BEYOND BRASILIA – CONTEMPORARY URBAN DESIGN IN BRAZIL

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This paper is a brief discussion of a recent research on how Brazilian cities have been shaped from the late 1980s to the early 2000s through several case studies in different cities.[1] After the disruption of the modernist paradigm, the de-mythification of Brasilia, and the redemocratization of the country in the 1980´s, architecture and urbanism in Brazil were eager for new models with which to face urban development. On one side globalization and market forces dragged society towards an "entrepreneurial" and fragmented city of shopping centers, gated communities, private enclaves, and trendy and irrelevant architectural imagery. On the other side academia, intellectuals, community and social movements, and consciencious political leaders pushed toward another social order and to solutions that are more appropriate to the Brazilian social and cultural heritage. This duality is cleary reflected in urban landscapes throughout the country and reflects a constant tension between opposite realms: global-local, private-public, and the individual-collective.

Urban design reflects this duality and the tensions that it generates in Brazilian cities, and it always results from public actions, either directly –through programs and projects by institutional agencies– or indirectly –through legislation, incentives, and other instruments set to control the market. Even illegal settlements and substandard housing result from political, economic, and social options at the governmental sphere, or simply from the lack of satisfactory institutional actions at national, regional, and local levels. Urban design seeks to shape the public realm, ensures its quality, and sets the stage for cultural, social and economic development. Findings of my research show how urban design can be regarded as a fundamental tool towards a pluralist and democratic city in Brazil, where three major trends in its practice were identified: a) late-modernism, b) re-utilization of the built environment, and c) social inclusion. This paper will briefly discuss some of the research findings in the hopes that it will be relevant to a better understanding of the role of urban design from an international perspective.

Introduction

Evidently, no paper can claim a complete discussion of such a complex theme as urban design in a large country like Brazil. The first problem faced is the very definition of urban design which, depending on the author, has different meanings. For this research I adopted my own inclusive and operational definition of urban design which I developed elsewhere (del Rio 1990; del Rio et al. 2002). In the following lines the reader should consider urban design as the conscious or unconscious process of shaping cities or parts of them, together with the various human and social operations that sustain it and give it meaning. According to this understanding, urban design is multi-scale, interdisciplinary, procedural, public-oriented, participatory, and inclusive.

The second problem faced concerns the size of the task and the complexity of the urban question in Brazil, a country with more than 3.4 million square miles with the largest GNP in South America. There are 26 states, 4,491 municipalities and, according to the census data, the population in 2000 was over 169 million, 81% of which was considered urban. In the same year, twelve cities had more than 1 million inhabitants, and although the growth rate of the urban population has dropped in the last decades and larger cities do not receive so many migrants as they did in the past, medium-sized cities

are growing at a much faster pace and now face the same problems of large metropolises. For instance, the greater São Paulo covers almost 48 square miles, holds a population of 17 million, and even with growth rates lower than they used to be its population should reach 21 million by 2015 (Wilheim 2001: 476).[2] In 2000, Rio de Janeiro, the second largest city in Brazil, had an urban population of almost 6 million while the greater Rio had over 9 million.

To a large extend Brazil´s most recent historical context is characterized by an unstable economy, rapid urbanization, limited (yet unexplored) resources, very perverse income distribution, high inflation rates, and a large percentage of the population that is excluded from the benefits of urban development. Thus cities face a myriad of problems which reflect more strongly on the poor, particularly the large ones with the most economic and social opportunities. The ever increasing housing shortage, for instance, notwithstanding several efforts, is the tip of an iceberg of problems affecting the poor to which one should add public health, lack of infrastructure, difficult access to public services, incomplete citizenship, etc. In Rio de Janeiro, although the city population has grown by less that one percent from 1991 to 2000 the population in *favelas* expanded by more that two percent and contains around 18.6% of the total.[3] In São Paulo, while residents of *favelas* count as 11% of the city population, in the Greater São Paulo the *favelados* count as 20 to 25% of the total population.[4] City governments claim statistics to be larger than those in the official federal census due to their different methodologies. Moreover, the real housing demand is much larger as it must include families living in substandard housing and in various illegal and informal solutions, such as in inner-city slums and in pirate subdivisions far from the city centers which suffer from lack decent infrastructure.

Despite the enormous problems faced by cities Brazilian urban design has evolved substantially in the last decades. Increasing community demands, better design professionals, market pressures and globalization, have contributed to a better understanding of the importance of the city environment and of the public realm.

A Preface for Contemporary Urban Design [5]

The 1980s was an important turning point for Brazilians in setting the stage for the rise of a new type of urbanism. The momentum generated by national political movements, the rise of the labor movement, and the largest public gatherings in the country ever finally caused the defeat of the military dictatorship that ruled the country since 1964.6 In April 1984 crowds of more than one million people gathered in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo demanding full democracy and direct presidential elections. After reestablishing direct elections for state governors and mayors in all but the large cities in the early 1980s, the military let go of power in 1985 and the Congress elected a new president. In 1988 a new National Constitution was adopted, and in 1989 the country had the first direct elections for president since 1961. Ironically two years later, following a series of scandals and high corruption, he also became the first president to be impeached.

