

# Observations on Inclusiveness, Equality and Equity in the Urban Space in the city of São Paulo

Manoel Alves, Maíra Cristo Daitx

keywords:

## Introduction

The mundialization process has led to significant transformations in the urban space, where new relations between public power and financial sectors have expanded the social base necessary for capital accumulation, thus contrasting with the reproduction of human life needs. In such a neoliberal context, where the State has opened up the command of the urban space production to flows and interests of the private market, decreasing its participation as the provider of the common good and, in many cases, reinforcing its role as the insurance of capital profit, questions on inclusiveness, equality and equity<sup>1</sup>, common to the fields of sociology and politics, have started to gain headway in talks on architecture and urbanism. One of the reasons for this discussion is most areas under urban transformation have been facing an uncertain future due to the lack of basic public services. Supported by urban laws, developers are occasionally exempt from responding to such needs, which are left in the hands of market competition and the offer-and-demand logic.

What demand and who does this market respond to? Whole neighborhoods have been created according to the enclave model, in which *conveniences* are drawn for indulging the tastes of their consumers. As such, those services are designed and located towards fulfilling the needs of homogenous groups not necessarily open to contact with others. Such urban samples, however, show no difference and heterogeneity, which are basic conditions of an equal urban space. Education, health and leisure are not offered to all classes of citizens, but to specific target groups. The right to the city regarding both *human rights* (e.g., housing, education, health, accessibility, mobility, etc.), which should (and could) be provided by the State, and *political rights* of being included in the production processes of the city (HARVEY, 2008) are far from being equal in the decision-making structures of the current politics. At best, some groups are included in discussions on transformations of their own neighborhoods – their own homogeneous and limited spaces –, but not on the ideals and means of production of their territories, cities, and urban space.

If urban inclusiveness, equality and equity (considering their differences) are a major concern from our time, we should set our eyes into their opposites, i.e., the forms of urban segregation and exclusiveness. By unveiling their aspects of capital reproduction<sup>2</sup>, relationships of power and social responses (good or bad), we can evaluate if we are creating (or even trying to create) more inclusive, equal or fair cities, questioning: To what extent are (or are not) speeches, urban policies and interventions related to the (re)production of a city characterized by intensifying social and spatial segregation for increasing urban inequality? What type of urban equity is eventually possible in a city where “[...] *the characteristic resort of the globalised city involves an elementary principle of urban space: segregation*”? (CASTRO ORELLANA, 2011:56). Can this movement be reversed in an era in which reinforced individual liberties, high competitiveness, lack of security, trust and hope (in institutions, in the future and in ourselves) are increasingly rising? In the next paragraphs, we intend to enlighten the reality of our particular context, i.e., the city of São Paulo, regarding the recent alterations in its urban laws and their consequences for the transformation of the urban landscape.

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### The ~~Inc~~(Ex)clusive city

The insignificance of human lives compared to the importance of keeping the motors of capitalism working has been criticized by many authors (BAUMAN, 2017, 2010; CASTRO ORELLANA, 2009, 2011; HAN, 2012). Capital

accumulation, now molded by global fluxes and financialization, is the main logic that rules our daily lives, in which other values like compassion, solidarity, and empathy have been swallowed by competitiveness, envy and resentment (BAUMAN, 2010). In a moment of multiple attempts for the implementation of a revisited neoliberalism, the State, previously responsible for and capable of guaranteeing more stability and a better life quality for people, now operates in favor of the capitalist system, retreating from its role as provider of basic human needs by justifying a free market competition will enhance the quality of those services.

However, the transition from what was the welfare state (at least in northern hemisphere countries, i.e., the "developed ones") to this "more free" model has already finished. We live in an era in which social and cultural values, as well the sense of control, responsibility and survival have changed. As a consequence, the promised progress and improvement have not reached (and do not reach) the majority, with the benefits being limited to the hands of few.

In this context, numerous academic and media articles have addressed issues related to the increase of inequalities, if compared to the post-war period. Most of them refer to economical inequalities, which are now assumed to be the source for all other inequalities, since the access to health, education, housing and other basic human needs is almost exclusively based on market relationships. According to Castro Orellana (2009), Guilluy (2019 [2018]), and Bauman (2017), such inequalities and the frustration on the gains of the neoliberal/global agenda are the recent reasons for the emergence of conservative waves that led to the election of populist governors, such as Trump in the USA, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Orbán in Hungary, and Duda in Poland. However, in contrast, the voices of the masses have claimed for a "change" - where to or how, no one knows for sure - expressing a symbolic reconnection between the figure of the "person in power" and the "forgotten ones"<sup>3</sup>. Although they may not be aware of the large gap between "them" and "us", we would be seriously mistaken if we thought what they - and their movements - seek for is equality for all. Rather, it is a necessity of "inclusion", of inclusiveness<sup>4</sup>.

