



Organizações & Sociedade Journal

2026, 33(114), 001-035

© Author(s) 2026

Section: article

DOI 10.1590/1984-92302025v33n0003EN

e-location: ev33n0003EN

eISSN 1984-9230 | ISSN 1413-585X

www.revistaoes.ufba.br

NPGA, School of Management

Federal University of Bahia

Associate Editor:

Letícia Dias Fantinel

Received: 12/29/2024

Accepted: 08/22/2025

Heterotopias in the History of Belo Horizonte Municipal Park: from the Caretaker's House to an Unfinished Multipurpose Complex

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Abstract

Public urban spaces, such as parks, shape the dynamic and complex landscapes of cities. Steeped in and influenced by historical processes, these places accommodate multiple purposes, addressing the needs and interests of their visitors. Within this context, heterotopic possibilities emerge, that is, phenomena that take shape in space-times, fostering practices that disrupt or reconfigure the production of social space. Drawing on this theoretical framework, this article seeks to apprehend the heterotopic processes that have shaped the production and historical organization of a social space within the Américo Renné Giannetti Municipal Park, in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. We adopt an analytical approach grounded in Foucault's (2013) principles of heterotopias, complemented by the theoretical contributions of Lefebvre (1974) and De Certeau (1994). We argue

that the reproduction of social space is marked by tactics and strategies that transcend formal, institutional, and morally accepted frameworks, giving rise to “other spaces” that challenge and reconfigure hegemonic structures conceived by those in power. Rather than adopting a generalized perspective, we focus on a specific public urban park and, in particular, on a distinctly heterotopic space within it. As we examine its characteristics and historical trajectory, in line with Martins, Corrêa, and Carrieri (2023), we highlight the significance of “minor administration,” a perspective centered on everyday life that brings to light the fissures and lines of escape generated by the actions of ordinary people.

Keywords: social space; heterotopias; conceived-perceived-lived; tactics; strategies.

Heterotopias: possibilities of space-time imbrications

The transformations of organizational spaces, the diverse modes of use and disuse over time, the complex social interactions that shape these environments, and the practices that seek to deviate from or challenge the formal frameworks established therein can together reveal sociocultural and economic characteristics that express the relational dynamics of specific social groups and the power networks that permeate them (Burrell & Dale, 2014; Stephenson et al., 2020; Brantner, Rodríguez-Amat & Belinskaya, 2021; Martins, Corrêa & Carrieri, 2023; Leone, 2023). Social space is reproduced through multiple facets, just as multiple conflicts accompany its appropriation – a space that is temporary, mobile, at times imaginary, and constantly (re)constructed. It is thus possible to analyze the production of public space through the lens of heterotopias. These place us in contact with complexities and, as proposed by Valverde (2009), Waring and Bishop (2018), Kahraman, Pak and Scheerlinck (2018), Çalışkan, Cihanger and Tümtürk (2020), and Sancino et al. (2024), problematize various uses that have been naturalized in everyday life and in organizational space.

Following Foucault’s (2013) formulation, utopias and heterotopias can be regarded as two significant forms of cultural and spatial positioning. Whereas utopian space is associated with the horizon, that is, with an idealized and unreal society, heterotopic space is tied to the concrete expression of culture. While utopias occupy the space of consolation, granting free access to a dreamlike and marvelous realm, heterotopias provoke unease and discomfort because, by inhabiting real space, they expose a juxtaposed, overlapping, or fragmented world.

Indeed, heterotopias can be understood as possibilities embedded in space-time, enabling practices that disrupt or reconfigure the production of social space. These “space-times” expose fissures, breaks, cuts, and deviations from the traditional or dominant path. As argued by Magalhães (2015), Lazăr (2023), and Sancino et al. (2024), such spaces destabilize established patterns and make possible the reconfiguration of the environments we inhabit. They embody concrete attempts at escape and resistance against the prevailing forms of discipline and control characteristic of contemporary capitalist society. They are real places, infused with subjectivities, which challenge established norms by coexisting with and often contradicting institutionalized spaces. At their core, heterotopias manifest the capacity to subvert and reconfigure social and spatial dynamics, producing environments in which the multiplicity of experiences and perceptions generates interaction and meaning, breaking through the constraints imposed by dominant structures (Waring & Bishop, 2018).

When addressing the possibilities of what he called heterotopology, Foucault (2013) outlined six principles that help identify and understand heterotopic spaces. They may be summarized as follows: (1) all societies produce their heterotopias; (2) heterotopias evolve and transform throughout history; (3) a heterotopia juxtaposes spaces and times that may otherwise be incompatible; (4) a heterotopia also entails a heterochrony, that is, a temporal dimension; (5) a heterotopia is neither fully closed nor fully open; and (6) within heterotopias, related places are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. For the purposes of this article, these principles are considered in this article as analytical categories that describe possible avenues for investigating the heterotopias analyzed, firmly contesting any forms of homogenization or standardization of the social space under study.

According to Gallo (2015, pp. 438–440), beyond the “language effect” associated with the term, heterotopias can also be described as spatial and chronological functions. They differ from utopias in that, while the latter refer to unreal possibilities, heterotopias allude to real ones, implying “a space that is there, but is another space.” In other words, heterotopias are real places, marked by subjectivities, which can coexist with and contradict institutionalized spaces. This notion runs counter to institutionalized structures, often studied from a singular and rigid perspective. While such structures are sustained by formal norms and hierarchies that shape behaviors and practices, heterotopias harbor dynamic and ambiguous spaces where the plurality of meanings and functions defies imposed definitions. Public space is frequently examined in terms of who it is intended for, how public it actually is, to what extent it allows the coexistence of different identities, and what elements define it as genuinely public. In architecture, for example, this type of place plays a fundamental role, serving as a platform for social interaction, cultural exchange, and civic engagement (Muzzio & Muzzio-Rentas, 2008; Shane, 2008; Tekinalp & Şentürer, 2024).

In this sense, transformations of public space can serve as analytical entry points into society, unfolding into fragments, attributes, attitudes, and practices of individuals, and marking out space-times essentially tied to the reproduction of social relations. Social space is a social product; in this process, individuals and organizations establish themselves and continually (re)imagine and (re)create their spaces, incorporating contradictory or unexpected heterotopic possibilities. The underlying notion is that society produces its own space, both material and symbolic, through the interaction of individuals, institutions, and social practices. From urban life and the production of its spaces – whether understood as “conceived,” “perceived,” or “lived” (Lefebvre, 1974), or observed through the “strategies” and “tactics” by which individuals and institutions operate within social structures (De Certeau, 1994) – arise encounters, confrontations, differences, and also escape routes from the formally instituted: that is, “heterotopias,” as described by Foucault (2013).

For Lefebvre (1974), city life derives not only from its physical configuration but, above all, from the social dynamics that manifest within it – multiple, unstable, and marked by tensions between the mental, cultural, social, and historical. Other spaces, as studied by Foucault (2013), subvert the dominant logic inscribed in the “conceived” space of those in power, revealing fissures, resistances, and contradictions expressed in what is lived and perceived daily by individuals. Heterotopic manifestations illuminate instabilities and controversies that strain the established order, bringing to light the plurality of meanings and experiences ascribed to a single urban space. Moreover, as De Certeau (1994) has shown, the production of space unfolds through the tension between strategies – operated by institutions and power structures that delimit the formal uses and

meanings of spaces – and tactics, that is, creative, often quiet practices through which individuals subvert, adapt, or divert such delimitations. These tactics, rooted in everyday life, reveal forms of resistance that destabilize the rigidity of established strategies, enabling space to be experienced in multiple, ambiguous, and insurgent ways.

Anchored in this theoretical framework, this article seeks to apprehend the heterotopic processes that emerged in the production and historical organization of a social space within the Américo Renné Giannetti Municipal Park in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. By examining the historical trajectory of this site, we propose an analytical approach grounded primarily in Foucault's (2013) principles of heterotopias, complemented by the theoretical contributions of Lefebvre (1974) and De Certeau (1994). We argue that the reproduction of social space is marked by tactics and strategies that transcend formal, institutional, and morally accepted realms, giving rise to "other spaces" that challenge and reconfigure the hegemonic structures conceived by those in power. As such, the Park, recognized as part of the cultural heritage of Belo Horizonte and of Minas Gerais, embodies a rich diversity of knowledge and power relations.

Foucault (2013), as well as Lefebvre (1974) and De Certeau (1994), underscores the existence of social practices that strain and juxtapose formal, institutional, or morally sanctioned space, promoting the (re)production of other spaces that elude the hegemonic logic of society. Although each of these authors adopts a distinct theoretical lens, their work converges in critical reflection on power, the production of urban space, and the multiple forms of social organization, remaining fundamental references in contemporary debates.

Based on this framework, we seek to explore complementary analytical categories that broaden our interpretive lens. In particular, we emphasize the *counterpositions* arising from the articulation between the dimensions of "conceived, perceived, and lived" (Lefebvre, 1974), as well as between the "strategies" and "tactics" described by De Certeau (1994). These categories assist in understanding the symbolic and material disputes that configure urban spaces, revealing practices of appropriation, resistance, and reconfiguration carried out by individuals and collectives.

This analytical framework underpins the investigation proposed in this study, allowing us to interpret the constitution of the Municipal Park as a social space traversed by multiple rationalities, practices, and narratives. The everyday life that unfolds there is complex and singular, opening paths for approaches in organizational studies that recognize the heterogeneity of actors, temporalities, and forms of occupying and assigning meaning to places.

