

Proposal of smoothing space: disputes around the “modern Manaus”¹

Abstract

This article presents a reflection on projects for the so-called area of “Modern Manaus” in the city of Manaus/Amazonas, Brazil, which aim to create activities to define the uses of space as scenarios. This area stands as a space of dispute by various interested parties in the city of Manaus. The focus of this article lies with the changes proposed for the area of Modern Manaus and the issues experienced currently by this spatiality, for it is understood that pressures and class struggles are experienced in the city as a whole and, therefore, highlight the tensions of living in the city.

Keywords: Manaus – City; Memories; History; Photos; Oral Sources.

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Propondo o alisamento do espaço: disputas em torno da “Manaus moderna”

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta uma reflexão acerca de projetos voltados para a Área denominada de “Manaus Moderna” na cidade de Manaus/AM, que visam a criar atividades definindo os usos do espaço enquanto cenário. Essa área se coloca como um espaço de disputa por diversos interesses na cidade de Manaus. O foco do artigo recai sobre as transformações propostas para a área da Manaus Moderna e nas questões vividas por essa espacialidade atualmente, pois entende-se que ali são experimentadas as pressões e lutas de classes vivenciadas na cidade como um todo, e, portanto, estão evidenciadas as tensões do viver na cidade.

Palavras-chave: Manaus - Cidade, Memórias, História, Fotografias, Fontes Oraís.

The area of “Modern Manaus”² is being transformed into an important space of commerce for the city of Manaus since the late nineteenth century³, and has acted as a space for several elements that gave it a variety of names, such as “Floating City”⁴

² The Project “Modern Manaus”, the name of the last great urban intervention in this spatiality, started during the second half of the 1980s and was divided into stages, whose developments can be seen till nowadays, projected to be completed in 36 months, and which has suffered various deadline delays, as can be verified by the document “Chronological Summary of the Project Modern Manaus”, archived at the *State Department of Infrastructure of the State of Amazonas* (SEINF) In: Program for physical improvements to the city of Manaus - AM. Contract no. 019/86. Addenda (AMAZONAS, 1986).

³ In 1855, the space saw the creation of the Ribeira of Edibles (*Ribeira dos Comestíveis*). “For another year, the Ribeira worked as a central place for supplying the city, covering the entire area from the Remédios Bridge to the bayou of São Vicente, being legally the only responsible for the sale of all food kinds to the population of Manaus” (COSTA, 1988, no pagination).

⁴ The so-called “Floating City” started to settle on the city of Manaus around the 1920s and was decommissioned in 1967. The name “Floating City” derived from the expressive construction, the number of houses and the floating markets in the Black river (*Negro*), occupying a wide area right in front of the city of Manaus, starting right by the Municipal Market, Adolpho Lisboa, and going all the way to the Educandos neighborhood. For a discussion regarding the Floating City, see: SOUZA, Leno José Barata. “*Cidade Flutuante*”: uma Manaus sobre as águas (1920-1967). 2010. Thesis (Doctorate in History). – Pontifícia Universidade Católica in São Paulo, Brazil, 2010.

(between 1920 and late 1960), Edge of Market Beach Fair (*Feira da Beira da Praia do Mercado*), Remedios Stairway Fair (*Feira da Escadaria dos Remédios*), Banana Fair (*Feira da Banana*) and, more recently, area and Modern Manaus Fair. Our aim is to reflect on the most recent changes and social attributes assigned to it.

Michel de Certeau (1994), to distinguish “place” from “space”, points us to the idea that movement affects the creation of a space. According to the author, a “place” refers to the stable, while “space is a practiced place. Thus, the geometrically defined street, designed by an urban plan is transformed into space by the pedestrians” (CERTEAU, 1994, p. 202).

It is worth noting that, from the problems of living in the city, a certain “place” may consist of several spaces, among them leisure space, survival/work space, tourism/historical heritage space, place of passage, “shortcut” to other spaces, even degradation place, generating the “need” for recovery and, therefore, is here understood as an object of historical analysis.

These areas and territorialities are configured, thus, from a “war of places”, as pointed out by Antônio Arantes (2000a).

To understand the constitution of this range of meanings, it is necessary to start with the social experiences built on those spaces. So,

this common space, daily trodden, is being collectively built with symbolic boundaries that separate, approach, level, hierarchize or, in a word, order the categories or social groups in their multiple relationships (ARANTES, 2000, p. 191).

Thus, these spaces cannot be understood through only one perspective, or as territories whose identity contours are unique or are clearly defined. We should observe how they are being woven in the social experience, in the everyday experience of the people who occupy and build these spaces, either physically or symbolically, creating multiple senses and meanings.

It is important to note that these territorialities should not be understood simply as a collection of various experiences and different ways of life, but as a space where

multiple meanings and senses intermingle, creating “symbolic transition zones [...]. More than well-defined territories, these ‘contexts’ or ‘environments’ can be understood as contact zones, where contradictory moralities intertwine [...]” (ARANTES, 2000, p. 192).

The city is built by this configuration of spaces, an amalgam of people who will articulating spaces and different time frames, forming this whole where the material marks are only parts of this shapeless, and at the same time articulated universe.

For Antonio Arantes (2000, p. 200):

The work, the cool breeze, the leisure and everyday life built the city as an articulated succession of places in time and space, both vertically and horizontally, by mediating liminal zones, fluid and ambivalent. The visible marks that last, identity places, are just part of a deeper and more extensive reality that contextualizes and challenges.

Starting from a conception that understands the city as a social practice, it is urgent to understand the people who build, compete and enjoy these spaces, because the city, as previously stated, cannot be seen as a homogeneous whole. Composed of values and different projects, the city should be understood as a heterogeneous whole. In the words of Henri Lefebvre (2004, p. 46-47):

The city is a work in progress, to be associated more with work of art than simply material product. If there is a production of the city and of social relationships in the city, it is a production and a reproduction of human beings by human beings, rather than the production of objects.

Through this perspective, we seek to understand the transformations experienced in the area of Modern Manaus, i.e. perceiving the city as a social practice that is the result of a constant conflict of interest.

Thus, it is worth noting that, currently, this area still stands as a space of dispute by various interested parties in the city of Manaus.

The map below seeks to physically locate the area in question, showing the space of Modern Manaus using a satellite photograph.



Mapa Espaço da Manaus Moderna (fotografia de satélite).

Fonte: Manausonline.com (2009).

Legenda: 1 - Igreja Nossa Senhora dos Remédios; 2 - Terminal de Cargas e Descargas do Porto Flutuante de Manaus; 3 - Mercado Municipal Adolpho Lisboa; 4 - Feira Manaus Moderna; 5 - Estacionamento da Feira; 6 - Feira da Banana; 7 - Avenida Manaus Moderna; 8 - Avenida Marquez de Santa Cruz.

The points highlighted on the map suggest the vitality of this area for life in the city of Manaus. The presence of the Our Lady of Remedies Church⁵; the Loading and Unloading Dock of the Floating Harbor of Manaus⁶, which concentrates great movement of goods arriving and leaving the city; the Municipal Market⁷, where a variety of fruits, vegetables and regional handicrafts can be found; the Col. Jorge Teixeira Fair

⁵ The Our Lady of Remedies Church was built on top of an Indian burial ground in the nineteenth century, showing, since that time, a desire to literally bury the customary practices of the inhabitants of the place. Being one of the oldest churches in the city, the Our Lady of Remedies Church replaced, for eight years (1850-1858), the mother church of Our Lady of Conception, which burned in a fire that year, as reported by Otoni Moreira de Mesquita (2006).

⁶ The Manaus Port was built by an English company, the *Manaos Harbour Limited*, in the early twentieth century, with the objective of streamline the latex flow, as well as to improve the transportation of people. It sits between the São Vicente Beach and the Municipal Market Adolpho Lisboa ramp. To the left of the entrance, the customs building, which came pre-fabricated in England, where the office was, and on the other side of the track, are the warehouses for stocking the goods. Ahead, there is a ramp that is intended for containers. Officially, the improvement works of the Manaus Port began on October 7, 1902, and trailed, morosely, for many years, being completed around 1919 (PORT OF MANAUS, 2011).

