

GLOBALIZATION AND URBAN POLICY ON THE PERIPHERY OF CAPITALISM

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*We beg you, please, not to find
natural what it is so often repeated!*
The Exception and the Rule
Bertolt Brecht

Some questions may help us approach such a complex subject as urban planning, which is undergoing a great change in a world turned upside down due to the restructuring of capitalist production started at the end of the 20th century.²

Considering that some nation-states are more fragile than many of the largest world corporations, and these corporations have little restrictions to expand their power and impose their models, which are the prospects for development of territorial planning inspired in cultural, social, and environmental diversity of each country and city?

Considering that neoliberal tenets supporting globalization impose deregulation and privatization of public services, eliminating the notion of subsidies, how can policies oriented to the needs of most populations in countries on the periphery of capitalism – and excluded from private markets – be planned and implemented?

Considering that dominant international financial capital will not submit to the rhythm or uncertainties of national democratic institutions, and therefore will engender new institutions with more decision-making power (decisions on primary surplus targets; interest rates; exchange rates; country-risk) than national Congresses or High Courts, can territorial planning carried out according to public policies with social participation counteract the interests of the new imperialism?

It should also be considered that these changes known as globalization have affected a political system that is still fragile. Indeed, we are talking about political systems based on patrimonialism, that is, a system dominated by a strong national oligarchy which is based on personal use of the public sphere, and the practice of favoritism (or exchange of favors). It should also be noted that such changes have affected a society that has not made social rights (social security, healthcare, and education) universal, and large parts of the population are in the informal economy and devoid of labor rights. Is it possible for this society to revert the increasing growth of inequality and poverty? Is it possible to implement plans based on social and environmental priorities, rates, indicators and goals? How to ensure democratic participation and implementation of decisions democratically made?

Considering that the new imperialism has inflated the importance of already important cities and metropolitan areas, and neoliberalism instilled competition among cities and territorial fragmentation, is there any chance for policies based on federative cooperation?

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² We will use the concept of globalization to refer to the set of global changes (including ideology, culture and politics) that started in the early 1970s, which Harvey names restructuring of capitalist production.

GLOBALIZATION AND POWER

The same way Taylorism and Fordism shaped a new man and a new society³, globalization is also producing a new man and a new society by introducing changes to nation-states, markets, work processes, aesthetics, products, habits, values, culture, individual and social subjectivity, occupation of territory, production of built environment, and the relationship with nature.

Indeed, the hegemony of Fordism brought about huge social changes by disseminating strong discipline at workplace under the mechanized and repetitive pace of work at big factories. Strict working hours, rigorous routines, repetitive tasks, the machine imposed a work pace that widely differed from that in rural areas, which is mediated by the seasons of the year or the forces of nature. The organization of family life, the entry of women into the job market, the growing use of home appliances in households, the widespread use of automobiles by individuals, a whole new way of life was molded – not without conflict – and changed housing and city life. Mass production of standardized objects for mass consumption started to include even the workers.

The combination of Fordism and Keynesianism resulted in Hobsbawn's so-called "Golden Age" that is, a period of 30 years (1940 to 1970) which is considered one of the greatest and more poignant social achievements of humanity.

(...) only after the great boom, in the troubled 70s, on the wait for the traumatic 80s, observers – above all and to begin with, economists – started to perceive that the world, particularly the world of developed capitalism had lived an extraordinary phase of its history; Perhaps a unique phase. (Hobsbawn, 1994 pg. 253).

As a result of adjustment of the process of capitalist accumulation to the advance of workers' struggles, governments combined the legal control over labor with policies that could assure rising of living standards.

This short description refers more specifically to Central Capitalist Countries (CCCs). In Peripheral Capitalist Countries (PCCs), Fordism and the Welfare State did not include the whole society.⁴ Modern urban development standards have been applied to portions of cities forming "First World islands" surrounded by illegal settlements like slums (favelas), slum tenements (cortiços), and illegal land parcels.

Peripheral Fordism constituted the transfer of factories, machines, technology, and products (including their design, and therefore their cultural and aesthetic values) to some large metropolitan centers targeting at first the domestic markets on this capitalist periphery. In some countries, this process of import substitution fell under some form of domestic control, achieved a nationalistic character, and became later known as developmentist period.

³ Gramsci, 1949.

⁴ José Luís Fiori notes that the terminology for the classification of peripheral countries in the capitalist world has changed – from "underdeveloped countries" to "dependent countries" to "developing countries", then to "countries of the South" and, finally, "emerging markets", which is the term used by the international financial capital in the age of globalization (Fiori, 1995). The terminology is revealing. For a better understanding of central core, periphery, and semi-periphery see Arrighi (1995). For the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to show differences between peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

Strong criticism of the Fordist-Keynesian model was added to determinations on the spheres of production and capital accumulation (crises in funding, markets, profitability; fiscal and oil crises) to set its decline. Harvey recalls the emergence of women's struggles, the countercultural, anti-consumption movement (known worldwide due to the appearance of hippies on the scene, particularly the American scene), the criticism to the strict modernist functionalism (Jacobs, 1961 e Berman, 1982), the dissatisfied from the Third World who fought for independence, among other movements.

Rigidity is the brand that contradictorily characterizes this period of relatively improved social well-being: rigidity in large-scale, long-term fixed capital investment; rigidity in the labor market, contracts, labor rights; rigidity in government structure and action. Flexibility is one of the characteristics of change initiated in the 1970s to accelerate working capital time: flexibility of production structure in relation to territory, flexibility in the organization of production units (they get fragmented), flexibility in labor relations, flexibility and diversification of products, and flexibility of markets. Information, knowledge, brands, and the media, among others, gain more importance in a world impacted by speed, ephemerality, spectacle, all supported by significant technological advances.

