

Mario Peters

# Apartments for Workers

Social Housing, Segregation, and Stigmatization in Urban Brazil



Nomos

Studien zu Lateinamerika  
Latin America Studies

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Volume 32

Mario Peters

# **Apartments for Workers**

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**Nomos**

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## Abbreviations

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| ANPOCS    | Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais               |
| ANPUR     | Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Planejamento Urbano e Regional |
| APCBH     | Arquivo Público da Cidade de Belo Horizonte                                       |
| BNH       | Banco Nacional da Habitação   |
| CAPs      | Caixas de Aposentadoria e Pensões   |
| C.A.S.A.  | Companhia Auxiliar de Serviços de Administração S.A.                              |
| CHISBEL   | Coordenação de Habitação de Interesse Social de Belo Horizonte                    |
| CNT       | Conselho Nacional do Trabalho   |
| COBAL     | Companhia Brasileira de Alimentos   |
| Cohabs    | Companhias de Habitação   |
| DBP       | Departamento Municipal de Habitação e Bairros Populares (Belo Horizonte)          |
| EESC-USP  | Escola de Engenharia de São Carlos da Universidade de São Paulo                   |
| FCP       | Fundação da Casa Popular  |
| FGTS      | Fundo de Garantia do Tempo de Serviço   |
| FJP       | Fundação João Pinheiro  |
| GEPH      | Gerência de Patrimônio Histórico Urbano (Belo Horizonte)                          |
| IAPB      | Instituto de Aposentadoria e Pensões dos Bancários                                |
| IAPI      | Instituto de Aposentadoria e Pensões dos Industriários                            |
| IAPs      | Institutos de Aposentadoria e Pensões   |
| INPS      | Instituto Nacional de Previdência Social  |
| MG        | Minas Gerais  |
| MTIC      | Ministério do Trabalho, Indústria e Comércio                                      |
| PBH       | Prefeitura de Belo Horizonte  |
| PNH       | Plano Nacional de Habitação   |
| PUC Minas | Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais                                  |

### *Abbreviations*

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| PUC São Paulo | Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo                                     |
| RMBH          | Região Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte  |
| SAGMACS       | Sociedade para Análises Gráficas e Mecanográficas Aplicadas aos Complexos Sociais |
| SBPE          | Sistema Brasileiro de Poupança e Empréstimo                                       |
| SFH           | Sistema Financeiro de Habitação   |
| UFMG          | Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais  |
| URBEL         | Companhia Urbanizadora e de Habitação de Belo Horizonte                           |
| USP           | Universidade de São Paulo   |

## 1. Introduction

Naquele tempo, só havia uma favela no perímetro urbano de Belo Horizonte. Era a que ficava situada nas imediações da Pedreira Prado Lopes. Voltei minha atenção para aquele problema. Tratava-se de uma grande área, localizada bem próxima do centro comercial, e que poderia ser recuperada, transformando-se num aprazível bairro residencial. Assim, idealizei um conjunto residencial popular, destinado à classe operária que, cada dia, se tornava mais numerosa...<sup>1</sup>

In his autobiography published in 1976, Juscelino Kubitschek remembered the urban reforms that he had initiated during his term as the mayor of Belo Horizonte, the capital of the federal state of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil, in the early 1940 s. In the quoted passage, he refers to a public housing complex that is known in Belo Horizonte as the Conjunto IAPI.<sup>2</sup> Built in the neighborhood of Lagoinha between 1944 and 1951, it was the outcome of a collaboration between the Prefeitura de Belo Horizonte (PBH)<sup>3</sup> under Kubitschek and the Instituto de Aposentadoria e Pensões dos Industriários (IAPÍ),<sup>4</sup> to which they had agreed some years earlier. For Kubitschek and Belo Horizonte's municipal administration, the new multi-story housing development symbolized the city's modernization.