⁷ The Municipal Market Adolpho Lisboa was built in the second half of the nineteenth century, aiming to centralize the supply of food in the city of Manaus. “The traditional market is what one might call ‘two faces’. The building has two completely different facades, one facing the Black River (Rio Negro) and the other facing the Barés street” (MESQUITA, 2006, p. 85).

(Modern Manaus)⁸, the largest trading center of vegetables, fruits and fish; the Banana Fair⁹; and the Marquez de Santa Cruz Street, traditional shopping street in the city, reveal the importance of this space in the dynamics of the city. However, we must go beyond what the map can show, and unveil the meanings of this spatiality to those who are part of it, understanding how it is experienced and built in daily life.

Currently, part of that space, as seen on the map, is a large metal shed located directly across the Black River (*Rio Negro*) is right in front the Col. Jorge Teixeira Fair.

Known locally as the Modern Manaus Fair, this market was built in the early 1990s and was opened in March 1994, standing out both for its physical size (it’s made of metal structures and houses, according to the Municipality of Amazonas, with 932 stalls and boxes, and 923 permit holders), and its current importance in the supply of food for the city of Manaus (it is responsible for supplying large supermarket and hypermarket networks, and also local restaurants). Divided into 10 different sectors, one can find at the Modern Manaus Fair, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, snacks, even clothing, perfumes and some services such as hairdressers and manicurists.

In this sense, we see the spatiality that currently is known as the area of Modern Manaus brings back, to this day, several references of other times and rhythms of its occupation, as reported by several workers who labored and work in this place.

We observe also other references, caught through conversations, of how the stronger presence of nature, and the always intense mention of horticultural and fish trade. Thus, numerous reports enabled us to accomplish this reflection.

In the memoires of Mr. José Moraes da Paz, 62 at the time of the interview, street vendor for over 40 years, 20 of those in the area of Modern Manaus, the more informal commerce became prominent. In his words:

⁸ A large warehouse of fruits, vegetables, meat and fish, the Cel. Jorge Teixeira Fair, created in 1994, replaced the old wood fair known as the *Remédios Stairway Fair*, an allusion to the Our Lady of Remedies Church.

⁹ The Banana Fair is a warehouse linked to the Modern Manaus Fair, where there are no stalls, but merchandise sits on display on the ground, in marked spaces. In that place, they sold mainly bananas, watermelons, among other products.

[...] there was a lot going on at that time, there on the beach, we had that pen, y’know? Of turtles... Do you like turtles? Tracajá (...?...?) Ya got there – Here! Ya beat on it, when was smartass, people only want’d it when it was well... smart, right? Then: - This one! How much? – It’s this much! – Give it to me! It was like that, on the beach, fish ... [...]¹⁰

It worth noting that the identity of this place was, throughout its historical process, grew as a space for commerce and sociability, and even leisure, fundamentally connected to nature.

Along the same, we find the speech by Fabiano da Silva Paz, a former street vendor, married, 34 at the time of the interview, a History professor in public education, who worked for a long time near the Modern Manaus, and also the son of the street vendor, Mr. José. Remembering his childhood in the 1980s, he told us about how he and his classmates liked to go there for swimming, fishing. He narrated that time as follows:

[...] It was just a rut, y’know? I knew all that; long before I had known it as a rut. And I actually gone there to fish, back in the day... with the people here from our street, the Ferreira Pena. I used to go with my classmates to fish, so I knew that place before, before all that... that structure they have today, y’know? It was not like that way back when, it was still in progress... starting construction and all that. But yes, there we bathed, fished and other stuff...¹¹

We note the way the current “Modern Manaus” still carries its regulars and those who shaped it, memories of other times, of other cultural ways of life. So, if for Fabiano, the mightiest recall is the leisure, the spatiality is also remembered, basically, as a space of exchange, of living in community and of the small retail that existed there.

The “fair” seems to be what shapes the place. There the workspace exists, it is what gives him dignity, his greatest value. It is from the commercial activity of the fair that life in that space seems to be defined.

Also worth noting is that the fair practice is so entrenched that, even though is a large metal shed structure, it remains known as the “Modern Manaus Fair”. Currently, according to the reflections of Mr. José Moraes da Paz, the city’s markets seems to

¹⁰ Interview conducted on June 26, 2008, in his place of residence.

¹¹ Interview conducted on June 25, 2008, at the Saudade Square, in Manaus.

carry only products originating from the south of the country¹², even fruits and vegetables that existed in abundance, are now becoming luxury items.

The area of Modern Manaus includes a multitude of activities and workers that continuously define its current identity. In this sense, looking at this space, we can identify, for example, shippers of goods that work in that area carrying a variety of goods to the interior of the boats, to be taken to the fair.

Another social group which can also be observed in the Modern Manaus is the of the collectors¹³, who scavenge the containers around the avenue for discarded food tossed aside by the vendors of the Modern Manaus Fair.

Those working at the fair also compose this space. They are those within the Modern Manaus Fair and the Banana Fair where basically horticulture, fish and meat are sold.

Mr. Luiz Maia¹⁴, when asked about the positive aspects of his profession, defended his condition as a marketer with the following argument:

So, what leaves here to the consumer, is coming out of my hand and the hands of others colleagues, received from the farmer... We are a workforce, the farmer works, he plants, he brings it and we pass it forward to the consumers. So that there is a workforce. Without the farmer, we in nobody. Without the marketer, the farmer can't produce nothing, because he has to sell to somebody, you see what I mean?¹⁵

These are, among others, the diverse activities and people that make up the space now known as Modern Manaus. Thus, we can observe that this is a universe characterized by great heterogeneity.

In the following images, both widespread by the Internet, we observe different angles of the same spatiality, the Modern Manaus Avenue:

¹² Interview conducted on June 26, 2008, in his place of residence.

¹³ Although no in-depth discussion occurred about the group of collectors, I signal their presence, even though individual and “unorganized”, appropriating and assuming their role as subjects in the construction of that spatiality.

¹⁴ In ORLANDI, Eni. *As formas do silêncio*. Campinas: Unicamp, 1997. p. 15, we understand that “the language making sense as a symbolic work, part of the general social work, constitutive of man and his history”. Thus, I chose to transcribe the interviews preserving the most literal way possible, the way of speaking of the respondents.

¹⁵ Interview conducted on July 3rd, 2007, in one of his stalls in the Modern Manaus Fair.

