

An unwanted tradition: the desire for uniformity in the Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro (1903–1906) as a condition for civilization and progress in Rio de Janeiro

Uma tradição indesejada: o desejo de uniformização na Grande Reforma Urbana do Rio de Janeiro (1903-1906) como condição da civilização e do progresso em terras cariocas

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Abstract

The Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro that happened at the dawn of the 20th century, accomplished by Mayor Pereira Passos and President Rodrigues Alves, was grounded in the Enlightenment ideas of the universality of reason and the direction of history to operate a modernizing intervention of the State in the urban space. This intervention sought to affirm the European values of civilization and progress to supplant forms of use of the city sedimented by centuries of historical experience in the city, namely the relationship between the city's inhabitants and its urban space.

Keywords: civilization, progress, urban reform, tradition.

Resumo

A Grande Reforma Urbana do Rio de Janeiro, levada a cabo no alvorecer do século XX, pelo prefeito Pereira Passos e o presidente Rodrigues Alves, fiou-se nas ideias iluministas de universalidade da razão e sentido da história para operarem uma ação de intervenção modernizadora do Estado no espaço urbano. Essa ação buscou afirmar os valores europeus da civilização e do progresso, a fim de suplantar formas de uso da cidade sedimentadas pelos séculos que compuseram experiência histórica na urbe, a saber, a relação entre os habitantes da cidade e o seu espaço urbano.

Palavras-chave: civilização, progresso, reforma urbana, tradição.

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Introduction

Cities are living organisms. They are dynamic and transform while maintaining a tradition¹ which, according to Hans Georg Gadamer, has an ontological positivity, that is, existing as a concrete and effective presence.² More than that, cities are impacted by the history of effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*)³ of this tradition. In other words, at every moment of their existence, they are informed by tradition, which is inescapable to them.⁴ Indeed, living in a city is an experience of dialogue. A dialogue between the individual who inhabits it and the living, dynamic, and tradition-filled organism that is the city, an entity that, in turn, also constitutes the subject that lives within it.

Cities are not blank slates. They are not spaces devoid of meaning, nor of a tradition of customs that reflect the human presence of their citizens. Cities have affection deposited in their space,⁵ habits that are consolidated in them and are constituents of their landscape.⁶ They have collective experiences and carry a symbolic charge carved by the chisel of time that cannot simply be erased or suppressed immediately by any process of modernizing state intervention.

Despite the Enlightenment delirium of an omnipotence of reason,⁷ the West was entering the first decade of the 20th century with the first contributions of Sigmund Freud. Freud relativized the Enlightenment belief in the universality of reason and explicitly recognized its limits in the face of the power of the unconscious. This questioned the very condition of man

¹“Tradition” is not employed here as a current term in Portuguese but as a concept coined by Hans Georg Gadamer, who defines it as the ground of the validity of a people’s morals. However, it encompasses more than that, as Gadamer himself asserts. It is, through the fabric of experiences over time, the result of the historicity of a collective life, one which possesses an ontological positivity; that is, tradition is, and has validity in each and every present moment. See GADAMER, Hans Georg. *Verdade e Método*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998, p. 421.

²The idea that tradition has an ontological positivity is present throughout Gadamer’s work, but it is important to highlight a specific reference here; see GADAMER, op. cit., p. 422.

³Gadamer presents the concept of history of effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), or effectuality of history. This concept elaborates on how the constitution of a tradition, shaped by the experiences of a people, produces an effect in the future. See GADAMER, op. cit., pp. 449-450.

⁴See GADAMER, op. cit., p. 422.

⁵Regarding the relationship between affect and space, see TUAN, Y Fu. *Topofilia: Um estudo da percepção, atitudes e valores do meio ambiente*. Londrina: Eduel, 2015.

⁶See TUAN, op. cit.

⁷Regarding the aspirations of universality and omnipotence of reason, which are central to the Enlightenment project, see ROUANET, Sérgio Paulo. *As razões do iluminismo*. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1987; SCHORSKE, Karl. *Viena Fin du siècle*. Política e cultura. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1988.

as a rational being, a presupposition of the Enlightenment.⁸ One of these limits has always been determined by tradition, something that Romantic writers and thinkers had already realized since the end of the 18th century, thus highlighting a key idea for the Romantic structure of thought, the idea of belonging.⁹ The notion of belonging nurtured by Romantic intellectuals has never been reduced to a mere feeling of emotional affiliation to a place of origin. Rather, the concept of belonging denotes a being constituted by something, which is beyond the idea of being simply permeated by something. It is also a fundamental idea because it questions the sense of universality and omnipotence of Enlightenment reason by relativizing it in the face of singularity and historical depth (tradition) of each collective experience of a people.

Due to its historical depth derived from its historicity, we firmly believe that the city is not an object; it is always a subject. It only contains aspects of an object in a very specific case, namely if it is a city created on an architect's or engineer's drawing board, such as Belo Horizonte and Brasília. Otherwise, if the city is not created, then it is formed. This means that it is the product of an existential game played in the context of the collective experience of a society, which is constituted and renewed in the sediment of historical time, and in the effectuality¹⁰ that results from the collective experience of its population in its space.

