

REPRESENTAÇÕES DO “CAOS URBANO” E O SENTIDO DAS REFORMAS
NAS METROPOLES BRASILEIRAS DA *BELLE ÉPOQUE*

“URBAN CHAOS” REPRESENTATIONS AND THE SENSE OF REFORMS ON
BELLE ÉPOQUE BRAZILIAN METROPOLISES

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Abstract: At the turn of the 19th to 20th century, period circumscribed by the so called *Belle Époque*, Brazil passed through structural changes, which were reflected on the landscape of big cities, especially Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In order to face the “urban chaos” threat derived from the physical and demographic growth of metropolises, the urban ruling elites developed a comprehensive reform process, whose sense has far exceeded the idea of a simple “remodeling” and “embellishment” of cities. Starting from theoretical and conceptual frameworks of Urban History and from the assumption that those reforms were linked to a wide disciplinary logic, thus involving several power devices, this article aims to analyze the aspects that led to such reforms, their characteristics and impacts on the daily life of urban popular classes.

Keywords: urban reforms; social order; *Belle Époque*.

Resumo: Na passagem do século XIX para o XX, período circunscrito à chamada *Belle Époque*, o Brasil passou por mudanças estruturais, que se refletiam na paisagem das grandes cidades, sobretudo Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo. No intuito de enfrentar a ameaça do “caos urbano” derivado do crescimento físico e demográfico das metrópoles, as elites dirigentes urbanas aprofundaram um abrangente processo de reformas, cujo sentido ultrapassava em muito a idéia da simples “remodelação” e “embelezamento” das cidades. Partindo de referenciais teóricos e conceituais da História Urbana e da premissa de que essas reformas estiveram atreladas a uma ampla lógica disciplinar, envolvendo, portanto, diversos dispositivos de poder, este artigo tem por objetivo analisar os aspectos que ensejaram tais reformas, suas características e seus impactos sobre o cotidiano das classes populares urbanas.

Palavras chave: reformas urbanas; ordenamento social; *Belle Époque*;

Introduction

In the last third of the 19th century, profound transformations shook up Europe, motivated, among other factors, by industrialization process, counterbalanced by the organization of workers’ movement, unions, and labor and socialist parties. Furthermore, the novelty of urban growth at a fast pace gave to big cities from almost all over the world the

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character of social experience, “the most unusual and critical of the 19th century” (HOBSBAWM, 1979: 42).

Moved by perplexity and torment in face of the experience of urbanization, the British, for example, asked themselves: “what will we do with our big towns? what will our big towns do with us?” (HOBSBAWM, 1979: 45). Experiencing the same torment, American intellectuals appealed to moralistic judgments, like the one by J. N. Ingrahan in claiming that “Adam and Eve were raised and placed in a garden; cities are the result of their fall” (apud HOBSBAWM, 1979: 47). Likewise, in France, since 1833, Doctor Parent-Duchatelet, alarmed by the problem of demographic pressure in Paris, configured an emergency situation, even suggesting to the oldest and most privileged inhabitants to leave the city, since:

[...] from this population growth, two causes were born that, continuously acting together, made disappear advantages which our parents looked for in the city and produced here a state of affairs that, at present, comes close to a barbary, and, whether in the city or in the surrounding settlements, it became intolerable for more than 100 thousand individuals. Both causes concern, on one hand, for the enlargement of Paris, and, on the other hand, for the mass increase of material capable of producing infected emanation. (apud SEVCENCKO, 1985: 71-72).

Along with industrialization process and urban growth, an imperialist expansion, mainly in Africa, created fears of uprisings by conquered peoples, which placed class and racial borders issues among the most important boundary lines for society of several European countries. By analyzing specific conditions of England between the 1880s and 1890s, a moment when the imperial expansion of that country reached its peak, increasing the fear of degeneration and fall and leading many observers to compare the British Empire to the Greek and Roman ones during their decline, as Elaine Showalter stated that “while other races seemed to be apart and exotic, the working class was available enough” (SHOWALTER 1993: 36).

Due to the strong economic depression that hit Western Europe at the end of the 1870s, the following decade saw the birth of the term “unemployment”, bringing together a serious crisis in relationships among social classes. The center of big cities started to be seemed as the place for concentrating a “residue”, formed by chronic miserable and “contumacious” unemployed people. Considering that this underworld lived in tenements, causing diseases, ignorance, madness and crime – problems regarded as inevitable – some analysts claimed, supported by the thesis of the urban man degeneration as a general race deterioration factor, the concept that the right of reproduction should not be allowed for the poor.

Concerning racial issue, the fear of colonial rebellions, miscegenation and interracial marriages aroused the interest of science and politics on fixing quite clear boundary lines between white and nonwhite, eastern and western people, for example, and no racial metaphors were missing at that time to describe the relations between those classes. Authors like Willian Booth have established parallels between the problems in African and urban jungle, where homeless people, poverty, hunger, alcoholism and sexual violence could be seen every day: “Once in Africa there are only trees, trees and more trees, with no other conceivable landscape”; as written by Willian Booth in *Darkest England*, a book edited in 1890, “it happens here in the same way – there is only vice, poverty and crime” (apud SHOWALTER, 1993: 19). Explicitly, everything which was dark or labyrinthine could be located in Africa, in the East or even in the working class districts in London, or in any other big city in the West. Whether for fear or compassion, poverty confinement in working class districts, urban housing shortage and unemployment composed a state of affairs which arouse researchers’ and ordinary citizen’s attention, whose imagination was more stimulated according to the higher number of publications on these subjects in newspapers.