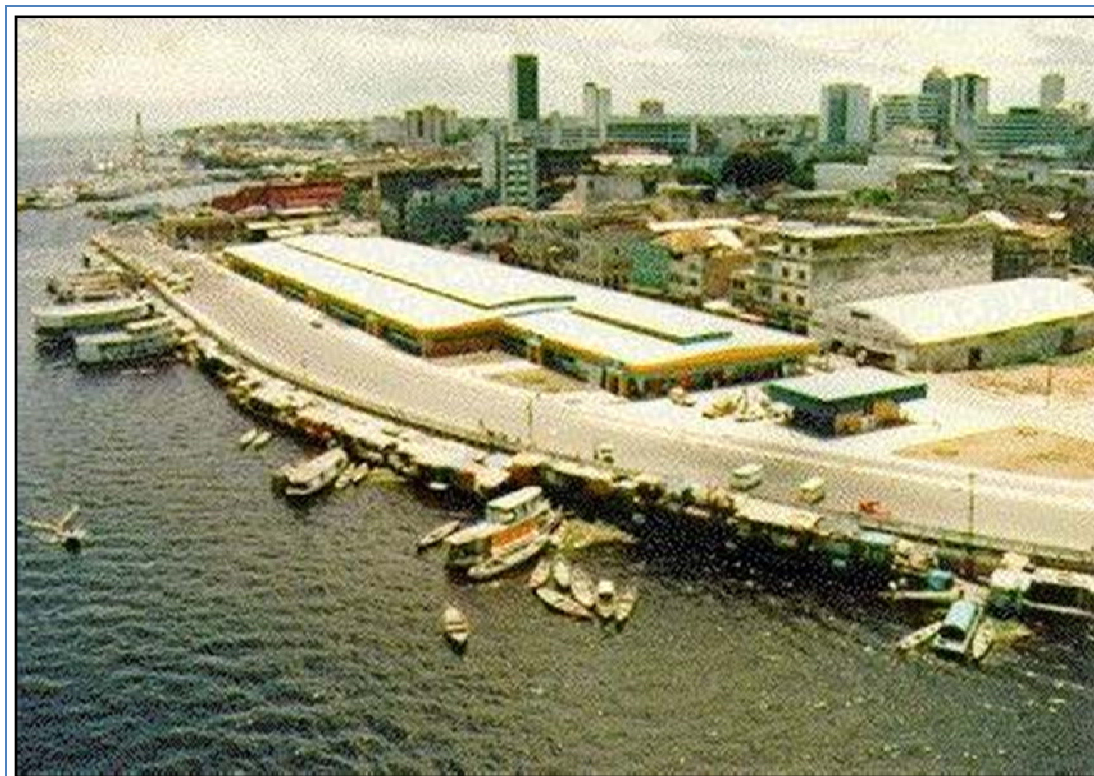


Photo of the Modern Manaus Avenue 1
Source: Image published in the Geocities site (2008)



Photo of the Modern Manaus Avenue 2
Source: Image published by the Manaus City Hall site (2008b)

First, we should highlight that the photographs include several subjectivities, as explained by Boris Kossoy (2007). Thus, one must take into account the scope of the photographer, the position the lens, the angle chosen, the way reality was cut. It is also necessary to reflect on the objectives of that which allows itself to be photographed or who orders the photograph from the photographer, what are the interests, what the image meant to convey to begin with, which memory it wants to perpetuate.

Perpetuating the memory in a frozen timeframe and a focused space, in the words of Boris Kossoy (2007, p. 133), like “a slice of life, removed from its constant flow and crystallized in image form”, this image presents silently, boosting the gaze and the reading to its interior, because therein lies “its speech”.

The use of photographic sources points us to the need of knowing its cultural role, which has the power to inform us, but also to misinform us:

[...] ambiguous instrument of knowledge, it exerts continuous fascination in men. While preserving references and individual memories, documenting everyday man made feats and the society in its multiple actions, fixating thus, the historical memory, it also serves – and is worth – the most selfish and directed ideological uses. The cultural role of images is critical, as words are decisive. The images are directly linked to the universe of mentalities and its cultural and historical importance lies in the intentions, uses and purposes that permeate its production and trajectory (Kossoy, 2007, p. 31-32).

Thus, we can see that the photographic image has served to preserve the memory, be it collective, national or individual/personal.

Although there are no references to the date or the photographer, we observe that both photographs are relatively recent, since both the fair (Photo 1) and the extension of the avenue (Photo 2) are constructions from the late twentieth century and early XXI, with the fair being inaugurated in 1994, and the extension of the avenue in the following decade.

We can see that the first photograph values the light of day and allows you to observe the avenue that separates, from one side, the Modern Manaus Fair and on the other, the Black River (Rio Negro), with boats moored right in front of the fair. This

image shows a calm space, giving the impression of a clean, organized, even pleasant space.

The second photograph, taken at night, draws attention to the artificial light, displaying the lighting placed by the city of Manaus in 2008, with the aim of enabling sightseeing¹⁶. The picture shows the avenue from another angle, a few meters ahead of the fair. It also displays a pleasant place. The moored boats give the feeling of calm. Public lighting is enhanced. There are three people walking down the sidewalk quietly. Further ahead, a stationary car; asking for information, perhaps? The movement is calm, the avenue seems a very quiet location.

However, what most arouses interest in these two photographs is not what you see, it is not what they portray (for those who have been through that space, such serenity if odd), but the absence. The absence of street vendors and chaotic traffic. The absence of homeless people, who roaming the space at night, often seen only as “drunk and drugged” by the press. The absence of the intense movement of goods and loaders who make a living in that space, mingling with thousands of travelers who come and go to various destinations. The absence of collectors competing for the remains the fair has to offer.

Removed from the Manaus City Hall site, Photo 2, as highlighted above, draws attention to the street lighting in that place and instigates some reflections. The photographer, by choosing to look the space from “above”, and afar, provides an overview of the whole, and reveals a design, perhaps a desire of an idealized city, where everything is in “order”, in their “proper place”. Thus, these images offer possibilities, wishes of organization, while they deviate from the daily practices that spatiality experiences (CERTEAU, 1994).

Practices such that, according to Michel de Certeau (1994), are responsible for the configuration of spaces, even if its practitioners fail to realize its constitution¹⁷. The

¹⁶ According to article published in the Manaus City Hall site, announcing the International Gastronomic Fair: “The whole area starts to get special lighting, in order to make it easier for guided tours, which will provide visitors the simultaneous opportunity to meet the both attractions” (MANAUS, 2008a).

¹⁷ According to Michael de Certeau (1994, p. 23), “The ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down there’, bellow the threshold where visibility starts. They walk – a simple way of experiencing the city, they are walkers. *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies decidedly follow an urban ‘text’, which they write though

photograph, as emphasized by Anne Marie Granet-Abisset (2002), allows us to apprehend representations. Thus, one can see in this image (Photo 2), a representation of the Modern Manaus Avenue, an idealized view of that city space by the government, or rather, how the municipal government wants that space to be seen.

However, other viewpoints are required. The following image approaches the space and offers another point of view, closer to the everyday practices of the place.

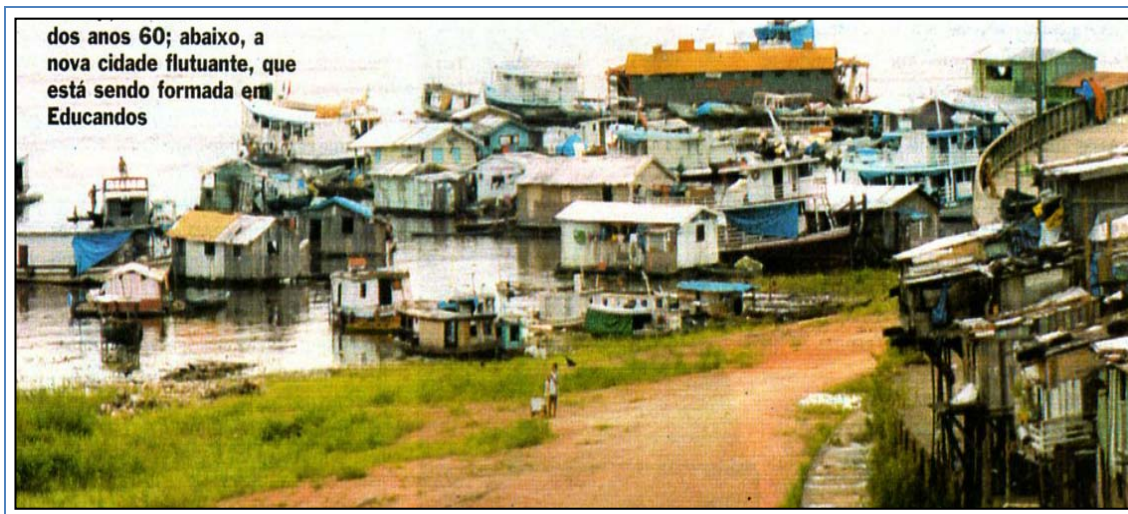


Photo 3 of Manaus, from the floating city to the regional stilts (Feb, 2000)
Source: Leno José Barata Souza (2010, p. 336).

