

Editorial

The Contribution of Administration to Thinking and Acting on Cities



Contribuições da Administração para Pensar e Agir Sobre as Cidades

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■ ABSTRACT

Considering the enormous challenges cities face due to the climate crisis dramatically and urgently affecting Brazil, as seen recently in Rio Grande do Sul, in this editorial we discuss the administration's contributions in reflecting and acting on urban management and governance. RAC has pioneered addressing conceptual boundaries, interdisciplinary approaches, and the relationship between theory and practice, valuing knowledge production that can help confront contemporary challenges. In this context, discussing the role of administration and its contribution to urban management is essential to inspire professors, researchers, and professionals in our field to co-create more resilient, fair, and sustainable cities.

Keywords: urban management and governance; administration; cities; sustainability.

■ RESUMO

Considerando os enormes desafios das cidades face à crise climática que vivemos e que se expressa de forma dramática e urgente no Brasil, como vivido no Rio Grande do Sul recentemente, propomos neste editorial discutir as contribuições da administração para refletir e agir sobre a gestão e a governança urbanas. A RAC tem assumido um papel pioneiro em tratar fronteiras conceituais, abordagens interdisciplinares e a relação entre teoria e prática, valorizando a produção de conhecimento que possa contribuir para o enfrentamento dos desafios contemporâneos. Nesse sentido, discutir o papel da administração e sua contribuição para pensar e agir sobre as cidades é fundamental para estimular que professores, pesquisadores e profissionais do nosso campo atuem nos processos de co-criar cidades mais resilientes, justas e sustentáveis.

Palavras-chave: gestão e governança urbanas; administração; cidades; sustentabilidade.

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For the city and the urban environment represent man's most consistent and, on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. But if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself.

(Robert Park, 1967)

INTRODUCTION

What does a contemporary management journal have to do with the tragedy in Rio Grande do Sul? In our view, everything.

The connection becomes even more apparent when we consider the reasons behind our research – to understand, learn, predict, and act. Given that we conduct research in administration, an applied field that bridges academic theory with institutional practice, it seems both relevant and necessary to begin this new edition of RAC by acknowledging the events unfolding in Rio Grande do Sul.

RAC has taken a leading role in expanding the frontiers of management knowledge, aiming to broaden the discussion and impact of research in the field. In this context, this editorial explores the administration's role in shaping our cities. As we enter 2024, a year of local elections in Brazil and the start of the preparatory process for the 6th National Conference of Cities convened by the Ministry of Cities, dialogue between civil society and public managers will be crucial in defining the National Urban Development Policy. Against this backdrop, how can the field of administration contribute to more effective urban management?

In this editorial, we dare ourselves as administration researchers to take a leading role in thinking and acting on our cities. We begin by briefly discussing the current debate and recent research on urban management, highlighting its advances and gaps. We then provide a quick recap of the trajectory of urban management policy in Brazil and its current challenges. Finally, we propose reflections for researchers and professionals in the field of administration to consider how they can effectively contribute to this process. Urban management involves not only planning, infrastructure, and city design but also, perhaps more importantly, the management of interactions within urban spaces through collaborative and experimental governance mechanisms.

EXPLORING THE DEBATE ON URBAN MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN BRAZIL

The scientific debate on urban management in Brazil is vast and interdisciplinary, encompassing a variety of topics. A brief search in the Google Scholar database for review articles on urban management published in the last five years (2019 to 2024) yielded 179 results. An analysis of these findings highlights several priority thematic areas.

A significant group of works addresses processes of urban planning, interventions, and reforms, including analyses of the application of urban management instruments and their challenges, such as master plans, urban zoning, and environmental licensing, as well as concerns about city design, planning, and land use (Abreu & Peres, 2021; Montrezor & Bernardini, 2019; Oliveira & Quaresma, 2022).

This discussion is connected to other studies focusing on urban infrastructure issues, including basic sanitation and water resource management (Becker & Pinheiro, 2019), proper disposal and management of solid waste (Santos & Souza, 2023), housing, afforestation, public safety, and especially urban mobility (Rocha et al., 2019; Fontoura & Ribeiro, 2021).

Another significant set of works is related to environmental management and the sustainability of cities, including studies on emergencies and disasters in the face of climate change (Teixeira et al., 2022) and the management of common resources and urban agriculture. Studies on smart cities (Alves et al., 2019; Reck & Vanin, 2020) also stand out, focusing on the application of technology to improve infrastructure and urban services. Lastly, we can mention studies related to social participation and the right to the city, which emphasize participatory and democratic urban management (Lima et al., 2023; Mendes et al., 2021).

This brief review demonstrates that the scientific field of urban management in Brazil is expanding and deepening, becoming an interdisciplinary field primarily related to urban and regional planning, engineering, architecture and urbanism, geography, and geosciences. This is confirmed by consulting the CNPq group directory, which contains 200 certified groups that deal with urban management. More than 50% of these groups are linked to these areas. However, research on urban management spans various disciplines within the social sciences, including anthropology, sociology, political science, economics, and psychology, as well as other areas such as law, tourism, health, ecology, and

environmental sciences. Of the groups identified in the CNPq, only 8 (4%) are directly related to the field of administration.

