

URBANISTIC CLIENTELISM: critical analysis of logic behind the urns of production of risk areas in Ouro Preto – Minas Gerais / Brazil

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss the idea of urbanistic clientelism, the exchange ratio of votes for carrying out the politics of urbanization. The object of study was areas of risk in Ouro Preto, State of Minas Gerais. To accomplish this analysis were made semi-structured interviews in neighborhoods considered at high risk of slipping in Ouro Preto (Taquaral and São Francisco and São Cristovão) and interviews with civil defense officials of the municipality. For analysis, we chose to qualitative content analysis (FLINCK, 2009). The results point to the fact, that there is a specialization of clientelistic politics relationship, call, in that work, as “clientelism for urbanization” and are an important factor for the production and expansion of risk areas.

Keywords: Risk Areas; Urbanistic Clientelism; State.

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir a ideia de clientelismo urbanístico visto como a relação de troca de votos para levar a cabo a política de urbanização. O objeto deste estudo são as áreas de risco em Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais. Foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas em

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bairros considerados de alto risco de deslizamento em Ouro Preto (Taquaral, São Francisco e São Cristovam) e entrevistas com funcionários da defesa civil do município. Para a análise, optou-se pela perspectiva metodológica da análise qualitativa de conteúdo (FLINCK, 2009). Os resultados apontam para a existência de relações políticas clientelistas cada vez mais refinadas, as quais este trabalho denomina “clientelismo urbanístico” que se apresenta como fator importante para a produção e expansão das áreas de risco.

Palavras-chave: Áreas de Risco; Clientelismo Urbanístico; Estado.

Introduction

This work aims to discuss the idea of urbanistic clientelism, namely, the relationship between poor people, living in areas of risk, characterized by the exchange of votes for the realization of urbanization policies necessary. Such clientelism is surrounded by the trend in which a political candidate or occupier of power explores and accumulates votes in exchange for shares of precarious urbanization and puts at stake the security of many families. The focus of the analysis refers to the risk areas in the city of Ouro Preto, State of Minas Gerais.

This work starts from the assumption that the production of risk areas in Ouro Preto is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by the idea of the absence of the state. One realizes that when it *unveils the social masks* (MOREIRA, 1982) it becomes clear that the State or its political structure, is not far from reality, on the contrary, has benefited from risk areas. So much so that contributes to the production and maintenance of these areas.

In that perspective, it is claimed that there is urbanistic clientelism as a generating factor and producer risk areas. This hinders the realization of planning instruments. There is no neglect, but an appropriation of secondary gain achieved by maintenance, production and expansion of risk areas. Thus, the idea of urbanistic clientelism is an attempt to understand more specifically the political reality associated with the production of urban space in these areas.

To perform the analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents of neighborhoods considered at high risk of slipping in Ouro Preto (Taquaral, São Francisco and São Cristovão), as well as interviews with employees of the civil defense of the city. Qualitative content analysis is guided by the recommendations carried out by Flink (2009).

1. Urbanization and risk areas in Ouro Preto

The city of Ouro Preto is located in the southeastern portion of the iron quadrangle with altitudes ranging from 989 at the mouth of the Rio Maracujá and 1772 at the peak of Itacolumi (CASTRO, 2006). More specifically, the city is located at the beginning of the Serra do Espinhaço separating the São Francisco basin of the eastern rivers flowing into the Atlantic, so it sits at the level of the ridge branching matrix, in other words the lines of secondary ridge (GUERREIRO, 2000). It can be said that geomorphologically, Ouro Preto is characterized by a rugged topography with very steep slopes and deep valleys, with about 40% of the areas located between 20 and 45% slope and 30% of the areas between 5 and 20% slope (CASTRO, 2006).

Regarding the use of the territory, Costa (2011) when analyzed the process of socio-spatial formation of the city of Ouro Preto, reported that by the eighteenth century the constitution of the city was related to the dynamics of gold mining in the region. According to the author, even with the decline of gold, the city remains economically since the nineteenth century takes over as the administrative capital of Minas Gerais. With the transfer of headquarters to the city of Belo Horizonte, in 1897, Ouro Preto went through a second decline and assumes a new role: establishes itself as the main educational center of the state (COSTA, 2011).