At the same time, a series of important changes helped consolidate the fields of city planning and urban design. The long struggle to overcome the lack of public participation and the modernist paradigm, its subversion of traditional urbanism, and the hegemonic image of Brasilia succeeded with the reestablishment of democracy. Different ways to understand and to cope with city problems and community demands now concurred equally with modernism. It was the start of a new "post-modern" era where local politics, public participation, and the context became important ingredients

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[2] Census data indicate the yearly geometric growth rate in São Paulo metropolitan area dropped from 6.17% (1950/60) to 1.63% (1991-2000). In Meyer et al (2004).

[3] Based on an analysis if census data by Besserman & Cavalilieri (2004).

[4] In Meyer et al (2004).

[5] The author is grateful to Luiz Cesar Queiroz Ribeiro, Luciana Correa do Lago, and Adauto Lucio Cardoso, professors at IPPUR (Institute for Graduate Studies and Research on Urban and Regional Planning, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) who shared their views on recent advances on planning in Brazil during an interview for this research in July 2004.

[6] For recent comprehensive accounts on the modern history of Brazil see Skidmore (1999) and MacLahlan (2004).

in the equation. The national debates that were held towards the new constitution spotlighted the need for an "urban reform" moving away from the notion that city problems resulted exclusively from demographics and uncontrolled growth.[7] The city´s elitist management and socio-spatial models are regarded simultaneously as causes and consequences of disparities in income, access, and power that prevent social justice and the reach for the democratic ideals (Ribeiro, 2001). From this new angle, the urban question is seen as the expression of societal needs in the larger sense, and two major issues are central to the quest for better cities: social equity and democracy.

The 1988 National Constitution introduced extremely important changes with respect to cities. First, it defined the municipality as an "entity" of the federation attributing it political, financial, and economic autonomy –a novelty in Latin America. This "municipalization" of the country´s power structure pressed the States to change their Constitutions and the municipalities to elaborate new *Leis Orgânicas Municipais* –the legal framework that govern their functioning and organization. Second, it introduced the concept of the "social role of urban property and of the city" and recognized the need for a more socially inclusive urban development. The National Constitution dedicated a chapter for Urban Policies where it compelled cities with a population of 20,000 or over to have master plans besides introducing new mechanisms for development control.[8] States and municipalities would then replicate this demand for master planning in their own Constitutions and *Leis Orgânicas*, and most would include the new development control mechanisms. In regards to urban development and the role of urban planning, the new National Constitution understands the city as a locus for the redistribution of wealth and for the reduction of social inequalities (Cardoso, 1997).

Moreover, although Brazil had environmental laws in place since the 1970´s, the new Constitution advanced on the environmental question by dedicating a whole chapter to it. Most importantly, by recognizing that environmental impacts affect all the population the Constitution introduced the notion of *diffuse rights* what in practical legal terms means that anyone can start a lawsuit against a project and its environmental impacts, not just those who are directly affected by their impacts such as is the case in the US. By extending the notion of environment, the concept of diffuse rights can be utilized in actions against urban and neighborhood projects. This makes it a powerful instrument for local groups and NGOs. Cardoso[9] noted that by introducing the notion of *diffuse rights* the Constitution recognized the environment as a collective entity, and the city as a social reality. Additionally, the 1988 Constitution established an independent Public Ministry where any citizen can begin, free of charge, a lawsuit against any of the three levels of government in matters of public interest, including environmental issues.

The 1991 master plan for Rio de Janeiro was the first one to follow this new Constitutional vision and became a model, particularly because it included and regulated several of the progressive instruments for development control predicted in the Constitution –such as the neighborhood impact statements and the transfer of development rights. Differently from prior technocratic plans developed under the military regime, the Rio Master Plan represented a real political pact between the different social groups involved –political parties, NGOs, professional and community groups, etc– as its conception involved public participation and *referendums*.

Evidently, this new political and social climate had an impact on how urban design is understood, as well as in how it is taught and practiced. In the 1980s there was an increase in the academic debate around urbanism and the urban question, accompanied by significant developments in urban theory and applied research. In 1994 a nation-wide minimum academic curriculum for programs granting the traditional title of architect-urbanist was approved by the Ministry of Education. Programs have to offer a minimum of 3,600 teaching hours (normally 5 years) and courses in

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[7] These debates happened at several different levels of the organized society, such as the local, state, and federal houses of representatives, professional and non-governmental organizations, universities, etc.

