(Urban) u-topias in sociological thought

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MUCH OF the contributions presented at the International Seminar on Sociology and Hope referred to the relevance of time - historical, social and biographical - in understanding the links between sociology and hope. Starting with Henri Lefebvre (2000, p.114, 136) from the recognition that time is inseparable from space - "time is inscribed in space" and "any reality presenting itself in space can be expounded and explained in terms of its genesis in time"[1], I aim to challenge the relationship between sociology and hope precisely from the spatiotemporal links that the discipline nurtures with that particular human feeling known as hope, the "state of mind" that comes with faith, the "certainty of the uncertain" (Fromm, 1979, p.27- 8).

I believe that space is "a set of relationships between things (objects and products)" socially produced that interfere with the production of life in a broad sense (Lefebvre, 2000, p.100, xx). As mediation, space does not exist "in itself", but refers to time, another mediation, although this relationship is proposed in socially different ways (Lefebvre, 2001 p.259). In turn, sociological thought refers to the host of concepts of social life publicized as "sociological" by their authors or other third parties that resort to them in different academic contexts. Their "point of reference" is specific: the "web of interactions and social relations", in which activities or behaviors of a social nature that the sociologist seeks to describe sociologically, are inserted (Fernandes, 1970, p.20-1).

Now, by mobilizing sociological concepts to interpret the social bonds between human beings and between these and the material world, sociologists also contribute to the production of space-time. Indeed, through language they produce historically and socially specific "places", "local space-times" to which a use of the space corresponds, "spatial practice" that produces space and that words such as "place" say and create (Lefebvre 2000, p.21, 23-4, 48). From this perspective, what do places conceptually produced by the sociological thought reveal about the relationship between the discipline and hope?

In this regard, what is of interest are specific places that sociologists in different academic contexts of the West, since the early days of the discipline in the mid-nineteenth century"(Ianni, 1989, p.8) have privileged to put into practice their own hope. This, after all, does not occur in a vacuum. It is expressed by reference to spaces pregnant with meanings historically produced and localized: places conceptually associated with possibilities of a different, alternative social order.

Indeed, it is through representations that the variety of empirically existing places becomes present in the sociological thought. Representation is a "substitute of presence in absence" (Lefebvre, 1980, p.240). However, "every" representation necessarily implies a value "whether the subject values or not what the absent object represents to him" (ibid, p.47). That is why places defined within the multitude of those experienced and/or investigated by sociologists in their everyday lives become *places of hope* for sociology. They are imbued with evaluatively positive attributes, by reference to the future of the respectively challenged social order. And that in addition to the possible commitment of the sociologist to the famous "axiomatic neutrality". This is what leads me to name these places "u-topias" of the sociological thought. Hyphenated, the term underscores the etymology of "utopia" - "non-place" in Greek, without abdicating the representation status of typical of the utopias (ibid, p.94).

Among the u-topias of sociology – which got from the "State" to the "community", passing through cities, "public sphere" and "public spaces", what is of interest to this essay are precisely the cities, which, since the early days of the discipline in Germany, France, United States and Brazil have been conceptually referenced to explain features of social life there.[2] Amid their absolute empirical variety, defined cities have become objects of representations of a city - in the singular, as " a space which is fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period" (Lefebvre, 2000, p.89). They have become urban u-topias, places fraught, in the eyes of the respective sociologists, with possibilities for the effective transformation of current patterns of social interaction, by reference to the past and with a view to an evaluatively expected future.

Seeking u-topias from the early days of sociology in these four national contexts and their most recent conceptual developments at various times between 1950 and 2000 shows the mediating role that representations of time in relation to space - in this case, urban space - play in the links of sociological thought with hope. Representations of a city impregnated with concepts of time guided by a supposed interdependence between past and present indicate more "hopeful" reflections of sociologists in relation to the conceptualized cities. However, the opposite occurs in concepts of city supported by the representation of a present disengaged from the past.

Demonstrating the argument requires necessarily images of cities which, proposed by pioneers in the history of sociological concepts of a city in Germany, France, the United States and Brazil, have been updated in the past six decades. These images refer to three urban u-topias. Together, they will show, in the end, the *methodological* importance of time concepts in relation to (urban) space, in questioning the links of sociology with hope. And the current little hope of the discipline will be clarified from another angle.

