

Housing as an issue between 1920 and 1965: circulation of ideas and shaping of the field in the Pan-American Congresses of Architects

A habitação como questão entre 1920 e 1965: circulação de ideias e conformação do campo nos Congressos Panamericanos de Arquitectos

La vivienda como cuestión entre 1920 y 1965: circulación de ideas y conformación del campo en los Congressos Panamericanos de Arquitectos

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Abstract

In the first half of the 20th century, there was an increase in the exchange of ideas between architects and urban planners, especially through professional meetings, where the issue of housing occupied a prominent place. In several Latin American countries during the same period, it is possible to recognize similarities in housing production, highlighting its understanding as a state issue and its formal aspect as a housing complex. Understanding the issue of housing as a problem extended to a vast region, based on the analysis of the Pan-American Congresses of Architects, the paper discusses the circulation of ideas around the theme as a contribution to processes of institutionalization of housing production in Latin American countries, taking as cases Brazil and Argentina, emphasizing the role of architectural culture in this process.

Keywords: Circulation of ideas; Social Housing; Pan-American Congresses of Architects; Latin America.

Resumo

Na primeira metade do século XX se verifica a ampliação do intercâmbio de ideias entre arquitetos e urbanistas, sobretudo através de encontros profissionais, onde a questão da habitação ocupa lugar de destaque. Em diversos países da América Latina no mesmo período é possível reconhecer semelhanças na produção da habitação, destacando-se sua compreensão como questão estatal e seu aspecto formal, como conjunto habitacional. Compreendendo a questão da habitação como problema ampliado a uma vasta região, a partir da análise dos *Congressos Panamericanos de Arquitectos*, o artigo discute a circulação de ideias em torno do tema como aporte a processos de institucionalização da produção habitacional em países latinoamericanos, tendo como casos Brasil e Argentina, enfatizando-se o papel da cultura arquitetônica neste processo.

Palavras-Chave: Circulação de ideias; Habitação social; Congressos Panamericanos de Arquitectos; América Latina.

Resumen

En la primera mitad del siglo XX se produjo un aumento del intercambio de ideas entre arquitectos y urbanistas, especialmente a través de encuentros profesionales, donde el tema de la vivienda ocupa un lugar destacado. En varios países latinoamericanos en el mismo período es posible reconocer similitudes en la producción de viviendas, destacando su comprensión como cuestión de Estado y su aspecto formal, como conjunto habitacional. Entendiendo el tema de la vivienda como un problema extendido a una vasta región, a partir del análisis de los Congressos Panamericanos de Arquitectos, el artículo analiza la circulación de ideas en torno al tema como contribución a los procesos de institucionalización de la producción de vivienda en los países latinoamericanos, tomando como casos Brasil y Argentina, enfatizando el papel de la cultura arquitectónica en este proceso.

Palabras Clave: Circulación de ideas; Vivienda social; Congressos Panamericanos de Arquitectos; América Latina.

1 Housing as an architectural and political issue between 1920 and 1965

Historical research into what has come to be known as the “housing issue” shows that the understanding of affordable housing as an object of the architectural field began around the 1920s, when professional meetings and the development of editorial activity linked to the field expanded the exchange of ideas in different contexts. Two points of debate stand out: the link between housing design and urban planning and the imperative of promoting housing through state action. At the same time, it was understood that housing was the fulfillment of architecture’s social function, that is, its participation in improving the conditions of society.

At the same time, when considering housing production in some Latin American countries, especially since 1930, it is clear that the way the housing issue was addressed was quite similar. The study organized by Sambricio (2012) shows the importance of analyzing this production as a whole, even if it is revealed, at certain points, to be specific to the conditions of each country or city. Overall, two common points stand out. On the one hand, the formal aspect of this housing, which identifies with the modern ideal in large-scale housing complexes. On the other, the fact that, for the first time, this housing was recognized as a social issue.

In Latin America, “through architecture, the avant-garde¹ and the State converge in the need to build a national culture, society and economy” (Gorelik, 2005b, p. 16, our translation). This notion is fundamental to understanding how themes pertinent to the field of architecture, such as the formal aspect of housing, to which a perspective of large-scale production in housing complexes was associated, “were linked to the dynamics of the country’s integration into the capitalist system,” through its association with industrial development, for example (Aravecchia-Botas, 2016, p. 31). Our work is in solidarity with Gorelik (2005b), Martins (1998), Botas (2011), Ballent (2005) and Aboy (2005) in understanding that between the 1920s and 1960s there was an encounter between politics and professional culture, which directly implied addressing the housing issue.

According to Gorelik (2005b, our translation), in the 1930s, the State and architecture met in Latin American countries to “test the avant-garde postulates developed in the previous decade.” Martins (1998) analyzes the relationship established between the Brazilian State after 1930 and the avant-garde architectural culture² and reveals an effort to overcome the division between art and technique, which leads architecture to integrate itself into the process of social transformation. The city becomes the object to be reorganized in favor of the collectivity, where, according to Botas (2011, p. 19, our translation), the architectural avant-garde aligns “its specific interests with the modernization project undertaken by the State”. Ballent (2005) defends the notion of “tangence” to think about the link between

¹ It refers to the set of postulates derived from artistic movements known as “historical avant-gardes”, which emerged in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, which broke with the cultural tradition of the previous century.

