

SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF CARTOGRAPHY IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZONIA

Ivaldo Gonçalves de Lima
Isabel Eiras de Oliveira
Universidade Federal Fluminense
CEG/GCE, Departamento de Geografia
Escola de Arquitetura, Departamento de Urbanismo
Av. Litorânea s/nº Praia Vermelha 24151-970
Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

Abstract

In this paper we seek to discuss the importance of the cartography in the urban planning and in the territorial fragmentation processes. The area focused is the Municipality of Marabá, located in the State of Pará, Amazonia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this paper is to underline the political strategic dimension of the geographic space representations. That space is assumed as a product of social practices, then maps, croquis and others forms of representation can add or subtract some value from the space. This formalization/representation is not free of the complex game among distinct social interests. In this way the political use of the space gives subsidies to what can or not express the cartographic design and at the same time what that design denotes about the political dynamics. Demarcation of indigenous lands and ecological reserves, creation of new municipalities and implementation of new cities show the weight of cartographic representation to the complex structure formed by government, enterprises and population, thereby to a new configuration of the regional geometry.

2. TERRITORIAL DIVISION AND "GERRYMANDERING"

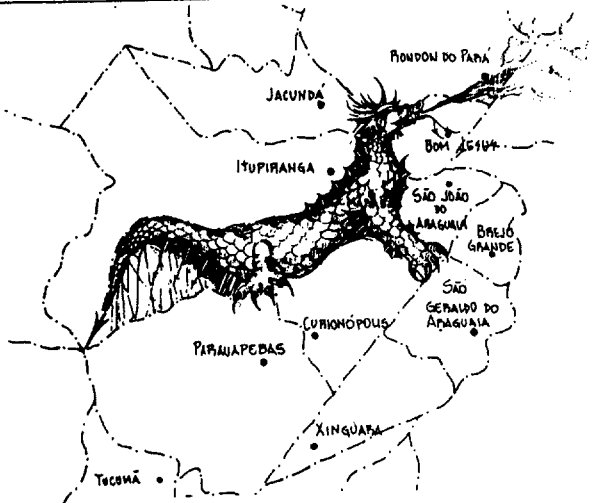
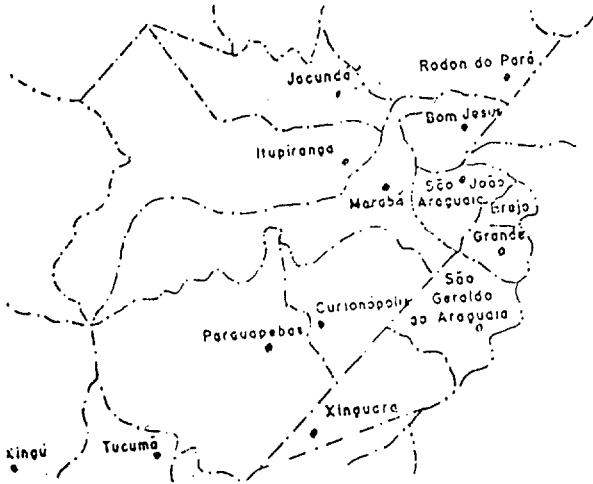
The political and territorial fragmentation results from struggle power relations which can be show in a graphic manner, as in the example of creation of new municipal outlines. This territorial fragmentation can express through the proper design that defines it, the strangeness of the political process gives it a form. That is, in the political-administrative (re)design, what are the forms which appear in the resulting map? In the earlier century to develop this idea some Americans intended to find and to display through the lines of the political maps the oddness of the political processes which defined those lines. Therefore appears a political map known as "gerrymander", a resultant term from the mix of the nouns "Gerry" and "salamander"(1).

Territorial divisions result in curious shapes when represented on the maps (see fig.1). In reality, the "gerrymandering" is an aesthetic dramatization technics, used to give force to political elements contained in the maps. In Marabá a cartographer has declared, about Parauapebas and Curionópolis - two municipalities dismembered from the Municipality of Marabá -: "Parauapebas has taken the best part of Marabá and the present map of Marabá seems a bat that open its wings over Parauapebas and Curionópolis". Originally the "gerrymandering" express on the map a manner of political manipulation. We intent to take from these considerations the fact of the political-administrative network be a

(1) Monmonier & Schnell(1988), spec. chap.8

FIGURA 1

GERRYMANDERING



result of a political intention(2). The reasons for this analysis are in the fact that in its design exist codifications that show the power relations which manipulate the territorial elements(3,p.143).