When many images reveal three u-topias

Although it is "symbolic individual works" that "bear the imprint of the inventor, spontaneous or cultivated poet," images expressively articulate individual and collective emotions passed on to the present and to the future (Lefebvre, 1961, p.288). So they result not only from the more or less everyday links of the respective sociologists with the cities they conceptualize, but also from their theoretical and methodological development. They are "forms" that take on the representations, integrating the imaginary, "relationship of the (reflected, subjective) conscience with the real", of which representations are precisely the mediations (Lefebvre, 1980, p.240, 56).

In the academic settings in question, the images of cities are impregnated with evaluative allusions to historical times - past, present and future. Thus they methodologically reveal defined representations of space. They carry evidence of also specific representations of time mobilized by the respective sociologists. These are concepts pregnant with "hopes, aspirations and purposes" – to mimic Karl Mannheim (1968, p.233-4) on the methodological role of the "sense of historical time" for understanding the "internal structure of a group's mentality." But these temporal desires are not loose in the air. They are expressed spatially; in this case in attributes associated with these cities: alienation, freedom, autonomy, good, evil, difference.

The 'disalienating' city

A first urban place of sociological hope is suggested in texts by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx from the mid-nineteenth century in the England of the industrialization-urbanization dyad. It is the city as a place of unique possibilities of 'disalienation' of human beings. The city would favor the awareness of men about the possibilities of social development which, inherent in the constitution of the human race, could be implemented right there.

In *About the Situation of the Working Class in England*, Engels (1972, p.256) outlines a picture of London in which the best and the worst of "civilization" combine dialectically: "these Londoners had to sacrifice the best part of their humanity" in favor of achieving "all the miracles of civilization" with which the city is "impregnated". If, therefore, the "social war" of "all against all" typical of the "industrial age" openly occurs there (ibid, p.257, 285), then the best of the human condition of its residents, although only in embryo, also finds shelter there.

It is in *The German Ideology* that this image will receive a much more elaborate conceptual treatment. Linked to the history of the division of labor "within a nation" - which would lead to the "separation of the town and country and opposition of their interests" (Marx & Engels, 1987, p.29) - "the city" becomes a privileged setting of "alienation." After all, its first "example" is the division of labor, which is "more developed" in the city separated from the country (ibid, p.28, 31). Well, alienation means the estrangement of men in relation to the generic human character of their own actions, to the social nature

of praxis: "the human being's own deed becomes an alien might standing over against him, subjugating him instead of being dominated by him" (ibid, p.47). Although inherent in the human being as gender (Marx, 1961), the conditions that make the individual alien to himself are leveraged especially in the cities of capitalist industrialization, proportionally to the increase in the "social power" in that context, "multiplied productive force, which arises through the cooperation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labor" (Marx & Engels, 1987, p.49). At the same time, however, it is in those cities that it is possible to "overcome" alienation - and establish communism. Although the authors are not explicit in this regard, it is there that they imply the presence of the "mass of humanity [...] 'propertyless' and "in contradiction with an existing world of wealth and culture" (ibid, p.50).

Marked by these characteristics, the cities imagined by these two Germans collaborate in a pioneering way to raise at least the big cities of nineteenth-century international capitalism to u-topias from the early days of sociological thought in Europe. By exposing the social hardships of that production method, the cities would leverage the awareness and elimination of these dramas as chapters of the historic process of development of the human race.

This representation has been long lasting in the sociology dedicated to urban space. Especially crucial is Lefebvre's dialectic reflection on the city, the urban and the space of the 1960s and 1970s. Forged in critical reassessments by Marx, Hegel and Nietzsche in the light of the social and cultural importance of everyday life in postwar capitalism, the city is a revealing mediation of the historical contradictions that bring human beings close to and move them away from a unique historical possibility that the city itself, as a historically produced work, favors and hampers: the "urban". It is the "simultaneity", the "meeting" of differences, "of the work and the product" through whose mediation the man becomes human, and that, at the turn of 1970 are an increasingly problematic "virtual social reality" amidst the widespread tendency to the "explosion-implosion" of the old urban centers - although the author highlights Paris (Lefebvre 1969, p.50, 77, 86, 1970a, p.13).