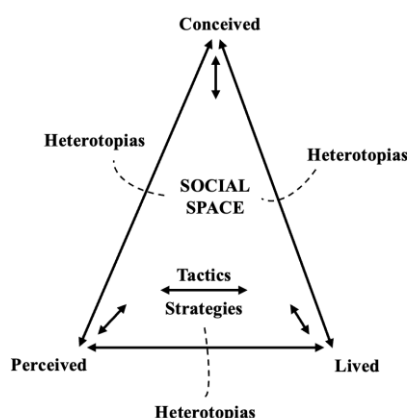


Figure 1. Representation of heterotopic manifestations, considering the triad “conceived-perceived-lived,” tactics, and strategies in the production of social space.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Lefebvre (1974), De Certeau (1994), and Foucault (2013).

The relevance of this study lies in its capacity to reveal the multiple transformations and reconfigurations that have occurred throughout the Park’s history. We highlight the heterotopias that emerge as responses to control strategies implemented by public administration, adapting themselves to the dynamics of urban space. These transformation processes, as examined by Chaves and Aquino (2016) in São Paulo’s Ibirapuera Park, suggest the possibility of juxtapositions and shifts in relation to the power networks that permeate forms of control over the park’s constituent spaces. In this way, these authors demonstrate the complexity of interactions between the park and the urban environment, as well as the underlying tensions that arise between the value of cultural preservation and the contemporary demands of management and use.

The documentary corpus compiled for this research presents statements permeated by heterotopic possibilities that emerge from governmental and control mechanisms operating in different contexts, demonstrating from the outset that the Park is a genealogical product of society. As such, it constitutes a public and social space with historical and cultural roots that can be traced and analyzed over time. Reflecting the priorities and values of a society in constant transformation, it carries cultural constructions, meanings, and narratives that express the changes that have unfolded over recent centuries. In this context, it becomes possible to analyze heterotopias that overlap and adapt through time, configuring themselves as spaces that challenge conventional notions of time, space, and behavior. This procedure was conducted with reference to contributions from Organizational Studies by authors such as Decker (2013), Lipartito (2014), Barros (2023), and Tennent and Gillet (2023).

With respect to Organizational Studies (OS), it is important to note that studies on non-hegemonic forms of “occupation” of the city can be found in research on urban public spaces, which is more directly focused on the theme of cities (Burrell & Dale, 2014; Vaujany & Vaast, 2014; Saraiva, 2019, 2020; Cnossen et al., 2020; Stephenson et al., 2020; Gomes et al., 2021; Leone, 2023; Saraiva, 2023; Saraiva & Silva, 2024; Sarayed-Din & Saraiva, 2024; Dacin et al., 2024) – as well as, relatedly or independently, in studies on the everyday lives of ordinary people, more specifically within the framework of the concept of ordinary management (Carrieri et al., 2018; Gouvêa et al., 2018;

Correia & Carrieri, 2019; Martins et al., 2023; Fujimori & Ichikawa, 2023; Klovovski & Ichikawa, 2024).

Regarding OS works that interrogate the city, Saraiva (2019), in *Cities and Organizational Studies: A Necessary Debate*, provides an extensive overview of the history of research and publications in the field, subdividing the topic into three major constructs: (1) studies on territorialities, their formation processes, and their differences; (2) sociabilities, symbolisms, and cultures, emphasizing the need to always discuss these terms in the plural; and (3) social inequality and urban segregation, confronting produced and lived space and highlighting the segregations, exclusions, and tolls inherent to urban conglomerates under capitalism. Numerous studies have been conducted and a wide range of contributions produced, as evidenced in the bibliographic references in that volume, as well as in subsequent publications such as Saraiva and Ipiranga (2020), Saraiva (2020), Gomes, Cardoso, and Domingues (2021), Saraiva and Da Silva (2024), and Sarayed-Din and Saraiva (2024). Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that research specifically addressing park management is scarce, as indicated by Santos, Nascimento, and Regis (2019) and Santos et al. (2023). According to these authors, there remains a theoretical need to address the dynamics of production, the obstacles and difficulties encountered, and the opportunities experienced in such management contexts.

While drawing on the contributions of the aforementioned studies, we chose to integrate discussions of everyday life into OS. Beyond seeking to approach the theme of parks through the complexity of the daily constructions of ordinary people, we align ourselves with the theoretical perspective proposed by the concept of *minor administration*, as developed by Martins, Corrêa, and Carrieri (2023), Martins (2021), and Carrieri and Correia (2020). Based on this approach, we emphasize life's inherent potential and the need to broaden attention and care toward forces and forms of action previously unauthorized. In other words, by focusing on the park's territory, we aim to highlight inventions, escapes, the unplanned, and the unexpected, much as Foucault does with his notion of heterotopias.

Borrowing from the concept of *minor literature* elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari (1977), the term *minor* here does not imply lesser importance. Rather, it plays on its meaning, emphasizing the singular forces and intensities that permeate everyday micropolitics. By recognizing the diversity and multiplicity of organizational forms that constitute the everyday – the mundane and the seemingly insignificant, but also what is real, factual, vital, and localizable in the lives of ordinary people – *minor administration* seeks to identify the lines of flight, the forces and actions that diverge, create, and invent new pathways, thereby empowering alternative ways of being and organizing collectively. Within this perspective of *minor administration*, we highlight five organizational possibilities that resonate with Foucault's revolutionary heterotopias:

1. A commitment to power, not to problems or lacks: careful observation of what animates desire and will, from which a group's capacity for action and invention emanates.
2. A commitment to multiple knowledge forms: to diverse inputs and outputs, and to the multiplicity of ways of inventing life and identifying feasible solutions.
3. A commitment to the sensitive body: to what sustains life in composition (collective action), rather than merely in instrumental function/organization (means-ends relations).

4. A commitment to the collective: to the construction of a commons that enhances human relations within another value system, such as exchanges not based on accumulation.
5. A commitment to a sustainable ethical compass: attentive to the integration of all living beings, beyond the human.

Thus, focusing on the life that happens in the park, through an archeo-genealogical and guided by a Foucauldian analytical approach, this article seeks to contribute to the exploration of other ways of being and coexisting that strain, expand, and rework conventional practices of the administrative universe, thereby illuminating what escapes: what eludes binary and functionalist organizations, what resists the colonization of our vital forces of creation and transcreation within the micropolitical relations of everyday life.

The proposed structure of the article includes, in the introduction, the adopted methodological approach, clarifying the correlation between the concept of heterotopia and Foucault's archeo-genealogical method. Subsequently, the heterotopic possibilities identified in the Park are presented. Focusing on a specific area of the space known as the "IMACO School area," we highlight the unfinished layers and overlaps that expose the distances between the conceived, the perceived, and the lived (Lefebvre, 1974). We also examine the survival strategies and tactics (De Certeau, 1994) that contest and reconfigure the occupation of the originally planned site. In so doing, we aim to articulate fundamental concepts of spatial organization and, within everyday life, to foreground *minor administrations* of the "occupation" of reality.

The research process and corpus construction

As Lashchuk (2024) observes, heterotopias can be apprehended through the language individuals employ and the forms of use they establish. This language not only defines spaces of action but also contributes to the construction of identity categories that shape social interactions and mark boundaries – both symbolic and practical – within these spaces. For Hernández and Marques (2022), the reformulation of spaces and identities enables the juxtaposition of different spatial configurations in a single location, allowing the coexistence of elements that, under other circumstances, might appear incompatible. Such spaces assume multiple forms and functions, adapting and transforming in line with the social practices established there. They are thus shaped by the interactions and needs of the groups that use them, becoming sites of coexistence and hybridization where diverse identities and meanings emerge in resistance to the limits imposed by institutional contexts.

By fostering the coexistence of different modes of appropriation and use, these spaces enable the emergence of alternative and, at times, contradictory narratives, giving voice to groups and practices often marginalized in more regulated contexts. This openness to diverse experiences and perspectives contributes to the construction of more democratic and inclusive spaces, in which cultural and social diversity permeates the urban environment.

In this sense, the Américo Renné Giannetti Municipal Park, analyzed as a heterotopic space, reveals complexities that problematize social and organizational behaviors, creating – or not – opportunities for practices of freedom and resistance. For Foucault (2013), the emancipation of individuals is tied to new articulations of force between knowledge and power that foster practices capable of sustaining "de-individualized," "multiple," and "displaced" power dynamics. Such

configurations allow for the creation of spaces where power relations become less centralized and more diffuse, generating environments of autonomy and diversity that subvert traditional mechanisms of control and discipline.

These dynamics permit the decentralization of power relations, enabling individuals and collectives to experiment with and exercise forms of autonomy that contest normative models of discipline. These “other places” have the potential to challenge organizational practices, offering experiences that counter centralized order and control. They thus manifest new forms of organization and coexistence in which processes of subjectivation and resistance find room to develop and be expressed.

Our proposal was to investigate a wide array of documents constituting an archive, through detailed analyses and categories presented below. In line with the archeo-genealogical orientation of this research, it was necessary to construct a dedicated archive as a source for analyzing the statements it contained. Employing Foucault’s archeo-genealogical method, we sought to situate the discourses within their historical and genealogical contexts, analyzing the object from the standpoint of discourse and tracing the enunciations that compose its history.

The discourses analyzed reveal, on the one hand, multiple truths about the events, and on the other, point to possibilities in the relations between power and knowledge, demonstrating how these interactions shape public space as the outcome of a tangle of historically constituted social practices.

As Aquino and Val (2018) have noted, the construction of the archive comprised diverse enunciative materials such as official documents, minutes, reports, legislation, photographs, plans, and iconographic records, originating from various institutional collections, including the Public Archive of the City of Belo Horizonte (APCBH), the Abílio Barreto Historical Museum (MHAB), and the State Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage of Minas Gerais (IEPHA/MG).