² The theoretical and historiographical movement led by Manfredo Tafuri in the late 1960s, in his “critique of ideology”, stated that “due to the constructive nature of architecture, avant-garde architecture cannot exist.” Gorelik (2005b, p. 20-23) analyzes, however, how, based on the centrality of architecture in the construction of the city and Latin American society, the notion of avant-garde could be revised, presenting “the dialectics of the avant-garde”: the one that led from “the avant-garde to the metropolis” and the one between history and design, and therefore defending the validity of recognizing “architecture as a positive pole of the productive dialectic of the avant-garde” and Latin America as a positive pole in its spatial dialectic, “where construction, more than possible, appeared as inevitable.” In this article, supported by Gorelik (2005b), the terms “architectural avant-garde” or “avant-garde architectural culture” refer to modern architects from Brazil and Argentina.

technique and politics in the 1940s, understanding them as two autonomous lines that meet at a point, although they have different paths. In a similar way, Aboy (2005) understands that in this convergence, the interests of both fields were mutually validated, materializing in the different formal languages of housing projects.

In this meeting, the two worlds, the political and the architectural, spoke about the same problem, but with different languages, and both, the political project and the spatial proposal, united interests to transform the ways of living of the people. Both the governments, which gave importance to the modernization of their countries, and the architect, who was aware of the leading role he should assume in the growth of the city and the improvement of the housing of the modern man, were marked by a conscious pedagogical objective carried out through housing complexes, as modernizing instruments [...]. (Pino, 2011, p. 117, our translation)

Although the technical, political and cultural conditions of each country were different, it is possible to consider that the social phenomenon corresponding to the housing issue and its perception and resolution by States and architects crossed national borders. From this perspective, this work was developed under a transnational approach (Barros, 2014), which considered cultural exchanges and communication networks in the period. We argue that the circulation of ideas about housing between the 1920s and 1960s contributed to processes of institutionalization of housing production, taking as an example a part of this universe: Brazil and Argentina³.

The way in which the institutionalization of housing production by the State occurred in the two countries during this period was quite different. While in Brazil, from 1937 onwards, a “social security housing policy” was established, that is, a housing promotion policy based on the application of social security funds, in Argentina a national housing policy was consolidated in 1946, structured on the actions of specialized agencies and the organization of the banking system (Bonduki, 1998; 2014; Ballent, 2005; Ferrari, 2018). These processes, in both countries, resulted in the pioneering production of large-scale, modern and functional housing complexes, primarily intended for workers.

When analyzing state housing production, the study considered professionals in architecture and urban planning as social actors who sought to realize the social function of architecture, carried out in housing. This understanding of the role of technical and professional culture in the institutionalization of housing production by the State and in how housing production took place between the 1930s and 1960s is directly related to Antonio Gramsci's⁴ conception of the “expanded State.” The author defines a concept of State that encompasses both Political Society and Civil Society “in permanent interaction and interconnection.” (Mendonça, 2007, p. 6, our translation) This close collaboration leads to an “expansion of the concept of State, understood as the set of parts, whatever their formal status – private organizations or State apparatus –, through which the influence of the dominant group is exercised.” (Portelli, 1977, p. 34, our translation)

³ Two main aspects supported the choice of the two countries: on the one hand, the political context of valuing workers, which Peronism and Vargasism seem to implement in a more complex way than other governments in the period and, on the other, the characteristics of the industrialization, urbanization and metropolization processes that the two most important cities in each country went through in the period, São Paulo and Buenos Aires respectively.

⁴ As support and input for Gramsci's readings, the readings of interpreters Hugues Portelli (1977), Carlos Nelson Coutinho (1989; 1992) and Sônia Regina Mendonça (2007) were used.

It is possible to understand that the concept of an expanded State offers an alternative to the notion of the State as a co-optor of the professional architect, especially the architectural avant-garde, as historiography has long presented for both the case of Vargas in Brazil and that of Perón in Argentina (Fausto, 1988; Cirvini, 2012). Although the category is not understood as a class, it is possible to think of it as one of the various actors in dispute in the political field. It is considered that the interaction between architects and the expanded State contributed to architects and engineers in Brazil occupying important spaces in the state apparatus reorganized by Vargas, not only in the technical sector, but also in the administrative sector, linking themselves to housing and city projects (Aravecchia-Botas, 2016), and in Argentina defining a relationship between architects and the State that did not exist until the establishment of Peronism, with expanded involvement in public works (Rigotti, 2014) and, above all, in housing projects and large urbanization plans.

2 The debate on housing in Latin America: social function, state action, large-scale production and planning

The first decades of the 20th century are marked by debates about new possibilities, as well as new needs of cities and the people who inhabit them. In Latin America, these debates occur through the movement of professionals, circulation of periodicals, the formation and strengthening of professional associations, and, above all, the holding of professional congresses. In 1920, the Society of Architects of Uruguay, under the direction of Horacio Acosta y Lara, organized in Montevideo the first of the “Pan-American Congresses of Architects” (CPAs). According to Atique (2007, p. 48), “these were the main forums for debate among architects on the American continent, anticipating, in a sense, and often gaining more prestige than the contemporary International Congresses of Modern Architecture” (CIAMs). It is interesting to note that the first CPA was held before the first CIAM (1928), and, more importantly, that some themes were discussed in both spaces, particularly debates about the profession itself and housing issues. It can be stated that much of the discussion around the topic of housing at the CPAs, such as the rationalization and standardization of constructive elements and processes and the association between housing design and urban planning, were related to modern ideals.