Although it communicates with the Marxian u-topia of the city as a place of historical possibilities of disalienation, Lefebvre's conceptualization also transforms it. It invests in leveraging the differences. In *The Differentialist Manifesto* (Lefebvre, 1970b), the explicit affiliation to the Marxian proposal (Marx, 1961) of "human emancipation" comes along with the emphasis on the "right to difference" - towards (more or less tense) irreducible particularities (qualities); the forged relation in relationship experienced as reciprocal, conflicting or appeased (Lefebvre, 1970b, p.44, 64-5). Is the spatial reality privileged for that? The urban, whose "corollary" is "the formation 'in the field' of a differential space-time" (ibid, p.129). This methodological - and evaluative – bet gave rise to the analytical focus on the " iso- topia", "hetero-topia" and "u-topia" triad, capable

of revealing the "differential space within the urban space". Notably the u-topia, "the place of that which doesn't even have a place", would be crucial for the thought (ibid, p.53, 179).

The fact that in recent decades the theoretical and methodological influence of Lefebvrian considerations on space has re-emerged in the four corners of the world (Stanek, 2011 p.xiv-xv) reveals a certain current feature of the old sociological u-topia of the city as a place of possible human emancipation. Of the four academic contexts in question, I allude, as an example, to images of Lefebvrian methodological inspiration that José de Souza Martins (1992, 2008a, 2008b) outlines about São Paulo. The center of that city would have stepped into the twentieth century marked by the "alienation of knowledge without roots, [...] of a deep divorce between the conceived and the experienced" and, more recently, would have lost "its monumentality and urban and urbanizing, emancipating and liberating virtues, its cultural density". All that despite the fact that "megacities" like São Paulo are "scenarios of challenges and possibilities," expressing "adaptive changes in the lifestyle of the millions of people who live in them," and "the emergence of remarkable possibilities for social transformation towards the primacy of man, his freedom, his imagination and his creativity" (Martins, 1992, p.11; 2008a, p.53; 2008b, p.J5).

It is noteworthy that a second quite influential sociological development of the Marxian urban u-topia arises from the same turn of the 1970s in France. Articulating the Althusserian structuralism with Touraine's reflection on the political action of social movements, according to Manuel Castells (1979, 1983, 2000, 2002) the cities are spatial structures of social relations typical of the capitalist world of that time. Shaping, in this context, "systems" organized around the collective consumption of goods, the cities would be "points of contradiction and conflict between capital accumulation and social redistribution, between state control and the empowerment of people" (Castells, 2000; 2002 p.11). Around these themes emerge "new forms of class struggle" (Castells, 1979, p.15, 2000) spearheaded by the so-called urban social movements, whose historical possibilities of action Castells (1983) followed especially until the 1980s.

Mentioned particularly in Latin American urban studies from that time (Gorelik, 2005), the Castellsian bet on the political virtues of urban social movements found an original conceptual development in Lúcio Kowarick (1979, 2000) among others. He recognized "consequences" of the type of capitalist development in Brazil in the twentieth century, not only in the type of labor exploitation existing in São Paulo, but also in the "very urban condition of existence to which the working class was subject" (Kowarick, 1979, p.41), whose spoliatory logic the author has investigated since then. Although more recently he noted that "the libertarian utopias have gotten lost", he also stressed that there is still the "body of ideas of a conception that is built from the struggle of

civil society and that necessarily involves, and increasingly, the issue of democracy", in favor of the belief in the "huge idle potential of historicity" sheltered in Latin America (Kowarick 2000, p.134).

Endowed with emphases ranging from humanity to the autonomy of the people and democracy, the urban u-topia of human disalienation could very well be associated with a second one which I believe was strong in the early days of the sociological thought – but in Germany, France and the United States.

The modernizing city

Cities are represented as places of peculiar possibilities for the realization of this body of ideas, of modernization of social life. The highlights are anxieties about the human being historically forged in the Europe and United States of the eighteenth and nineteenth century revolutions, and spread worldwide in the wake of the social dissemination of modernity as a social and cultural reality guided by the idea that everything and everyone is transient, fashionable, modern. I refer to the ideas of liberty, equality and rationality, with their counterparts of social and cultural differentiation.