[8] According to the latest national census data, in 2000 there were 926 cities with a population of 20,000 or more. Some of these mechanisms are: compulsory subdivision and edification of urban land, surface rights, progressive property tax, preference rights to the municipality to buy a property, adverse possession of urban land (important for squatter rights). See Fernandes (2002), Souza (2003), and also <*www.polis.org.br/publicacoes/ download/arquivos/estatuto_de_la_ciudad.pdf*>

[9] In an interview with the author (see note 6).

urban and regional planning, urban and landscape projects, environmental studies, and sustainability besides those more closely related to architecture. Thus, learning how to deal with the urban question and societal needs became an inseparable part of the architectural education in Brazil.

In the last decades several new graduate programs in urban planning were created and offer MSc and PhD titles. The National Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Urban and Regional Planning (ANPUR) was funded in 1983 and today 39 institutions are affiliated to it.[10] At the institutional level, graduate programs, research, and events are monitored and supported by grants from the Ministry of Culture through the national research council (CNPq) and the program for faculty training (CAPES), both of which include committees for urban and regional planning as well as for architecture and urbanism. Finally, important scholarly discussions have also helped to develop Brazilian urbanism such as the now extinct seminars on urban design at the University of Brasilia (1986 to 1989), the national conferences that are promoted every two years by the ANPUR and the seminars on the history of the city and of urbanism that have been held every year since 1997.

Spatial Segregation and Urban Design

Looking from another perspective these positive changes have to compete against the social fragmentation of the urban environment caused by the severe historical income gaps between social groups in the Brazilian society. During the technocratic regime of the military the dichotomy "formal versus informal city" and the socio-economical conflicts worsened, as the dominance of higher classes got stronger. The high inflation rates of the 1970s and 1980s, and the disruption of the old institutional system in the early eighties encountered cities that are socially and spatially fragmented, what social movements and local politics are only starting to change. Holston & Caldeira (1998), for instance argue that in Brazilian cities spatial fragmentation enables a disjunctive citizenship. As observed by Rolnik (2001), if we have to point out one element that fully describes the Brazilian city both in time and space, it is the existence of deeply contrasting urban conditions within the same city.

Unfortunately, recent trends also contribute to a socially unjust urban environment, such as those initiated by a so-called postmodernist vision of the city, by global capitalism, and by the neo-liberal vision which sees a successful city as a result of "competitive entrepreneurship". For Arantes et al (2000) these developmental efforts rely on the management of the city as an enterprise, and their strategic planning sometimes hides the true intentions of global capitalism and transnational interests. The "barcelonization" of urban design fostered several Brazilian cities to a search for short-term results that are more "economically attractive", diverting public investments from comprehensive and socially correct initiatives to specifically located projects and the making of artificial places. Marcuse (1995: 243) points out that post-modernism covers the city with "an increasingly pervasive pattern of relationships among people and orderings of city space…"

Evidently, urban development and design in Brazil may also enable social exclusion in environments that limit social encounters, prevent the unexpected, seclude and control the types of users, and prevent the existence of real urbanity. A recent study by Caldeira (2000) shows the relationship between the increase in urban poverty and the escalating of street crimes in Sao Paulo, and how it contributes to the fear syndrome, segregation of space, and control of accessibility. Places are marketed by picking up on consumers concerns for security and by stressing spatial isolation. Much of the Brazilian urban landscape is being taken over by controlled environments and fencings around parks, plazas, shopping centers, business parks, and even to individual buildings in residential and local commercial streets (Figures 1 & 2).

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[10] The ANPUR includes academic and research institutions from urbanism, social sciences, geography, public administration, economy, law, etc. See <*www.anpur.org.br*>

Figures 1 & 2: *Controlled environments in typical residential and mixed-use streets are strong elements of the new the Brazilian cityscape. (Photos by the author)*

This phenomenon is particularly strong in areas generated by modernist spatial morphologies which proved to be more easily appropriated by the private sector in segregating social realms (del Rio & Santos 1998). The *corbusian* model of "towers in the green", single-use zoning, and vehicle circulation generated disjointed districts of large distances between buildings, a landscape of highways, and public areas that are no-man's land. Today, the majority of new residential developments are gated, and generally follow architectural styles inspired in Miami-*ish* imageries so dear to the middle-class. Post-modern social and cultural metaphors have been incorporated to all social groups and popularized new values in architecture and urbanity. As bitterly noted by Lara (2004), this is ironic for a country where modern architecture was heroic and important enough to influence even the most humble residences from the fifties to the early seventies.

Contemporary Trends in Brazilian Urban Design

Whichever prism we look through there have been several positive changes in the quality of life in cities –despite increasing territorial and social seclusion of some social– and many cities are indeed investing in urban design projects and in reshaping the public realm. My research investigated urban design as it has been practiced since the promulgation of the new National Constitution of 1988.

