

From global to local: Erechim100 Plan and City Marketing in the periphery.

Introduction

This research¹ aims to contribute for the understanding of some new practices in urbanism and their implications in the planning of cities located in the periphery of globalization.

Among the considered approaches there are the marketing and the strategic planning, courses originated in the company environment and which in the last years have exerted a growing influence in the way of conducting the cities.

In this conjuncture an elaborated plan will be analyzed for small/medium sized cities in the south of Brazil, where it has been believed to be possible identifying the manifestations of this named new urbanism. Through this cut, the production of some national and international authors that have been responsible for part of the discussion on the subject will be revised.

Formulated in 2001, Erechim100 plan was characterized by a group of purposes, intervention and management, which aimed to qualify the city for residents and visitants, arousing the tourist interest indeed.



General view of the central area of Erechim – Google Earth

¹ This paper was under the orientation of Professor Dr. Carlos Ribeiro Furtado – PROPUR/UFRGS

Despite of not being unprecedented, it was peculiar in involving a city that has not made part of what SASSEN (1991) denominated as "Global Cities". This condition has reinforced the relevance of this study, once it has avoided the typically referred topics, such as metropolis and large agglomerations.

International paradigms widely divulged by media, the operations in Barcelona and Bilbao are significant marks for this type of experience, since museums, parks, monuments, revitalizations and other actions have been employed in the promotion of the locations, playing a significant role in the new economy:

"Far from being a marginal observation to the problematic of the territorial organization operated by the economical restructure, the capacity of the production of images associated with the patterns of consumption, will become, (...), a differential element in the cities competition for the companies attraction, from which will result in marketing strategies and urban beauty." COMPANS (1999)

In this scenario, the consequences for the peripheral cities, mainly in "emergent" countries, have provided infinite hypotheses of investigation, since the focus on the development has been turned to the urban.

COMPANS (1999b) has still pondered that ***"The strategies of local development that have been generated from the paradigm of the global cities has had as a presuppose that endogen factors will be able to favor it, unless it is possible to interpret the dominant economical dynamics and the possibilities of market niches, which may be explored for the competitive insertion of the city in nets flows of the international capitals. Among the endogen factors responsible for the activity of these capital flows, transformations may be found, not only political and institutional ones but also physical, that are able to provide the conditions for better "selling the city" in the context of an interurban competition stimulated by globalization. (p 107)***

Therefore the conceptions of localizations, proximities and distance have been altered. The concept of "country" has ended up in becoming relative when virtual nets are organized overcoming the geographical impositions.

New Urbanism

Centered on the regulated view, understanding zoning, director plans and other legal instruments, the normative planning was hegemonic in the great part of the XX century.

Since the 80's, this model has lost its territory lending space to other management mechanisms, where, in an international level, the urban intervention plans became common, punctual and promotional, as the revitalization and re-qualification, among other denominations.

In Brazil, in the 70's, the normative planning had its peak, coinciding with the technical-developmental view from the military regiment, situation that also lost strength in the next decade. With the constitution of 1988 and the creation of the Statute of the City, the Director Plan came back to discussion, although dividing space with other instruments.

The focus has been on the experiences considered well succeeded, which such

common characteristic is the option for located operations, where the public power has had more inductive than regulatory attributions. In the new economy, the cities have become protagonist, many times playing a role that has reminded of that in corporations.

According to VARGAS (2003) explanation, ***“in the process of competition among cities, the privileged spaces, well designed, with architecture of quality have worked as a great shop window of the city and as a strong promotional element of its image. (...) The projects of urban intervention have contributed for changing the image of the City and enhancing its attractiveness. The policies of City Marketing have started acting as a highly important instrument in the Urban Management issues.”***

In the opinion of many critics, among them COMPANS (2005), the application of these models would be faced with some restrictions, mainly by repeating mistakes from the previous model when implemented in a generic and indistinctive manner, consequence of the non-management of external agents to the environment, which through the divulging of the experience, has disseminated the illusion of producing power, regardless on the peculiarities of each location, and the same process of economical restructure and urbanity occurred in Barcelona city.

