilian man, it would also be necessary to build a new urban environment. The image of ordered and healthy cities was an instrument of legitimization and propaganda and Urbanism was taken as an important step toward modernization of the society. Under Vargas the seeds of Modern Urbanism had found, in Brazil, a fertile soil.

THE IMAGE OF A MODERN CITY: THE AGACHE'S PLAN FOR RIO DE JANEIRO

The invitation of Agache to Rio de Janeiro by the mayor Antonio Prado signaled an important step in this debate. The Agache Plan, elaborated between 1928 and 1930, was a hallmark in the evolution of Brazilian Urbanism and one of the plans that most represented the SFU.¹⁰ It encouraged a new global vision regarding the city and treated different topics, such as habitation, aesthetics, sanitation, transportation and street systems, as a whole. This plan showed remarkable emphasis on symbolic and aesthetic aspects in the formation of modern urban centers, commonly monumental and uniform, while still considering functional requirements.

The plan is composed of three parts. The first is an extensive study of the city, including its history, topography, and urban growth, economics and demographical patterns. The second, "Rio de Janeiro Maior", is the core of the plan, while the third, addresses sewage and water supply. Agache emphasized Rio's two essential functions: its political-administrative function as the capital of the

⁸ The word urbanism appeared in France in 1912, being credited to Agache. It first appeared in the Brazilian milieu in 1918. Freire, Victor da Silva. *Codigos sanitários e posturas municipais sobre habitações. Um capítulo de Urbanismo e de economia nacional.* In: *Boletim do Instituto de Engenharia*, São Paulo, n.3, feb, 1918, pp.229-427.

⁹ This list is extremely long to be reproduced here. In São Paulo, after the pioneer Vitor da Silva Freire, Ulhôa Cintra and Prestes Maia discussed the Henard's scheme applying it to São Paulo in 1924. In Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Sampaio called attention to the Lagoon Rodrigo de Freitas in 1923. Zozimo do Amaral and Henrique de Novaes, later, criticized the sanitary conditions of the city. In Porto Alegre, Benno Hoffman referred to the need of a general plan for the extension of the city. In Recife, in 1929, José Estelita emphasized the need of zoning and building codes to Recife, while Napoleão Albuquerque, reflected on the need of land infill and Paulo Guedes demanded a general plan for the city.

¹⁰ The plan was published in Portuguese in 1930 (see note 5) and in French in 1932 as *La remodelation d'une capitale: aménagement, extension, embellishment.* (Paris: Societé Cooperative d'Architects, 1932).

country and its economic function as an important port, commercial and industrial city. As was common in SFU plans, Agache associated the city with a living organism: the open spaces, avenues and parks were the lungs, the street system, the circulatory system; the civic center, the brain and the sewage the digestive system.

The major objectives of the plan were circulation and zoning. Affirming the need of the regional and national routes to penetrate into the core of the city, Agache attempted to solve Rio's traffic problems, which were made even more difficult by the city's troubled topography, through expressways, 'carrefours', and crossings, he tried to make the city fluid to the automobile. He used a radial-peripheral system as an 'ossature' in order to easily reach different parts of the city (figure 1).¹¹ In this scheme, a large avenue, the future *Presidente Vargas Avenue*, established a linkage between the northern part with the center and then, through the *Rio Branco Avenue*, with the southern zone of the city.

The other major issue of the plan was zoning. According to Agache the urban life of Rio depended on certain functional elements. In order to secure their existence, it was necessary to analyze and to locate them appropriately in the city. For each quarter, Agache fixed heights, types of buildings and morphologies in order to create different images and urban patterns for the city districts, assuring some hierarchy among them.¹² This conjunction of urban morphology, zoning and architectural type would define the appearance of each quarter. Therefore, zoning legislation would differentiate these districts and insure that they maintained their character. Avoiding more banal notions of zoning, Agache was concerned creating a city in which its functions and parts would be associated taking into account urban aesthetics. For Agache, urbanism was also an art of composition that insures that each district would have its own image, different from each other, and would also combine in a coherent and stable image of a modern city. (figure 2).