Unfortunately, besides the much publicized innovations in Curitiba and a few recent accounts on specific projects (Brakarz et al 2002; Machado 2003) the advances of Brazilian contemporary urban design in shaping the public realm remain largely unknown from most international scholars and professionals. Thus, the main goal of my research was to study and assess it critically, and to consider its major lessons from an international perspective. Researchers from different cities in Brazil contributed by studying and writing about fifteen case-studies. Not surprisingly, these studies reveal that modernism continues to be an incredibly strong intellectual influence for the better (by bringing in the functionality and urbanization much needed in developing areas) or for the worse (by facilitating spatial and social segregation), and the contradictions inherent in a free-market and global economy are revealed in many projects. However, a number of ground-breaking and successful examples also exist and can teach us important lessons in understanding urban design as a contributor to a more just urban development process. My studies suggest there are three major prevailing trends in contemporary Brazilian urban design (late modernism, revitalization, and social inclusion) which will be discussed and illustrated through case-studies in the following lines.

Late Modernism

Without any doubt, modernism continues to be a strong influence in Brazilian thinking and, consequently, in planning and urban design, and in the way cities are shaped. We have already stressed the strong intellectual influence of modernist thinking on Brazilian social values, and although architectural facades may have changed, designing and urban development control is still processed within modernist frames of mind, and so are the vast majority of master planning, and zoning and building codes.

It has been much pointed out by many authors that Modernism facilitates urban development processes that promote spatial segregation and segmentation, which result in a dual city. Maybe more than in any other Brazilian city, this duality is very clear in Brasilia where our study indicates that while the problems inherent in the city's modernist urban design –many of which rightfully addressed by Holston (1989)– get worse, there is also a progressive degradation of its original design qualities albeit the government's efforts in preserving the Pilot Plan –the area of the original project.[11]

The duality of urban development is clearly expressed in Brasilia's morphological and visual dimensions, as the most visible expressions of the city's urban design.[12] Besides the well known *classic modernism* that made the Pilot Plan such a strong cultural artifact other types of urban morphology co-exist in the Federal District and around the area of the Pilot Plan). Settlements that predate Brasilia and represent a *vernacular* morphology –such as Planaltina and Brazlândia– coexist with satellite cities which appeared even before the inauguration of the new capital (Figures 3 & 4). Satellite cities represent a *peripheral modernism* because their morphology reproduce the disadvantages of classic modernism at the same time that they are devoid of its aesthetical and visual qualities. Other co-existing morphologies are the *workers' camps* built by contractors for their personnel during Brasilia's early years, the *favelas* (squatter settlements) built by poor migrants attracted to the new labor market, and the expanding *post-modern* neighborhoods and gated communities.

Figures 3 & 4*: Late modernism in Brasilia: Taguatinga satellite town (left) and the new suburban district of Aguas Clara (right). Photos by Topocart.*

These types mix in space and have suffered transformations in their visual dimension, such as the more recent residential and commercial sectors in the Pilot Plan which reflect postmodernist architectural imagery, the *favelas* which now look more like vernacular spaces, the old workers' camps which have lost their original distinctiveness, and the new residential neighborhoods which partially redeem classic modernism but incorporate contemporary attributes such as gates and walls. Although all these morphologies contribute to a busy contemporary metropolis not all are recognized as part of the formal image of Brasilia and are not part of the middle-class repertoire of desirable places.

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[11] Besides being declared "*bem historico nacional*" (included in the Brazilian national historical institute's list of national monuments) Brasilia's Pilot Plan (the original plan) has been declared a World Heritage by UNESCO.

[12] Case-study by M. Elaine and G. Kohlsdorf and F. Holanda, at the University of Brasilia.

The Pilot Plan´s classical modernism continues to represent the utopian image of urban desirability with none of the conflicts of large cities such as Rio and São Paulo.

The project for Palmas, a town built in 1990 as the capital of the new state of Tocantins, is another interesting contemporary example of late modernism.[13] Like Brasilia, the rationale behind the city´s creation was that it would spur regional development in a backward region and, in this aspect the operation was successful. While Palmas had a population of 86,116 in 1996, from 1998 to 2003 it grew 28.7% -while the country was growing at 3%- and in 2003 the city population was estimated in 160,000 while the new state of Tocantins had 1,157,098. A dam and water reservoir, a regional highway, a railway, and an airport were built to connect Palmas to the rest of the state, and the city fulfilled its mission of integrating the region and creating a new society in the midst of the *cerrado;* it is a dynamic city where everything remains to be done.

Figures 5 & 6*: The plan for Palmas new capital city of Tocantins State followed classic modernism (left), but the reservoir provides important public amenities (right).*

Inspired in modernist Brasilia and Milton Keynes, the design for Palmas established an orthogonal macro-grid which concentrates the basic urban systems, and sectors of 42ha where private developers were left with great flexibility in deciding the street grid and building arrangements. In the original idea public spaces and facilities would be linked by pedestrian walkways, and the design of the residential blocks would spur such a social integration among residents that walls between houses would not be needed. Utopia was trampled by reality as the state government acted as land developer and the openness of original design induced speculative development. Planning in Palmas was confused with subdividing land and selling lots, which was constrained only by an obsolete zoning legislation. Original land uses where changed –even those designated to public facilities– what compromised the city functions and the neighborhood scale of the original design. Avenues were bus lines were located turned into dense commercial strips, and the wide modernist median of the main boulevard divides the city in two, speeds up traffic, and makes crossing a nightmare in the summer. The town core at the higher elevation of an otherwise flat region, holds the governmental buildings sited apart in the midst of a large and barren plaza devoid of users off-hours (Figure 5). Large open areas and parks, and the artificial beaches built on the lake created by the dam seem to be the only amenities that make Palmas different from any other frontier town (Figure 6).