"Inclusion", although frequently used to refer to physical inclusivity of disabled people, should be understood as a multidimensional notion with different levels and refers to multiple groups, since it is not a dual relationship, but a multifaceted one. Yet it refers to a world where we want to be "in" instead of "out". On the other hand, "exclusion" originates from latin word "*excludere*", whose prefix "*ex*" means "from an interior to an exterior, from inside to outside", and suffix "*cludere*" is derived from the verb "*claudere*", i.e., "shut down". In this sense, "inclusion" means movement from the exterior to the interior and the closure of the boundaries to the previous one, whereas "exclusion" means the opposite. Those who are "included" are out of the realm of their previous "excluded" situation, leaving behind its conditions, and the "excluded" ones have no access to what is desirable, since its door is closed to them.

The word "inclusiveness" has gained recent importance in arguments about the direction of our developments and progress. In an order that does not intend to promote big revolutions, in which unequal conditions are accepted, the main challenge is to expand the benefits of the model (presently, the neoliberal/global/financial capitalist model) to as many people as possible, avoiding its incongruences and strengthening its structure - as such, the system does not crash and continues to operate. In his speech at the UN-HABITAT conference on inclusiveness/inclusivity in the urban space, Stren (2001) highlighted how *diversity* - the concept that reunites all types of differences under the same level of importance - should be understood as a productive asset to be explored specifically in our present globalized condition. On the one hand, governments cannot deny the existence of the *other* to their inhabitants and political/social system; on the other hand, globalization has put different cultures in contact in a no-return path. In this scenario, a way of dealing with this dichotomy should be, instead of rejecting or expelling the *other*, our being more open to embracing and including it as a potential for growth. In fact, what Stren is saying is *diversity* can and should be incorporated under the logic of the production of the contemporary city, increasing capital accumulation by branding a creative and world-class city image. i.e., *inclusiveness* can be a "win-win" game. However, the question is "how?", since what we see is the reproduction of the urban space as a productive element of capital accumulation processes, a "creative world-class city" promoted by "place entrepreneurs". Whatever the level of uncertainty, the change from the key "city-work-politics" to "city-management-business" of entrepreneurial nature must be recognized - as a challenge to fulfill the goal of creating a more inclusive city, but not only.

In fact, the results of this attempt of *inclusiveness* have had several bad reviews through consecutive years and led us to two main topics for discussion. The first refers to Creative City, a concept that associates (and even attests, some may say) innovation as a relational outcome of big cities and urban agglomerations. Such areas can embrace their diversities and promote previous unintended contacts, thus enabling ideas to flourish and bloom - and then, make money. In an era in which the dominance of the means of production and technology is almost overcome by those in power, the one who has the best idea gets ahead from their competitors and has better chances of success in untamed territories. However, the creative city, a city of entrepreneurial

nature, has already been recognized and criticized as representative of a model that denies urban access to many creative groups considered “economically unproductive” for public and private investments. Therefore, it has created an urban space that preaches diversity, but ends up promoting more social and spatial exclusion.

The second topic is related to the opposition between “bottom-up” and “top-down” actions of change - more specifically, between the aversion of “top-down” urban plans of city restructuring and transformation and the appreciation of microuban solutions from “bottom-up” initiatives, held by local groups and associations. Some of such “bottom-up” actions have been criticized, since, rather than opposing to, they are representative of another face of the neoliberal system, once tamed by the logic of an entrepreneurial city (BRENNER, 2017). “Top-down exclusive” decision-making processes related to the production of a city have started to make room for autonomous “bottom-up” initiatives not because of the idea of a better society, where individuals are heard and included, but specially because their solutions have been adapted to short budgets. Identified and coined as *contingent urbanism*, such solutions have demanded reduced or no effort from political institutions and reinforced the creation of a neoliberal subject (LAVAL & DARDOT, 2014), i.e., a subject that requires no help from the State to solve problems, but takes the reins of his/her life organizing themselves into groups that will put an idea into action. By *including* those demands, the neoliberal system ends up controlling their form of operation; it adapts the actions to its own benefits, absorbing and including those that do not alter its previous positions of power, and rejecting and expelling more insurgent ones through repression or silencing (MATHIESEN, 2004).

Besides, the discussion on *bottom-up* ways of producing the city has led us to another related topic, namely *governance*. *Governance*, instead of *government*, was also defended by Stren (2001) in his speech, who claimed this political method is more *inclusive*, since it incorporates the decision-making of a “much wider range of stakeholders and social groups” into the policy-making process observing different local-global levels. After the expansion of neoliberal governments, the minimization of the State role has created a wider range of actors and agents responsible for political decisions over the urban space.

The inclusion of all types of groups and individuals in decision-making processes – not only the majority, but also those who have been historically neglected – is a basic concept of social equality, and should be sought for. However, the ways of fairly doing it are still a challenge. Co-creation and co-participation are examples of methods of social inclusion in decision-making incorporated in urban planning activities, frequently as actions of passive consultation, and only in particular cases as active collaborative relationships between different actors and stakeholders. Therefore, most outcomes of such attempts, although theoretically *inclusive*, do not alter the structures of power, which remains in the hands of the same old hegemonic groups that solely fight for their private interests, sometimes supported by governmental States and institutions.