For the residential districts, Agache opted for expansion on the valleys respecting the topography and leaving green spaces inside the urban boundary. The residential neighborhoods would be differentiated by population, social hierarchy and building type.¹³ In the organization of the embassies and ministries sector, Agache was concerned with a certain uniformity of the urban parcels, proposing regulations that would not allow buildings that could disturb the unity of the area.¹⁴

In the central city, Agache addressed the need to improve circulation in the tight colonial urban tissue. In the banking sector, for example, he realized the impossibility of street-widening and proposed that streets should be reserved for pedestrians while many blocks would be replaced by taller buildings with ample parking areas underground. It can be argued that Agache attempted to conciliate the conflict between permanence and mobility. To achieve usable, livable and qualified spaces in a modern city, Agache recognized that it is necessary to provide a sense of place and protection, of a continuous city fabric, while assuring rapid transportation. The city is defined by different continuous urban masses, traditional blocks, streets and squares. (figure 3)

One of the most meaningful aspects of Agache's plan was the emphasis on the symbolic and aesthetic elements of a city. The Entrance of Brazil, a vast square surrounded by uniform and simplified classical buildings, providing a monumental entrance, a stage for parades and civic commemorations (figure 4-5). These elements are also present in the notable landscape design for the Gardens of Calabouço.¹⁵ In the business-center, *Praça do Castello*, Agache planned a hexagon-shaped square in which office towers and shops had an important place in the composition, showing their power in the modern city and emphasizing the need for symbols and form (figure 6):

¹¹ Agache, Alfred. *Ibid.*, p. 135-140.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 219. See also Tougeron, p.38-39. Agache divided the center city in five main zones central/commercial, industrial, residential, suburban, and green spaces/reserves.

¹³ While the aristocratic residential districts were located in the south, such as Catete and Laranjeiras (p.193-201), the workers districts were located in the north (p.188-189) close to the industrial district. This district was articulated with the transportation means. There was also an Embassy sector, formed by villas in wide and tree-lined avenues, which was located closely to the Ministries district.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p.187.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.161.

“Instead of dispersing the elements of urban modern life throughout the entire city, loosing their symbolic expression, why not reunite them in an organic ensemble of building and public spaces, achieving great monumental centers in order to express the social and economic ideals of our time?”¹⁶

For an architect like Agache, concerned with the formal aspect of the city, the solution to the artistic problem of the modern city resided in the construction of appropriate architectural ensembles. Agache promoted the grouping of buildings as a form of stage, which possessed a morphological continuity of the 19th century city (figure 7):

“The buildings, if carefully studied and integrated in the whole, will contribute to the formation of the general ‘decorum’: their position, appearance, perspective are some of the elements contributing to the urban embellishment ... Hence, it is necessary that the urban planner works not only in the placement of the buildings in plan, but also, imagines their volume.”¹⁷

Agache mastered classical composition in order to define urban spaces, using the haussmanian-baroque vocabulary (blocks, boulevards, perspectives), and to confer monumentality and majesty to the buildings. Urban design and architecture were unified in a stable and coherent image of city free of contradictions or disorder.

THE ESTADO NOVO REMODELING: RIO DE JANEIRO, RECIFE AND PORTO ALEGRE

Agache finished the plan in 1930, but the Revolution replaced Antonio Prado by Pedro Bergamini later that year. The new mayor promoted an administrative reorganization and established the *Comissão do Plano da Cidade* (City Planning Commission) which approved the plan and attempted to implement it, but this commission was dissolved when a new mayor, Pedro Ernesto, assumed power one year later. Agache’s plan was virtually forgotten.¹⁸

The fate of the plan only changed in November of 1937 when the *Estado Novo*, the Vargas dictatorship, promoted a new arrangement of the local politics and named Henrique Dodsworth to the head of the municipality. Dodsworth, who governed from 1937 to 1945, reestablished the commission, now called the *Serviço Técnico da Comissão do Plano da Cidade*, with the mission to evaluate the plan and to adapt it to the new reality of the city in the late 1930s.¹⁹ The Dodsworth general plan of improvements followed the guidelines set by Agache, including infrastructure and a new road system, which consisted basically of avenues and tunnels to improve communication within the troubled topography of Rio. Needless to say, the plan was strongly supported by the building company lobbyists.²⁰