Another important event that characterizes the urban formation of the city is the installation of the aluminum plant by Canadian group Aluminum Limited, which favored a differentiated economic dynamics of the city (COSTA, 2011). This event promoted population growth by enhancing migration flow constant until the 1980s, which impacted directly on the urban planning process and thus contributed to the occupation of areas vulnerable to sliding (COSTA, 2011). According to the author, the first areas of consolidation were: Saramenha, Morro do Cruzeiro, historical center, Morro São Cristovam, Morro da Queimada, Morro Santana and Morro São João.

After the 1950s, three elements are key to defining spatial planning: the economy around the mining of aluminum; the dynamics associated with tourism; and the expansion of the Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (COSTA, 2011). This dynamic has meant that, first, the original urban centers expand towards the Praça Tiradentes (divider natural waters); then pressed by the increase in land value registered by the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN), the areas of the hills were occupied. For the author, this



occupation was carried out by an impoverished population that failed to attract investment (or urban facilities) for the neighborhoods. With the construction of the highway 56 MG densification process intensified in the southern portion of the city neighborhoods consolidating areas of Novo Horizonte and Nossa Senhora do Carmo (COSTA, 2011).

According to Ferreira (2011), was from 1960, when the population increased and intensified urban expansion towards the peripheries occurrences of accidents related to mass movements, especially landslides, began to be recorded in the rainy season. Ferreira (2011) cautions that this does not mean the absence of such events in previous times. What we have, in fact, justified by the lack of records with less intense occupation in this period, considering that the areas are only seen as risk occurs when the human presence.

Pinheiro *et alli* (2003), reviewing the work of Sobreira and Fonseca (2001), states that the need for creation of new urban areas as a function of population growth, from the sixties was not accompanied by adequate prior planning, leading to the occupation of areas where it developed mining activities in the past. According to the authors, the areas occupied mostly present unfavorable geomorphological characteristics, generating problems in regards to the safety of the population.

The context of risk that has been developed in these areas is currently in Ouro Preto dramatic. Neighborhoods like São Francisco, Taquaral, Piedade and Santa Cruz have condemned areas by civil defense and with great density of houses. Are occupied areas without the minimal planning, where the government conducts palliative and low technical quality urban works. Therefore, these areas have running water, electricity and streets with sidewalks. But do not have urban drainage, engineering works were not carried out to mitigate the risks, such as preparing the ground for construction obeying the level curves, slope retention, and an infinity of actions of urbanization to ensure “dignified living”¹ (COSTA 2011). Thus in these areas the risks are concentrated.

Beck (2010), when discussing modern society, says the fact that transformation in late modernity is that the logic to understand society is not only the distribution of wealth, but fundamentally the distribution of risks. According to this author,

Risks, as well as wealth, are the object of distribution [...]. In the case of social wealth, it means consumption, income, educational opportunities, property, among others, as coveted goods [...]. The positive logic of appropriation is confronted by a

¹ Free translation: “morar digno” (COSTA, 2011).

negative logic of expulsion by distribution, rejection, denial and reinterpretation. (BECK, 2010, p. 32)².

Furthermore, the author says that although the standards and means of distribution of risks differentiate the patterns of distribution of wealth, it does not nullify the fact that many risks are distributed according to the social class of individuals. This fact requires us to understand it from the perspective of politics. Another author who discusses the theory of risk is Veyret (2001), for whom the risk is a central concept of society and one of its main components structuring. These risks can be engendered from the combination of natural, scientific, technical and human factors.

2. Relations policies clientelistic

Risk areas have been the subject of constant debate in Brazil, both by the media and within academia. The media discussed from the point of view of “natural disasters”, without presenting the complexity of the question to the viewer. The information provided is fragmented and insufficient to motivate a positive attitude on the part of the community in relation to the increase in these areas, especially in the areas of urban density.

In academia, the approaches vary between those of the development of mathematical and geotechnical aiming to build technical solutions to the problem models. And those who run the analysis of the socio-spatial dynamics to understand the problem. This article falls into this last line, specifically the tradition of studies of the production of urban space. The challenge is to contribute to the elucidation of the problem, in that the “technical solutions” have not been sufficient to minimize or prevent the proliferation of risk areas (COSTA, 2010).