Surely these conceptions also permeate the historic ground on which the urban u-topia of possibilities for human disalienation emerged. I associate these ideas with a second representation, to show that the emphasis here lies in values of modernity that are tributary to the assumption that empirically existing human being and generic human being would be *tantamount*. We are far from Marx and Lefebvre, to whom the human race is a theoretical and practical (and political) virtuality, whose constitution process is essentially contradictory.[3]

A synthetic evidence of the entry of the modernizing city in the sociological imaginary is the urban image that permeates a famous essay by Georg Simmel (2005). As a "place of monetary economy" the big city - and the surreptitious empirical reference is Berlin - would be the ideal stage "for the conflict and attempts to unification" of the two types of individualism typical of the "life of the spirit" of its "resident": freedom, "claimed" by the eighteenth century "man", alongside the "human particularity and its achievements, ensured by the nineteenth century division of labor". The thesis is twofold. Autonomy and individual differentiation would integrate "modern life", especially in the big city, which paradoxically challenges these attributes by promoting the "intensification of nervous life", in opposition to "countryside" and "small town" (Simmel, 2005, p. 577-8, 589).

Individual freedom and differentiation thus assume the evaluative status of possibilities typical of large cities. And this in spite of all the counter forces that in these cities would also exist in a unique way; incidentally, a condition that would preclude "judging them": it would only be possible to "understand them" (Simmel, 2005, p.589). While in the Max Weber (2004) of the unfinished essay "The City", the interpretation method is not guided by paradoxes, the conceptual emphasis lies again on the modern characteristics of the cities.

In fact, the typology of cities there is quite large. Since, however, the author searches for meaning connections between the history of ancient and medieval cities in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, and the historical process of rationalization of capitalism particularly in Germany in the early twentieth century, the highlights are the attributes of social life in the medieval towns of north-central Europe that would have a much to share with the "modern city (London, Paris, Berlin, [...] Düsseldorf)" (Weber, 2004, p.412). The "specifics of the western town" would revolve around freedom (in the ownership of real estate, in the personal legal situation), and the "association" (institutional, autonomous) of "citizens" for national interests; so much so that "total strangers" were sometimes incorporated (ibid, p.425-45).

In this sense, the image in its own way contributes to the urban u-topia in question. If Weber's work criticizes the Western rationalization process, the study of cities suggests that the freedom and rationality of the modern city are embryonic historic possibilities in the medieval European past. To circumvent his contemporary dilemmas, bewailed at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, there is nothing like politics – of which Weber was an obstinate advocate.

An example that the effect of this urban u-topia is not an attribute of the German sociologists of the time, is Durkheim's focus (Durkheim, 2004) on the explicit evaluative merits of the medieval corporation - empirically characteristic of European *cities* - to curb the individualism of modern society. Indeed, this kind of positive appreciation of medieval cities is inseparable from a broader intellectual movement in the early days of sociology in Europe: "Suddenly the Middle Ages are once again the object of humanist attention" (Nisbet, 1981, p.55, 57).

But there is more. Just seek the sociological reflection on the city at the University of Chicago since the 1910s. In its final version, the pioneer program of "investigation of human behavior in the urban environment", Robert E. Park (1967) ecologically associates the city with the "natural habitat of the civilized man," but also with a "cultural area characterized by its peculiar cultural type", in the words of a German bestseller of the time: "All great cultures are city-born. The outstanding man of the second generation is a city-building animal" (Spengler cited in Park, 1967 p.2-3). Although the research topics listed in the text refer to its own social problems typical of the conflicting and unequal city that Chicago used to be back then, ultimately the "big city" is at the same time the cradle of human "civilization." This category, characteristic of the modern political ideology in France, suggests the importance, in the city imagined by Park, of attributes typical of the modern world. Not surprisingly, at the end of the text the author highlighted the moral diversity of the city "because of the opportunity that it offers, particularly to the exceptional and abnormal types of man": it "shows the good and evil in human nature in excess" (Park, 1967 p.46).

The formulation ensures the civilized city of the author an evaluatively paradoxical character typical of Simmel's modern city. Indeed, Park attended Simmel's classes in Berlin and translated his texts (Lindner, 2004, p.120-1). But Weber's modern medieval city also implicitly matters at another point in the text (Park, 1967, p.12).

And there are cases in which this city explicitly guides, alongside de Simmelian city, the reflections of the sociologist from Chicago. This is what happened in the Louis Wirth (1938) of the bet on "urbanism as a way of life."

In hindsight, the u-topia that these images show may seem dated. Not only the Second World War but also the subsequent decolonization struggles destroyed the belief in the Western liberating virtues of reason, freedom and equality. The postmodern movement also helped to highlight the historical, political and social character of all that (Harvey, 1992). However, that was no reason for the sociology of the last sixty years in the four scenarios in question to fail in recording approaches that diversely update this u-topia.