The project was also a manifestation of societal and political transformations that had been in progress in Brazil, and other Latin American countries, since the early 1930 s. After he had seized power in the so-called '1930 Revolution,' Getúlio Vargas adopted a populist style of gov-

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1 Kubitschek, Juscelino: *Meu caminho para Brasília. Vol. 2: a escalada política*. Rio de Janeiro 1976, 32. "At that time, there was only one slum within the city limits of Belo Horizonte. It was the one that was located right in Pedreira Prado Lopes. I turned my attention to that problem. It concerned a large area, located close to the commercial center, which could be renovated, transforming it into a pleasant residential district. So, I conceived a public housing complex for the working-class, which was growing every day..." I have translated all Brazilian quotations into English in the footnotes.

2 Its official name is Conjunto Residencial São Cristóvão-IAPÍ. I use the shorter and more common designation.

3 This is the official name of Belo Horizonte's municipal administration.

4 The Brazilian national government under Getúlio Vargas established the IAPÍ in 1936 as a pension fund for industrial workers. See chapter 2.

erning. He introduced new legislation that provided the growing urban working class medical care, paid vacation, elementary education, and old-age pensions, among other benefits. These measures accompanied a policy of import-substitution industrialization that sought to foster national development (*desenvolvimento nacional*) and reduce the influence of traditional oligarchic elites and supposed foreign imperialism.<sup>5</sup> Other populist regimes that came to power in Latin America between the 1930s and the 1960s followed a similar course, especially the governments of Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico (1934-1940), Juan Perón in Argentina (1946-1955), and Victor Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia (1952-1956 and 1960-1964). Populist leaders across the subcontinent sought to organize their societies from above and strengthen their hold on power by pursuing policies of social harmony, which included forging alliances between different social classes.<sup>6</sup> These policies were a strategy to gain public support by preventing social unrest and thereby maintain themselves in power. However, Vargas's social policies actually reinforced existing inequalities since only those who were employed in the formal economy could benefit from them.<sup>7</sup>

In Brazil, the lack of housing for the growing number of rural migrants coming to the cities in search of work was a serious threat to harmony. From 1937 until the second half of the 1960s, when the military regime abolished them, the state's most important tool for the creation of housing were the *Institutos de Aposentadoria e Pensões* (IAPs). These were government-controlled corporations that the *Estado Novo* had originally established as public pension funds in 1933.<sup>8</sup>

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5 Ianni, Octávio: *A formação do estado populista na América Latina* (Documentos da História Contemporânea 63). Rio de Janeiro 1975, 124. See also: Werz, Nikolaus: "Revolutionen, Staatsstreiche, Populismen: Konstanten lateinamerikanischer Politik?" In: Siegfried Frech, and Wolf Grabendorff (eds.): *Das politische Südamerika. Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Kultur*. Schwalbach/Ts. 2012, 65-66.

6 Ianni: *A formação do estado populista na América Latina*, 124.

7 Ibid., 127. See also, Prutsch, Ursula: "Populismen, Mythen und Inszenierungen-Getúlio Vargas, Juan und Eva Perón im Vergleich." In: Martina Kaller-Dietrich, Barbara Potthast, and Hans-Werner Tobler (eds.): *Lateinamerika. Geschichte und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Edition Weltregionen 8). Wien 2004, 206.

8 Bonduki, Nabil Georges: *Origens da habitação social no Brasil: arquitetura moderna, lei do inquilinato e difusão da casa própria*. 5th Edition. São Paulo 2011, 99-115, 127-131. In chapter 2, I explain why the IAPs became active in the housing market.



