Despite Brazil’s role as host country for the World Cup and the upcoming Olympics, as well as home to billion-dollar mega projects financed with money from the federal government, Brazilian architects have had a minor role in these large public projects. This is likely to get worse; the forecast is that Brazil’s GDP will shrink by 9% in the 2014-2016 period, the worst recession among the 20 largest economies in the world. Unemployment doubled from 6% to 12% in less than two years.

It’s a must that we keep this crisis and its supporting role in mind when analyzing the way that generalist and specialized media cover architecture. Unlike in the 1960s, when there were a number of columns dedicated to the subject, today the big national media addresses the subject sporadically. Only when there’s the occasional inauguration or the collapse of some thoroughfare or residential structure spotlights a lack of urban planning; Plagued by drops in advertising and falling subscriptions, newspapers and magazines don’t even concern with what they consider superfluous. Art and architecture magazines languish or shut down, they let their most experienced professionals go, since they’re not immune to the model by which publications are financed. Two exceptions are the magazines Piseagrama and Monolito, which publish themed issues (access, tour and extinction, for the former; elevated offices, for the latter) a novelty after decades of mediocrity and disciplines dominating the academic media attention.

There are websites that seem more like the work of closed circles of friends for academics obligated to publish books than efforts to expand the architectural reading public. Their pompous, argot-heavy language certainly doesn’t help.

By aligning themselves quite uncritically with the federal administrations of the last decade, many prominent architects who have a voice have declined to discuss the impact of the urban crisis driven by the economic policies of the past five years (similar to the auto industry and construction companies responsible for derelict housing projects). Opportunistic critics, being in the pocket of those in power who they are supposed to oversee, end up not being taken into account. At times which calls for plenty of debate, mea-culpa and reflections on what went wrong in Brazil, part of the establishment only cares about changing the subject.

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