The conceptual focus of the Latin American sociology of the 1950s and part of the 1960s in the urbanization-industrialization dyad fed strongly on the so-called modernization theory of Weberian inspiration (Gorelik, 2005, p.117-18). It is against this context, for example, that such an explicitly evaluative image of the urbanization of São Paulo like that of Florestan Fernandes is understood (1960, p.191):

> Considering the conditions under which the disaggregation [in São Paulo] of the old social order of slaves and masters and the incipient development of the new order of social classes occurred, urbanization represents and ensures evolution to *historically desirable* social situations of life in Brazil. (emphasis mine)

Another indication: the institutional proposition of a "rural sociology" in the 1960s stems from the unambiguous expansion of urban over rural - and rational over traditional, etc. (Martins, 1981, p.23). But the u-topia in question also has far less dated developments in today's view. I think, on the one hand, of a certain recent American sociology which, in dialogue with sociological considerations by Erving Goffman – from the so-called second generation of the Chicago School - on the social logic of social interaction situations, highlighted the evaluatively positive links between the city and the stranger (Lofland, 1985, 1998; Sennett, 1978, 2005). These are proposals that touch evaluative bets in the equality and freedom implicit, initially, in Simmel's approach to sociability among the anonymous in the modern city (see in particular Lofland, 1998). As for Weber, there are those who recognize him in the theoretical line that allows Richard Sennett to associate the city with the alleged freedom implicit in the possibilities of social insertion of the stranger therein (Martins, 2008b).

I refer, on the other hand, to a French sociology that in recent decades has

emphasized the communicative virtues of public spaces where strangers interact, and that characterize the city as such (Joseph, 1991, 1998). The figure of the "townsman" essentially open to communication, results from the critical updating of the emphasis on Chicago in city interactions, through a return to Simmel.

All that not to mention the true tradition of German sociological studies of the period that followed the Second World War around the issue of "urbanity" (see Frehse 2010, p.10-11). Using the conceptual attributes of the modern city of Simmel and Weber, and Wirth's urbanism, several authors have assessed more or less critically, with the help of notion, the urban reality that empirically exists in Germany. Indeed, urbanity is assumed by one of its most fierce new advocates (Siebel, 1994) as the "result of social processes" that would have, over the centuries, turned the "European city" into a place where history is present in the everyday life of its residents; a place of more or less conflicting encounters with the strange and a shelter for deviant behaviors; a place of "conscious" conflict of interests; and of freedom, emancipation and contradiction.

Once all these aspects have been explained, we come to a third and final u- topia. Considering the contexts in question, it introduces itself subtly particularly in Brazil.

The different city with relation to the modern

While the early days of Chicago show a sociology that fed evaluatively, without mediation, on German u-topias of the modernization of social life in the cities, the early days of the discipline in Brazil, in the 1930s, suggest the *contrapuntal* importance of that u-topia. The city houses unique historical possibilities of differentiation in relation to European - and American modernity.

Much of that is likely due to the explanatory emphasis that the "past" takes on the social thought that was established in the country then, becoming a brand of the first generation of local sociologists (Candido, 2006a, p.232s). Inseparable from the "sharp curiosity" of Brazilian intellectuals of the time "to see the country and, in a broader sense, modern society and its problems" (Candido, 2006b, p.284), the sociological focus on the past of the urban world in Brazil appears in a pioneering way not only in Gilberto Freyre's (2000) *mansions and huts* (*sobrados and mocambos*), but also in parts of *Raízes do Brasil,* in which the historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (2006, p.67-184) resorts contrapuntally to Weber's considerations about the cities and the process of Western rationalization in the civil service, in order to explain features of urbanization in nineteenth-century Brazil.

In culturalist and socio-historical approaches, large nineteenth-century cities in the country are imagined as places whose cultural traits and socio-historical processes, respectively, *differ* from those of European cities that conceptually populate the imaginary of the two authors in these works. Freyre (2000, p.11) emphasizes that "with the development of cities and industries" and the "decline of rural patriarchy in Brazil," social distances, on the one hand, would

have decreased throughout the nineteenth century, but on the other "clashes among men, which the Industrial Revolution instigated in our midst, would have increased and become more frequent." And yet, the cities of the period would also have been the stage of typically "Brazilian" "compromises" between social extremes: processions, church festivals, and carnival would be "moments of socialization" that turned the streets and squares into "areas of socialization" (ibid, p.13, 16).

