

# Housing Programs as Vectors of Urban Space Production

## - Their Impact on Families in Socio-Environmental Risk.

Sandra Maria Scheffer<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The paper presents preliminary results of the research of doctorate on urban space production in relation to housing in Ponta Grossa, Brazil, regarding the support to families in socio-environmental risk. The soil use and occupation are historically produced and reveal the dynamics of each society and the interaction between several social segments. Public policies foster the production of urban space, more specifically the housing policy, through the implementation of programs that define characteristics of space concentration and determine the population profile. In March 2009, the Program “My House My Life” was launched, this is a Federal Program that in one of its income groups aims to prioritize the support to families living in risky or unhealthy areas or that have become homeless, therefore, are exposed to socio-environmental risk. This study presents preliminary results regarding the analysis of urban space production, under the perspective of sustainability and considering the implementation of the Housing Program in the city of Ponta Grossa, State of Paraná, Brazil, from 2010 to 2013. This city is relevant for the study as it received high investment of Federal resources to build housing units. The city also presents a large number of precarious settlements with families living in socio-environmental risk and who demand housing. The methodology adopted is the Henri Lefebvre Method, called regressive-progressive, which helps to reflect on the historicity of the space production. Research preliminary data was gathered from governmental organizations documents. The housing policy is shown as a vector of space production in which some distancing of the individuals involved might occur regarding the moments of the policy conception and its implementation.

*Key words:* Families in socio-environmental risk, housing policy, space production

### 1. Introduction

Space production is a historical process regarding the broad reproduction of the production model, expressing spatial forms which result from social processes. Therefore, the soil use and occupation are historically produced and reveal the dynamics of each society and the interaction between several social segments.

One of the characteristics of public policies is to be a vector fostering urban space production, more specifically the housing policy, through the implementation of programs that define socio-spatial characteristics of concentration regarding the population profile.

<sup>1</sup> Masters in Applied Social Sciences at Ponta Grossa State University (2003), Doctorate Student in the Urban Management Program at the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná. Professor at the Ponta Grossa State University in the Social Work Course. The thesis is oriented by Samira Kauchakje, political scientist, Doctor in Education and Post-doctorate at the Research Institute and Urban and Regional Planning - IPPUR/Rio de Janeiro Federal University –UFRJ. Professor in the Post-Graduation Program in Urban Management and in the Social Sciences Course at PUCPR.

In the region of Ponta Grossa, State of Paraná, in the South of Brazil, the production of space has as one of its historical determinants the implementation of housing complexes. This is mainly observed in the programs for low income families which define occupation social characteristics and produce the periphery spatial growth.

From 2009, with financial resources from the Federal Program *My house My Life* (*Minha Casa Minha Vida- PMCMV*), the city enhanced this characteristic of spatial growth. This program aims to prioritize the assistance to families living in risky or unhealthy areas, or that for some reason lost their houses and, thus, live in socio-environmental risky areas.

Therefore, this article aims to present research preliminary results regarding the analysis of urban space production under the sustainability perspective, considering the implementation of the program My House My Life, from the territorial basis of the city of Ponta Grossa, State of Paraná, throughout the period 2010 to 2014, focusing on the families that were in socio-environmental risk.

The investigation and interpretation of the research data are based on the method of Henri Lefebvre, called regressive-progressive, is adopted to help capture the historicity of the space production. Techniques were used as bibliographic and documentary research based on data collection from governmental agency documents. Also, statistical procedures and explanatory maps were used to present and discuss the data collected.

The Lefebvre Method brings to a first plane the interpretation of the social practice contradictions in the space as a set of social relations that have real existence “in and through space” to grasp the production historicity.

In this sense, the article is divided into sections as follows: a) conception on the urban space production, where the theoretical perspectives of critical authors regarding key concepts such as urban and space are presented; b) the Program My House My Life, presenting the historical conjuncture characteristics of the program implementation in Brazil; c) a case study with the Program My House My Life characteristics in Ponta Grossa and its repercussion on space production mainly for the families living in socio-environmental risky areas; d) research results. This text is, therefore, designed with the intention to contribute to the theoretical debate with an initial discussion in order to encourage continuous research on the topic under analysis.