3. URBAN DESIGN AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTROL

The Marabá City (see fig.2) takes part from the oldest urban history of the occupation of the Amazonia. Indeed Marabá is formed by three distinct "cities" which are linked to different phases of its development. One of these three "cities" was projected recently. The planner and architect responsible for the new design has organized a hybrid project rejoining culturalistic and rationalistic ideals to create a city with the form of a Brazil nut tree - chestnut, typical tree of the region. We're talking about a "city" structured for thirty-three leaves - residential sectors interconnected internally but not one each other. It's possible to verify that there is a correspondence between this spatial fragmentation and the fragmentation of the local social corpus(4).

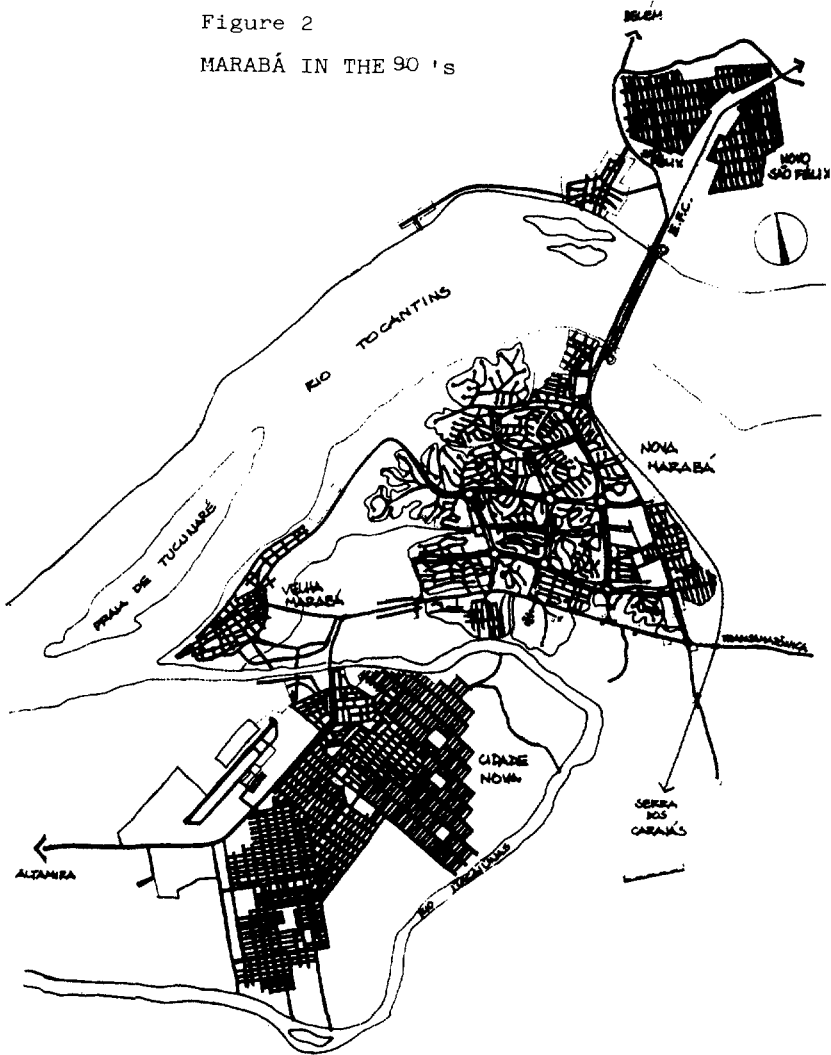
People who live in Marabá - in the new projected sector - encounter many troubles because they haven't the control of the cartographic knowledge about the urban planning purposes of the place where they live in. There the circulation is not easy and there aren't connexions among different sectors (leaves), neither focal points and corners. That design

(2)Lima(1993),spec. chap.5

(3)Maurel(1984)

(4)Oliveira(1992), spec. chap.5

Figure 2
MARABÁ IN THE 90 'S



restrain the identification and election of referential points, crossings and boundaries(5). The socio-political control in relation to that urban project creates a straitjacket that forces the population towards a disciplinary behavior.

4. TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

We've sought to present some features that link together the political use of the space and its cartographic representation to the strategic thought of some segments of the social structure in contemporary Amazonia. The evaluation of the cartographic resource as a normative value - reinforcing conservative political practices - or as an emancipator value - acting to light the population's conduct - is the backdrop of this paper. To mention a Chinese reflection(6) "the frontier between the order and the disorder is the logistic", where we'd add: in its territorial dimension.

5. REFERENCES

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(5) Lynch(1960)

(6) Tzu(1994)