2 City Profile

São Paulo is the largest urban agglomeration in South America, with a population of 18 million people. It lies at 800 m above sea level and at 60 km from the coast. The climate is more temperate than in neighbouring (400 km) Rio de Janeiro, which lies at the same latitude on the coast. The built area of 200,000 ha is spread out from the original centre in a large octopus shape with a 70 km East-West axis and a 50 km North-South axis. The main mass of urbanisation is bordered in the south by two artificial water reservoirs and a steep slope where the plateau falls to sea level and by a mountain range in the North. This means that most of the urbanizable land for expansion lies in the east and west.

The urban form is radio-concentric with more radials than tangential elements. High-income groups have traditionally occupied the South-western sector (in blue in Figure 2). As the city grew the city centre started drifting South-west, as though following the high-income population. The march towards the south-west occurred in a leapfrogging fashion leaving wide gaps in-between. The first leap, about three km long, occurred in the late Fifties when São Paulo had about 4 million people. Banks, office buildings, smart shops and services that had occupied the central ridge moved to the Avenida Paulista. Ten years later there was a second leapfrog of five kilometres when office buildings, bank branches and the first Shopping Centre were set up on Av. Faria Lima. By the late 1980s --after another ten years-- a new shift of new office headquarters started further south still to Av Berrini -some 15 km from the old centre. São Paulo's centre today is something like a comet with a tail stretched out towards the south, feeling over-extended and wondering whether it had not come to far and would it not rather return to its origins.

The South-western sector concentrates most of the economic activities except manufactures (tertiary centres in red) and most of the higher income residential settlements (blue). (Drawing C.D.)

standard, the quality of the environment is fair and accessibility reasonable. Originally residential settlements consisted of low density detached houses but high rise apartment blocks are now being built at rates twice as fast as housing and they already make up one third of the built stock in dwellings. The other sectors and the outer periphery consist of predominantly middle and working class residences, and they are the location of the bulk of manufacturing industry. This originally located along the railway (after 1850) and after 1950 along the roads. Here the conditions of the infrastructure and environmental quality are poor and often extremely poor. The roots of such extreme differences both in income and the quality of the environment go back to the origins of São Paulo and Brazilian society itself.

3 City History
The Economic Heart of Modern Brazil

São Paulo is the largest South American metropolis, but it is also the youngest. Rio de Janeiro became the capital of the Portuguese colony in 1763 because of its coastal location and proximity to the mining region of Minas Gerais. Buenos Aires, in its turn, became capital of the new-born Vice-Kingdom of the River Plate by about the the same time (1776), reflecting its growing economic weight at the expense of Lima. In contrast, as late as 1850 São Paulo was still a small borough of hardly 15,000 people. Indeed, up to then it had been little more than a jumping board for the 'bandeiras', slave hunting expeditions or military campaigns in the struggle against Spain for the south-western border regions. But 1850 was the year of the suspension of the African slave trade and also of the promulgation of the Land Laws, which instituted private property in land. In practical terms this set the conditions for the introduction of wage labour and capitalism in Brazil, about three decades after the Declaration of Independence (1822). With wage labour and capitalism came industrialisation and urbanisation and a period of high rates of accumulation and rapid growth, similar to that experienced in England in the eighteenth century. São Paulo was to become the centre of this process.

A peculiarity of the formation of Brazilian society, which was to imprint its features on urban development, is that although wage labour predominates, it is not a bourgeois society. At Independence, there was no revolution and replacement or transformation of the colonial elite by a capitalist class (the bourgeoisie). On the contrary, Independence was merely a process by which the colonial elite set up a State apparatus of its own to ensure the reproduction of social organization with no change at all. The transfer of part of the national surplus continued as earlier from the colony to the metropolis, and colonial production became
a process of hindered accumulation (Deák, 1988, 1991). Instead of colonial tribute, the transfer of the surplus now took such forms as interest payments, profit remittances, unfavourable terms of trade and freight and insurance payments. Hindered development is at the roots of most of what have been seen as urban ‘problems’ but in fact are the peculiar features of the urban process in Brazil: precarious infrastructure, highly differentiated and even fragmented urban space and generally low quality urban environment since higher is not required by the low levels of reproduction of the labour force, which in turn would only have to rise if unhindered development were at stake.