Despite the limited research and publications on urban management within the field of administration, the importance of expanding this dialogue is undeniable. This expansion applies to both organizational studies and public administration. Considering the debate on urban management in Brazil and the trajectory of public policy and the current challenges hindering its implementation, it is possible to design a research and practice agenda in which administration researchers and practitioners can contribute to more effective urban management.

THE TRAJECTORY OF URBAN POLICY AND CURRENT CHALLENGES IN URBAN GOVERNANCE

Discussing the trajectory of urban management in Brazil requires acknowledging the urban reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which aimed to ensure the social function of cities and property. This movement culminated in the inclusion of Articles 182 and 183 in the 1988 Federal Constitution. These articles introduced the right to the city and democratic urban management, establishing a role for municipalities in urban development policy and territorial planning. However, a national law was needed to guarantee better land use, establish guidelines for urban management policies, and finance urban infrastructure and housing. This was achieved ten years later with the enactment of the City Statute by Law 10257 of 2001.

The City Statute provided principles and tools to build the 'cities we want,' focusing primarily on urban planning through master plans and urban management devices aimed at territorial planning. However, more than 20 years after its implementation, various studies highlight obstacles to the full application of the City Statute (Costa, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2018) and the implementation of an effective urban management policy.

Notable obstacles include technocracy and speculative interests in the real estate market, which concentrate 'city governance' in the hands of a few interest groups, weakening participation and democracy in city management, and excluding and rendering invisible the most vulnerable actors. Additionally, the last ten years have seen a demobilization, with city participatory councils being emptied and manipulated.

Small municipalities, in particular, struggle to implement urban management policies due to a lack of infrastructure and resources. Many Brazilian municipalities either lack or have outdated master plans. A significant gap

exists between planned regulations and actual conditions in neighborhoods and communities. The so-called 'Statute of the Metropolis' also poses the challenge of thinking beyond individual cities to consider metropolitan regions and territorial development.

As we enter 2024, the impact of climate change presents serious problems, as evidenced by the recent events in Rio Grande do Sul. Such incidents are not isolated but increasingly predictable realities in our cities, neighborhoods, and communities.

Urban issues must be addressed by all of us, not just architects, urban planners, engineers, and public administrators. According to the 2022 census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 85% of the Brazilian population lives in urban areas, with many in risky situations. The country has over 10,000 favelas and urban communities, housing 16.6 million people (8% of the population). Additionally, over 76 million Brazilians (37.5% of the population) live in homes not connected to the sewage system, and 1,942 cities have residents in risk areas.

In light of these challenges, how can the field of administration contribute to urban governance? In our view, the field plays a central role in this discussion. Professors, researchers, and practitioners must expand their contributions to both theoretical and practical advancements, moving beyond traditional notions of government to explore connections between actors and sectors.

EXPANDING PERSPECTIVES ON URBAN GOVERNANCE: AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH AND ACTION IN THE FIELD OF ADMINISTRATION

Broadening the scope of urban management requires addressing its governance – specifically, the complex coordination of collective actions within cities to produce desirable outcomes for residents. This involves connecting actors and urban networks, fostering relationships, and promoting co-creation processes that can lead to experiments and new governance practices to strengthen public policies (Andion, 2023; Ansell et al., 2022). Such an approach goes beyond the concept of 'smart cities.' It focuses on creating adequate public spaces that account for the diverse dimensions of the city, including territories, people, and the environment, in a more systemic way. This perspective encourages a holistic view of urban governance, integrating various elements to ensure more inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Thus, we propose that urban governance should not be treated as an accessory to urban management or as the monopoly of experts, politicians, and certain groups. Urban planning and management should be designed in accordance with the demands, requests, and actions of those living in the city. This reflection must include peripheral territories and vulnerable populations often forgotten and excluded from city governance.

From this perspective, it is possible to broaden the scope and access to the process of urban discussion, diversifying communication channels and forms of public debate. This involves addressing public problems beyond the traditional instruments of master plans and territorial planning, considering ecosystems of social innovation and existing experiments in cities (Andion et al., 2020). Additionally, it is essential to consider the political ecology of various districts and neighborhoods, including their particularities, demands, and priorities.

Finally, this approach places democratic governance at the center of urban management. And why is democratic

governance important for urban management? It is crucial because it allows for broader perspectives and interpretations of urban problems by considering the experiences of those living there. It provides space for the intersectoral and interdisciplinary approach needed to address urban issues and facilitates the construction of knowledge and collaborative co-production of responses. This, in turn, generates more inventive solutions to the complex problems we face in cities today. Democratic governance enables groups that do not normally have access to discussions to listen, see, and participate in deliberation, thereby increasing citizens' engagement, involvement, and commitment to their city.

In short, urban development and management cannot be separated from public governance, socio-state interactions, and municipal decision-making processes. Therefore, we believe that the field of administration has much to contribute to promoting more resilient, fair, and sustainable cities.

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