Thus, as a rule, a city has a historicity, it is rich in tradition. As such, it can not be a mere passive object of the "fortunate ideas" of its administrators, as its historicity underpins the validity of a tradition. Moreover, beyond its historicity, the city also has a sense of geographicity. By *geographicity* or *spatiality*, terms we use here as synonymous, we understand the collective experience of a people not as a phenomenon referring to time, but as one referring to a space. In other words, *geographicity* is the collective experience of the inhabitants of a city established in a specific space. Therefore, we can safely state that, usually—except for the cities created on the drawing boards of professionals—a city has, at the same time, two elements that preclude any possibility of treating it as a passive object of possible urban interventions by government representatives: its historicity and its geographicity. We will revisit these themes later, as their relationship with the urban space is

⁸See the work published by Freud, where he introduces his concept of unconscious, in 1900. FREUD, Sigmund. *A interpretação dos sonhos*. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2016.

⁹See GADAMER, op. cit., p. 442.

¹⁰See GADAMER, op. cit., p. 449.

characterized by an ontological positivity. In other words, they are not mere narrative constructions of intellectuals who formulate ideas about cities, but rather have a statute of existence that links the urban space to the experiences deposited in it, are constitutive of that same space, and of the nature of the relationship that a people establishes with it. This makes them a decisive and unavoidable element in its effective production.

Thus, it should be noted that a historically formed city such as Rio de Janeiro cannot be a blank slate for any possible urban modernization project. The analysis presented in this study regarding the processes of transformation of the urban landscape is based on Professor Lucrécia D'Alessio Ferrara's approach to this process. A lecturer at FAU/USP, Ferrara argues that the production of urban space is a dynamic process, and a reference to a dialectical relationship between use, and function of space.¹¹ In other words, what produces a given spatial configuration and its landscape is a permanent interactive dialogue between the function assigned to that space and the ways it is used. Therefore, it results in the configuration of the space itself, which, more than just a product of this relationship, is also part of a dialectical movement greater than any of its results in this interaction. This relationship is dialectical, and dynamic, has movement over time, and a permanent reconstruction of spaces, their experiences, and meanings. Indeed, from this perspective, all spatial production is seen as dynamic, as a continuous and temporally permanent process. To use the space is to assign meaning to it, to transform it from a space into a place. This transformation presupposes an affection deposited in the space,¹² a process of appropriation that endows it with a sense of spatiality. The nature of the experience established in the space shapes it and attributes to it the function of place, namely, the space that is collectively used, that is endowed with geographicity.

However, if the relationship between use and function that produces the urban space is dialectical, then there is no preeminence between these two categories in their relationship with each other. If how a space is used redefines its function, assigning a new function to the space also evokes new uses for it. Therefore, when the government implements an intervention plan for urban space, it demands new uses for that space, because it establishes a new function for it, since redesigning the function of a space, as we have

¹¹Regarding the dialectical relationship between use and function of space, see FERRARA, Lucrécia D'Aléssio. *Ver a cidade*. São Paulo: Nobel, 1982.

¹²Regarding the relationship between space and place, see CORREA, Roberto Lobato et al. (org.). *Geografia: conceitos e temas*. São Paulo: Bertrand Brasil. 1995.

previously argued, reshapes the uses established for it. Similarly, the new uses give shape to the new function of that space, showing it even in the experiences of its users.¹³

Thus, the government, in its urban intervention actions, which are of particular interest to us in this study, has the power to redefine the uses and functions of a public space through its interventionist action in that space. This has been a recurrent State-led movement in the Western world since the mid-19th century with Haussmann's Reform in Paris, as exemplified by Haussmann's renovation of Paris, Vienna's urban reform with the construction of the impressive Ringstrasse, and later in South America at the turn of the 20th century, with the reforms of Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

In this article, we discuss another urban modernization initiative that took place in the Western world between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, namely the urban reform implemented in Rio de Janeiro between 1903 and 1906. We aim to show how, amidst both convergences and contradictions, federal and municipal urban interventions have sought to challenge elements present in the city's long-standing occupation patterns, which have been consolidated over more than three centuries of urban experience in Rio de Janeiro. We intend to show that this movement sought to implement a new way of using urban space, based on exogenous references, foreign to the city's historicity. It was believed that through these interventions the city of Rio, the capital of Brazil at the time, would achieve "progress" and "civilization," values that were sought to be imposed upon the city.

The federal urban reform

In Brazil, despite several interventions by the government of the State of Rio de Janeiro in its urban spaces, the first major urban surgical intervention resulted from the Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro, which took place between 1903 and 1906. We name it the "Great Urban Reform," rejecting its more conventional nickname, established by the historiography of the 1970s and 1980s as the Passos Reform. We reject this term because we believe that there was not only one urban reform in the center of Rio but rather two simultaneous reforms. These reforms were not in conflict but

¹³For a better understanding of this dialectical process of production of space, Ferrara's work is essential. See FERRARA, Lucrezia D'Alessio. Op. Cit.

instead harmonized with one another, each with different guiding values that left distinct inscriptions in the urban space of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The federal urban reform was designed by the President of the Republic, Francisco de Paula Rodrigues Alves, who was a representative of São Paulo's large coffee industry and came from one of the leading wealthy coffee-growing families in the state,¹⁴ especially in the municipality of Guaratinguetá. The federal urban reform was undertaken in association with the interests of the São Paulo coffee industry and the *Clube de Engenharia* (Engineering Club),¹⁵ a private institution that had been gaining political influence since the Campos Sales administration.¹⁶ Rather than representing engineers as a whole, the institution primarily served engineer-entrepreneurs, as clearly stated in its founding charter.¹⁷

The main guiding principle of the federal urban reform was the idea of progress, which was very popular throughout the First Republic. The reasons that motivated the reform and that also guided the choosing of Pereira Passos to implement another urban reform plan—this one at the municipal level—were those related to the city's sanitation objectives to deal with the epidemic and endemic diseases that had been continuously plaguing the city since the first major yellow fever epidemic in 1849.