A reason of São Paulo becoming the main economic centre of the Brazilian economy is –possibly among others– that by the time of the take-off of capitalist development in Brasil, the epicentre of coffee production, in its migration westwards from Rio de Janeiro, had just reached São Paulo. For more than half a century coffee was the main export staple of Brazil and São Paulo was at the heart of the coffee region. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation made São Paulo the major industrial city in the country. When the world crisis of 1929 put an end to the ‘coffee cycle’, the leading position of São Paulo in the Brazilian economy had already been firmly established. Then the balance of trade constraints ensuing from the crisis made it necessary to broaden industrial production and supply the rapidly growing home market at least with mass consumption goods which could not be paid for out of the export revenue any more. The dynamism of São Paulo now became based on manufacturing rather than on an ephemeral export staple.

By the end of the 1970s and after a decade of exceptionally rapid growth –which had been dubbed the ‘Brazilian economic miracle’–, Brazil already had the world’s seventh largest national product with a diverse structure of manufactures dominated by car production. The share of São Paulo of national manufacturing GDP amounted to over 42% and half of this was concentrated in the Metropolitan Region itself. Within the State of São Paulo, in turn, the metropolitan region concentrates the bulk of all branches of industry except agriculture (Fig. 6). As a consequence, in the hundred years between 1870 and 1970 São Paulo, attracting large contingents of immigrants from the country and abroad, grew from a small town of 23 000 people to become a major metropolis of over 8 million people (Fig. 7), a multi-ethnic city with over a million-strong contingents of Italian, Portuguese, German and Japanese origin and over a dozen lesser groups from Europe and Asia still strong enough to have their own restaurants, food and book shops and even neighbourhoods (Fig. 8).
The pattern of urbanization in the elite society

As already mentioned, the pattern of urbanization stems from the features of hindered accumulation. A first factor is relatively low per capita income, currently at about US$ 8,500 (on the basis of purchasing power parity, 2005), with an extremely uneven distribution: income concentration in Brazil, is one of the world’s highest and although better, still very high in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region (Fig. 9). Among the effects of this at the level of the urban agglomeration is a kind of reproduction of scarcity, which is manifested in acute shortages and very uneven distribution of infrastructure (Fig. 10). This leads to marked spatial differentiation over the metropolitan area, as reflected, for example, in the spatial segregation of the population according to income (Fig. 11). Thus in enormous tracts of urban space huge contingents of poor people live in poor quality dwellings in poor urban environments, in sharp contrast to the enclaves of smart housing, proud office buildings and haughty company headquarters. The contrast between destitute poverty and ostensive wealth is so great in fact, that it has prompted some to talk of ‘dual development’ or the ‘dual city’. These terms are misleading, however, since both sides of the ‘duality’ are the result of one and the same process of social reproduction.

The mid-seventies were to be a major turning point in national and consequently, metropolitan development. They saw the exhaustion of the stage of predominantly extensive accumulation in Brazil, which, with its high rates of surplus, hitherto had allowed the reproduction of hindered accumulation, the material basis of its elite society. The division of surplus into one part to be accumulated and another to be sent abroad –expatriated– although wrought with antagonisms, was feasible in the extensive stage of development with its high rates of surplus. The exhaustion of this stage and the fall of the rate of surplus led to a crisis of hindered development because the division of the surplus into two parts became problematic and imposed a choice between both: either expatriation or accumulation. Whichever the choice, conditions for hindered accumulation were over and this produced an impasse of which Brazilian society was not yet –after three ‘lost decades’ due to the stalemate– able to find its way out.