The most powerful example of the Dodsworth works was the *Presidente Vargas Avenue*, a super boulevard 4 km long and 80 meters wide linking the center of the city to the north zone, which had already been proposed by Agache. The plan was redesigned in 1940 by a team of professionals, mostly engineers under the direction of Hélio Alves de Britto, and the construction began in April of the following year.²¹ Parts of the avenue were inaugurated yearly each November until 1944, but the most challenging was the last part, in the core of the city, involving a large number of demolitions of religious buildings and larger shops. This great operation demolished around 600 buildings, transforming substantially the cityscape and forcing thousands of people to move to the periphery

¹⁶ Ibidem, p.129.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p.211. Despite its emphasis on aesthetics, Agache did not ignore traffic and sewage.

¹⁸ This commission was formed by traditionalists like Archimedes Memória, Angelo Bruhns, José Marianno Filho and modernists like Lúcio Costa, Henrique de Novais and Armando de Godoy. Silva, Lúcia. *O Rio de Janeiro e a reforma urbana da gestão de Dodsworth (1937-1945)*. In: *Anais do V Encontro Nacional da ANPUR*. Belo Horizonte, 1993, p.46.

¹⁹ This new commission was headed by the engineer José de Oliveira Reis. Silva, Ibid, p.46-47, Rezende, Vera. *Evolução da produção urbanística na Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1900-1965*. In: Leme, Maria Cristina (editor). *Urbanismo no Brasil, 1895-1965*. São Paulo: Edusp/Nobel, 1999, p.44.

²⁰ The program included the Brasil and Tijuca Avenues, the urbanization of Botafogo and the Leme Tunnel. *Plano de Obras da Gestão Dodsworth*. In: *Revista Municipal de Engenharia*. Rio de Janeiro, n.1, set, 1944, n.4, dez, 1944.

²¹ Decrees n.6747, 6897 and 6898 from 12/28/1940. Project 3022/38 Rezende, Vera, Ibid, p.44. Lima, Evelyn Werneck. *Avenida Presidente Vargas : uma drástica cirurgia*. Rio de Janeiro : Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, 1995, p.17-18. Oliveira Reis, José. *O Rio de Janeiro e seus prefeitos*. Rio de Janeiro: Prefeitura da Cidade, 1977, p.149. In addition to the head Oliveira Reis, the team also included Nelson Naves, Hermínio Andrade Silva, Armando Stamile, Edvaldo Vasconcellos, Aldo Botelho, Helio Mamede, and Domingos Paula Aguiar

(figure 8).²² Among the many buildings demolished, were jewels of colonial religious architecture like *São Pedro dos Clérigos*, *São Domingos*, and *Bom Jesus*. The *Candelária*, a late 18th century neoclassical church, survived but right in the middle of the avenue (figure 9).²³ Only a highly authoritarian government could make this possible. Although Dodsworth and Brito affirmed that the only aspect taken into account was a rational traffic system, it is impossible to dissociate this intervention from aesthetics. The creation of scenery for a modern country was the main objective.

Another important concretization of Agache's ideas was the urbanization of the Castelo Hill. This hill was razed by the mayor Carlos Sampaio in 1922, and remained a precious tract of vacant land in the core of the city. The new urban pattern followed loosely Agache's intention. The area was given to federal institutes and ministries in order to house the growing bureaucracy.²⁴

The central area of **Recife** is formed by four districts: Santo Antônio, São José, Boa Vista e do Recife which spread over islands, peninsulas and continental parts. Santo Antonio, the administrative, commercial and cultural center of the city, started to be considered a problem, due to the traffic congestion, and an urban reform was continuously demanded since mid-1920s. Meanwhile, Agache, in his effort to propagate Urbanism (and also attain commissions), visited the city in 1927, attracting the media attention to the city's problems.²⁵ Although Agache was not commissioned, it can be said that questions of urbanism were seriously considered by cultural and political elites.²⁶ The appearance of local modern initiatives in literature and architecture also encouraged this discussion.