President Rodrigues Alves aimed to reshape the external image of the city of Rio de Janeiro so that it could attract European immigrants. This goal was set within the context of the approval of the Prinetti Decree in Italy in 1902¹⁸ and, more crucially, a labor crisis in the coffee industry due to the recent abolition of slavery in Brazil.

¹⁴See FRANCO, Afonso Arinos de Melo. *Rodrigues Alves: apogeu e declínio do presidencialismo*. Brasília: Senado Federal, 2000, pp. 81-87.

¹⁵The *Clube de Engenharia* was not a mere association of engineers aimed at discussing technological matters of the time. In Rio de Janeiro, where it was founded, there was already an institution with that purpose: the Polytechnic Institute. The *Clube de Engenharia*, founded on December 24, 1880, was an association of engineer-entrepreneurs. In other words, it was a group that gathered and articulated the interests of Brazilian engineers who sought to take on a role that was historically performed by international sources of capital: to execute urban infrastructure works in the Brazilian capital, which was then experiencing rapid demographic growth and thus required such projects, including urban lighting, sewage systems, potable water supply, port reforms, and general reformulations of the urban space.

¹⁶One must note this political rise of the *Clube de Engenharia* alongside the São Paulo and national political elites since the National Congress of Engineering and Industry, which was opened with a speech by none other than the then President of the Republic, Campos Sales. See AZEVEDO, André N. de. *A Grande Reforma Urbana do Rio de Janeiro: Pereira Passos, Rodrigues Alves e as ideias de civilização e progresso*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. PUC-Rio/Mauad, 2016, pp. 106-107.

¹⁷*Ata de fundação do Clube de Engenharia*. Rio de Janeiro, 24 de dezembro de 1880.

¹⁸The Prinetti Decree is a decree from the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giulio Prinetti, that prohibited

The reform efforts were also driven by the interest in modernizing the port and adapting the urban infrastructure to accommodate the increased cargo of the country's main port. This initiative was due to an anticipated rise in its load, given that the import taxes were exclusively collected by the Federal Government, as established by the tax system that emerged from the Federal Constitution of 1891. These taxes accounted for 49% of the government's total revenue,¹⁹ which made the increased collection of such taxes crucial for maintaining Brazil's fiscal balance.

Finally, there was a pressing need for the city to adapt its urban space to the emergence of a capitalist economy after the abolition of slavery in 1888. The main focus of the federal urban reform was the modernization of the port of Rio de Janeiro. This modernization project articulated three additional interventions by the federal government, namely: the works around the port, which rectified, widened, and provided continuity to roads that hindered a smooth and speedy connection between port goods and the urban fabric of the center of Rio de Janeiro; the work on Avenida do Mangue, now Avenida Francisco Bicalho, aimed at transporting goods to the north of the city; and the construction of Avenida Central, now Avenida Rio Branco, which was considered a key part of the project of redesigning the city's external image.

Similarities and differences between the federal and municipal urban reforms

The core principle of the municipal urban reform was the idea of civilization, which was the predominant value of the monarchical period.²⁰ It was up to Mayor Francisco Pereira Passos to design in broad terms and execute the remaining aspects of the reform that were outside of the Federal Government's remit. The municipal urban reform project was developed by engineer Américo de Souza Rangel, a close friend of Pereira Passos who worked under his guidance. It was Rangel who headed the reform plan committee (*Comissão da Carta Cadastral*), from which the municipal urban reform project emerged.

subsidized migration to Brazil.

¹⁹See LAMARÃO, Sérgio T. N. *Dos trapiches ao porto. Um estudo sobre a área portuário do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, Turismo e Esportes, 1991. p. 143.

²⁰See MATTOS, Ilmar H. de. *O tempo Saquarema. A formação do estado Imperial*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1986.

Passos and Rangel highlight in the reform project that the city's sanitation problem was linked to its architectural restructuring.²¹ The reference to an architectural remodeling in the reform plan would mean not only a reorganization of the city roads but also an aesthetic improvement that would encompass everything from the architecture of establishments to the city's landscape and monumentality.

The main objectives outlined by the reform plan committee focused on urban sanitation, road restructuring, and—what we want to emphasize—aesthetic improvement of the city. This is made explicit by the committee, which states its intention to “awaken architectural taste”.²²

The federal urban reform was less concerned with the city itself, as its focus was on major national issues such as redesigning the city's image to solve the labor crisis following the abolition of slavery through the recruitment of immigrant labor; the resolution of the Brazilian fiscal imbalance through the expansion and modernization of the port, and the sanitation of the city to manage epidemics and endemic diseases. In contrast, the municipal urban reform was designed and executed from a different perspective. This perspective focused on the city, especially about its logistical adaptation to a capitalist economy that emerged after the abolition of slavery and to the redesigning of its image through new urban and architectural arrangements, as well as to the control of how the population of the Federal District used urban space, especially through prohibitions and inspections of citizen conduct.

The dialectical relationship between the use and the function of urban space in Rio de Janeiro was evident in both federal and municipal government interventions. The federal urban reform aimed to assign a new function to the port areas and to the center of the city, notably remodeled by the sumptuous work on Avenida Central, which evoked new uses for these spaces. In contrast, the municipal urban reform sought to assign new functions to various spaces in the city center as a way to encourage the population to use them in new ways and also to alter uses deemed detrimental to what it considered appropriate urban spatial arrangements. This was primarily achieved through the issuance of prohibitions and the enforcement of stringent inspections, including penalties in the form of fines for offenders.