This image allows us to see practices than the previous images, taken from above, seemed to hide. In it, we can see a small part of the Modern Manaus Avenue (at the top, to the right) and several houses on the bed of the Black River (Rio Negro), where locals use the wall itself, which separates the river and the avenue.

This image is very significant, because it reveals the permanence and the insistence of ways of life that are sought to be extinct.

So, putting these images side by side, we see that they have been shot from above, only the latter revealing what Antonio Arantes called “war of places”, i.e. the tensions on the ways of occupation and uses of that space. The first two images, panoramic, represent that space from an idealized and urban projects point of view, which seek to conform the city to interests linked to capitalist development. On the

they can not read it. These practitioners use the spaces that cannot be seen; the knowledge they have of these spaces is as blind as the gaze of lovers embracing”.

other hand, the third image catches the constitution of space in its daily life, showing the ways the popular sectors occupy the space, continuing to fight for their interests, a daily confrontation, insisting on remaining and keeping their ways of life, adapting themselves to the new reality.

We can see as an example the use of the great wall, built to support the avenue, which would, theoretically, prevent the construction of stilt and floating houses in the river, but ended up serving as support structure for these homes.

We understand the importance of discussing projects/plans such as the “Shock Order”¹⁸, recently released (in 2010), and the “Living Center”¹⁹, of 2008, both from the City Hall of Manaus, whose objectives are based on an idea of reordering the city and call attention to the impasses, the tensions and the class disputes experienced in the city today. While without the same organic structure of the previous project, the “Modern Manaus” Project can be seen as update attempts of the initial project of the 1980s and its articulations with the new capitalist logics and dynamics for urban planning.

Under the heading “Modern Manaus falls to pieces”, the “Reporter Newspaper – The opinion newspaper” (“*Jornal Repórter – O jornal de opinião*”), published on 23 May, 2008 in the online edition, an instigating article regarding daily life of Modern Manaus. The article contained a description of the day-to-day happenings of that space, fraught, of course, with the subjectivity of its author.

Before submitting the content of the article, it is necessary to pay attention to the political context in which this speech was inserted.

Manaus, at the time of publication of that article (May, 2008), was experiencing a peculiar moment: it was under the administration of Serafim Correa (PSB party), a

¹⁸ According to an article published in the Manaus City Hall site, inspired by the eponymous program implemented in Rio de Janeiro, the city mayor of Manaus, Amazonino Mendes, together with several municipal secretariats, such as the Municipal Secretary of Production and Supply (Sempab) and the Municipal Institute of Social Order and Urban Planning (Implurb), proposed the “Shock Order! in Manaus, aiming to “fight with impact actions the irregularities committed in several areas within the urban perimeter of Manaus” (MANAUS, 2010b).

¹⁹ Project proposed in 2008 by the then mayor, Serafim Correa, who had the objective of “providing improvements of the environmental comfort, aesthetic and functional conditions of downtown Manaus, by implementing immediate actions, as well as medium and long-term planning”, as highlighted the news article published in the Manaus City Hall site (MANAUS, 2008c).

mayor who emerged victorious in the 2004 municipal elections, in a dispute with Amazonino Mendes (then affiliated to the PTB), a member of the political group that had been in power for two decades in the Amazonas State²⁰. The municipal elections in 2008 and, however, saw Serafim Correa (seeking re-election) disputing the top post of the municipal executive with Amazonino Mendes, who eventually returned to power the following year.

It is important to highlight that, at various times, the meanings produced on the area of Modern Manaus transformed into disputes between local political groups. Thus, we see a speech alignment aired on the web article to others, introducing nothing new about that spatiality and even the city as a whole.

The search for order and conformation of the city by some sectors of the Manaus society, represented by the group allied with Amazonino Mendes, can be observed, for example, in the 1980s, through the authorship project by Gilberto Mestrinho, which predicted a reorganization and a conformation of the city to the new reality of the Free Zone (*Zona Franca*). This project, significantly titled “Modern Manaus”, predicted, among many other works, the construction of an avenue to be named Beira Rio, but which became known as “Modern Manaus” Avenue, whose goal was to increase the fluidity in traffic of the Amazon capital.

The article cited led us realize that

The construction of “Modern Manaus” designed to improve the flow of heavy vehicles from the port of Manaus to the Industrial District stopped a long time.

Surrounding “Modern Manaus”, rows of parked cars strangled the intersection of two narrow streets.

A small truck – a “Mercedes” – loaded with goods tried to get one of those arteries and was “stuck”. Soon there were three rows of vehicles on two streets. While some curious people called the owners of

²⁰ This group was created and led by Gilberto Mestrinho (PMDB), an Amazonian politician who, after a period of exile, returned to Manaus in 1979, benefited from the Amnesty Law, and was elected in 1982, the state governor of Amazonas. Since then, he only lost state elections on two occasions: in 2004, to Serafim Correa, and in 1988 to Arthur Virgílio Neto. The journalist Orlando Farias, in his recent book “The dance of porpoises and other mammals of power” (“*A dança dos Botos e outros mamíferos do poder*”) (2010, p. 22), reminds that “Since the first few meetings with supporters in Manaus, Gilberto Mestrinho established, always with a visionary air, that he would dedicate himself to training staff and building a political hegemony that could guaranteed power for a period of at least two decades”.

vehicles near the honking, so the small truck could pass through, 35 minutes went by (NEWSPAPER REPORTER [“Jornal Repórter”], 2008).

The text went on with a tone of complaint, highlighting other misfortunes that are present in that space, such as trash that appears when the river rises and mixes with the sewage and the fumes of cars and local barbeque joints around the avenue, “assaulting” the tourists arriving who come to meet the “modern” city.

Its focus seems geared to the possibility of tourism development in this space, since it is the entrance and exit of the city. Thus, it made sure to point out: “The unsuspecting tourist that comes to Manaus, instead of seeing it as an example of a modern city, as claimed by some, witness one of the largest antics of the third millennium [...]” (NEWSPAPER REPORTER [“Jornal Repórter”], 2008).

For the writer, this space was, at that time, an area of degradation, calling for the government to act, as the body responsible for cleaning it, making it more pleasant, especially for tourists and, thus, enabling the development of profitable businesses. This speech, which calls for order, seems to echo interests and views very similar to those that were present at other times in this spatiality, like, for example, in the 1980s, when it was possible to build/executing the “Modern Manaus” Project.

Two years later, on February 9, 2010, the mayor Amazonino Mendes, elected in 2008, read in the City Council the Annual Message, which officially opens the activities of the City Council. Between checking accounts, performed in 2009 and the announcement of goals for 2010, we are drawn to the following:

Another goal established for this year is the **revitalization of downtown Manaus in order to prepare the city for the World Cup in 2014**. “A shock order” should be implemented from 2010 in the city, implying in the obedience of a new master plan, that we should present to this House (MANAUS, 2010c, emphasis added).

First, we must point to the fact that urban transformations going through Manaus are also shared by other Brazilian cities due to mega function events like the 2014 World Cup and also the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, and they, in turn, are

linked to urban crises experienced by other cities in the world, where such mega events have been conducted and widely discussed²¹.

Neiva Vieira da Cunha²² alerts us to the fact that:

Among experiences of implementing events of this magnitude, the Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992, has been an obligatory reference for contemplating the impact that these events may have on the host cities, regarding its international projection. Thus, the “Barcelona model”, as it came to be known, served as first inspiration for major sporting events taking place in Rio de Janeiro, guiding proposals for urban planners and architects for its transformation into an “Olympic city”. (P. 325)

Going back to the segment prominent in the newspaper, we observe important clues that allows us to understand the city and the political group that resumed the control of the municipal government in 2008, regarding the reorganization of the central area of the city to adapt it to the expectation of the organizers of the “Football World Cup 2014” event.

