

THE MEANING OF COUNTER-HEGEMONY POSSIBILITIES IN ARCHITECTURE O SENTIDO DAS POSSIBILIDADES DE UMA CONTRA-HEGEMONIA NA ARQUITETURA

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Abstract

The article aims to propose a reflection on the critical – theoretical-practical – possibilities to formulate architecture and urbanism strategies that allow reacting at different levels to the impositions of destructive social logics in the contemporary world. To this end, it proposes an analytical path of some of the spatial results of the process of rationalization in modern architecture – in its Brazilian refraction – to name the conditions of a critical – counter-hegemonic – action; one that is possible in contemporary times. This reflection's main theoretical frameworks are the questions posed to modern architecture by the Italian critic Manfredo Tafuri, and the problematization of Fredric Jameson on the theoretical impasses attributed to it. These could be partially overcome by Lefebvre's critique of the production of space and everyday life, allowing the construction of a theoretical-methodological horizon of social transformation. The present possibilities indicate that critical practice must pursue spatial, cultural, and social contents as alternatives to the progressive abstraction of life, that is, imagine counter-hegemonic procedural actions – and achievements – to face the imposition of hegemonic capitalism (Jameson).

Keywords: Counter-hegemonic Architecture, Modern Brazilian Architecture, Modern Architecture, Architecture Criticism

1 Introduction

Through and against hierarchy, could not occur, here and there, architecture or urbanistically, "something" that results from the existing mode of production, that is born from its contradictions unveiling them, and not covering them with a veil?

Henri Lefebvre¹

Among so many, a task is presented to those who insist on maintaining the transformative character of architecture and urbanism implied in its contradictory modern constitution: what are the critical – theoretical-practical – strategical possibilities that allow reacting at different levels to the impositions of the destructive social logics of the contemporary world? To contribute to this task, which sometimes seems unachievable to us, we propose, based on the recognition of the limits revealed by critical architectural thought, to identify the spatial results of the process of rationalization of life. To know them in order to materially find a negative character – which corresponds, in part, to the counter-hegemonic suggested term - to be explored by disciplinary strategies. Thus, it is imagined that the hegemony of abstract value realized in the spaces of life can correspond contradictorily to mechanisms and representations of negativity. These could be triggered by the disciplines of architecture and urbanism in the sense of building counter-hegemonies that, in their continuous movement, foreshadow concrete utopias (Lefebvre, 2014). This critical perspective was boosted by the recent weakening of the unwary and noisy bond between architectural images and the economic logics of financial abstraction. Such themes will be explored through topics that do not intend to exhaust them, but rather compress an argumentative unfolding that helps to clarify some action plans.

2 Methodology

The methodology of these observations is a critical reading escorted by three fundamental authors to face the proposed theme. The bond between them is established by Fredric Jameson: the aporetic and at the same time insurmountable radicality of Manfredo Tafuri, confronted by the open radicality of Henri Lefebvre. Both, each in their own way, problematize modern spatiality adopting distinct ideological perspectives. This article aims to update and operate this critical scheme applied to the Brazilian context, in which modernity was carried out exposing its fundamental contradictions.

3 Discussion

¹ Lefebvre (2013, p. 120, our translation).