As Gorelik (2005b, p. 17) states, “the force of the circulation of ideas in modernity” eliminates the notion of influence as a one-way street between a central model and its periphery. Following the discussions at the CPAs held between 1920 and 1965 allows us to highlight the concerns of professionals across the continent and the evolution of architectural issues alongside urban and technical developments and an understanding of social and cultural issues, with particular interest in housing. By considering local and regional specificities, one can also understand the multiplicity of issues attributed to the role of the architect, as well as the development of the professional field itself.

The work relied on the proceedings of professional congresses in the continent, especially the CPAs (1920-1965), but also the First Argentine Congress on Housing (1920), the First Argentine Congress on Urbanism (1935), the First Pan-American Congress on Popular Housing (1939), the First Housing Congress (1931), and the First Congress on Urbanism (1941), which serve as primary sources of information about the circulation of ideas during this period, and on specialized periodicals published in Argentina and Brazil between the

1930s and 1960s such as *Nuestra Arquitectura*, *Revista de Arquitectura*, *La Habitación Popular*, *Acrópolis*, *Revista de Arquitetura*, and *Arquitetura e Urbanismo*.

Two particular moments can be distinguished in this articulation around the housing issue based on the prioritized themes. The first is especially marked by the distinction of housing as a social issue, spanning from 1920, the year of the first CPA, to 1939, the year of the First Pan-American Congress on Popular Housing. The second moment, primarily marked by the theme of planning and its relationship to housing production, begins in 1940 and continues until 1965, the year of the XI CPA, the first held on non-Latin American soil, attesting to the changes that followed in the field of housing.

3 Housing as a social issue

In Gutiérrez, Tartarini and Stagno (2007, n/p, our translation) we find the CPAs as the most important meeting space for American architects during the 20th century: “they bear witness to the concerns, debates and reflections of American architects professionally integrated in their respective countries and ratify the desire to think about global and regional problems from a professional perspective.” The context denotes changes, in which European cultural values and the academic teaching of architecture are questioned, mainly due to the First World War, while local professionals expressed themselves in favor of national architectures and the study of the history of American architecture and cities, highlighting the “need for an exchange of ideas,” for discussing different teaching methods, for discussing common problems among different countries, and for the “opportunity to fight for professional dignity” (Los Congresos Panamericanos [...], 1927, p. 305, our translation). The agendas included over the years a series of issues faced by American architects, with the housing question being included since the first meeting.

Four CPAs were held between 1920 and 1930, with a ten-year hiatus before the fifth congress. It is interesting to note that despite the initial motivation for the meetings – to discuss the role and performance of the architects – the topic of housing gained significant importance. The relevance of the housing issue came from its recognition as a social issue resulting from the processes of modernization and urban expansion that the region's large cities underwent at the beginning of the 20th century, which required propositions from architects and urban planners.

Argentina has stood out in Latin America as a key point in the debate on housing production since the early years of the 20th century. Against the backdrop of the post-World War I international scenario and the national context of rising living costs, which reached a quite high level by 1920, the Museo Social Argentino organized in 1920—before the first CPA—the First Argentine Congress on Housing –Primer Congreso Argentino de la Habitación.

The importance of this congress lies not only in its pioneering role as a space for discussion, but in the fact that the treatment of the housing issue was already at this time extrapolated and understood as an urbanistic issue. It was the first time that these two key issues for urban development, housing and urbanism, were articulated (Collado, 2011). Topics that would be the subject of later professional debates were also put on the agenda, such as the necessary conditions for minimum housing, the use of new materials, and the mass construction of housing. Financial measures necessary to facilitate home

acquisition for workers were also discussed, along with arguments for the construction of individual or collective houses. The conclusions pointed to a state commitment to the construction of affordable housing, envisioning the expropriation of vacant land for housing construction, the encouragement of private initiatives, and the development of construction cooperatives (Zanzottera, 2013).

At the First CPA, the role of private initiative was also addressed, concluding that the solution to the shortage of housing in major American cities would come from joint work between the State and the private sector, recognized as the main responsible party for producing “cheap houses” until then, while emphasizing the imperative of State action both legally and operationally, as well as financially. As the meetings progressed, increasing importance was given to the role of the State in solving the housing issue, with an agreement that the private sector alone could not solve the problem. However, encouragement for private action would be repeatedly addressed by professionals as a possibility to increase the housing supply. Another noteworthy point from the first meeting is the recommendation for building collective housing in the most populated urban centers, highlighting the relevance of the debate to the Modern Movement at a time when multifamily buildings were still a novelty (Atique, 2007). This theme would also be revisited in subsequent meetings and publications discussing the opposition between single-family and multifamily housing.

It is worth noting among the conclusions of the second CPA, held in Santiago, Chile, in 1923, is the understanding of the state as responsible for “promoting and assisting the creation of industries for materials and construction elements that adhere to certain types, classes, and dimensions, seeking the mass production of standardized types” (II Congreso Panamericano [...], 1923, p. 81, our translation). The adoption of standardization and mass production in housing construction still faced implementation difficulties in less industrialized countries but would be important for solving the housing issue from a mass production perspective in the 1940s.

