

## SPACE, TRANSPORTATION AND RIGHT TO THE CITY IN BRAZIL: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

### Espaço, transporte e o direito a cidade no Brasil: uma abordagem teórica

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**RESUMO:** Space, as a category theorized by Lefebvre and Santos, converge with the motivation of this work. Faced with a concern of the role of urban structuring and its impact on social life, this article, through theoretical analysis as a method, seeks discuss aspects of urban mobility, the right to city, and the force of production of space by addressing the plurality of possibilities existing in these objects of analysis. The main objective was to know and deepen the discussions on the production of the urban space and to provide through this article a space for discussion about urban poverty and access to the city. The right to the city, the production of urban space and urban mobility affect the poorest sectors of the population, in these terms, through the understanding of space as the stage of relations and the urban as a way of life, which reveal its exclusive nature on the one hand, of areas endowed with better infrastructure in order to guarantee an effective capital movement, and on the other hand, it provokes a paradox, since there are still spaces lacking the basic conditions for the resident population to obtain a decent life .

**Palavras-chave:** Space, right to city and urban mobility.

**ABSTRACT:** O espaço, enquanto categoria teorizada por Lefebvre e Santos, convergem com os anseios deste trabalho. Vis-à-vis à uma preocupação com o papel da estruturação urbana e de seu impacto na vida social, este artigo, através da análise teórica enquanto método, busca discutir os aspectos da mobilidade urbana, o direito a cidade, e a força da produção do espaço versando a pluralidade de possibilidades existentes nestes objetos de análise. O principal objetivo foi de conhecer e aprofundar as discussões sobre a produção do espaço urbano e fornecer através deste artigo um espaço de discussão sobre pobreza urbana e o acesso à cidade. O direito à cidade, a produção do espaço urbano e a mobilidade urbana afetam os setores mais pobres da população, nesses termos, por meio do entendimento do espaço enquanto palco das relações e do urbano enquanto modo de vida, os quais revelam sua natureza excludente e contraditória no convívio, por um lado, de áreas dotadas de melhores infraestruturas a fim de garantir uma circulação de capital eficaz, e de outro lado, provoca um paradoxo, pois, ainda há espaços carentes das condições básicas para a população residente obter uma vida digna.

**Keywords:** Espaço, direito a cidade e mobilidade urbana.

### INTRODUCTION

The challenge faced in this work emerges from a deep concern with the role of urban structuring and its impact on social life, in this way seeking to discuss the aspects (conversations on the plurality of alternatives) of the right to the city, much theorized by Henry Lefebvre and force of space discussed by Milton Santos, joining factors that affect the mobility of people. Concerns about the role of space in the social process lie at the heart of the discussions of Geography as a branch of scientific knowledge, at

different historical moments, despite epistemologically diverse approaches. The enrichment of the analytical instruments offered by geographic science in the present period qualifies it and authorizes it as an important area of scientific knowledge called to think the space of man in its entirety. Geographic space, in these terms, is considered the main category of Geography through the understanding of the city as a way of life, which reveals its exclusionary and contradictory nature in the conviviality, on the one hand, of areas endowed with better infrastructure in order to guarantee an effective capital movement, and on the other hand, it provokes a paradox, since there are still spaces lacking the basic conditions of transportation and mobility for the resident population to seek a decent life.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This paper has as method the theoretical analysis, with the purpose of knowing and deepening the discussions about the production of urban space and how it affects urban mobility. With this, it seeks to provide through this article a space for discussion through the reading of texts and books that address the right to the city, the production of urban space and how urban mobility affects the poorest sections of the population.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **1 - SPACE, SOCIETY, POVERTY AND TRANSPORT**

Corrêa (1995), expresses itself in clear terms when commenting on the impossibility of separation between society and space, since the concreteness of society is given by its space, which produces at the same time that space, is only amenable to be understood through society. As can be seen, this is not an absolute space, as a set of points interconnected with each other, with its own existence, independent of external agents. The referential also does not concern the relative space, where the fundamental one becomes to cross distances and the relations between objects mean valuations of losses and gains (CORRÊA, 1995).

The understanding of space appears in Lefebvre (1976)<sup>1</sup> apud Corrêa (1995), as a social space, lived, having a close connection with social practice. Absolute space, on the one hand, is empty, place of numbers and proportions, and space, on the other hand, only as a product of society, is functional because the existence of produced and hierarchized objects runs. The author advances and exposes space as the place that reproduces the social relations of production.

In the same way, Santos (1986, p.128) argues that space is therefore regarded as "an objective reality, a product that is the result of production, a social object." This social space, human, of which the author speaks, encompasses all individuals, being the space of all.