Flexibility also reached governments and their regulating role. Liberalism was born again with the new condition. Former British Prime-Minister Margareth Thatcher (1979-1990) and the late U.S. President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) responded to the fiscal crisis with attacks to real salaries and unions. The hegemony of globalization meant dismantling **big** provider governments, **big** and powerful workers' unions, and **big** productive fordist capital. But above all it meant primacy of the market.

Globalization also affected traditional political parties, particularly left-wing political groups. New actors came to the stage: NGOs, environmentalists, women's groups, organizations advocating the rights of minority groups, etc. Bourgeois or representative democracy also started to be challenged and political parties waned.

Over time, and as a result of capitalist appropriation of new technologies, the glamour the media and many intellectuals attributed to globalization and to so-called global cities started to give room to a cruel reality: rise of unemployment, precarious labor relations, reversals in social policies, privatization and mercantilization of public services, increase in social inequality. Unlike social inequality or poor social inclusion existing prior to globalization, its hegemony brings forth a new trend, social exclusion: neighborhoods are neglected, cities are neglected, regions are neglected; even countries are ignored if they do not fit into the new economic order.

A new regional dynamic is built under strong determination by means of actions that disrespect local or national cultures, and ignore ethics, ethnicities, races, religions or environmental sustainability. (Harvey, 2003; Stiglitz, 2002; Ocampo and Martin, 2003). For those who are not the empire or its allies, globalization is a tsunami that sweeps everything before it. The offensive campaign to disseminate biotech seeds and "terminator" seeds (which cannot germinate a second time, and in case of generalized use would ensure global corporations total control of food production in the world) reveals the unethical behavior of global forces.⁵

The certainty of individual and family security in the future, peace of mind and hope gave way to uncertainty that now haunts the new generations. Even in the United States where very

⁵ See website <http://www.etcgroup.org>

high consumption standards have helped keep social peace, poverty has grown as Harvey reveals (2003).

Governments have not become smaller as neoliberal advocates try to make us believe, but conformed to the requirements of big corporations and financial capital. They have become weaker only in respect to social policies. In areas of interest to big corporations and financial capital, governments were strengthened with the help of mainstream media. In the early 1990s, the suspicious privatizations of state-owned companies in Brazil – largely financed by the Brazilian government itself – were preceded by nationwide media campaigns involving the most popular broadcasters in the country who would belittle the government and extol the capacity of private enterprise. (Biondi, 1999).

According to Ball et al. (1988), an important characteristic of the social welfare state in CCCs was massive production of standardized, high-density, heavily government-subsidized housing. Investment in urban infrastructure was concomitant with urban planning and public land use control. Big constructing companies and large unions (with significant participation of immigrant labor force) took part in such an extensive building activity.

After 1975, government investment declined, prices went up, speculative activities increased, as well as the complexity resulting from flexibility in promotion and production. According to the same authors, subcontracting started to grow side by side with a sharp decline in fixed capital investment. All this change also undermined the power of unions (Ball et al., 1988).

The word subsidy practically vanishes from official documents.

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON PERIPHERAL COUNTRIES⁶

If the impact of globalization on the developed world was significant, it was and continues to be devastating on nations where most of the population never enjoyed universal rights: employment, social security, healthcare, education, and housing.

Inequality inherent to globalization enhances and diversifies inequality in a society that is historically and traditionally unequal. In the process of restructuring of production, one thing is starting changes in an environment of full employment and universal rights extensive to all; another thing is introducing changes where universal rights are a privilege for a few.

For CCCs, globalization meant breaking the social contract; for PCCs, new relations based on domination and exploitation. A well-engendered model for building hegemony was put to practice through the Washington Consensus.⁷

⁶ Despite visible differences, we will make no distinctions between peripheral and semi-peripheral countries. Due to our professional, academic and political experience in the region, Latin America is our main reference.

⁷ Based on John Williamson's Washington Consensus a broad strategy to train staffs was put into practice. The idea was having teams trained to implement the adjustment of peripheral economies (Cf. WILLIAMSON, John. *What Washington Means by Policy Reform*. In: J. Williamson, ed. *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?* Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990). This formula came to light at a 1989 meeting of U.S. government officials, representatives of international financial organizations, and officials from "emerging" economies. The recipe for the latter was only one: macroeconomic stabilization with primary fiscal surplus, reform of social security systems, finance and trade liberalization and privatization. According to the recipe, after all these measures, investment and economic growth could be resumed. But this did not happen. The document "In Search of a Manual of

As mentioned above, global forces are not compatible with democratic institutions in each of the countries involved. With the help of some well-paid media, they forged and imposed institutions with more authority than National Congresses. Let us see some examples: Central Banks interfere deeply with the lives of people in most countries, but are not accountable to anyone. Their board members are illustrious but unknown experts, and their inaccessible meetings produce bureaucratic minutes which many economists can hardly decipher. None of them was democratically elected. It is no surprise that one of the topics in the neoliberal agenda is the *independence of Central Banks from governments or any other national institutions*.

The “country risk” level is a more prestigious indicator than income distribution. It looms like a sword over the head of every country. How is it established? Who establishes it? What are the criteria for establishing it?

Staffs of Finance Ministries include professionals who may not be acquainted with social and territorial realities in their own country, but were trained and organized for a mission and they carry it out with professionalism and absolute objectivity. Their ideological role is clear, and they can hardly disguise they operate according to instructions found in the document resulting from the Washington Consensus. They exert their power over all the other ministries and agencies with the utmost rigor.⁸

The methodology used for the calculation of public expenditure is unique. Investments appear as expenditure in accounting records (for example: funds for building infrastructure for production), thus depressing the capacity of the government to spend. From the accounting method to the terminology used, all details refer to a logic of domination and global interests.