So much so, that science in that period, particularly physical anthropology, often seen as evolutionist and focused on the taxonomy of the strange (GIDDENS, 1997: 119-120), has devoted itself to establish the legitimacy of hierarchy and differentiation between races and classes, as well as to demonstrate the danger of physical and moral degeneration represented by disrespect of those limits. In this context; marked by a strong feeling of insecurity, in which only a subtle line separated a criminal from “people in excess” who composed the “dangerous classes”, represented by unemployed people or those who did not perform functions recognized as useful, which were normally carried out by “ordinary” members of society (BAUMANN, 2009: 7); it was not a coincidence that the Italian anthropologist doctor Cesare Lombroso formulated in *L’Uomo Delinquente*, a book published for the first time in 1876, the concept of the born criminal, predisposed to crime from birth due to atavistic biological factors, which could be identified in individuals’ physical and psychological characteristics⁴.

Throughout the second half of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th century, Brazil also went through structural changes, which were reflected on urban landscape. The

⁴ Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909) is considered the founder of Italian criminal anthropology, which has exerted strong influence on Criminal Law in several countries worldwide, especially in Brazil. Also known as Positivist or Scientific School of Criminology, this strand had as remarkable names Enrico Ferri and Luigi Garofallo, jurists who argued that a criminal was a sick or “degenerated” person, crime was a symptom and sentence was a therapy (FERLA, 2009).

tensions caused by accelerated and disorganized urbanization, mainly in the then capital of the country, Rio de Janeiro, and in São Paulo, which generated, by educated men of that time, extremely contradictory images regarding these and other Brazilian cities; sometimes identifying them as a culture and civilization diffuser center, higher form of human achievements; sometimes as an addiction stronghold, a social confrontation, exposing misery and degradation of human condition (PESAVENTO, 2003: 78-79). The daily contact with crowd and misery on streets led national ruler elites to deepen a comprehensive reform process, in order to face the imminence of “urban chaos”. This process was known, at semantic level, by the term “civilizing”.

This article aims to analyze the aspects which led to this “civilizing” project, its characteristics and impacts on working classes daily routine, suggesting that the meaning of urban reforms occurred on Brazilian metropolises at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century far surpassed the concept of a simple “remodeling” and “beautifying” of cities, since, in order to “technically” and “objectively” face the “urban chaos” threat, such reforms were linked to a broad disciplinary logic that, for this reason, would involve several power devices like engineering, medicine and the legal-repressive instrument.

From the assumption that the city represents a research and discussion field of interdisciplinary approach, Urban Cultural History was used as an analysis criterion, theoretical bias which considers that a city is not only studied as a place for production or social action performance, but as a problem and an object of reflection which takes into account the ways cities were planned throughout time, or in other words, urban representations. Among them, a fundamental one here is related to urban modernity itself, because it presents a series of other appreciations. In Sandra Jatahy Pesavento’s synthesis:

As a sensitive translation of world capitalist renewal, modernity, [...], makes the city more than a *locus*, a real character [...] The emergence of a modern city and, mainly Paris as a paradigm and myth of an exportable metropolis around the world [...] put in scene a range of new representations. For example, the transformation of a town triggers a representation struggle between progress and tradition: a modern city is the one that destroys to build, razing to beautify, performing urban surgeries to redesign space according to technique, hygiene and esthetic [...] urban modernity also provides to think other types of representations: those related to plans and utopias built upon the future of the city, inscribing a dreamed and desired town on urban projects. Achieved or not, they are the register of a will and of a thought about the city [...] (PESAVENTO, 2003: 79).

Therefore, the city is transformed in an object of many discourses: urban, political, literary, journalistic, police, medical and legal, among others. Filled with metaphors to qualify

it and, simultaneously, revealers of specific knowledge or sensitive modalities of urban reading, such discourses, produced and interpreted during the so called Brazilian *Belle Époque* – period in which a predominantly urban culture took shape, the ideal of progress, faith in science and in technique for resolution of social ills – constitute substantial part of sources used here. Among them, there can be highlighted: official documents, such as chief of police's reports (especially in São Paulo), Postures and Sanitary Codes, besides urban chronicles like those by João do Rio and Luiz Edmundo about Rio de Janeiro, and Jacob Penteadó, about São Paulo; literary writings, especially by Lima Barreto and Adolfo Caminha; press articles from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo; medical dissertations on sanitary and moral conditions in Rio de Janeiro, highlighting doctor Francisco Ferraz de Macedo's perceptions, who exerted great influence on agents responsible for policing and application of justice, which was the particular case of jurist Francisco Viveiros de Castro, the greatest Brazilian expert on sexual crimes at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. From a reflexive reading of these sources, it was intended to understand the real motivations and effective dimension of urban reforms that occurred in Brazil, in this proposed temporal cutting.