In its contemporary urban development three main features emerged in São Paulo since the early 1990s. A first is slower growth, a consequence of the developmental stage of the Brasil itself. The two others: tertiarization and the advent of neoliberalism are more general tendencies of world capitalism.
The impact of globalisation
Slow-down, tertiarization and neoliberalism

The first and one of the most visible new trends in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region since the nineties must be a dramatic fall in its hitherto galloping growth rate, to an almost vegetative level (Fig. 12), to a point that the central core is effectively losing population (map of Fig. 13). Such trend reflect broader trends at the national level: in consequence of a fall in demographic growth rate coupled with an already high level of urbanisation (80% in 2000 and 98% in the State of São Paulo), the process of migration from rural to urban areas has slowed down and the period of high rates of urban growth is over. It still grew of course and today it is an agglomeration of some 18 million people -- but much slower and the forecasts are that it will not reach much over 23 million people by 2020.

The slowing down of growth rates lead to a rather unexpected result over the last two decades: spatial segregation of the population according to income, although still high, did decrease in the period between 1977 and 1987 (Maps of Figure 14 below) whence it remained largely unchanged. In fact, spatial differentiation did become, and is becoming, less pronounced with the fall in the migration rates and the less rapid growth of the periphery. Since there was no change in the policy of provision of urban infrastructure during this period, this shows the potential for urban improvement and an eventual transition to the intensive stage of accumulation, based on a new emphasis on qualitative growth indexes such as per capita income, technological levels and the quality of the environment –which takes us to the most crucial questions of urban policy, to be discussed further below.

Secondly São Paulo made a transition from being a predominantly industrial region to being a major commercial, financial and services centre. In fact, this transformation merely reflects broader trends at the national level, and indeed, also of world capitalism: with technical progress the increase of productivity (as vividly manifest in automation) there is less and less need for labour in manufactures, whereas the State and the services industry must expand along with the physical infrastructure to meet the needs of an increasingly manifold productive structure. Accordingly, manufacturing is losing share in GDP and yet more in work force both nationwide and in São Paulo at the expense of finance and services.

In fact, the consolidation of São Paulo as the major financial and services centre of Brazil and lately even of Mercosul went on in
spite of the recessive policies since the 1980s. The slump implemented under the pretext of a ‘monetary stabilization’ plan (1986) inaugurated what was to become a second ‘lost decade’ and real wages declined by 40% between 1989 and 1996 while unemployment increased from 9.1% to 15.1% over the same period. The effects of this economic policy were quickly manifested in São Paulo: there was a doubling of the number of favela dwellers to over two million people who lead an uneasy coexistence with the hyper-modern intelligent’ office buildings and company headquarters, which multiplied in the same period. Such contradictions notwithstanding—and largely because none of its fellow Brazilian or Latin American rivals is free from those—, São Paulo has consolidated its economic and financial primacy within Mercosul. It concentrates the greatest number of finance banks and foreign company regional headquarters, it boasts the highest volumes of daily trade in Latin American stock exchanges and is becoming the most attractive city for business and leisure tourism (as measured in number of visitors) within Mercosul.

This process places new demands on the urban agglomeration: a reskilling of the labour force and major adjustment of the physical infrastructure and public services, and a remodelling of the tax system, to rely less on manufactures. Indeed, the main question São Paulo faces today relates to the quality of urban infrastructure and the environment: How can the Metropolitan Region move from a period of rapid growth and chronic infrastructure shortages to a stage of consolidation, in which the quality of urban life becomes a central concern? To relate this to the impasse of hindered accumulation: the extensive stage of accumulation requires a good infrastructure to support production, but relatively little for support of urban life, while the stage of intensive accumulation and its increased reliance on labour productivity require even more and better infrastructure for production, but raise even more its requirements of urban infrastructure and quality of environment.

