

# Rio de Janeiro Urban Symbols: Centrality, Power, and Community

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## THE DOMINION OF NATURE

Saints, natives, and landscapes have given name to many cities in Latin America: Santa Fé de Bogotá in Colombia, Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia, Santiago de Chile. The primitive inhabitants of Venezuela were immortalized in Caracas, while Havana paid homage to the cacique Habaguanex. The metaphors of nature do not always correspond exactly with the reality: neither in the humid and marshy coast of Argentina prevail the *Buenos Aires* (good airs), nor does a bit of metal appear in the *Río de la Plata* (silver river). Gonçalo Coelho also made a mistake when he thought the extended bay of Guanabara was a magnificent river. But he did not make it when he identified the unpredictable and torrid sky of January as the symbol of the *carioca* weather – “*o azul demais*” (the excessive blue) of Vinicius de Moraes – eternal image of Rio de Janeiro.

Once the originality of America was found – opposed to the desired Cipango – its exuberance and exoticism were associated with paradise on earth: in the far year of 1504, Durer drew images of the new location of the supposed “happy world.” Since then, European and local artists have represented several allegories of the new continent: Tiépolo did it with the palace of Würzburg and José Teófilo de Jesus with Salvador, Bahia in Brazil. They painted a baroque scenery with shapely native women surrounded by exotic beasts in a rich and exuberant rain forest. It was a dreamed environment of a desired nature – the same as nowadays searched by people on holiday at the Clubs Méditerranées in the Antilles – without buildings and cities. This was due to the fact that, despite the early urban structures of Incas and Aztecs, built form signified the presence of “*order and progress*” (motto of the Brazilian flag) by white settlers, the rationality and regularity of which were against the organic freedom of the grand and imposing landscapes. Cities had always reflected pure geometry or a solid unity opposed to geographic ruggedness: Naples besides Vesuvio, Cuzco protected by the Andean mountains, Caracas inside the Valle de Avila. Opposed to this is the originality of Rio de Janeiro in the context of Latin America: it appears and integrates itself in the complex nature of the site, whose influence does not disappear, in spite of the “inborn wickedness of men” (José Martí). It is not by chance that the Brazilian singer Luiz Jatobí said: “God made the Earth in seven days, one of which was spent making Rio de Janeiro.”

Symbol city not only of Brazil but also of the whole hemisphere, Rio is the synthesis of the many differences of Latin America. Not even García Márquez was able to imagine in his village Macondo a diversity of weather phenomena greater than in Rio. Here rationality and feelings live together; logic and spontaneity; sea and mountains; memory and oblivion; rain forest and concrete jungle; beauty and ugliness; prehistory and Internet; white and black men; poor and rich ones. The writer Zuenir Ventura synthesized the duality in the

“sunny” Rio of heaven and the “dark” Rio of hell. In the beginning, it was a timid human adaptation to the varied magnificence of nature: the *vila velha* (old village) was erected in the bottom of the *Pão de Açúcar*; then the settlers penetrated through the bay and went up to the *Morro do Castelo*, remembering the old medieval Portuguese villages. When the geometric design of the city imposed itself on the plain, the progressive and endless urban expansion created a permanent antithesis and relation with the landscape. From the central *rua Io. de Marçõ* to the suburban *Barra da Tijuca*, square blocks, axes, and diagonals overcame the organic irregularity and spontaneity of hills, lakes, coves, and swamps. Once the empire was established, Dom João VI submitted for the first time to nature when he created the monumental avenue of palm trees in Jardim Botânico.

During the republic, many *morros* (hills) were pulled down – and the historical memory of the colonial buildings on Castelo and Santo Antônio was destroyed – or tunnels were dug through them; the shoreline of the bay was redefined; the city and the “waterfront” were separated; and poor and rich residents were allowed to press themselves together over the many hills with rich residences pressed against favelas. But, in spite of all this, the magnificent spectacle of the Guanabara Bay was not diminished – the fireworks that touched Le Corbusier’s soul – and neither were the symbolic tenacity of Corcovado and *Pão de Açúcar* as “architectural” ensigns of the city. Even two *carioca* architects (Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer) integrated their buildings with the surrounding nature (we must remember Costa’s Parque Guinle (1948) and Niemeyer’s house in Canoas (1953)), giving more importance to architectural rationality than to the sensuality of the landscape inherent to the perpetual image of the capital’s monuments, having built a modernity frozen in the empty space of Planalto in Brasília (Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos, 1988). There, abstraction and nature have lost their opposed meanings, integrated with the plasticity of the Niemeyer’s organic curves.