Brenner and Theodore’s analysis of the “actual existing neoliberalism” (2002) helps the understanding of why this theoretical model is not flawless. In this “actual existing” version of the political-economic ideology, the alliance between State and capital may considerably diverge, depending on the contextual conditions under which it is established, since it operates on cultural and geographic variations that lead to arrangements among society, governments, public institutions and capitalist forces. Therefore, the actual existing modes of inclusiveness (in our words), from a global to local scale, may comprise both situations of more and less open (or liberal) participation from the State: either one that guarantees the movement of inclusion will occur by giving people more freedom on economic choices, or one with a more controlled participation of the State, providing social services in exchange for a predetermined social role from its inhabitants. Both positions and any in-between variation aim to invert the inherent condition of uneven development (or inequality’s creation) from the capitalist system - a by-product that can also lead to its own doom.

One of the main variants in those modes that reinforces urban inclusiveness regards the way society and centralized States deal with the duties of their individuals and recognize them as citizens. This topic poses another question: the friction between terms “equality” (political level) and “equity” (social and political level). Recent discussions on “equity” have gained eminence in opposition to the concept of “equality”, since the latter had already been absorbed by dominant speeches. Therefore, instead of reducing inequality and instigating equal conditions, “equality” should be more strongly representative of a reinforcement of the competitiveness logic, one of the main characteristics of the neoliberal agenda. By assuming all individuals on Earth are “equal”, one rejects differences inherent to the present social disparities and reinforces the logic of meritocracy. According to meritocracy, each individual, member of a specific society or group, can enhance their social and economic position only by their efforts (merits of their work) and deny at the time they were born they were already starting from a different position in the race of capitalism.

“Equity”, on the other hand, embraces those in-born or acquired differences - women or men, black or white, old or young, poor or rich - and defends everyone should have equal *conditions* to fight inside the system<sup>5</sup>. In the words of Shafritz and Russell (2000), equity is “*fairness in the delivery of public services; it is egalitarianism*

*in action – the principle that each citizen regardless of economic resources or personal traits deserves and has a right to be given equal treatment by the political system*” (SHAFRITZ AND RUSSELL *apud* FREDERICKSON, 2010, p. 53). The discourse of "equity" also favors dialogue and empathy defended by Bauman (2017), when he quotes Pope Francis in his book *Retrotopia*<sup>6</sup>. It appeals to an emotional and relational condition of the human being neglected by the terms "equality" and "inclusiveness". Not surprisingly, the latter is the favorite term used by institutions in their voluntary and charity actions, in opposition to cultural and social groups or movements that reunite forces and power by appealing to the feelings and emotions of their members for fighting for what they consider to be just.

The incongruences of the reproduced models of inclusivity, inclusiveness and equality grow if this essential part of human behavior is denied. Firstly, such terms are common market-driven ones, used either for attracting ascending social and economic groups, or for exploring the infinite emptiness of a world where the acceptance by 'superior' groups (the necessity of being considered *equal*) is considered "success" and searched by many. Secondly, those models are used by powerful forces to simulate a world where the possibility of being included is real - a simulation of progress -, concealing the fact that the very reason for inclusion is the reality of exclusion. The "ex", although constantly referred to as a negative condition - the excluded - is also part of other "positive" terms, namely "exclusiveness" and "exclusivity". Both are frequently used as assets by the market, since they fulfill a need for belonging that, at least partially, has been eliminated from society in the context of high competitiveness and rejection of the "other". Exclusiveness makes the individual feel important, because it enhances the sense of self (and makes he/she feel "included"). Feeling important requires the opposite be compared - the "in's" and "ex's". Not surprisingly, speeches on inclusivity normally stand for conditions of difference that do not distinguish the poor from the rich. A rapid search into "inclusivity" policies will lead to handicapped inclusion (basically the physical one) followed by gender - conditions that may universally affect those from both the "in" and the "ex" classes.

Discussions on inclusivity/inclusiveness in the urban space raise some solutions as the most adequate under development. First the necessity of a universal design suited for all bodies. Secondly, the necessity of inclusion of the workforce (and its productive time) in urban central areas (through the creation of spaces for formal work and development of public transportation systems) (see BABA et. al, 2015, for a study in Nigeria). The third point comes along with co-participation and co-creation (see ERJAVEC & RUCHINSKAYA, 2019 for an article on their advantages for inclusiveness,) processes normally held by architects and urbanists that seek collaboration from local inhabitants and public sector for the development of their own ideas in (and along) multiple steps, from the construction/design process to socio-political arrangements and technical and cultural background, etc - as addressed elsewhere, this can be more or less successful. Last, but not least, the most conflicting solution refers to territorial inclusion by housing and public spaces, feared by most real estate investors that consider the city an asset for capital accumulation, and fed by the threat of social housing, land reform, common properties, etc. If we agree nothing escapes the hands of capitalism, we may say even "inclusiveness" by housing has been absorbed by public-private partnerships and policies that, through hegemonic speeches, allow the entrance of lower masses into the financialized system of mortgages and loans. According to such a hierarchy of decision-making, although we are most likely open to sharing the space of work and dislocation with the others, we resist sharing the space of our leisure and private lives – the space where people can be themselves, free from the attributes of social manners – with those who are not like us. In this same logic of rejection, the more we cannot have something, the more we want it, and the more homogeneous we become, the more the market will create exclusive products (KLAUFUS et. al., 2017) towards satisfying our necessity of differentiation by identity (LIPOVETSKY, 1994).