The experience of Palmas demonstrates the gap between intentions and acts, and represents a lost opportunity to create a truly contemporary city, ecological and sustainable, as the city's original conception document hoped for. Its are similar to those afflicting any other large city in Brazil: incomplete urban services and infrastructure, inefficient public transportation, disrespect of the zoning principles, great tracts of land left empty on fully serviced areas, and a growing contingent of squatter settlements. However, in establishing a new administrative center and attracting large numbers

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[13] Case-study by Dirceu Trindade, at the Catholic University of Goiania.

of governmental employees, entrepreneurs, developers, retail, services and thousands of families in search of opportunities, and in implementing new regional accessibilities, Palmas is undeniably a successful development effort with clear reflections over the whole region and the state.

Modernism in Brazil was intrinsic to positivist thinking and closely tied to the idea of social and economic progress. Not only Brasilia is still the most dominant model of perfect city environment and urban design, modernism is still largely dominant in defining planning tools and parameters. Therefore, city governments by enlarge still direct their efforts to direct urban development and land use controls towards the modernist models. One of our case-studies of late-modernism addressed this question through a discussion of the verticalization process in Sao Paulo and the major morphological aspects that it entices.[14]

As in all Brazilian cities, development in São Paulo is moved not only by capital accumulation and the moves of real-estate developers, but also by the planning and urban design models set forth by the modernist paradigm. Models and standards adopted in Rio and Sao Paulo have great cultural impact in the rest of the country and so does the typical aspect of its cityscape: verticality. In the case of the city of Sao Paulo, the process of verticalization is based on the land-use code enacted in 1971 which for the first time established restrictions to land use, restricted building coverage to 50% of the lot, established mandatory setbacks, and forced the annexation of smaller lots to allow the construction of towers. This model also directed the 1976 zoning code in Rio, and eventually all zoning and building codes in Brazil followed the same modernist model of tower-in-the-green with setbacks responding to height, and where the pedestrian scale and a well-defined street façade are no longer important.

If in the beginning density and height of buildings were related to location –the closer to traffic corridors the higher and denser– the planning model was eventually perverted by the real-estate market and land speculation. The isolated residential tower surrounded by gardens became the hegemonic model in São Paulo and in the country. The complex of towers in a large parcel or occupying a whole city block would soon follow as a popular real-estate solution. Demands of zoning codes and growing security concerns generated solutions that include gardens, community and recreational facilities in controlled environments, what was much facilitated by the modernist model. Gated communities patch up the city structure, and streetscapes became marked with towers holding no spatial relation to sidewalks, walls and fences. However, due to an increasingly less mobile society and market demands, residential solutions become increasingly sophisticated; islands of quality in an otherwise insecure and unfriendly large city, in what is perhaps a new type of urban design.

Revitalization

By the mid 1980's the majority of the large cities in Brazil had realized that they should direct planning and design efforts for the redevelopment of the downtown areas. Deteriorating, underutilized and outdated buildings, vacancies, "planning blights", antiquated zoning and regulations, and over ambitious road projects were some of the problems that had to be faced. Not surprisingly, much of this was historic and cultural patrimony that had to be respected for legal, symbolic, and political reasons. Unlike North-American cities, most of these areas were still being heavily utilized by a large amount of the population particularly the riders of public transportation that had to use the central stations. Several revitalization projects have been development in Brazilian major cities, most with a cultural and recreational bias, and some include efforts to revitalize waterfronts. Good examples now spread out in cities such as Rio, Salvador, São Paulo, Recife, Porto Alegre, and Belem.

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[14] Case-study by Silvio Soares Macedo, at the University of São Paulo.

