

Intelligence, Creativity and Fantasy

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From international context to Portuguese urban planning: Creativity on mechanical aesthetics in Planos Gerais de Urbanização

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ABSTRACT: It is known that cars have given rise to new spatial relations between the territory, the urban form, the population and the architecture. Space became understood not by distance units, but rather by space/time relations. In the modern age, the City was therefore transformed based on overcoming stabilised urban models. Objectivity was then called into question with new theories. In that approach, the car intensified the closeness between form and function – and modern architects would see this binomial as a manifest, an aesthetic concern, as Le Corbusier (1887-1965) witnessed it in *Vers une Architecture*. In short, an apology came out as a fascination with the machine, which replaced the importance of the machine in itself. Consequently, the thinking of new urban spaces reflected an idea of progress symbolised by the car. Portugal, a country living under a nationalistic right-wing dictatorship (1926-1974) in a contradiction between local and global, tradition and modernity, allow the question on how the mechanical aesthetics set up the architects' thinking having presented the aforementioned scope. The creative ideas towards a new territorial thinking were also real in Portugal, putting in practice the same fascination for the car. Nevertheless, they did not wholly prevail, nor in the international context. This paper aims to set up the closeness between those two contexts.

Keywords: modern Portuguese urban planning, *Planos Gerais de Urbanização*, car, mechanical aesthetics, *Estado Novo*.

1 APPROACH

As we all know, the Industrial Revolution gave rise to unprecedented development in production and consumption. Systematic mechanisation of society (based on scientific and technological advances), as well as a permanent and rapid demographic growth, would, therefore, have inevitable consequences on territorial development and organisation.

One of the major impacts of such phenomenon arose from a new way of understanding the concept of distance as well as from different relations between means of transportation and the space for human life. This concerns the mechanical mobility, i.e. the car, which became a symbol of independence, freedom and speed. For achieving such a symbolic meaning, the car would spread out all over the territory, likely reaching all homes and families. That means that it would place the territory accessible to all as a whole, at least in purely conceptual terms.

This paper's central proposition starts with the idea that cars changed architects and urban planners' territorial understanding, doing what no other means of transportation did. However, when the subject refers to the car and its link to urban space, one may be speaking

about fantasy, that is, the idealisation of new scenarios, which might go far beyond reality. It is also important to bear in mind that idealisation is both a product of intelligence and creativity and, as such, it plays a decisive role to change the world, although not immediately nor directly. To understand the full meaning of this sentence, it is necessary to go back to modern times, when the ideas on urban planning and the car were placed side by side, shaping new meanings, while real pragmatic needs turned into aesthetic intentions.

Moving on to the Portuguese context in the same period – between the 1930s and 1950s, coinciding with *Estado Novo* political regime and *Planos Gerais de Urbanização*¹ – the paradox may be more significant.

1. The Decree-Law n. 24 802, dated 21th December 1934, established the legal framework which instituted Planos Gerais de Urbanização. It was an extensive programme to reorganize Portugal over more than 400 urban settlements. Every one having more than 2500 inhabitants should be subjected to a new plan, including all the places with either touristic, leisure, climatic, spiritual, historic, or artistic relevance. That purpose should be achieved in solely three years after the Decree-Law final approval. Vd. the Article 2nd of Decree-Law 24 802.

The texts presented in Proportion Harmonies and Identities (PHI) - INTELLIGENCE, CREATIVITY AND FANTASY were compiled with the intent to establish a multidisciplinary platform for the presentation, interaction and dissemination of researches. It also aims to foster the awareness and discussion on the topic of Harmony and Proportion with focus on different visions relevant to Architecture, Arts and Humanities, Design, Engineering, Social and Natural Sciences, and its importance and benefits for the sense of identity, both individual and community. The idea of modernity has been a significant motor for development since the Western Early Modern Age. Its theoretical and practical foundations have become the working tools of scientists, philosophers, and artists, who seek strategies and policies to accelerate the development process in different contexts.

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