Such an apparent natural arrangement is not real - at least not for all inhabitants of an increasingly urbanized world. Space is not limitless and metropolitan areas concentrate disputes for land, thus generating other responses besides the creation of new products and processes, of which one of the most known is gentrification. Despite the existence of different gentrification processes, and regardless of their singularities, we are here referring to the substitution of the social profile of inhabitants in central areas - the expulsion of the previous ones towards receiving those of higher income. This process is related to both a speech on the enhancement of the quality of the urban space and the buffer impact of real estate capital flows. Following this logic, we can also add touristification, an urban transformation process that deals not only with richer people, but also with people in flux, seekers of space consumption for enjoying their leisure time. Finally, land speculation – sometimes in cooperation with the previous process of socio-spatial segregation – plays a main role in creating territorial disparities by the exclusion of social groups from urbanized or urbanizing areas in benefit of capital accumulation over time.

As a result, groups who fight for collective rights in the form of social movements or neighborhood associations have emerged. Some of them fight to be "included", whereas others fight against "inclusion" for sustaining

their apparent, although rowdy, sense of normality and control. Those belonging to the latter group can be considered the same "lower class" quoted by Guilluy (2019) as "a class that was not included in the outcomes promised by globalization of late capitalism (and its consequent hyper urbanization), of freedom of movement and limitless territorialization". In this "lower class", "richers" or "poorers" do not have the power to escape from the contact with the other, or to avoid this contact without the necessity of fighting.

In a recent paper entitled "*All-inclusiveness versus Exclusion: Urban project development in Latin America and Africa*", Klaufus et. al. (2017)<sup>7</sup> addressed the way the number of "all-inclusive" urban enclaves has grown in Latin America and Africa as a market response to the increasing inequality and disparities of the contemporary world. Both characteristics are normally associated with an enhancement in the perception of violence, although the real violence does not necessarily increase. Besides the topic of creation of social homogeneous, walled and camera-controlled neighborhoods, the most interesting point in the article is the quibble of the "inclusiveness" word. Its irony enlightens a recurrent topic, especially in developing countries, where both deregulation and possibility of gaining new markets are bigger. Instead of creating in-clusive cities, what we really see is a clear tendency towards more and more ex-clusive cities of heterogeneous territories<sup>8</sup>, where (all-)inclusiveness is only a word from the vocabulary of those looking for spaces of fully satisfaction (e.g., resorts and condominiums).



Image 01 – Territorial Heterogeneity. Narratives of Urban Segregation and Socio-spatial Practices: Pairaisópolis - Red Series. Source: Luciano Costa and Ricardo Pinto. Highrise Project Collection.

### **São Paulo: a city of exclusiveness**

São Paulo, the biggest metropolis in Brazil, is a clear example of the above-reported phenomena. Regarding documents and data gathered during the development of the "High-rise Living and the Inclusive City"<sup>9</sup>, some aspects of recent transformation in São Paulo's urban tissue were identified and pointed out. Despite alterations in laws and urban instruments promoted by the municipality towards the creation of a more "inclusive city" (although the word - *inclusividade* in portuguese – has never been a clear topic in City Hall's speeches), the results are quite different, showing the opposite, i.e., an "exclusive city" of unequal territories. Nonetheless, resistance outbreaks in this day-by-day transformation from multiple groups, from historical movements for social housing rights to spontaneous acts of resistance as a response to prejudiced behaviors from "upper classes", are also observed. Below there are images of some examples.



Images 02 and 03 – Left: “Who is interested in the end of Exclusively Residential Areas?” - Picture of a poster on the wall of a high-income residence in Jardins region (which comprises Jardim Europa – see image 05 – and Jardim América neighborhoods). Right: Reproduction of the cover of a local neighborhood’s magazine, from Vila Nova Conceição. The headline says “Dwellers are against alterations in the Zoning Law. Campaign from the Association shows the union of the dwellers to stop the neighborhood from being mischaracterized”, with a picture of a poster attached to the gates of a vertical building from the area. Inhabitants from these rich central neighborhoods have recently fought against alterations in zoning laws, for preserving the “exclusivity” of their territory and avoiding verticalization and/or transformations of its urban environment. This movement reinforces the socio-spatial segregation of privileged areas in the city of São Paulo and the resistance to urban transformations aimed by denser and more mixed cities. Source: Left – Anthony Ling, Caos Planejado (caosplanejado.com); Right – Boletim da Associação dos Moradores da Vila Nova Conceição, October 2015 (vilanova.org.br)