Manfredo Tafuri's work is the most uncomfortable synthesis of the critical radicality resulting from the radicalization of architectural modernity. In *Architecture and Utopia* (1976) the author proceeds to a critique of modern and architectural ideology, identifying an unitary bourgeois cycle in which capitalist development and its liberal ideologies are linked with the constitution of the modern architectural discipline. This attachment begins in the theses of bourgeois liberalism and is concluded in the early movements of Fordism as a paroxysm of the industrial civilization. The author identifies contradictions on both poles: on one, the opposition between architectural unity and the city, in the passage from the aristocratic capital to the metropolis; and on the other the division between the call for homogenization and Fordist standardization and the principles of universality and utopia inherent to the liberal ideology – which is collapsing in the late 1920s. This ideological inflection marks the passage from architecturally prefigured social utopias to the marginal and constricted roles of formal replications resulting from the loss of their substance. The emancipatory and critical contents of radical architecture were suppressed by its functional and affirmative dimension when applied to capitalist development in the context of the Second World War. The "capital's direct management of land" leads to the "the uselessness of outworn instruments [of architecture and urbanism]" (Tafuri, 1976, p. 170-171). This radical criticism seemed to set an aesthetic and political impossibility, which led to the refusal of this inferred aporia extended to the secular profession. Kate Nesbitt (1996, p. 37), summarizes the reception of this criticism in the disciplinary field, concluding that Tafuri "seems to rule out change through architecture".

If Tafuri's criticism led to actual immobilism of architectural thought and a false self-styled post-criticism overcoming², it also allowed expansion and elucidation of the disciplinary impasses still at work, despite neoliberal euphoria. Interestingly, the Brazilian modern outbreak, understood through this ideological criticism, can help figure the spatialization of such impasses, as well as the construction of critical categories. They intend to seek conscious instruments moving through dialectics that do not abandon the negative dimension while seeking to tension the inexorable positivity of the discipline. In this sense, an excerpt is necessary.

In Brazil, the philosopher Otilia Arantes broadened criticism of architectural ideology and sought to analyze the main works, trends and theories that intended to react to the consequences of this great Modern Project reversion. The postmodern explosion of the late 1970s, didactically exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1980, allowed the author to capture the "problematic encounter between the aesthetic dimension and social impasse", in addition to the exposure of the evident facadism in the *Arsenale* (Arantes, 2015, p. 14, our translation). By reading these works and seeking coherence in the seemingly unclassifiable formal diversity, the author opened ways for understanding both the "integral formalism" of the modern movement (the positive dimension of the "dialectics of the *avant-garde*") (Arantes, 2015, p. 52–53, our translation) as well as historically formulated alternatives, more or less critical of modern principles. Some experiments, such as Aldo Rossi from *Teatro del Mondo* (1980) and Jean Nouvel from the Institute of the Arab World (1987), intended to extend the critical potential of modernity while opposing its formal schemes and destructive ideological impacts on the city. Although the bet on a certain critical contextualism – which the two architects cited were part of – was revised in the 1990s, the reading schemes that explained the relationship between form and social content were extended to a new radical criticism. Thus, it detected the subsuming of alternative strategies of context and situation to postmodern simulation and imagistic schemes. The formalist continuity of modernity settled as the society of spectacle and the cultural industry, meaning the end of the line for architecture and urbanism carried out in the golden years of neoliberalism.³

This interpretative key – which captures social contradictions in the architectural form – allowed broadening the understanding of how modern Brazilian architecture was formed. If capitalist industrial modernization was a global impulse – although unequal and combined – and the link between architecture and capitalist development had already been widely detected, it was time to shine the light of radical criticism over the singular Brazilian case. Ideology of plan and integral formalism needed to be solved in the complex equation of modern Brazilian architecture – which emerged as a miracle in the 1930s. This already partially performed analysis⁴ helps the main objective of this reflection⁵. The local materialization of

² Michael Speaks' articles (2002, 2005) in *Architectural Record* summarize the main arguments of overcoming criticism by a projective practice aligned with "contemporary business management practices", as summarized by George Baird (2004).

³ See Recaman (2001).

⁴ See Arantes (1997) and Recaman (1996, 2002).