Just as the “Newspaper Reporter” (“*Jornal Repórter*”) claimed in 2008 for the city and the Modern Manaus area to be adapted, seeking to attract and appeal to tourists, the Municipal Executive Branch is consistent with the perspective of the city, since it proposes, as a major goal for 2010, an adaptation of the city, or rather, the central part of the city, to the World Cup event in 2014.

Thus, throughout the year 2010, it was possible to follow the various vehicles of local communication, news of reorganization actions in various locations around the city, undertaken by the city through various Councils, as part of the “Shock Order” plan.

On March 25, 2010, the newspaper “The Critic” (“*A Crítica*”) reported one of the first actions of the so-called “Shock Order”:

²¹ See the important study of the “Barcelona Model”: DELGADO, Manuel. *La ciudad mentirosa. Fraude y miseria del modelo Barcelona*. Madrid: Los libros de la Catarata, 2007.

²² The “Barcelona Model” in question: mega events and urban marketing in the construction of the Olympic-city”. Available at: <http://osocialemquestao.ser.pucrio.br/media/15artigo29.pdf>. Consulted on 29/05/2016.

Yesterday morning, a clandestine vendors removal operation surrounding the Modern Manaus Fair, in the streets Barão de São Domingos, Marquez de Santa Cruz and Modern Manaus Avenue, cleaned the streets before they were clogged with wheelbarrows, supermarkets woods, filled with goods of unknown origin. “The issue of urban order is important, but public health must also be observed. That is why we are acting directly on the withdrawal of food vendors who act clandestinely”, explained the director of Sempab Informal Trade, Marcelo Schröder (MANAUS, 2010b).

It is worth noting that some terms used by the writer allow us to understand their agreement posture against municipal action. Thus, in this speech, the Modern Manaus surrounding the workers appear as “illegal sellers”, their goods are of “unknown origin” and, after its retirement, the streets were “clean”.

Thus, the news of the removal sought to print, in society, or at least to readers of this newspaper, the idea that this action was necessary and would benefit the whole population.

The report also stated that “With yesterday’s operation, the return of street vendors will no longer be allowed. The Sempab tax agents will occupy the streets to prevent the invasion of wheelbarrows” (MANAUS, 2010b).

The City Council, besides making efforts to remove the occupants considered unwanted, also promised to spare no efforts to ensure that they would not return.

Highlights of this report give us clues to reflect which city project were desired by the groups that hold the government currently in Manaus and echoed by the daily newspaper “The Critic” (“*A Crítica*”): a city whose concept of organization goes through part of segregation of their people in order to receive tourists.

On the issue of segregation, it is significant the speech of the mayor Amazonino Mendes, in an interview published by the same newspaper “The Critic” (“*A Crítica*”) on April 6, 2010.

When asked about his priority as a mayor, since he had decided not to run for governor, Amazonino replied:

Putting the city to rights. **Within 150 days, I’ll remove the street vendors.** This removal of street vendors will be preceded by a technical

study of the city’s reorganization needs, including traffic, parking, transportation system, restoration and construction of sidewalks in neighborhoods, redefinition of land use, a new Master Plan. Finally, a gigantic action. (SKYSCRAPERCITY, 2010, emphasis added).

For the elites represented by Amazonino Mendes, “putting the city to rights” involves the “removal of street vendors” of tourist views. It goes through, therefore, the segregation of these workers, since, in the opinion of those groups, “they definitely invaded the rights of others” (SKYSCRAPERCITY, 2010).

Also in this interview, the mayor stated that

There are times and times. There was a time when it was right to protect the street vendors. But you know that the amount turns into quality. It is a rule. They went overboard. So, today, they (street vendors) can no longer be protected. We can no longer leave them free to do what they want. Because now they invaded the rights of others. So, we have to look for a solution and the only solution is the so-called “*Camelódromo*” (street vendor warehouse), which was an idea I had in my second government, though they didn’t let me do (SKYSCRAPERCITY, 2010).

In the passage of the interview transcribed above, the mayor made it clear that the presence of specific social groups, in this case, the street vendors, is uncomfortable to city’s beautification project, and the solution is the final segregation of these groups in spaces (*Camelódromo*), taking them out of view of those who circulate through the city center.

Another important aspect to be observed is that the mayor’s speech indicates a consensus somewhat widespread in the public opinion that street vendors currently do not fight for their rights to work, but are linked to groups of offenders. Street vendors, in his speech, appear as subjects linked to illicit activities, smugglers, and therefore “can no longer be protected” (SKYSCRAPERCITY, 2010).

The so-called *Camelódromo* seems to be the last and final solution proposed by the elites troubled with the growing presence of these workers in public spaces. These elites are shown as unconcerned with the conditions and survival strategies of these

workers, because they want to set their destinations without even seeking a dialogue with these groups, that will in the end be the ones to suffer the consequences.

In its May 7, 2010 edition, the newspaper “The Critic” (“A Crítica”) brought one more report on the actions of the “Shock Order” in the area of Modern Manaus. With the suggestive title “The end of Modern Manaus”, the story told of the intention of the municipal government to “end fairs, bars, ferries, the attraction points and the trade in Modern Manaus area” and, also, showed the eye of the public power to the people who occupy that space.

Thus, at that time, as in others, we note that one of the main points of conflict is the small informal trade.

Manoel Ribeiro, who is chief director of the Municipal Institute of Urban Planning (IMPLURB), stated, in the story mentioned above, that “All that is bad exists there”. As we continue reading the story, we can identify what he considers “everything bad”. In this line, the story continues, stating that “it is easy to verify the occurrence of drug trafficking, prostitution, trafficking of weapons, illegal goods and narcotic substances”. And ends with the speech of Manoel, saying that: “Our idea is to remove everything and everyone. What exists in the area will be removed: ferries, sellers, hawkers. All will be removed to the port” (“THE CRITIC” [“A Crítica”] NEWSPAPER, published on May 7, 2010).

Interestingly, at any time, the newspaper interviewee referred to the wholesalers. Apparently, what he understood as “everything bad” is the popular presence of small traders, what he called “sellers, hawkers. All will be removed to the port” (“THE CRITIC” [“A Crítica”] NEWSPAPER, published on May 7, 2010).

Thus, when talking to some workers of the Modern Manaus area, we can see that such “Shock Order” has not been well received by those who will be removed and that, about to be removed, seek ways and strategies to deal with the eviction from their traditional local work.

It was with great indignation that Josildo dos Santos, married, 35 at the time of the interview, manauara, father of three children, carrier of goods since he was 15 in the Modern Manaus area, told us about the “matter of removing everyone from there”²³.

According to the respondent:

They as always wanting to remove the people here and the worst is that they really remove, because they have power, y’know? But the people return anyway, we also fear their right to take our family’s sustenance. Who keeps this working are us! [...] They only talk about the criminals and forget that most here are family men and workers, y’know!²⁴

The deponent speech evidences the “war of places” lived in the city. While for the public authorities, what matters is the conformation of the city within certain embellishment patterns, other social groups, of workers like Josildo, are more committed to supporting their families and fighting their daily struggles in defense of their interests.

While the speech of the government representatives highlighted the fact that “All that is bad exists there”, and thus justify the “need” to rearrange the spaces in the city; in the workers’ speech, like Josildo, the most important issue is that “most here are family men and workers [...]”, and therefore the occupation of spaces is legitimate, because it guarantees the work and sustenance of their family.

And, in this struggle for many interests, we have Márcio Roberto Rocha Aguiar, 36, high school educated, technical course in Communication - Radio. At the time of the interview, Márcio worked at the Modern Manaus Fair as a radio broadcaster, advertising sales, sending messages and informing the vendors and customers. He showed how these workers reinsert themselves in the spaces and reconfigure their ways of working, while the government is acting as a representative of the various interests of established commerce, of the capital linked to tourism, among others in the wealthier classes, an elite worried with the way the city adapts to their capital interests.