This question brings forth the third trend: a new approach to urban planning under the aegis of neoliberalism, its theses of disqualification of the state as representant of collective interest and the legitimation of new, fragmented forms of intervention in the urban space, so that it will determine the responses to the first two trends. The result of these three trends is contemporary urbanism in the metropolis, as outlined below and developed in some detail in the next section.
Neoliberalism: the latest trends and the challenge

The immediate effects of economic neoliberal policies have just been mentioned and in what follows we focus on the effects of neoliberalism on urban development and especially on urban planning, or planned State intervention. What is new in planning can only be said if a word is said about what it was before.

In the period from the sixties to mid-seventies, ‘development’ and/or ‘integrated’ plans were the main trend of planning in Brazil. None of them was more comprehensive, large-scale and ambitious than the PUB: The Basic Urban Plan, elaborated in 1968 by an international consortium Asplan/Daily/Montreal commissioned by Gegran (Executive Group for Greater São Paulo). PUB had the specific purpose of dealing with the spatial organisation of Greater São Paulo as the urban agglomeration was now outgrowing the administrative limits of the City of São Paulo. It envisaged 650 km of Metro lines, 600 km of express ways, and the transformation from a monocentric to a polynucleated metropolitan structure supporting 42 million people by the year 2000. However, the PUB was just too big for São Paulo and it remains today little more than a reminder of the heyday of large-scale integrated plans in Brazil - for more than a decade, from the mid-60s to the mid-70s there was government support and finance for all medium and big cities to make master’ or development’ plans. Only two of the proposals in PUB were partially realised -- 80 km of expressways were built and 65 km of the Metro network. However, the urban structure proposals came to nothing and the town centre started its unplanned drift towards the south-west and the south, and urban sprawl also continued. The building of the Underground went at such a slow pace (barely 2 km a year) that the gap between demand and the service offered kept widening rather than starting to narrow. When growth slowed down and there was a chance of closing the gap, building halted altogether (1989). Even planning was not to start again until 1998, then in the form of a new comprehensive transport plan (PITU 2020, of which more will be said further below).

Lack of implementation and the slow-down in economic growth by the mid-70s led to the formulation of sectoral plans related to selected aspects of the urban structure, such as sewerage, water management, transport or urban renewal and most frequently deal with only a part of the agglomeration.. The half-institutionalised Metropolitan Authority never became an elected body, such as the Greater London Council and the Gegran was renamed Emplasa and became a half-forgotten body within the administrative structure of São Paulo State. Its swan song was the 1993 Integrated Metropolitan Development Plan. This included a masterful
Chapter on three Scenarios for São Paulo based on different estimates of the future levels of economic and social development in Brazil, but virtually no propositions at all, since Emplasa had no authority to make any.

**Strategic planning and urban operations**

In the early Nineties a new period in planning began under the aegis of neo-liberalism, which in practice meant cutbacks in public expenditure and the sale of public assets to private companies (‘privatisation’). Urban services are less easily privatised than other public assets. These included: mines (Vale do Rio Doce), steel plants (Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional), the State of São Paulo telecommunications system (Telesp, sold in 1998 to Telefonica of Spain), electric power distribution (Eletropaulo became Elektropaulo, sold to a multinational consortium of foreign firms), and some busy interstate trunk roads. Water and sewerage supply and urban transportation have not been privatised. Generally speaking there is a strong rhetoric about diminishing the ‘inefficient State’ which reinforces the arsenal of excuses for non-investment in urban structures and services. Institutionalization of the new approach went apace: a so called *City Statute* was inscribed in the 1988 Constitution, to be complemented with municipal level by-laws, which in São Paulo happened in 2002. Earlier yet São Paulo was already experimenting with *urban operations* – an expedient through which localized issues are treated in isolation in a sort of partnership between private entreprises and local governments, which opens up the possibility of legitimating the direct interference of pressure groups in the production of space. The first urban operation was realised in 1991 for the refurbishing of Anhangabaú, the north-south axis of the old city centre (see below).