The risk areas are those that offer any kind of danger to human occupation. This paper deals specifically related to the risk of slipping in the city of Ouro Preto. Considering that the production of these areas is an association between two dimensions: the natural and human. One ponders that the human dimension involves the following factors: cultural (as own variation of risk perception), economic (such as price areas) and political (the functionality of

² Riscos, assim como riquezas, são objeto de distribuição[...]. No caso das riquezas sociais, trata-se de bens de consumo, renda, oportunidades educacionais, propriedade etc., como bens cobiçados. [...] A lógica positiva da apropriação é confrontada por uma lógica negativa do afastamento pela distribuição, rejeição, negação e reinterpretação. (BECK, 2010, p. 32).



the areas within the context of the exchange of vows and political expansion of risk areas). Since the political factor is the focus of the reflections produced in this study.

This study seeks to clarify the relationship of municipal government, as well as candidates for elective office with the resident at risk areas in the city of Ouro Preto. Leal (1975), in the book “*Coronelismo, hoe and voting: the municipality and the representative regime in Brazil*”³ highlighted the perverse logic of patronage behind the old republic electoral system to analyze the *coronelist* system that prevailed at the time.

For this discussion a definition of clientelism is required. According to Carvalho (1997) this concept is extremely broad and can be understood as a pattern of exchange of votes for state actions, and this way of doing politics in Brasil has grown strongly with the implementation of democracy and is associated with low degree of citizenship. To Seibel and Oliveira (2010) clientelism is an obstacle to the implementation of social and political rights. States that:

The patronage as exchange between subjects mechanism mediated by the practice of favor, stimulates selective actions that permeate State-Society relations and condition the effectiveness of social policies. This logic of political and administrative action that is internalized in terms of both policy makers as their clientele, expressed a sly game of a non-explicit contractuality that reduces favors, social and political rights [...]. Patronage therefore means a stock exchange among individuals who, on one hand, demand a public service character that normally could not be obtained through the market and on the other by those who manage or have access to decision makers on the granting of this service. This mediation takes place via “political currency” whose debt is charged, probably in the next electoral event (SEIBEL; OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 135-138)⁴.

Areas, from its formation to its stabilization and expansion, are in constant relationship with the government and working in connection with the electoral system. In hazardous areas initially occupied various political relations with the government are constituted. First, the process of resistance manifests to settle in areas that are generally not regulated. In this first phase, the government tends to position itself establishing dialogue to poor urban areas or implementing policies removal.

³ Free translation: “Coronelismo, enxada e voto: o município e o regime representativo no Brasil”.

⁴ Free translation: “O clientelismo, como mecanismo de troca entre sujeitos, mediado pela prática do favor, estimula ações seletivas que perpassam as relações Estado-Sociedade e condicionam a eficácia social das políticas públicas. Essa lógica de ação político-administrativa, que se internaliza tanto ao nível dos formuladores das políticas como de sua clientela, expressa um jogo dissimulado de uma contratualidade não-explicita que reduz a favores, direitos sociais e políticos [...]. O clientelismo significa, portanto, uma ação de troca entre sujeitos que, por um lado, demandam um serviço de caráter público que, normalmente, não poderia ser obtido por meio do mercado e, de outro, por aqueles que administram ou têm acesso aos decisores sobre a concessão desse serviço. Essa intermediação dá-se via ‘moeda política’, cujo débito será cobrado, provavelmente, no próximo evento eleitoral” (SEIBEL, OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 135-138).

The removal policies are clearly unpopular and are only effective when there is pressure from some group in society (COMPANS, 2007). By hurting the interests of elites, these can pressurize the government for removal actions. The political relationship between government and the area itself is cut by other interests and vectors. Santos (2007) states that the places are produced by vertical and horizontal vectors.

To Santos (1996) the place (the relationship with the place) is, in a given time interval, the concrete (system objects arranged in space-technosphere), as well as a system of actions (psychosphere). In this sense, the verticalities seen as arising out of orders actors who organize the place is associated behaviors. States that “there is not a place commanding another, but as a metaphor. But limits the choice of behaviors in one place may be due to interest based on another” (SANTOS, 1996, p. 35)⁵. Therefore, the scope of this work the state itself is analyzed as a component of the external vector, because the interest is based on the structure supporting the electoral process.