²³ Interview conducted on April 22, 2010, close to the Modern Manaus port.

²⁴ Idem.

Márcio is from the Brazilian state of Pará, Belém, has three children and works in the Modern Manaus area since 1985, when the fair was still made of wood and called the Stairway Fair (or Banana Fair). He came to Manaus with his father, in search of better job opportunities. Family members were already working with horticulture in the Ceasa of the Pará state and had a restaurant.

In the early 1980s, his father, now deceased, came to Manaus bringing the whole family, attracted by the propaganda that the city offered great opportunities.

When talking about his life story, Márcio told us a little about his work:

Since I was 10, when I wasn't in the Ceasa, I was behind a counter of a bar, restaurant and grill. Sometimes I spent all day in the Ceasa and, at night, I would work the bar, restaurant and grill. When I went to the Ceasa during the day, my mommy who was there at the bar, restaurant and grill. Then, when I came home from the Ceasa, at three, four o'clock in the afternoon, Ceasa closes, then I would Mommy a rest, went there to take over another trade. But always like this... Time just to study and ... and ... to work²⁵.

Márcio's story is deeply marked by working in the Modern Manaus area. His whole life path is guided by the important moments of the area: the destruction of the old wood fair, the uncertainties before the new fair and the victory of the space at the Modern Manaus Fair. He told us, with great pride, that it was his father who started work with the “transportation cars”, i.e. with the wholesale of fruits and vegetables “imported” from the Northeast and Southeast of the country.

Another deponent who spoke about the resistance imposed on the “modernizer” projects was Josildo dos Santos. He said that

This organization of theirs... removing people from here is old... Always saying that here is something for the tourists... yeah... this theme park thing, y'know? See, we could even leave, but there's no way... we end up having to go back, because the place is here, y'know? Then, you see, ma'am, everything comes around here and we come back anyway, like, I myself have been ordered to leave, I went, I suffered and I went back... I come back everytime...²⁶

²⁵ Interview conducted on June 27, 2007, at the Modern Manaus Fair radio station.

²⁶ Interview conducted on April 22, 2010, close to Modern Manaus.

Through Josildo’s words, we observe the insistent and firm resistance of these workers to claim their right to be there. More than resistance, it is through real and physical occupation that they have ensured their presence and the identity of this space.

Two years before the “Shock Order” plan, another project had been launched by the city of Manaus, on June 12, 2008.

The project, known as “Living Center”, gives us clues to reflect on the concepts that inform the current proposals and actions of the “urban planning, urban and environmental requalification and social and economic inclusion” (MANAUS, 2008d).

In 2008, through their institutional site, City Hall announced that the project “Living Centre” had the objective to “provide improvements of the conditions of environmental, aesthetic and functional comfort of the City Centre, by implementing immediate actions and establishing medium to long-term goals” (MANAUS, 2008d).

On August 17, 2008, the newspaper “Amazonas on Time” (“*Amazonas em Tempo*”)²⁷ also reported that the Municipal Institute of Urban Planning (IMPLURB) had the objective of revitalizing the downtown area of the city, preserving it as a symbolic center and attracting tourists.

The project, according to the newspaper, aimed to remodel the entire downtown, in order to attract customers for commerce as well as for tourists. According Auriane Carvalho, journalist at the “Amazonas on Time” (“*Amazonas em Tempo*”), the “project ‘Living Center’, launched in July, is awaited with expectation by the public, for they expect restorations to the central area, thus attracting more

²⁷ We can observe that this newspaper acted in line with the political group in power during the 2004-2008, a representative, especially, of the middle class in Manaus. In several editorials, there are enthusiastic reflections regarding the actions coordinated by the public power, i.e. on August 16, 2008, when dealing with the subject of “invasions and politics”, we read, on one hand, that “The Manaus society progressed. It has been more discerning with politicians, became more demanding, forcing some sophistication to public works. It gives the impression of being able to understand the harm that some invasions can cause [...]”, in a clear reference to the policy of fighting invasions filed by the municipal government. On the other hand, the editorial accused the political group that preceded (and succeeded) as being responsible for these policy of invasions: “It would be easier and cheaper if the administrators on call, through the decades, stopped the occupation of the banks of the bayous, which involved deforestations of riparian forests and aggression against water quality [...]”, and added: “How can anyone, candidate to representing the people, make use of such a damaging tool, such as invasion, to reach the right to represent them?”.

customers and tourists to the place” (NEWSPAPER AMAZONAS ON TIME [“*Amazonas em Tempo*”]), published on August 17, 2008).

Who were the so-called public that awaited, expectantly, the restorations announced by the newspaper? Before seeking answers to this question, one must look for a little more information than City Hall provided.

Like the objectives, City Hall also announced the anticipated results of the “Living Center” project:

- Improvements in Environmental Quality;
- Improvements to the Road System;
- Recovery of Public Spaces;
- To systematize the Clean Urban Actions;
- Promotion of Tourism;
- Improvements in Public Lighting;
- Disciplinary Actions in Public Spaces;
- Promotion of the Cultural Heritage Rescue;
- Improvements in Accessibility;
- Recovery of Gardens and Urban Furniture Areas (MANAUS, 2008d, emphasis added).

First, we must emphasize the notion of public space used in this document. We note that all the improvements promised refer only to the physical space itself. There are no references to the occupation of these spaces by people, and, it seems, their focus is maintaining these places clean, as if they were mere displays where people could be showcased, participating in some planned activities, seeking to maintain “order”.

For the Modern Manaus area, they announced the “Living Center” project would provide an international attraction:

Project creates Gastronomic Fair in Modern Manaus.
Starting on 15th, the fringe of Modern Manaus, downtown, will gain an international attraction. The Managerial Committee of the Living Centre Project is finishing the details for the implementation of the International Gastronomic Fair, which will run every Friday, from 18.30 to 22.30, in front of the Chaminé theater.

[...]

The international fair will offer, also, MPB musical shows, circus performances, sports activities and entertainment for the children (MANAUS, 2008d).

The prospect of discipline the use of public space, in this case, the Modern Manaus area, is made clear by the creation of the Gastronomic Fair. Through the photographs released by the City Hall, one can even “see” this desire of order and discipline.

Following this path, the images of the Gastronomic Fair posted on the City Hall site, on October 13, 2008, allows us to reflect this model of occupation so desired by the Manaus City Hall for the Modern Manaus Avenue:



Photo 4 of the Gastronomic Fair

Source: Image published on the Manaus City Hall site (MANAUS, 2008c)

Photograph 4, displayed above, presents an image of the still empty avenue, well-lit. The curbs appear to have been recently painted white. All stalls are standardized, covered by uniformed white canvas. The angle chosen by the photographer, in order words, the back of the stalls, intends to show that that place is clean. The picture clearly suggests a model of occupying that space: organized, disciplined.

This point of view is confirmed if one looks closely at the images portrayed in the following photographs, numbered 5 and 6.



Photo 5 of the Gastronomic Fair.

Source: Image published on the Manaus City Hall site (MANAUS, 2008c)



Photo 6 of the Gastronomic Fair

Source: Image published on the Manaus City Hall site (MANAUS, 2008c)

Here, we have another point of view of the event being portrayed, the space meant for the public. The photographs reveal the avenue filled with people; most are sitting in the numerous chairs and tables spread around the place. They talk, eat, eat, buy food at the tents, watch an Arab dance show (at the back of the two photographs, we can see a stage with the dancers, an international attraction).

Observe that absence of any street vendors (the people buying drinks or food are close to the tents). These photographic cutouts, the relatively well-dressed people. We can conclude that the fair is meant for the middle class. It is a family event, since we see children about. The expressions captured are of people having fun.