The Brazilian city from *Belle Époque*: a universe in mutation or a place for social lack of control?

As it was mentioned before, during the second half of the 19th century, Brazil went through profound structural changes. The gradual replacement of slave workforce by a paid one, the emergence of factories and development of movement systems of people and goods, besides the strong demographic growth accentuated by increasing waves of European immigrants, and incorporation to urban population of national ethnic elements (black and mixed race people) coming from rural areas, led cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to lose their provincial and colonial aspect which were kept until then.

Regarding the problem related to demographic pressure, 1890 census data pointed that the Federal District had 521,651 inhabitants, 81% of them living in the urban area. The figures also reveal that, between 1872 and 1890, the population of nation's capital had almost doubled in absolute terms, and this population contingent was mostly composed by individuals of national origin – 320,821 against 111,935 white people from Europe. In addition to the majority of nationals, it was also seen a male prevalence compared to females, once while the number of men reached 238,667 individuals, women did not exceed 184,099. Although there was a certain gender balance among nationals – 159,293 men to 152,528 women – a deep

numerical inequality among foreigners still remained, since male portion of population was twice higher than female – 79,373 to 32,561, respectively. Another element to be distinguished is that, in the 1890s, nearly 31% of the total population in Rio de Janeiro was composed by foreigners in the fifteen to thirty age group, a percentage that was kept exactly the same until 1906 (MINISTÉRIO DA INDÚSTRIA, VIAÇÃO E OBRAS PÚBLICAS⁵, 1898).

The quantitative data mentioned above show not only the specificity of emigration to the nation's capital in that period, essentially urban and marked by a prevalence of young men, but also suggested that the demand for Brazilian women by foreigners was unavoidable and often conflicting (CHALHOUB, 1987; ESTEVES, 1989).

Parallel to physical and demographic expansion in the city, economic activities were increased and diversified, bringing as a consequence, greater complexity to the urban social profile, which became characterized, among other elements, by the mismatch between (plentiful) offer and (scarce) demand for workforce, a fact that promoted maximization of labor exploitation and, therefore, a reduction on wage levels.

According to 1890 data census, the total number of economically active workforce in the city, nearly 131,310 people, were employed in industrial, commercial and transportation activities. More accurately, 54,520 individuals were in industries (48,661 in manufacturing ones and 5,859 in the so called “artistic industries”), 10,733 workers were integrated to sea and land transport system, and 48,048 were allocated to commerce. Although the quantity of national workers employed in those activities was always nominally higher than the foreigner one, the number of foreigners in transport and commerce was proportionally higher, which was an exception (MIVOP, 1898).

In global terms, data related to occupational structure in Rio de Janeiro also show that more than half of the 89,000 foreigner employees worked in commerce and industry, which means that immigrants were located in the more dynamic sectors of economy. Meanwhile, 48% of the nonwhites were employed in household services, 17% in industry, 16% did not present any stated profession and the remainder worked in extractive, agricultural and livestock activities (HAESENBALG, 1979: 159; MIVOP, 1898).

This explains not only the strong social stratification, characterized by subordination and marginalization of nonwhites, but also the level of difficulty faced by nationals to get a job that integrated them in a regular labor market, which tended to worsen ethnic and nationality

⁵ Henceforth MIVOP.

conflicts concerning to work conditions. Analyzing this kind of strain, Sidney Chalhoub warned to the fact that ethnic and national rivalries assumed, in this context, significant importance, concluding that they both refer to popular cultural aspects internalized by poor Brazilians and immigrants for a long time, and to the particular situation of transition to capitalist order in Rio de Janeiro (CHALHOUB, 1987: 38). One indication can be seen in Lima Barreto's ironic speech: "It is unique that, by establishing the Republic, they did not do it in such a liberal way to give to a black man the position of a teacher. It is really a unique Republic" (BARRETO, 1953: 45).

Some statistics on unemployment level in the Federal Capital show that the quantity of unemployed or people known as "no stated profession" reached, in the last decade of the 19th century, 48,110 individuals, representing about 9,20% of total population in the city (LOBO, 1978). For these elements, who were on the sidelines of regular labor market (the majority of black and mixed race people), living from small business and other means was a survival strategy. In addition, a marginal world generated, supported and reproduced by modernity was formed, bringing out new urban characters like thieves, pickpockets, crooks, gamblers, drunkards, women and drug dealers, gigolos, prostitutes and beggars, among others.

In *A Alma Encantadora das ruas*, the chronicler João do Rio cites some examples of activities that he called as "misery occupations", listing some of them as rag seller, diggers, rat catchers, boot collectors, tattooists, prayer and *cordel* literature street vendors, *modinha* (a kind of traditional urban song from Portugal and Brazil) composers, among others. Female activities can be added to these occupations, like those related to household services, seamstresses, choristers, dancers, singers, actresses and cigar sellers (RIO, 1951). All of these female activities were so depreciated in that time, that women who exercised them were included in a "no stated profession" category and were often associated to prostitution, as doctor Francisco Ferraz de Macedo has mentioned in his thesis about the causes of prostitution in Rio de Janeiro, in which considered that activity as a social disease linked to the problems of urban growth, misery and enlargement of forms of leisure, especially modern theater, which was for him the greatest of all "scourges that destroy the purity of home", since "on stage, male and female characters manipulated indecency and indignity with ability", in the exclusive pursuit for applause and consecration from an "inconsequent audience", who was more interested in "physical shape and sinful seduction appeals, voice, style, and sinister combination of gestures than in dramatic skills" (MACEDO, 1873: 189).