Curiously enough, neoliberalism found fertile soil in Brazil. In fact, it is the first ideology (imported, as always, from the developed societies of the core of world capitalism) that really suits its elite society. The latter had previously professed liberalism while it was a slave society, and later flirted with social democracy without ever having set up a welfare state. But now neoliberalism with its tenets of disqualifying the State as representant and keeper of collective interest and indeed, abolishing the very idea of collective interest, proposes the very same policies that elite society always pursued when kept all its infrastructures – both physical and institutional – precarious and fragmented in order to prevent unhindered development.

In spite of this hostile environment, and after almost a decade of near-paralysis the late Nineties saw the re-birth of initiatives on the
part of various government bodies dealing with the São Paulo Metropolitan Region, spurred perhaps by the near-calamitous state of most of the urban services. Currently some significant projects at the metropolitan scale are being realised. They include: a long overdue long-term transportation plan with an emphasis on rapid mass transport; a comprehensive initiative for water management that takes into account resource conservation, drainage and flood control; the treatment of sewage and the use of the protected area of the southern reservoirs for leisure and recreation and other compatible uses. These projects are briefly summarised below.

Another ongoing project of special interest is a large scale initiative for the renovation of decayed central areas and the restoration of historical buildings, to be discussed further below in the last section in some detail.

5 Urban Projects

Public Transport System

One of the largest and most important recent projects (1999) is a complete replanning of the public transport system to achieve entirely new levels of performance in terms of capacity and levels of service. Aimed at the time-horizon of 2020, the new transport plan dubbed PITU 2020 (Integrated Plan of Urban Transport) encompasses all transport modes and it refers to the whole of the Metropolitan Area. The Plan falls under the jurisdiction of a specific Secretary of the São Paulo State government (which also runs the Metrô). This plan fixed a target of greatly expanding all the main elements of the mass transport system over the next twenty years, and calls for:

- extension of the existing 49 km long Metrô network to over 170 kms,
- extension of the 30 km long suburban rail lines to 100 kms,
- building of 95km of light train track to operate in the periphery, and
- building a special monorail link to connect both the new and old airports to the city centre and the Metro network in twenty minutes.

An analysis of three alternative geometries led to the choice of a broadly extended network able to become the backbone of the public transport system for the metropolitan region (complemented of course with lighter means such as buses and minivans). The system would provide coverage to the main sub-centres and to huge extensions of the currently poorly-connected eastern and northern regions. There may soon be news of a new management and financial structure for the implementation of PITU 2020. Hitherto the Underground system has been wholly in the hands of São Paulo State through a Company set up for this end in 1968. There have been several proposals to attract private
enterprises to take part in the implementation of the new plan. Such alternatives are still on the drawing board, and the Metro Company itself will have to adapt to the new operational schemes in which private capital will take part (the PPP scheme for the Pinheiros Line now under construction envisages a 27% participation of private capital, a rough equivalent to the rolling stock and the operation systems, which would also run the line under long-term concession from the Metro Company).

The plan called for the conclusion of the first priority Pinheiros and Santo Amaro lines – both to the Southwest – by 2004. As it happened, construction did not start until 2005 on the Pinheiros Line, now rescheduled for conclusion in 2012 and a first stage in 2008. This is discussed again in connection with the revitalization of the Centre in the last section.

The main feature of the programme for the improvement of the road network is the building of a long overdue Ring Road at a radius of roughly 40km around São Paulo which will bring some order into the rather erratic expansion of the urbanised area exclusively along radial axes. It will also help to keep heavy freight traffic out of the more central parts of the city, and make tangential movements in the periphery easier. Of this currently a first stretch of about 50km in the northwestern sector is ready and the next stretches of north and the South are being programmed.