²¹Prefeitura do Distrito Federal. *Melhoramentos da cidade projetados pelo Prefeito do Distrito Federal, dr. Francisco Pereira Passos*. Rio de Janeiro: Typographia da Gazeta de Notícias, 1903. p. 5.

²²*Ibid.*

The federal urban reform was an urban reform for the country and was based on the idea of progress as its core principle. The idea of progress was the hegemonic idea throughout the First Republic. It can even be asserted that it was the political metaphor of this new regime, overcoming the concept of civilization, which was the driving idea and most cherished value during Brazil's monarchical period.²³

The notion of progress during the First Republic represents a shift from the same concept during the Second Reign. In the Second Reign, progress was a relative and secondary value in the face of the greatest value of the time, i.e. the idea of civilization. Therefore, progress in this period was not seen as a value in itself, but as a value relative to the concept of civilization. Progress would be the progress of civilization, the inherent movement of a civilization's development over time. Therefore, it was not an autonomous and emancipated idea from what would be understood as the inherent movement of civilization. Furthermore, the notion of progress during the Second Reign was much broader than the one developed in the Republic, as it extended beyond the material dimension of life and encompassed the entire process of development in the arts, science, culture, behavior, political and institutional stabilization, social well-being, hygiene, among other elements related to the idea of civilization.

Due to the reorganization of the national political architecture and the fascination with money, business, and financial profits derived from the *Encilhamento*²⁴ experience, the Republic facilitated a redesigning of the idea of progress of the previous regime. Now, with the new regime, the idea of progress gained autonomy from its counterpart, civilization; in practice, it detached itself from it, aiming for a development in itself, without referencing something beyond itself, as it had been in the Empire. Furthermore, the new notion of progress of the Republic was based on the idea of material

²³ See AZEVEDO, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁴ *Encilhamento* is a term borrowed from horse racing. It refers to the moment of great tension experienced by the animals as they are confined to their stalls, anxious, on the verge of being released to race in pursuit of victory. In the context of Brazilian history, *Encilhamento* refers to a phenomenon that occurred in the early years of the new republican regime, which involved the liberalization of the right to issue national currency by some private banks. This resulted in an abundance of easy credit, which sparked a sense of euphoria in the general public, manifesting in the creation of several new businesses, most of which went bankrupt only a few years later. *Encilhamento* was an illusory period of optimism during which there was a widespread belief that anyone who was proactive could easily become wealthy, whether it was through entrepreneurship or financial speculation. A few years later, the imbalance between supply and demand triggered by this economic policy led to a series of business bankruptcies and the onset of a severe inflationary crisis.

growth. In other words, it became an idea associated with economic and technological development, as well as the development of the overall process of modernization, which was in full swing in the Western world at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Progress was no longer seen as the development of the various elements that characterized a civilization. Instead, it became the great works, such as the Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro as a whole, and as part of this greater work the works of port modernization and electrification, the opening of new avenues, the widening of streets, the increase in new housing, new businesses, new initiatives for improvements, and development of urban infrastructure. The idea was that once progress was set into motion—through works, economic gains, technological innovations, etc—, it would almost magically bring about the development of a civilization, much like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. This civilization would then be envisioned as a logical corollary of the realization of progress in its most diverse material manifestations. In other words, apply progress and it will result in a civilization. Progress would then be thought of as a great panacea, a remedy that could solve everything. Where there is progress, civilization would inevitably follow, as it was believed that progress was the only possible way to achieve a state of civilization.

It can be observed that not only does the idea of progress lose its subordination to that of civilization, but, more importantly, the idea of civilization becomes subordinate to that of progress, making it inconceivable without its connection to the course of progress and its imperatives. Thus, the entire process of making a possible civilization would now be perceived as a process of updating, meaning that civilization can only be understood as a dialogue projected with a forward-looking urgency that anticipates the future. Moreover, it is not merely a movement anchored in the current fabric of an anticipated future but also a movement driven by the desire for an idealized new future that is incompatible with a past—a civilization that is not updated in time. This necessitates the obliteration of the past through a process of overcoming it, the innermost meaning of the concept of progress implies a continuous process of improvement projected into the future.²⁵

Progress would be the future, not just any future, but one that can only emerge through the devastating overcoming of a past. In this new conception of progress, the past is consistently viewed as an obstacle to the

²⁵ See MORAES, Antônio Silva. *Diccionario da língua portuguesa*. Rio de Janeiro: Empreza Litterária Fluminense, 1920. Verbete progresso.

implementation of an irresistible future, which always marks a constant and successive overcoming of the obstacle that the past represents. Therein would lie progress and its optimistic move forward, characterized by continuous advances toward a blazing and almost inexorable future. In this sense of progress, the future consistently emerges as a powerful imperative. For the future and its improvements to be established, the past would need to perish.

The nature of the urban interventions of the federal urban reform was not without reason. All its projects, which were previously mentioned, aimed to dismantle the city's past, perceived as colonial and eager to be erased from the memories of Rio de Janeiro citizens and Brazilians overall, despite the fact the city was a product of the 19th century.²⁶ The construction projects in the port and Avenida Central were the ones that tore down the Federal District, rather than the much broader and of much greater scope actions of the municipal government, headed by Mayor Pereira Passos. Furthermore, the federal projects grounded on the idea of progress did not hesitate to strip the geographicity of the spaces where they operated—except for Avenida Central—, thus obstructing the human and humanizing presence of pedestrians. They are excluded from using the spaces surrounding the port and the Avenida do Canal do Mangue, current Avenida Francisco Bicalho, as the federal urban intervention(s) prioritized thinking about the spaces in which it operated not as spaces for citizen use, but as functional places. In other words, they were seen as spaces purely designed to be emptied as place, since they were conceived as functional spaces: transportation of goods from the port to the rest of the city.