To organize this material, we followed three fundamental steps: defining the corpus of analysis, discursively ordering the documents, and, finally, the archiving process. The latter consists in identifying inflection points that made possible changes in the rules of *veridiction*. In this context, the researcher’s task is to apprehend, across an extensive historical series, the rationalities underlying what was said, highlighting the process of *eventalization* (the Foucauldian method of analyzing phenomena as contingent events through archival discourse). Events that suggest deviations or heterotopic traces reproduce resonances, modifying the relations of veridiction.

The Belo Horizonte City Public Archive (APCBH), one of the main sources consulted in this research, is the product of public policies aimed at preserving the municipality’s documentary heritage. Between April and May 2023, we conducted email exchanges and in-person visits, through which we accessed a variety of documents and collections, including several notebooks with attendance records, minutes, and terms of office from the park’s advisory committee (1992-1995), as well as minutes of meetings held between 1993 and 2003. Other documents, such as the park’s use regulations (1997–2000), the socio-environmental survey (2001), the automatic irrigation project (2002), the action plan and management reports (2002), the Agenda 21 Program report (1999–2000), and the historical-cultural heritage survey (2002), provided critical support for Foucauldian analysis of institutional statements. Iconographic and textual materials were also included, such as the comic book *Belinho – Parque Municipal* (1997), press clippings on the park and

the Parque 21 Program (2003–2004), and numbered photographic negatives (1143, 1144, 1177, 1247, and 1267, undated). Documents such as *Discreet Justification or Portrait of Commitments* (1999–2003), the notebook *Survey of Belo Horizonte Actions Related to Agenda 21* (2005), and folders from the “Agenda 21 Seminar” were also crucial for identifying points of discursive inflection, symbolic disputes, and spatial reconfigurations that reveal the constitution of heterotopic manifestations within the park.

In addition to these materials, we consulted the book *Parque Municipal: Crônica de um Século* (*Municipal Park: Chronicle of a Century*), produced and published by the mining company Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD) following a renovation project carried out by the company in 1950. Composed of six chronologically organized chapters, the work traces the park’s identity from its romantic idealization during the construction of the capital, through its trajectory across the twentieth century, to the landscape intervention conducted by CVRD as part of its “project in favor of the park,” which included a revitalization of the landscape carried out by the company.

The second stage of developing the archive’s corpus involved research into the digital iconographic collection of the Abílio Barreto Historical Museum (MHAB). Among the materials analyzed, we accessed iconographic, textual, and cartographic documents that contributed to the historical and discursive reconstruction of Américo Renné Giannetti Municipal Park. Various reports on events that took place in the park, published between 1975 and 2008, formed a relevant body of sources for understanding the media and social representations attributed to the space over the decades. The master’s dissertation *Belo Horizonte Municipal Park: Public, Appropriations, and Meanings* by Aurino José Góis (2003) was also incorporated into the corpus, providing valuable academic interpretations of the park’s uses and meanings in different historical contexts. In addition, cartographic documents such as the General Project of the Park (dated 12/24/[189?]) and the General Plan of the City of Minas, prepared from the geodetic, topographic, and cadastral plan of Belo Horizonte (undated), were essential for analyzing the original conception of the space and subsequent urban transformations, thereby enabling reflection on the interplay between conceived, perceived, and lived space (Lefebvre, 1974).

We also consulted the Minas Gerais State Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IEPHA/MG), where we accessed key documents for understanding preservation policies and recent disputes surrounding the use of the Américo Renné Giannetti Municipal Park. The process of designating the park’s landscape as a state heritage site, formalized on March 13, 1975, constitutes one of the main iconographic and textual sources in the corpus and is crucial for understanding the legal and symbolic frameworks that have shaped the park–government relationship over the decades. Additionally, the *Technical Note on the Master Plan Analysis*, produced between August 2015 and August 2016, provided updated information on the conflicts related to recent urban interventions in the park. Both documents were incorporated into the analysis as statements that express regimes of veridiction and disputes of authority over urban space, directly contributing to the identification of institutional practices and resistances linked to contemporary forms of heterotopia.

To complement the archival sources and deepen our understanding of the actors and institutional decisions involved in the park’s transformations, we consulted municipal legislation covering the period from 1944 to 2008. This timeframe spans the creation of the Belo Horizonte Institute of Fine Arts, marking the establishment of the Guignard School within the park, through to

the repeal of Law No. 1,538/1968, which had prohibited construction in the area reserved for the Municipal Park. The legislation analyzed comprises decrees, laws, and resolutions and revealed the successive processes of institutionalization, restructuring, and later dismantling of the IMACO School, as well as the disputes over use of the space. These normative decisions were critical for identifying the legal and symbolic shifts in the use of the park's territory, allowing us to trace the political conflicts and legal-administrative mechanisms that either supported or contested the preservation and appropriation of the space over time.

Press reports on the Municipal Park formed another fundamental part of the corpus. Articles published between 1958 and 2024 were analyzed, drawn from print newspapers such as *Diário da Noite*, *Diário de Minas*, *Estado de Minas*, *Hoje em Dia*, *O Tempo*, and the *Official Gazette of the City of Belo Horizonte*, as well as digital sources such as Portal G1, *Blog da Cidinha*, and documents from the Belo Horizonte City Council. Their content ranged from the installation of the Guignard School in the park ("The Guignard School," 1958), to accounts of abandonment ("Listed Bandstand is Abandoned," 1988), to revitalization attempts ("Municipal Park Will Receive Multipurpose Complex," 2013), to the suspension of construction of the Multipurpose Space in an article published in 2024. These statements revealed narrative disputes and institutional practices that continuously update, strain, and redirect the uses and meanings of the park over time. Incorporated into the Foucauldian analysis adopted here, these reports function as discursive devices that shed light on the emergence of new spatial rationalities and the identification of heterotopic traces analyzed in this study.

In addition to the materials consulted at MHAB, we conducted online searches to incorporate news about interventions in the park up to mid-2024, thereby ensuring the inclusion of the most recent events related to changes in its space.

Before beginning the archive analysis, we devoted several days to exploring the park itself. As De Certeau (1994) suggests, one must walk, discover, and recognize. This process enabled a deeper and more sensitive understanding of the park, moving beyond appearances and approaching the everyday dynamics that constitute it. Strolling through the space revealed not only the physical and historical aspects of the place, but also the social practices, interactions, and modes of use that together weave the park's symbolic and experiential fabric.

Heterotopic possibilities: unfinished layers and overlays in the Park

The history of parks and the Américo Renné Giannetti Municipal Park

As noted earlier, public urban spaces, including parks, structure the dynamic and complex landscapes of cities. Informed and influenced by the historical processes of societies, these places serve diverse purposes for their visitors. As Cranz (2000) points out, an important lesson from the history of parks is that their formation reflects the social objectives, ideologies, and attitudes underlying the cities in which they are located. Parks have been central to the transformation of civilizations and to the role played by public space. As Paula and Caser (2020) argue, in France, for example, the parks designed by Haussmann contributed to the development of new concepts of the city within a broader panorama of modernization. In the United States, Central Park, designed by Olmsted, fostered greater integration between buildings and open spaces. Both projects were conceived in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In Brazil, the arrival of the Portuguese royal family and the influence of colonizers in the early nineteenth century contributed to the emergence of parks in the country. During this period, European architectural models predominated in these projects. Yet, given the colonial landscape, distant from the urban networks already consolidated in Europe, the first parks built served primarily as complements to the spaces occupied by the elites who exploited the territory.

The construction of Belo Horizonte, planned to be the new capital of Minas Gerais at the end of the nineteenth century, was deeply shaped by the rise of the republican regime in Brazil. Julião (2011) observes that, during this transitional moment, feelings of nostalgia and enchantment infused the construction process of the new capital. These sentiments reflected a collective yearning for transformation, accompanied by expectations of a new beginning and promising horizons. The period was marked by a desire to break with the colonial and monarchical past, projecting a modernizing future in which the new capital emerged as a symbol of progress and renewal, blending elements of tradition with the modernity to which society aspired. Within this context, the aspiration to build a city that embodied modernity stood out, replacing the vestiges of colonial rule and monarchical influence that had characterized Ouro Preto.

Bernardo Pinto Monteiro (1857-1924), the fifth mayor of Belo Horizonte and governor from 1899 to 1902, played a vital role in articulating a vision of modernization for the new capital. Monteiro sought to integrate natural beauty, architecture, science, and production, reflecting the ambition to consolidate an urban center that embodied the modern ideal. According to him, “the thought of the Minas Gerais legislator, when decreeing the change of the capital, was to create a city that would not only be distinguished by its beauty... topographically, for its architecture, for its hygiene, and for everything that constitutes the modern ideal of a populous center” (Minas Gerais, 1900, p. 4). According to him, “the thought of the Minas Gerais legislator, when decreeing the change of the capital, was to create a city that would not only be distinguished by its beauty... topographically, for its architecture, for its hygiene, and for everything that constitutes the modern ideal of a populous center” (Minas Gerais, 1900, p. 4). This vision consolidated the role of the capital as a representation of the state’s grandeur, synthesizing its productive diversity, natural resources, and physical structure. Thus, Belo Horizonte was conceived as an expression of the progressive spirit of Minas Gerais, highlighting both the potential for regional development and the modernizing ambition of the time.