The following conclusion is also highlighted: “in order to stimulate construction and foster social security [...] it is recommended that Housing Insurance be established throughout the continent through the formation of Employer's Funds established with direct contributions from companies, the State and employees who benefit” (II Congreso Panamericano [...], 1923, p. 81, our translation). In January 1923, the Eloy Chaves Law⁵ had been enacted in Brazil, creating the first “Retirement and Pension Funds”, “with direct contributions from companies, the State and workers and employees”, as indicated in the conclusions of the II CPA, making it evident that there was a connection between Brazilian and regional discussions regarding social, labor, and housing issues. From 1937⁶ onwards, Vargas determined that social security funds be used to build housing for

⁵ BRAZIL. Decree No. 4,682 of January 24, 1923. “Creates, in each of the railroad companies in the country, a retirement and pension fund for their respective employees.” Rio de Janeiro, DF, January 24, 1923.

⁶ BRAZIL. Decree No. 1,749 of June 28, 1937. “Approves new regulations for the acquisition of buildings for housing members and for the headquarters of Retirement and Pension Institutes and Funds”. Rio de Janeiro, DF, June 28, 1937. It is worth mentioning that in the same year, Decree-Law No. 58 of December 10, 1937, regulated the subdivision of land and its sale/acquisition through installments, thus facilitating the possession of property by workers, where they would build their own homes. The self-construction of one’s own home therefore appears as a second line of action in addressing the housing issue.

workers through the Retirement and Pension Institutes (IAPs), making this the main housing policy until the 1960s.

In the conclusions of the third CPA, which took place in 1927 in Buenos Aires, the relationship between the Argentine context, in terms of achievements in the field of housing production, and the debate held at the congress is also evident. Among the conclusions, it was proposed for each country “the creation of official commissions for affordable housing”, the approval of laws regulating the action of cooperatives, mutuals and building societies for the construction of affordable housing and the “foundation in all American countries of Social Museums organized for the purpose of studying and seeking solutions to legal, economic, technical and social problems related to housing” (III Congreso Panamericano [...], 1927, p. 315, our translation). Since 1915, the state production of affordable housing had been carried out in Argentina by the Comisión Nacional de Casas Baratas (CNCB) and since before that, housing construction cooperatives had been operating in the country, the most important being the “El Hogar Obrero” Cooperativa; since 1911, the Museo Social had been operating in the country, establishing an institute for study and social action.

According to Huapaya Espinoza (2015), the proposal for the implementation of regulatory plans for large cities gained momentum since the late 1920s, highlighting the notion that the functions of architects were expanding at the scale of urban design. The IV CPA, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1930, indicated that the study of the issue of affordable housing should be conducted in relation to plans for the transformation and development of cities, and from then on, the integration of housing design and urbanism would be widely discussed in professional congresses. It is worth noting that the modern movement was officially embraced by the Central Institute of Architects after the IV CPA, signaling a new moment for the profession, which would even lead to the reformulation of the association within the Institute of Architects of Brazil (IAB) in 1934⁷. In 1931, the National School of Fine Arts (ENBA) adopted an approach aligned with modern ideals, introducing urbanism as an inseparable component of architectural design. In 1933, regulations for the practice of the professions of architect and engineer were established⁸.

During the years of the CPAs’ hiatus, several meetings related to urban planning and housing were held in the American countries⁹, including some in Brazil and Argentina. Although still with a conservative bias, in 1931 the First Housing Congress was promoted by the Architecture Division of the São Paulo Institute of Engineering, which brought together a heterogeneous group formed by members of the government, public and private entities, universities and institutions linked to urban development. It is worth highlighting the participation of the Argentine architect Raul Pasman, who presented the thesis “Low-Cost Houses”, regarding the solution to the housing problem in Argentina. The congress identified the need to promote actions to increase housing supply through new

⁷ In 1921, the Brazilian Institute of Architects was established, and its first years were dedicated to the pursuit of professional practice. Differences of interest led to a split in the original group, but it was soon realized that the existence of two entities represented a weakening of the profession's affirmation, and in 1924 the two entities were united in the Central Institute of Architects.

⁸ BRAZIL. Decree No. 23,569 of December 11, 1933. “Regulates the practice of the professions of engineer, architect and surveyor”. Rio de Janeiro, DF, December 11, 1933 – The decree also creates the Federal Council of Engineering and Architecture and the first eight Regional Councils subordinate to it, constituting from then on the CONFEA/CREAs system.

⁹ We can mention the International Congress of Americanists (Lima, 1937), the International Congress of Planning and Housing (Mexico, 1938), and the International Congress of Architects (Washington, 1939).

technologies and organized production methods. However, collective housing was not yet an option. (Primeiro Congresso de Habitação, 1931)

The stigma associated with tenements and conventillos still distanced the idea of multi-family buildings as suitable housing during those years, due to sanitary aspects, related to urban concentration, social issues, due to fear of the spread of communism in common areas, and moral issues, with significant criticism from the Catholic Church. However, in the 1930s, the economic issue gained prominence, associated with the production of a greater number of units and the reduction in the cost of units due to the price of land linked to verticalization and, therefore, to collective housing.

In 1935, the First Argentine Congress of Urbanism took place, whose highlight was the exhibition of a housing complex built in Mendoza, consisting of three-story blocks with a total of 576 units and collective facilities (Informaciones del Primer [...], 1935). Besides the use of collective housing, the connection between housing design and urbanism became explicit, with a focus on the functional organization of the city.