The most important of such projects is the Cultural Corridor Project in Rio de Janeiro, conceived in 1982 it was the first inner-city revitalization program in Brazil.[15] Both a pioneering and an integrative effort, the project covers four large non-continuous areas in the historic downtown where the modernist zoning regulations where cancelled and aimed at preserving the historical and cultural architectural heritages, promoting social and economic revitalization, and renovating the cultural role of the city center (Figure 7). As of September 2004 the project included more than 3,000 buildings 75% of which had been partially restored and 900 had been totally renovated (Figure 8). In addition the area received more than 25 new cultural centers, theaters and museums, and various street beautification projects have been implemented.
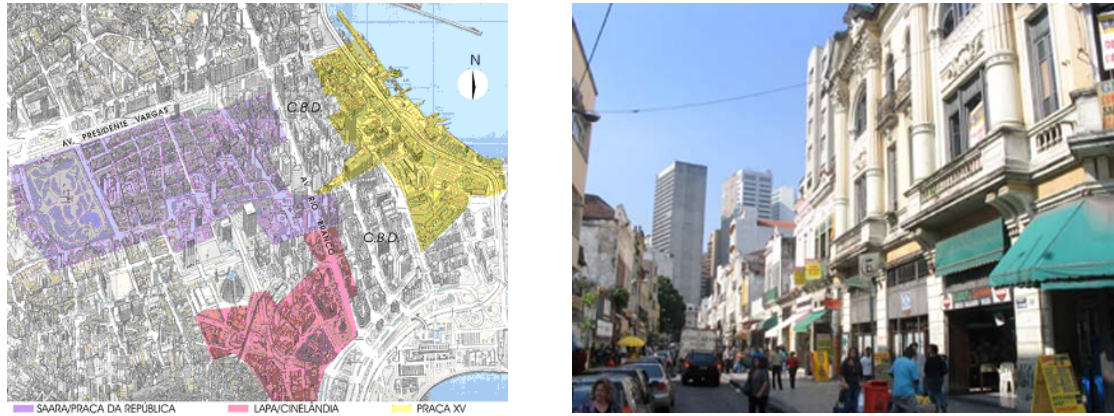
Figures 7 & 8: The area of the Corredor Cultural in downtown Rio, and some of the preserved buildings and uses against the modernist background. Map: City of Rio; photo V. del Rio.

This project success results from a continuous effort of the city with full support from property owners, merchants, and the community at large. Besides promoting the recuperation of historical structures and the maintenance of traditional uses, the project encourages infill development and new buildings that promote a reinterpretation of history through contemporary vocabularies. A special building approval process and a set of specific design guidelines, tax exemptions and building incentives, and various cultural and street activities, are some of the tools utilized. The Cultural Corridor Project harmonizes planning and design goals with social and economic sustainability, and a well balanced mix of preservation, redevelopment, cultural promotion, and community participation.

Cultural Corridor inspired public initiatives in several Brazilian cities in their quest for preserving historic architecture and revitalizing central areas. Another important of such projects is in Salvador, capital of the state of Bahia and Brazil´s first capital during the colonial period.[16] In 1992, the state government started to implement a massive project to redevelop and revitalize the Pelourinho district in the old city center, a UNESCO´s World Heritage Site. It contains one of the most important collections of colonial buildings and baroque churches in Latin America, it is the repository of a long tradition of African culture and of the descendents of slaves, and it is the most important and representative place of Salvador's cultural history. Because most of area belonged to religious orders and had very poor residents most buildings were in serious decay. Following unsuccessful earlier attempts to renovate it the state government decided to implemented a large scale operation in the early 1990s to fulfill Pelourinho´s strategic cultural role in national and international tourism development.

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[15] Case-study by the author with Denise de Alcantara, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.
[16] Case-study by Ana Fernandes and Marco Gomes, at the Federal University of Bahia.

This project brought significant transformations to the area. It was controversial because transformed original uses and activities, pushed away the families that lived there, and promoted cultural gentrification for the tourism industry. Many traditional and spontaneous social and cultural practices changed, some were "institutionalized" into tourism attractions, and new cultural centers and museums operated by the public sector were introduced. The controversial design solution changed the historical morphology of the area by creating new accesses to the interior of the blocks which were totally transformed from private yards to semi-public areas for restaurants and cultural events with architectural solutions not always appropriate. However, the project managed to recreate the place, making it safer and more attractive in the eyes of tourists, revitalizing its economy, and creating conditions for a proper maintenance of the historical architecture (Figure 9).

The last revitalization project discussed represents well contemporary private initiatives and postmodern urbanism as practiced by the private sector with important positive repercussions for the public. The DC Navegantes is a popular outlet shopping center in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, totally planned and developed by the private sector which invested in the reutilization of a brownfield.[17] Differently from post-modern theme parks which explore false identities, this project explored its own historical industrial architecture, the centrality of the area, and its accessibility by public transportation. Dozens of shops and eateries in recycled industrial buildings and new additions, interesting landscaping, and semi-public areas for public events generated a simple and attractive mix. The project is a perfect example of the creation of a successful new place which image and identity which did not really exist (Figure 10). The public sector only started to act later, after the developers proved their success, by supporting the area through streetscape improvements and a small pedestrian precinct for street performances. The DC Navegantes outlet mall has expanded since its first phase, and other private developers responding accordingly by converting other buildings and implementing more attractions and revitalizing the surrounding area.