However, as the urban fabric has grown horizontally more and more intensely in Brazilian cities, the centers have been emptied and the outlying areas are being occupied in a perverse urban production. The need for large commutes to go to school, work, shopping and parks is increasing. According to Vasconcelos (2011), as a result of Brazil's increasing access to the middle class and its consequent financial

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<sup>1</sup> LEFEBVRE, H. De l'Etat. (4 volumes). Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1976-1978.

improvement, more people are buying cars and more cars are seen on the streets while more traffic jams stop the city.

In Brazil, Vasconcellos (2011), observes that less and less people use public transportation because of the precariousness of the system and low investments in detriment of the construction of avenues, roads, parking lots and roads. The city increasingly turns to the use of the automobile and little is thought, still less is done, in terms of seeking a rational use of the car. We seek to expand the road network by increasing the number of streets, viaducts, bridges and parking lots so that it is possible to accommodate so many vehicles. Through policies that make cars have every privilege in the planning and growth of cities, access to urban spaces in Brazilian cities is increasingly difficult for those who use other means of transportation.

Urbanization practices in Brazilian cities have rendered them places that are not accessible to all who inhabit it. The population is practically obliged to own a car for their journeys, since access to the city, public improvements, leisure, commerce, culture and education is thought for automobiles. For Gomide (2003) and Rosa (2006), pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport are marginalized in urban policies and unable to access the various spaces of the city. However, the deterioration of urban transport conditions affects the poor more seriously.

The increase in the use of private vehicles is resulting in a fall in the share of public transportation and leads, as a consequence, to the reduction of the level of the quality of provision of its services. According to IPEA (2013), travel to work is becoming increasingly long and costly.

For the Banco Mundial (2002, p. 31), there is a relationship between poverty reduction and urban accessibility:

If we take the perspective that poverty is understood as "exclusion", accessibility is important not only for its role as facilitator of regular and stable income generating employment, but also because it is part of the social capital that maintains the social relations that form of the networks of protection of the less favored in numerous societies.

In order to substantiate the aforementioned paragraph, a study based on data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), generated by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), observed from 1992 to 2009 - both at the national and subnational levels ( states and metropolitan regions) highlighted five main results: 1) the time of work-to-work travel, which in 2009 was 31% higher in the RMs<sup>2</sup> of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro when compared to other RMs; 2) low-income workers (1st decile<sup>3</sup> of income) travel on average 20% longer than the richest (10th decile), and 19% of the poorest spend more than an hour traveling compared to only 11% of the richest; 3) this difference in travel time between rich and poor varies among RMs, being much higher in Belo Horizonte, Curitiba and DF, and almost null in Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza and Belém; 4) the data point to a trend of worsening urban transport conditions since 1992, increasing the times of work-to-work travel.

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<sup>2</sup> RMs - Metropolitan Regions

<sup>3</sup> A decile equals 10%. In this statistical concept, the total number of the country's population (including children and people without income) is divided by 10. Thus, in a country like Brazil with a population of 206 million inhabitants, each decile represents a group with 20 million of people.

In this way the less privileged are the most vulnerable because of their location in the city and by vocation, less able to bear the costs of preventive or corrective actions. These are transformed not only into the poor financially but also into mobility.

## **2 - THE EXCLUDING NATURE OF URBAN SPACE AND TRANSPORT**

It is inevitable to observe that Brazilian cities are produced by unequal spaces, in zones, neighborhoods and streets. The existence of areas with better infrastructures to ensure an efficient circulation of capital provokes a paradox, since there are still areas lacking the basic conditions for the resident population to obtain a decent life.

The contribution of Carlos (1994) on the production of the urban space as a way to make viable the process of reproduction of capital enriches the urban analysis, since the author establishes the connection between the needs of capital and people. In this context, the basic needs of people, living in a place, for example, immediately emerge the situation of the working class and their way of life.

The types of housing, their access and collective consumption equipment will be differentiated from the social class served in the city, from where the author removes two characteristics. The first concerns spatial segregation that is valid both for people with higher purchasing power and those with low financial income.

Neighborhoods that have complete infrastructure will soon have a high land value and will not be available to the needy population. There are also closed condominiums, true fortresses, given their exclusivity and location, usually far from the city center, yet they have leisure spaces such as shopping malls, as well as guaranteed security. The second characteristic refers to the options of the housing complexes with their houses "produced in series", located far from the center of the cities, which increases the path between work place and dwelling of the population, endowed with irregular infrastructure, often with absence of basic sanitation, leisure areas and cultural spaces. In reality what the author seeks to unravel is the question of how society (re) produces the space of its reproduction. And this will be possible by analyzing the imbrications between the ways of life and the work processes present in space.

Thus, the link between the place inhabited by citizens and the corresponding land price reveals their way of life and their irregular distribution in the city expressing the social inequalities regulated by the logic of the capitalist system.

