

Technical language and the (im)possibilities for a democratic production of space

Thaís Mariano Nassif Salomão^{1*}, Denise Morado Nascimento

¹*Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*

**thaisnassif@gmail.com*

Understanding language as a structuring element of the human relationship with reality (FOUCAULT, 2007) and viewing the city as a common and a right - not only of access, but of transformation (LEFBVRE, 2001; HARVEY, 2008) -, this paper attempts to contribute to the social inclusion debate and the democratic means of space production by unveiling some of the technical language's effects on citizens capacities to affect and interfere both on the city decision-making processes and on space itself - a fundamental dimension to wealth and sociability production, that is, of life reproduction.

Focusing Brazilian's urban context - marked by self-production (ABRAMAT, 2005) and illegality (TIBO, 2011) -, this aim is addressed by a theoretical essay based on Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic economy analysis strategy, in order to better understand the system of rules that determine technical language's efficacy and highlight the social conditions of language production. Which are, in architecture and urbanism's technical language case, fundamentally disciplinary conditions. Fitting also to approach Michael Foucault's theory - imperative for a study concerning the relationship between power and knowledge as forms of institutional social control - particularly highlighting the author's developments on the definition of discipline.

The context in which arises the discussion proposed by this paper is a context of contradiction that has been dragging on in the field of urban planning in Brazil since the early 21st century. Especially since the establishment, in 2001, of a legal-urban framework that is still today an international reference, the *Estatuto da Cidade* (Federal Law nº 10.257, July 10th, 2001). This legislation, the outcome of a long campaign for urban reform that began with the post-military dictatorship democratization process, strengthens and complements the 1988 Federal Constitution. In addition to providing

tools that would allow the government to take control over urban development, *Estatuto da Cidade* promotes a guideline that must be emphasized: compulsory social participation in urban-planning development, implementation and monitoring. This guideline is applied, for example, to the *Plano Diretor Municipal* - City Master Plan. Seen as important tools for *Estatuto da Cidade* to approach the local scale, these city master plans are mandatory to every city in the country with over 20 thousand inhabitants and aim to define the best ways to promote Brazilian cities' occupation, growth and development. Today, they constitute one of the main spheres of institutionalized direct social participation in the country.

The previously mentioned contradiction emerges from the clear contrast between the progressive legal scenario described above and the reality experienced in Brazilian cities. In the last decades, Brazilian cities have been experiencing a worsening of adversities and an increase in demand for public voice, arising from a disbelief in representative democratic institutions (CASTELLS, 2013; LIMA, 2013). The protests that took place in June 2013 in Brazil, known as *Jornadas de Junho*, were triggered by an increase in public transport fare and, over the weeks that followed, several other agendas related to public services and urban living conditions took the country's streets, highlighting the urban relevance among the country's many development issues (VAINER, 2013).

Regarding urban planning, institutionally, Brazil has never been so participative. However, the possibility of debate on structural issues is exceptionally remote, as says Erminia Maricato (2007). Even more remote is the prospect of effectuating those determinations debated, considering a context of urban space financialization, associated with the advance of neoliberalism (FIX, 2007, 2009). Even with the proliferation of critics that present the multiple barriers encountered among institutionalized participatory processes (VILLAÇA, 2005; MARICATO, 2011; SANTOS JUNIOR; MONTANDON, 2011; AZEVEDO, 2011), little is discussed in depth about the role of the disciplines of architecture and urbanism and its agents towards the imbalance of internal disputes that take place within these processes.

Sérgio Ferro (2006), in his writings "*O canteiro e o desenho*" - design and construction site - elaborates a critique concerning the allegedly progressive role of

architecture's technical language applied to the scale of the building - the technical drawing - and reveals its consequences on space production and on labor interrelationships within the construction site. This paper develops from the understanding that architecture's technical language applied to the scale of the city - the complexity of terminologies; the abstract representation strategies; the multiplicity of planning instruments and urban policies; the parametrization of codes; as well as the difficulties of interpretation and access to urban legislation - deserves similar attention.

Largely, isolation and exclusiveness are the purpose of technical languages, which operate as institutional and disciplinary conservation mechanisms within their field. Knowledge is veiled by technical language in an essentially power reproductive relationship, restricting expert status to a privileged few. Particularly concerning architecture and urbanism's technical language, the complex awareness needed to understand the dynamics and disputes that take place in the city, result in different levels of critical depth among the mentioned cloistered knowledge, overpassed by different ideologies. The ability to read a map, for instance, is far from enough to provide the understanding needed to debate in the matter of zoning implications on land prices appreciation, population's maintenance or expulsion, environmental and spatial qualities or regional influences on different scales.

However, technical language's symbolic efficiency cannot be completely grasped if reduced to the effects of enclosed knowledge. One must realize the employment of expertise is able to strain a social competence, authorizing and providing a speaker with authority and, simultaneously, it is exactly this speaker's authority that constitutes what is recognized as technical competence (BOURDIEU, 1992). This paper explores such system - consisting of structured structures predisposed to function like structuring structures - and its consequences to the possibilities of democratic production of space, while critically analyzing the current Brazilian urban planning field context.

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