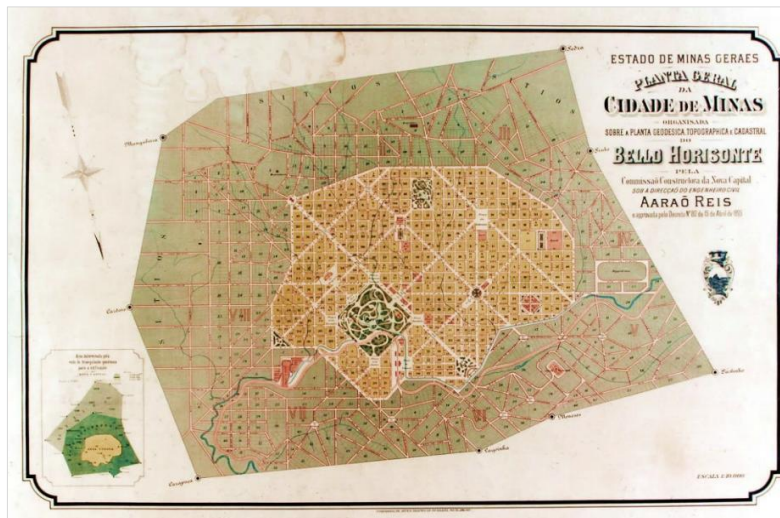


Figure 2. General Plan of the City of Minas Gerais superimposed on the geodetic, topographic, and cadastral plan of Belo Horizonte. The green space represents the Municipal Park.

Source: Barreto, 1996, p. 252.

The park was planned to cover an area of approximately 640,000 m², initially conceived according to a naturalistic approach that sought to adapt the landscape design to the site's natural features. While respecting the land's contours, however, the park was incorporated into a regular, quadrangular plan, consistent with the overall design of the capital. As Arruda (2012) notes, the plan of the New Capital Construction Commission, presented in 1895, was characterized by a geometric and linear style, with diagonal avenues crossing the urban area. Morando (2012) further observes that the Commission's initial design also reflected ideals of sanitation, surveillance, and social control, assigning the large central green area functions related to physical activity and recreation.

By becoming a stage for the city's cultural events, the park transcended its original function, layered with performances that brought together different realities and perspectives. This heterotopic characteristic manifests in its ability to accommodate multiple realities within a single space. By enabling such multiplicity of functions, the park exemplifies the essence of heterotopias, serving as a site where overlapping layers of meaning and experience coexist, challenging the idea that a social space can have a single purpose. In this sense, the Lefebvrian dimensions of "lived space" and "perceived space" generate shifts in the realm of "conceived space."

According to Galera and Garcia (2017), in the twenty-first century the park came to occupy about one-third of its original area. Despite this reduction, it remains one of the most visited public spaces in the city, accounting, according to the authors, for approximately 60 percent of total park use in Belo Horizonte.

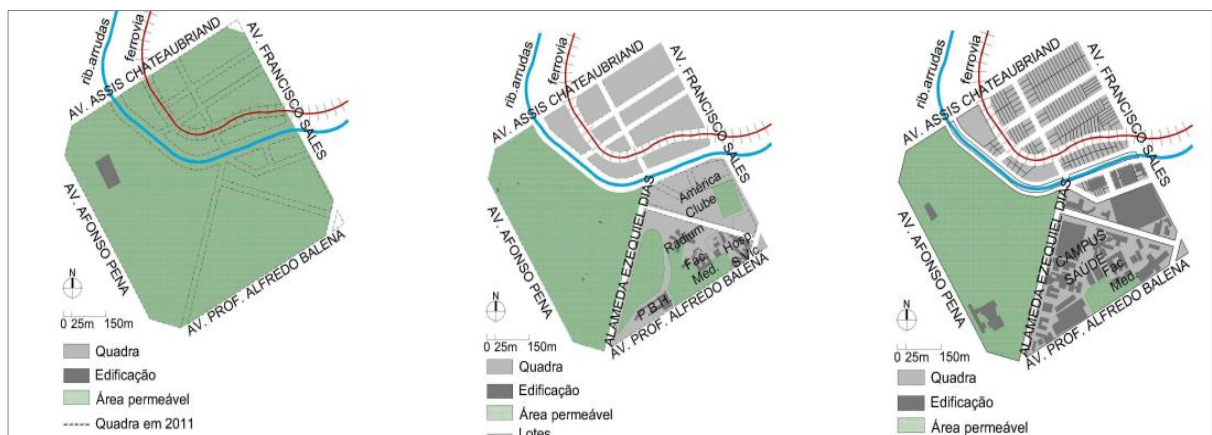


Figure 3. Changes in the configuration of the Municipal Park over time, highlighting the divisions that occurred in the 1890s, 1940s, and 2010s.

Source: Simão, 2012, p. 97.

The unfinished park: a departure from the conceived

During this research, when selecting a specific location or phenomenon to delimit our field of study in the Park, we encountered a vast, unfinished area marked by signs of abandonment and inaccessible to the public. This space evoked the sense of being, in a way, “outside all places,” a heterotopic manifestation that operated (or failed to operate) differently from its surroundings. While physically integrated into the Park, this “non-place” symbolized a separate territory where norms and intended functions appeared suspended, exposing an ambiguous universe between the constructed and the neglected.

At the level of the “perceived” and the “lived,” this space illustrates the dialectic proposed by Lefebvre (1974), configuring itself as a stage of tension between “strategies” – often linked to power structures and planning – and “tactics” – everyday practices of use and appropriation that challenge or reconfigure conceived ideals. Originally designed to fulfill a functional and integrated purpose, the area progressively drifted from these intentions, becoming a marginalized territory. This shift demonstrates how social practices and actual uses reconfigure space beyond its idealization, revealing contradictions inherent to the urban planning process. While conceived representations of space pursue homogeneity and control, the lived and perceived expose fissures in urban logic, creating an arena where different interests and meanings coexist and conflict. This complex relationship reinforces Lefebvre’s view of space as a social product in constant construction and reconstruction, reflecting the tensions between hegemony and resistance.

In seeking to understand what (does not) occur in this space, we investigated its historical significance based on references from the archival corpus. The aspects identified and the distinct forms of use and disuse point to the configuration of a nonlinear social space, marked by multiplicity and deviations, offering clues to an eminently heterotopic configuration.

The area analyzed corresponds to the region long occupied by the IMACO School. Built in 1954, the school remained on the site until its demolition in 2013 to make way for a proposed multipurpose complex, still unfinished. Before the school’s construction, the site had served as a

residence for the park's caretaker and as a facility for students of the Guignard School, who referred to it as *Escolinha do Parque* ("Park School").

We reconstructed this historical trajectory through the crossroads and counterpoints of the Park's development, which on several occasions subverted previously established functional classifications. Not always governed by the rules assumed by mechanisms of social control, these transformations revealed points of instability within the social sphere. In this sense, as Foucault (2013) suggests, this discontinuous evolution highlights nodal points through which heterogeneous social relations can be identified and examined. Such relations, once analyzed, enable new forms of understanding and creation.

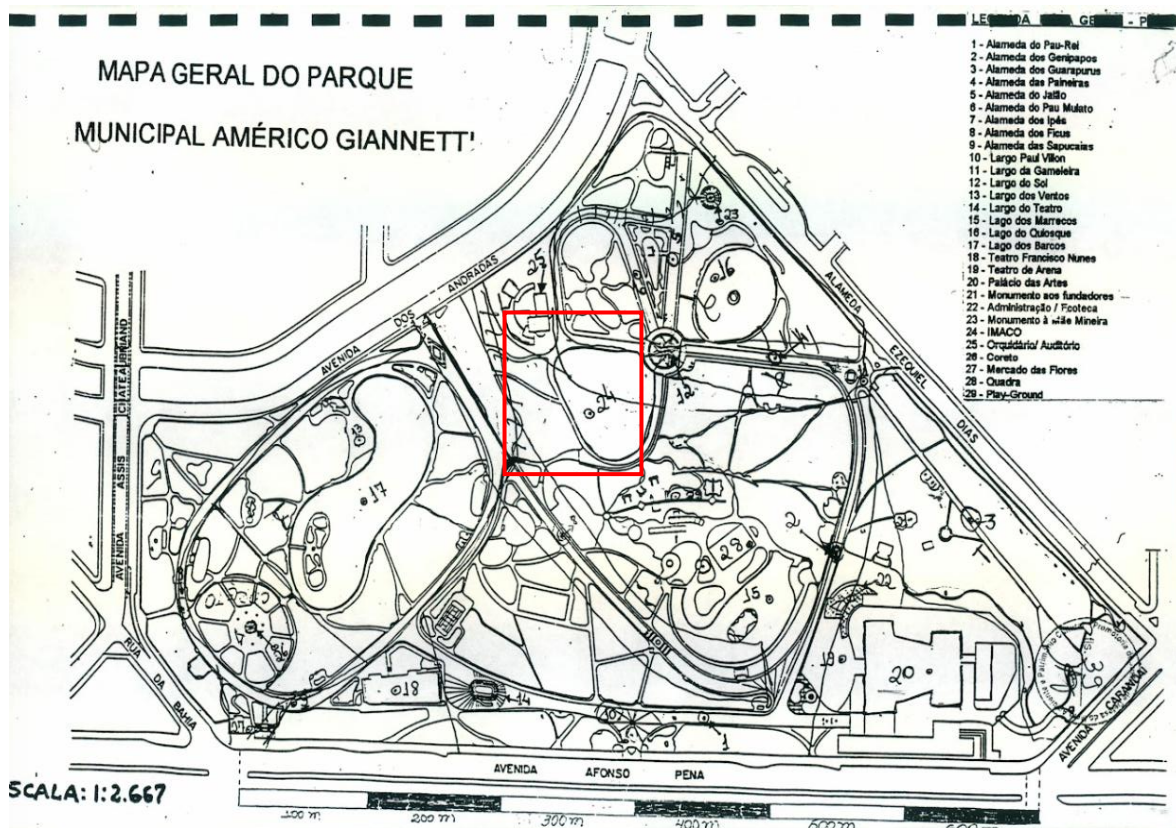


Figure 4. General map of the Municipal Park highlighting the analyzed area.

Source: APCBH Collection, 2000–2003.