The mythic and ambiguous quality of Rio is a result of the interaction of three basic factors: the urban and architectural order imposed by the political and economic power based on models from abroad that traditionally identified the national domain of the capital; the process of industrialization together with the presence of workers, living in the favelas or in wide and anonymous suburban quarters; the hedonistic value of the natural surroundings with hills and the blue sea as a symbol of leisure time. First appropriated by the rich class and then exploited by the tourist market, it became the dominant image of the *carioca* city. According to Gilberto Freyre, this relation with nature marks a vital attitude that gives particular importance to idleness to compensate for the stress of modern life. The sociologist Ana Clara Torres Ribeiro, comparing the life styles of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, shows the synthetic value that this city has as symbol of the Brazilian culture. Social space is privileged over private space, and

community extroversion is privileged over individual shelter. Natural beauty promotes the exhibition of bodies, racial interaction, sensuality, a more emotional and pleasant way of living, and the importance of practicing sports. It is not by chance that Rio has 73 km of paths only for bicycles, the most extensive in Latin America. These days, with the worldwide prejudice against and disregard towards urban spaces, Rio is a city that still maintains the intense interaction of social relations and the aesthetic pleasure of public extent. It is not by chance that each New Year's Eve two million people leave their homes and stay on streets and squares celebrating and appreciating the colorful New Year at Copacabana Beach.

## A TROPICAL CITY

The image of Rio contains two basic aesthetic expressions: one is academic and the other is modern. Before the republic (1889), the presence of the Imperial Court during the 19th century had little influence over the adaptation of the "colonial" city to the functional and aesthetic demands created by Illuminism. The urbanistic suggestion of Grandjean de Montigny, who proposed designing avenues over the existing medieval tissue, or the first Haussmanian projects of Francisco Pereira Passos, did not interest the emperor. Little value was given to the greatness of public spaces, limited to Praça XV, Praça Tiradentes, and Campo de Santana. Since its beginning, the 20th century started rudely in the historical context. In a way it sets upon violently against the existing nature – many hills were destroyed such as the central Senado, Castelo, and Santo Antônio – in another way, it built the academic symbol of the "civilized" capital of Brazil. The "*mui leal e heróica cidade imperial*" reached the climax in the *cidade maravilhosa*, the apogee of which happened in the 50's.

It is possible to define the evolution of Rio as a constant fight between memory and modernity, between nature and construction. On one hand the past is destroyed – nothing remains of the original village on the morro do Castelo – on the other hand, the succeeding layers of a renewed present are constantly being built. Once the existing morros disappeared, more value was given to the natural symbols – the *Pão de Açúcar* and the Corcovado – or a new nature arose at *Aterro do Flamengo*. Four urban typologies define the character of the city: an introverted monumental centrality and a part alien to nature's toughness; the organic medievalism present in the favelas on the hills; the anonymous suburbs and countryside which extend towards the north and west along the railways and the industrial quarters; and the location of wealthy people besides the coast at the southern end, marked by the sensuality of the beach and the sea.

The academy was established with the plan of the *Avenida Central* and the transformations promoted by Pereira Passos (1902-1906); these continued with the Master Plan of Alfredo Agache (1929-1930) and culminated with the construction of the Presidente Vargas avenue in the 40's. Eclectic or classicist monuments and axes – symbols of the state structure – were built throughout the historical center and swept off hundreds of colonial buildings. The originality of it all in the Latin American context is how fast the changes took place. While in Buenos Aires or in Havana the academic traits have survived until today – the Avenida de Mayo or the Parque Central – in Rio, already by the 30's, the historical palaces of *Avenida Central* began to be demolished, replaced by modern skyscrapers. Although the image of the city has an independent and introverted character, alien of all dialogue with the surrounding landscape (the placement of the port in front of the historical city definitely ended the relationship with the bay), Pereira Passos as much as Agache, while forgetting the needs of the poor, valued the privileged space of the neighborhoods by the coast along the southern axis: Glória, Flamengo, and Copacabana. The construction of the *Avenida Beira-Mar* and the tunnels that made access to the beach easier, once the tramways were put in place, integrated the residential areas of the high society to the

urban structure. Although the Teatro Municipal (1909) was, until now, the symbol of the Haussmanian renewal – similar to Paris Opera – the hotel Copacabana Palace (1923), despite its academicism, is the starting point of the "peripheric" modernity.