Identified as “hypocrisy and moral perdition reign”, theater was criticized by educated men in that time, because while disseminating artificiality from stage to real life, it contributed to “laxity of customs, decline of interest for work, and perversion of natural laws and social rules and values”, put in this world in order to the poor become ambitious, woman be valued rather than man and new over the old (MACEDO, 1873: 187). Such representations came closer to those produced about cabaret and brothel, which explain medical knowledge trend (but not only it) in associating the occupation of an actress to activities of prostitution. Ferraz de Macedo himself wrote that if the great contingent of harlots in Rio de Janeiro was recruited among the “proletariat”, a significant part could be found in artistic community, including cabaret dancers, generically defined as “theater extras” (MACEDO, 1873: 186).

Just like Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo was the scene of intense growth, transformed in the 1890s into a “complete and economically active city, moving from tenth to the second place in size in the country, only surpassed by the Federal Capital” (MORSE, 1976: 216). Thus, there too, the advance of capitalism resulted in complicating elements of social aspect, difficulty in adequacy of relation between demand and offer of job and housing and the need to adapt the improvement of public services to the population and physical growth of the city.

The same situation to that presented by Sidney Chalhoub and Lima Barreto about ethnic and national rivalries was also noticed by Boris Fausto in relation to São Paulo, during the last decade of the 19th century (FAUSTO, 1976), and by memoirist Jacob Penteadó, who marked in his writings working methods, habits and strains between the population of national origin (black, mixed race and countryside people) and foreigner immigrants who fought for daily subsistence in São Paulo, in the beginning of the 20th century, period that, due to immigration outbreak, a growth of a diverse population took place, responsible by intensification of commercial practices, generally improvised on streets, based on a scheme of small exchange of *vintém* (currency in that time) and barter, methods that were classified by Jacob Penteadó as “primitive” (PENTEADO, 1962: 163). Moreover, remembering the layout of Belenzinho district around 1910, the memoirist gives an example of the conflictive sociocultural coexistence of poor and different population who started to share space in disordered expansion during the sunrise in the city; by mentioning, with typical prejudices and strangenesses of a society whose previous generation continued to live with slavery and the “annoyance” of white residents in that district with “samba beat” of black dwellers on Conselheiro Cotegipe

street, during May 13th celebrations, event described as a “real promiscuity festival” (PENTEADO, 1962: 215).

Daily behavior facets of “people on streets” were steadily recorded in chronicles and in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo press. According to João do Rio, “there are women in the city [Rio de Janeiro] who are completely lost in vagrancy. Because of them, there have been dramas [...] and, sometimes, lovers come roaring, with a gun in hand” (RIO, 1951: 82). Likewise, the newspaper *O Commercio de São Paulo* wrote down, in its August 17th, 1910 issue:

Yesterday, after long months of calmness, police registered a bloody fact that for some hours impressed the Capital population, which has forgotten similar tremendous tragedies developed in the first months of the year. For a few hours, news about the terrible scene occurred on a field at the side of Boiada road, impressed the population, feeling that was disappearing as soon as people knew that protagonist and victim were low-level citizens. And, indeed, yesterday’s bloody drama can arise little interest: it is a third class crime, as stated in the jargon of the article [...]. It is a simple case: a rude brown man, thinking he was deceived by his lover, killed her and later on ended up with a shot in his own ear.

The fact is that “dramas” resulting from “third class” crimes have eventually increased and justified public authorities concern with “low-level people”, pointed as pivots of those crimes.

Therefore, everything points that the last three decades of the 19th century and the early ones of the 20th century represented for the inhabitants of Brazilian great metropolises a period of change in quality of life, fixed in a feeling of permanent loss of an idyllic world, previously characterized by an almost domestic organization of social life. All the dramatic situation of this change in sensitivities was reflected on literature and press. Describing the situation in Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the 19th century, the chronicler Luiz Edmundo has defined the city as:

[...] a monster where epidemics sheltered themselves dancing wonderful *sabats* (sic), a melancholic village of old and short buildings with peeled cement plaster, filthy alleys stinking, except Ouvidor street, where [...] a “no tail donkey” man (carts pulled by men and not by animals) meets another stylish one from the tropical region, wearing a black British woolen frock coat in February, and [...] diluting himself in sweat waterfalls (EDMUNDO, 1965: 21).

In São Paulo, for example, the press referred to the changes the city underwent through the image of disfiguration of moral and social values. One evidence appears in *Diário Popular*, on October 27th, 1893:

São Paulo walks towards moral perdition. Anywhere that one turns, the visitor finds vice being developed with such liberty that it is necessary public authorities’ intervention to prevent it. Once, on streets where you only found families and houses

inhabited by people who have what to do, nowadays, you see impossible faces, showing themselves even though covered by Simon cream, powdered by face powder, grooves that are not extinguished, marked by mockeries and sleepless nights drinking, in lively immorality, the glasses of fake champagne, among low-value loves.