One of the research areas of the Highrise’s project is related to alterations in the recent City Master Plan (approved in 2014<sup>10</sup>). Among its new proposals, one of the most discussed regards the change in occupancy rates, land use, and coefficients and maximum number of floors of built areas, which comprise a long and conflictual theme between urban planners and the real estate market. Concentrated in the urban perimeter and within well-supplied areas of public services and urban infrastructure (Urban Transformation Structuring Axis), built potential was allowed to the whole city. The proposal aims at avoiding the uncontrolled verticalization in neighborhoods internal areas that have caused traffic problems and reducing the public money spent on the (usually unsuccessful) adaptation of the road system and the expansion of the public transportation network, from a low-density to a high-density area<sup>11</sup>, i.e., directing the flowing real estate capital into areas of growth potential. The municipality, in an attempt to alter both landscape and topology of a city marked by territorial fragmentation and segregation, would also add built incentives to developments which include mixed-use and pedestrian ground-level fruition. New high-rises would, therefore, provide social services to all city’s inhabitants, and not only to their private dwellers and customers. Embedded in the proposal is also the limitation of garages and parking lots for encouraging the use of bicycles and public transportation and increasing pedestrian flows. As a counterpart, real estate stakeholders would be allowed to build more floors (including above-zoning limits) without paying extra taxes.



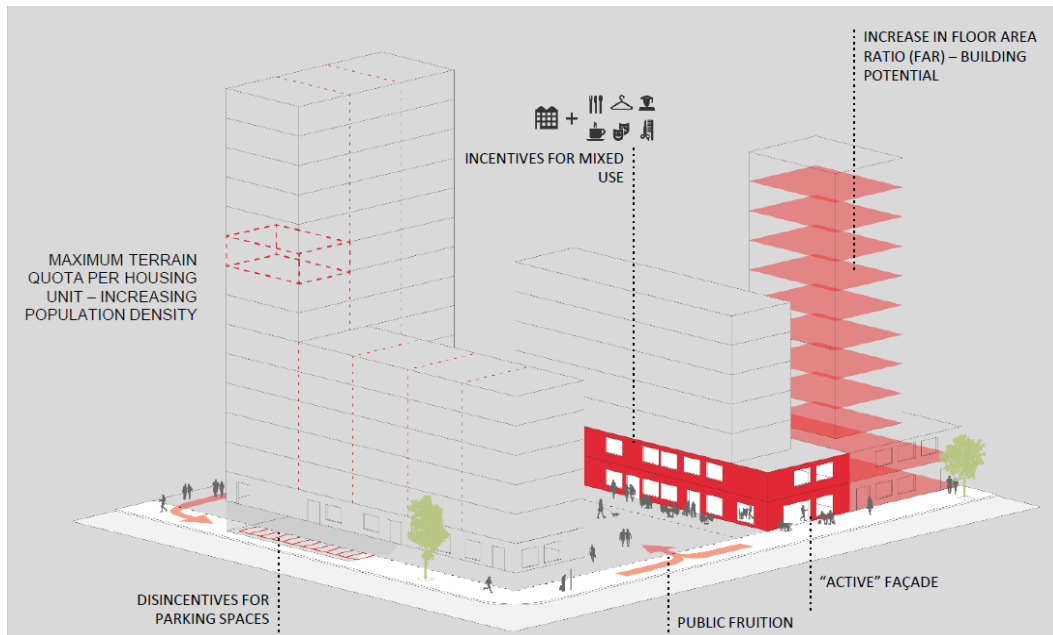


Image 04 - Diagram with instruments and tools for improving the urban environment - part of the 2014 São Paulo's Urban Plan - to be applied in Urban Transformation Structural Axis areas. Source: Secretary of Urban Development of São Paulo

Initially those ideas seemed really fresh to a city that had been transformed by a strong verticalization over the past 15 years, characterized by the construction of pulverized enclaves with no interaction between public and private spaces – not even between commerce and consumption. Six years later, however, some built examples showed a different story. In the area of Pinheiros, one of São Paulo's richest neighborhoods, there is a huge landscape transformation along Rebouças Avenue corridor<sup>12</sup>. Targeted as one of the coolest *paulistana* areas due to its proximity to nighttime leisure, co-workings, galleries, local “hip” stores, and the financial center of Brigadeiro Faria Lima Avenue, Pinheiros has also two subway stations that have boomed the interest of real estate developers. Planned since the mid-00's, the yellow subway line was a key element for the significant process of acquisition of private properties in the region – mostly composed of small empty plots or former 2-storey houses and shops. After waiting for the so-promised transport integration for almost 15 years, construction companies and real estate developers which, at that point, had controlled a considerable part of Pinheiros plots, shot land, housing and commercial prices up.

Additionally, the strip between Pinheiros Street (where one of the subway stations is located) and Rebouças Avenue has also a privileged position in relation to its surroundings. This set of blocks faces a very particular neighborhood, namely Jardim Europa, one of the most pleasant and arborized areas of the whole city. It is in an exclusively residential area (see Image 03) protected by a SP's zoning law that guarantees its low-rise buildings, opening up views for (and from) new apartments – from Pinheiros all the way to Ibirapuera Park and the horizon of highrise buildings. The whole strip is included in Rebouças Avenue Urban Transformation Structural Axis, where high(er)-rise buildings are now allowed, thus making it one of the most lucrative areas for real estate investments. However, this new promised land did not follow the directions towards more mixed-uses and de-automobilization ideas sustained by the city hall, at least not as planned.