In Latin America, Rio encloses two urban paradigms: the academic and the modernist. No one master plan made between the 20's and 30's – Forestier in Havana, Brunner in Santiago de Chile, or Rotival in Caracas – has had the detailed conception that Agache's plan had in Rio. His proposal synthesized the classical French tradition, the North American academicism, and the European hygienist functionalism of the first decades of this century. The image of a compact habitat was not only about the volumetric dimension of the blocks, but also about access streets, parking areas, and about mixed use. At the same time Le Corbusier appeared in 1929 and opposed to the urban density the utopic continuous belt that goes through hills and bays, an original urban design that later matured in Algiers. The rescue of the natural landscape in architectural plans constituted the starting point for a quick assimilation of the Modern Movement assumptions in Brazil. While being punctual answers, the continuity was identified by the Ministry of Education and Health (1936), planned by Le Corbusier and Lúcio Costa's team, the Santos Dummond Airport (1937) by the Roberto Brothers (just burned in 1998), the Modern Art Museum (1953) by Affonso Reidy, and the Aterro do Flamengo (1961) by Reidy and Burle Marx. All together these create a relation of contemporary urban spaces not existing in other capitals of the region: neither in the plan of Buenos Aires by Le Corbusier himself, nor in Bogotá or in Havana, on the proposal done by José Luis Sert.

A creative and regionalist alternative to the symbolic structures of the capital – academic as much as modernist – appears in Copacabana. Developed in the beginning of this century as a summer resort of the local elite and occupied by a few eclectic mansions, at the end of the 20's it attracted international tourism. From the 30's until now it has been the residential ambit of the "educated" *carioca* middle class, in a coincidence with the building "boom" caused by the dynamic economy of the Estado Novo of Getúlio Vargas. The precocious authorization of the presence of high-rise office and apartment buildings in the city (1928) created a typology of compact occupation of houses with different façades, characterized by tropical versions of Art Déco and Rationalism. Since the 30's, Rio has been an exotic version of Latin American modernity: Carmen Miranda triumphed in Europe and North America; Walt Disney designed Zé Carioca; builders of condominiums from Miami came to Copacabana to be inspired by the architectural scale of "mass tourism" housing. No other city in the continent achieved such a well-balanced integration between users, architects, and businessmen in the creation of the "city effect," with aesthetic quality, adaptation to the hedonistic atmosphere of the function, ability of integrating landscapes, and social vitality of the urban space. Burle Marx designed a continuity flux from the natural curves of *Aterro do Flamengo* to the sinuous sidewalks along the beach. Finally, the bucolic excesses, the high concentration of population – one of the highest in the world – and its reinless cosmopolitanism made Rio "a sin from the gods, a babilonic reflex, a mirror of Ninive, a miniature of all metropolises, the refuge of all criminals."

In spite of six million inhabitants in the metropolitan area, of whom almost one million live in the favelas, the area of the Distrito Federal in the fifties kept a structure that was compact and at the same time diversified by symbols socially easy to recognize in each part of the city. In the suburbs, the Church of Penha and the Maracanã Stadium – built for the World Cup of 1950 – contrasted with the anonymous surroundings. The tower of the Central Station, the *Arcos da Lapa*, the MES, the Imperial Palace, the Mesbla's clock, defined the dialogue between history and modernity in the city downtown. Looking south, the church of *Nossa Senhora da Glória*, the *Palácio do Catete*, and the Flamengo's Déco are related with the old residences in Larajeiras and Botafogo, the building "boom" in

Copacabana, the sophisticated apartments in Lagoa, and the bucolic areas in Ipanema and Leblon. Neighborhoods near and far were identified by tropical rhythms – Tom Jobim and his *Garota de Ipanema* – and carnevalesque samba schools: Madureira, Vila Isabel, or Padre Miguel. It is impossible to find another Latin American capital so unprejudiced in its mix, which creates formality and informality, of governmental etiquette and bikinis, of administrative rationality and feminine sensuality.