The municipal urban reform, on the other hand, was based on an anachronistic value, the value of civilization, stemming from imperial times. The mayor who conceived the reform, Pereira Passos, was born in 1836 during Brazil's regency period and was much older than the other protagonists of the Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro. Passos left office in 1906, already considered an elderly by the standards of the time at the age of 70.

The idea of civilization that emerged from the imperial period involved far more elements than the republic's idea of progress. It encompassed a wide range of dimensions, such as hygiene, urban behavior, politeness, civility, political-institutional stability, social well-being, art, science, technology,

²⁶The idea that Rio de Janeiro in 1903 was not a colonial city, but rather an imperial city, is defended and, it seems to us, well substantiated by the research work of the architect Paola de Paoli, see PAOLI, Paola de. *Entre relíquias e casas velhas. A arquitetura das reformas urbanas de Pereira Passos*. Rio de Janeiro: Rio Books, 2013.

culture, and thought, and maintained autonomy concerning the idea of progress, guiding and subordinating it to its development. Concerning the past, the imperial perspective was positive, as it contained a historicism that acknowledged the idea of a unique trajectory of a people since it was significantly informed by the Western Romanticism of the late 18th and 19th centuries. Thus, the idea of civilization in imperial times was far from advocating for the destruction and oblivion of the past. On the contrary, the past was considered essential to the execution of the modernization project.

Thus, the notion of progress in the imperial period, along with its entire approach to the future, presupposes a movement that encompasses and transcends the past also through a process of updating. However, unlike the Republic's idea of progress, not only does it not forego a past, but has the past as an unavoidable and even indispensable fact in its project for the future. The movement of civilization through time would suggest an accumulation rooted in the past. In this movement, the accumulation of experiences from the past is updated in dialogue with each present time. This understanding of the relationship between past and present, or between tradition and modernity, allowed for the projection of new meanings onto the past, which is perceived as something that, in some way, retains its validity in the present. In these representations, the past takes on a quality of presence and proposes a dialogue that fosters the emergence of new meanings. Thus, unlike the Republic's idea of progress, the past is not something to be overcome, an obstacle to the future or something to warrant shame, but is rather an indispensable component towards the future. We can say that the idea of civilization is itself a fact referring to a past that moves through time, towards a future, and not just a fact exclusively referring to the future, as in the republican notion of progress, a somewhat tyrannical, imposing, implacable future that refuses to dialogue with other dimensions of time and demands that each of them bend to its inexorable march towards a teleologically defined future, to which, along with its imperatives, everything submits.

The meaning of the reform plans and actions of the municipal urban reform pointed to this distended relationship with the past, seeking to destroy it only insofar as it was indispensable, limited to what was truly necessary according to the outlines of its reform plan. The municipal reformer intended to preserve significant elements of the city's past, even if it was going against much of public opinion, which expressed a desire to suppress much of the past and the memory of the old city.

The municipal urban reform consisted of a much wider array of intervention actions by the government on urban space. Its objectives were diverse, as listed in the reform plan, the *Carta Cadastral*:

- a. Facilitating communication between different neighborhoods, which, in turn, lowers the high Rio de Janeiro transportation and passenger car fees;
- b. Allowing the establishment of an advantageous route for the major pipelines, thus avoiding the frequent opening of ditches in narrow streets;
- c. Preventing the ongoing appreciation of old-fashioned buildings in the narrow streets that currently have the most significant urban traffic by allowing them to be replaced in the not-too-distant future;
- d. Facilitating the drainage of the subsoil through tree planting, which is impractical in narrow streets;
- e. Awakening architectural taste, since, by offering wide and well-located streets a compensatory monetary value for its buildings, owners will be encouraged to build them in better conditions.²⁷

As can be seen, the municipal urban reform was less specific in its objectives than the federal urban reform, which was focused on the construction of Avenida Central and the modernization of the port and its surroundings. It is evident that the municipal urban reform was aimed at addressing the city—its infrastructure, logistics, appearance, and hygiene—and not the country as a whole as were the works in the port area and routes for the distribution of goods leaving the renovated port.

In our view, the main focus of Pereira Passos's reform were the new roads and fixing of the city's road system, which provided continuity between previously disconnected streets. This approach is exemplified by the creation of Avenida Beira Mar, an avenue which not only covered the vast stretch of Rio de Janeiro's coastline between the city center and the neighborhood of Botafogo, but also connected it to the new center road system. This created an open and direct connection, previously nonexistent, between the city's center and its South Zone. But the South Zone was not the only focus for Pereira Passos when it came to operating road connections from the center of Rio de Janeiro. Passos also created a road system that provided a direct connection, previously nonexistent, to the neighborhoods in the western

²⁷ Prefeitura do Distrito Federal, op. cit., p. 5.

part of the city, such as Estácio de Sá and Engenho Velho, areas that served as convergence points for various routes leading to the suburbs. He did so through a route formed by Rua da Assembleia and Rua da Carioca, Praça de Tiradentes and Praça da República, Rua Visconde do Rio Branco, Rua Frei Caneca, and Rua Estácio de Sá. Another connection between the city center and the western and northern neighborhoods was established through a communication route through Boulevard de São Cristóvão, Rua Visconde de Itaúna, Praça da República, and Rua Marechal Floriano Peixoto, which was extended to the sea. The third connection aimed at linking the port area with the city center, as the neighborhoods of Saúde and Gamboa were isolated by a chain of hills. From this perspective, two major routes are established. One that was formed by the widening of Rua da Prainha, extending from Largo da Prainha to the widening of Rua Uruguaiana, ending at Largo da Carioca. The other was created by the extension of Rua do Sacramento until it reached Rua Camerino and the widening of Rua Camerino to the Saúde pier. Another system of new road connections was created in order to link the South Zone with the neighborhoods in the west, now known as the North Zone. The traffic of cars and wagons in this direction was significant and required an urban planning solution. A 17-meter-wide avenue was then designed between Largo da Lapa and Rua Frei Caneca, at the corner of Rua de Santana, passing beneath the Lapa arches at the point where Rua Riachuelo begins.