VISTA PERMANENTE  
PARA O JARDIM EUROPA



Image 05 - Extract from an advertisement of a highrise mixed-use tower in Rebouças Avenue, with the call: "A permanent view to Europa Garden". In this case, urban views from the apartment (at the limit of the verticalization area) will not be transformed, a fact that values even more the price of the apartments by its exclusivity. Source: White 2880 ([www.white2880.com.br](http://www.white2880.com.br))

In fact, most of the so-called highrise "mixed-use" buildings under construction<sup>13</sup> share their space with small malls (commercial centers), hotels and private offices. No public service in the buildings has been planned so far, although the legislation and official city drawings allow post-offices, healthcare centers, or any other type of activity of social services to the community and, therefore, territorial inclusiveness, rather than consumption. Neither is the proposed human "fruition" of the urban space fully attended, nor is a pedestrian scale achieved, as seen in a variety of "empty" and controlled private areas used mainly for car access (see images 06 and 07).

Besides, although garage areas would reduce the built potential, almost none of such buildings have abandoned their parking spaces, unless for the typology of tiny housing – micro-apartments located in lower and cheaper levels with the worst views. Actually, almost all the built potential of those new developments has been used in short-term rent apartments not proposed for long-term residence. In many cases, such new buildings have been managed as hotels, privately financed and administered by subsidiaries of the construction companies. In fact, once apartments can be bought only by investors, even the possibility of inclusiveness by the financing of private property is rejected. In all examples studied, the "visitors", "hosts" and "dwellers" entrances to the buildings are different, creating hierarchical classes of inhabitants inside them. In short, all the "inclusive" urban transformation potential of the area has been openly distorted by the market, designers and customers, thus creating not only "exclusiveness", but also "exclusion". The rejection of the "other" has apparently won.



## A AVENIDA É DEVOLVIDA AOS PEDESTRES.

Studios 1, 2 e 3 dormitórios  
De 38 a 190m<sup>2</sup>  
Av. Rebouças, 2880

VEJA FICHA TÉCNICA COMPLETA



Images 06 and 07 – Above: Extract from promotional leaflet and web image of one of the mixed-use developments located in Rebouças Avenue, with the call: “The avenue is returned to the pedestrians”. Although announced in this headline, no real ‘public’ ambience or pedestrians are included in the picture. Below: Ground floor of the real estate development, in red the areas of the building which would be open to the public, in blue the areas inside the plot that are used for car access. In order to turn the corner, the pedestrian would need to cross four car entrances/ exits only in this real estate development. Source: White 2880, with graphic interventions from the authors (white2880.com.br)

### Embracing social equity

Although the prescripts for our cities seem to be pessimistic, voices and forces of resistance are growing and facing new modes of social exclusion. In São Paulo, movements that fight for social housing in central areas have become important resistance actors against the transformation of downtown areas facing the path of gentrification. By proposing alternatives to the on-going remodels of exclusiveness, people from higher and lower classes have gathered around specific objectives towards promoting a fairer urban space. This can be observed in tactics of social engagement that stimulate other ways of producing the city, such as demand for public leisure spaces and transformation of huge private open areas (originally intended for real estate ventures) into public parks (e.g., “Parque Augusta” movement<sup>14</sup>), right for public transportation in elite zones (e.g., the communal “Barbecue for the Different People” manifests<sup>15</sup>), reappropriation of automobile spaces as leisure and playful areas mostly performed by urban collectives and youngsters that recreate other global models of “parklets” and “open streets” – most of these, with the support of the City Hall.

Of course, all of them are direct responses to historical decisions of exclusion processes of social segregation, currently supported by hegemonic and political groups. However, and fortunately, reactions are now more visible than ever before.



Images 08 and 09 - Left: A man holding a banner with words “Different people - here we are!”<sup>16</sup> during a communal barbecue party organized in response to a prejudiced comment made by a Higienópolis dweller opposing the construction of a subway station in her

neighborhood. She claimed such a station would attract “different people, such as drug addicts, beggars and the homeless”. The comment generated a series of (good mood) protests from multiple groups and individuals claiming for the right to public transport in the city central area. Right: A banner with words “Augusta Park with no buildings. We are the revolution!”, on top of a highrise. The well-located area, a compound of private unbuilt plots on Augusta Street, has been under dispute since the 90’ - in 2013, resisting to another huge and exclusive high-rise real estate development, an occupation promoted by organized social groups demanded its transformation into a public park. Sources: Outra Política ([outrapolitica.wordpress.com](http://outrapolitica.wordpress.com)) and Grupo do Bem Estar, Twitter ([twitter.com/Grupodobemestar](https://twitter.com/Grupodobemestar))

The concepts of “inclusiveness” and “equality” have clearly become terms (words) absorbed by hegemonic speeches. However, should we think about it as something to be rejected? Both concepts, alongside with the fight for social “equity” are alternative lines of thought on the way we could lead our cities to be fairer environments for human beings. The trio, embraced differently by each theoretical or social group, have more in common than in difference. In diverse levels, conceptually, they seek to integrate people, particularly the most vulnerable ones, on public decisions and political creations, consider everyone *first class* citizens, regardless of their gender, race, age, ethnic, economic and social situation, improve *everyone’s* life quality and provide better public services and policies of health, education, housing, etc. Towards creating *fairer* cities, they fight against the “ex” forces that lead to less integration, more segregation, increase in social inequalities, and fear for the different (the “us” *versus* “them”). By knowing the complexities of the systems that produce inequality and exclusion, we can find alternative ways to do things right.

