

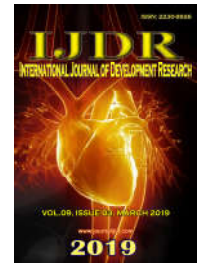


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SUSTAINABLE DISCOURSE IN THE PRACTICE OF SHANTYTOWN URBANIZATION THROUGH RESETTLEMENT OF VULNERABLE POPULATION IN AN AMAZONIAN METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Urban re-shaping has been the most common practice to reduce the number of socially vulnerable precarious settlements in the Belém Metropolitan Region, eastern portion of the Brazilian Amazon, in the last decades, but its results and effectiveness are still quite debatable. This article seeks to analyze the discursive interpretations of the concept of urban sustainability based on an intervention for housing of social interest from the Growth Acceleration Program in the state of Pará, aiming at establishing links of sustainability among the population served by the Plan through the project which aimed to relocate families - the Taboquinha Project, located in the district of Icoaraci. Qualitative-quantitative research was used based on the technical projects, documents, interviews with beneficiaries and semi-structured interviews with technicians, executors and beneficiaries. The data obtained infer that there is disconnection between actions to generate occupation and income of families, besides the absence of equipment for leisure in the intervention area. It is noticed that in relation to sustainability, based on the categories of leisure and work, the Project reproduces spaces that are not related to the material and substantive experiences of the individuals served, disregarding their everyday needs and practices.

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of sustainability has often been evoked in order to make welfare expectations move from the areas of housing, health and social rights, strongly marked by socially unequal access, to a notion of the environment built as a and common to all (ACSELRAD, 2005). Clothed in this universalistic sustainable framework, the environment is conducive to the construction of a social consensus designed to reconstitute a sense of community, solidarity and common interest in a socially fragmented world, seeking to accommodate differences in a new interdependent totality.

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Acselrad (2009) points out that the search for an urban consensus in such a spatially and temporally extended way, legitimized in the purposes of biospheric balance and intergenerational justice, is explained by the need to prevent the risks of socio-political rupture in cities increasingly fragmented by the processes of globalization and flexible accumulation. Therefore, if the use of the notion of urban sustainability seems to increasingly integrate a planning norm applied to heavily divided cities, the symbolic character of the actions associated with such a notion (either by the rhetorical representation of a consensual and unconscious environment or by sense that one wished to print to the "connecting" material operations undertaken on his behalf) would not seem sufficient to give stability to the mechanisms of urban reproduction. The notion of sustainability will thus appear to be only part of a broader effort to shape a new mode of urban regulation capable of durably integrating into the reproductive

dynamics the very constitutive inequality of cities. It is in this context that the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC), a countercyclical state plan that was put into practice by the Brazilian government in the second half of the last decade, is inserted in order to reduce the effects of the global crisis that has arisen in the United States, but reverberated on a planetary scale. The PAC consolidated itself as a strategy of broad action of economic movement, mainly linked to the civil construction in the great urban centers of the country, being divided in axes of action that go from the sanitation to the construction of housing units. With the PAC, the strategy of replacing the Belém (PA) “baixadas”¹ – flooded areas with housing estates is continued, a process that has been going on for the last three decades, now linked to relocations, and aimed at resettlement of poor families in other metropolitan urban. This paper analyzes the sustainability discourse present in a housing project of social interest of the PAC, referring to the Urbanization of Precarious Settlements, aiming at the relocation of families at risk and socio environmental vulnerability in Belém (PA). The methodology used is centered on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Social Technical Work Project (PTTS), referring to the beneficiaries of the housing interventions of the Taboquinha Project, as well as semi-structured interviews with technicians responsible for the elaboration, execution and supervision of housing interventions, all linked to the Executive Housing Company of Pará (COHAB), responsible for the works.