The success of the strategy to form policy-makers for the PCCs is significant. IBRD, IDB, OECD are some of the entities that have organized themselves for this “capacity building” task. All loans granted by multilateral agencies (offered as “benefits”) require the application of clauses provided in the Washington Consensus.

For the success of this task, agencies have counted on a tradition in peripheral countries: intellectual mimicry, that is, overvaluation and replication of proposals from foreign origin, and underestimation of local proposals.

In PCCs, local intellectual and professional memory has been undermined throughout history. Exposed to ideas from foreign countries for many centuries, PCC intellectuals are often faced with artificial or virtual historical sources. Particularly in the cultural area, ideas seem to be “out of place”: a set of values, ideas, symbols and forms displaced from a productive foundation. Important problems are recurrently discussed, but remain unsolved. From time to time, attempts to solve the same problems are made without taking into account the knowledge amassed by previous generations. The glamour of prestigious foreign universities is irresistible.⁹ With such an academic and professional tradition, no wonder these ideas have attracted a real army of activists around the world.

Arguing about the pressure rich countries impose on poor nations to adopt “good policies” and “good institutions”, Chang shows empirical evidences of negative outcomes of such an influence. Poor countries have grown faster when they did not follow the neoliberal recipes emanated from the international establishment involved in development policies for PCCs. China and India are examples of nations with high growth rates which have not followed the neoliberal recipe.

So, it seems we are facing a “paradox” – at least for those who are not neoliberal economists. All countries, particularly developing countries, have grown faster in the period they pursued “bad” policies, between 1960 and 1980, than in the next two decades, when they started to adopt “good” policies. The obvious answer to

Technopols” by the same author (In: WILLIAMSON, John, ed. *The Political Economy of Policy Reform*. Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1994) sought to provide supplemental political guidance for the army of neoliberal activists.

⁸ As a member of the team that created the Brazilian Ministry of Cities, and vice-minister of Cities in President Lula’s cabinet for 3 years (2003/2005), the author was able to observe the practices of such neoliberal activists within the Brazilian federal administration.

⁹ Some brilliant Brazilian intellectuals reflected on this subject: Roberto Schwarz (he coined the expression “ideas out of place”), Florestan Fernandes and Celso Furtado.

this paradox is to recognize that such supposedly “good” policies are not beneficial to developing countries; on the contrary, it is possible that “bad” policies are better if effectively implemented (Chang, 2002, pg. 214)

THE LEGACY OF PATRIMONIALISM

But not only recent processes triggered by globalization can disturb urban planning in the PCCs. I will be referring here more specifically to Latin-American countries colonized by Iberian nations.

Social inequality in Latin America is the outcome of a legacy of five centuries of foreign domination combined with the influence of local patrimonialist elites. The characteristics of patrimonialism can be summarized as follows:

a) strong relationship between ownership of property and concentration of political, social and economic power;

b) the public sphere is treated like something private or personal;

c) favoritism or the exchange of favors is central to the exercise of power.¹⁰

Clientelism, *coronelismo*, oligarchy or *caudillismo* are concepts strictly related to patrimonialism.

Widespread corruption in Latin America is a byproduct of the exercise of power through the personal sphere, which perpetuates in the political and the judiciary systems characteristics of “backwardness” and premodernity. Premodern relations survived during the processes of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization of Latin-American countries.

In this environment, law enforcement follows unpredictable paths when dominant interests need to be opposed. Progressive laws may yield conservative decisions since trials will not ignore personal or crony relationships. This happens with landowners, as we will see below. It is always important to remember that land ownership is at the core of the power structure, and therefore is central to the formation of Latin-American societies.

Other characteristics of “backward” forces are the role of discourse or rhetoric in the exercise of power, and the gap between rhetoric (represented by a law, plan or project) and practice¹¹. In Latin-American legislatures, legislators rarely see themselves as conservative. The overwhelming majority of them declare themselves as center-leftists. The academic world somehow displays similar characteristics, which are part of the Latin-American soul.

Several authors have reviewed the specific characteristics of this “sui generis” capitalism that subordinates society, but feeds on non-capitalist relationships. Citing “internal discrepancies” in Latin-American societies, Canclini (1990) reminds that “different historical temporalities cohabit in the present time.” Celso Furtado (1995) referred to “discrepancy and contemporaneity” characteristics. Francisco de Oliveira borrowed from Trotsky the reference to “unequal and combined” development (1972). Florestan Fernandes (1975) reminds us that this is “modernization with backwardness” or “modern development of backwardness.” Many reviews found the persistence of patrimonialism during the process of modernization¹².

It is not sufficiently clear nor there are sufficient studies tackling the impact of globalization on such “backward forces”. On the other hand, it is possible to observe in Brazil recrudescence (or at least maintenance) of clientelism and corruption in the political system after many years of dictatorship, particularly after the 1990s. Our hypothesis is that the loss of real power of the legislative branch to institutions run by global forces deepen relationships based on trade-offs, as well as the role of rhetoric and marketing in the legislatures. The hypothesis herein is that patrimonialist capitalism is functional to globalization, and when it is

¹⁰ Part of this description can be found in Faoro, 1989. It is important to note that the concept of patrimonialism is not restricted to the concept of crony capitalism.

¹¹ See the books by Brazilian 19th century novelist Machado de Assis, and the criticism of his books by Roberto Schwarz in Schwarz, 2005.