Following the same line of thought, VAINER (1999) has stated that ***“Among urban planning models that have occurred for occupying the throne left empty by derogate from the technocratic-centralized-authoritarian traditional pattern is the named strategic planning. The model has been spread in Brazil and in the Latin America by the combination of action of different multilateral agencies (BIRD, Habitat) and from the international consultants, mainly Catalans, whose aggressive marketing has operated in a systematic manner the success of Barcelona.”***

Among the Catalans mentioned, he has highlighted Jordi Borja among the ones that have spread the experience in Barcelona and the virtues from this new model through the consultancy and texts. In BORJA's own words (1997), a ***“Strategic planning is the definition of a city project that unifies diagnostics, realizes public and private actuations and establishes a coherent scene of mobilization and cooperation of the urban social actors.”*** 98

This statement would be coherent with KOTLER's (1995) thought when develops the concept of “Place Marketing” or marketing of place, in a typical interpretation of the business environment, offering an environment in which the cities would be able to be introduced in the global economy.

Following his reasoning, there would be ***“five consecrated approaches from the development of a location: communitarian development, urban design, urban planning, economical development and marketing strategic planning.”*** (p 77).

However, in this author's view, the first four approaches, among those, design and planning that have been highlighted, would extend procedures that have not assisted the current demand in a satisfied manner, being, then, overcome.

This recipe would translate the employment of typical market tools as SWOT²

² ²Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, attributed to Harvard Business School.

analysis, a tool widely utilized in the competitive strategies elaboration, a trivial theme in the company environment.

Advancing on the concept of city marketing, ASCHWORTH has purposed the idea of "city branding", associating the brand construction to the planning processes. These strategies would lead to an active similar to the corporative body.

KOTLER has synthesized the problem, simplifying his judgment: ***"Selling a location means to make it satisfy the needs of its market targets. The task is carried out with exit when the citizens and the companies are content with their communities and the visitants and investors expectations are satisfied."***(p 106)

COMPANS (1999b) has reverberated the thought from the authors by exposing that ***"The construction of a "brand" for the city consists, then, of the diagnosis of economical and social potentialities, faced to a demand evaluation of the companies or sectors target, followed by the definition of positive and negative aspects that must be highlighted or modified in the city image divulging. Invariably, the image that we have tried to construct has been that of an enterprising city, socially integrated, that has offered quality of life and a favorable "atmosphere" to businesses. (108)***

The importance of agents as Kotler has held in the fact of not being urban, but extremely influent company consultants, and, this way, forming an opinion. Would they be occupying a space from the traditional planners?

In his own way, although not distant, LANDRY (2005) has also offered a reading on this "new" urban planning through his book "Creative Cities", among other works. For him, the city marketing would be one from various tools possible for the transformation of the cities in their search for means of modern production, named creative industries.

It has directed to the possibility of new relations between the public and the private by the means of "Ruling" (37), where he has described what would be the modern functions for these actors. In the case of the public municipal power, its function would go beyond the "simple" elaboration and application of laws, having to lead the incentives of the local development.

This way, the planning would extrapolate some traditional issues as zoning or regulation, congregating knowledge and interacting with other areas.

For him, with the current precepts in the present day, the normalization would be more centered in the land issue than in the cities dynamics, making the planning to be insufficiently integrated with the economical, social and cultural subjects. (p 47)

He has sustained that the contribution that the culture has conceded to the cities has been reflected in the vitality, in the quality of participation, in the construction of the dialogue among its inhabitants and in the promotion of diversity, constituting places where people want to live, work and enjoy.

Therefore, the cultural inheritance and its contemporary expressions would be the factor that would have triggered the interest in the processes of urban revitalization (p39), utilizing local characteristics as a base for the social and economical development. The differentiation would be vital in a world where the cities more and more seem to be the same.