## **2. Urban space production conception**

In this section, some essential elements are identified in order to understand how the urban space is constituted. Thus, it starts from the idea that in the definition of space use, both spatial shapes and social relations are interrelated, and these are situated in a specific context which is inserted into a specific production model. Therefore, the use and occupation of soil are historically produced and reveal the dynamics of each society, from the interaction of its several social segments.

Lefebvre (1974) highlights in his studies, the term space production, in which the space and the capitalist relation reproduction with all its conflicts and contradictions are interrelated.

Milton Santos (1991) supporting his theoretical debates on the critical referential, presents similarities with Lefebvre, however, also advocates the discussion in which the space is the combination of shape, structure and function. It is from the society

dialectical movement that shapes and functions are changed provoking changes to the places throughout time. Therefore, space is produced in and through the social totality movement.

For Santos (1997, p.26) the "...space is not a thing, nor a system of things, other than a relational reality: things and relations together. That is why its definition cannot be found unless in relation to other realities: nature and society, mediated by work."

Correa (2000) agrees with Lefebvre about the discussion over the capitalist production model, influencing and reflecting in the space construction, however, he also points out how the parts connect with each other or not, reflecting a class society "... it is simultaneously fragmented and articulated: each of its parts keep spatial relations with the others, even if with variable intensity." (2000, p. 7) The connection between the parts which compose the urban space is organized around the capitalist movements, through the goods circulation instruments, investments and the ideological reproduction. Therefore, the urban space expresses the society reflecting a class society. "These spatial relations are of a social nature and their matrix the class society and its processes." (Correa, 2000, p.8)

Godoy (2004), as Lefebvre, highlights that the space exposes in the content of its shape the same contradictions that have produced it, which are also social relations reproduction conditions. Godoy agrees with Milton Santos, when he draws on the work and production categories to analyze the concept explaining that these categories reflect on the concept of space production. He understands that "the space production is the production of objects that articulate and organize, in their specific functions, social interchanges which involve work and production. The space is, in this case, the materiality and the mediation between production systems, work control and reproduction in its technical and material dimension." (2004, p.33)

Regarding the concept of urban, Castells (1983) points out that the urban phenomenon and urbanization analysis must be developed towards the knowledge of their social processes. He states that: "Explaining the social process which is in the basis of space organization is not only to situate the urban phenomenon in its context. A sociological problematic of urbanization must consider it as a process of organization and development, and, therefore, from the relation between productive forces, social classes and cultural forms (among which the space)". (1983, p. 36)

For Castells (1983) urbanization is a broader concept than the spatial concentration of a population within certain limits of dimension and density. He also thinks it goes beyond a diffusion of value, attitudes and behavior systems called urban culture. There is a link between these delimitations, social concentration and value systems, and this can be a way of understanding the urban, however, it is not limited to the junction of definitions either.

Another point questioned by the author is about the direct link between industrialization and urbanization, calling attention to the need for understanding the particularity of each concrete experience of the urbanization phenomenon in different social realities.

Regarding industrialization and urbanization, these are processes which are related, but not all urbanization results from industrialization. In certain societies, urbanization comes before industrialization, which occurs is that when the later seeks important

elements for its development such as workforce, raw material, transport and proper places for its facilities, tends to foster urbanization.

Monte-Mór (2006), understands that there is a way of being urban, in which the capital is influenced by the transition of urban characteristics, therefore, this way of being urban is a major factor once it is the influencing capital. In this sense, this author does not refer to the term urban culture as Castells (1983), but develops a similar theory when states that individuals present a way of being urban.

For Monte-Mór (2005), cities are shaped according to the capital logics, generating changes on the country. He considers that the country and the city are interrelated socio-spatial elements, but the urban way is prevalent, once the country produces and relates intensively with cities. The author includes in his discussion the term extensive urbanization, in order to discuss the urban tissue enlargement, that is, cities grow socio-spatial and virtually in an urban way, therefore, the urban is spreading and integrating the rural to the urban.

Castells (1983) confirms this statement, which exposes that the apparent separation between urban and rural hides a relation of mutual dependence and articulation between production, consumption and lifestyle. For this author, urban and rural are associated dimensions of the same societal phenomenon, interrelated and mutually determining.