¹² Many of these authors are rethinking the meaning of “backward forces” under globalization. See, for example, the reformulation of “unequal and combined” development attributed to Latin-American countries in 1972. OLIVEIRA, F. *Crítica à razão dualista: o ornitorrinco*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2003.

not functional, its representatives are simply marginalized and have no say in important decisions. But this issue should be unraveled by hands that are more competent than those of an urban planner.

THE PARADOX OF PERIPHERAL CITIES¹³

Cities, particularly PCC metropolises, are an excellent source to show contrasts and contradictions mentioned above.

Depending on the country, larger or smaller portions of urban populations are excluded from any right to the city and seek access to housing with their own and scarce resources. Despite the scarce surveys available (we are not aware of any peripheral country that keep accurate records on housing for the excluded population), we may say that the largest portion of the urban population builds their homes without any technical knowledge (on engineering and architecture), formal financing or compliance with land, city and building legislations. This practice called self-construction was central to lower labor costs in Brazil (housing costs were not included in the salaries), particularly during the period of developmentism when the fordist industry had its startup in the PCCs to win their domestic markets. Self-construction is a core aspect of globalization. Although included in the capitalist system of production, workers (a part of the Economically Active Population) are excluded from the capitalist housing market.

The private housing market in Latin America contributes to the general housing shortage. In the CCCs the private housing market sells homes for 80 percent of the population, while the remaining 20 percent depends on public subsidy; in the PCCs, the private housing market is restricted, socially excluding and highly speculative. In Brazil, like in most Latin American countries, it is estimated that only 30 percent of the population can buy a home in the private housing market. Not even those who could be considered as middle class (5 to 10 minimum wages a month) have access to housing in the private market.

On the other hand, varied interests determine regressive investment practices by governments. We would like to mention here three major trends in public urban investment: a) real estate market-oriented investment whose motor is real estate valuation b) investment oriented by urban marketing whose motor is visibility, and c) investment determined by clientelistic relationships responding to electoral interests. This last alternative may imply investment in poor areas, but it subverts good investment policies which could be based on urban planning.

Housing options including urban infrastructure and services required by most of the population are available neither in the market nor through public policies.

Environmentally fragile areas – banks of streams, rivers and reservoirs; ravines, flooding areas, swamp areas, sloping grounds – which require specific legislation and are not of interest to legal market are “left” for most of the population build their homes. The occupation of such areas has serious consequences: pollution of water sources and reservoirs; many casualties due to landslides; floods, epidemics, etc.

This situation is increasingly serious due to the high level of damage to the urban environment. It was the result of intense urbanization starting in the 1940s with the offer of cheap labor for industrialization.

Disperse urbanization in PCC cities resulting from the expel of poor populations to the periphery causes another set of serious social and environmental damages. Disperse urbanization occurring, for instance, in the United States or Canada has serious environmental consequences, but will not submit suburban populations (who have automobiles) to long journeys on foot like in the PCCs. In peripheral countries, walking long distances has increased significantly, as evidenced in the NGO Forum on Transportation at Habitat II (Istanbul, 1996).

Nobody can deny the role of land ownership in the exercise of power in Latin America history; even countries that promoted land reform in the beginning of the 20th century, like México and later Peru and Bolivia. In these countries, a complete reversal in the impetus for

¹³ We will not concentrate on quantitative data showing the world urban tragedy, particularly in PCCs, nor in the deleterious impact of globalization on a growing urbanization process in the world. For abundant quantitative data see Davis, 2006. See also documents from UN HABITAT, ECLAC, GLOBAL URBAN OBSERVATORY cited in references.

national reform is observed. In other countries, like Brazil, late industrialization was concurrent with large unproductive rural estates for quite a long time. Holding of unproductive land is one of the characteristics of patrimonialism, and one of the major problems both in the countryside and in Latin American cities since it affects fair and sustainable occupation of the territory.¹⁴

Marcuse emphasizes that globalization affects all cities in the world, whether they are winners, losers or outsiders. The growing urban sprawl challenges concepts of rural and urban land. Real estate undertakings have increasingly produced either gated or fragmented housing arrangements (clusters, ghettos or citadels). While capital mobility increased, social mobility declined. The excluded from globalization, according to Marcuse, are different from those living in informal settlements. The neighborhoods that traditionally receive migrants in the city – areas to be developed – were forgotten, and currently we have one or more generations of migrants experiencing poor prospects of access to employment and social security. In short, the gap between social classes and the segmentation of space increased (Marcuse, 1997).

Representation of the city is a cunning ideological construction in which part of it, the “city” of the elite, takes the place of the whole. Guy Debord points out that the society of spectacle is the society of monologue, a true factory of alienation (Debord, 1992). This is not a new finding, but it reaches extremes under globalization. Recalling the effects of the Katrina in New Orleans, one year after the tragedy poor neighborhoods are still in ruins, while richer areas are recovered.

If in the cities of central countries the poor have little visibility, in PCCs they are practically invisible. The new fragmentation lingers on side by side with the old segregation, whose connotations of gender, race and ethnicity have grown deeper. Although Latin America is plenty of good examples, the best example of this comes from South Africa.

South Africa is a median industrialized country where imperialist domination took racial contours. The affluent, residential neighborhoods are impressive in cities like Johannesburg. Joburg makes us remember the richest cities in the world, except for the many security warning posters, high walls, dogs, electric fences, etc. Except for the downtown area, where blacks are the majority of residents, to access black neighborhoods (townships or slums) it is often necessary to take roads that leave the “city”¹⁵ (Villaça, 1995).