Figures 9 & 10: *A renovated block with a central plaza and underground parking in Pelourinho, Salvador, and the DC Navegantes outlet shopping district in Porto Alegre. Photos: architects V. Costa & E. Fernandes (9) and L. Castello (10).*

Social Inclusion

In the last trend identified in my research I included projects geared towards social inclusion, what is evidently opposite to most social and economic models generated by globalization. Urban design has an important part in the re-democratization of Brazil in guaranteeing the social function of the public realm, and as a tool in responding to the the social function of city as stated in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988. This became a crucial question with the realization that the quality of public spaces and services were major issues not only for the conquest of full citizenship but also for ameliorating the gap between rich and poor, and to compete for a better image nationally and abroad. A significant

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[17] Case-study by Lineu Castello, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul.

number of governmental planning and urban design efforts are geared towards the recuperation of the city – or at least parts of it – as a pluralist environment, while seeking to extend social and cultural amenities to larger groups. These efforts are particularly clear through the well known experiences in Curitiba, as the existing literature points out (Margolis, 1992; Hawken, 1999; Schwartz, 2003; Irazabal, 2004), but also in other cities through the renovation of public spaces and the upgrading of *favelas*.

The first case study of urban design for social inclusion is Rio Cidade, a citywide program for remodeling public spaces in Rio de Janeiro´s commercial cores started in 1993.[18] Corresponding to historical centers of neighborhoods and to their most important retail and vehicular arteries, project areas were very deteriorated and were taken over by street vendors and other forms of illegal practices, reflecting the state of most public spaces in Rio. Responding to the new Strategic Plan, renovation of the areas would not only provide for better and comfortable public use but would also attract new private investments, revitalize retail, and transform their image and consequently that of the city as a whole –the program was also a city marketing operation (Figures 11 & 12).

Figures 11 & 12: Renovated public spaces by Rio Cidade projects in Meier and Leblon. Photos by the author.

Rio Cidade was unique in its objectives, its scope, in the way it was implemented, and in the political and economic repercussions. Through public competitions design teams were hired and managed by a city semi-private planning agency, which also coordinated the several public service providers and the implementation. Around 40 projects at different districts were developed and about half were implemented, concentrating in increasing the quality of public spaces through streetscaping, landscaping, public lighting, street furniture and signage, parking, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Important infrastructural improvements by various service providers were also coordinated by the city during implementation, such as betterments in the stormwater drainage and sewage.

The second case-study in this group also focused in São Paulo,[19] a city which performs important urban interventions at complementary scales, ranging from large-scale urban projects to urban design experiments in the street scale. On one side, the city continuously deals with unregulated urban growth in the form of illegal subdivisions, land invasions, and favelas in preservation areas. One the other side, São Paulo is increasingly facing the fragmentation caused by

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[18] Case study by the author.
[19] Case study by Carlos Leite de Souza, Mackenzie Presbiterian University at São Paulo.

highways and railways, meaningless modernist open spaces, and by "*terrain vagues*" the transformation of post-industrial spaces – brown and grey fields, abandoned rights-of-way, etc. The three experiments analyzed (a specific urban architectural intervention at the city center, the upgrading of a favela in an environmentally sensitive area, and a project for restructuring a town center through the use of *terrain vagues*) show how much can be done through urban design towards implementing meaningful public spaces and a new territorial logic through the use of empty spaces as opportunities for new social and physical connections (Figure 13).

Lastly, I want to comment on the Favela Bairro, an innovated program launched by the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1994 to upgrade *favelas*.[20] Because the city understood that *favelas* are perceived as places of marginality but differently from previous policies. *Favela-Bairro* recognized the long-term social and capital investments that squatters did to their environment by providing them with physical upgrading, access to public services, basic social programs, and most importantly land titles. Environmental upgrading and security of tenure are fundamental steps toward community development, integration to the city, socialization, and eventually full citizenship. As with Rio Cidade, in Favela Bairro private firms were hired through public competitions to carry out projects for almost one hundred small and medium sized *favelas* throughout the city. Initial funding was from the city´s own budget but soon the IDB supported the program with a US$ 300 million loan. Physical improvements included installation of storm drainage, sewage, and drinking water lines, public lighting, vehicular and pedestrian accesses, playgrounds and recreation areas (Figure 14). Community development included educational and income generation projects such professional training, work cooperatives, and hiring residents for trash collection and reforestation. Sometimes new community buildings were also built, such as daycare centers and new housing units for families evicted from their original homes by the project.

Figures 13 & 14: In São Paulo, left over spaces are utilized to create new connections, and in Rio the Favela Bairro project upgraded almost 100 squatter settlements. Images courtesy of C. Leite (13) and Fabrica Arquitetura (14).

Favela Bairro´s design and management methodologies were essential for its success not only because of the complex socio-cultural and spatial reality of each *favela*, but also because at any given time it might engage dozens of simultaneous operations at various stages of execution (Brakarz, 2002). Moreover, it is important to note that design and implementation included participatory processes not only to engage the community in decision making and hiring their labor, but most importantly to persuade local strongmen and drug lords. Favela Barrio was a strong success, and research shows that the governmental investments also encouraged investments by the residents. In the late nineties the city noted that 450,000 people received direct benefits from the program, the IDB recognized it as the "Project of the Year" title in 1998, and it received the United Nations "Habitat Prize".

