

## Exploring *Social Network Analysis*.

### Urban Plans and Portuguese modern architects

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Notwithstanding the eminence, constant growth and recent inclusion of other methodologies in urban morphology, a gap is still perceptible in what concerns the realm of the pair individual/collective, of the intervention of the single person versus the group, of the initiative and action and respective possibilities, in short, of *agency*. Since K. Marx we know the individual does not act in a social void. However, the correlated issues have not been digested and properly investigated: the issues of the absence of actual independence between actors, or of the presence of patterns of dependency in the core of social and professional milieus where a given sum of individuals moves about.

The paper explores some possibilities of use of *Social Network Analysis (SNA)* in urban studies. It features two case studies related to the competence and to the actual realization of urban plans by Portuguese architects in Portugal or in territories which were at the time under Portuguese flag. One is the migration of architects from Portugal to the colonies or to the 'ultramarine provinces', as they were latter called, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in particular from the decades of 1920's to 1974, and the urban plans they produced. The other is the study, situated in mainland Portugal, of the connection between architects and plans in 1948 – the year of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Congress of Architects. If in the first case, the question is the transport of ideas and concepts from Portugal, a country then stifled and without perspectives, to the vast horizons of Africa and to the Asian possessions. In the second case, the question is the burgeoning, in the interior of the same territory, of attitudes and doctrines deriving from a small group of individuals with a profile of activists. Both cases are permeated by the dispute of modernism - in the period in which modernism was a style, at least so much as it was a thesis; how it spreads out, by which agents, with what results and with what long term effects. In both cases, the quest is to find out some aspects of the relationship the agents establish between themselves, creating nets where the positions (nodes) are different, in centrality, symmetry, degree of control and connectivity. The position of a node in the network determines in part the chances and constraints that the agent meets coming his way, and therefore the aptitude for accomplishment of the agent who is represented by this node. On the other hand, in the distribution of resources, in the creation of new

urban settlements, in the expansion and the enhancement of existing urban settlements and cities, in the choice of which aspects of the urban fabric or the territorial occupation ought to be privileged, in the definition of qualified interventions by architects and urban planners - in all these decision-making situations, the belonging and position of the agents in networks emerge as relevant. This position, which is dynamic in time, results of the agent's biography, of the knowledge and skills that he masters, of his desire and conformity to collaborate with other agents or groups, of the possibilities that he has to do so. To be essential, that position does not need to be constituted by strong links - weak ones will suffice, as has explained GRANOVETTER (1973) in his seminal article on analysis of social networks. Different measures of centrality and other types of connection, as well as the theoretical and methodological basis of SNA, are described by S. WASSERMAN and K. FAUST (1994) and by J. SCOTT (2000). A new perspective has been emerging that moves away from the atomist model to face individuals in the context of their relationship to others.

In the first case study, the routes of the Portuguese architects who work, visit and/or settle in the overseas territories prior of 1974 are drawn and the urban plans they participate in are considered (MATOS and RAMOS, 2010, 2011). The formal and informal networks where they are inserted are analyzed, using for pointer the co-authorship in projects. In the second case, a temporal cross-section of a year is studied, at a crucial moment in the social history of Portuguese architects and in the political and professional options of a significant group of these designers. It is the year of the first professional congress, which elapses in the political atmosphere of the second postwar period; people were still hopeful of help coming from the western democracies. It is a year central to the period that M. S. LOBO (1995) considers the climax of urban planning in Portugal: 1944-1954. Connections between the ICAT, the ODAM (BARBOSA, 1972), the participation in the Congress (SINDICATO NACIONAL DOS ARQUITECTOS, 1948) and the contract for and localization of the urban plans underway, are analyzed. In both cases, the transformative potential of existing urban settlements or their creation through the professional exercise by architects is considered.

Key-words: *Social Network Analysis*, history of urbanism, Portugal, architects, profession

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