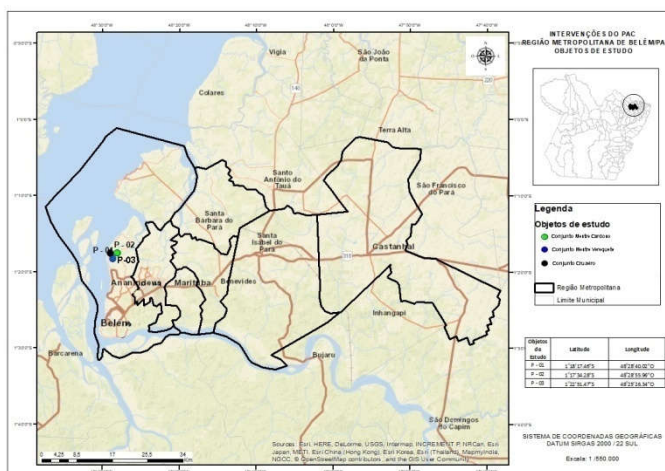


Figure 1. Housing sets of PAC-UAP objects of study

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research carried out was based on housing interventions specifically aimed at the relocation of families in situations of socio-environmental vulnerability of the Taboquinha Project, in Belém (PA). These interventions are subprojects aimed at housing provision and are part of PAC projects contemplated in the Social and Urban Infrastructure axis. These interventions were chosen because they have resettled beneficiaries from precarious areas from the environmental and social point of view of the Region; and the fact that the units were delivered more than two years ago, which

characterizes the consolidation of families in the following spaces:

Taboquinha Project (consisting of three housing complexes: Housing set Mestre Verequete, Housing set Mestre Cardoso and Housing set Cruzeiro), located in the Cruzeiro district, Icoaraci District, in Belém (PA). These settlements were resettled in vertical multifamily blocks, with 978 families occupying the banks of the Igarapé Cubatão, also in Icoaraci. These housing project subprojects are related to the Paracuri Basin Urbanization Project, which includes, in addition to the construction of housing units, the urbanization of the entire area outside the residential area and also provides for the recovery of the Igarapé Cubatão. The methodological approach of this study was to capture and understand social subjects, in their actions and relations, as producers of their material and social existence, through the use of a qualitative-quantitative approach on the Social Technical Work Project (PTTS)² of housing interventions designed to relocate families from environmental risk areas in Igarapé Cubatão, in the Icoaraci district of Belém. From this posture and conception, derived the methodological, technical and strategic procedures used in this research.

Initially, the original document of the PTTS was requested from the Executive Company of Housing of Pará (COHAB) executing the interventions, as well as post-occupation reports of the interventions. At the same time, semi-structured interviews were carried out with technicians directly involved in the planning, execution and evaluation of the PTTS and the physical projects interventions studied, as well as interviews with beneficiaries of the actions, residents of the housing complexes that participated from the beginning in the transition between spaces of irregular occupation and vulnerable until their entry and consolidation in these interventions. Lefebvre (1977, p. 11) identifies three dimensions of everyday life that, in a dialectical relation, constitute a unity, therefore a totality that must be apprehended.

These three dimensions are work, family, and leisure. Thus, the Lefebvrian project presupposes a study of the possibilities and limitations contained in these two dimensions of human social existence, the material dimension and the social dimension. In this sense, to think of everyday life in its triple dimension (family, work and leisure) is to think of it as a tense sphere of social life fraught with conflict. These three terms define a dialectical relationship in which norms and patterns of interaction contradict or deny themselves, they also mark in their structure the possibilities of concrete existence of human beings. The idea that all human fulfillment and that all social integration is through work is contrasted with the concrete situation within the modern way of life in which the life projects, aspirations, desires and dreams of each individual involve these three dimensions, that is, the social as a presupposition of human existence is also embodied in leisure and private (family) life. The use of the dialectical triad is

¹The “baixadas” settlements would be a form of informal settlement proper to the Amazonian city, in which historically the poorest population was forced to occupy areas of lower altimetric quota, and, therefore, is susceptible to the influence of the dynamics of the rivers. They have a great population density, although close to the urban center and can be considered spaces of great socio-environmental vulnerability and precariousness.