The Environmental Billings Project

Prominent among the environmental projects is the Billings Project, which deals with the bigger of the two southern water reservoir systems, and its companion water management project for the entire basin of the São Paulo Metropolitan Region. This seeks to integrate the needs of water supply and treatment, drainage and flood control, power generation, urban settlement and the preservation of the environment. After many decades of debate about the best way to preserve natural resources against urban encroachment, there is growing consensus that the best way to preserve water quality in the water basins is to restrict uses to leisure, theme parks and low-density but high quality settlement that are compatible with this goal rather than to leave them as green areas. This has made these areas vulnerable to invasion by illegal settlements with no sanitation infrastructure at all. The new model of course demands among other things improved accessibility both by public transport and road, both envisaged by the PITU 2020 and the Ring Road projects respectively. These projects will make the great scenic beauty of the lakes available to the public and thereby provide a shield against further deterioration. An important complementary project is the cleansing of the Tietê River through a complementation of sewage network
and expanding sewage treatment, and deepening of its section for better flood control accompanied by an improvement of its chaotic look through some landscape architecture.

**Fighting air pollution**

Even though there is no specific ‘plan’ to reduce air pollution, a set of measures is currently being implemented designed to deal with it. Pollution levels are currently running so high that people accept a one day ban on driving their cars a week (based on licence plates). The expansion of the Metro system is expected to help a great deal in reducing pollution and congestion. There have also been measures to enforce stricter emission standards for new cars and there is also a lobby for a government subsidy for replacement of old by new cars.

**The Plano Diretor Estratégico 2002**

The *Plano Diretor Estratégico* (Strategic Master Plan) of 2002 was laid out under the aegis of urban operations and decentralization (31 subprefectures were set up, upgraded from formerly *Regional Administrations*). Instead of reaching for metropolitan scale, this led to further fractioning of the administrative structure – and with it, of the planning process. Urban operations are ‘proposed’ (marked in yellow on Fig. 23 opposite) but their precise nature is not specified. The text under the heading says:

(Urban operations) are aimed at revitalizing certain areas of the city, through concentration of investment, creation of public spaces, induction of new corridors and poles of centrality and attraction of urban life. The rules of each operation will be established in specific particular laws.

Whereby the view encompassing the overall urban structure will be lost in the specific ‘strategic’ projects of each of the otherwise key areas…

**Recovery of the Old Centre**

One of the most important projects –together with expansion of the Underground—for the urban structure is a programme for the recovery of the old centre of the city, after three decades of slow decay brought about by the shift of the dynamic centre to the south-west. The new transport system would restore accessibility to the town centre, the historic buildings will be refurbished and optical fibres, and telephone and telecommunications infrastructure will be greatly expanded. A centrally located railway station (Estação Júlio Prestes) has already been refurbished as a concert hall and major cultural centre. Private investment will of course play its part and recently there was talk of building a near-500m high tower in a run down district near the old centre. That
was called off in the end, but there is little doubt but that the process of recovery shall trigger further developments by private investors. The main initiatives for the revitalization of the Centre are described in the next section.

6 Urban operation Centre

One of the greatest and more far-reaching projects currently underway in São Paulo is probably a set of wide range initiatives aimed at putting the Centre back to its original place and thus redeem the historical centre. As mentioned earlier, the most ‘central’ – in the sense of accessible and prestigious – locations have been migrating southwesternly since the late fifties –for half a century now, as a result of concentration of investment in infrastructure in this sector followed by the settlements of the high income residents. In fact the policy of favouring the SW sector is much older yet; but it was in the fifties that the centre lost its accessibility to the elite. The surface transportation structure became so clogged that one had to travel over one hour and a half between downtown and the (old) airport distant a mere 11 km from it. And provision of the only alternative for the elite: the Underground at good levels of service, was postponed for several decades and the southwestern branch of the six-pronged star-like planned network never materialized.

The first reaction to the congestion of the streets in the central area was to eliminate the streetcars (1968) and create an extended pedestrian Mall, possibly the biggest of the world. This was the death knell for the western, smarter portion of the centre, for the car drivers could only become pedestrians on the mall at the price of a very long and strenuous drive and expensive but scant car parking, --whereas the noisy, smelly, overcrowded and unreliable buses offered no acceptable alternative of public transport for the middle classes.