It seems to us that, contrary to the perspectives presented by the historiography of the 1970s and 1980s, Pereira Passos's reform agenda did not aim at banning the poor population from the center of Rio, or even hindering their access to it. This was opposite from Haussmann's approach, which combined his radial avenues arranged in semicircles in order to disperse popular presence in the urban center of Paris after the barricades of the 1848 Revolution. Alternatively, Passos sought to evoke the presence of the population in the center of Rio de Janeiro by creating a new road system that connected the center with the neighborhoods of what is now the North Zone through three interconnected street systems. Furthermore, he advanced the studies for the construction of a fourth avenue, which would be quite long and feature smooth curves, connecting Avenida Francisco Bicalho with the junction of the current streets of São Francisco Xavier and Barão de Mesquita. This avenue would then connect the port area to the neighborhoods of the current Grande Tijuca region and to the roads leading to the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro.²⁸

²⁸See *Mensagens do Prefeito do Distrito Federal*. 7 vols. Rio de Janeiro: Typographia da Gazeta de Notícias,

In line with Pereira Passos's reform efforts to connect the city center with the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, there were also calls for popular presence in the central area of Rio de Janeiro, which was not restricted to the new road systems described. It is worth noting that Passos implemented bandstands in several squares in the city center. According to him, these new urban structures would be used for the leisure of the population, as bands would be brought in by the city to perform on weekends. Additionally, Pereira Passos also built an octagonal aquarium of marine specimens at the Passeio Público park, designed to attract the population for visitation in the city center.²⁹

However, this was not carried out without conditions for the presence of the population of a simpler social background who lived in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro. The presence of the population desired and evoked by Passos in the city center was conditioned on new ways of behaving in that area. Its presence was required in that space, but only as long as it was with shoes on, in collared shirts, with no tolerance for behaviors such as urinating in the street, selling meat offal in small stalls, spitting on the floor, or allowing the city's traditional street vending and the practice of *tavolagem* (now known as *camelôs*, or street vendors). From the perspective of the municipal reform, the center of Rio de Janeiro should be frequented in such a way that would allow the government to be a space of rhetoric of seduction³⁰ and civilizing delight through a reformed city with new urban planning and architecture. The mayor sought to turn the center of Rio into a pedagogical space for civilization, a model of how to be civilized, or, alternatively, a model on how to behave like the bourgeois urban Europeans of the 19th century, which, *mutatis mutandis*, would be roughly the same thing.

The municipal urban reform was thus implemented to operate a framework. It sought to place the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro within an external mold, exogenous to the city and its tradition and collective historical experience. Therein lay the idea of civilizing Rio de Janeiro and its inhabitants, because, at the time, the meaning of the word "civilization" only admitted the singular form, never the plural, namely: "civilization," getting to the point of

1903-1906. Mensagem de setembro de 1906, p. 50.

²⁹ See *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³⁰ Here we adopt Giulio Carlo Argan's concept of architecture and urban planning as a rhetoric of seduction, in which he conceptualizes the architecture and urban planning of Baroque cities—objects of his research—as a discourse that aims at persuading those in the city to recognize the power of the State's authority. This serves to establish control over the individual consciousnesses that emerged in the context of urban growth in the major capital cities of 17th-century Europe. See ARGAN, Giulio Carlo. *L'Âge Baroque*. Genève: Editions d'art Albert Skira S. A., 1994.

being “civilized,”³¹ getting there, in a kind of movement of evolution of the progress of peoples towards civilization, where the European peoples—and not only the French—had already arrived before us.

The idea of civilization, although related, was not reduced to the idea of progress, nor vice versa. In other words, the federal urban reform and municipal urban reform expressed diverging points. On the other hand, however, it is worth beginning to explore some of the similarities between these two different reform plans.

First, both reforms ignored the historicity of Rio de Janeiro, disregarding the collective experience of its people over the previous four centuries of the city’s history. In these four centuries, the city of Rio experienced urban slavery, and in the 19th century it was nothing less than the largest slaveholding city in the world, that is, the largest concentration of urban slaves on the planet. Not only that, it was also, along with other Brazilian cities, the last place in the entire Western world to abolish slavery. Adding to this is the fact that slavery in Rio de Janeiro had ended less than 15 years before the leaders of the executive branch, who were the protagonists in both urban reforms, took office: Rodrigues Alves in November 1902 and Pereira Passos in December of the same year. In fact, Rio was never a blank slate. It was never a mere object, but rather a subject, the bearer of an urban culture that endowed it with idiosyncrasy, and for which the culture of occupying the urban space of the city was a *de facto* presence. In other words, it possessed an ontological positivity solidified by four centuries of collective experience of a people. Despite that, both reforms that made up the Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro aimed to level the city’s historicity, to erase its tradition³². They ignored the tradition of urban land occupation practices in Rio de Janeiro. Thus, they pursued the practices of street vending, *tafolagem*, making do with what you have in the center of Rio and, above all, a free way of engaging with the urban space of the city.