3. Urbanistic clientelism: a specialization of clientelistic relations in Ouro Preto

The results of this research indicate that, in Ouro Preto, when the risk area or slum does not clash with the interests of the ruling class, which is established in the areas of risk is a precarious urbanization process articulated the local political system. Some statements, reproduced below, allow exemplify the issue. A resident of the area considered the risk of slipping (Neighborhood Taquaral) O. F. A. 49 years reported: “The father gained lot more or less in 1970, and almost had no home. It was an old land where operated a paint factory [...]. People were coming and making tents and [there] some 15 years later asked the mayor to put water, electricity, road and the mayor did ... People here still vote for him ...”⁶.

The speech illustrates this resident that the city allowed the installation of water, electricity and access to the area built even without settling the area and aware of the characteristic of risk, since the city hall of Ouro Preto already had a mapping of risk areas,

⁵ Free translation: “Não que haja um lugar comandando um outro, senão como metáfora. Mas os limites à escolha de comportamentos num lugar pode se dever aos interesses sediados em um outro” (SANTOS, 1996 p. 35).

⁶ Free translation: “O pai ganhou lote mais ou menos em 1970, e não tinha quase nenhuma casa. Era um antigo terreno onde funcionava uma fábrica de tintas [...]. As pessoas foram chegando e fazendo os barracões e [há] uns 15 anos pediram pro prefeito colocar água, luz, estrada e o prefeito fez... O pessoal aqui ainda vota nele...” (O. F. A.).



initially performed in 1979. The resident's house was, in the early 2012, condemned by the civil defense, but the resident remained in the residence because she had nowhere to go.

Another illustrative example is the case in São Cristovam Neighborhood: G. C. R. lives with her mother, her children and her husband in a lot where there are four other houses in an area considered at risk. The area has been regularized by the prior management of city hall. “The mayor ‘Jane Doe’ built the wall [, talking about the retaining wall built in the backyard]. Was the only help they gave” (G.C.R.)⁷. The resident uses the term “aid” indicating it does not recognize the meaning of urban policy. Additionally, you can see that the inhabitant customize the action by saying “the mayor ‘Jane Doe’ built”. About this logic of “aid” or favor, Seibel and Oliveira (2010) say: “while holding the paraphernalia of the state, clientelism becomes a reason in itself, because it strengthens the circle ‘patronage-elections-patronage’, based on the exchange of gratitude favors” (SEIBEL; OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 136)⁸.

Important to note that from the point of view of residents in areas at risk of Ouro Preto, they are “abandoned” because “the mayors only look at tourism”. Or as pointed out another villager, 79, of the town of entitled Morro do Piolho, in neighborhood São Francisco, “the government does nothing. Just look at our downtown . They only take care of the historic downtown. . The *cantão* be damned ... Every one for themselves...” (J. M.)⁹.

The context of abandoned indicated by previous statements reinforces the exchange system and customization of action, as in a reality where the pessimism regarding the occupants of government prevails, a policy of precarious urbanization already seems a gain for those living in the vicinity of the system. In addition, the customization of the action becomes easier, because when the government is understood as one that “does nothing”, a particular point action can only be the fruit of the good will of the mayor (a) or councilman to be no exception. That is, the logic of an absent government encourages customization of personal actions. Thus:

The logic of gift and favor has become the main content of the political and social ties, operating in the spheres of private and privacy issues that a society of rights, should be established as a public character [...]. Is the field of social policies that social selection clientelistic assumes it's most primary form, therefore the guideline

⁷ Free translation: “A prefeita ‘Fulana’ construiu o muro [, falando do muro de contenção construído no quintal da casa]. Foi a única ajuda que deram” (G. C. R.).

⁸ Free Translation: “ao mesmo tempo em que sustenta a parafernália do Estado, o clientelismo se torna uma razão em si, pois fortalece o círculo ‘apadrinhamento-eleições-apadrinhamento’, baseado na troca de gratidão por favor” (SEIBEL; OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 136).