On the other hand, references to objections against urban man's corrupted character in relation to natural purity and simplicity that individuals from rural areas still retained are often found in literature of that time. Among many examples, Adolfo Caminha, even having as a scenario a shorter capital, Fortaleza, discussed the issue in the following way:

Mendonça knew Fortaleza superficially; his trips to the capital had been very rare; sometimes he came on business. He knew the men who were prone to evil, [...], but noisy and dissolute life of the capitals, that daily turmoil of deceptive virtues and unconfessed vices, that quantity of divergent passions, what constitutes, so to speak, human being's greatest happiness, that collection of gallant lies and disguised turpitudes, that tenement of wasps which is known as society, he did not know and not even imagine (CAMINHA, 1976: 27).

The fact is that the diversifications of economic activities, plus a greater complexity of social structure, have transformed the landscape of Brazilian metropolises in something more and more unknown and scary to doctors, jurists, politicians and social reformers' eyes. Conceiving urban centers as real observation laboratories, these social agents have produced extremely contradictory images about the centers. On one hand, the material improvements in the cities – like construction, enlargement and remodeling of streets and avenues, implementation of new lighting systems, basic sanitation and transport – and the search for new forms of leisure and sociability symbolized the reproduction, at a national level, of European behavior standards, leading the urban space to be represented as an emblem of modernity and progress, the triumph of “civilization” over colonial past, strongly marked by rural life. The great hubbub of streets, happiness experimented in cafés, restaurants, brothels, theaters and bakeries, as well as the presence of whole families on streets and public walkways were there to confirm that representation. On the other hand, workers' unrest, concentration of poverty and public exposure of work have sustained, in terms of thinking, the construction of city images as symbols of chaos, gathering places, mainly in central areas and in unhealthy tenements, of a miserable and unruly crowd capable of hiding, in its bowels, vice, disease and crime.

Police actions and precepts of engineering, medicine, and criminal law at service of social control of the city

For men from the best placed social classes at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, urban crowd became a synonym of political threat and of contact with physical

and moral “disease”, capable of degrading individuals and social relations, foreseeing the imminent onset of a crisis likely to mainly put in risk the family, an institution seen as the basis of all the social order. Feelings of fear, surprise and outrage in view of misery, associated to the correlation established between urban growth, poverty and crime have promoted not only radical changes in conceptions and practices of health and notion and coverage of crime, as well as have intensified elites desire in organizing urban space through imposition of a continuous surveillance and repression scheme to daily practices of population, in order to mainly transform members of the so called “dangerous classes” into “good citizens”, or in other words, into docile and disciplined workers and parents of responsible families⁶. Taking into account the theoretical background of social Darwinism and positivism, the different “deviations” started being increasingly separated and classified, and for each of them, specific forms of confrontation have been developed, supported by the notion of science as a progress fundament.

Concerning to police action on population, São Paulo seemed to be served as a pioneer example for the rest of the country. As attested by jurist Francisco José Viveiros de Castro, in 1892, the first statistics about crime in the capital emerged, transforming São Paulo into the unique state to have this organized service. In 1893, it was organized one of the best demographic census in the capital, succeeded, in the following year, by the first arrests of working class leaders, during the celebrations of May 1st. Furthermore, in 1897, it was created, under inspiration of the then delegate Cândido Motta, the Customs Police Provisional Regulation, with the purpose of regulating and disciplining prostitution. Not to mention that, in 1902, the Disciplinary Institute was founded (CASTRO, 1934: 58), culminating with the exacerbation of a campaign carried out during the whole decade of 1890 against the presence of “brawlers” and abandoned minors on the streets.

However, the clear proof of an “indefinite crime” fear by urban elites was the complete reformulation promoted on internal structure and mentality of police institution in relation to crime and its combat (BRUNO, 1947; NEDER e NARO, 1981; FAUSTO, 1984). Research conducted on police chief reports in São Paulo showed that, between 1892 and 1916, there was a gradual increase of police authority concerns on public morality and protection of “good manners”.

In a report presented to Department of Justice in São Paulo, in 1896, Bento Pereira Bueno, Police Chief, complained about the insufficient number of police officers, which has not increased according to the rate of population growth, asserting that, therefore, “police action have not been verified with a desirable regularity”, making almost impossible “the much

⁶ The term “dangerous classes” was used in Brazilian political talks in the late 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, to designate all the miserable people (GUIMARÃES, 1982: 1).

needed customs security in big cities” (BUENO, 1896: 173). In this process of “customs security” the police target was the elimination of misdemeanors like vagrancy which, associated to begging, were seen as the main receptacle of delinquency; disorder events, referred in relation to people’s behavior in public, also including strikers’ actions; drunkenness, similar to disorder; and prostitution which, although it was not prescribed as a crime in the 1890 Penal Code, it placed the woman under the heading of vagrancy.