By relating various cities, among them, Barcelona, Curitiba and even Porto Alegre as examples of locations where actions would occur for the creative environment, he has noticed that despite of the City Marketing concern with the differentiation, the urban publicity would be only repeating consecrated formulas, not considering *Genius Loci*. (p 43)

In other words, the mere application of ready formulas would not be seen as something desirable, once would not explore the potentialities of the cultural body correctly.

From global to local

VARGAS (2003) has lead to issues at the domestic level when stating that ***“The projects of urban renovation, mainly in port areas, strongly marked by Barcelona’s case, with the construction of Vila Olímpica, has emerged this issue, starting to act also as promotional elements of the public administration with the elections intention. In Brazil, the most paradigmatic case has been Curitiba city.”***

Since the 90’s, Curitiba has attracted the international attention with innovative processes of intervention, transforming the city in a type of reference in contemporary Brazilian urbanism, position that has not been free from contestation.

Personified by the architect Jaime Lerner (mayor, and after that, governor of the state), the result of the effected operations made this capital to start receiving important tourist flows, even without natural attractions, beyond figuring as one of the main alternatives of investment out of the route Rio - São Paulo.

LERNER (2004) based his theses by focusing on the intervention as a way of potentializing the dynamics of determined parts of the city, comparing it to the human body that needs the adequate treatment when ill:

“I believe that some “magic” from the medicine may and have to be applied to the cities, once many of them are ill, some almost in terminal state. As the medicine needs the interaction between doctor and patient, in urbanism is also necessary to make a city to react. Touching an area so that it may help to heal, improving, and creating positive chain reactions. It has been indispensable to intervene for revitalizing, making the organism to work in another way.” P 7

This procedure would even awake a greater feeling of belonging in the inhabitants, result associated to the punctual transformations in the city, which he has named “Urban Acupuncture” and that has, as a consequence, gained in image and appropriation.

However, this way of seeing the city has not been unanimous. For SANCHEZ (2001) ***“The participation of the citizens, the meaning of belonging to the city, the adhesion to new projects or offered services, the elevated degree of acceptance and public approving of the “city projects” and, mainly, the apparent unanimity that some projects have achieved, have been reiterated elements presented by the municipal governments through hegemonic images of Barcelona and Curitiba, for demonstrating their projects exit. However, it becomes necessary to detain the nature of this participation: has it referred to an effective or represented, active or passive, legitimating or transforming participation of the official projects?”***

Beyond the legitimating issues of these processes, COMPANS (1999) I would also add new questions to the theme by referring to the challenges that the globalization has inflicted on the less inserted locations, once to these new rules are imposed where ***“the chances of the Third World cities integrate to the global economical flows by means of sectors attraction “strategically dominant”, in a way that is not traditional supplying of bad remunerate and precarious labor for the execution of repetitive tasks – that, besides, are more similar to the industrial production than to the “tertiary advanced” – seem meaningfully reduced.” (104)***

But how may the markers of these movements be observed in “less global” cities? Could the planning proposed for Erechim be considered as an event of this nature?

Erechim 100 Plan³



Erechim, located in the north of Rio Grande do Sul, distant 370 km from the capital Porto Alegre, is a city with almost 100.000 inhabitants that was colonized by immigrants from various origins, producing a mixture of culture and habits.

Its origin is strictly associated to Rio Grande do Sul-São Paulo railroad, that in the beginning of XX century crossed non-populated regions, providing the rising of various cities along its journey.



Map of Erechim city with two main urban operations. The sinuous line - The Rail Way – is a linear park over the old railway journey. The Axis – the Central Sidewalk – occupies the main structure of the original urban ladder.