²The Social Technical Work Project (PTTS) is a subproject mandatorily developed in parallel to the construction of housing projects of social interest, according to Brazilian legislation. Its objective is to enable the beneficiary families of the future housing units, access to courses, lectures and workshops for training in various topics ranging from generation of occupation and income, to heritage education, environmental education and neighborhood relations. It is developed by multidisciplinary team.

essential in our analysis because, as Lefebvre (1977) believes that the present does not clarify the real, needing regression in search of finding the mark of change, our methodological path requires an effort of reflection whose background is the dialectical method of investigation, because it makes us see that, behind all the coherence that the capitalist mode of production tries to pass, there is a process rich in contradiction developing. The categories of work and leisure were chosen to consolidate the analysis of sustainability in this article, understanding this as a sphere of social life essential to the community. In short, it is a matter of recognizing where the old, the new, the different is located, since it is the dialectic relation of these three movements that maintains the reproduction of the system. The new often appears as a trend, a novelty that contains different historical times, but which, when investigated, can offer the elements for an analysis that contributes to unveiling the essence of the transformation of reality. In the analyzes, the interviewees are identified by the letters "T" for technicians, and "B" for beneficiaries in the analysis of the data.

RESULTS

The socioeconomic survey of the beneficiaries of the Taboquinha Project showed that 75% of the respondents were women, the majority (65%) aged 18-45 years, almost the total (93%) of the state of Pará, whose predominant civil status was a stable union with children, with more schooling in incomplete primary education. Usually these managers had between two and three people under their financial and educational responsibility. As for the dependents of those responsible for the families, 72% were students, in most cases classified in incomplete elementary education. They had a predominant monthly income in the range of 1 to 2 minimum wages, usually guaranteed by only one family member, in general, resulting from activities classified as autonomous. The dependence of the igarapé for the guarantee of family income was common, since the presence of many autonomous workers (fishermen) in the community was verified. It was found that in 11% of the families interviewed they had a person with special needs, but only 1% depended on the use of a wheelchair. The predominance of a young population was observed, since only 16% were over 65 years old. As for the family dwelling, those who lived in the area for more than 5 years, as a house of their own, built in wood, had more than 5 rooms in a precarious state of preservation, generally used only for housing purposes. Sustainability appeared as a key element between physical and social aspects in the Taboquinha Project PTTS, where the strategies devised by the processors aimed to contribute to the generation of occupation and income of the families relocated to the built housing complexes, according to one of the proposed objectives:

To carry out workshops and / or training courses and professional qualification, providing access of the families to activities of occupation and income, leading to the economic and financial development that will contribute to their fixation in the area and the sustainability of the works and services implemented (COHAB, 2007, p.10. Sustainability is seen as an objective to be achieved in order to maintain and fix the beneficiaries in the housing complexes, first, in an economic dimension, but with a sense of making these individuals fully adapted to the new housing environment, in a clear social perspective, where improvement quality of life appeared as the ultimate goal. This idea tried to reconcile the need to overcome

the problematic socio environmental framework in the intraurban space with the development of a countercyclical policy of employment and income generation, since it also sought to take advantage of the local labor in the works executed - action contained in the regulations of execution of the projects - and, at the same time, enable some qualification for the beneficiary population through the courses and workshops offered by PTTS. In order to contribute to the fight against this situation, we present the present proposal that is aimed at the eradication of stilts in the area of TABOQUINHA, where in an integrated way and with the participation of the beneficiary, actions will be developed in the areas of sanitation, environment, housing, education, work / income, health, safety, sport, leisure and culture. [...] We intend from the proposed intervention to contribute to the promotion of changes in the current reality, where families are surviving under subhuman conditions, located in unhealthy areas and unsuitable for housing (COHAB, 2007: 7-8. In the interviews with the social work technicians of COHAB / PA, the understanding about sustainability was ratified as an important aspect to be considered in the execution of the works, but always referring to the economic bias, and, first, to the generation of occupation and income, albeit in a superficial way, being far from any environmental elements. The adaptation of the families takes precedence in relation to the cultural questions or relation of the subjects with the constructed space:

"The perspective of technical social work is to enable actions that reduce the impact of this transition (from occupation to housing), especially with regard to improving income and living conditions in the new residence. Many workshops on handicrafts, baking, cutting and sewing, for example, were made available to the beneficiaries who sought in them a way to improve their income, all linked to the socioeconomic profile that was identified [...] in this way, families obtain a form of obtaining sustenance that did not exist before"(T2). In the interviews with the technicians responsible for the elaboration and execution of the physical projects, it was also highlighted the unprecedented character that brought the PAC in relation to the allocation of financial contribution exclusively directed to technical social work in order to complement the change of the families to the groups, which also expresses sustainability economically. As Technical T1 highlights:

"We can not speak ill of the PAC. For the first time in history there was exclusive resource for a social work, a work that adds to what the physical project elaborates, in a way. In the case of Taboquinha, the change was very great because the places where the people lived were precarious and the move to the blocks was a great advance for the families, although we know that there is still much to improve in this dynamic both in relation to the project of the units, and in the living conditions of families".