In 1930, the architect Nestor de Figueiredo, educated in the National Beaux-Arts School and assistant of Agache in Rio de Janeiro, was commissioned to make a new plan for the entire city and for the Santo Antonio district.²⁷ In his plan, presented in early 1932, Figueiredo proposed a new design in which the center of the district would be the center of reception and distribution of traffic for the entire city, with two large avenues radiating from *Independência* Square (figure 10-11). In this plan features from Agache's plan for Rio appear: the imposing and scenic aspects, the perspectives, Y-shape avenues, monumental groups of buildings and squares, and particularly the idea that buildings form the city. Some themes explored by Agache, such as the Entrance of Brazil and the idea of creating an exclusive business center also appear. Like Agache's plan, Figueiredo's method is also morphologic: work with elements of the traditional city to create refined and elaborated spaces for the modern city.²⁸ Due to the critiques by local professionals²⁹, a commission formed by the Municipality to approve or reject the plan asked advice from the most famous Brazilian urban planners: Washington de Azevedo, Prestes Maia e Atílio Correa Lima. Their reports pointed out some problems in the plan and encouraged the Municipality to abandon it and commission another urban planner, Atílio Correa Lima,

²² BRITO, Hélio Alves. Obras da Avenida Presidente Vargas. In: *Revista Municipal de Engenharia*. Rio de Janeiro, jul-oct, 1944, p.100-111

²³ This idea was also present in Agache. The reasons could be found in the prestige of neoclassical features and in the possibility of creating a magnificent esplanade of modern building around it.

²⁴ The famous Ministry of Education and Health, is also located in this area.

²⁵ Agache made two conferences exposing the main lines of the SFU program. Cf.: *Jornal Pequeno*, 27/08/27 "No DSA, o Prof. Agache realizou hontem a sua primeira conferência"; *Jornal do Commercio*, 15/08/27 "Um urbanista, o Rio e o Recife"; *Diário da Manhã*, 26/08/27 "A visão fascinadora de uma grande e bela cidade. O urbanista francês Alfred Agache, chegado hontem ao Recife, iniciará seu plano de remodelação da cidade com 2 conferências. *Diário da Manhã*, 28/08/27 "Recife e seu urbanista"; JC, 27/08/27 "O urbanista Agache".

²⁶ The attempt to commission Agache was questioned by financial aspects and by nationalistic reasons. *Jornal do Recife*, 09/09/1927. O urbanista Agache e o plano de remodelação do Recife. in: *Boletim de Engenharia*, n. 1, vol.III, oct.1927, pp.21-22. It should be mentioned that a local engineer, Domingos Ferreira, made two proposals for the area and the process of reform was already started. Moreira, Fernando. Planos e idéias do urbanismo moderno no Recife. in: *Anais do IV Seminário de História da Cidade e do Urbanismo*. Rio de Janeiro: PROURB, 1996

²⁷ Figueiredo was commissioned after he was showed the plan for Recife he had presented in the IV *Congresso Panamericano de Arquitetos*, held in Rio de Janeiro also in 1930. "Pelo embelezamento e progresso do Recife" *Diário da Manhã*, 03/09/1931.

²⁸ Figueiredo also presented a general Plan for Recife that consisted of a new zoning and a radial-peripheral system, communicating peripheral zones through large avenues, which was also clearly influenced by Agache. *Plano de Remodelação e Extensão da Cidade do Recife* (1932). See Outtes, Joel. *Recife pregado a cruz das grandes avenidas*. Recife: MDU/UFPE, 1991. p.103-105; Moreira, Fernando. *Ibid*, p.773.

²⁹ Domingos Ferreira pointed out the financial aspect while José Estelita criticized the form of the blocks and the internal courtyards and Paulo Guedes focused in the sanitary aspects. Cf.: *Diário da Manhã*, 17/02/1932 e 18/02/1932; These critiques were promptly answered by Figueiredo in the media: *Diário da Manhã*, 26/02/1932. Moreira, Fernando, *Ibid*, p.778

already famous for his plan for the new city of Goiânia.³⁰ Correa Lima made a different plan in 1934 that started to be implemented in the following year.³¹

The proclamation of *Estado Novo* named a new governor, Agamenom Magalhães, and a new mayor, Novaes Filho. Unsatisfied with the length of the process, the new mayor created a new commission, in charge of evaluating the work that had been done, basically demolitions, and of proposing a conclusion.³² This commission disapproved the Correa Lima Plan and working on Figueiredo's plan presented another plan of reform in April 1938. Figueiredo was rehabilitated as author, although the new project reduced drastically his original plan to only a single avenue and some blocks paralleling it (figure 12-15).