When we contemplate the objectives of these photographs – to illustrate an action proposed by the Manaus City Hall – we cannot help thinking that the images are not as innocent as they may appear to be at first glance. The message they portray is of an idealized occupation of public spaces, or, at least, of that in space in particular: fun “should” be had without excesses, in an orderly fashion: people talking and consuming; sitting down, smiling, seemingly happy.

Note the following photographs:



Photo 7 of the Gastronomic Fair.

Source: Image published on the Manaus City Hall site (MANAUS, 2008c)



Photo 8 of the Gastronomic Fair.

Source: Image published on the Manaus City Hall site (MANAUS, 2008c)

Photographs 7 and 8 offer more arguments in favor of this argument. Photo 7 shows, in the foreground, two children playing chess and at the back, a ping pong table also in use. The children in the foreground, sitting, disciplined, pose while concentrated on the game. There is no rush, it is “orderly” fun. Photo 8, in turn, shows four young people also sitting down, playing dominoes, smiling poses, showing that they are happy with the fun available.

It should be emphasized once more that the pictures above (Photos 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) were taken from the City Hall site and, thus, fill up a space for municipal government advertising. They display the speech constructed by the government, part of the narrative that seeks to support the Gastronomic Fair project, and have, as previously mentioned, the model of occupation advertising by the government.

From the inception of its administration (early 2009), the mayor Amazonino Mendes also turned their concerns to the Modern Manaus, seeking a particular order

for this area. The model, though designed during the previous administration, seems to have been embraced by the current administration²⁸.

We should add that, in addition to the “International Gastronomic Fair” event, the “Living Center” project also had planned actions, medium and long term, for the Modern Manaus area. A remodeling that, according to its creators, would improve traffic flow and the transformation of this part of the city into a place of leisure and tourism:

“Center 2015” – Long-term project for Modern Manaus zoning area, aiming to improve the population’s quality of life by providing greater fluidity in vehicle traffic with new alternative routes and remodeling of the area for land use activities (residential, commercial, services and leisure areas) (MANAUS, 2008d, emphasis added).

This is a project of mine that I will spare no effort to see completed. I want the Center to be modern and for tourists without leaving aside the historical traces that resemble the Manaus’ past, he added.²⁹

Now we return to the question raised a few pages back: Who were the so-called public that awaited, expectantly, the restorations announced by the newspaper and also by City Hall? Would it be the workers of this area, people who occupy that space in search of survival, carriers, itinerant vendors, homeless people? Were they consulted about these actions? It is something they claimed for themselves? Or would it be the users of the improvised Modern Manaus port claiming such changes? What was the past Amazonino promised not to leave behind?

The image below was published by the newspaper “The Critic” (“*A Crítica*”) in May 2010, and sought to illustrate an article on the “Shock Order”. It had the objective of corroborating the government’s speech that changes are “necessary”, though they are still able to aid the reflection of these issues raised.

Therefore, we need to seek other forms of occupation and the needs of this space:

²⁸ We should emphasize that the political group Amazonino Mendes representes is the political opponent of previous administrations, in other words, while Serafim Correa’s group representes mainly the middle class and part of the entrepreneurs, the group led by Amazonino Mendes represents the other part of the business elites.

²⁹ According to the news article published in the Manaus City Hall site, on March 18, 2009, with the headline: “Amazonino will revitalize the city center” (MANAUS, 2009a).



Photo 9 of the carriers in the Modern Manaus area.

Source: Image published by the newspaper “The Critic” (“A Crítica”) (online edition, May 7, 2010)

This image expresses another idea of daily life of Modern Manaus. This cut favors the intense movement of cars and trucks, as well as the Carriers, vendors, among many other people.

Josildo dos Santos reflects on the programs and projects like “Shock Order” and “Living Center”.

When asked about what he thinks of the “Living Center”, the respondent made the following reflection:

They (the politicians) say it is to improve, and it does improve, y’know? The mestizo who works here is... violence... We see a lot, y’know? But they have to look at the other side too, the worker, but they only speak of... tourism, yeah... these things... that, like the other says, brings good things for the city, moves it along, brings money, but worker has to work, y’know? And they only look t’one side, and we have to pay for it, like the mestizo said, the rope always breaks on the weaker side, right?³⁰

³⁰ Interview conducted on April 22, close to the Modern Manaus.

The transcript above is extremely rich in detail, allowing us to understand that workers like Josildo, despite the government’s speech, argue that the project aims to “improve the population’s quality of life”, but not anyone will benefit and that possible improvements cater more to the logic of the capital (the tourists) than the desires of those who work there daily; in his words, “brings good things for the city, moves it along, brings money, but worker has to work, y’know? And they only look t’one side, and we have to pay for it”.

Thus, it is important to reflect that the interest here is to discipline urban public spaces does not qualify as news in a capitalist society. Since the nineteenth century, the political and economic elites have been worried with “order and discipline” in these spaces. The vast literature on this subject has shown that the emptying of the countryside and the uncontrolled growth of European cities, due to the nineteenth century industrialization, generated concerns and interventions, especially in the centers of big cities.

In Amazonas, the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century brought an economic acceleration generated by the growth of the world’s latex demand, a product of rubber, from the native region’s tree. Manaus, being the state capital, its main point of arrival and departure, attracted huge waves of migrants, particularly from the Northeast, which, fleeing the drought, sought opportunities in the rubber plantation.

The city experienced a significant demographic growth without infrastructure and, consequently, unable to deal with this dynamicity. On the other hand, rubber tappers, especially foreigners who got rich overnight, demanding changes to the city’s environment, seeking convenience and fun, copying the novelties coming from Europe and mirrored in the Old Continent as a development model.

Interventions in the city center of Manaus were done, in those years, following the European premises that were already being followed by other Brazilian cities, and

bringing, as a hallmark of this metamorphosis, the exclusion of former residents and the poor workers³¹.

Also in the second half of the twentieth century, the interventions in the Manaus social environment became significant. With the installation of the Manaus Free Zone (“Zona Franca”), a new logic is attached to the dynamics of the city, which underwent refurbishments, accepting the interests being imposed.

Manaus, in general, and the Modern Manaus area, specifically, are the result of these interventions, which, at different times, from the late nineteenth century, were putting themselves at the mercy of the immediate and varied concerns from several conceptions.

Concern about disciplining and the intervention of urban land, consequently, was a long time coming; however, the principles that drive this intervention have been transformed to the extent that capitalist society advances and poses new questions³².

In fact, we can observe that interventions in urban spaces have been based on other assumptions. The changes that occurred in the capitalist world since the post-war era, the need for reconstruction of European cities, as well as the modernization process of American cities and the consolidation of the new logic of globalization, which demanded, according to Otília Beatriz Fiori Arantes (1996), the emergence of new urban and architectural concepts that would be consolidated as an alternative at the end of the century, obeying the “new” logic of the globalized society, with the concept of “culture” becoming central.

The aforementioned author, as well as other urban scholars, has shown that, if previously “they talked and acted in the name of society as a whole, [...]. Today,

³¹ Regarding the transformations Manaus underwent in the golden period of latex extraction, check, among others: COSTA, Francisca Deusa Sena, *Quando viver ameaça a ordem urbana: trabalhadores urbanos em Manaus (1890/1915)*; DIAS, Edineia Mascarenhas, *A ilusão do Fausto: Manaus, 1890-1920*; e PINHEIRO, Maria Luiza Ugarte, *A cidade sobre os ombros: trabalho e conflito no porto de Manaus 1899-1925*.

³² Ermínia Maricato (2007, p. 123) says that “After a century and a half of life, the matrix of modern urban planning (and later functionalist), which guided the growth of cities from central cities of the capitalist world, and later deconstructed by neoliberal proposals that comes with the productive reconstruction of the end of the twentieth century”.

everything seems to obey the principle of maximum **flexibility**” (ARANTES, 1996, p. 229, emphasis added).

According to the author,

[...] city planning is talked about less and less, for it would be required to comply with a stable model of optimization of its operation and, increasingly, in requalification, but in such terms that the emphasis stops being predominantly technical to fall into the vast area of cultural *passe-partout* (ARANTES, 1991, p. 229).