But, urban is also a way of thinking and acting, therefore, a person might live in a rural area, but acquire urban habits, that is think and act with urban characteristics, therefore the urban extrapolates pre-determined limits of territory. (Castells, 1983; Monte-Mór, 2006)

By analyzing the relation between urban and rural, the society is seen in a historical movement based on the development of productive forces that reflect the mankind relation with nature, human beings with human beings, and human beings with production means. Thus, we agree with Santos, who explains that "...we cannot talk anymore about the classical notion of urban network; the same way we cannot refer anymore to the classical notions of city-country relations. This does not mean that such relations do not exist anymore, but that they changed in content and form."(1997, p. 49)

Taking into consideration this conceptual universe, urbanization expresses the social production of spatial forms in which there are agents in a dispute for urban spaces. For Ana Fani Carlos "The spatial production is carried out in people's everyday life and appears as a form of occupation and/or use of a certain place in a specific time". (2001, p. 46)

The conception: urban and space presented in this section by these authors tend to have some similarities or conceptual complementarities, from which we highlight some conclusive elements such as:

- The urban space is an unequal and changeable complex. Unequal because it expresses class relations which exist in the capitalist society and changeable due to the social dynamics;
- Urban space is a relational reality, in which different social segment actions are expressed, revealing the social process;
- The space conception is fundamental in order to understand the relations around it, once these are determined by the society movement and its production model;

- Urbanization is a social and historically built process. Urban life presents as one of its most remarkable characteristics, the complex diversity, formed by different cultural patterns, social classes, religions, architectural shapes and all the other forms of coexistence, among other diversities, which bring dynamics to the urbanization phenomenon;

- The spatial shape becomes a social factor through the social values designated to space and through the action of several agents that act upon it.

Therefore, the space production goes through this diversity of agents' interests defining logics of socio-spatial occupation.

### **3. The Program My House My Life in Brazil**

Public policies are a place of conflict, there is a relation of forces between the relevant parties and it is in this game that they originate and are established, therefore, it is a state of alliances which is altered throughout the historical trajectory.

The program My House My Life – PMCMV, as a modality of Housing National Policy, is within this logics, since it was created through the Law n° 11,977 in 2009 aiming to favor the production and acquisition of new housing units, fostering the economy through the generation of employment and income and has been altered by the Law n°12.424/2011, which defined some changes for the second phase of this Program.

According to Soares et al (2013) the Program was also presented as one of the main actions of the government reacting to the international economic crisis in 2008 that hit the country, as it provided the creation of jobs and investments in the civil construction sector through a large scale social policy, which aimed to meet the demand for low income houses.

The program, in the urban area, has three levels of clients, according to the income: up to R\$ 1,600 (level 1), up to R\$ 3,100 (level 2) and up to R\$ 5,000 (level 3).

For families with the lowest income – level 1, the Federal government offers financial support. The contractors present projects to the government, the federal bank Caixa Econômica Federal (CAIXA), which is the main financial agent in the Housing National System – analyses and contracts the work, providing resources and organizing the commercialization, while the municipalities are responsible for the application forms and selection of families interested in buying their own house.

In Ponta Grossa, a city in the State of Paraná, the municipal agency responsible for collecting the application forms and informing CAIXA about these families is PROLAR – Ponta Grossa Housing Company.

### **4. Ponta Grossa Housing and Program My House My Life Characteristics**

The phenomenon of population concentration in the urban space changed the dynamics of the Brazilian society, resulting in a new lifestyle, the urban. With differences in each region and in each city, the urbanization phenomenon spread all over the country.

Ponta Grossa is not indifferent to the urbanization phenomenon. In the city history, it is possible to verify remarkable phases of development which contributed to

the appearance and expansion of population and its urbanization process, such as the cattle dealers occupation, the construction of railways accelerating the urbanization process, the migratory movements, mainly of foreigners, enlarging the demographic structure, the industrialization through the industrial plan development, among other factors.

Among the most distinctive characteristics of this city, is its privileged geographical location, since its appearance in the route of cattle dealers up to the construction of important roads and railways. The road and rail junction favored population concentration, as it made the traffic between cities easier, mainly within the region.