Buarque de Holanda (2006, p.88-9), in turn, states that "the growth process of urban centers" came hand in hand with the "development of the traditional situation of the dependency" of "the cities in view of agricultural domains", changing the "classic and typically European" distinction between city and village into "urban environment" and the "farm" that would have marked "the entire administrative system of the country" in the Empire and the Republic. It is this specificity, among others, that abolition would challenge, the "landmark" of a "slow revolution" whose fate - democracy or authoritarianism - was still undecided in 1936 (ibid, p.126).

Marked by this analytical attention to historically forged differences between Brazilian and European cities, both images suggest evaluative bets of their authors in the historical possibilities of a specific - "Brazilian" - future contained in these differences. For good or ill.

But they were not alone. Sociology was institutionalized in the pioneering University of São Paulo by the hand of people like Roger Bastide (1987, p.188), whose teaching practice aimed at "taking from reality a Brazilian theory rather than imposing on Brazilian facts a sociology born in North America or Europe."

Having said that, it should be considered that probably this kind of emphasis on the search for the difference in relation to the European and/or American modern – and the urban u-topia it holds - is not typical of the early days of sociology in Brazil. While it is not within the purpose of this essay to deepen this aspect, I remember that it is the academic scenarios peripheral to Europe and the United States that have given rise to conceptual claims on behalf of non-Eurocentric notions of modernity - and a "decolonized" sociology (Boatca et al., 2010).

As for the urban u-topia now at stake, it reappears after the trajectory of the sociological reflection about the cities in Brazil. The same Fernandes who embraced evaluatively, through the functionalist method, the modernizing virtues of urbanization, pointed out the strong presence of "some rural components" in the metropolitan present of São Paulo of the 1950s - opening up an interpretive space for differences of the national urban reality in relation to the north American context, the first empirical reference for reflection on the "rural-urban continuum", with which Fernandes (1960, p.192, 191) works. Back in the 1970s, Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz (1978, p.47) pointed out, based on an analysis of nineteenth-century São Paulo, that unlike Europe and

the United States then, urbanization in Brazil does not coincide with industrialization.

It is in light of this line of theoretical concerns that one also understands why Kowarick and Martins, educated in this academic tradition, had been concerned until recently with the specificities of urbanization in Brazil: its exclusionary and predatory (Kowarick, 2009), residual (Martins, 2008b) nature. Thus we approach, from another angle, the first u-topia mentioned here: in search of theoretical - and historical - possibilities of difference in current urban Brazil, the Marx-inspired dialectic continues to be revealing...

Between sociology and hope (in cities), historicity

Synthesized the three u-topias and some of their more recent developments in four Western academic contexts, it is noted that although fraught with social problems, the cities have also been the object of desires and expectations of sociologists who have contributed significantly, in conceptual terms, to the history of these respective sociologies. If on the one hand only rarely hope in these cities is explicit, on the other it can be perceived through intuition. Just take into account the concepts of time that impregnate the images and thus the three u-topias by reference to the urban space.

In this sense, not much importance is given to the teleological character which, as it was very typical of the nineteenth century, emerges at the beginning of sociology in Europe and the United States. Indeed, for Marx the ultimate goal of history is communism, and its "sense" is the "extension of rationality itself, human achievement" (Lefebvre, 1971, p.21). In Simmel, Weber and Durkheim, in turn, the present future is the modern city, inseparable, in Park, from a linear conception of history, from the world primitive to civilization. These teleologies crashed after World War II, as also did the belief in modernity as a "project" (Habermas, 1985, p.9).

More interesting is the fact that under the cloak of distinct historical finalisms - more recently in question - hides the view that the future of the cities in question is inseparable from how the past and present are combined in them. The images result from interpretive threads on the inseparable links between past, present and future, in the respectively conceptualized urban reality. It is what I call *historical* conception of time. Historicity matters - and opens up space for different conceptual approaches (whether teleological or not) of the hopes of sociologists in those cities.

