

Second urbanHIST Conference
Interpreting 20th Century European Urbanism

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Interpreting 20th Century European Urbanism

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Situated Readings:

F. Choay and “L’Urbanisme, Utopies et Réalités” (1965)

Priscilla Alves Peixoto, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Edited by Françoise Choay and published in 1965, the book *“L’Urbanisme, utopies et réalités. Une anthologie”* has been used in schools of architecture and urbanism as a sort of guide to a panoramic view on theories of urbanism proposed between the mid-19th century and the 1960s.

In contrast with the book’s wide circulation, there are not many works dedicated to its interpretation and interested in exploring the context of its enunciation. In other words, there are few works that investigate the historicity of Choay’s proposal.

The book was published in the same year of Le Corbusier’s death and five years after the dissolution of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM). It gathered and translated texts from previous times and

its own, promoters of cultures of city and urban space construction. How much could it have seemed provocative to its contemporary architects and urbanists?

On the other hand, why would a successful journalist with regular columns in important French journals turn, in 1965, to an endeavour to systematise, translate and bring to the discussion theoretical texts on urbanism?

The proposed communication will analyse *“L’Urbanisme, utopies et réalités. Une anthologie”* (1965) from a different perspective than that of a guide. The assumption is the need to underline the processual character of its preparation and the author’s enunciation conditions.

We will base our approach on the notions of “historiographical operation” enunciated by Michel de Certeau and “intellectual biography” formulated by François Dosse. In a sort of discourse analysis, we will seek to clarify the elements maintained and changed by Choay in the process of interpreting urbanism. We also aim to situate the author in the epistemological framework in which her work is inserted.

Choay’s writings published in the printed media will be the main source of the research. The article will be structured in three parts. The first will analyse the construction of Choay’s interest on urbanistic issues. The second will seek to explore the construction of the themes included in the anthology and her interpretations of urbanistic practices. The final part will suggest that apparently the author partially modifies her interpretation after the book has been published.

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