The emphasis placed on the issue of social housing in Latin American debates, highlighted by both professionals and various governments throughout the 1930s, culminated in the establishment of a specific space for discussion on the topic in 1939 in Buenos Aires, the First Pan-American Congress on Popular Housing. The speech delivered by then-Vice President Ramón Castillo¹⁰, titled "Housing and the Action of the State," is fundamental for understanding how the Argentine State perceived the housing issue at that time and is illustrative of the conception adopted by other governments during that period. The Vice President highlights the existence of Argentine laws on the subject of housing, understanding them, along with social assistance legislation, as a complement to labor laws.

Another important speech was made at that moment preceding the meeting by then-Minister of Foreign Affairs José María Cantilo. The minister emphasizes that social housing is a governmental issue, but its solution requires multidisciplinary collaboration: from financial and economic systems, architecture and urbanism, hygiene, law, education, and social assistance, stating:

It is therefore logical that governments have a positive interest, before beginning or continuing their efforts at the national level, in thoroughly understanding the initiatives being carried out in the same direction in other countries, making the most of others' experiences; and that they seek to get in touch, through their experts on the matter, to jointly clarify the most suitable general formulas for a good national policy on low-cost housing. Both purposes are achieved through international meetings. (Cantilo, 1939, p. 13, our translation)

All American governments were invited to participate in the First Pan-American Congress on Popular Housing. The Brazilian delegation was formed by professionals linked to key institutions not only for the production of popular housing but also related to the

¹⁰ In the months leading up to the First Pan-American Congress on Popular Housing, between January and August 1939, through the Argentine radio stations "del Estado", "Splendid" and "Cultura", a series of conferences were held as part of the activities prepared by the Congress Organizing Committee, the content of which includes some interesting considerations.

construction industry and urbanism: Rubens Porto (MTIC); Francisco Baptista de Oliveira¹¹ (Engineering Club; National Union of Engineers), Plínio Cantanhede (President of IAPI), and Paulo Accioly de Sá (Division of Construction Industry at INT). It is noteworthy that this delegation, according to the MTIC Ordinance of August 1939¹², was "funded by the six IAPs subordinate to this Ministry, which have a significant interest in the results that can reasonably be expected from this event."

The Argentine delegation had a strong presence from the Catholic Architects Corporation and presented single-family homes as a solution to the housing issue, a position that was entirely different from that upheld at the congress itself, which extensively addressed the construction of collective housing and housing complexes, in addition to the minimum unit suitable for working-class families. It is worth mentioning the recommendations of the "Commission on Social Aspects" that "every set of affordable housing, composed of individual or collective homes, owned or rented, should be complemented with medical, social, cultural and sports facilities" and of the "Commission on Urbanism and Popular Housing", whose president was the Brazilian Francisco Baptista de Oliveira, that "every popular housing plan should be viewed as an urban plan and, therefore, as an integral part of a regulatory and regional plan". (Primer Congreso Panamericano [...], 1939, p.509, our translation)

Two years later, Oliveira chaired the Organizing Committee of the First Brazilian Congress on Urbanism, organized by the Engineering Department of the Centro Carioca. Although it took place in 1941, this congress can be included in the first period of professional articulation, as its conclusions were the same as those from the aforementioned "Commission on Urbanism and Popular Housing," a coincidence that can be attributed to Oliveira's involvement in both meetings. At the end of the Congress, the housing project was recognized as an urban issue, gaining significance within Vargas's labor policy. It is noteworthy that the president himself was present at the end of the meeting, demonstrating that the State was willing to collaborate in the implementation of the conclusions and decisions made by the congress participants. (Bonduki, 1998; Feldman, 2008)

It can be stated that in the Latin American context, the professional debate between 1920 and 1939 marks a period of maturation on the topic of housing. Housing was recognized as an issue to be addressed by the State, and housing design was definitively integrated into the field of urbanism, a theme that characterized the meetings held from 1940 onward.

3.1 Planning and Housing Production

According to Atique (2005, p. 1, our translation), until 1940 the CPAs showed "a plurality of thoughts and ideological, political, aesthetic, and constructive options among architects." However, the adherence to the modern movement —strongly characterized by the association between urbanism and housing— ensured a certain homogeneity in subsequent discussions. Feldman (2014) notes that since 1940, there has been a direct

¹¹ In 1940, Oliveira presented the lecture "The Brazilian Proletarian House" at the Engineering Institute of São Paulo, based on his thesis and assessment of the 1939 Congress, highlighting the conclusions of the Congress' "Urbanism Commission" for solving the problem of affordable housing.

¹² RIO DE JANEIRO. August 22, 1939. Ordinance SCsm-138 of August 30. DOU, Section 1, September 1, 1939, RJ.

correspondence between the decisions made at the CPAs and at the Inter-American Conferences¹³ throughout the 1940s and 1950s, which also attests to the homogeneity of the debate. In 1940, at the V CPA, which took place again in Montevideo¹⁴, Urbanism and its relationship with urban growth was the main topic of discussion, with conclusions similar to those of the Pan-American Congress on Popular Housing.