In 2013, according to IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) data, the city of Ponta Grossa had around 331,611 inhabitants. From this total, the rural Ponta Grossa population corresponded to 2,54% while 97,46% comprised the urban area residents.

These indices are above the national average, for which IBGE pointed a rate of 84.4% urban population in 2010, which on the one hand shows an accelerated urbanization process and on the other hand reveals that the city did not present as a characteristic the growth and/or maintenance of an expressive rural population in the last decades.

Thus, the urban space becomes the privileged place of expression of social struggles and conflicts, resulting from capitalism, and which generate demands for the State, among them the housing demand.

According to data from the PROLAR, the Housing Company established in Ponta Grossa in 1989, up to the year 2009, a number of 3,406 houses had been implemented and over 6,971 units regarding other programs such as pieces of land and condominiums, which resulted in a total of 10,431 housing units throughout the 20 years of this company. After 2010, considering built houses and those in contract processes through the Program My House My Life, a total of 7,214 houses and 234 pieces of land were commercialized, comprising a total of 7,448 housing units in the last 3 years.

This data demonstrate that this city outstands in the State for having received a high amount of federal resources for the construction of housing units through the Program My House My Life.

#### **4.1. Families in risky areas and irregular occupations**

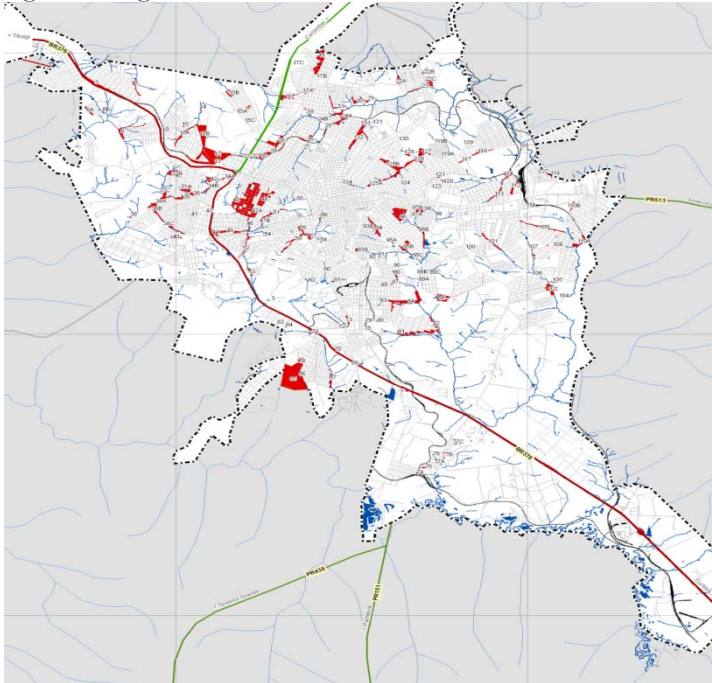
The city of Ponta Grossa also presents a high number of precarious settlements with families living in socio-environmental risk and demand better quality housing. According to the Housing and Social Interest Municipal Plan 2011, the city had 162 irregular settlements totaling 8,778 housing units. From these irregular settlements, 80 are in conditions considered of high or very high environmental inadequacy, which corresponds to 49,4% of all occupations, therefore, around 4,336 families in a situation of environmental inadequacy, or even risk.

These families are also characterized by the unsuitability of their houses, regarding ownership and infrastructure; these are, therefore, considered precarious settlements in socio-environmental risk.

In Ponta Grossa, according to information in Figure 1, the precarious settlement locations are usually the small river banks, and areas destined to permanent preservation,

causing the destruction of riparian vegetation, consequently changing the original landscape. This tendency results in many problems for the environmental preservation of areas and for the families who live in these places, as they many times suffer life threatening and risky situations.

Figure 1 – Irregular settlements in Ponta Grossa urban area - 2010



Source: Ponta Grossa Housing and social interest Plan - 2010

In the PMCMV norms there are rules to attend the demand, and one of the criteria is to prioritize the families living in risky or unhealthy areas or that have lost their homes. In order to complement the national criteria, the municipality through its organization entity can establish three additional criteria. Ponta Grossa defined the *per capita* income, original home, considering that the worst conditions must be prioritized, and number of dependents eligible regarding age.