What the Future Awaits

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[20] Case study by Cristiane Duarte and Fernanda Magalhães, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

In a special recent issue of the journal Geoforum titled "Urban Brazil", the editors state in the preface that Brazilian cities of today reflect a more clear and dialectic social and spatial division between legal and illegal, rich and poor, formal and informal (Fernandes & Valença, 1991). Undoubtedly, the contradictions of a global and free-economy are strongly inserted in the shaping of Brazilian cities that also succumb to street violence, social segregation, and to the retreat of the middle-class to gated environments. Indeed, as pointed out by Sachs (2001), Brazil is a poorly developed country because it adopted a growth model that is socially perverse, and were income is getting increasingly concentrated. He points out that while in 1960 the richest 10% had concentrated 54% of the national income, by 1995 they had 63%.

In the last two decades, political avenues have been opened that may pave paths toward more just cities and a better quality of urban life. With full return to democracy, the resurgence of leftist parties, more organized local movements, and the New Constitution state and local governments revised their planning systems to include more participation, socially oriented programs, and accountability. Important progress was made in some cities such as in Rio de Janeiro with the creation of a municipal controller of expenditures (Controladoria Geral do Municipio) and its informations system (Acioly Jr., 2001), and others involving the community in decision making processes such as in the famous experiments of of cities run by the Labor party with *participatory budgeting* (Abers, 1998*;* Ribeiro & Grazia 2003).

Two important political avenues have been recently opened toward more just cities and in implementing what the Constitutional calls the "social role of urban property and of the city". The first is the *Estatuto da Cidade* (statute of the city) a law approved in July 2001 after years of national forums and debates which regulates the National Constitution´s Urban Policy chapter by implementing new instruments of urban policy and development control mechanisms, and gathers legal instruments that were spread in different pieces of legislation. According to Fernandes (2001), the statute is aimed at making cities more inclusive and it "confirmed and widened the fundamental legal-political role of municipalities in… directives for urban planning and in conducting the process for urban development and management." Inherent to the statute is the concept of neighborhood rights although its regulation was left to specific legislation by the municipalities. Some researchers consider that by doing so the *Estatuto* generates interesting political possibilities because each city will have eventually define these notions dependent on its own social and political movements. There is no doubt that the *Estatuto* will have a strong influence on urban design and the shaping of Brazilian cities.

The other big institutional leap forward in making cities better places and in setting the stage for contemporary urban design was the formation of the Ministry of the Cities under the current Labor Party president elected in 2002. This new ministry is divided into four secretaries (housing, urban programs, sanitation, and transportation and urban mobility) and although suffering from meager resources it is starting to act on national policies and investment programs, supporting master planning at the local level, and investing in institutional enabling and training of local public officials.[21]

All that said, as my research indicates and this paper tried to make clear, Brazilian cities have been practicing urban design and producing places that are more livable, attractive, and responsive to communities. In fact, cities are encouraged to support urban design as a public policy and to invest in development and environmental control not only as a result of the country´s new legal-political framework, but also because it responds to societal cultural demands that are deeply engraved in Brazilian traditions. Indeed, while privatization takes on the public realm and produce entrenched spaces, many socio-cultural expressions can only happen in the public realm and therefore depend on public spaces that are accessible and minimally qualified. On one level, public events such as the carnival parades, religious celebrations,

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[21] See the scope of the ministry´s work in http://www.cidades.gov.br/

soccer and sports events, etc demand one type of public realm. On the other level, social encounters, dating, extended families, social networking, family recreation, etc demand another type of public realm. Moreover, public spaces are even more important for the lower income groups who depend on social networking for survival and rely on the public realm to mediate class distinctions, and for whom the social domains of street (public) and house (private) are never rigidly demarcated (Da Matta, 1991; Neuwirth, 2005). The street, the square, the sidewalks, the parks, and the beaches will always be fundamental places for urban design, for socialization and plurality in Brazilian cities.

My investigation suggests that contemporary urban design in Brazil has overcome the limitations of modernism, has become more responsive to community needs, and is closer to real place making. Differently from the modernist paradigm which relied on public sponsorship, centralized control, and a rigid model of what a city should be, contemporary Brazilian urban design is postmodern in the sense that it relies more on public-private partnerships and participation, and it incorporates different visions of quality in the construction of public spaces. I would like to echo the optimistic development scenario suggested by Wilheim (2001) in which a socially inclusive development has one of its pillars in the quality of the public realm. The shaping of cities and urban design as public policy in Brazil will be increasingly fundamental in the quest for a truly pluralistic and culture specific city, and for a fair social and economic development.

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