Throughout the 1940s, the debate over the best means of access to housing was significant. One group of professionals viewed the acquisition of a single-family home as a way to address not only the housing issue but also other social issues, while another group advocated for the rental of units as a means to facilitate access to housing; rental was almost always associated with collective housing. In an article from 1946, José Pastor stated that single-family homes were particularly feasible in suburban areas where land prices allowed for the purchase of lots and occupancy at lower densities, while in consolidated urban areas, where land prices were higher, horizontal ownership in multi-family buildings was preferred. The *Ley de Propiedad Horizontal* (Horizontal Property Law) was approved in Argentina in 1948¹⁵.

After taking over the Secretary of Labor in 1943, Juan Perón initiated a policy of outreach to the working class, in which housing emerged as a basic condition for ensuring the dignity of working families. During Peronism, from 1946 to 1955, housing was recognized as a symbol of social justice aimed at ensuring for the worker, being promoted directly through housing complexes and indirectly through subsidies for single-family self-construction. For this purpose, the banking system was reorganized, with the establishment of the Banco Hipotecario Nacional as the main financial promoter of housing policy, and various technical bodies were created—such as the Administración Nacional de la Vivienda, the Dirección de Vivienda of the Ministry of Public Works (MOP), and the Dirección de Vivienda of the Municipality of Buenos Aires. According to Aboy (2005, p. 72, our translation), the new bodies allowed technical teams to “crystallize their theoretical programs in their works, and the government found in them the instruments to materialize its social policy.” The regulation of the professions of architect and engineer took place in 1944¹⁶, and throughout the 1940s, there was a gradual replacement of engineers by architects in key positions within the state apparatus, with a progressive enhancement of the role of the profession in public service¹⁷ (Rigotti, 2014).

¹³ “Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Inter-American Conferences, as the supreme body of the OAS, were the forums where planning and housing from the perspective of the Latin American metropolis took shape – in content and institutional structure.” (Feldman, 2014, p. 136, our translation).

¹⁴ The economic difficulties and the political crisis affecting various countries on the continent pushed the V CPA, which was originally scheduled for 1933, to 1940. In the previous congress, it had been decided that the host city would be Havana; however, the context of crisis associated with the onset of World War II made it impossible to hold the meeting in Cuba, so it was again held in Uruguay, which had a more favorable situation: at that time, both the President of Uruguay (Alfredo Baldomir) and the Mayor of Montevideo, architect Horacio Acosta y Lara, one of the founders of the 1st CPA, were architects.

¹⁵ ARGENTINA. Law n° 13.512, of 1948. “Régimen de Propiedad Horizontal”. Buenos Aires, 1948.

¹⁶ ARGENTINA. Decree-Law No. 17,946 of July 7, 1944. “Regulation of the exercise of surveying, architecture and engineering in the federal capital and national territories”. Buenos Aires, July 7, 1944. Article 13 creates the respective professional councils, including the Consejo Profesional de Arquitectura y Urbanismo.

¹⁷ The Central Society of Architects (SCA), established in 1886, accepted as members only those professionals who worked independently. Therefore, although the State launched competitions and bids for public works, these were predominantly carried out by foreign architects and engineers. Work in public administration, in the association’s view, compromised the artistic property rights of architects and led to low-quality architecture due to budgetary constraints and the self-interests of

After World War II, it became evident that there was a profound awareness of the social dimension of the significant housing deficit on the continent and the urgent need to address it. Notably, the VI CPA, held in 1947 in Lima, focused on the "discussion of the social function of architecture and the responsibility of the architect," with an understanding that addressing the housing issue through technical, economic, and social aspects was the role to be played by these professionals (Huapaya Espinoza, 2015, p. 68, our translation). The concept of planning was incorporated into the discourse, associated with the developmentalist project proposed in the post-war period, in which Latin America and the "Latin American city" became objects of study among professionals in the Western world. Lastly, it is worth mentioning the need for "the formation of National and Pan-American Planning Organizations" recognized by the attending professionals¹⁸ (Congreso Panamericano [...], 1947, p. 435, our translation).

Since the VII CPA in 1950, which took place in Havana, the "plan" has been debated and understood as the most appropriate means for the development of American cities and "the concern for urbanism as a solution to the city's problems extended to urban and rural planning and to comprehensive planning¹⁹, marking a thematic axis that would reach its peak in the congresses of the 1960s and 1970s" (Gutiérrez; Tartarini; Stagno, 2007, p. 72, our translation). The "comprehensive planning of housing spaces" is understood as the answer to the social problems that American cities faced at that time. It was believed that the development of Latin American countries would occur through an injection of reform policies and precise planning, which had been implemented since 1948 by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). At this congress, the "Pan-American Federation of Architects' Associations" (FPAA) was created.

the State. However, in the early decades of the 20th century, several significant professional developments indicated the need to revise the criteria for admitting new members and to reevaluate professional activity. In the 1910s, the SCA faced the gradual incorporation of graduates as "architects" from the School of Architecture at UBA—up until then, graduates were "engineer-architects"—and in the 1920s, a major change occurred with the perspective of social function in response to issues arising from modernization and urbanization processes, particularly in the capital, Buenos Aires, addressing matters such as housing production, which had previously been viewed as a contradiction to the liberal practice defended by the SCA.