Four significant uses and configurations of this space were identified through archival analysis: the caretaker's residence, the Guignard School, the IMACO School, and, finally, the construction of a Multipurpose Complex. These successive uses reveal heterotopic possibilities that, over time, assumed distinct forms.

Analysis and Findings

The archives and heterotopic possibilities: the caretaker's house, the Guignard School, the IMACO School, and the Multipurpose Complex

The records collected for this research reveal that, from the beginning of the Park's construction, the use of the site for the caretaker's quarters was marked off as a space distinct from the other buildings. In this sense, and as Foucault (2013) proposes, we observe heterotopias of deviation, that is, places society assigns to its margins, generally occupied by those who deviate from the social norm. By analyzing the role of the caretaker and the delimitation of a dwelling within the workplace, we can identify the constitution of a place of deviation inside the Park's structure. From a "lived" perspective, this space was designated as the residence of someone set apart from the park's visitors and from the other municipal employees, who soon occupied facilities suited to their functions. This configuration corresponds to the first principle proposed by Foucault (2013), whereby certain spaces are designated for those who fall outside conventional social expectations and rules.

The establishment of the caretaker's quarters also highlights the "tactic" of creating a habitable and functional environment for the person responsible for the park's upkeep. As Foucault (2013, p. 12) notes, these are "heterotopic operations by which the body is torn from its own space and projected into another space." Here, the individual was inserted into an environment where divergent functions and meanings coexisted: on the one hand, a private living space; on the other, the link between his domestic life and the park's maintenance and management activities. This juxtaposition represents a distinct layer imposed on a real space, altering its initial conception as a site for leisure and quality of life.

Exploring this overlap raises questions about the boundaries between public and private in the capitalist context. In a society marked by commodification of spaces and services, functions can quickly become ambiguous. The home, conventionally linked to the private sphere, here also served the demands of public space, designed for collective leisure. In terms of lived space, this functional appropriation reflects the fusion of life and work, in which the domestic environment loses part of its autonomy and becomes an extension of the public structure, subject to the imperatives of maintenance and surveillance. From a capitalist perspective, this dynamic reinforces control over space and over the experience of the individual who inhabits an "other space" that unsettles the rigid separation between public leisure and private life. Heterotopic manifestations in this case reveal the complexities and contradictions of urban space under capitalism, where the private dissolves into the public environment, demanding adaptations and interventions that expose the power dynamics shaping urban experience.

The founding of the *Escolinha do Parque* by Guignard in 1943, at Kubitschek's invitation, represents another juxtaposition of spaces within the Municipal Park. Located in a studio in a City of Belo Horizonte building, the School of Fine Arts introduced new dynamics into the space. As Foucault (2013) explains, this once again demonstrates the juxtaposition of spaces (from the caretaker's house to a building that would serve as an art school). Whether or not a dedicated building existed remains uncertain, as published accounts differ from the interviews consulted at the start of this section. Regardless, this passage points to the emergence of various "tactics," or even heterotopias of crisis and deviation. Crisis, because the space enabled artists to subvert artistic traditionalism; deviation, because students came to be seen as diverting the Park from its original leisure-oriented function. Echoing the concept of minor administration (Martins et al. , 2023), we emphasize here the power of life, which unfolds in multiple and complex forms. What interests us

are the possibilities of paths opened for space that had not been previously envisioned: the a priori models of action and thought were not guiding frameworks for the representations that arose.

Guignard's classes were often held outdoors, enabling an innovative approach and expanding artistic freedom. According to Cedro (2007), outdoor practice broke with prevailing academicism and encouraged young people to express themselves freely. Ávila (1997) likewise noted that Guignard fostered an insurgency against the norms of artistic academicism, encouraging young people to express themselves freely through painting and drawing. In this context, imitations of classical works, enclosed studios, artificial light, Impressionism, and other techniques and styles already outdated in Europe but still dominant in Brazil's traditional schools were abandoned. By integrating this new layer, the space enabled open discussions removed from the confines of classrooms. Students' libertarian expressions can be read as heterotopias of deviation, or as "tactics" through which individuals sought to break with conventional artistic education.

This dynamic reflects the constitution of an "other space" in the Foucauldian sense, that is, a place where established norms and traditional expectations are deliberately contested and reformulated. Rather than conforming to the rigid, hierarchical standards that dominated art education at the time, Guignard created an environment that allowed students to explore new forms of expression. This "other space" transcended the physical and also acquired a conceptual dimension, opening avenues for practices beyond technical or formal training. Indeed, by challenging academicism, Guignard fostered an environment where authenticity was central, encouraging students to move beyond classical reproduction and develop individual styles and perspectives. In this context, art was experienced not as an activity confined by the conventions of a closed classroom, but as an organic practice in constant dialogue with the environment, natural light, and urban life. The openness of the physical setting and the break with hierarchical teaching structures allowed each student to explore their uniqueness and confront their own perspectives, transforming creation into a pursuit of collective and individual innovation. Here we see the formation of a sensitive, smaller-scale, non-instrumentalized collective body, whose objectives were not always compatible with the logic of profitability.

In the 1950s, the establishment of the IMACO School (Municipal Institute of Administration and Accounting Sciences) marked another heterotopic layer in the Municipal Park. In 1954, the project was approved by the Municipal Deliberative Council and enacted into law, representing a bold innovation for its time. The initiative was presented as the implementation of a new educational paradigm in the city. IMACO symbolized Belo Horizonte's insertion into a more modern and industrialized national context, reflecting the broader social and economic transformations underway in Brazil. In a setting of urban and industrial expansion, the college responded to the growing demand for technical and specialized training, aligning with labor market needs and promoting technical education. The institution symbolized the educational modernization of Belo Horizonte, consolidating itself as a center for training qualified professionals, particularly in administration and accounting, meeting the demands of the labor market amid increasing urbanization and industrialization. It played a decisive role in adapting the educational system to the social and economic transformations of the period, reinforcing the link between technical education and the needs of a society in transition.

This juxtaposition brings into focus Foucault's (2013, p. 22) second principle of heterotopias, which points to the possibility of 'diluting and making disappear a heterotopia that once existed, or

organizing one that did not yet exist.” The IMACO building offers unmistakable evidence of the transience and mutability of spaces inhabited by individuals. In the case of the Park, each successive use – the caretaker’s house, Guignard’s school, construction sites, and finally IMACO – fulfilled distinct purposes over time, illustrating what Foucault (2013) describes as the reorganization of states of equilibrium and modes of operation intrinsic to heterotopias. Heterotopic manifestations, including the caretaker’s residence, Guignard’s outdoor classes, and the IMACO School building, challenge and expand conventional notions of education and interaction with nature. They accumulate layers of meaning and function, often contradictory or unresolved, moving beyond the realm of “conceived space” and into that of “lived space.”

The large student population, combined with the park’s management difficulties, eventually drew the attention of the Minas Gerais Public Prosecutor’s Office (MPMG). In 2000, the Municipal Department of the Environment requested intervention to safeguard the park’s conservation. The document reported various nighttime incidents involving students near the bamboo grove, including alcohol consumption and fires that damaged vegetation; an intoxicated student hanging from the school’s marquee and threatening to jump; bomb detonations in the restrooms; broken windows; and graffiti on the park’s structures. According to this report, all of these incidents were being concealed by the school administration. These episodes evoke the notion of heterotopic traces, manifesting in spaces usually considered incongruous – such as the juxtaposition of the park, the school, and acts of vandalism or violence. Such heterotopias, as Foucault’s second principle indicates, continually juxtapose unusual places and reorganize their states of equilibrium and *modus operandi*, awakening new meanings and coherences that reflect the dynamics of power, governance, and social practice. Once again, we stress that no fixed pattern prevails: what emerges is a multiplicity of processes and possibilities, grounded in diverse knowledges and in the plural capacities for inventing viable solutions.

The points presented and the heterotopias identified here appear less as tools for resolving conflict than as evidence of the complexity of “lived space.” The question of how to overcome escape routes in such contexts raises doubts as to whether norms could ever harmonize conflicting interests. In moments of crisis – particularly involving the “tactics” employed by adolescents and the “strategies” of institutional authorities – heterotopias can obstruct the establishment of order, functioning instead as terrains that permit the expression of discontent and disorder. In this sense, they serve as escape valves from normative reality. Rather than pacifying conflict, heterotopic manifestations allow tensions to surface and sometimes intensify. The attitudes of students, deemed “deviant,” generated a parallel reality in which conventional norms were rejected or inverted. In their transition from childhood to adulthood, students like those at IMACO often seek to assert their identity and autonomy, a process that frequently brings them into conflict with established structures and expectations.

In this context, the school came to be characterized by individuals with defiant attitudes and disruptive behaviors who, within the Park, unsettled the previously established institutional order. This dynamic illustrates the adolescents’ attempts to negotiate space and power within society. Crisis heterotopias, such as those described, express the tension between the conformity demanded by adults and institutions and the resistance of adolescents. Like the Guignard students before them, IMACO students experimented and tested limits, often clashing with the local administration. These actions can be read as attempts to subvert the norm, constructing an “other space” where

common rules did not apply or were reinterpreted by the students themselves. There is a wager on the power and inventive capacity of its agents; a wager on the unexpected. Error is embraced as opportunity, insofar as the focus is on building the common that amplifies and exalts the *in-between*, that is, the relational fabric itself.

The Park 21 Program

The City of Belo Horizonte launched the *Parque 21* Program (“Park 21 Program”) as the framework for relocating IMACO School from the Municipal Park. In July 2003, the City announced efforts to foster dialogue among the institutions involved, to create a common agenda for dealing with emergencies, and to discuss the medium- and long-term implications of the school’s presence in the park. The school’s removal was incorporated into the *Parque 21* Program, which also envisioned the creation of a Natural History and Culture Reference Center. According to Góis (2003), the program was a joint initiative of the municipal administration involving several departments – Urban and Environmental Policy, Environment and Urban Sanitation, Urban Structure, Urban Cleaning, Regional Urban Services, and Culture. It was aligned with the broader international Agenda 21 initiative, aimed at promoting sustainability in accordance with global ideals of environmental preservation. Its primary objective was to guarantee the Park’s protection for future generations.