Postmodern readers of this essay might argue: these are conceptions of time typical of modernity, already outdated! In fact, if fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all "universal discourses" are "the hallmark of postmodern thought" (Harvey, 1992, p.19), and this implies reducing the experience to "a series of pure presents unrelated in time" (Jameson, 1984, p.20, cited in Harvey, 1992, p.57), then ...

But this is also a specific, *present-minded* conception of time in relation

to space. It falls, incidentally, in a broader trend predicted by Lefebvre (2000, p.114): "time disappears in the social space of modernity." From this angle, articulating past, present and future in space actually makes no sense.

The fact is that under the more or less explicit impact of the postmodernity call, not to mention economic globalization and the much-heralded "crisis of ideologies", this present-minded conception of time also entered the recent sociological reflection on the cities. This is what is observed in images which, with different methodological orientation, are temporally based on the assumption, for example, of "radical" changes in the social structure of cities in recent decades (Sassen, 1991, p.12); of an absolutely new pattern of - "visual " – consumption of time and space (Zukin, 2000, p.81); of "many" changes in "times, spaces and rhythms of urban experience" since the 1990s (Telles & Cabanes, 2006, p.11). If the social and cultural complexities of the contemporary urban environment undoubtedly bring new challenges to sociology, in turn formulations such as these show that the present in the cities can also be imagined as essentially distinct from everything that was there before. So much so that conceptual tools hitherto common for planning the city - and forged in dialogue with the ideals of modernity - would have become obsolete.

With close attention to conceptions of time implicit in the respective images of city, the relative character even of conceptual associations such as these becomes clear. Especially when the blunt rupture of the present in relation to the past becomes kind of an analytical assumption, although in itself it is an investigative issue: sharp change in relation to what, if the past itself does not exist "in itself" as taught by Foucault's criticism of history - which fostered postmodernity itself?

Here this aspect matters less than the link of sociology with the hope that the present-minded conception of time indicates. No urban u-topia at all.

And that means no harm to sociological thought when hope is not at stake. But when, as in the seminar that fostered this essay, it does matter, conceptions of time in relation to urban space gain an unsuspected relevance. They become precisely methodological references of different links of sociology with hope. The imaginary foray attempted here suggests that historical representations of time in relation to urban space are *sine qua non* conditions for distinguishing hope in the sociology devoted to the cities. As for other places of hope of the discipline, they too would need to be submitted to the temporal methodological parameter - but this is a task for another time.

The finding sheds new light on the so-called current crisis of hopes in sociology. However, the assumption of the difference between past, present and future for the knowledge of historical facts (Koselleck, 1981) is essentially Western. It is no surprise that hope will be challenged when, as currently seen in Europe, sociology takes other notions of time seriously - in order to "decolonize" itself.

But could it be, then, there is no more space - and time - for hope in the discipline? At least in the case of cities, the most recent developments of the three u-topias we know are rather suggestive. They indicate that, in search of hope, a privileged route for sociology is to be sensitive, again, to time, actually with the historicity of social processes inside and outside the cities.

The time we need, however, is specific - and opens up space for my own hope. Don't even think about showing a prior evaluative preference for the modern. This is what happened in the past of blind faith in the virtues of modernization. I have learned from my research that methodologically assuming the historical time as mediation, ensures modernity itself a crucial methodological role for the critical knowledge of historical possibilities contained in urban spaces in the present. And for the critical recognition of the more or less illusive hope contained in the spaces that sociology produces when studying them.

Notes

1 The foreign texts which appear without any indication of translation (Trans.) in the References of this article were translated into Portuguese by this author.

2 I have selected these contexts with relative randomness, within the scope of broader studies on Western sociology dedicated to cities, including a fellow (2010) at the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, to which I am grateful.

3 Indeed, Marx and Engels criticize in the neo-Hegelians the assumption of "Man" (his rights, property, etc.) as a *fait accompli* in the Germany of the time.

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Abstract – What do the places conceptualized in sociological thought reveal about the ways this discipline addresses hope? Sociologists' hopes express themselves, among others, in representations of places that are envisaged as settings historically pregnant with other social orders. By focusing especially on urban u-topias brought about at the beginning of sociology in Germany, France, the United States and Brazil, and on their recent conceptual developments, one realizes the methodological role that representations of time as to (urban) space play in the relations of sociology with hope. Particularly historical concepts of time regarding cities seem to be crucial for a "hopeful" sociology.

Keywords: Sociology, Time, Space, U-topia, City.

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