According to Andrew Boraine (Cape Town City Partnership), Cape Town the fascinating South African city has two thirds of its population living in slums and townships. But, except for the sides of the freeway that goes from the airport to the “city”, these two thirds of the population are totally invisible for most of the white population. What catches the eyes of visitors is the beauty and the luxury of the seaside city. Khayelitsha, the largest township in the outskirts of the “city” of Cape Town can be reached by freeway or railway. According to our guide, a community leader who accompanied us, around 600,000 people live in the township. It is an extensive horizontal occupation of single family homes in small lots, with basic urban infrastructure, scarce public facilities, and very few buildings for uses other than residential. It is an example of the big and very much criticized fordist housing projects that work more as “warehouses” for people or low-paid labor force, and is no “urban party” demanded by Lefebvre in his classical writing “The Right to the City”¹⁶.

After visiting Pretoria I was convinced that physical and also visual separation was a strategy of apartheid that marks and will mark the country for many decades¹⁷. Due to the large distances between homes and workplaces of blacks, and the shortage of public transportation,

¹⁴ On the urban land and real estate issue in Latin America see papers and events promoted by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in partnership with Latin-American organizations. Website: <http://www.lincolinst.edu>

¹⁵ Alexander is the only big slum inside the “city” of Johannesburg, but it is practically invisible from the outside because it is almost totally contained within a small hydrographic basin. Townships are the gigantic housing projects built for blacks in South Africa during the apartheid. The best known township is Soweto, main stage for the fight against apartheid.

¹⁶ For more information see, HARRINSON et al. (2003) and MABIN (1995).

¹⁷ After years of territorial separation imposed by legal norm – the apartheid divided the population into 4 races during almost half a century – South Africa finds it hard – on the tenth anniversary of the democratic government – to fight segregation now reaffirmed by another “law”: the real estate market law.

the sides of freeways that leave the “cities” are taken every day by long lines of people (blacks) walking past the heavy traffic from the white clusters in the suburbs.

It is clear that heavy advertising and the media in general have an important role in the construction of the ideological representation of the city, highlighting spaces of distinction. It is also clear that this representation is an instrument of power – to make “natural” and “general” an aspect that is only partial and associated to schemes for real estate valuation in the cities. It is never too much to remember that the proximity of poor people entails real estate or land devaluation.

The invisibility of this “non city” has decisive influence in the formation of consciousnesses. The excluded in the hegemonic city are seen as a minority and not as the majority of the population as it is true in most PCCs. Citing Brecht again: “The exception became the rule, and the rule the exception” but this is denied by what the eyes can see¹⁸.

Illegal land occupation and buildings seem to provide a foundation or “ground” to generalize the illegality in social relationships. There are no laws, no courts, and no tribunals to settle disputes among neighbors in slums or in the so-called clandestine or pirate poor neighborhoods. The absence of the State, particularly the judicial and institutional apparatuses gives room to new “laws” that are dictated by “local bosses”. Some years later, this local organization grows into regional or international rings of organized crime. Our hypothesis is that in these “forgotten” areas or regions urban illegality and not only social exclusion contributes to the immense growth of violence in the whole world, and particularly in the PCCs.¹⁹

The growing urban violence is the most visible sign of the real city overflowing its spaces of poverty and segregation (evidently more violent) to seek spaces of wealth. But such violence is too much evident in our cities for us to discuss it here.

URBAN PLANNING AND GLOBALIZATION

After a century and a half of life, the modern urban planning matrix, which guided the growth of cities in central countries in the capitalist world, lost ground to neoliberal proposals that followed global changes. The modernist model, a definer of holistic land use standards, and supported by centralization and rationality of the governmental apparatus, was applied to only a portion of PCC cities to produce what we can call incomplete modernization.

In a country where laws are enforced according to the circumstances, the so-called Master Plans are not connected with urban management. Rhetoric full of good intentions, but miles away from practice. Concepts that are reified, reaffirmed in international seminars, ignore the majority of the population. Social housing, public transportation, sanitation and drainage are not important themes (or central themes, as they should be) for this kind of urban planning.

The outcome is: urban planning for a few, market for a few, the law for a few, citizenship for a few... Instead of universal rights, privileges for a few. (Castro and Silva, 1997)

Modernist, functionalist urban planning, important instrument for ideological domination contributed to the consolidation of unequal societies by hiding the real city and preserving conditions for the formation of speculative real estate markets restricted to a minority. Abundant regulations (zoning laws, building codes, visual codes, land parceling regulations inspired in foreign models) stand side by side with the extreme flexibility of the illegal city to provide the character of fractured, but dissimulated institutionalization (Maricato 1996). A permanent tension is established between legal and illegal conditions, and what they mean for the institutions in charge of land use control, housing funding, and environment preservation, among others. Local oligarchies take advantage of this discriminatory application of the law by making use of it in an ambiguous and arbitrary manner. Feeling insecure after occupying land in illegal condition, communities submit themselves to the protection of political parties, legislators or local governments, thus reinforcing clientelistic relationships²⁰

¹⁸ From Bertolt Brecht’s play “The Exception and the Rule”.

¹⁹ See web site <http://www.who.int>.

The serious problems peripheral cities experience are not due to the absence of Urban Plans. Their problems relate to city growth that would not conform to urban plans passed in City Councils, but instead, growth according to traditional interests dictating local politics and specific groups connected with local governments. The “rhetorical plan” fulfills an ideological role (Villaça, 1995) and helps hide the motor that commands urban investments.

What could be an opportunity to develop endogenous proposals which are more sensitive to urban praxis in the peripheral city, the end of modern functionalist planning gives room to another movement toward technical, cultural, ideological and political domination on the periphery of capitalism: the Strategic Plan.

FROM “WASHINGTON CONSENSUS” TO “STRATEGIC PLANNING”.