### THE UNBRIDLED URBANIZATION

The national capital transfer to Brasília was a hard blow for Rio de Janeiro. It started a three-decade-long cycle that depreciated the cultural identity of the *cidade maravilhosa*. Emptied of a great part of the tertiary and administrative functions, its industrialization process was diminished by the increasing competence of São Paulo and Belo Horizonte. The income sources were reduced by changes in the political structure – between 1960 and 1975 it was the Guanabara State and then became a municipal district of the Rio de Janeiro State – and its affairs were affected by the central powers of the military regime between 1964 and 1984. Then Rio suffered a social and spatial desarticulation. Following the master plan requested by governor Carlos Lacerda to Dioxiadis Associates (1964), the greatest part of the decisions about the city began to be done by the central power – global and technocratic as seen in the plans Pub Rio and Pit Metrô (1975/1977) – almost unrelated to the needs and hopes of local communities. A rapid increase in population and in automobiles forced the creation of an efficient highway system that became one of the principal interests of every state governor. Between 1960 and 1965, 19 overpasses were built, laying the basis of a fast flow to the north zone with the Brasil Road and the connections with the new Galeão Airport. At the regional scale appeared in the 70's the bridge to Niterói and the links between the central and southern zone: the elevated Avenida Perimetral – a barrier impossible to get free between the city and the harbor – and the tunnels to the new urbanizations for affluent society along the coast. The Barra da Tijuca rose on an initial structure (1969) proposed by Lúcio Costa. The first subway lines were also created, joining the central zone to the neighborhoods closest to south and north.

The creative contributions that identified Brazilian architecture in the world during the 50's as a regional expression of the Modern Movement disappeared in the 70's with the uniforming North American influence of the "International Style" and later of post-modern formalism. Shiny surfaces of crystal mirrors or false pediments on top of buildings established the corporate image of banks, transnational corporations, and insurance companies located downtown along the Rio Branco Avenue and in the empty space at *Largo da Carioca*. At the same time supermarket chains appeared, along with introverted shopping centers and enclosed residential enclaves. In the middle of Botafogo, the facing towers of Rio Sul Shopping Center and *Morada do Sol* apartments announce the principal typologies of the suburbs. If Miami was once inspired by the Copacabana example, now it is just the opposite. The "American way of life" was assumed in the urban development of *Barra da Tijuca* – with a population of almost one hundred thousand inhabitants (1997) – which pretends to convert itself into a "Carioca Orlando." There, the "private" city of the exclusive condominiums with luxurious apartment towers and internal basic services, the enormous shopping centers, or the commercial strip built "main street" style, define the "imported" modernity. Of Rio's personality there remains only the sea and the public beach along a stretch of 25 km. On the other side, in the northern zone of the economic "miracle" of the 70's, the anonymous horizontal city grew indiscriminately along the industrial sections of the city, in need of public services and unifying the municipal district with the others besides it: Duque de Caxias, São João de Meriti, Nova Iguaçu, and Nilópolis. In the 70's Norma Evenson denounced the state of crisis of the city and foresaw incoming economic bankruptcy and paralyzation of urban life. The festive image of Copacabana was erased by the dramatic

visions of the tropical megalopolis of painters Siron Franco and Rubens Gerchman.

In social terms, the urban life of Rio deteriorated steadily until the 90's. First, the persistence of the deep contrasts of income that still exists in Brazil, whose "excluding" modernization does not succeed in either changing the rate of poverty that persists in 30% of the urban population in the country nor in improving the life style of a million people living in the favelas throughout the city. Thus, as a consequence of general misery, there were 15,000 homeless people living under bridges and overpasses as well as growth of the informal economy, in great part illegal, and the street trade of the *camelôs* (street vendors), occupying streets and squares in the most important central and residential neighborhoods. To this is joined the illegal lotto – *jogo do bicho* – and the growing presence of drug traffic in the favelas. Violence has taken over daily life: the "*bala perdida*" (lost bullet) shot by criminals and policemen is the new and real symbol of the city. Despite the short moment of splendor during the Eco92, it climaxed in 1993 with the slaughter in Vigário Geral, Nova Brasília, and of the *meninos da rua* (street abandoned childrens) at the Church of Candelária. The *cidade maravilhosa* became shadowed by fear, daily insecurity, street disorder, omnipresent poverty, and a growing illegality.