⁵ This discussion follows and develops the script indicated by Wilderom's methodological chapter (2019).

such contradictions works as a metabolism that allows identifying particular spatial elements that can inform disciplinary practice in a more objective way. This, despite the denouncing precision of its original and persistent productive bonds, remains alive in public institutions and civil society, in the activism of social movements, and in other forms of action that could allow the introduction of our so-called counter-hegemonic possibilities. It is therefore necessary to understand as an outlined objective what are the hegemonic configurations, which are material and architectural basis to possible alternative configurations, in addition to the theoretical-critical formulations. The analysis of Brazilian architecture, following the critical tradition, allows the construction of generalized spatial categories that may be useful in this sense. After all, as stated by tradition, Brazilian modernization can better clarify the global process, to the extent that the original ideological illusions of European liberalism were not present in the local process.⁶

Incited by the Getúlio Vargas's government and its hesitant modernization model, Brazilian architecture erupted just as the ideologies of social emancipation collapsed in the European context, between the late 1930s and the Second World War. It inserted itself in the context of what Tafuri called "reality of the plan" (1976, p. 135), as a local version of the impositions of economic planning resulting from the impasses of liberalism and the international financial crisis of 1929. In our case, this planning imperative encompassed social structuring, following the national states' formation in Europe, which at the same time needed to build a nation – and therefore its identity – and the State itself. In a sudden and accurate way, it recurred to the creation of symbols that, instead being the result of formative social processes, sought to anticipate and activate. From the aesthetic point of view, that is, the configuration of sensitive material according to a possible or desired time spirit, the construction of such mass symbols, that incited a sense of nationality, had been anticipated by the modernist movement of the 1920s. However, in Vargas's government and in this argument's context – reality of the plan – aesthetics was progressively disposed of critical dimension, culminating in the architectural configurations of palaces and symbol-buildings. This was the case of the Brazilian production of MESP (1936), as well as Pampulha, in the southwest of Brazil (1939-1942). Not withholding the analyses of these projects, carried out elsewhere, we now move on to some spatial and constructive synthesis – granted by these analyses – that enable the continuity of our argument.

The unaffected disconnection between the cell – in this case, the building – and an existing or desired urban context (*the plan*) is the first movement from an autonomy of this specific cultural system that allowed its full functioning in an adverse social environment if we consider the original contradictions of the bourgeois cycle. Although Le Corbusier brought along his admirable urban plans of the late 1930s, the role of the master was clear from the beginning in the official approach: to fix the intrinsic logic of his formal vocabulary directed at the building, even if it was, in principle – and mistakenly – inseparable from his totalizing conception of the general urban plan. This involuntary task was fully accomplished. The MESP building is an unmatched architectural prodigy, despite, or because of, the logical easing, at first unacceptable, of the Corbusian words. However, this formal system was consolidated in Pampulha's project. How does this architecture resolve the relationship with its surroundings without being allusive, modifying or annulling it? It is a matter of syntactic coherence whose existence and possibility are implicated, nevertheless, in a comprehensive social process that imposes spatiality and urbanization dynamics.

What was left to it was the role of identity simplification and formal sublimation of a social impossibility – harmonical forms instead of socio-spatial assertion. What is, then, its alternative meaning, other than a beautiful building? The contradictions of this architectural system are related to a possible socio-formal extraversion inherited from the *avant-garde* of the 1920s, but that's not all. Or, more directly: to the universality of the cell as a vessel of an industrial and social rationality, which are based on the socializing expectations brought by homogenization. In the Brazilian case, the composition difficulties of the unit itself are evident in the internal articulation of *stylemas* that clash amongst each other by not reproducing the basic logics of modern architecture. The meaning of this clash is, among other virtuosités, the precarious social starting point and curve that sustains it: the irrational wooden formwork necessary to sustain this reversed purism⁷. However, the relationship between these objects and something that involves or juxtaposes them becomes a problem whose impact can be felt in the undoing of our great cities.

⁶ Cf. "As ideias fora do lugar" in Schwarz (1992).

⁷ See Recamán (2010).