In 1908, Carlos Torres Gonçalves, engineer and defender of the Positivism, planed the tracing-via of Erechim, denominated by WEIMER (2004) as “geometrical tracing”, based on the concepts used in Belo Horizonte planning, elaborated by Aarão Reis and that, once, was inspired by Washington city design and by Cerdá ideas to Barcelona. Large streets, strong hierarchy and the creation of converging points through the

diagonal streets that cut the basic check characterize it.

Its main income has come from the industry and services, having this sector as of primary

³ This plan was designed by the architects Cesar Dorfman, Andreoni Prudencio, Carlos Fraga and Rodrigo Adonis Barbieri with the collaboration of the architects Redenzio Zordan, Rogério Malinsky and participation of the architect Carlos Krebs.

importance, predominantly in the familiar agriculture production and agro industry.

A result from the demand of one of the local entities, ACCIE⁴, this planning referred to proposing interventions in sectors of the city aiming to search for a remarkable image, exploring the strong existent urban identity.

Therefore, a group of purposes was elaborated valuing local aspects, coming from the uses that the population has commonly already made beyond developing the potentialities that the scenario has offered. This way, the suggested solutions were sketches to be detailed in a close future.

For being a complex work, with many variables and strict deadline, in any moment it was faced as a project of immediate execution, but as a study that would serve as base for debate among the community, bodies and public power.

In the beginning, the definition itself of what this planning would be generated questionings, considering that the proposed title followed the direction of other works present in specialized literature, which has referred to “revitalization” in cities, neighborhoods, avenues, buildings, etc.

However, when observing the intensity and the vitality with the locations that were utilized by the population, the necessity of another understanding was immediately perceived, condition that demanded a search for solutions that overcome the simple application of formulas or models.



Beyond the linear park, the Rail Way would extend a system of surface transportation integrating various neighborhoods of the city. Each station would be a meeting point.

With this precaution, the examples of Barcelona and Curitiba were important influences, once ended up becoming a mandatory visit in this type of action.

The title has made reference to the city scenario in 2018, surveying which desirable attributes would be accomplished until this date.

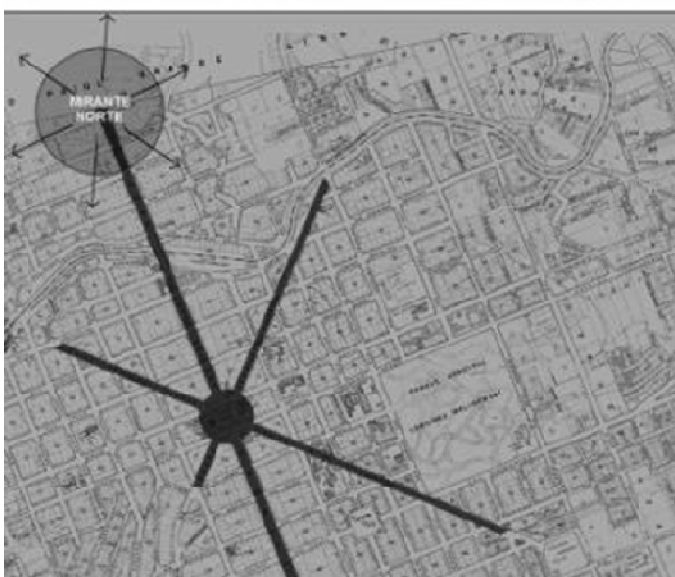
In practical terms, the plan was based on two operations:

The **Rail Way**, extending the rail line stretch that cuts the original projected ladder, was worked within the concept of linear park receiving landscape care, a cycle via, beyond the utilization of the rail for transportation.

⁴ Commercial, Cultural and Industrial Association of Erechim



The Street of Events, along the Central Sidewalk, would shelter cultural, political and commercial demonstrations, in a flexible way. It would be a practical example of relations between an urban design and management.



North Lookout – in the main extremities of axis lookout squares have been proposed, marking the locations and developing the visual integration with the landscape and other parts of the city. The city design itself has been the base of the planning.