Recently, the IAPs and their mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century housing programs have sparked growing interest among scholars of architecture and urbanism. However, historians have almost entirely ignored this important period in the early history of social housing in Brazil. This empirical historical study takes a step toward addressing this lack. Scholars of the IAPs' housing programs have consulted historical sources, but they have not made full use of the wide range of relevant contemporary documents. In this study, I work with official reports, legislative texts, autobiographical material, newspaper and magazine articles, printed versions of political speeches, articles from professional journals, photographs, and interviews. By analyzing these sources with historical methods, I pursue the study's main subject, the complex interrelationships among social housing policies, socio-spatial segregation, and territorial stigmatization, which have not yet been studied from the perspective of social history. More specifically, I explore these interrelationships through a case study of the Conjunto IAPI in Belo Horizonte, whose history, as I explain in the next section, has not yet been the subject of detailed study. I focus on the period from the early 1940s, when it was decided to build the Conjunto IAPI, to the early 1970s, by which time its apartments had been sold to their tenants and several infrastructural projects in its neighborhood were completed.

Historians of social housing should be sensitive to the contemporary national and local sociopolitical context. So, I analyze the interests of the federal and city authorities who were responsible for housing programs. I also consider how continuities and changes in national and municipal policies affected the development of residential areas in the long term. But my study is not limited to such political and structural issues. I consider social housing in the terms of social and cultural history. Research within a range of disciplines has largely overlooked the course of daily life in social housing complexes in the past and the present, but I regard neighborliness and social life as particularly relevant and explore them through interviews with residents.

In their work on housing and segregation in Latin American cities, sociologists have emphasized that the stigmatization of slums has harmful consequences for their residents.<sup>9</sup> I use 'stigmatization' in Goffman's

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9 Sabatini, Francisco, and Carlos Sierralta: "Medição da segregação residencial: meandros teóricos e metodológicos e especificidade latino-americana." In: José Marcos Pinto da Cunha (ed.): *Novas Metrópoles Paulistas: População, vulnerabilidade e segregação*. Campinas 2006, 171-172.

(1975)<sup>10</sup> sense of a process in which one group ascribes some negative moral attribute to another. The residents of public housing in Brazilian cities have been stigmatized by outsiders who stereotype their residences as concentrations of poverty. So, I analyze the historical dynamics and consequences of territorial stigmatization,<sup>11</sup> for I understand public housing not only as a result of government policy but also as urban spaces that individuals and groups experience and shape by their actions.

In his memoirs, Kubitschek wrote about the “favela problem” and the transformation of the Lagoinha neighborhood into a pleasant residential district. Because public housing has had a profound impact on the social spaces, architecture, and street scenes of Brazilian cities since the late 1930s, its history is an important part of Brazilian urban and social history, and, so, it is important to consider how *conjuntos habitacionais* (public housing complexes) have contributed to the changing faces of the neighborhoods around them. And, as social housing is a factor in the development of urban infrastructure, I also consider how infrastructure, in particular, shops, hospitals, and schools, influenced daily life in the Conjunto IAPI. Researchers into social housing in Brazil have not yet pursued these issues in detail nor have they paid much attention to the relationship between the IAPs’ housing projects and the transformation of local social structures. For example, the excerpt from Kubitschek’s autobiography quoted at the start of this chapter makes it clear that construction of the Conjunto IAPI had far-reaching consequences for the inhabitants of the neighboring *favela* of Pedreira Prado Lopes. I describe these repercussions in discussing how social housing contributed to the social exclusion of the poor, particularly, *favela* inhabitants, and, more generally, to processes of socio-spatial segregation, including the different access of social groups to urban infrastructure and public services like housing, public transportation, healthcare, and education.

I approach all of these issues from multiple perspectives, for social housing in Brazilian cities in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century involved political, urban, social, and cultural developments both locally and nationally. Thereby, I seek to explain the complex historical relationships among urbanization, social housing, segregation, and territorial stigmatization.

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10 Goffman’s book was first published in the United States in 1963.

11 In section 1.4, I discuss conceptual approaches to territorial stigmatization that have been developed by urban sociologists and explain why these concepts are useful for my work.