Mass urban transport services directly affect the quality of life of a city, because they define the displacement alternatives that the inhabitants have at their disposal, the activities they can participate in and the places where they can go. In the words of Oliveira (2003, p. 17):

Urban transport is of vital importance as cities grow as they provide a number of benefits to all segments of society. To workers and students because they can reach their places of work or study, guaranteeing them the maintenance of consumption needs or reception of knowledge; entrepreneurs, because they have labor in the attention of their production process, and finally, society because they can benefit from all the goods and services that urban life offers, through economic and social relations through the displacement of people.

The available transportation to the user is the result of governmental policies, the global demand for displacement in a region, the competition between the different types of transportation and the resources available to the individual for the acquisition of

services. Under this aspect, collective transportation becomes of paramount importance for the city management process. A suitable model allows reducing congestion, emission of pollutants, reducing traffic accidents, as well as providing a significant improvement in the quality of life of its citizens.

From this, a synthesis elaborated by Santos (1993, p. 01), results in a true geographical theory:

[...] economic activity and social heritage distribute men unequally in space, making certain consecrated notions, such as urban networks or the city system, not valid for most people, since their effective access to goods and services distributed according to the urban hierarchy depends on their socioeconomic location and also on their geographical location.

Also, according to the author:

The organization of the transportation system makes those who live far from the centers even poorer, not only because they need to pay for their displacements, but also because the supply of services and goods is expensive in the peripheries. Public resources, in general, are for economic investments, to the detriment of social expenditures (Santos, 1993, p. 93).

Overcoming the obstacles of a condemnation, as can be inferred from the formulations of Santos (1993), to the place that the inhabitants, both in the countryside and in the city, they occupy, is an essential part of the original reproduction of these populations, that is, the maintenance of unequal social relations.

### **3 - GUARANTEE OF THE RIGHT TO THE CITY THROUGH PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The understanding of the trajectory of urbanization, processes and forms of appropriation of the city can not be completely understood except in the light of the notion of production of space. According to Lefebve (2006, p.07):

Space can no longer be conceived as passive, empty, or else, as the "products", having no other meaning but to be changed, to be consumed, to disappear. As a product, through interaction or retroaction, space intervenes in the production itself: organization of productive work, transport, flows of raw materials and energy, product distribution networks. In its productive and productive way, space (bad or well organized) enters into relations of production and productive forces. Its concept can not, therefore, be isolated and remain static. He becomes dialectical: producer product, support of economic and social relations. Does it not also enter into reproduction, that of the productive apparatus, of expanded reproduction, of the relations which it practically carries out, "on the ground"?

The dialectical relationship of space as a product-producer of itself and its corresponding society demonstrates its eminently dynamic and self-transforming character, unlike the old views about the mere space of social relations or an a priori given in the consideration of a given society. Space is, by nature, social. It is not an object, nor is it a commodity or an instrument. Space is not simply the place of the production of things, it is above all the place of reproduction of social relations, whether

they are labor, leisure, education, culture or everyday relations. In short, space encompasses the reproduction of the urban environment and way of life.

The process of (re) production of social relations cannot be dissociated from society, from the values and ideologies of each epoch. There is a social logic implicit in each time and space. Contemporary urbanism itself contains the unity of individualism. Therefore, individualism is not a simple characteristic or a random fact, lost in the midst of urban reality. It is engendered and organized by the centers of power. It is the separation of classes and ideas in the city and this separation that are transmuted into new forms and new determinations for future societies. In the same way, the technical and scientific capacities of the production of the social space are used to reproduce these relations and forms. It is the order of the space of capital, of industry and of consumption whose roots can be found in the historical process. For this reason, a more accurate analysis of the great urban transformations cannot disregard the very changes in the society and in its mode of production.

The urban demographic growth and the intense migrations that have occurred towards the cities during the last two centuries are closely related to the transformations and economic restructuring that the industrial capitalist modernity brought to the humanity. This seemingly obvious assertion calls for an understanding of the implications that capitalism has taken to cities for social reality and for what we may call "car-centered"<sup>4</sup> society, which is totally linked to the dream of the automobile by the rise of the new Brazilian middle class.

However, urban space also encompasses the interests, contradictions and struggles arising from the (re) production processes of capitalist production relations. In this order, the inequalities resulting from the distribution of the city's assets are felt and result in numerous conflicts. In the words of Lefebvre (2008, p. 32), "excluding from urban groups, classes, individuals, also implies excluding them from civilization, even from society". This brings externality to the city and the its life, the city as a complex system that is interconnected.

In Brazil, ensuring the quality of existing public transport is the responsibility of the municipal public administration, within its competence, and state for intercity transport or high capacity, which is responsible for planning and overseeing public transport services.