Another revealing fact that police activity went far beyond the combat to real crime is discrepancy between number of arrests for inquiry and imprisonment with trials. Taking into account that in São Paulo, the years from 1892 until 1905 corresponded to the peak of arrests for inquiry (84% of arrests made), and further considering that, this period coincided with growing changes occurred in the city and recession caused by coffee crisis around 1898, it is noted that police repressive activity aimed at, above all, the social control.

Seeing common people as brawlers, working with the idea of naturalizing deviation and opposed pair concepts, in which street represented the evil, and home, work and school the good, police task was guided to carry out a real intervention on public spaces, to keep the order threatened by rule offenders against “good living” (FAUSTO, 1984: 112). In this respect, in Rio de Janeiro, for example, there were countless diligences to modify population habits, which go from legal imposition of wearing suit and shoes, to the attempts of “civilizing carnival” according to European standards, and the Afro-Brazilian religions, seen as synonyms of backwardness, in addition to interventions on parties and spaces of people sociability like stands and fountains (MALLMANN, 2010: 107-108).

It is worth mentioning that this standard of intervention on public areas and regulation of social and moral conducts was also reproduced in smaller-sized cities in the countryside, like Campo Grande, the current capital of Mato Grosso do Sul, whose first Posture Code, approved in 1905, following Rio de Janeiro model, prohibited in the first paragraph, Article 44th, Chapter 9th, “gathering, in taverns or bars, of people who are not buying”, with estimated sentence of six thousand réis or two-day imprisonment. Furthermore, in Chapter 10th, referring to “Prohibited meeting and moral offense”, the first three paragraphs of Article 45th highlighted, respectively, to be expressly prohibited: “§ 1st To make disturbance or clatter and to shout at night; § 2nd To play sambas or catiretes (sic), or to use any instruments that generate noise or voices in the Village; § 3rd To utter swear or licentious words that offend public moral”. The

offenders might be subjected to a 10\$000 fine or a five-day imprisonment (ARCA, 1995, *separata*).

It must be stressed that interventionist concerns of moralizing nature were growing and being refined in a direct proportion to organization growth and workers' claims, reaching national dimensions in the mid-1910s. One year after the 1917 general strike, a Judicial-Police conference took place in Rio de Janeiro, in which present authorities tried to define, as clearly as possible, joint strategies of public power actions against delinquency and public morality.

In this Conference, there was a significant explanation by the then Police Chief of the State of São Paulo, Celso Vieira de Mello, regarding the concept of public morality. Claiming that, according to police point of view, such notion was still so vague, he proposed that the idea would be applied to surveillance of streets, encompassing crimes of public insult to decency prescribed in 1890 Penal Code, misdemeanors to police regulations, penal laws and municipal postures, besides “all the cases that are not prescribed in postures and regulations, or under other aspects, can eventually offend [...] decency, dignity and reserved character of citizens in all that refers to public respect of good customs” (PEREIRA, 1918: 478-479). Defining public space as the “quality of the place and not witnesses' presence, which in all cases of public insult to decency or offense to good customs require police intervention”, Celso Vieira de Mello also proposed the expansion of police field activities understanding that, besides pathways, squares, churches, bars, inns, etc, the same field of activities should be expanded to all places exposed to public, as for example, “a house with its door opened, allowing be seen from outside, what happens inside it” (PEREIRA, 1918: 480).

Parallel to this, a broader intervention of Public Power was developed on the reformulation process of physical space of the cities itself. Due to countless “corners”, to confusion of anonymous people on streets, and to poor population concentrated in simple houses and alleys, the large Brazilian urban centers were turned into fugitives and ex-slaves' shelter, becoming what Sidney Chalhoud (1990) defined as “hiding place cities”, in which any riot could become practically uncontrollable. It was no coincidence, therefore, that in São Paulo and, more quickly, in Rio de Janeiro, urban reforms have closely followed the model implemented, between 1853 and 1870, by Haussman in Paris. The central point here was the role of engineers, one of the symbols of rationality in the 19th century.

Since the late 1850s, the increase in value and volume of exports, especially coffee, demanded counterpart improvements on transportation systems and urban infrastructure

services, which were essential to production and movement of goods. This enhanced the possibilities of engineers' professional performance, including in national public service as it was showed in May 1862, by creation of the Body of Civil Engineers linked to Ministry of Agriculture, which in that time encompassed the public works sector. Rearranged in 1871, this sector was replaced by the General Board of Public Works and 14 Work Districts, which encompassed all the Provinces of the Empire (COELHO, 1999). Thus, in Rio de Janeiro, for example, the first projects aimed at household water supply collected in springs located outside the Neutral Municipality dates back to the 1870s (SILVA, 1965), as well as the nomination of a technical commission responsible for studying an improvement plan for Federal District, aiming at urban aspects and, mainly, at solving the problem related to sanitation of the city. Although the plan had not been implemented in that time, many of the works scheduled in it have served as a basis for a “remodeling” of the city, conducted by Pereira Passos, when he was the mayor of Federal District, almost three decades later.