### 1.1. The State of Research

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, architects, city planners, sociologists, historians, geographers, and others have studied the history of Brazilian cities, mostly large cities in southeastern and northeastern Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> The four most important lines of research have been urban modernization, the historical development of city planning as a profession and an academic discipline, housing, and conceptions of the city.<sup>13</sup>

Research into housing was the starting point of Brazilian urban studies.<sup>14</sup> Since the second half of the 1960s, the spread of impoverished enclaves, in particular *favelas*, has been a popular topic of this research.<sup>15</sup> And the housing crisis that accompanied the gradual political liberalization (*abertura*) of the late 1970s stimulated academic interest in the history of housing.<sup>16</sup> At first, historians of housing focused largely on the development of workers' neighborhoods (*vilas operárias*) during the República Velha (1889-1930), a subject that mirrored the general interest in the social history of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that began at that time.<sup>17</sup> In the 1980s, most of the work on the history of housing focused on Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Recife (Bonduki 1982, Vaz 1985/1986, Abreu 1986). By the end of the decade, though, some authors had taken up a national perspective.<sup>18</sup> In the next decade, the founding of research associations like the Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em

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12 Fernandes, Ana, and Marco Aurélio A. de Filgueiras Gomes: "História da cidade e do urbanismo no Brasil: reflexões sobre a produção recente." In: *Ciência e Cultura* vol. 56 no. 2 (Apr/June 2004), 23. [http://cienciaecultura.bvs.br/scielo.php?pid=S0009-67252004000200015&script=sci\\_arttext](http://cienciaecultura.bvs.br/scielo.php?pid=S0009-67252004000200015&script=sci_arttext) (accessed 24 February 2018).

13 Ibid., 24.

14 Ibid., 23-24. See also, Bonduki, Nabil Georges: "Habitação no Brasil: uma história em construção." In: *Encontro Nacional da ANPUR* 8. Porto Alegre 1999, 3.

15 In 2005, the sociologist Lícia do Prado Valladares published *A invenção da favela. Do mito de origem a favela com*, which is the most detailed study available of the historical development of research on *favelas*.

16 Bonduki: "Habitação no Brasil: uma história em construção", 3. Throughout the 1970s, theories about capitalist accumulation influenced research into urbanization and its outcomes, the housing deficit, the actions of the state, and possible alternatives.

17 Ibid., 3-5. Drawing upon post-Marxist approaches and Foucault's concept of micropolitics, several Brazilian scholars described the *vilas operárias* as instruments of exploitation and social control.

18 Ibid., 4-5.

Planejamento Urbano e Regional (ANPUR) and the organization of conferences (particularly the first Seminário de História da Cidade e do Urbanismo in 1990) were important steps towards the institutionalization of urban studies and encouraged scholars to broaden their studies of the history of urban housing in Brazil. At the same time, the establishment of the research network Urbanismo e Planejamento Urbano no Brasil, 1900-1950, signaled a shift of interest from housing to city planning.<sup>19</sup>

Research has addressed the role of the state in the history of housing. Before the early 1980s, most studies of housing policies had focused on the activities of the Banco Nacional da Habitação (BNH) since its inception in 1964.<sup>20</sup> Scholars then began to study a wider range of issues, like the influence of the state on the real estate market<sup>21</sup> and the consequences of rent control and the Leis do Inquilinato, which the Estado Novo introduced in the 1940s and succeeding governments strengthened.<sup>22</sup> Since then, research has addressed the influence of housing policies on socio-spatial segregation. Several authors (e.g., Azevedo and Andrade 1982, Maricato 2009) have concluded that real estate speculation and the state's fostering of private interests have increased social inequality and segregation. Most of the work that has approached these subjects historically has focused on the spread of illegal housing since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> Public housing projects built by the state after 1937, like the Conjunto IAPI, have received much less attention. Taking a broader approach, the geographer Flávio Villaça (1997/2001/2003) and the political scientist Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos (1979) have shown that there is a historical correlation between housing policies and socio-spatial segregation. I discuss their findings in the last section of this introduction, for they provide a useful framework for my analysis of the relationship between the Conjunto IAPI's historical development and the process of segregation in the neighborhood of Lagoinha.