The revitalization proposed by the *Parque 21* Program reflects, once again, the overlapping and transformation of the spaces that constitute the Park. Here we see another layering of meanings and uses in a single physical environment. In line with Foucault’s second principle (2013), this dynamic underscores the reorganization of spaces once considered atypical, promoting new logics and interpretations. The program added depth to the Park’s historical layers, orienting its spaces toward sustainability practices and community engagement, thereby reinforcing its multifunctional character. These overlays reconfigured the “perceived” dimension of space into a site where multiple realities coexist and intertwine, functioning as compensatory heterotopias. In this sense, the idealized vision of a sustainable environment was materialized and experienced. Once again, no fixed pattern prevails: rather, there are processes and a multiplicity of possible trajectories.

By proposing to replace a strictly educational facility with a Multipurpose Complex, contradictions surfaced in this historical trajectory, especially because the new complex would also serve educational and community-development functions. According to Foucault’s second principle (2013), new structures are superimposed upon old spaces, altering balances and previously established functions. Although the Multipurpose Complex promised activities similar to those once offered by the School, it reorganized the dynamics of the site by accommodating a broader set of coexisting functions, generating new interpretations and possibilities for use. This transformation promoted community cohesion, aligning the site with contemporary and future needs while echoing its historical functions. At the same time, the demolition of the School can be read as an attempt to contain the “tactics” and heterotopic manifestations that had permeated the Park, which challenged its administration. In this sense, replacing the School with a multipurpose facility represented an effort to restore order and governability, even as it opened new opportunities for meaning and community use.

Popular Action (*"Ação Popular"*) No. 024.08.990.268-8 was filed against the then-mayor of Belo Horizonte, arguing that demolishing the IMACO School building was immoral and harmful to the public good, causing irreversible environmental damage. The plaintiffs sought to preserve the building in its original location, claiming that the landscaped area of the Municipal Park had been listed by the Minas Gerais State Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IEPHA), which they argued made demolition illegal. Court records also stated that construction of the Multipurpose Complex had not been preceded by a bidding process and that Municipal Law No. 9,675/2008, which authorized the demolition, was unconstitutional. The community therefore requested preservation of the building and immediate suspension of demolition plans. Returning to Foucault's sixth principle (2013), which defines heterotopias as spaces with functions distinct from their surroundings, this Popular Action can be read as a movement to defend a place that not only embodied collective memory but also resisted forces threatening its existence. In this sense, IMACO School represented a heterotopia of preservation and resistance, a space that transcended ordinary uses, connected with the past, and created a reality parallel to modernizing and commercial logics.

The lawsuit proceeded, and the 6th Civil Chamber of the Minas Gerais Court of Justice concluded that demolition of IMACO would not be presumed harmful to the public interest. It held that the plaintiffs bore the burden of proving that destruction of the building would damage public property or the environment. The ruling also overturned the claim that the building itself was listed, clarifying that the designation applied only to the landscaped area of the Park, as determined by IEPHA.

In 2009, the school was decommissioned. Beginning in 2011, the press reported on its demolition and replacement by a Multipurpose Complex. In April 2011, the newspaper *Estado de Minas* reported on the planned transformation of the former IMACO Institute building into a Multipurpose Complex. Scheduled to begin in July of that year, the project envisioned the construction of a 44,000-square-meter cultural facility, including a venue adapted for concerts and theatrical performances, an open-air area for 45,000 people, an auditorium for workshops and lectures on environmental education, a library, and a memory room dedicated to the Park.

This new space constituted another layer in the Park's overlapping uses and meanings. The transformation of the "perceived space" into one dedicated to entertainment and cultural purposes reflects its heterotopic character, now encompassing multiple functions and interpretations. By combining cultural, recreational, and educational activities, the multipurpose configuration challenged traditional notions of urban spatial use, reinforcing the Park's complexity and versatility.

In mid-2013, news outlets began publishing images of the Multipurpose Complex's architectural design, highlighting striking contradictions. On the one hand, the demolition of IMACO School – a symbol of education and local history – made way for a facility that would also promote learning and culture, suggesting continuity in its role of fostering knowledge and community. On the other hand, the transformation signaled a rupture, replacing a historical legacy with a modern, multifunctional structure. This overlap went beyond a physical change, reflecting a reorganization of power relations and social values. The replacement of the school with the Multipurpose Complex suggests historical and political interests underlying the decision, exposing tensions between heritage preservation and modernizing ideals, which often reshape urban space at the expense of collective memory.

These developments connect directly to Foucault's (2013) sixth principle of heterotopias, which emphasizes the creation of spaces with distinct functions and meanings in relation to their spatiotemporal context. Although such projects may initially appear to be simple extensions of their environment – or attempts by municipal authorities to produce the illusion of continuity and harmony – they transcend this superficial appearance. On the “lived” plane, they acquire authentic meanings that escape predefined logics. They thus become not mere complements to the urban landscape but heterotopic sites that question and reconfigure normative understandings of space. By opening new possibilities for use and interaction, they disrupt the conceived continuity of history, exposing and constructing alternative realities. They reshape spatial organization and generate settings in which social interaction and occupation need not follow the city's pre-established functional order. Precisely because they diverge from conventional reality, such heterotopias allow for unexpected appropriations, creating an active arena of cultural and social resistance in which rules are challenged, and new dynamics emerge.

The heterotopic manifestation here resides in the overlap and tension between old and new, between tradition and progress. While the School had represented formal education and a historical legacy, the Multipurpose Complex became permeated by discourses of adaptability, multifunctionality, and cultural inclusion. It sought to redefine the meanings and purposes of the site. In this sense, the transformation resonates with Foucault's fourth principle (2013), which addresses moments of passage, change, and transience. The space was reconfigured as a transitory place mediating movement and interaction between past and future.

Analogous to Foucault's discussion of stairs and corridors that connect various levels, this site embodied a transitional condition – between heritage and modernization, though in conflict. Preserving an old building amid modernization pressures can itself be read as heterotopia, where historical space is overlaid with intentions of renewal. Conversely, modernization projects also function as heterotopias, challenging traditional forms and establishing new realities that coexist with older ones. This interplay highlights the tensions inherent in urban development, where transitional spaces become arenas of transformation between what was and what is to come.

Following the demolition of IMACO School in November 2013, *Estado de Minas* reported on the stalled construction in the park. According to the article, the interruption was due to the need for “project refinement,” as indicated by the Capital Development Superintendence (Sudecap). Release of government funds was conditioned on resolving technical issues. In March 2014, the same newspaper again noted major delays: construction had advanced only to the foundations and footings. Anonymous sources cited the need for price adjustments as the cause of suspension, while Sudecap offered no official comment. At that time, the delay had already exceeded 50 percent of the initial schedule.

The fenced-off foundations simultaneously embodied potential and paralysis, reflecting an ambitious revitalization project that, in practice, was suspended. A site of collective memory had been transformed into an abandoned construction zone, unsettling conventional notions of progress and development. On the “perceived” and “lived” planes, it became a space of incompleteness and unrealized possibility. This unfinished layer illustrates the contradictions of urban planning, reaffirming the heterotopic character of the Park as a site of deviation and resistance.

The stagnant condition of the construction also invokes Foucault's sixth principle (2013), which highlights spaces with particular roles that contrast with their environments, often creating illusions about the adjacent real. The hoardings conceal a site of unrealized potential and disorder. Rather than embodying progress and activity, the construction site became a symbol of incompleteness. While the rest of the Park continued to function, the halted project stood out as a physical and functional discrepancy, disconnected from the desired reality. Although at first glance integrated into the city's fabric, it revealed itself as an "other" place, distinguished by the fragmentation and contradictions inherent in the failed materialization of an architectural vision.

In May 2015, *Estado de Minas* reported on the unfinished project in the Park. Initially scheduled for completion in April of the previous year, the project had suffered multiple interruptions since its official launch in 2013, attributed to financial and technical difficulties. At the time, Sudecap explained that construction had been suspended pending renewal of an agreement with the state government, the main provider of funds. No estimate was given for resumption. In 2017, the same newspaper likened the "Multipurpose Project" to a soap opera – a drawn-out narrative marked by twists, delays, and administrative silence. What had been envisioned as a cultural landmark had become a symbol of bureaucratic inertia, with heterotopic manifestations emerging from the complexities of public authority.

This slowness connects to Foucault's (2013) second principle of heterotopias, which highlights society's capacity to transform them, either by dissolving spaces once imbued with meaning or by creating new ones yet to exist. The halted construction exemplifies a space of stagnation. Here, traces of involuntary heterotopias emerge: a site that, rather than consolidating its original purpose, has been reshaped by the forces of delay and bureaucracy. Conceived as a cultural and social asset, it came to evoke abandonment and inefficiency. This reconfiguration illustrates how heterotopias evolve, acquiring new meanings and coherences through unexpected disruptions. What was meant to be a place of cultural enrichment became a site for reflecting on the contradictions of urban management, resisting straightforward interpretation.

In 2019, with the project still unfinished, a City Council report documented a technical visit by the Committee on Education, Science, Technology, Culture, Sports, Leisure, and Tourism to evaluate the Multipurpose Complex. Since 2015, execution had been suspended, awaiting an agreement with the state government for financing. This behavior reflected an accommodation to circumstances, shifting attention from developing the project to managing its inertia. Although the official narrative avoided explicitly acknowledging failure, the initiatives – or lack thereof – already signaled resignation to the situation. This tacit acceptance of the stalled project, without a clear plan for resumption, exemplifies how narratives and practices evolve to normalize an unforeseen reality while maintaining a semblance of control.