¹⁸ No evidence has yet been found regarding the extent of this resolution, but indeed, a series of continental cooperation bodies were created starting in 1947. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was organized by the UN in 1948 with the mission of promoting regional economic growth through the development of studies and technical assistance to Latin American governments, and it would become the main source of information and analysis on the economic and social realities of Latin America, leading a common agenda among various countries where planning was the key concept that provided consistency and systematicity to the propositions of "developmentalism" in the 1950s. In 1951, OAS established the Inter-American Housing Center in Bogotá, known by its Spanish acronym CINVA (Centro Interamericano de Vivienda y Planeamiento Urbano). Essential from the perspective of institutionalizing housing issues at the continental level, CINVA focuses on teaching, research, exchange, and assistance in housing, architecture, and urbanism. In 1956, during a seminar on planning education held in Puerto Rico under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAS, the Inter-American Society of Planning (SIAP) was created, with the main objective of coordinating studies and stimulating the application of comprehensive planning. In 1962, the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) was established, a CEPAL entity dedicated to planning, public management, and training, which played an important role in the training of government technical personnel in the region.

¹⁹ It is understood that, within the scope of the CPAs, urbanism is understood as an activity focused on the city project itself, having its origins in the late 19th century, while urban planning comprises a broader, multidisciplinary activity, which acts on the social, economic, political and cultural processes that build cities, having its origins after the Second World War. Leme states that "when analyzing the *field of urbanism* and the *activity of urban and regional planning* in the long period from the 1930s to the early 1970s, the occurrence of some processes is noted: the articulation, in a gradual and complementary way, between the field of knowledge and professional practice; the expansion of the territory covered by studies, analyses and proposals; the articulation between plans, proposals and the State". (Leme, 2019, p. 9, our translation, emphasis added)

The eighth and ninth CPAs, held in Mexico City in 1952 and Caracas in 1955, focus on planning and the social function of architecture, with their respective titles being “Planning and Architecture in Social Problems of America” and “The Social Function of the Architect: The Architect and Planning.” Among the conclusions of the VIII CPA, it is important to mention the recognition of the Inter-American Housing Center (CINVA), newly established in Bogotá, as a permanent organization and entity responsible for implementing the resolutions approved at professional congresses regarding housing issues. Among the conclusions of the IX CPA, a notable recommendation is the creation of the “Inter-American Private Bank for Social Interest Housing.” This is the first time the term “social interest housing” – vivienda de interés social – appears in the CPAs. The proposal to create the bank considered that the isolated action of each Latin American country was incapable of alleviating the high housing deficit.

Two other conclusions from the IX CPA are significant for understanding the circulation of ideas during the period: the first recommends ensuring the exchange of information through the FPAA to facilitate the sharing of experiences and results obtained in various countries; the second proposes solving the housing issue through comprehensive planning, simplifying methods, and applying processes such as pre-fabrication, industrialization, and mass production to supply common markets, with the assistance of ECLAC in exchange processes. It is also worth mentioning a conclusion that directly relates to the propositions made by Team X at the IX CIAM (1953): it states that housing cannot be justified in isolation, as human housing needs are satisfied on various scales, with the progressive integration of families, cooperative units, neighborhood units, or communities, and the city. (IX Congreso Panamericano [...], 1955)

In 1958, the Seminar for Technicians and Officials in Urban Planning was held in Bogotá, under the auspices of CINVA, resulting in a set of recommendations “to the peoples of America,” compiled in the “Carta de Los Andes,” which asserts the notion that territorial planning is inseparable from housing policies, being the most appropriate tool to address regional problems arising from low levels of economic, social, and cultural development (Leme, 2019). The Carta de los Andes had significant dissemination among urban planners, being translated and published in Brazil in 1960²⁰.

The X CPA took place in 1960, again in Buenos Aires, with the theme “The Architect Facing the Problems of Human Habitation,” reinforcing once again the field’s concern with housing issues. The conclusions point to solutions deemed fundamental for the comprehensive and planned development of the American countries: subordinating rural land ownership to social interest through a comprehensive agrarian reform and urban restructuring that allows the community access to necessary urban land for the location and construction of housing, apart from any speculative conditions; creating local planning workshops that incorporate housing promotion as the only means to preserve and foster social balance (Gutiérrez; Tartarini; Stagno, 2007).

In August 1961, President John Kennedy officially launched the “Alliance for Progress.” Aside from the evident U.S. attempt to prevent the spread of communism across the continent from Cuba, the program did in fact allow for the incorporation of new construction technologies into housing projects, and in various countries, extensive

²⁰ The publication has a preface written by Anhaia Mello who describes it as “one of the three documents that guide territorial planning”, alongside the Athens Charter (1943), derived from the III CIAM, and the Charte d'Aménagement (1952), resulting from the week of studies on territorial planning promoted by the Economie et Humanisme group, in La Tourette, France.

residential neighborhoods were built with resources from the program, such as Vila Kennedy and Vila Aliança in Rio de Janeiro (1965), Ciudad Kennedy in Bogotá, Colombia (1961), Barrio Kennedy in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1963), and Colonia John F. Kennedy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras (1966). The housing complex in Bogotá stands out for bringing mutual aid housing production to the forefront of the debates. It is no coincidence that CINVA's headquarters is located there, as it advocated for the notion of "appropriate technology," with important initiatives for alternative projects that incorporated the experiences of the populations involved, promoting the form of self-built urban production. The concept of user participation in housing design would gain greater resonance on the continent with the work of John Turner in the 1960s²¹, but it had already been promoted by the U.S. in underdeveloped countries through the "Housing and Home Finance Agency" (Harris, 1998)²². In Brazil, however, popular participation in the housing design and construction would find a conducive environment only in the 1980s.