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19 Leme et al. (1999) published the results of the network's studies in eight Brazilian cities.

20 Valladares, Lícia do Prado, and Ademir Figueiredo: "Habitação no Brasil: Uma Introdução à Literatura Recente." In: *Revista Brasileira de Informação Bibliográfica em Ciências Sociais BIB* No. 11 (1981), 30. The BNH was the most important state organ for housing under the military dictatorship (1964-1985). See chapter 2.

21 See, for instance, Ribeiro (1991). Ribeiro's work focused on Rio de Janeiro.

22 See, for instance, the work published by Melo (1987, 1991 a) and Bonduki (1994).

23 Maricato, Ermínia: "Por um novo enfoque teórico na pesquisa sobre habitação." In: *Cadernos Metrópole* (PUC São Paulo) vol. 21 (2009), 34-35.

Allow me to summarize the state of research into the IAPs and their housing activities between 1937 and the late 1960s. Architects have done most of it. However, Marta Farah's master's thesis in sociology (1983) was a pioneering work in which she collected data on the IAPs' public housing projects and analyzed the contemporary ideological background. Melo (1987) and Varon (1988) also discussed the IAPs and their housing programs.<sup>24</sup> The history of social housing had finally stimulated academic interest, and this early work was part of a growing interest in the development of housing policies before 1964.<sup>25</sup> However, many authors still ignore the IAPs and regard their activities as insignificant.<sup>26</sup> In the international research community, the IAPs remain all but unknown.<sup>27</sup>

In 1998, the architect Nabil Georges Bonduki published *Origens da Habitação Social no Brasil: arquitetura moderna, lei do inquilinato e difusão da casa própria*, in which he presented his extensive research on the development of working-class housing in Brazil between 1930 and 1964. Several revised editions have been published,<sup>28</sup> and the book has become the main reference for scholars of the IAPs and their public housing projects. Bonduki discussed the political and social circumstances that led the Brazilian government to consider the housing crisis from the 1930s onwards.<sup>29</sup> His approach was interdisciplinary with sociological, social historical, political, and economic dimensions.

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24 Melo's work was a Ph.D. thesis in political science. Varon wrote her master's thesis in architecture on the IAPs.

25 See Bonduki: "Habitação no Brasil: uma história em construção", 4-5. The authors mentioned were among the first scholars to approach housing from a historical perspective and with a national focus.

26 See, for example, Lehfeld (1988, 24), Silva (1989, 38), and Maricato (2004, 36).

27 Castriota, Leonardo Barci, and Guilherme Maciel Araújo: "Patrimônio, valores e historiografia: a preservação do conjunto habitacional do Instituto de Aposentadorias e Pensões dos Industriários-IAPI." In: *arquiteturarevista* vol. 5 no. 1 (Jan/June 2009), 42-43. [revistas.unisinos.br/index.php/arquitetura/article/view/4801/2063](http://revistas.unisinos.br/index.php/arquitetura/article/view/4801/2063) (accessed 24 February 2018).

28 All citations are to the 5th edition (2011) of Bonduki's book.

29 Bonduki: *Origens da habitação social no Brasil*, 73-131.

In his introduction, Bonduki defined social housing (*habitação social*) as follows:<sup>30</sup>

Neste sentido, utilizamos o termo *habitação social* não apenas no sentido corrente, ou seja, habitação produzida e financiada por órgãos estatais destinada à população de baixa renda, mas num sentido mais amplo, que inclui também a regulamentação estatal da locação habitacional e incorporação, como um problema do Estado, da falta de infra-estrutura urbana gerada pelo loteamento privado [of land].<sup>31</sup>

Bonduki's definition of social housing is useful in that it refers to the state's responsibility for solving the problem of missing infrastructure in public housing developments and their surroundings. I draw upon this understanding of social housing when, in chapters 3 and 4, I consider the development of infrastructure in the neighborhood around the Conjunto IAPI and the effects of the complex's central location.