"The PAC was an incredible laboratory for us [...] the mooring that the regulations have on the environmental issue is very important" (T2).

"The challenge was great. The project contained a square for each set, but since the resources were not updated since the approval, I believe that only one of them was as it should initially" (T1).

Table 1. Comparison between the current house and the previous one (beneficiaries)

Answer Objective	Subjective response (Why?)
Same or Worse	"... I think it even got worse...".
	"... not bad ... but it was diferente".
	"... here it is difficult to pay the energy bill".
	"... things got worse because of my work because I'm a seamstress and the energy has become very expensive...".
	"... my house was much bigger ...".
Improved in part	"... I had to get rid of a lot of things because it did not fit here".
	"... the whole is less worse than the place where we lived...".
	"... it is not flooded, but it is very hot...".
	"... my house was bad, today I live in a better house".
	"... it improved in some things, but it got worse in others..."
	"... In time, we'll get used to it".
	"... anything is better than living on the bridge...".
	"... a lot is still missing, but it's better".
	"... in part it was good, but there is a lot of problem...".
	"... people can now say they have an apartment...".
Has improved considerably	"... the best thing is to have our house ...".
	"... for those who left the creek, it is much better."
	"It's a better place to live ...".
	"Here we have sanitation ...".
	"This is masonry ...".
	"It's more comfortable here ...".
	"... my daughter has a real room."
	"... soon we can sell ...".
"... we can say it's ours!"	
"Without comparison. It is much better".	

Table 2. Comparison in relation to leisure and work themes after resettlement (beneficiaries)

Answer objective	Subjective response (Why?)	Category
Same or Worse	"... there was a soccer field. There's nothing here...".	Recreation
	"... I had my sale and here I could not do this...".	Job
	"... children play everywhere...".	Recreation
	"... they promised that they would build a square, but until today they did not...".	Recreation
	"... did not change anything in the matter of my work...".	Job
	"For me, nothing has changed".	Job
	"... people living better, things improve in everything, even at work".	Job
	"... despite having nothing, not even a small square, is better than Cubatão".	Recreation
Improved	"... child plays anywhere, anyway...".	Recreation
	"... after a while, I managed to sell groceries at home and I survive this here...".	Job
	"... I've always worked with what I work for. I'm a clothes saleswoman, but here people can come to my house...".	Job
	"... it's a bit further away from the buses, but it's still better"	Job
	"... here is masonry; there it was wooden on the water. Even without a square or a block, it's much better here"	Recreation
	"... we rest better, in a better environment. For those who work ten or twelve hours like me, that's importante".	Job
Has improved considerably	"... there are a lot of people who say," Oh, but I could have this or that ... "but you can not compare. Children are safer here...".	Recreation
	"... it is better to live here. Even to have proof of residence this is important...".	Job

Although praise for the structure of the Program was significant, signaling the beginning of a new approach to urban resettlement processes, allocating resources to social technical work, there were significant gaps still not fulfilled in the implementation, such as denial of the experiences of the population served, the type of space produced, the absence of leisure spaces, the lack of spaces for consumption, and distance from previous daily practices, as evidenced by the responses of beneficiaries B8 and B11, respectively:

"About leisure I think it got worse because before there in Cubatão (occupation) the children played in the soccer field that was there. There's nothing here. They said that a square was going to be built, but the only one that has nor is the Housing ... The children play outside, but I do not think so". "It's not bad here because we are no longer on top of the water in a wooden house, but everything is different. Our neighbors went to Mestre Cardoso and we came here... We had a life there and another one here. In some things it has improved. In others not, but we end up finding a way. We stayed away and ended up meeting other people. The truth is that agent fits in anywhere, if need be, right?"