This approach, which led to the convergence of the federal and municipal urban reforms, occurred because the induction of new patterns of

³¹ See STAROBINSKY, Jean. “La palabra civilization”. In: *Prismas. Revista de História Intelectual*. n. 3. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1999, p. 10.

³² We draw the reader’s attention to the fact that tradition, in the sense that Gadamer imparts to it, is something that cannot be invented or created, nor can it be eliminated, since it is an effective presence derived from a historicity. It is also important to note that the word tradition has three possible translations in German: *Überlieferung*, *Brauch*, and *Tradition*. The latter, *Tradition*, carries the Gadamerian sense of the product of the experience of a historicity. For a better understanding of the concept of tradition in Gadamer, see GADAMER, op. cit. Refer especially to the second of the three parts of the book.

urban space occupation was considered non-negotiable. Mayor Pereira Passos sought to induce behaviors in the urban space of Rio de Janeiro that aligned with what was understood as civilized standards, namely those behaviors typical of the bourgeois-urban world of the more privileged social classes of the main countries of the Old Continent. On the other hand, the federal reformers aimed to design a functional city from a logistical standpoint, as they were concerned with facilitating the progress in the federal capital. Cars were emerging in Rio de Janeiro and goods from a port that was significantly expanded in order to multiply its volume of trade needed to be transported quickly through the city's widening streets, with no obstacles to the flow of the Rio's new logistics of capitalism. For one reason or another, the old ways of using the city's urban space had to be eradicated.

Second, both reforms were based on the importation of an external paradigm, specifically one that is European, urban, capitalist, and derived from the 19th century bourgeoisie. Based on this paradigm, the reforms aimed at constraining the people in the federal capital, which had emerged from a massive context of *escravidão de ganho* and been cast into the streets of Rio de Janeiro for centuries. For both reforms, the value of progress and the value of civilization did not recognize otherness or trajectories. Both aimed to standardize behaviors based on elements external to Rio's tradition. Adapting the city to Western capitalist modernity meant standardizing it from the outside in. For both reforms, there was a pedagogical dimension in the inscription of their values, which were reflected in the urban space of Rio de Janeiro. Progressing and civilizing also meant standardizing the relationship between the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro and their city.

Third, and as a result of the last convergence between the reforms, there is the lack of recognition of popular practices in the city's urban space as legitimate ways of being its inhabitant and user. Both reforms failed to recognize that Rio de Janeiro was, above all, a city of diversities, a plural, polyphonic and polychromatic city. They did not acknowledge that the city had been, for centuries—but especially in the 19th century—, a meeting point of cultures that, in the crucible of urban experiences, dynamically synthesized these encounters in the city center. Whether it was the federal or the municipal urban reform, neither aimed for a project for the future of the city that did not lean toward standardizing its diversity as a *sine qua non* for its development as a modern city. In summary, neither of the reforms ever believed that a project of modernity capable of giving dignity to the city and

to the country could emerge from the depths of a diverse and mixed tradition of encounters and historicities, developed over centuries in Rio de Janeiro.

Conclusion

Based on the considerations presented, we can offer the following insights. The first one is that Rio de Janeiro, the object of the Great Urban Reform that occurred between 1903 and 1906, was a city whose tradition was not taken into account as an object of urban intervention. The tradition of urban space occupation by the people of Rio de Janeiro paid tribute to a historicity that spanned four centuries of slavery on the city's streets, where the primary role of an enslaved person was that of a street earner, commonly referred to as "negro de ganho" or "negro ao ganho".³³ This was a condition in which the enslaved person was inserted in an "economy of daily salvation,"³⁴ since the failure to deliver the earnings from their services required by their master would result in a wide variety of physical punishments. Among them, the most prevalent was the striking of the palm with a paddle, causing inflammation and swelling that often left the injured hand unable to close for days³⁵. This reality, typical of the captivity of street earners in Rio de Janeiro, led the enslaved person to a bold relationship with their labor practices in the city's urban space. The consequence of a possible low income on a day's work was the looming threat of torture. The impact of the possibility for an enslaved person to attain their freedom through their dedication to street labor in the city must also be considered. When considering these elements surrounding the condition of enslaved street earners and the contingencies that shaped their economy of daily salvation, we will notice that enslaved people, even the freed ones, developed a bold and unconcerned approach to any type of regulation of urban behaviors, very frequently overlooked in the history of Rio de Janeiro.

³³The terms *ganhador de rua*, *negro de ganho*, or *negro ao ganho* [translated in this article as *street earners*] refer to a specific form of urban slavery in Rio de Janeiro. The system operated as follows: the enslaved person's master would send them to the city streets to sell a service or goods. At the end of the day or week, depending on the master, the enslaved individual was required to bring back a pre-established sum of money set by their owner. If they failed to do so, they would be severely punished by their master.

³⁴The concept of "economy of daily salvation" alludes to the plight of the street earner, who is obligated to bring in the daily earnings set by their master. Failing to meet this quota, earned in the streets of the city, would result in physical and psychological punishments. See AZEVEDO, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

³⁵To gain an understanding of how painful this punishment was and how it inflamed the hand of the street earner that failed to bring their daily earnings to their master, see KARASCH, Mary. *A vida dos escravos no Rio de Janeiro (1808-1850)*. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2000. See especially the author's chapter on the tortures inflicted on enslaved people.