⁹ Free translation: “O poder público não faz nada. Só olham para o centro. Só cuidam do centro histórico. O *cantão* que se dane... Cada um que se vire...” (J. M.).

in organizing relations between state and society based on personalism, mutuality of benefits and individual loyalties (SEIBEL; OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 137)¹⁰.

In those contexts in which the perception is compromised by poor vision anchored in the absence or scarcity (water on tap, new streets or installation of electricity) an improvement has great significance for these families. These clientelistic relationships that explores the context of abandonment without resolving it effectively, favoring the growth of urban clientelism. The imbalance in the power game to the detriment of those pushed to the risk areas is a result of local political strategies aimed at absorbing votes by maintaining basic needs.

The unfavorable scenario of the local policy is indicated in the interview with an official of the civil defense of the city. Regarding Taquaral neighborhood that presents problems in urban drainage and has been occupied daily by poor families, states that “political talk to people occupy in exchange for votes. Say they will regularize...”¹¹. This statement reveals the political irresponsibility in Ouro Preto which contributes to the expansion of risk areas. The promises of regularization continue to occur even in the face of condemnation by civil defense and public agents that have full knowledge of it.

In Ouro Preto, field research indicates that this precarious urbanization is the basis for the reproduction of a clientelist politics, which we are calling specifically for urban clientelism. The study of risk areas in Ouro Preto, lets say the exchange of voting is the mechanism that “articulates” – the dialectical perspective of Lefebvre (2008) – in other words, becomes functional production and expansion of risk areas.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show that the form of the power of patronage politics is, nowadays, a factor that streamlines production and expansion of risk areas in cities, from the

¹⁰ Free translation: “A lógica da dádiva e do favor tornou-se o conteúdo principal dos vínculos políticos e sociais, operando nas esferas da vida particular e privada as questões que, numa sociedade de direitos, deveriam ser fixadas como de caráter público [...]. É no campo das políticas sociais que a seleção social do tipo clientelista assume seu formato mais primário, pois se pauta na organização de relações entre Estado e sociedade baseadas no personalismo, na reciprocidade de benefícios e nas lealdades individuais” (SEIBEL; OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 137).

¹¹ Free translation: “Políticos da cidade falam para a população ocupar em troca de voto. Dizem que vão regularizar...”.



case analysis of the city of Ouro Preto. That is, the political factor of this complex equation is to exchange votes and the perpetuation of a clientelistic state.

You could say that in Ouro Preto, the policy of urbanization related to hazardous areas is being used for electoral machine. And that if the areas of risk do not clash with class-interests, poor urbanization will be implemented to keep the urbanistic clientelism. Prevails a situation in which poor people of these areas of risk exchange votes for the execution of basic policies of urbanization. On the other hand, candidates or those in power who exploit and accumulate votes for favors, putting into question the safety of many families.

According to Beck (2010) and Veyret (2001), which emphasize the importance of risk in the structure of modern society, it is clear that this relationship - risk area and local policy - must be analyzed. In this sense, this is an initial attempt to raise the issue or the debate and to look again at the issue of the relationship between the production of urban space and politics. That's because "the construction of urban problems reveals the role of space and the production of urban space in its contradictions" (CARLOS, 2009, p. 291)¹².

Furthermore, it is possible to consider, also, that the policy of urban clientelism is another key defining element of spatial planning in Ouro Preto. This form of policy weakens the instruments of urban planning of the city making them ineffective on behalf of the dominant logic of territory use. It is emphasized that the public power as well as its local agents, are present in these risk areas feeding on them and with that causing damage in terms of production quality of life in the city.

Finally, we point out a number of interrelated questions that guide this study. The first refers to the scale of the phenomenon presented. As such patronage politics is articulated in other scales, for example, the historical state and national level? We can speak of a logic of maintaining urban precariousness in favor of a secondary gain in politics on a broader scale?

In order to revert the situation of subordination of the population of the areas of risk to the electoral game that aims at exploit the suffering of urban insecurity is necessary to reflect on the extent of formal politics, as well as on urban production of these risk areas, with the purpose to promote effective improvements.

¹² Free translation: "a construção de problemas urbanos revela o papel do espaço e da produção do espaço urbano em suas contradições" (CARLOS, 2009, p. 291).

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