The Municipality continued the works rapidly. The new half-mile long and 35 and 50 meters wide new avenue started in Independence Square and continued diagonally in the direction to the main bridge linking to the mainland. The building of the new ensemble was extremely rapid and caused the destruction of many narrow alleys, old buildings and historical landmarks. This operation displaced a traditional central neighborhood of lower medium class and small commerce. On the new lots, much larger than the older ones, prominent and tall buildings were for offices, the federal and state bureaucracy, banks and cinemas.

This new avenue, later called *Guararapes*, was clearly intended to modernize the old center, transforming it in a monumental ensemble. There was a clear desire for verticalization, greater density and concentration, closely resembling the business-center proposed by Agache in Rio. The regularization in order to produce the desired profile of the avenue was the role of legislation. Despite the rapidity of the demolition and construction, occupation was not immediate. Despite Novaes Filho's efforts to attract investments, the lack of state funds and the fragility of the local bourgeoisie led to delays in the construction of some buildings. Finally, many buildings were occupied by the growing federal bureaucracy.

The city of **Porto Alegre** also followed the Rio and Recife examples. Although it did not have an ample discussion on urban matters quite so early, Porto Alegre had a sort of administrative continuity, an earlier municipal control over public services and some far sighted ideas in planning, which remained powerful in the development of the city. The city also followed the pattern of demolition of central areas opened by Rio de Janeiro, but the plan that guided these actions, the *Moreira Maciel* Plan of 1914, was more comprehensive than the others, setting the guidelines for the expansion of the city over the next decades.³³ Their geographical position led to a unique exchange of ideas with Argentina and Uruguay, while cultural affinity made them more accessible to German urbanism.

In 1935, Edvaldo Pereira Paiva and Luis Ubatuba de Farias, municipal engineers, were charged with making a topographical survey of the city, but they exceeded their instructions and produced a famous exhibition on urbanism, which provoked discussion of the city's problems. The exhibition was published in 1939 as *Contribuição ao Estudo da Urbanização de Porto Alegre*, in which they pointed out the main problems of the city and established a new plan. This included new coastal residential districts, open spaces, an industrial district and new scheme of avenues that would promote decentralization.³⁴ Paiva and Farias were highly influenced by Agache and by Hénard's ideas about traffic resolution.

³⁰ Their critiques refer basically two aspects: the lack of enough knowledge of the place and the excessive traffic convergence to the Independence Square. Azevedo, Washington. "Parecer sobre a remodelação e extensão da cidade do Recife. in: *Revista Brasileira de Engenharia*, vol. XXVII, n.5, jun., 1934; Prestes Maia. Os melhoramentos de Recife: notas de viagem. in: *Revista Polytechnica*. São Paulo n.110-122; "O plano de Remodelação do Recife: o parecer de Atílio Correa Lima sobre o anteprojeto de Nestor de Figueiredo". *Diário da Manhã*, 12, 14, 17 and 20/03/1935. Apud. Outtes, *Ibid.*, p.123-125.

³¹ The Correa Lima Plan, presented in March of 1936, though to be quickly executed, is more modest and economic, trying to change little the central pattern. Correa Lima, Atílio. Plano de Remodelação do Recife. in: *Urbanismo e Viação*, n.9, jul, 1940; n.11, dec, 1940, n.15 jul, 1941.

³² This commission was formed by representatives of the Municipality, State and Professional Association of Engineers de Outtes, Joel, *Ibid.*, p.172.

³³ It set an extension of the port in area gained from the river and proposed important avenues and thoroughfares. Ferraz, Célia. Trajetórias do urbanismo em Porto Alegre 1900-1945. in: Leme, Maria Cristina. *Ibid.*, p.92-93.