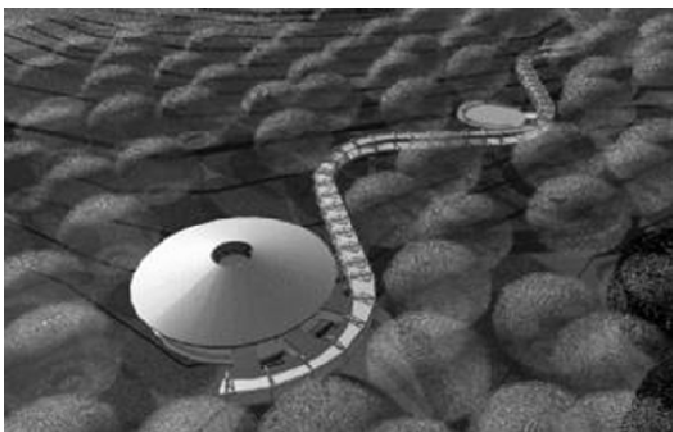
Including the main Erechim urban axis and formed by the main avenues - Maurício Cardoso and Sete de Setembro – and recognized by the population as a great meeting point, the **Central Sidewalk** meant the valorization of the axis in all its extension by means of the sidewalks care, identifying it as a unique space. Constructions were proposed as lookout-square in North and South extremities and the implementation of interventions along the journey as the street of events, sportive center and other equipments with capacity of generating entertainment.

Some Conclusion

The positions presented have offered a partial panorama on the subject, which has not finished the rising questions, demanding a greater deepening. However, even if in a superficial way, some issues may be considered, once they lead to recurrent situations in urban studies⁵.

For instance, the origin of an initiative as this one would be an important detail itself. The fact that the demand has come from a businessmen's body would promote the interest of other segments for the urban planning, not only from the ones that commonly participate in the process, but from the ones that now have been observing new opportunities in the city. This observation would allow them to see the highlighted place of the city

⁵ <http://www.vitruvius.com.br/institucional/inst94/inst94.asp>



The natural reservation existent, practically in the center, would receive equipments for better utilization, in entertainment as well as in education.



Constructed in the junction between the Central Sidewalk and the Rail Way the Public Market would be a great shop window of the familiar agriculture production of the region, beyond a tourist and art craft space.

as an economical instrument.

On the other hand, the role attributed by LANDRY to the culture and the body, would also coincide with various fundamentals utilized in the planning elaboration, being him nearer the utilized references than the conceptions of authors as KOTLER, where the competition would be a central question.

Even by considering the positive and negative points of the city, this plan may not be fitted in

the methodology of a conventional strategic plan, since it has not been aligned with many of the techniques characteristic of this tool, centering in principles of urban design.

Despite of the plan searching for the local promotion, there have not been greater concerns related to the competition among cities, considering that the obtained advantages would be positive secondary effects. This question has not been totally ignored, but would prevail the focus in the interventions while potential spaces.

Yet, there would be an agreement with BORJA (1997) when he has highlighted the involvement in the municipality as a guarantee of realization for a plan with these vicissitudes. In relation to this experience, many of the objectives were not achieved because of the little repercussion that occurred among the local political leads.

With the non-occurrence of the public political commitment, legitimate actor of the acts on the city, it has become improbable that interventions have occurred in a harmonic way, being the already known individual attitudes of the other actors maintained, by omission or by speculation.

Taking the subject to another perspective, we may understand that LERNER would also employ a group idea, with a strong influence from the urban design, assuming an intermediate position between the technique and politics. However, with him, the promotion has been extensively applied as a tool of divulging the constructions and projects,

overcoming indeed the interventions themselves.

The relation between the urban planning and the local development has provided great research opportunities. In this line, the Tourism, one of the key economical strengths in the new economy, has stood as one of the agents of urbanism imposing the necessity of readapting to the planning before these new demanding.

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