In 1965, 45 years after the first CPA, the XI meeting was held in the United States, confirming the U.S. preponderance at that time. Housing production was placed on another level due to the formation of a new political and socioeconomic scenario, in which many Latin American countries were dominated by dictatorships and the post-war cultural system began to be replaced by another that questioned the foundations of the Modern Movement.

By the end of the decade, as Gorelik (2005a, p. 127) indicates, it became evident that the realization of the "developmentalist project as a virtuous meeting project between the State, technicians, and social needs" was impossible. It was clear that technical culture did not find the desired support in the State, not only because several countries at that time were under dictatorial governments but, essentially because, the classes interested in modernization were not equally concerned with imposing the structural transformations necessary for full development.

4 Final considerations

We have sought to present a broad, though not exhaustive, overview of the interaction between architecture and urbanism professionals around the issue of housing in the American continent, with special emphasis on Latin America, highlighting the importance of the housing issue in the constitution of the field. In addition to conference proceedings and periodicals, reference works have helped to relate these discussions to the promotion of housing policies and programs in large cities on the continent, particularly in Brazil and Argentina, and to understand the relationship between the State and professionals, between politics and technical aspects, which culminated in housing production.

Based on the study of the circulation of ideas, particularly in the CPAs, it is possible to state that many of the topics under discussion were common, with two particular moments of discussion distinguishable. Up until 1940, the very recognition of housing as

²¹ In 1963, the issue of *Architectural Design*, edited by Turner, was entitled "Dwelling resources in Latin America" and presented the notion of popular knowledge as an effective instrument for tackling the housing issue in Latin America.

²² According to Richard Harris (1998), the theory and practice of mutual aid was developed in the 1940s and 1950s at the Housing and Home Finance Agency, mainly by Jacob L. Crane. He was also responsible for suggesting, within the scope of the "Point Four" program (1949), established by President Truman, the expansion of activities in the housing field by the notion of self-help as the best way to attack the problem.

an issue and its social function in the field of architecture, the integration of housing design into the field of urbanism, and the need for mass housing production stand out, themes that found a particularly receptive environment in the two highlighted countries. In the post-war period, Latin America appeared at the center of professional debates in the West as a locus for analyzing urban and regional issues and the possibilities for modernization and development through comprehensive planning of housing spaces.

The task of breaking away from the (cultural) ideology of the liberal-agrarian elites, who sought the European academic model as a reference for public work production, fell to the representatives of the architectural avant-garde linked to the state apparatus in the 1930s, overcoming it and developing a new, updated vision for the modernizing state project (Gorelik, 2005b). The new ideology ensured that state projects not only varied in architectural language but also recognized housing as a social issue. In the 1940s, the institutionalization of housing production became consolidated in Brazil and Argentina, manifested by indirect state production through subsidies for self-promotion of housing and direct production in large housing complexes, where the involvement of professionals linked to the debates promoted during that period stands out.

In Brazil, it can be acknowledged that the notion of the social function of housing was promoted by professionals embedded in the state apparatus, both in technical roles related to project design and in administrative roles²³. In the first case, notable architects include Attílio Corrêa Lima and Carlos Frederico Ferreira, while in the second, Alim Pedro, president of IAPI, and Rubens Porto, technical advisor at MTIC, who advocated for industrialization and the construction of large-scale, functional housing complexes as city cells²⁴. In Argentina, it is also possible to consider that housing projects were linked to the work of architects within the state apparatus, especially because they incorporated elements that were not officially planned, particularly regarding standardization of construction types and the significant number of collective facilities, with notable figures including Antonio Bonet, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, and Juan Kurchan, members of the Grupo Austral, which was primarily responsible for the dissemination of modern ideals in Argentina²⁵.

By recognizing themselves as agents in society, as can be observed from the resolutions of the CPAs, architects positioned themselves as co-responsible for the necessary changes to be made, especially regarding housing and city projects. After the exposition and analysis of the circulation of ideas on the continent and the formation of the professional field in Brazil and Argentina between 1920 and 1965, it is believed that housing production was the common ground where the State and Architecture met and mutually constituted each other.

²³ According to Feldman (2008), the expansion of Vargas's state apparatus included the insertion of urban planners, not only in technical positions, but also in administrative ones – several mayors and intervenors appointed by Vargas after 1937 were urban planners.

²⁴ See, among others: CORRÊA LIMA, Attílio. “Conjunto Residencial da Várzea do Carmo I.A.P.I. S. Paulo” In: *Revista Municipal de Engenharia* PDF. Vol. 10, n.4, nov. 1942; PEDRO, Alim. *O Seguro Social, a Indústria Brasileira, o Instituto dos Industriários: Relatório do Presidente do IAPI, período 1946 a 1951*. Rio de Janeiro: IAPI, 1950; PORTO, Rubens. *O Problema das Casas Operárias e os Institutos de Aposentadoria e Pensões*. Rio de Janeiro: [s.n.], 1938.

²⁵ Ver, entre outros: LIERNUR, Jorge F; PSICHEIURCA, Pablo. *La red austral: obras y proyectos de Le Corbusier y sus discípulos en Argentina, 1924-1965*. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes: Prometeo 3010, 2008.

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