³⁴ Faria, Luis Ubatuba de. *Contribuição ao Estudo de Urbanização de Porto Alegre*. Prefeitura Municipal, 1938; Ferraz, Célia, *Ibid.*, p.94.

Meanwhile, the Estado Novo appointed a new mayor for the City, José Loureiro da Silva (1938-1943). Loureiro created the *Conselho do Plano Diretor* that decided to call Arnaldo Gladosch, a São Paulo-based architect educated in Germany, to coordinate a major plan for Porto Alegre. Gladosch, also an assistant for Agache, settled in the city and participated actively in this council, revealing his ideals regarding city planning. He advocated surveys, the need of a major plan and condemned the widening of streets, considered by him as a temporary solution. His plan introduced zoning, green areas, industrial areas and addressed problems of flooding and the treatment of the coast. Gladosch also attempted to resolve traffic problems in the center of Porto Alegre,³⁵ incorporating previous ideas of Paiva and Ubatuba de Farias, which were members of the team.

The major feature of Gladosch plan was the completion of *Borges de Medeiros* and the new avenues *Salgado Filho* and *Júlio de Castilhos* (figure 16). *Borges de Medeiros* began to be built in 1924, following Moreira Maciel's ideas, but construction was finished, like the Rio and Recife projects, only during the *Estado Novo*. The powers conferred to Loureiro da Silva and the suppression of the Municipal Chamber favored the rapid construction. The avenues were inaugurated in 1940. *Salgado Filho* links *Borges de Medeiros* Avenue with the inner city through the Avenue of *Farrapos*, an important link between the center and the north zone, according to Gladosch ideas. The two avenues, *Salgado Filho* and *Borges de Medeiros*, established new urban patterns and changed the traditional cityscape.

The influence of Agache in the plans of Porto Alegre and Recife is enormous: the emphasis on verticalization, uniformity of central areas, symbolic and morphologic issues. The way from the drawings to the reality, however, was a very tortuous one. Plans were made, approved and rejected according to the political struggle. Only the authoritarianism and the financial support of the *Estado Novo* were able to stop endless discussion and to execute the plans. In spite of this effort, the three plans were drastically reduced to main large avenues. They changed significantly the cores of the cities, but left the periphery largely uncontrolled.

BUILDINGS CODES AND THE NEW FORM OF THE CITY

As said before, the new design of cities was attained through legislation, which aimed to coordinate the new constructions in order to create a stage. The new legislation approved around the late 1930s for these cities established zoning and differentiated patterns for new construction and gave birth to an interesting proto-rationalist architecture. These new laws regulated the construction of new parcels, establishing larger lots, wider streets and longer setbacks from the street. Preoccupation with hygiene was also present in the new laws, which established requirements for illumination and ventilation. The control of urban design was reflected in the alignment of the facades, volumetric unity of the blocks and concordance of heights and architectural motifs, which maintained uniformity in the new areas and created a modern urban profile while maintaining some qualities of the traditional city. In the three cities, the alignment of the facades was kept in the outer limits of the lot in the city center, maintaining the traditional city alignment with the building facing the street. On the other hand, in the suburbs, they required setbacks from the street, creating a low and less dense pattern, which contrasted sharply with the high, dense and vertical central area, reserved for offices and business.

These regulations conferred unity in central areas, creating differentiated zones, as Agache had proposed in his plan. In addition, the legislation was also preoccupied with the aesthetics of the city. It contributed to the transformation of the center in a symbolic space. The regulations were unable to create expressive isolated buildings, but they did create an ensemble with a pleasing uniformity in the central areas, making possible the design of the modern city without losing the pedestrian scale and the qualities of the traditional city, a conciliation of new and old urban patterns. In short, principles of decorum, monumentality, symmetry and modulation from a Beaux-Arts culture were preserved.