By 2022, stagnation persisted. The *MG1* news program reported that construction had been stalled for more than seven years. According to the report, over R\$9.3 million had already been invested, yet no completion date was set. While park visitors emphasized the site's potential benefits, public attention focused on the area fenced off by hoardings – an unfinished structure now overtaken by neglect. Work had been halted due to the suspension of the agreement between the state and the municipality, and the City was evaluating the feasibility of proceeding.

This scenario reflects the marginalization of the site within the Park. In line with Foucault's first principle (2013), the unfinished, now forgotten project exemplifies a heterotopia of deviation, in which an alternative reality subverts expectations and original functions. Rather than serving as a meeting place and community hub, as envisioned, the space became a symbol of abandonment and administrative inefficiency. Governmental silence and the project's dereliction transformed it into an "other space," disconnected from its initial intentions.



Figure 5. Record of halted works inside the Park during the research.

Source: Authors' collection, 2023.

Currently, beneath the hoardings that conceal the stalled construction, one finds an image of Guignard and, just above it, renderings of the architectural design for the future Multipurpose Complex. These juxtapositions expose the historical contradictions concentrated in a single area of the Park and exemplify the fluid and conflictual nature of heterotopias described by Foucault (2013). Distinct "strategies" and "tactics," in De Certeau's (1994) terms, shaped the appropriation of this space, reflecting desires and needs conditioned by power relations. Together, these movements produced a constant reconfiguration of Lefebvre's (1974) triad of "conceived–perceived–lived" space.

Beneath the hoardings surrounding the Multipurpose Complex, a mural depicts the painter and teacher Guignard, who once used that very spot for his classes. For his students, it became a space of freedom and expression, challenging the conservative educational norms of the time and offering a refuge beyond the confines of the studio. Over the decades, the site assumed multiple uses – an attribute of heterotopias, which accumulate and overlay different layers of meaning.

This site, which over time has accumulated and layered different meanings, demonstrates how heterotopic spaces are dynamic, adaptable, and capable of both reflecting and shaping the needs and expectations of their users. In organizational terms, this parallels the constant transformations and overlaps generated by shifting objectives and individual demands. Such spaces are not confined to a single function but are adapted to accommodate multiple purposes, interests, and relations of power. Moreover, the multifunctional nature of heterotopias challenges institutions to see space not only as a physical structure but also as a symbolic territory that shapes organizational culture. In work environments that embrace heterotopic flexibility, different layers of meaning – such as creativity, autonomy, and belonging – can be cultivated and reinforced. This perspective supports the development of more inclusive and collaborative cultures, where individuals, by expressing their identities, contribute to redefining organizational norms and processes.

Recognizing spaces that enable a multiplicity of meanings also entails creating places that escape normativity and allow for alternative practices – minor administrations. These spaces function as breaches in the organizational power structure – arenas where individuals can experiment with different forms of subjectivity and, at times, subvert the relations of control typical of corporate hierarchies. As Foucault (2013) observed, such arenas reveal how individuals negotiate their autonomy across different space-times, offering a symbolic refuge in which the organization's official discourse may be suspended, reshaped, or reinterpreted. Heterotopic spaces thus develop their own logic, operating as sites of resistance and rupture with the status quo, where norms can be questioned and reimaged. This underscores that organizations are not merely physical or legal entities but also networks of power devices that shape social relations, behaviors, and identities.

During the IMACO era, when the site functioned as an educational institution, it became a locus of crises and conflicts – both among the adolescents themselves and between them and the Park's administration – exposing the tensions between education and the power relations embedded there. Subsequently, following repeated clashes with segments of Belo Horizonte's population, the launch of construction on a Multipurpose Complex (depicted above, behind the hoardings) – a project that was never completed – introduced yet another layer to the historical trajectory of this space. Never completed, it became a ruin: a symbol of wasted public resources and public disillusionment, where education gave way to an abandoned building site.

This image, therefore, represents not only static projections of specific space-times, but also the historical layering of this place's complex strata, challenging simplistic interpretations, definitive solutions, and hegemonic impositions. By capturing the contradiction between the signage, the unfinished project, the City's announced plans, and the artistic mural, we perceive the webs of power and conflict that shape the heterotopic character of this place. On the one hand, we have the promise of renewal and progress embodied in the City's sign, symbolizing the supposed governability of the space and its future. On the other hand, the mural, interpretable as a celebration of culture and memory, offers a counterpoint to the official narrative, honoring the

history, art, and resistance that persist in this place. These overlapping and contested layers, visible in the photograph, represent an environment of tension and conflict, evoking the heterotopic manifestation itself, that is, a place of multiple possibilities and meanings that coexist in complex and contradictory ways.

In this sense, the space resists one-dimensional and often utopian narratives of progress promoted by the municipality. From the Park's creation and the establishment of the caretaker's quarters to the demolition of a school of notable historical importance, these movements suggest alternative ways of appropriating space that challenge the dominant power structures governing the Park. Associated with multiple heterotopic manifestations, they reveal how counter-conducts and social deviations function as micropolitical forms of resistance to hegemonic impositions. Over the past century, the diverse appropriations of this space have marked it as a transgressive and dynamic territory, where movements and interactions diverge from established norms.

These dynamics correspond directly to Foucault's (2013) conception of heterotopias as real spaces that, while part of the urban fabric, are situated "outside" the environments ordered and regulated by society. Heterotopias function as counterpoints to conceived space, revealing fissures and openings where new forms of occupation and meaning emerge. In the case of the Municipal Park – and especially the area examined in this study – the site can be regarded as essentially heterotopic: a locus where interactions challenge normative standards and hegemonic forms of control and use. Here, "other spaces" coexist with established order while simultaneously subverting it, undermining the disciplinary logic of the city. The Park and its heterotopic areas thus emerge as sites of resistance, where power and control are continually reconfigured through the everyday tactics of those who appropriate these spaces. These traces of urban heterotopias embody forms of resistance to governmental strategies of control, revealing the creativity of the population in redefining the functions and uses of space.

This process echoes Lefebvre's triad of "conceived-perceived-lived" space, where the plans of the Construction Committee never fully aligned with the ways the Park was perceived and experienced. On the lived plane, the Park transcends its function as an extension of public order, incorporating multiple uses and meanings that reflect dynamic social practices. The Municipal Park, and particularly the site analyzed, thus emerges as a territory of interaction and diversity, where the city is revealed as a stage for symbolic disputes and social practices that expose the tensions between institutional control and popular creativity. This heterotopic dynamism underscores possibilities for agency and reinvention, affirming the capacity for adaptation and subversion inherent in everyday life.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has analyzed a space within a public urban park as a complex social formation, broadening the understanding of organizational dynamics beyond the conventional boundaries of mainstream administration. This choice signals a deliberate departure from dominant approaches that prioritize large organizations or hegemonic management models. By focusing on an urban space, this study positions itself at the margins of hegemonic knowledge, which tends to overlook significant social transformations and the complexity of organizational forms that manifest in varied

ways across time and space, shaped by models of understanding grounded in dominant ways of knowing.

Although the concept of heterotopia, as developed by Foucault (2013), has frequently been employed to describe exceptional or ruptured spaces within the urban fabric, many studies – such as those of Calle and Abella (2021) and Giacomini and Lima (2024) – remain largely descriptive, without examining in depth how such spaces are produced, appropriated, and contested in everyday life. Here, heterotopias are read in dialogue with Lefebvre (1974), who conceives urban space as a social product continuously disputed between the conceived, the lived, and the perceived, and with De Certeau (1994), who emphasizes tactical practices that unsettle institutional strategies. In this sense, heterotopias are not reduced here to isolated reactions to public policy but understood as expressions of minor administrations – ordinary organizational practices that generate fissures and resignifications within the very urban logic of control.

This framework advances perspectives that resist treating public space as a passive backdrop for institutional order. The park emerges instead as a terrain where strategies and tactics continually confronted one another, revealing everyday practices that defied normativity and produced multiple, insurgent uses of space. Heterotopias thus emerged from the tension between institutional forms of management and the creative practices of urban subjects, straining the established order, opening space for the invention of the common, and revealing the city as a contested field marked by resistance, contradictions, and symbolic displacements.

The analysis of how social spaces are produced and organized offers insight into the collective and subjective construction of the world we inhabit. This process is intrinsically tied to social relations that simultaneously produce and (re)construct spaces over time. Adopting Lefebvre's triad of the conceived-perceived-lived, we were able to relate these processes to Foucault's notion of heterotopias. These spaces, in one way or another, subvert the established order, generating other relations previously unimagined. Heterotopias are precisely those spaces that destabilize established classifications (the "conceived"). Dominant norms hold no place there, allowing the instabilities and contradictions of the social sphere to come to light (the "perceived" and the "lived"). Social theorists, geographers, and organizational scholars have already recognized the potential of heterotopias as a concept, drawing on its capacity to exceed imposed analytical limits that go beyond geography, while also offering readings of spatial organization.

Since Foucault's original formulation, the concept of heterotopia has been expanded by numerous scholars, each adding distinct perspectives and interpretations. This theoretical evolution, from Foucault's formulation to contemporary discourses on spatial practices and urban interventions, demonstrates the multifaceted nature of heterotopias and their relevance for understanding the complexities of how public spaces are designed and used (Tekinalp & Şentürer, 2024). Within this panorama, this article reflects on how counter-conducts can be explored in organizational contexts. The exercise of (re)thinking individual and organizational practices in this field enables us to reassess and question forms of knowledge that have long gone unchallenged or only superficially examined in organizational analysis. By examining heterotopic manifestations, we have sought, drawing on significant contributions from the Applied Social Sciences, to offer insights into how individuals, groups, and practices position themselves against imposed structures. These analyses contribute to a deeper understanding of the social construction of place.