When Metrô building finally started (1972), the exodus from the Centre was already at full pace. After the first two lines: North-South and East-West were slowly built --less then 2 km a year--., the next in line was meant to be the Pinheiros Line (yellow), but Paulista Line (green) was built first, and when finally construction of the Pinheiros line was about to begin (1989), building suddenly halted altogether except for a few extensions of existing lines and later the surprise of the isolated stretch in the southwestern periphery. In the same year a new reference network was drawn (Fig. 17) and as soon abandoned. Indeed there was no plan till ten years later PITU 2020 (1999) referred to earlier which set Pinheiros Line priority 0 and scheduled its conclusion to 2004. However,
building did not start over until 2005 when conclusion of the first stretch (the southwestern branch) was rescheduled in two stages to 2008 and 2012.

Meanwhile, the western part of the Centre kept deteriorating quickly; the mall was taken by street vendors and hawkers and periodical attempts at their removal time and again led to pitched battles between vendors, fiscals and the police.

In the reflux of planning and the retreat of the state from planning and investment, non-governmental organizations mushroomed and took initiatives in key areas of the metropolitan area, and the Centre was no exception. By 1991 the first Urban Operation was realized and refurbished the Anhangabaú Valley in the very centre of town (Fig.27 opposite). In the same year a powerful association was created to deal exclusively with the Centre, lead by BankBoston and comprising banks, shopkeepers, small enterprises called *Viva o Centro*, which got status of public utility in 2000.

The Centre of São Paulo has unique features and special qualities which make it stand out of all other regions of the city. Full of potential, the Centre is the privileged locus of culture, history and urban development of the metropole. Along with its neighbouring areas it is the space able to reverse the excessive sprawl of the urbanized area, which, unqualified, jeopardizes both the social and economic life of its inhabitants. The Centre emerges then as the rational alternative of functional and spatial reorganization of the metropole.

It is in the development and strengthening of its Metropolitan Centre that lay the possibilities of competitive insertion of São Paulo in the ranks of ‘world cities’ which will attract with their efficiency and quality standards the main corporations and organizations, home based or supranational.

Association Viva o Centro “Apresentação”

In 2000 another association was born at the other end of the social spectrum, an association of popular movements, students, slum dwellers and homeless, denominated *Centro Vivo*.

The idea of the *Forum Centro Vivo* – founded in December 10, 2000 – emerged at the meeting “Popular movements and the University”, organized by the students of the University of São Paulo (USP), the Central of Popular Movements (CMP) and the Union of Movements for Shelter (UMM), in May 2000.

Since then, we have been meeting with the purpose of organizing all the people fighting for the right to stay on in the Centre and of transforming it in a more democratic place, in opposition to the process of urban renewal and of exclusion currently at work in São Paulo.”

Forum Centro Vivo, [Homepage](http://www.vivacentro.org.br/vivacentro/index.htm)

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In 1997 the law of Urban Operation Centre was promulgated, giving both more legitimacy and more agility to private initiatives regarding the centre. These and association Viva o Centro concentrated around three main themes: increased fiscalization of street vendors, increased ostensive policing of the streets and refurbishing of historical buildings. Meanwhile Centro Vivo went about fighting for keeping slum dwellers and homeless from being removed from the centre. The great absentee from the programmes for the Centre was claim for rapid mass transport – Metrô– building, and especially it’s Pinheiros Line. At the run-up to 2004 elections, the Association Centro Vivo drew up 10 proposals for the Centre and invited the candidates for mayor to comment on the problems and respective solutions presented. Well, the ten proposals did not have as much as a mention to the accessibility of the centre within the urban structure, or how it could be improved, or to Metrô as a solution of this, or yet to the Pinheiros line in particular. There was one reference to transports: it was to local street cars to provide mobility within the Centre…

The more effective measures are still taken by the municipality. A first was a broadly comprehensive project dubbed Ação Centro started in 2001 and planning a 168 million investment which included a US$ 100 million loan from the Interamerican Development Bank- BID. This stated a rather ambitious goal as in the Preface of its final report:

Contemporary urbanism, in its democratic trend, demands that good practice is not only the principle of inclusion, but also the shared management of public spaces. The capitalist city is essentially excludent. Public policy must, therefore, revert the sharpening of social inequality, unemployment and of urban violence, proper to the capitalist world of today.