The Brazilian social landscape, seized by the gale of early twentieth century modernization, ideologically elides the decades in which a possible urban conformation had been carried out following the precepts of bourgeois urbanism in the nineteenth century. The modernist return to the colony faced an unlikely challenge: elaborating artistically what was socially consolidated by overcoming the same slavery that built this golden civilization. This social impasse of a very late modernization became a formal or aesthetic one. The ideological displacements made by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer are well known. The allusion to Portuguese-Brazilian civil architecture, religious baroque, tropical landscapes, and bodies follows the path of social reference loss in a production that, conversely, only advanced. Thus, the first empty space to receive virtuous forms was an idealized landscape which the architectural forms explicitly mimicked. The natural space could only be maintained in specific circumstances, since the land that progressively welcomed this architecture developed explosively. This transition has been carefully rehearsed by Niemeyer's work since the 1940s.

The inherited formal extroversion forces, whose aesthetic-social synthesis had been elaborated by European *avant-garde* under the impulse of Fordism in the 1920s, would not simply disappear when crossing the ocean. They demanded an elaboration intending to discontinue them in the purest formalism. Such aim was met by Niemeyer's ensemble-form, elaborated throughout his extensive production. The alternative meaning – for which the bulldozer of modern architecture tended radically – was summing up locally to replication. The architectural “other” was a configuration that arranged similar units in a false enlarged unified ensemble. Its social dimension had dissipated; the form itself showcased this incompleteness. The social dimension can be understood as the urban, the city. The latter was gradually disappearing, as pointed out by Lefebvre. However, modern *avant-garde* had radicalized this evaporation by completely disregarding the city in its constructive project. The Brazilian case did not imagine this shallow emptiness, but rather made extraordinary forms fit inside urban precariousness, with the same figure-background scheme of the tropical landscape-architectural object experiences initially intended. This formal scheme imploded with the city ensemble-plan of Brasília, in Brazil's middle-west, reaching unimaginable spatial limits. The urban precariousness of the surroundings does not take away its beauty, it rather emphasizes it; without confronting it or giving it a social example; a horizon of justice. On the contrary, it stabilizes Brazilian duality, which, superficially, sometimes moves and sometimes paralyzes.

Joining this dialectical climax came the inevitable confrontation between the architectural matrix and the Brazilian metropolitanization. From the point of view of a complex aesthetic elaboration of socio-spatial contradictions, the new creative explosion axis of Brazilian architecture moved to the country's largest city in the mid-1950s. It set a new spatial paradigm that sought to adapt the findings of Brazilian *avant-garde* to the dynamics of urbanization driven by wandering spaces resulted from economic and speculative logics that organized the southeast city of São Paulo. The spaces of this capitalist metropolis are scarred by the difficult coordination of constructed fragments, which result from the logic of an economic abstraction that rules them. Such fragmentation reaches unprecedented levels on the outskirts of capitalism. In addition to a great absence of previous minimum urban unity, these fragments are mostly built according to laws of necessity and precariousness. The meaning of the urban fragment, resulting from undesigned and unplanned land partition, differs drastically from the unified imposition of the authoritarian State architecture in Brazil. How to attribute a new impulse to it in an increasingly restricted social horizon subjected to the determinations of capitalist industrial expansion across the globe? Hyper late industrialization, precarious industrial labor, disappointments regarding social development in local modernization, and political weakening of the State were, along with spatial dynamics, new factors of the same equation.

The formal constriction movement of the architectural unit would allow its formal independence, even if subjected to abstract land division; this space becomes sufficient territory for intervention. The ensemble, generality, or latent expandability – impulses of a spatial extroversion intrinsic to modern European typologies – became an independent sum of self-centered units, performing another of the vicissitudes conditioned by aesthetic refraction in an underdevelopment context. The formal ground of this architectural fragment presumed a constructive continuity that would be imposed by unappealable exemplarity. The city would become a juxtaposition of continuum architectural gems, independent from each other, but with strong common expression guaranteed by a balance of displaced and anachronistic echoes of the liberal logic. Inside its walls, a freedom of intimacy; an embryo, in this political context, of an emancipated society. This scheme was contradictorily associated with a perception of Brazilian society's fragility in this period – whether it meant the working class, the economic elites, or the State – inhibiting broader social transformations. In the architect's second house (1949), Artigas defines another volume – the studio – in dialogue with the main construction. A sloping slab travels to cover both volumes giving it a paradoxical sense of unity. From the main room, only this attachment and the sky are visible. His architectural path indicated,

more vigorously than in his contemporaries, the constriction of the residential unit within the lot, as a solution for a city going through an unbridled allotment process in the 1950s.