Cities have a new role in the globalized world. This statement has been used for various and different purposes. A prestigious bibliography that led their authors to an almost hegemonic status in the international consultancy market explains that not all cities can achieve the status of “global cities”. Only a few urban centers where the fates of the world are settled, and include some of the following characteristics: headquarters of big corporations, information technology and communications research and development centers, skilled labor, think tanks, avant garde cultural and artistic activities, sophisticated services, etc. Formulas are offered – for far from reasonable prices – to take any city to the exclusive podium of fashionable global cities.

One of such proposals, which was called Strategic Plan and was inspired in the urbanization of Barcelona for the Olympic Games, was acclaimed in Latin America as the great formula to save cities. Despite the democratic and participatory cloak, the proposals for “strategic plans” perfectly combined with neoliberal tenets that guided the “adjustment” of national economic policies through the Washington Consensus. One recipe for the countries and another for the cities to get adapted to the new era of restructuring of production in the world, or more specifically, of **adjustment** of the relationship of subordination to the new requirements in the process of capitalist accumulation under the American empire ²¹.

Locally, the role of the already mentioned “Strategic Plan” is the same: deregulate, privatize, fragment and give the markets absolute domination. Strategic planning reinforces the idea of an independent city that needs some tools to compete with the others for investments. The city becomes then a “machine to produce income” (Arantes, 2000). The city as a “political actor” must operate as a corporation (this means, minimizing internal conflict) in order to survive and win. It is the “corporate city” or “city-homeland” that demands the efforts and the “consensus” of all around this comprehensive view of the future ²². To that end, the city must prepare itself to provide services and facilities required from all global cities, such as five-star hotels, convention centers, technological research hubs, international airports, cultural megaprojects, etc., to “sell” itself effectively. We are dealing then with a “city-merchandise” (it

²⁰ During the 1er Congreso Nacional de Suelo Urbano in México City, remarks by researchers and municipal authorities reiterated the difficulty in implementing Master Plans due to the lack of land use control. See UNAM (2005). Statements during the Congreso Nacional de Suelo Urbano confirm this kind of relationship between residents in illegal settlements and politicians (UNAM, 2005).

²¹ About the trend of the “Strategic Plan” see etymology and criticism in Vainer (2000).

²² Molotch had already defined in 1976 the concept of “growth machine” (which was used again a decade later by Logan, 1986) to explain the building of a social pact that, while minimizing local conflicts, acts in the defense of the city in the competitive environment.

must sell itself) and a “city-corporation” (it must be managed like a high-performance private company) (Vainer, 2000).

The use of image and culture is central to the Strategic Plan. Architecture as a showcase has played this role as Otilia Arantes (2000) shows it. The holistic modernist approach in planning is dropped for a symbolic appropriation of new spots (or renewal of old ones) which are obviously related to real estate valuation.

Some factors have contributed to the successful sale of the "Strategic Plan", even among progressive municipalities²³. Among its guidelines, democratic participation is extremely valued. As Vainer shows it, in this model the invitation to participate implies submitting the interests of many to hegemonic interests: unity to save the city and take it to victory over the others that compete for the same investments. The “Strategic Plan” also left behind aspects of bureaucratic urbanism, which in fact has often slowed the development of cities by hindering diversified and specific solutions that could take into account local potentialities and social and community networks. At the same time, it introduced the prospects for a new political and economic role for local governments and for urban planning. In this sense, the new proposal seemed to bring about a solution for local governments which did not know what to do to face growing unemployment and social demands, fiscal wars and cuts in federal government funding.

WHAT TO DO?

Due to foreign (global) and domestic (“backward forces”) restrictions, the question is, what is the feasibility in the PCCs of urban planning that is committed to democracy, sustainability, and social justice?

What to do about illegal and violent neighborhoods over which governments have no control?

How to face a highly speculative and excluding real estate market and ensure the right to the city to all? How to implement the social function of property against the interests of real estate valuation?

What to do about environmentally fragile areas occupied by poor housing? When to remove or when and how to consolidate illegal land occupation? What are the minimum housing standards to develop illegally occupied areas?

How to effectively carry out land use control (one of the most corrupt sectors in local Latin American governments) to protect environmentally fragile areas and increase the access to legal housing?

How to improve sanitation and how to enhance the availability of public transportation when a large part of the population cannot pay for it? What is the best technological matrix to be used in each case?

We should not forget that solutions for these problems cannot be found just around the corner, nor, least of all, at some prestigious American or European university. But this should

²³ Among the Brazilian municipalities that adopted the “Strategic Plan” in the later 1990s, stands out Santo André, governed by the Workers’ Party, a fact that gave rise to a hot debate on urban planning. The three largest Argentinean cities after Buenos Aires – Cordoba, Rosario and Bahía Blanca – adopted Strategic Plans with the same Catalan consultants.

not mean we have nothing to learn from CCCs. However, it is important to note that CCCs have never faced identical problems resulting from an awesome process of urbanization (as is the case of Latin America) that makes populations face, in the same national territory, and often in the same city, pre and postmodern realities. We can and should take advantage of the solutions found in CCCs since they constitute amassed knowledge and experiences that present lessons to be learned. But such solutions require at least mediation against PCCs regional and urban realities. What is new is the exchange of experiences developed within the PCCs themselves.

We would like to point out here that some conditions could help building a more proper environment for urban planning in the PCCs in the global society. Such conditions should not be regarded as a recipe. Thus, the same way unrestricted transfer of models should be rejected, there should be some prevention against recipes. The idea is observing some conditions that can be considered general but never sufficient.

1) Making the real city visible or deconstruct the virtual city built by urban marketing and global interests

In order to break away from the ideological and hegemonic representation of a city that was constructed according to interests dictated by high real estate profits and segregation, it is necessary to build consciousness around the real city with its deficiencies and injustice. The choice of indicators can constitute an antidote against modern (or postmodern) sceneries that are restricted to some islands in an ocean of need.