If *equality* at the political level can be defined as a political ideology for the common goods governed by laws, *equity* at a social level would be a type of “positive discrimination” in favour of the recognition of differences. This distinction is undermined if we argue equality is not achieved without *previous* inequity. Equity, as a hypothesis of our assumptions, encompasses several principles as a constitution, which would establish a basic charter that, in the territory of the city, should have a title for its mandate (COOK & SWYNGEDOUW, 2012) and consider space a key element for the notion of spatial justice (SOJA, 2010).

Embracing social equity is to be in touch with differences without fearing the unknown. Dialogue and knowledge could make us more empathetic, sensitive and respectful with one another and see ourselves through the lens of similarity instead of difference. Our intention is not to claim this fight should be individual. On the contrary, institutions and public policies could and should be elected and tested towards ensuring the movement does not go to the “ex” direction, and give their citizens a sense of security that stops them from fearing each other, the future, and the possibilities it can offer. As quoted by Bauman, this process will be large and tiresome, but it may still exist:

*the present task of lifting human integration to the level of all humanity is likely to prove unprecedentedly arduous, onerous and troublesome to see through and complete. We need to brace ourselves for a long period marked by more questions than answers and more problems than solutions, as well as for acting in the shadow of finely balanced chances of success and defeat. [...] More than at any other time, we – human inhabitants of the Earth – are in the either/or situation: we face joining either hands, or common graves* (BAUMAN, *Retrotopia*, 2017, p. 140)

## Notas

<sup>1</sup> Equity is the right of each and every citizen, regardless of personal social condition or economic resources, to be given equal treatment by the political system, therefore deserving fairness in the delivery of public services (SHAFRITZ & RUSSELL, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> According to Brenner, “[...] capitalist cities are not only arenas in which commodification occurs; they are themselves intensively commodified insofar as their constitutive sociospatial forms are sculpted continually reorganized in order to enhance the profit-making capacities of capital”. (Brenner 2012:14)

<sup>3</sup> Guilly uses the word “outcasts” to refer to people socially and territorially rejected from the society.

<sup>4</sup> For the United Nation, inclusiveness, as the major principle of an inclusive city, “[...] promotes growth with equity. It is a place where everyone, regardless of their economic means, gender, race, ethnicity or religion, is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the social, economic and political opportunities that the cities have to offer”. (UNHabitat 2010, p.1)

<sup>5</sup> According to The Human City Project, “social equality is a state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects, including civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights, and equal access to social goods and services”; more specifically, “social equity is the economic, legal, environmental, and developmental rights of access to the collective resources of society with an all-encompassing effort by means of equal say and insight of all members of society to ensure the longevity of the collective resources and to enrich the individual lives of community members as indivisible, equal inter-respectively, and as mutually comparable pinnacles to the direction of the community and individual members in respect of need and right to access and recognition.” *What is Social Equity?*, available in <https://projecthumancity.com/2017/02/02/what-is-social-equity/>, (2017). For them, social equity should be fought for, since it is not only a matter of whether surveillance works elegantly and totalitarian, but also on the impossibility of equity in an oppressive social and economic system

<sup>6</sup> Transcription of Pope Francis’ speech, given on 6 May, 2016, and quoted by Bauman in his book, *Retrotopia*. “If there is one word that we should never tire of repeating, it is this: dialogue. We are called to promote a culture of dialogue by every possible means and thus to



rebuild the fabric of society. The culture of dialogue entails a true apprenticeship and a discipline that enables us to view others as valid dialogue partners, to respect the foreigner, the immigrant and people from different cultures as worthy of being listened to. Today we urgently need to engage all the members of society in building 'a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter' and in creating 'a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society' (Evangeli Gaudium, 239). Peace will be lasting in the measure that we arm our children with the weapons of dialogue, that we teach them to fight the good fight of encounter and negotiation. In this way, we will bequeath to them a culture capable of devising strategies of life, not death, and of inclusion, not exclusion. This culture of dialogue should be an integral part of the education imparted in our schools, cutting across disciplinary lines and helping to give young people the tools needed to settle conflicts differently than we are accustomed to do. Today we urgently need to build 'coalitions' that are not only military and economic, but cultural, educational, philosophical and religious. Coalitions that can make clear that, behind many conflicts, there is often in play the power of economic groups. Coalitions capable of defending people from being exploited for improper ends. Let us arm our people with the culture of dialogue and encounter. Dialogue, with all that it entails, reminds us that no one can remain a mere onlooker or bystander. Everyone, from the smallest to the greatest, has an active role to play in the creation of an integrated and reconciled society. This culture of dialogue can come about only if all of us take part in planning and building it. The present situation does not permit anyone to stand by and watch other people's struggles. On the contrary, it is a forceful summons to personal and social responsibility." (POPE FRANCIS *apud* BAUMAN, *Retrotopia*, 2017, p. 138-9)