In the context of the hyper late Brazilian industrialization carried out during the democratic interregnum – between the New State and the military coup – the Niemeyerian prospect was unfeasible in face of the imposition of underdevelopment destituted from inflows of national autonomy. For the absolutization of economic logic, which the city of São Paulo represented so much, the enclosure within the lot assured a space for socialization of the nearby circles. This microcosm frailly indicated a possible supra-individual meaning, conditioned by a radical process of spatial fragmentation. These political bets were only understandable within the context of aggravated social conflicts leading up to the closure of the political regime. Although the spatial trials were carried out in residency projects, the coherence of spatial arrangement introversion lingered within scales projects and different programs carried out by Artigas and his followers.

Although the architectural solutions of these two main historical moments – “getulism” and democratization – have resulted in very diverse spatial paradigms, some essential aspects bind them together. Modern deterritorialization resulting from the geometric abstraction that guided plan spatiality had an explicit motive in the context of underdevelopment. It survived, or rather, it was propelled forward, when it lost its original meaning – social change mediated by rational organization of an idealized territory. In Brazil, this deterritorialization followed the deideologized abstraction of a deregulated economic order, which has in the spatial ambit its operation mechanism. Thus, the apparent disorder resulting from intangible economical forces emerges to the urban surface, free from inertial forces or political obstacles; regulation which existed in the original ideological context. The singular fragments that punctuated São Paulo’s urban space, even while intending to spread, ended up concentrating all aesthetic efforts in architecture. This strategy ensured its existence and survival by settling a broad formal vocabulary which resulted in frozen morality. Both persevered even when set outside the conflicting social context, in which the possibilities of national development were at stake.

The meaning of this aesthetic and formal scheme determined by abstraction forces has a historic recurrence: the intrinsic antiurbanity from the modern design projects in architecture. Its underdeveloped refraction focused on a territoriality lacking urban organization, in a city’s historical sense. The colonial, imperial and republican period left us with spaces which were already built from decontextualized fragments. This fragile urban support was ravaged by the process of economic modernization in the first decades of the 1920s and radicalized in the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the antiurbanity of our architectural modernity finds the destructive meaning of the vanguard operation, emptied from social utopias – the plan. A sufficient anti-urbanity that did not intend to institute a new rational order which was critical to the urban schemes of the past. Its segregalist social character implicates in a spatial organization freely commanded by economic forces which find nor physical or social barriers to confront them strongly enough. In the proposed argument, we highlight that this antiurbanity did not find counterpoints in the disciplinary field either. On the contrary, the aestheticization of this fragmented illogic was a determinant creative impulse trigger, with no enunciated social content intending to critically justify it.

4 Final Considerations

After this brief analysis of more visible concrete spatial phenomena in the Brazilian refraction of the *avant-garde*, we return, thus instructed, to the possibilities or gaps in the initial critical formulations disciplinarily perceived as aporetic. These questions guide this reflection: are counter-hegemonic spaces possible in the context of neoliberal hegemony? If so, do they have an emancipatory horizon, that is, even if they are not themselves the spaces of the liberated life, do they lead towards them in any way?