Bonduki's book helped to make the history of social housing in Brazil and the activities of the IAPs current subjects of interest. Since 1995, Bonduki has coordinated the research group *Pioneiros da Habitação Social*, which includes architects from several universities in São Paulo.<sup>32</sup> The group specializes in the relationships among the state, working-class housing, and modernist architecture in the 1940s and 1950s. Several of its publications describe how housing became a social issue in the context of modernization, intensified capital accumulation, and accelerated urbanization.<sup>33</sup> In his book, Bonduki remarked on how social housing policies and the deterioration of public areas and their equipment in housing develop-

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30 The use of the term 'social housing' (*habitação social*) has not been very common among Brazilian scholars. The fact that some authors have started to use it might be read as a consequence of Bonduki's research. Furthermore, the Ministério das Cidades has recently introduced the term 'Habitação de Interesse Social' in reference to contemporary social housing programs.

31 Bonduki: *Origens da habitação social no Brasil*, 14. "In this sense, we use the term 'habitação social' not only in the current sense of low-income housing built and financed by state institutions but in a broader sense that also includes the state regulation of rental housing and incorporates the lack of urban infrastructure created by private allocation [of land] as a problem for the state."

32 Some members of this group wrote their master's and doctoral theses on social housing and the IAPs. They took *conjuntos habitacionais* in Rio de Janeiro (Botas 2011), São Paulo (Ferrari 2013), and Natal (Almeida 2007) as their case studies.

33 See, for instance, Bonduki and Aravecchia (1998), Almeida (2007, 2008), and Botas (2011). See also Bruna (2010) who focused on social housing and the influences of international architectural concepts on the Brazilian modernist movement

ments have influenced sociability in them since the late 1960s.<sup>34</sup> However, neither his book nor the publications of the *Pioneiros da Habitação Social* have addressed social life in detail, an important matter for a social- and cultural-historical understanding of the IAPs and their housing programs.

The BNH and housing policies under the military dictatorship have traditionally been much more popular subjects of research than the IAPs and the municipal and federal entities responsible for housing between the 1930s and the 1960s.<sup>35</sup> Given the range of subjects in urban and housing history that historians have studied, it is astonishing that they have continually ignored the IAPs.<sup>36</sup> The attention that architects now pay to them is the result of programs in the history of architecture and urbanism at Brazilian universities.<sup>37</sup> But their studies have left many questions unanswered and many sources undiscovered. Therefore, the history of Brazilian social housing in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the actions of the IAPs, in particular, is an open field for historians.

The IAPs in Belo Horizonte have attracted even less attention than their activities in other cities have. Research into Belo Horizonte's urban history has tended to concentrate on certain periods. Several studies have discussed the political and ideological background of the city's founding in

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in the 1930s and the 1940s. In late 2014, Bonduki and the architect Ana Paula Koury published the three volumes of *Pioneiros da Habitação Social*. The second volume includes a detailed analysis of the most important Brazilian state organs for social housing between 1930 and 1964.

34 See Bonduki: *Origens da habitação social no Brasil*, 318-319.

35 The book *Habitação e poder: da Fundação da Casa Popular ao Banco Nacional da Habitação* (1982) by the sociologist Sérgio de Azevedo and the political scientist Luis Aureliano Gama de Andrade is still an important reference for studies of the BNH and the development of housing policies after 1964. It is important to note that the authors analyzed the BNH while it was still in operation. They also discussed the Fundação da Casa Popular, the first Brazilian state organ for housing, which operated nationally between 1946 and 1964. Bonduki (1998), Gawryszewski (2002), and Trompowsky (2004) have also discussed this institution.

36 Since 2001, the meetings of the Associação Nacional de História have included workshops on urban history, but, remarkably, social housing has not been among the topics discussed.

37 Until the late 1990s, the historiography of Brazilian architecture ignored social housing complexes since many architects found that they lacked aesthetic quality. See Bonduki: "Habitação no Brasil: uma história em construção", 2-3.