The return to democracy in 1985 was accompanied by fragmentary actions by a mayor and government bureaucrats who had little effect in reverting the situation. Leonel Brizola and Darcy Ribeiro entrusted Oscar Niemeyer with a prototype project for a new primary school (CIEP, 1984), which was later reproduced in more than 300 examples in the state for the education of poor children. During Marcello Alencar's two terms as mayor, besides the creation of a sanitary system and streets – the *Linha Vermelha* joining the center end at the airport was concluded (1992) – the *Orla* project was finished from Leme up to the *Barra da Tijuca*, to order the movement and service flow of the south coast. Even more important was the rescue of the historical center with the creation of the *Corredor Cultural* (1984), with the intention to protect and restore 1,600 buildings of cultural value with the help and participation of the area inhabitants. Under the direction of the architect Augusto Ivan de Freitas Pinheiro – later named *Subprefeito* (Vice-mayor) in 1992 – an ambitious plan was undertaken which constituted the starting point in the conscience of the city as a cultural artifact and to the value of a common historical memory of the most important monuments and their urban context. There was also a desire to close the narrow streets around the colonial monuments for the exclusive use of pedestrians, following the example of Curitiba by the former Mayor Jaime Lerner, who acted as adviser to the proposed replanning of Praça XV, an idea taken up again in the 90's by the *Riocidade* project.

Another precursory initiative in the relations between politicians, technicians, designers, and the interests of the population emerged in the municipal district of Niterói during Jorge Roberto Silveira's mayoral term, which was followed by that of the architect João Sampaio (1992-1996). They established the connection between the inhabitants and the urban context, not only in the solution of immediate problems – for example, the project for the "family doctor," based on the Cuban model – but also in recovering traditional cultural symbols and creating new environmental paradigms. Central public spaces were replanned, among these the bus and the *barcas* (ship) stations, thus together shaping the principal "gate" of entry to the city. Also, the construction of the Contemporary Art Museum (1991/1996), a project by Oscar Niemeyer, known and admired internationally, constitutes today the unifying symbol of Niterói.

### RIOCIDADE AND FAVELA BAIRRO: THE RECOVERY OF URBAN IDENTITY

When César Maia became the mayor of Rio de Janeiro in January of 1993, reformative steps were taken in its contradictory evolution. With two nationally and internationally known architects, Luiz Paulo

Conde, Secretary of Urbanism and later Sérgio Magalhães, Secretary of Housing, with the support of *Iplanrio* – headed by Verena Andretta de Carvalho and Olga Maria Esteves Campista – interventions in the fabric of the city were undertaken during his four year term as mayor, which had no precedents in the second half of this century. The first radical change was the methodology on focusing urban problems. Far away from the abstraction of the precedent master plans, it was opted to elaborate a strategic plan that would be established with the participation of social activists, technicians, and economists from the city. A diagnostic of the current situation and interventions divided into different levels, proceed from the “macro” to the “micro” scales. In the “macro” dimension we found the proposals of the new port of Sepetiba and the recovery of the degraded areas of the current central harbor zone, the concentration of office buildings around the *Teleporto* (new communications center), the cleaning of the polluted waters in Guanabara Bay, the reordering of public transportation, and the plans to define a site for the Olympic Games of 2004, not finally achieved. Later, the sectorial focus of urban project was emphasized, based on the principal areas of social need, through objective operational conditions and an agreement of the population or the involved corporations. It is the seed of a community planning, democratic, decentralized, consistent, and competent, that invalidates the prior technocratic, rationalist, and authoritarian pattern. The two great initiatives of *Favela Bairro* and *Riocidade* define the actions of “urban acupuncture” (César Maia) undertaken during the municipal management, projects that continue until the year 2001 under the direction of Luiz Paulo Conde, voted mayor in January 1997.

In the end of this century dominated by globalized neoliberalism, privatizations, deregularizations, and the tendency to erase diversities and formal autonomies in cities throughout the world, the only protection of the “peripheric” societies consists in keeping their own cultural identity and its presence into the urban symbolic systems, through the semantic multiplicity of community meanings. To the shining towers of hotels and offices in the “city” one must oppose the requalification of urban spaces: the street, the square, the park. To the silent and empty abstraction of the downtown, we must promote the intense mark of life in neighborhoods. To the qualification of functional spaces of the rising middle class, we must rescue the environmental personality of the anonymous suburbs, whose dimension results dominant in the cities of the so-called Third World. While in Europe antagonic contradictions were never produced in relation to the urban structures – the new experiences of Rotterdam, Berlin, and Barcelona were inserted in a continuous and homogeneous tissue – Latin America is identified with the existing disorder and irregularity of the city’s form. Its growth and the arbitrariness of speculation and private enterprise created a situation of crisis, both in the disqualification of buildings and spaces, as well as in the technical precariousness of basic infrastructure. Also demonstrated was the inefficiency of the centralized state, based in the “remote order” without direct relations with the needs of the urban community.