To the extent that Tafurian (1976, p. 170-182) aporia is almost a consensus, we should propose a reflection on some indications of this less mentioned author, present a chapter called Problems in the form of a conclusion . To this end, we must strive to maintain the original dialectical method, that is, not wanting to find peaceful and positive contradictions denials, for those, from the 1960s until now, have only increased. Moreover, according to the author, it is essential to understand the real processes that states a necessary link between architecture and the increasingly complex capitalist development. Not only from an ideological point of view, but also in the productive aspects in which it has progressively diluted itself.

In the 1960s, a context to which Tafuri's reflections are deeply associated, a decline in the professionalism of architecture, increasingly emptied from its ideological and intellectual character, was already announced. The rationalization of objective

processes while projecting cities and buildings increasingly undermined the once prevalent spiritual activity of the architect. If on the one hand this resulted from the deterioration of the bourgeois ideologies to which architecture owed its modern origin, it also undermined its critical consciousness, – and its utopias – a space of reactive social action to the paths of economic logic. We can only corroborate with the vaticinium of professional deterioration, greatly expanded by informational technologies that imply labor division, foreign to the logics of synthesis and totality brought by modernity in its peak. Perhaps the worst result of this deterioration of critical reflection today is the increasingly anti-intellectualism present in the academic world. Its effects are diverse, ranging from the abandonment of specific technical knowledge to the elimination of critical distance in relation to the immediate processes of reified everyday life.

The conditions and limits of professional practice are not an obstacle, and their recognition is fundamental for enabling resistance actions to the hegemonic forces of capitalist development. We cannot avoid facing the high complexity of both the construction sector and the urban structure. The complexity of contemporary planning is a result of the ideological anticipation of the plan, carried out by radical architecture. It is, therefore, a matter of facing the contemporary consequences of these partial and instrumental strategies of social control:

Beyond the criticism of ideology there exists the "partisan" analysis of such a reality, in which it is always necessary to recognize the hidden tendencies, the real objectives of contradictory strategies, and the interests connecting apparently independent economic areas. It seems to me that, for an architectural culture that would accept such a terrain of operations, there exists a task yet to be initiated. (Tafuri, 1976, p. 172).

We must recognize this practice moves in the field of negativity, which problematizes utopic images of a liberated society, subjective wills, syntax updating, or even class architecture. This negative field reaches the heart of an essentially constructive aesthetic activity such as architecture and urbanism. A reflection by Fredric Jameson (1985) helps us undoing the so-called Tafurian aporia. If only a class critique is possible instead of a class architecture, the architect's role becomes resolutely negative in denouncing existing or historical ideologies. The aesthetic dimension of architecture is thus restrained, while the architect's revolutionary political practice becomes the only possibility. We could say that the Italian architect thus sentences an inflexible separation between them, eliminating residues of aesthetic autonomy. Jameson goes further by bringing this aporia closer to a textual genre whose internal coherence leads to a closure, an ideology. According to the American critic, this analysis is shrouded by the debates of Western Marxism and the revolutionary impasses of the 20th century.

In addition to the difficulties pointed out by Marxism in the second half of the 20th century, which involve a myriad of authors, it will be more appropriate here to advance towards the political and aesthetic alternative pointed out by Jameson, which would pave the way for counter-hegemonic practice. To confront Tafuri, Jameson turns to another celebrated Italian author, Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony imposition is based on several factors that dilute the separation between materialism and idealism; likewise, counter-hegemony includes possible resistance which implies a cultural struggle: in our case, "counter-hegemony means producing and keeping alive a certain alternate "idea" of space, of urban, daily life, and the like." (Jameson, 1985, p. 7).