At the same time interventions occurred in the cities, engineers searched for disseminating an idea of “objectivity” as an inherent element of their profession. “Objectivity”, gradually converted by public power into authority scientifically established, in order to make it immune to any divergence on the means placed to accomplishment of its rationalization projects of urban space, as it was verified during “beautifying” works in Federal District, led by mayor Francisco Pereira Passos, which would lead Lima Barreto to state: “All of a sudden, the ancient city disappeared and another one arose as if a change of scene happened in the theater. There was indeed much of scenography in it” (BARRETO, 2009: 106).

Guided by miasma and microbe theories, which allowed the emergence of “organic body” metaphor that covered all the medical speech when it referred to society, sanitarist doctors eventually had been stood out as conductors of urban reforms. In order to take care and protect the social body from insalubrity present in fluids (in the air and water), following those two medical conceptions, it was promoted the installation of sewer systems to distance filth from cities, plumbing, implementation of hygiene services and introduction of green areas and public gardens. More than this, the use of a metaphor based on disease virtuality (physical, moral and social) has contributed to promote a real reorientation of thought and exercise of public power related to crime, since, from this point, sanitarist doctors performance should lie on all urban social space, on all the population and no longer being restricted to the so called “focus of infection” like theaters, cabarets, bars, brothels, factories, among others.

Following the hygienist model, police and justice action would not focus solely on proven criminals. Far from this, seen under the eyes of police and legal apparatus as people with “vices” and uncontrollable passions, associated to strong odors and savagery, all the members of poor and working population became corruptible a priori, and consequently, their daily habits were placed under interventionist and disciplinarian action initiated by authorities, in order to recover the social body, according to the “laws of nature”. Thus, parallel to sanitization of public spaces, Brazilian knowledge/power from the late 19th and the early 20th century focused their attention on “asepsis” of public housing, considered them as places of transmission of diseases. Therefore, using the need for sanitizing the “infected environment” as justification, it was prepared an intervention on individuals’ private life.

Examples of this intervention are the Municipal Posture Codes, which defined criteria of building construction to give them standardization according to the process of urban modernization. Eulália Lobo (1981: 24) informs that, since the 1880s, it had been discussed in legislative from Rio de Janeiro the problem of tenements as a factor of workers’ low productivity. In São Paulo, the same interventionist desire was felt, at least, since 1886, right after the city suffered a severe smallpox outbreak, immediately attributed to tenements and collective housings, as it is observed in the Municipal Posture Code, published in October of that year, mainly in the chapter concerning “Tenements, Workers’ Houses and Cubicles”, which prohibited the construction of tenements within the city urban perimeter, as well as in Sanitary Code decreed in the State of São Paulo, in March 1894, especially Chapter V, relating to “Poorer People Houses”, whose articles 138 and 141 determined:

Article 138. The construction of tenements should be strictly prohibited, thus, it is agreed that the municipalities provide the current ones to disappear.

Article 141. Workers’ housing should be established outside urban agglomeration (LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO, 1894).

Images produced in Brazil about popular housing were very similar to those developed by European sanitarian doctors, for whom “the habit of living in houses and rooms, having meals in taverns, preferring, in sum, to live on street, in cabarets”, was understood as the reason of “physical decay and moral independence of working class”. Seen as immoral and unhealthy, to combat popular housing became, thus, a struggle against a habitat considered a “shelter, a defense place of autonomy”. Hence, doctors and urban reformers’ main goal was to make workers, by “well” preserving their houses, to create attachment to public order, reducing

the social part of house in favor of spaces reserved for the family (parents and children), as a way to facilitate the practice of surveillance. By doing this, workers would be closer to intimacy of home and, therefore, far from cabarets (DONZELOT, 1980: 38-43).

In other words, if home was the development place for restricted and healthy individuals within the family, its opposite, tenement (the non-home) was conceived as the space where the most abject physical and moral evils originate, capable of infecting the “social body”. Thus, in favoring the need to penetrate into popular houses as a way of “correcting the environment”, medicine reflected not only on the intention of examining and classifying “deviations”, but also the bourgeois desire of taking the ideal of an hygienic family for poor people and workers, in order to correct detected ills in society.

Perhaps no other aspect of daily life has aroused more interest of intellectuals, politicians, social reformers and public agencies in Brazil at the end of the 19th century than the affective-sexual practices developed by members of “subordinate social groups”. According to Foucault (1980: 31), such interest is explained because “in power relations, sexuality is not the strictest element, but one of the most useful: it is used in a larger number of maneuvers and can serve as a point of support, articulation of the most varied strategies”.

Indeed, in the construction process of knowledge oriented to regulation and political management of the most comprehensive aspects of inhabitants’ daily life in big cities, and following the same paths taken by European science, intellectuals and social reformers also demonstrated in Brazil, from the late 19th and the early 20th century, a growing concern about sexuality, expressed, for example, in an increasing approach, especially by Medicine and Criminal Law, on themes like prostitution, homosexuality and marriage, among others.