Therefore, both in the national and in the local criteria the need to assist families with precarious homes is expressed. Ponta Grossa has a Municipal Law 10,367 of 2010, altered by the Law 11,303 of 2013 as a complement which defines that each Housing complex must shelter 15% of families coming from risky areas.

According to Table 1, Ponta Grossa has built 18 complexes in the Program My House My Life comprising the lowest income level totaling 5,805 houses from which 1,827 are still being constructed and 3,978 have already been made available to the families, from these 2,196 were destined to families that used to live in unhealthy or risky areas, that is 55,20%. This data demonstrates that the assistance was above that required by the municipal law.

**Table 1** – Housing complexes from the Program My House My Life in Ponta Grossa.

NAME OF THE COMPLEX	NUMBER OF HOUSES	N° OF FAMILIES COMING FROM UNHEALTHY OR RISKY AREAS		YEAR OF COMPLETION
HOUSING COMPLEX JARDIM GRALHA AZUL	195	120*	61,53%	2012
HOUSING COMPLEX JARDIM AMÁLIA I	99	56	56,56%	2012
HOUSING COMPLEX JARDIM AMÁLIA II	339	213	62,83%	2012
HOUSING COMPLEX JARDIM BOREAL	365	173	47,39%	2012
RESIDENTIAL ROMA	249	133	53,41%	2012
RESIDENTIAL ATHENAS	341	192	56,30%	2012
RESIDENTIAL RECANTO VERDE	392	115	29,33%	2012
RESIDENTIAL CALIFORNIA I	153	105	68,62%	2012/2013
RESIDENTIAL CALIFORNIA II	328	298	90,85%	2012/2013
RESIDENTIAL LONDRES	457	201	43,98%	2013
RESIDENTIAL ITAPOÁ	500	258	51,6%	2013
HOUSING COMPLEX JARDIM PORTO SEGURO	85	37	43,52%	2013
RESIDENTIAL PANAMÁ	475	295	62,10%	2014
RESIDENTIAL AMÉRICA**	500			2014
RESIDENTIAL ESPLENDORE**	200			2014
RESIDENTIAL COSTA RICA I**	387			2014
RESIDENTIAL COSTA RICA II**	386			2014
RESIDENTIAL COSTA RICA III **	354			2014

Source: Data from the Ponta Grossa Housing Company – Prolar organized by the author - 2014

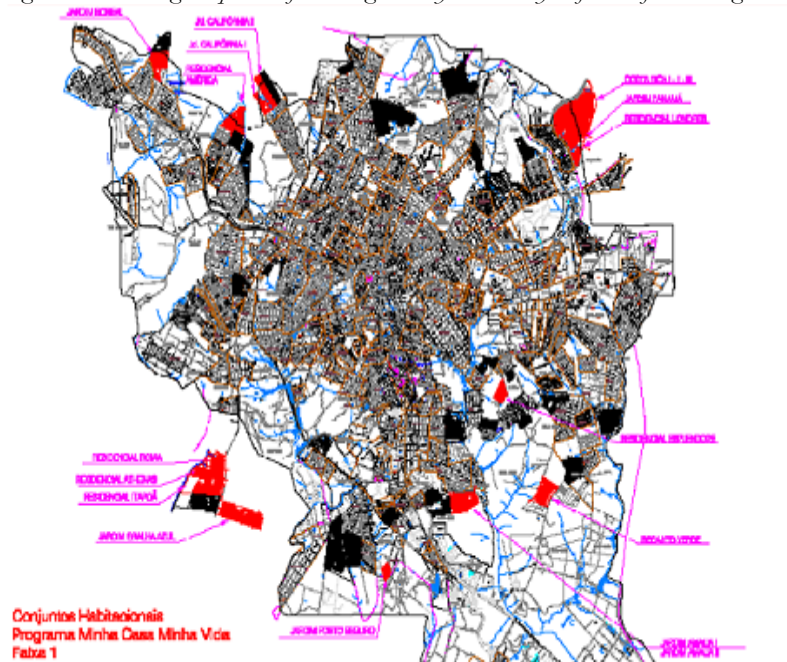
Note: \*According to PROLAR, in the housing complex Gralha, which was the first complex built, the information regarding families in risky areas might not be accurate.