It is impossible addressing the rehabilitation of the Centre of São Paulo without considering actions of social inclusion that ensure the right to dwelling, guarantee of minimal conditions for the homeless and also programmes for work and income. On these principles we built the Programme Ação Centro (Action Centre)...


It then earmarked one-third of the investment to each of three main areas: boosting local economic activities; fixation of residents with a priority on subsidizing low income people; and refurbishing and conservation of historical buildings. Even though total investment is nowhere near what would be needed for any sizeable

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2 Homepage address: [http://www.forumcentrovivo.hpg.ig.com.br/sociedade/28/index_int_2.html](http://www.forumcentrovivo.hpg.ig.com.br/sociedade/28/index_int_2.html), accessed in 2006.9.29 (my translation).

improvement in the urban environment at the scale of the Centre to be felt, and even though once again considerations of the place of the Centre in the overall structure were amiss, still the study did a valuable survey and appraisal of the potentialities and the possibilities of renewal and renewed dynamism of the central region.⁴

But, quite independently of any initiative of the ‘urban operation Centre’, at long last construction work on the Pinheiros Line of the Metrô is underway for good and in a couple of years, for the first time after thirty years, the Centre will get good access from the southwest sector on public transport at a large scale.

Paradoxically, São Paulo is largely unprepared regarding what would, or should, happen once the Centre regains its ‘vitality’. When smart locations abandoned it, São Paulo was an agglomeration of about 6 million; now it is threefold as big. Few imagine the future scale of buildings and intensification of land use to be proposed by private promoters. There is indeed urgent need for an overall conception of what should happen in the Centre, once its accessibility is restored.

In this direction the biggest step may have been an initiative taken recently (2005) by the Municipality: it declared of public utility for the purpose of expropriation some 10ha of rundown blocks in Santa Efigênia, the most derelict portion of a quarter nicknamed ‘cracolândia’ (crackland) for being the domain of cheap drug dealers. At present there are no specific projects yet for the area, but this initiative does open the way for a concerted intervention and for urban design at an unprecedented scale in São Paulo, the spatial organization of which has been dominated by ‘spontaneous’ or market-oriented patterns of growth and very little overall design.

These projects and others which could not be mentioned here for lack of space and others yet that may come to light in the future, if implemented, apart from bringing new levels of urban infrastructure and services, would also indicate that Brazilian society is finally ready for a far-reaching change to its historic pattern of development. In fact, it would correspond to the optimistic scenario of the Emplasa plan PMDI 93 referred to earlier. Public expenditure would be put on a footing consistent

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⁴ According to a report issued in 2004, about 19% of the planned investment had already been realized or under way (Moura Guerra, Lisandra, 2004 “Estado de Avanço” Dossiê Programa Ação Centro, EMURB-PMSP)
with the potential status of São Paulo as world-city. Schooling, higher education and public health levels would be upgraded to ensure the formation a skilled workforce needed to keep up with the requirements of technical progress in manufacturing, hi-tech infrastructure and telecommunications, research and development and in a widening range of services and expanding leisure time.

In short, it would mean that the development potential of the most developed part of South America, the core of Mercosul, has a good chance of being realised. It is worth reiterating that the biggest metropolitan agglomerations of the region -- São Paulo, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro-- will certainly compete for the position of being the main centre of development and prestige, within Mercosul, a position which will rise or fall, however, depending on the development of the region as a whole.

Figure 31: Urbanization at the core of Mercosul- A night view of southern Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and northern Argentina and Chile shows the intensity of urbanization in the region (based on NASA/NOAA image of 2000, country boundaries, city names added –C.D.).

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