In this study, we adopted Foucault's archeo-genealogical and analytical approach as our primary theoretical-methodological framework, in dialogue with Lefebvre (1974) and De Certeau (1994), whose theories were mobilized as analytical categories for understanding the constitution of social spaces. We demonstrate that decisive moments, conflicts, confrontations, and forms of resistance emerge historically through discourse, configuring a set of propositions that differ from fixed rules or abstract theorems. These propositions are derived from the elements and discourses that shape societies, as preserved in the corpus assembled. The identified elements, organized from the archive, served as a point of departure for analysis, enabling the construction of specific bodies of knowledge that move away from universal and totalizing models.

Lefebvre's (1974) contribution enriches this analysis by conceiving space as a social production marked by disjunctions between what is conceived, lived, and perceived, underscoring the multiple forms of appropriation and the meanings attributed to urban spaces by social actors. De Certeau (1994), in turn, allows us to grasp the tension between strategies – linked to power structures and the institutionalization of space – and tactics, that is, everyday practices that, by appropriating gaps in the system, operate as deviations, resistances, and resignifications of spatial use. Together, these contributions are essential for understanding how spaces are (re)produced in the clash between order and transgression, between control and social creativity.

Complementing these perspectives, and in line with the discussions developed here, it is worth highlighting the studies of Vaujany and Vaast (2013), who critique traditional approaches that treat space as a static, neutral container – an inert backdrop for organizational life rather than a dynamic process shaped by practice. In contrast, they propose understanding space as a dynamic and performative process (spacing), constituted by the continuous interweaving of material and sensory elements—architecture, objects, sounds, memories, narratives, bodily experiences—that together participate in the (re)constitution of space in its unstable and living dimension. Although not a central analytical category in this study, this theoretical contribution reinforces the view of space as a relational and contingent construction, mediated by everyday practice and corporeality. It allows us to reconfigure conventional assumptions about materiality and foreground the multiple, emergent, and mutable organizational and social arrangements that shape spatiality.

Engaging with the notion of heterotopia through this lens broadens the understanding that “other spaces,” as formulated by Foucault (2013), are distinguished not only by symbolic function or social deviation but also by their sensitive and practical materialization, constantly traversed by disputes over meaning and non-hegemonic uses. Heterotopic manifestations can thus be observed not only as deviations within a dominant spatial order but also as effects of practices that overflow institutionalized normativity, constituting provisional, embodied, and plural arrangements. Vaujany and Vaast's (2013) critique by analyzing how space is “lived” and performed in social interactions therefore provides a powerful complementary lens for reflecting on the conditions of emergence and sustainability of the heterotopias examined in this work.

The Park never materialized as originally planned. Many of the proposed buildings were never completed, and some were eventually demolished. The initial design presents striking differences from what is perceived today. Yet, as this article has argued, these changes have not diminished its significance. On the contrary, the Park retains remarkable historical and cultural value, becoming over time an emblematic and meaningful space for the Belo Horizonte community. Although its development diverged from the original plan, the Park itself emerged as a heterotopia

within the city: a place of multiple meanings and distinct uses, reflecting Belo Horizonte's complex historical and cultural evolution, exemplified here through the so-called "Caretaker's House." Its physical and functional transformations, while underscoring deviations from conceived ideals, also symbolize the population's capacity for adaptation and redefinition of space. The Park thus presents itself as a counterpoint to the ordinary structures and logics of urban centers.

The various manifestations analyzed here – from the founding of the Park and the installation of the caretaker's residence to the demolition of a school of great historical importance – point to the strategies inherent in the power structures that permeate the management of the Municipal Park. These heterotopias reveal how tactics, counter-conducts, and social deviations act as micropolitical forms of resistance to dominant practices of control. The multiple appropriations of space over the decades highlight its transgressive and mutable character, marked by movements and interactions that challenge previously defined norms. In this way, this article transcends the Park's physical history, analyzing its evolution as a locus of heterotopic practices produced through styles of governance and the meanings inscribed in this urban space.

Confirming this article's departure from conventional studies, we reaffirm our commitment to contributing to knowledge that broadens understandings of what it means to manage. As proposed by Silva and Carrieri (2022) and Saraiva (2023), by exploring the particularities of organized social life, we show that Administration goes beyond capital management, encompassing the diverse forms and subjectivities that shape organizational histories. The reflections presented, in dialogue with studies on minor administration (Martins, Corrêa & Carrieri, 2023; Martins, 2021; Carrieri & Correia, 2020), confirm the importance of social and organizational processes rooted in local and particular contexts. They also demonstrate the varied, plural, and complex practices – such as heterotopic manifestations – that offer new perspectives on organizational dynamics.

Drawing inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari's (1996) notion of minor literature, our research also seeks to expand perspectives within and about Administration, proposing an approach that moves away from functionalist and utilitarian forces. The study of "other," deviant places demonstrates ways of managing within a complex, ambiguous, and contradictory panorama – conditions that characterize social life itself. Scientific research in the Applied Social Sciences, such as Administration, must remain grounded in reality. What distinguishes this study, compared with essentially utilitarian investigations, is that it does not assume a predefined reality nor reduce organizational management to the relentless pursuit of profit. It values approaches that examine reality, the dynamics of practice, and the cultural and identity meanings that individuals attribute to themselves and to institutions, as well as the relationships established through their insertion into social spaces. Together, these dimensions form a complex whole permeated by heterotopic manifestations – a locus in which we seek to recognize "subversive practices, undisciplined toward productive norms, which rescue the power of life and creation where hope no longer exists" (Martins, Corrêa & Carrieri, 2023, p. 5).

By analyzing the historical trajectory of the Municipal Park – and especially one site within it continuously layered with overlapping appropriations – we underscore the importance of developing alternative and experimental approaches and methods that can confront the dominant expectations and desires that deeply shape individual lives. The concept of heterotopia thus enables reflection on the social reality constituted by those who shaped the Park's history, through the representation of places that emerge from social interaction. In line with Hernández and Marques

(2022), we also contribute to fostering receptivity to difference and to the creation of opportunities to uncover new spaces and relations that emerge from the intersection of everyday practices. The field studied here therefore transcends the physical dimension of people and their immediate surroundings, also addressing a heterotopic dimension that exceeds the spatial limits of the research itself.

Moving away from a generalist perspective, our study focused on a single public urban park and, within it, a particular space. We propose extending this inquiry to include other parks and their historical trajectories – whether *minor* or heterotopic – in Belo Horizonte and beyond. We also encourage organizational research to explore how the management of such multifaceted spaces unfolds through mechanisms that subvert the established order, investigating their particularities through non-linear narratives.

In this sense, we reiterate that the analyses conducted here “do not exhaust or reduce the multiplicity, diversity, polyphony, and singularity” (Martins, 2021, p. 186) of the experiences of those who construct the Park in their daily lives. Instead, aligned with the proposal of *minor administration*, we hope this work contributes to: (1) deterritorializing, transvaluing, reinventing, and transforming what is understood as a park and its management possibilities; (2) creating new political ramifications, expanding critical awareness of how traditional administration is tied to the construction of capitalist subjectivity; and (3) mobilizing new collective agencies of enunciation that expand the future possibilities of such spaces.

In conclusion, we emphasize the contributions of minor administration across three spheres: (1) Organizational Studies more broadly; (2) organizational studies dedicated to public spaces, especially urban ones; and (3) studies of ordinary management.

Within Organizational Studies, the focus on the minor highlights the importance of local realities, where “practitioners” actually reside (Stengers, 2018). This contributes to the notion of ordinary management, deeply rooted in this field. Privileged positions, prominent roles, and the widely disseminated practices of “major administration” give way to the ordinary lives of common people, to things once deemed insignificant yet pointing to possibilities of resistance.

In the field of urban studies, our contribution lies in detailing practices in the Park. We seek to problematize and highlight the specificities of this place of encounter, overlay, and multiplicity, expanding perspectives on the diversity of possible worlds and connecting our knowledge, actions, and practices as a Global South (Carrieri & Correia, 2020) to ways of experiencing organized life in cities.

Regarding ordinary management in its strict sense, focusing on the *minor* gives greater visibility to the concrete strategies of resistance and survival of ordinary, real people, moving beyond distant abstractions of material life’s possibilities. In this way, researchers and scholars in Organizational Studies can effectively contribute to improving the quality of life of segments of the population often overlooked by studies centered on major events and mainstream administrations.

Minor administration proposes something different from ordinary management. Within everyday life, it highlights fissures, escape routes, and the inventions of ordinary people. It focuses on the unusual strategies devised by this “firefly population.” With the Park as our locus of inquiry, we seek to draw attention to “the small imitations, appositions, inventions, sub-representative matter” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 90): that which leaks, evades, or exceeds binary and

functionalist organizations, resisting the colonization of our vital forces of creation and transcreation in the micropolitics of daily life (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996).

Finally, we believe we have achieved our proposed objective: to analyze and identify the heterotopic possibilities woven into the transformations that have taken place throughout the history of Américo Renné Giannetti Municipal Park. In particular, we traced those that manifest in the site originally occupied by its caretaker, amid the reconfigurations of governmental mechanisms and the shifting power relations that continue to shape this space.

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Financial support/funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the Belo Horizonte City Hall (PBH) and CEPEAD/FACE/UFMG for their organization and institutional support, which were fundamental to the completion of this work.

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Waiver of Conflict of Interests

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Inclusive Language

The authors use inclusive language that acknowledges diversity, shows respect for all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

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