In the **Rio** case, the new Building Code proposed by decree 6000 of 1937 established a new zoning based on Agache suggestion and determined minimum heights of twelve floors along the *Presidente Vargas* Avenue (figure 17). Later in 1940, these heights were increased to 22 floors in the central area

³⁵ Ferraz, Célia, *Ibid*, p.95-96; Silva, José Loureiro. *Plano de Urbanização, 1938-1943*. Porto Alegre: Globo, 1943. p.129. Mostly written by Edvaldo Paiva, the book shows the concretizations of the municipalities, incorporating theoretical conceptions and proposals of Paiva, Faria and Gladosch.

facing the new Avenue. This intense verticalization, conveyed by the real estate interests, did not occur in provincial cities, where these interests were not so powerful. Some buildings clearly represented the power of *Estado Novo*. The new Army headquarters, designed by the conservative Beaux-Arts architect Cristiano Stockler das Neves, transmits an intense image of power and discipline through its architectural mass and monumental scale, clearly intended to form a stage for military parades.³⁶

The **Recife's** legislation of 1936 establishing some zoning control over the city, which was divided in four zones each one with different patterns of occupation.³⁷ This law established higher buildings and densities in the center and lower densities and heights in the periphery. The Recife legislation required the minimum heights of seven floors, with setbacks in the upper floors, for the new avenue and adjacent streets, with galleries at the street level covered by the projection of the buildings (figure 18). Favoring circulation of vehicles, setbacks at the corners in order to provide visibility for drivers were also required, and architects took advantage of this requirement exploring innovative solutions for corners, using cylindrical, corner-cutting or concave forms.³⁸ The facades of the new avenue were rigidly controlled by the Municipality. The rules required that the main lines and the architectural motifs should be in concordance with neighboring buildings (figures 19-23)³⁹. This legislation was inspired by Agache's one for Rio and adapted to local conditions.⁴⁰ The main entrances to the avenue, formed by the *Trianon* and the *Correios* Buildings, received a remarkable architectural treatment, resembling the Entrance of Brazil. The plans revealed the permanence of the Beaux-Arts origins, conciliating innovations of the modern aesthetics with traditions of classicism.

The same continuity that characterized **Porto Alegre's** administration also occurred in legislation. In 1926, some changes were introduced in the old legislation of 1913 requiring new constructions in the center city to have at least three floors, indicating a clear commitment to modernization.⁴¹ In the late 1930s, Loureiro da Silva, referring to the need to embellish the city, established new urban patterns to the occupation of Salgado Filho and Borges de Medeiros Avenues. A minimum height of six floors on these two avenues was decreed to change definitely the image of colonial city and to confer it an image of modernity, like that defined by Gladosch buildings *Mesbla* and *Sulacap* (figures 24-26).⁴²

Most of these buildings were not designed by very known architects with a solid academic formation. The designers did not follow the corbusian influence that was flowering in Brazil at this moment, but they present modernizing lines and a somewhat romantic aesthetic of velocity playing with lines of curves and balconies. Despite some traditional features, these buildings used the most modern techniques. It is interesting how, in Porto Alegre and Recife, very similar laws were made to achieve verticality in order to produce images of what is supposed to be a modern city.

CONCLUSIONS

As discussed above, the cities of Porto Alegre, Recife and Rio de Janeiro have many common characteristics in terms of planning. Since the late 1920s they engaged in discussions about urbanism that led to the commission of plans by Agache or by his followers. These plans, which present very similar features, were extensively discussed in a slow process of implementation. Under mayors newly appointed by Vargas dictatorship, some features of these plans were put in practice, transforming the core of these cities in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In all these cities, the creation of great architectural ensembles was made possible by building codes. The dissemination of these reforms represents an important case of transferences of ideas.

Agache and his followers believed in the aesthetic and formal aspects of the city and the image of modern city they proposed was based on traditional urban morphologies and Beaux-Arts composition. These planners offer an opportunity to reflect on the theme of building a modern city with traditional

³⁶ In the interior panels portrays heroic moments of the Brazilian Army. Lima, Evelyn Werneck, *Ibid.* ch. 4.

³⁷ Prefeitura Municipal do Recife. *Regulamento de Construções do Município do Recife*. 08/12/1936. Decreto n.374. This decree has being discussed since 1930, when a commission was established to revise the 1919 law.

³⁸ *Chapter IV: Alinhamento e nivelamentos para as construções. Art 18*. Prefeitura Municipal do Recife, *Ibid.*, p.16.

³⁹ *Ibidem.*, p.37-38.