In the pursuit for sharper perception of the reality in a particular community, the choice of indicators is vital. They may constitute antidotes against political marketing that manages to change vice into virtue through televised electoral campaigns, as well as against modern or postmodern sceneries which are restricted to a minority.

Deconstruction of prevailing representations must give room to a new symbology. Social indicators, such as housing conditions, access to sanitation and transportation, number of school enrollments, per capita number of hospital beds, infant mortality rates, life expectancy, etc., constitute parameters to assess public policies and governments that can be applied together with mainstream economic indicators, whose prestige is evidenced by the extent domestic and international media highlight them. Universities have then an important role to play when they shed light on the hidden and illegal dimension of urban spaces by means of scientific appraisals.

2) Establishing channels for democratic debate: visibility to conflicts

Peripheral societies have traditionally ignored, or better, failed to recognize existing social conflicts. Instead of democratic debate, repressing or disrespecting interlocutors when disputes involve class antagonisms.

Democratic debate is not a tradition, on the contrary, there is a tradition of a sole and dominant version about reality. The versions of the “single thought”, a concept created by the French newspaper “*Le Monde Diplomatique*”, about forced, constructed and disseminated neoliberal consensus is not new in the PCCs.

Constructing space for social participation, giving voice to those that never had it, and having different social interests emerge (so that the elite becomes aware of something it never admitted: the counterpoint) is a hard but highly transforming task.

There is world consensus about the virtues of participation in public administrations and urban plans. International agencies, such as the U.N., Habitat, and even the World Bank, IDB,

USAID, OECD, are all unanimous to defend social participation in the destinies of communities. A lot of paper was spent to describe “participatory planning”. In view of the fragile conditions for citizenship and participation persisting in the PCCs, it is believed that it is necessary to go beyond rhetoric that fails to include contradictions, controversies, and conflicts.

3) Administrative reform

As we have seen, urban administration structures are, in their majority, outdated. They are corrupted by traditional behaviors based on privileges and exchange of favors that share arenas with perennial lobbies conducted by contractors, transportation companies, pharmaceutical companies, and suppliers of all kinds of inputs, etc.

In view of the intense urban growth, administration machines have changed, but never became structured or updated to face problems arising from such growth. Many Brazilian metropolises, like São Paulo, one of the largest in the world, lack a metropolitan administrative structure. The city’s parochial systems are not prepared to face the size of disasters resulting from poor stormwater draining and sewage systems, air pollution, traffic jams, lack of land use control, etc. In general, the public administration machines manage and maintain, under satisfactory standards, **only some sections of the cities**.

To take this machine to operate in illegal neighborhoods requires reform of the institutional framework, including redefinition of operating attributions to try to shorten the distance between administration offices and reality.

Fragmentation of administration among secretariats, departments and state-owned companies is very functional to archaic interests. Against an integrated approach to economic, social, environmental, and urbanistic problems there is a tradition of “distributing” positions in every sector of the administrative machine among different parties or important individuals within the political forces that elected the mayor.

Urban planning committed to social inclusion requires an integrated approach. The upgrading of slums can solve problems of environmental sanitation, lack of legal postal addresses, poor housing and security conditions, but it will neither improve schooling or literacy rates, nor organize women to fight for better living standards, nor help organize cooperatives nor improve the leisure time of youths. “Exclusion is a whole” – economic, cultural, educational, social, judicial, environmental, racial – and cannot be fought in a fragmented manner²⁴.

Finally, a modernization and disclosure of records, mapping, and information on cities are vital tools for better understanding problems and more efficient administration.

4) Capacity building for planning the actions.

The same way the dissemination of the Washington Consensus made use of intense campaign for the training of technical and political staffs, democratic planning must seek to form groups of activists among public employees, professionals, businessmen, politicians and community leaders. The commitment to transforming action implies bridging the gap between planning and management, in order to take plans out of red tape or of mere rhetoric. It is particularly important to include guidance and control of investments in the planning process. The rhetorical or juridical culture, as already noted, hides a practice that may even go against

²⁴ *Charte européenne pour le droit à habiter et la lutte contre l'exclusion*. Fondation pour le Progrès de L'homme. Paris, 1993.

the plans. Oftentimes, public investments induce urban growth in regions or neighborhoods which are not recommended in Master Plans. We have plans without works and works without plans, configuring a situation that is anarchic and subversive to sustainable growth.

The tension between plans and investments that are contrary to them can only be eased in the field of political practice, be it social, partisan, professional or academic.

5) Land property reform

Finally, it is never too much to repeat things that are obvious, but not very much taken into account in the global society: the absence of public control over land property contributes to housing shortage, territorial segregation, higher infrastructure and service costs, in addition of imposing extra pains to the poor excluded populations in the cities. The “disorder” in the land market (which evidently supposes another “order”) imposes costs to public administrations which result in differential revenues that are privately appropriated.

According to Fernanda Furtado, the weight of real estate property tax collection is depressed in Latin American cities as compared with American and European cities. There is a rejection about real estate tax (IPTU), which is regarded as a right of owners, and not as a gain that is not their own, as we can consider in the perception of Henri George (George, 1992). We believe this is the position of both the rich and the poor. Other arguments used to explain the lack of prestige of IPTU as a fiscal instrument for social justice are: mistrust of citizens about the application of tax revenues by governments, extreme care of mayors and councilmen to avoid the adoption of measures which are unpopular, tradition of federal funding of municipalities, and the stable role of real estate in face of a future without social security (Furtado 1999).