\*\* The complexes América, Esplendore and Costa Rica I, II and III are still being built and the process of selection and analysis in development, therefore, the number of families from unhealthy or risky areas might be inaccurate.

In order to identify the location of these complexes production, in Figure 2 the spatial configuration of the city Housing Company projects is highlighted in black, while the Housing Complexes belonging to the Program My House My Life are presented in the color red.



Figure 2 – Housing complexes of the Program My House My Life with families registered at PROLAR.



Source: Ponta Grossa Housing Company – PROLAR - 2014

Regarding the location of the Program My House My Life housing complexes, the requirement is limited to its insertion in areas close to the urban network, however, from Figure 2 it is possible to see that the Housing complexes presented in red reinforce the characteristic of the city horizontal growth increasing the periphery and that some complexes are not very close to already implemented neighborhoods and for this reason are in a more peripheral position and less integrated to the urban network.

The residents of these complexes, more specifically those coming from risky or unhealthy areas leave that situation behind and improve their home standard of living, but get farther from the public services creating another unfavorable situation that results from the urban space production.

### Final remarks

The housing policy is presented as a vector of space production which is man-made and reproduces continually. The conception of space is fundamental to comprehend the relations around it, as these are determined by the society movement and its production model.

Housing projects are within these logics, as they are developed to satisfy the need for housing, on the other hand they generate highly significant impacts to the environment, endangering all the pre-existing natural form. Thus, the cities growth alters the landscape,

with constructions, and the urban services network which are necessary for the implementation of housing complexes.

Therefore, the Housing Policy produces and alters the space, defining through its criteria the population segments that will occupy this space. Also, the spatial forms become a social factor through the social values designated to the space and by the action of several agents that act upon it.

The regressive-progressive method demonstrated in an initial application, the necessary historical background in order to better understand the current characteristics and clarifying that in this construction and production of space, there is some distancing for the receivers of this benefit, especially those coming from risky areas, regarding the moments of policy conception and implementation.

In order to deal with this situation in a progressive way, favoring the urban sustainability process, a normative treatment is necessary with principles that enable urban planning to be worked so that bigger problems and degradation of the physical space can be avoided and the social needs of individuals who receive the program can be catered for.

Therefore, it is necessary a totaling perspective about the existing complexity of urban environments and these must be analyzed and evaluated so that they can be used in a sustainable way.

## References

- CASTELLS, Manuel. *A questão urbana*. Tradução de Arlene Caetano. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1983. 590 p.
- CORRÊA, Roberto Lobato. *O espaço urbano*. 4ª ed. São Paulo: Ática, 2000. 95p.
- DI GIOVANNI, Geraldo. As estruturas elementares das políticas públicas. *Caderno de pesquisa nº 82*, NEPP, 2009.
- GODOY, P. Uma reflexão sobre a produção do espaço. *Estudos Geográficos*, v.2, n. 1, p. 29-42, 2004.
- LEFEBVRE, H. *A Produção do Espaço*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1974.
- MONTE-MÓR, R. L. O que é o urbano, no mundo contemporâneo. *Revista Paranaense de Desenvolvimento*, n. 111, p. 09-18, 2006.
- ROCHA, F. G.; PIZZOLATTI, R. L. Cidade: espaço de descontinuidades. *Estudos Geográficos*, v. 3, n. 2, p. 46-53, 2005.
- SANTOS, Milton. *Pensando o Espaço do Homem*. São Paulo. Hucitec, 3. edição, 1991.
- SANTOS, Milton. *Metamorfoses do espaço habitado*. 5 ed. São Paulo:Hucitec, 1997
- SOARES, Isabelle Oliveira; et al. Interesses especulativos, atuação do Estado e direito à cidade: o caso do programa “Minha Casa Minha Vida” em Uberaba (MG). *URBE. Revista Brasileira de Gestão Urbana (Brazilian Journal of Urban Management)*, v. 5, n. 1, p. 119-131, jan./dez. 2013