<sup>7</sup> Also in 2017, French newspaper *Le Monde* published one of its informative and rigorous atlases, entitled "Atlas of Critical Economy", which included the short text "equity: the trompe l'oeil of equality". Equality, Atlas explains, establishes, from the French declaration of the Rights of Man (humans we say today, without even achieving equality in gender with it) and of the Citizen, that all individuals have the same rights and duties. It is known that each citizen (if such), at that time, had to submit peacefully to the new social order, germinal, and obliged with the fulfilment of rights and duties proper to the rule of law. If there is equity, it is in the economic distribution, as a political attitude, subordinated to general stability.

<sup>8</sup> Territory means practices, socio-human relationships, collective actions disputing the use of space; a core (material and symbolic) that produces domain (values, ideologies, narratives), and legitimates any material/factual/technical/social action throughout a geographical extension (jurisdiction). Human action is regulated and ruled by the ontological hierarchy of the core, from which sense emerges. The core may be legal or not, explicit or not, but powerful enough to rule the geographical extension and try to produce stability; it is neither *one* (hierarchy of the identity, of the integrity), nor essential (*origin*), but multiple (Deleuze's sense), scattered in social practices – according to Derrida's concept of *loss of structurality of the structure*. This is a positive, structural, orthodox concept of territory which is valid for explaining, for instance, the State as a sovereign institution superimposed to land and people. This notion is challenged, but not suppressed, by globalization, transnational capital, multiculturalism, and so on. On the other hand, human action is not one, but many, and responds to diverse subjectivities embodied in a same individual. Legacy or legitimacy are in permanent confrontation/negotiation. This notion of territory is relative, uncertain, heterodox, compatible with metaphors used to explain nowadays cities, societies, milieu. In the city, this concept is visible wherever limits and borders (*urbs*) are recognizable, in integrated or marginal urban fabrics (*civitas*), and also in symbolic systems, narratives, representations grounded in the need for expressing that core: value of the civic/public life, the legal, the allowed, the forbidden (*polis*). The current urban territoriality oscillates between two notions, namely *de jure* territory and *de fact* territory. Territory always involves both concepts, i.e., a political issue in a concrete space and time, more strategic or more tactic. In both cases, it is likewise an arena of struggle, where processes, actors, discourses, and expressions are different. It is under this theoretical framework that questions related to inclusiveness, equality and equity are addressed in this paper.

<sup>9</sup> French-brazilian binational research project financed by ANR (Agence Nationale de la Recherche) and FAPESP (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo), leaded by professors Christian Montès and Manoel Rodrigues Alves.

<sup>10</sup> Plano Diretor Estratégico do Município de São Paulo. For more information, access [https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/urbanismo/legislacao/plano\\_diretor/index.php?p=201796](https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/urbanismo/legislacao/plano_diretor/index.php?p=201796)

<sup>11</sup> Most recent high-rise towers were built in previous low-rise residential/commercial plots in low-density neighbourhoods. Real estate stakeholders usually buy a group of contiguous lots until they have the amount of land necessary for their developments. This urban tissue transformation does not normally come along with infrastructure upgrades, whether those made by public administration (e.g., roads and sidewalks), or those made by public companies (like water, sewage, gas and electricity) – the latter being more easily and rapidly adapted. Even private services such as communication (Internet and television networks) are usually overloaded in many dense areas of São Paulo.

<sup>12</sup> The information on Pinheiros provided in this article is the result of research under development in the High-rise Project, supervised by Máira Cristo Daix and Milena Cristina Sartori.

<sup>13</sup> These buildings will be finished until 2022.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on "Parque Augusta", see Marino, Cintia Elisa de Castro. "Activism and appropriation of urban space in São Paulo". In *arq.urb*, nº 23, sept-dec 2018: 157-171; and Levy, Dan and Carla Liguori. "The Neoliberal Urbanization in São Paulo, Brazil: the case of Augusta Park". In *International Planning History Society Proceedings*, v. 17, n. 2, june 2016: 197-210.

<sup>15</sup> See « <https://globalvoices.org/2011/05/17/brazil-barbeque-as-protest-in-sao-paulo/> », from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Verbal expression "É nós na fita!", literally translated to "It's us on the tape!", refers to a normally unknown or unseen person reaching fame or media dissemination (tape, in this case, means to be on the news, on tv, etc.). It is commonly used by paulistanians to express the acceptance of an invitation, or proximity to the others (better translated as "We're together on this!"). All meanings, including the one chosen to be in the title –more symbolic of a territorial presence inside the elite neighbourhood ("tape" in this case) – can be interpreted by the popular expression in this banner.

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