Some good examples of urban managements that formulated and implemented democratic plans and faced conflicts and challenges in order to protect social and political priorities can be found in some PCC city governments. From the 1980s on, a new generation of mayors emerged during or after the struggles against the dictatorship, between 1960 and 1990. These experiences are not well-known due to the lack of prestige of PCCs’ domestic proposals and the overwhelming predominance of technical and academic production from central countries.

In Brazil, experiences in the following cities that could be mentioned are, among others: Belém: making participation democratic by conducting the Congress of the City, and modernization of administration with the implementation of the urban multipurpose register; Belo Horizonte: proposals for food supply that enabled reduction food costs for poor families; Recife: solid policies to promote the city's multicultural roots, particularly Afro-Brazilian music, besides measures to prevent landslides in poor neighborhoods; Santo André: consistent sanitation and housing policies; Diadema: policies against urban violence; Caxias do Sul: where even the children discuss the future of the city. But the most notable change in urban management and planning is the Participatory Budget in Porto Alegre.

The Participatory Budget, practiced in Porto Alegre for almost two decades, constitutes a change in the pattern of urban investment. It meant a departure from a tradition of public investment according to interests of a real estate market that imposes territorial segregation and inequality. In addition, well-organized lobbies at City Councils have difficulties to operate. The excluded start to be regarded as political actors that participate directly in decision-making and can therefore exert some control over the government, which in its turn becomes more accountable and transparent. There is a breakaway from political clientelism, although this will

depend on the degree of democracy exercised in the process – the risk of cooptation and clientelism is always present. The Participatory Budget changes the place and nature of urban planning.

Another important experience in Brazil took place in the federal sphere of government: the creation of Ministry of Cities with the participatory process promoted by the National Conferences of Cities.

The Ministry of Cities was created by President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva in 2003 to fill an institutional void: the lack of a National Urban Development Policy (NUDP) to integrate sectoral policies in the areas of urban planning and land policy, housing, environmental sanitation and transportation.

In 2003 and 2005, the Ministry of Cities promoted the National Conferences of Cities to define NUDP guidelines, principles and priorities. Participants in the conferences were: 45 national organizations representative of social movements, NGOs, universities, professionals, businessmen, unions and research centers. The process was originated in the meetings promoted first by municipalities, and at a second stage, by state governments. A working paper was prepared to help discussions and guide proposals. Over 3,000 Brazilian municipalities (out of 5,600), and all but one Brazilian states (27) participated in each of the conferences in 2003. In the national meetings in Brasília, over 2,000 thousand delegates elected in state conferences represented spheres of government and civil society, besides the federal government.

Other successful examples in PCCs, particularly in Latin America, are:

Montevideo, capital of Uruguay, had three municipal administrations of the political coalition Frente Amplio that promoted social inclusion by adopting the Participatory Budget and Strategic Zonal Development Plans (1990/2004). Zonal Plans provided the formulation of proposals with decentralized social participation, in order to improve the quality of life in regions of the city which had traditionally been neglected²⁵.

Rosario, in Argentina, has had three socialist mayors who, similarly to their Uruguayan peers, gave priority to social and political inclusion (1995/2007). Healthcare and housing deserved special attention, and planning was developed through participatory processes²⁶.

Land titling actions, upgrading of precarious areas and provision of new homes for low-income people are among the big challenges to contain the growth of slums in Latin America. But concerning such challenges, this new generation of mayors still has a lot of knowledge to exchange. In Bogota, Colombia, the Operación Nuevo Usme is a good example of how to take advantage of informal processes of production of the city to offer formal housing affordable for low-income populations. Similar experiences are on progress in Pereira, Colombia under the name Macro Projeto de Pereira, and also in Porto Alegre Metropolitan Region, Brazil, named Urbanizador Social²⁷. The development of such actions presupposes solid empirical knowledge and commitment to local housing production processes. In this sense, they show how out of place and falsely controversial are proposals advocating privatization (the market only) or

²⁵ See LEITÃO, Karina. *Gestão participativa e qualificação urbana: Belém e Montevideú*, presented at University of São Paulo, PROLAM, 2003.

²⁶ See RODRIGUES, Roberta. *Inovações e limites da Política Urbana na América Latina: teoria e prática recente de Governos Locais Democráticos. Belém (Pará - Brasil) e Rosário (Santa Fé - Argentina) como referências*. University of São Paulo, PROLAM, 2004.

²⁷ Since 1997 Colombia has a Federal Land Law, no. 388, which is very advanced. In Brazil, the advanced Statute of Cities, federal law no. 10,257, passed in 2001.

statization (the State only) for the solution of problems. Informal entrepreneurs and the organized population are important actors that operate in partnership with local governments in the examples cited. Instead of a bureaucratic and distant operation imposing formal requirements that hinder the legality of the undertaking, local governments assume a new and active posture marked by regulation and commitment. Urban management is vital to the success of such experiences which take place in environments where plans, projects, and announcements are traditionally highly publicized but rarely implemented²⁸.

The list can be long, but to know it requires a lot of effort because it is necessary to differentiate between what is institutional literature or institutional marketing and real implementation. Moreover, most of such experiences are not bestsellers of urbanism. These and other successful cases of planning and management committed to social action and participation are not sufficiently known and praised because of poor exchange of information among PCCs, due to the prestige of models from central countries, as mentioned here before.

Closer relations among PCC professionals, scholars and social leaders, and increased exchange of experiences which are more proper to their reality could leverage urban development. We are not making distinctions according to nationalities here – which would be an odious prejudice – but taking into account the endogenous character of the guiding focus of formulations and actions.

In other words, it is necessary to place the periphery in the center: in plans, projects and actions.

²⁸ See the book to be launched by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, organized by Martin Smolka and Adriana de A. Laranjeira.

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