In the interviews with the beneficiaries it was perceptible that they saw the change to the sets as positive, with the units seen as adequate in comparison to the occupation where they resided. The most pointed negative observation is the value of electric energy bills, as emphasized by B4. B6 highlighted the importance of social technical work actions:

"The whole is better than the place where we lived, but what has become difficult here is the account of CELPA (energy concessionaire. It was very difficult to pay the bill because there we paid the fee and here the value is high. It's an absurd! [...] We know you're going to get off the stilt and go to a better place, but for me, things have gotten worse because of my work because I'm a seamstress and the electricity is importante". B8 emphasized that there is a consideration by beneficiaries of the importance of moving from their family to housing units, in relation to the quality of the built environment, although it still considers it far from desirable as a good living space because "[...] much trouble. Problem with water, the garbage takes time to be collected... But we do not have to complain, no. Today we live in our own place". Another important aspect of the analysis is the association

between the change of residence and the exchange value that is established after this change, as is clear from B11's answer: "A lot of people have already left ... Sold and went to another place. When I was in charge of COHAB there were not so many people selling, renting... There are people who make Money".

DISCUSSIONS

According to the PTTS, sustainability is, in addition to "ending the stilts in the area of TABOQUINHA [...]", assisting in "[...] promoting changes in the current reality [...]" without, however, to change the framework of material structural poverty of families, inserting them into what Lefebvre calls abstract space, in a tendency to continue the state's activity, through PAC, in the reproduction of contradictory spaces for housing, as reproduction of spaces-goods, imposing social control over families from the relocation and monotonous standardization of the typology that has no relation to the environment and to the city itself, in what Lefebvre (1973, p. 67) calls "deprived neighborhoods, but dependent on the city". The actions proposed by the PTTS have sought to be relevant within a context of low qualification perceived in the population profile, although they are not clearly connected to it. The project did not allocate, for example, any activity to fishing workers, considered in the analysis of the socioeconomic profile as a significant portion. Even though having a reading about sustainability that is closer to the socioeconomic bias, the Project cannot interpret community needs in this regard. Thus, the experience of the population was neglected and an important expression related to its material base.

As in Acselrad (2009), the notion of sustainability presented in the project bulb and in its execution is only part of an effort to configure a new mode of urban regulation capable of durably integrating into the reproductive dynamics the very constitutive inequality of the city, without altering more than the place of housing, unable to intervene directly in the causes of inequality, although it does signal to emphasize the concern with the socioeconomic aspect. For Lefebvre (1973), space has a perceptible aspect that can be apprehended through the senses. This perception is an integral component of every social practice. She understands everything that comes to the senses; not only the sight, but the hearing, the smell, the touch and the taste.

This sensuously perceptive aspect of space is directly related to the materiality of the "elements" that make up "space". In the case of relocated families, the value judgments described are interpretations of the perceived space that contains their valuations on the new space as opposed to the old, as "better" or "worse", that is, a counterposition that defines their representations of space, in passages above, relativizing the problems still present due to access to home.

Space can not be perceived as such without having been previously conceived in thought. The junction of elements to form a 'whole' which is then considered or designated as space presumes an act of thought (LEFEBVRE, 1973, p.20). The space conceived, in this case, can not meet the needs of the beneficiaries, in regard to work and leisure, which meets the strategies designed by the PTTS to qualify people from the community, not to mention the structural issues cited in relation to the spaces of common use, housing units and access to basic services.

Conclusion

The sustainability described in the PTTS of the Taboquinha Project was discursive and dislocated from the current reality of the families in the implementation of the project and resettlement, since the actions were based exclusively on the economic aspect, with no connection with the material life of the beneficiaries. Although access to the house is valued and housing conditions are considered better in relation to the precariousness of the irregular and vulnerable occupancy previously inhabited, in the leisure category there remained an incomplete gap that denotes, besides the lack of consideration of the need for spaces and relations, the reproduction of a logic based on homogenization, in the monotony and without connection with the experiences of the population served. In the work category, although housing conditions have improved after resettlement, PTTS actions have no relation to the experiences of the resettled working population. The program imposes type of living space, type of leisure space and type of consumption. They are abstract spaces that are opposed to social spaces (trade, fairs, soccer fields, street vendors. It created a space that, among other problems, values the quantitative, the regulated, with no use value, the product space, as copies of commodity spaces, that is, spaces aesthetically similar to those thought by the real estate market, but much smaller of them in the sense of attention to the material and immaterial needs of the families that inhabit them.

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