With the progressive disappearance in the region of military dictatorship and the acceleration of the process of democratization, the urban governments – particularly from the capitals and metropolitan centers – took on a more administrative and economic role where decisions were approximated to the needs of the different social groups that coexist in the city. Besides, the traditional political structures, corrupt and client oriented, were exchanged for technical teams and progressive professionals, both deciding to face not only the social problems, but also the importance of cultural values of the urban environment. In other words, the idea was to overcome the traditional scheme of the “old left,” based exclusively on quantitative goals instead of qualitative ones and on the dictatorship of economy and functions over culture and aesthetics, criticizing all design operations, depreciatorily qualified as urban “make-up.” Another phenomenon also takes place: the association between

politicians and internationally known architects, taking on administrative duties and invalidating the image of a technical municipal bureaucracy. As an example, let us mention Jaime Lerner in Curitiba, pioneer of a successful urban intervention in Brazil; Miguel Angel Roca with Ronald MacLean Abaroa in La Paz, Bolivia and Rubén Martí in Córdoba, Argentina; Mariano Arana in Montevideo, Uruguay; Luiza Erundina and Nabil Bonduki in São Paulo; Jorge Roberto Silveira and João Sampaio in Niterói; César Maia and Luiz Paulo Conde in Rio de Janeiro.

The programmed interventions took place in two phases: the *Riocidade* plan, which comprised 17 neighborhoods of the city, and the *Favela Bairro* works, comprising in the first stage 15 *favelas*. (shantytowns). As opposed to the preceding interventions – Pereira Passos or Agache – no demolitions or expropriations from private property were made, which would mean costly investments for the government. In both plans, the essential objective was to improve the quality of public space in areas punctuated by great movement and use by the community. Also reinforced is the social and aesthetic value of the commercial areas of the neighborhoods, to eradicate the illegal and arbitrary occupation of sidewalks and empty spaces by the *camelôs*, relocating them in defined areas. Improved are the technical infrastructures (power plants, telephone system, gas, water drainage, etc.); redesigned urban furniture; and recovered landscape value of streets, squares, and green areas to diversify the uses of leisure time for the population. The attempt is to rescue the symbolic and historical meaning of the central zones and traditional streets of the neighborhoods; in short, to obtain a particular “identity” in each part of the city. For the first time in the history of Rio, the “rich” south zone did not become a priority for design: eleven projects were made in the northern and western suburbs.

What changed the *carioca* metropolis into an experimental “laboratory” of urban design was the methodological focalization of the municipal government in assuming the diversity and fragmentation that characterize the contemporary city. Designers try to substitute the abstract needs of a generic community, with hopes and aspirations of concrete social groups with their own traditions and habits. Thus, once the unitary and totalized schemes of the “Modern Project” were abandoned, the multiplicity of identities of the recent postmodernity was rescued. What emerged was a competition of ideas and concepts about the “informal” as well as the “formal” city, with many multidisciplinary teams of planners, architects, landscape and industrial designers. For the first time, famous architectural studios, usually identified with expensive works promoted by big enterprises – Pontual Associados, Paulo Casé, MMM Roberto, Indio da Costa, Acácio Gil Borsoi – faced problems of social content and designed for the needy strata of the population. On the selected projects, various solutions appeared, with different formal quality and functional effectiveness, which established a positive effect on the local urban culture. Later, the proposals were confronted by the communities and criteria, opinions, and suggestions were assimilated. From the times of Pereira Passos and Agache until the present decade, never had the city had been the central theme of exciting controversies in the daily press. Although a great part of the criticism was directed against the excessive variety of the plans (particularly in the elements of urban furniture and the proliferation of sculptural symbols), the high cost of the investment (almost \$250 million), and the reduced number of projects (over a total of 154 quarters and 580 *favelas*), once the works were completed, the community of each neighborhood perceived the effort realized by the designers to understand the idiosyncrasy of the place, the historical and contextual values, and the cultural traditions of its inhabitants. The experimental character of the model was also demonstrated by the creative initiative in a wider perspective of the operative tools to be used in the future transformation of the city.

