

Who builds local scale and what for? Readings from the expansion area of Belém

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This article assumes the perspective of dialectic interaction between morphological and sociological elements, following Lefebvre (1999), to understand the emerging logic of urban space structuring and of social organization in Belém's expansion area, assuming spatial attributes and social relationships as main evidences.

The occupation of the expansion area of Belém dates back to the mid-1960s, period of intensification of capital and people flows, when the Amazon region was the target of federal interventions that aimed to promote Brazilian Amazon's spatial and economic integration and the boost national development. Amazon was late and quickly integrated to economies of more industrialized regions of Brazil, and had as side-effects the breakdown of traditional way of life and the deepening of existing socio-economic imbalances.

Regional processes (integration, migration and economic crisis) intensified the occupation of the expansion area of Belém, structured along the axis of Av. Augusto Montenegro, which caused a growth rate for this area three times the national average during the 1980s (TRINDADE JR, 1998). Since then the area has been occupied by different spatial patterns here assumed as typologies, that correspond to the performance of different agents producers of the urban space, and strongly rely on marketing for the development of the area, thanks to its location within the metropolitan context, and despite the precariousness of urban infrastructure available.

Records from different historical periods, that overlap themselves on that space, form a complex urban fabric, in which various forms of settlements coexist (LIMA,

2002), as official housing, gated communities and squatter settlements, which are not integrated among themselves, and increasingly tend to differentiate and to deny their surroundings. Occupancy standards identified in the area made up a disjointed and fragmented urban fabric, such urban fragmentation was derived from social and spatial segregation, and materialized by creation of borders, voluntary isolation of groups and differentiation in levels of accessibility to urban services.

Such patterns raise analogies with other studies that investigate the role of street throughout the history of Brazilian urbanization as a place to be denied, because of its association with devalued uses such as accommodation of slaves and animals (LEITÃO, 2005), that explain how the withdraw from the street or public area became a social stratification mechanism through new forms of occupation. This process had its peak of denial when gated communities enclosed themselves, but established virtual cooperation strategies with their peers. As well as getting away from the street vicissitudes, the choice of isolation among equals results from a need for social and spatial distinction, and tends to transform public space into marginal space.

According Sposito (2013), the analysis of differentiation processes of contemporary society shows that social groups tend to cluster in order to ensure their sense of belonging and security, which contributes to the impoverishment of the diversity of social relations and denial of city as a collective product.

Under this context, this article analyzes the occupancy patterns of Belém's expansion area and inhabitants' local strategies of integration and / or segregation across existing typologies in the area to check on what scale decisions are taken to establish them. To achieve this goal were performed readings of secondary data for nine districts which have their access depending on Augusto Montenegro, to classify typologies of existing settlements. From then focal groups were conducted in selected settlements (vertical, horizontal, open, closed, of public or private production, informal occupation) to explore the relationship of inhabitants with public and private spaces focusing on four dimensions of life (supply, work, leisure, education). Semi-structured interviews with former residents and field observations at different times and days refined obtained results.

The study revealed that housing typologies were produced by or for specific social groups that do not recognize each other as part of the same reality, and increasingly tend to isolate themselves, producing morphologies that represent a new class distribution in space. Peculiar strategies of segregation and cooperation were detected, and the analysis of the residents' records revealed the prominence of local scale as spatial unit for fragmentation and articulation of urban space, since closed communities correspond to 12% of covered area and the perception of fragmentation is much higher than that, these mechanisms were adopted to cope with urban violence as a population's response to environmental adversities.

The arrangement between different typologies also highlights the role of private ownership and strict separation between the public and private dimensions, typical of Brazilian urbanization and capitalist hegemony (MARICATO, 2011). This organization has produced a mix of environments, where the proliferation of isolated settlements contributes greatly to the elimination of urbanity, of community conviviality and understanding of diversity. It also fosters hostility between residents of different settlements studied, and tacit agreements on the use of public spaces by the population, visitors and criminals (e.g.: drug dealers). The discussion on how these typologies relate search for alternatives to reproduction of life in this area, despite their social and spatial disparities and the expectation of social (des) construction of the city from the private dimension.

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