The argument, here severely simplified, leads us to the Lefebvrian space exit and to a short excursion. The French author is known as a radical critic of modern architecture, especially of the *grands ensembles* produced in France after the 1950s. It was his sociological research in these abstract spaces that allowed the author to propose a reflection on everyday life and the centrality of space in contemporary capitalist production (second half of the 20th century). It is through spatial rationality, whether it refers to a unit, to the ensemble or to the city, that the capitalist and alienated social reproduction takes place. The abstractions of the economic order erode the cities – constructions – from any meaning, transforming them into products to be exchanged and consumed. To this ideological aspect of space, directly productive aspects can overlap, without being separated: "productive labor organization, transportation, raw materials and energy flow, product distribution network... space is inserted into production relationships and forces " (Lefebvre, 2013 [1985], p. 125, our translation). For us to be able to return to Jameson's criticism, it is worth emphasizing another quote about the space unity:

The concept of space intertwines mental, cultural, social and historical fields. Reconstructing a complex process: discovering (new, unknown continents or cosmos); production (of each society's

own individual spatial organization); creation (constructions: the landscape, the city with its monumentality and the background).. (Lefebvre, 2013 [1985], p. 126, our translation)

For Jameson, both the closure of Tafurian thought and that of impassive and conformed postmodernity would lead to a stalemate of action. The possible openness is, as we have seen, in the political validity of the construction of counter-hegemonic spaces as cultural dispute and in the possibility of spatialities that seek an approximation with a revolutionized everyday life, maintaining aesthetic distance. Even if there are no greater indications regarding the architectures involved in these possibilities, Jameson, a literary critic, intends to build a theoretical framework that allows proper architectural reflection to unfold strategies for a discipline adrift. This mediation between theory and practice was carried out by the author of *Urban Revolution*, "the one great prophetic vision of these last years of discouragement and renunciation" (Jameson, 1985, p. 53). In conclusion, an observation in relation to Jamesonian expectations. This author emerged in the international debate on postmodernity by declaring that cultural logic began guiding contemporary capitalism, making economic and cultural dynamics become indifferent. Even so, he would point out the remain of certain relative autonomy that would allow betting on the critical possibilities of culture, art, and architecture. It remains to be seen whether this aesthetic residue would linger on today, resisting the narrowing that neoliberalism produces on the non-economic dimensions of life. As recently reaffirmed by Otilia Arantes (2021, p. 42, our translation):

To conclude: after what I have exposed there is no need to confirm - that's it, there is no more space in the contemporary world, whether for artistic creation, nor aesthetic experience in the terms of the past; specifically until modernism in its peak. .

To which Tafuri (1983, p. 11, our translation) could add:

That is why the architect's problem is not building such representations, if by representations we understand the collective way of understanding reality. Architects or not, voluntarily or not, we are built as soon as we arrive in this world, we are built and, at the same time, we build this reality images. There are, nevertheless, movements that can shift representation, but they are not subjective. Criticism, for instance. Criticism, which constantly strips representations as they are (notice I say criticism, not the critic), that is, intersubjective, social, international work. Criticism can bring so much doubt regarding present representation that it can push it forward; it can encourage the leap.

Although this is not the purpose of this reflection, it is useful, in this synthesis effort, to indicate how this critical equation can be fed by current architectural production. After all, every critical reflection proposed can only be based on the analysis of existing spatial phenomena, trying to avoid the ideology minefield. Similarly, the possibilities, or virtualities inscribed in reality must also be supported by concrete proposals understood as counter-hegemonic alternatives to the radical spatial abstraction of neoliberalism. In the Brazilian context, just as a possible response to the longings of practical action, we can say there have been critical impulses inserted in architectural achievements in the recent decades. Such impulses are less or more developed depending on each case. They face, with enormous difficulty, the production mechanisms of the current capitalist field, which completes the urban explosion and implosion, as stated by Lefebvre. However, such reactive and intuitive constructions lack theoretical and critical formulations that explore and give full meaning to what arises only as a formal reaction to the *status quo*. Especially in the Brazilian case, the positivity of counter-hegemonic power formulations appears daily with the appropriation of urban space by its residents. Amongst the basic needs that result in unprecedented precariousness, indications of creative free will appear at all times, especially in the poorest city areas. Such a dimension of life can be the priority social fabric for architectural space research in order to shape it and broaden its meaning, which can be, why not, concrete-utopian.

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