⁴⁰ Agache, Alfred. *Ibid.* Appenso, p. XI

⁴¹ In the new Porto Alegre there was no more room to colonial-like architecture of one or two pavement houses. Decreto, n.53, 10 de maio de 1926. Art 4 Almeida, Maria. *Gestores da cidade e seus regulamentos urbanísticos*. In: Leme, Maria Cristina, *Ibid.*, p.110.

⁴² Decree n. 245, December, 1940. Almeida, Maria, *Ibid.* p.111.

morphology. Architecture was allied to urban design in order to create this image through the imposition of building codes.

Although these planners emphasized the formal aspect of the city, they also aimed at the adaptation of cities to the modern times and paid attention to functional requirements: traffic solutions; zoning, surveys, etc. Figueiredo, Gladosch and Agache's plans displayed a new competence and a new knowledge about the city, conceiving it as a whole, from a rational and scientific point of view. These experiences also show how much Brazilian professionals were attuned to European and American ideas and theoretical formulations. They constituted an interesting example of how the characteristics of modern urbanism, mainly from the SFU program, were present in local modern urbanism.

In its attempt to impose an image that symbolizes a complex meaning- the corporatism, social control, state regulatory interventionism - the *Estado Novo* elected the SFU program as the best interpretation of the image of modern city. The conception that social order could be shaped by spatial order is prominent in the *Estado Novo* urban program. Urbanism was an important element in the creation of the national project of building modern Brazil. The promises of urbanism were concretized in Brazil by an authoritarian regime, which attempted to create a certain form of urban scenery for the disciplined masses, in which the poor was hidden. Only regimes like Vargas, Kemal and Salazar seemed to be able to carry out these reforms. It is only in the *Estado Novo* (1937) that right conditions were created to end a long debate and to begin building. Needless to say these operations were supported by commercial and business interests in order to reconvert areas occupied by a lower-medium class, which was dislocated to the periphery.

These experiences also show that the formation of modern architecture and urbanism in Brazil seems to be more complex than understood by the architectural historiography in its insistence on the influence of Le Corbusier and the *Carioca* School. These reforms occurred at same time as Brazilian Modern architecture started to be internationally recognized with the famous MoMA Exhibition, *Brazil Builds*, in 1943. It showed how state representation differed from the national to the international ground and how different professionals positions penetrated in certain niches of the state bureaucracy. This formal approach towards the city, was surpassed only during the 1950s by a new and broader view about cities, now considering them in the metropolitan context⁴³. Along this metropolitan-regional approach, the influence of CIAM spread in many projects for many civic centers, housing and universities after WW II.

The arrival of the Modern Movement, and particularly Urbanism, in non-European cultures is a fascinating theme. It is interesting how ideas from abroad were introduced and diffused and how they related with local traditions of building cities raises many questions. Comparing to the associative policy of Lyautey-Prost in Morocco, which advocated the use of regional styles and traditional forms of architecture and ornamentation, these initiatives in Brazil and Latin America seemed to have failed in this sense. The approach of these planners did not differ in cities with such different climates, perhaps except for Porto Alegre. The image of these plans seems more suitable for Chicago than a tropical city. But what is supposed to be an authentic image of a Latin American or Brazilian modern city?

In the hybrid context of Latin America, however, European modernism cannot be understood merely as an intruder, because the predominance of Europe has been always strong. Moreover, modernism arrived in a moment of awareness and definition of the national culture of the Latin America countries. In Brazil, which does not have a rich pre-Columbian past as do its neighbors, modernism was particularly helpful to define a necessary national and unified culture.

The demands for Urbanism were created not only by the producers in France, but also by the receptors in South America. Urbanism responded to the desires for modernization of the local elites, which included the erasing of the past and the creation of a new identity. In process like that, such as the remodeling of these cities, what part of the traditional culture should be maintained and what part should be abandoned still an unresolved question. How a city can be modern and Brazilian at same

⁴³ Taking for granted that the resolution of urban problems no longer resided in urban reforms, this new mentality focused on the region, defending economic transformation, industrialization and urban expansion

time is another unanswered question. These examples showed that Latin America and Brazil were primordial experimentation terrains to modern society.