A harmful consequence of the current model of collective public transport is the promotion of the exclusion and urban segregation of people below the poverty line, who, because they can not afford the tariffs, have hindered or prevented their access to the facilities, services and opportunities the city offers. Currently, collective transportation is not treated as an essential public service, as determined by the Federal Constitution of 1988, but subject to the logic of the market. The Draft Constitutional Amendment (PEC) 90/2011 proposes a new wording to art. 6 of the Federal Constitution, to introduce transportation as a social right.

According to ANTP and IPEA (1998), policies that prioritize public transport promote notions of solidarity, integration and inclusion, that is, citizenship, in addition to reducing urban costs. The idea is to draw the attention of the authorities and society to the high social cost resulting from the lack of priority for public transportation. For cities to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, it is necessary that

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<sup>4</sup> ABRAMOVAY, R. Mobilidade versus carrocentrismo. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 14 dez. 2011.

collective public transport be the backbone of urban mobility, with affordable tariffs, quality, good frequency, less generation of air and noise pollution, and reach the entire urban space, promoting social inclusion and the right to the city, so that users prefer it as a means of mobility.

Lefebvre (2009) says that citizens should not only have the right to housing, but also the effective right to urban space, its benefits and the possibility of human and social fulfillment in the city.

The city should be the place of conviviality and sociability, approaching its first essence. This idea was completely contrary to the way space (and urbanism) was conceived, planned and constructed in the French context of the late 1960s, and not only in that country, but also in various parts of the world. To Harvey (2009, p. 09):

The question of what kind of city we want can not be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what types of social relationships we seek, what relationship we nurture with nature, what way of life we want. This resembles Lefebvre's conception of the right to the city not "as a simple right of visit or as a return to traditional cities," but "as a right to urban life transformed and renewed." The right to the city is therefore a right to access what already exists: it is a right to change the city more according to our inner desire. The freedom to do and to rebuild ourselves, like our cities, is one of the most precious, if not the most neglected, of our human rights.

For Lefebvre (2009), the Right to the City consists of the (re) appropriation of the urban space by the working classe through their struggles for the democratic exercise of citizenship where all come to fulfill and be charged for their social role. It is not limited to the right to "visit" the city. It is your right of usufruct in all its possible dimensions: social, economic, political, cultural and everyday. It is only through a resumption of the city and the urban area that are redefined by quality public transport, in which a new configuration of urban space production can be created, which can lead to this change.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is understood that the right to the city manifests itself as the superior form of rights, as a right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, habitat and housing. The right to the work (participant activity) and the right to appropriation (quite distinct from property) that intertwine within the right to the city, fully reveal the use. The city would be, in this direction, the perpetual work of its inhabitants, contrary to the idea of passive receptacle of production and planning policies.

The mobility of people is what makes possible the full realization of the other urban functions of the city, that is, the daily basic right to access the various urban activities: work, leisure, culture, sports, health, education, etc.

Optimizing the time spent traveling, adding quality and efficiency to the means of transportation, can improve the quality of life in Brazil. The mobility of exclusion has as its main and sad feature the urban segregation of the poor, in a process that comes from a vicious circle. For Gomide (2003), the concept of social exclusion encompasses the concept of poverty and its overcoming presupposes the universalization of citizenship. According to the author, combatting social exclusion therefore means combatting situations of deprivation, exclusion and lack, in such a way that every person is given minimum conditions to exercise his rights and his abilities. One strategy

to combat social exclusion, in this sense, is to guarantee access to essential public services, including collective transport.

Changing strategies in the short and medium term is not a matter of people choosing to live, work and study near their homes, because in most cases, especially in the outskirts of cities, there is no such possibility. Job opportunities, especially, focus on the most central areas. When fighting for housing, health equipment, education, etc., in the struggle for urban reform, one must be concerned with the facilities or difficulties of access of the people.

Urban planning, if well executed and looking at the poorest strata of society, is central to mobility. The lack of an adequate transport service implies a fall in the urban mobility of the poorest, restricting their capacities and opportunities. The reinforcement of the local scale and the neighborhood plan are essential for reducing the distances to be traveled daily. However, the isolation of localized neighborhoods and economic niches is detrimental to integration and economic development. Thus, the neighborhoods and their economic niches must be interconnected and connected to the centralities of the city and should have as parameter the right to city.

An urban transport policy focused on social inclusion should prioritize the design of programs and projects that provide the poorest people with access to adequate transportation services. All social inclusion policies must be based on ensuring that the poor have the right to access essential services. It is hoped that these reflections will contribute to the issues of urban mobility and access to collective transportation services being considered in the agenda of Brazilian public policies.

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