Thus, from the second half of the 1960s, a proliferation of social movements, both in Europe and in the United States, brought “new characters to the historic scene”³³, making it clear the limits that society.

In those years, these issues were presented through claims and protests against that society. It was as if a larger outbreak of consciousness affected the so-called third world. However, three decades later, in the 1990s, when globalized capitalism was expanding and neoliberalism consolidated, these questions are shown in a capitalist world reorganization process, according to some postmodernism theorists³⁴.

Otília Beatriz Fiori Arantes (1996, p. 238) explains, using Frederic Jameson, that:

The expansion of global capitalism would have produced a huge release of social energy and simultaneously, something like a “surplus” of consciousness: third worldism, regionalisms, minorities movement, student revolts, etc. Hence, the widespread feeling that anything was possible. It turns out that this “global untying of energy” was the exact contemporary of a process in which the last remaining areas of pre-capitalism, internal or nor spaces, were penetrated, colonized and submitted as commodities, of the third world to the unconscious bombarding by the cultural industry.

³³ Reference to Eder Sader (1991).

³⁴ Sharon Zukin (1996, p. 205) points to the speech of some post-modernism theorists that deal with the importance of space for visual consummation: “elements of this point of view mold the ordinary vocabulary of the cultural critic, the radical culture and the urban political economy. This way, Frederic Jameson and Edward Soja were captured by the predominance of space over time in the post-modernity, Phil Cooke linked urban and regional reorganization to economic and global restructuring, related to post-Fordism, while David Harvey emphasized, under the idea of ‘flexible accumulation’ under the influence of Debord e Baudrillard, the ways by which cultural appropriation became a strengthening strategy of the economic value”.

The city is now thought in terms of the consumption of its spaces, and its planners shifted their attention from hygienists doctors to entrepreneurs. Thus, the so-called **strategic planning** has gained more space in urban interventions.

Carlos Vainer (2007, p. 76) reminds us that this planning model was inspired by the business and systematized planning in the United States, specifically in the *Harvard Business School*, and that “according to its advocates, local governments must adopt this strategy since cities are subject to the same conditions and challenges as private companies”³⁵.

Therefore, we see a new design in the conception of the city and a shift in the government’s concerns, namely:

If, during a long period, the debate on the urban issue referred, among others, to themes like the uncontrolled growth, reproduction of labor force, equipment of collective consumption, urban social movements, rationalization of land use, the new urban issue would, now, have as a central nexus the problem of urban competitiveness (VAINER, 2007, p. 76).

Still according to Carlos Vainer (2007), it is possible to observe that cities are now thought of as luxury commodities, and the concern of local governments revolves around the need to make these cities attractive to transnational capital. It is, therefore, necessary to create spaces valued by this capital, for the city-merchandise will be “consumed” not by all, but only those who can pay for it. So, you need to exclude the conflicts and “depoliticize” the city. In the author’s words:

This city project involves the direct and immediate appropriation of the city by globalized business interests and depends to a large extent, on the banishment of politics and the elimination of conflict and the conditions of exercising citizenship (VAINER, 2007, p. 78).

What is at the center of the theoretical and political project of urban strategic planning is the idea of competition between cities. Hence, the justification to think of them as business. Cities are in contention for greater investment and, therefore, need to

³⁵ Otília Beatriz Fiori Arantes (2007) also discuss the appearance of this “new” conception of planning and urban intervention.

be attractive, especially to international capital. There is a competition between cities to be sold as commodities, attracting investment and technology, as if their problems could be solved simply due to the presence of these two elements.

The city that is strategically managed and planned aims to be competitive and “productive” and bring results, that is, to attract investments and technology, as previously mentioned. Within this perspective, it is therefore the private sector the most competent to assist the administration of these cities, since entrepreneurs have “experience” in business administration. We propose then, a “partnership” between the public and private sectors. About this relationship, Carlos Vainer (. 2007, p 89) warns that:

[...] the city-business analogy does not end in a simply administrative proposal or, as its defenders often intend to present, merely managerial or operational proposals. In fact, the set of city and local government is being redefined. The concept of city and with it the concepts of government and city government are invested with new meanings, in an operation that has as one of the mainstays, the transformation of the city in an economic subject/actor [...] and, more specifically, with a subject actor whose commercial and business nature establishes the power of a new logic, with which it aims to legitimize the direct ownership of the instruments of public power for private business groups.

Still on Carlos Vainer (2007), we can say that, when a city “is sold”, the elements that are valued by those who “can afford it” is also sold. Hence, if a given space in the city is considered as a virtually valued space for the “sale”, the concern by the government falls less on the population living and daily building that space, and more in fighting for that space to become pleasing to the “consumer”.

In a city strategically designed and managed, there is no room for political experience. Conflicts and debates, which are integral parts of a democratic coexistence, should be excluded in favor of consensus. In a city thought through the perspective of a business, conflict “hinders” productivity. Only consensus guarantees market competitiveness³⁶.

³⁶ Regarding this depoliticization of the urban space, Carlos Vainer (2007, p. 90) points out that “the company city operates in the city’s market and should be competitive, agile, flexible [...] the political controls are estranged from the social space where what counts are the results”.

The strategic planning “needs” consensus to be performed, at the same time that the consensus is the ultimate goal. It is with Carlos Vainer (2007), that we can see this need, when the author quotes Castells and Borja, showing that:

It is also the local government responsibility to internal promotion to the city, proving its inhabitants with “civic patriotism”, a sense of belonging, the collective will of participation and the trust and belief in the future of the urban space. This internal promotion should be based on visible works and services, both those with a monumental and symbolic character, and those focusing at improving the quality of public spaces and the welfare of the population (CASTELLS, BORJA 1996 apud VAINER, 2007, p. 94).

The strategic planning brings a triple dimension to the city. As the author warns us, the city is seen by strategists as a commodity, as a business and as a homeland.

The “Living Center” project, with its objective of “revitalizing”³⁷ the historic center of the city of Manaus, certainly inspired by the strategic planning and the actions developed, among them, the International Gastronomy Fair “Flavors of the World”, were aimed at consumers who want the city-goods-company, namely tourists, who, in turn, expect the city to offer comfort, safety and local charms.

In this sense, one can understand the concern of the municipal government of ensuring the attractions, as well as emphasizing that the security in place is guaranteed:

The International Gastronomy Fair “Flavors of the World” is host to live shows with singers and musicians from around the world, circus performers and dance groups; and provides a lot of fun to aficionados in games of domino, chess, checkers, table tennis and hopscotch, offered for free (MANAUS, 2008d).

And the City also reminds that “The local security is guaranteed by the presence of the military police and the metropolitan guard” (MANAUS, 2008d).

³⁷ “Urban revitalization and all other denominations with a ‘re’ prefix such as renovation, rehabilitation, renewal, regeneration, among others, run through the urban agenda of the globalized world. These designations are linked to different readings of the space and the problematic, possibly being understood as a functional, architectural and socio-cultural restructuring inserted in a set of programs and projects, public or of independent initiative, which focus on social relationships and urban fabrics”. (VAZ; JACQUES, 2001 apud PRADO, 2007, p. 2).

This means that, being an event aimed at tourists, the concern of the government to show the place as “worth it” is perceptible, noticeably pleasant, safe. However, how are the people who live and work in that space being seen? To what extent this revitalization suits their needs and demands?

We see, therefore, that the dominant sectors seek to conform the space according to their economic and political interests, and, looking at the area of Modern Manaus, and seeing it as potential profitability, a potential space for attracting tourists and, consequently, of investment/investors, showing their inspiration in strategic planning. Thus, it seems, for these sectors of the elite, the idea prevails that, by investing in the city for it to be attractive to foreign capital, urban problems, among them the exclusion, would be automatically solved by private investments.

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