Within the limits of the present essay, it is possible to make a detailed analysis of the 17 projects that were completed. The most exciting fact is the presence of fragments of beauty, order, coher-

ence, color, and vegetation in the tough and anonymous suburbia. In this century, the image of Rio was always reduced to three main neighborhoods – Copacabana, Ipanema, and Leblon – internationally recognized between the skylines of Pão de Açúcar and Corcovado. But mention was never made about the other parts of the city, bigger and always forgotten, except the musical references of *Escolas de Samba*: Penha, Madureira, Campo Grande, Ilha do Governador, or Méier. Today, they have recovered their identity and meaning: their inhabitants no longer see themselves as urban outcasts. The order rescued in the dense access ways to Méier and Ilha do Governador; the “humanization” of the emptiness under the Madureira overpass; the wide spaces of the pedestrian ways at Penha and Campo Grande; the availability of squares and parks, have made the return of teenagers, youth, and old men and women to the street in daily interchange one of the pleasures of living in the neighborhoods. At the same time the strengthening of cultural traditions is a reason of pride for the community: the sculptural work for the musician Noel Rosa, in Vila Isabel (Arqui 5 studio), has converted itself into a symbol that identifies the place, famous for the musical contributions of its inhabitants.

In the most famous neighborhoods of the central areas, the results were more contradictory. The circulatory space in front of the principle access tunnel to Copacabana, confronted with the strong personality of the neighborhood, with its persistent identity forged during the 40’s (the integration of those horizontal curved, thin and continuous windows of Art Déco and proto-modernism), has more the character of the silence of a sepulchre than the waveness of the *samba carioca*. A mistake was also made in the design of the bus stops, out of scale with the available space. After years of traffic chaos and environmental disorder, it is a relief today to walk around on the main street of Botafogo, *Voluntários da Pátria*, with the image rescued all over its length. A similar perception happens at the intense trading axis of Catete (project of Jorge Jáuregui), richer in its design proposal, establishing a dialogue between the existing historical places of the 19th century and the symbolic characteristic of each public space. The most criticized, discussed, questioned, and divulged example – almost a symbol of Riocidade – is the arch and obelisk placed by Paulo Casé at the entrance of Ipanema. The designer wanted to reaffirm a space of intense public life, surrounded by bars and restaurants, as a symbol that identifies the neighborhood. The mistake lies with the arbitrariness of the forms and the heaviness

of the image, without any relation to the historical context of the place. If Ipanema coincides with *bossa nova* and the smooth songs of Tom Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes, the cyclopean dimension of the arch makes no reference to the transparency and fluidity of the local rhythm. Lastly, Leblon is the most successful in terms of the design of urban furniture. The lightness of the functional elements – lamps, telephone cabins, bus stops – designed by Índio da Costa, achieve a virtual presence that dematerializes itself in relation to the architectural presence of the urban environment. Within the intense traffic flow, the Antero Quental square is a harmonic wave of peace and serenity.

The election of Luiz Paulo Conde as mayor of Rio until the year 2001 constitutes clear proof of community approval of the works and projects of the municipal government. Now, a new series of initiatives in different parts of the city are starting up to the beginning of the next century, articulated with the existing ones. *Riocidade* as well as *Favela Bairro*, will have – as said by Conde – the priority during these first years. Strong economic support from the IBD (Interamerican Bank of Development) is concentrated in the urban transformation of the *favelas*. The finished examples of Parque Royal (Arqui 5) and Fernão Cardim (Jorge Jáuregui), demonstrate how the everyday life of its inhabitants can change strongly with the new design of streets, sidewalks, parks, and social infrastructures.

The next century will see a metropolis in search of a new identity, which will fuse past and present, center and surroundings. The desire is to sew, to tack, to articulate the *broken city* (Zuenir Ventura), and to go on qualifying those gray, sad, urban silences throughout the suburbs. In turn, a new life will be given to downtown, abandoned and deserted in its absurd monofunctionality, integrating it with the landscape of the bay, once eliminating the old port and the overpass of Perimetral Avenue. The free spaces of the beach will be taken advantage of by the building of residences in the areas of abandoned warehouses that will help to increase the population in the central zone and to recover the rich social life that existed until the beginning of the century. Thus, new symbols of Rio de Janeiro will appear and be spread all over the territory, defining a new identity that will be recognized as equal to the traditional icons, like *Pão de Açúcar* and Cristo Redentor.

Translation done by Gustavo Enrique Martinez (Rio de Janeiro) and Cristina Amoruso (Miami)