Similarly, from the experience of urban slavery in Rio de Janeiro, a disordered social system started developing in the city's culture in the form of urban space occupation by its inhabitants, since the boldness of street earners, through the economy of daily salvation, created a driving force that galvanized social life in the day-to-day life in the center of Rio de Janeiro. The logic of the boldness in the urban space occupation—derived from the economy of daily salvation of the enslaved street earner—allowed, and even imposed, a relaxed form of work regarding rules of urban behavior, practiced by the various social types and segments that made up the people of Rio de Janeiro. These were: enslaved and freed people, poor free men who lived off odd jobs, immigrants in a precarious social and labor situation who needed to earn their daily bread on the city streets, as well as migrants, many formerly enslaved after abolition, who needed to find a way to survive for themselves and their families on the streets of the federal capital.

Both the municipal urban reform, led by Mayor Pereira Passos, and the federal urban reform, orchestrated by the consortium of São Paulo's coffee industry's interests and the *Clube de Engenharia*—which was aware of the great opportunities that their association with the government's great works could provide them—did not find a place for the city's tradition in their urban reform projects and initiatives. This happened because they viewed popular traditions of the people of Rio de Janeiro as an obstacle to the city's and nation's development. In other words, these traditions were not seen as legitimate, as the product of centuries of historicity of Rio de Janeiro, reflecting its people's attempts to survive, thrown to their own fate to fend for themselves and the survival of their families. These traditions of Rio de Janeiro's urban space occupation and their perceptions should be surpassed, because they would be on the margins of another tradition—one that was exogenous to the city of Rio and derived from the bourgeois and urban context of 19th century Europe. It was on this foreign tradition that the notions of civilization and progress desired by both reformers were based. These notions converged on their view of the popular practices established in the city, which were perceived as an obstacle to the implementation of these foreign values.

These reformers believed that the people of Rio de Janeiro should adapt to new urban practices, ones that were more in line with the 19th century European values of civilization and progress. These values were highly cherished and advocated by both of the reforms that constituted the Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro, between 1903 and 1906.

We can assert that both urban interventions failed to account for the historical trajectory of Rio de Janeiro and its people in their daily toil as urban workers, whether free or enslaved. Both interventions were also permeated by a vanishing point that pointed towards a city ideal external to its historicity, to its collective experience of urban work.

Amid some fundamental differences between the federal and municipal reform plans, there were certain points of convergence in the reformed city space, unfortunately due to the bourgeois disdain and shame of an elite that denied the social and cultural wholeness of what we are as a people. This people never bowed to the pressures of a progress and civilization idealized as superior and to the indicators of the little value attributed to the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro from modest social backgrounds.

In summary, while recent historiography establishes numerous differences regarding Great Urban Reform of Rio de Janeiro, particularly between the municipal and federal urban reforms³⁶, our focus here is to highlight the similarities between the two.

In short, we can assert that the reforms first converged through the shared belief in historicism, which imparted meaning and a direction to the historical process. The difference was that the municipal urban reform believed this meaning resided in the development of a civilization over time, whereas the federal urban reform embraced the idea that the historical process was guided by material progress.

A second point of convergence was the belief in the existence of a superior culture in the world, the European. This culture should therefore be a model for Brazil and its people, beginning with an exemplary capital and the city with the highest level of capital³⁷ in Brazil, the reformed Rio de Janeiro.

Another point of convergence was the belief in the Enlightenment and in the universality of reason, leading to the belief in the power of the government to modernize society from the top down. Reason would be capable of “redeeming us from our colonial, Lusitanian, and slave-owning

³⁶Azevedo's work is the one that most thoroughly explores the distinctions between the two urban reform initiatives—the federal urban reform and the municipal urban reform—in Rio de Janeiro. See AZEVEDO, op. cit.

³⁷The concept of *capitality* was developed by Giulio Carlo Argan, see ARGAN, op. cit. It refers to the power of being a reference and the magnetism that a city exerts over other cities in a country or region, thus representing a significant influence over them. For example, although Washington D.C. is the capital of the United States, it does not possess capitality. On the other hand, New York City has this characteristic even though it is not the country's capital.

past,” which, until shortly before the Great Reform of Rio de Janeiro, had lasted for over 300 years of collective historical experience in its forms of occupation of the urban space of the city. Both believed that a society with an urban space occupation culture rooted in approximately 350 years of slavery could be transformed by the power of Enlightenment reason through a modernizing government.

Finally, the belief in the transformative power of Enlightenment reason led both the federal and municipal reforms to pursue urban interventions that would educate the taste of the population. These interventions would have the aim of modifying behaviors and fitting them within the realms of discipline and coercions that this idea inherently imposed³⁸. The Municipal Theater and Avenida Central are two of the projects, one from each reform group, that exemplified the pedagogical intent of both urban interventions. For both, implementing an urban reform necessarily involved educating the people to create a kind of new tradition³⁹ in the city. This new tradition was expected to align with the tradition of the Old Continent, so that the delirium of Enlightenment, plenipotentiary, and universal reason could convert Rio de Janeiro into a bourgeois-European city of the late 19th century. It was believed, then, that a tradition spanning approximately three and a half centuries could vanish thanks to the Enlightenment actions of the modernizing State. Despite the federal urban reform having Paris as a model, as indicated by the project on Avenida Central in its concept and landscape, and the municipal urban reform not having Paris as a focus, but rather the elements found in European cities in general, it did not forgo autochthonous concepts, that is, concepts beyond European contributions.

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³⁸The coercions related to the idea of civilization are closely aligned to Freud's considerations on the repressive dimension of civilization. See FREUD, Sigmund. *O mal estar na civilização*. São Paulo: Pinguim/Cia das Letras, 2011.

³⁹When we allude here to the desire of creating a new tradition, we are referring to establishing a new *Tradition* in the terms previously explained.

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