Thus, influenced by perversion-degeneration-heredity chain created by European Medicine at that time, as well as by the notion that a social disorder threat in the country had its origin in man’s anomalous constitution, which needed to be corrected; agents responsible for application of justice were also engaged in a broad scheme of surveillance and moralization of inhabitants’ daily conducts in metropolises. The articles incorporated to 8th Title of 1890 Penal Code, which dealt with “Security of Honor, Honesty of Families and Public Insult to Decency”⁷, attested not only the change of a detection and penalty system for a few people to another one of surveillance for many, but also the fact that, whatever the achievements of

⁷ Title 8th was part of Carnal Violence Chapter, giving individual treatment to indecent exposure crimes (art. 266), deflowering (art. 267), rape (art. 268 and 269), kidnapping (art. 270 and 271), adultery (art. 277 and 278) and public insult to decency (FEDERAL SENATE).

Criminal Law in that period related to combat of more serious crimes; surveillance, official authorization, daily life regulation, fight against small crimes and large number of technically non-criminal transgressions were placed in the center of public order project, developed by Brazilian ruling classes, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. In these terms, it can be said that sanitization technologies and sex/sexuality regulation also aimed at maximization of life and family control of population, besides a demographic and urban ordered growth.

Final remarks

It was tried to show that, under the justification of facing the imminence of social “chaos” due to disordered urban growth of Brazilian metropolises, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, national ruling elites deepened a comprehensive reform process that, ultimately, aimed at the submission of inhabitants in big cities of the country to the new capitalist world order. Defined in semantic plan by the term “civilizing”, this reform process was based on two simultaneous movements: on one hand, it was sought to promote an ideology which valued work, linked to complementary concepts of “order and progress”. On the other hand, in order to curb “mixture of bodies”, which could place society under the threat of physical and moral “illness” resulting from the “anarchy” of races, classes and genders; it was imposed a continuous surveillance and repression scheme of daily life practices of urban population, with the objective of mainly transform members of the so called “dangerous classes” into docile and disciplined workers, able to family life.

Inserted in a mental structure that saw the State as legitimate representative of public interests and the only instrument capable of establishing “objective” criteria to solve community problems, doctors and engineers – typical figures of rationality in the 19th century – endeavored to incorporate to their knowledge the large urban centers and people who lived there, commanding a desire for hierarchy, control, submission and discipline of workers and misery in general.

Under the guidance of medical concept of insalubrity, Public Hygiene has invaded theaters, brothels, cabarets, bars, factories, schools and popular houses, trying to isolate, prevent and heal body and “spirit” illnesses that may be originated there. This was the moment when, under the justification of solving shortage and lack of hygiene of popular housing, several companies have emerged, supported by government incentives, with the purpose of building Worker Villages under unrestricted control of Public Hygiene, aiming at monitoring

and punishing workers who presented behaviors considered inappropriate from a moral or social point of view.

The engineer's knowledge, in its turn, was used as a "neutral" element to provide a more rational urbanization. Thus, from reform plans produced by engineering, big cities in the country have taken a new physical layout. Wide avenues were opened; existing houses of small rooms were demolished or refurbished; public locations like fountains and stands - people privileged sociability spaces - started to disappear, in a growing movement that aimed at standardization of what was seen as poor population disordered behavior, which little or nothing would enjoy most of improvements brought with "remodeling" or "beautification" process of Brazilian cities. The city center, now defined as bourgeois area par excellence, place of business, luxury and goods was practically forbidden for working classes, which in this exclusion process were pushed to peripheries and suburbs, where new houses were built, "ill" like tenements of working class neighborhoods in São Paulo, or the "new Africa" and slums on hills in Rio de Janeiro. A significant example of this exclusion scheme appears in a statement by Dona Alice to Ecléia Bosi:

When I worked, neither I go to downtown. My life was to go from Marques de Itu to Bom Retiro, there was no city for me. Later on, when I discovered the city, it was wonderful [...]. The city center was beautiful, for sure it was! Women wearing gloves and hat in the city; like in a walk. (apud BOSI, 1987: 60).

But that was not all. It was seen that, parallel to physical and demographic growth process of cities, the performance of judiciary and repressive apparatus was also modified. Reforms of police and criminal justice occurred between the late 19th and the early 20th century reflected, most of all, the advent of redefining notions of constituent elements of order and social discipline. Henceforth, urban policing, to whom has been reserved a markedly moralizing function, would play an important role in an attempt to establish new and narrower acceptable behavior limits, in which what is permitted and tolerated in public should be enormously reduced. The main target of police apparatus was the popular who broke social standards of "good living", through actions defined as contrary to public morality and "good manners", among which were indecent exposure and prostitution⁸; or misdemeanors, seen as dangerous to social order for infringing rules of discipline and work, which was the case of drunkenness, vagrancy and begging.

⁸ Although it was not prescribed as a crime in 1890 Penal Code, prostitution put woman under the heading of vagrancy.

In order to make effectively possible this comprehensive “civilizing” movement oriented to build a clearer distinction between public and private spheres, between sanity and illness, more would be needed. Since in the light of all the negative circumstances mentioned above, law mediation was an indispensable element to stimulate the so called “pleasant instincts”, it has become essential to operationalize Judiciary Power, enabling it to act including in the field of individual conscience, eliminating “artificial passions” that could “threaten public security and social interests” (CASTRO, 1934).

Strictly speaking, in the city of capital, which became a reality with urban reforms, the spectacle of poverty, produced by conditions imposed by modernity itself, should not take any place, but be isolated, disciplined and marginalized.

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