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**\* Public policies and architecture in the central area of megacities. The case of São Paulo, Brazil.\***

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# **Public policies and architecture in the central area of megacities. The case of São Paulo, Brazil.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil, as well as most developing countries, has faced the problem of habitational growth with the development of outskirts. Some projects of Urban Development, promoted in São Paulo in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, come with the intention of stimulating new investigations about social housing and its relation with consolidated urban areas. This article aims to enlarge the conceptual parameters in the relations between contemporary theory fundamentals, public policies and architecture projects for central areas of metropolis in developing countries. As a case study, the result of the contest “Habitasampa” will be analyzed. The contest was organized in 2004 and considered a model in the search for alternatives regarding popular housing in metropolitan areas.

## **KEY-WORDS**

Social Interest Housing, Urbanization, Contemporary Architecture, Central Areas.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the search for the update of public policies related to social interest housing, alternatives to the growth strategies based on the expansion of the outskirts of São Paulo have arisen in the last 15 years. Such strategies follow a model fundamental on the conceptions of national modernism, which have become an example of social exclusion. Since the re-democratization of the country in 1980, alternatives have been presented in the attempt of “humanizing” these human conglomerates. However, these proposals have had little repercussion – isolated between a de-contextualized super-urbanization (or generic, as it is said today) and the continuity of the peripheral models still modern. In this period, a search for the international theoretical parameters (abandoned from 1960 to 1970) can be observed in some groups of architects and urbanists, although this was made difficult by the ideological/nostalgic reminiscences of the height of the Brazilian modernism. Themes such as the criticism to modernism, “the return of the cities” (through Jane Jacobs), the contextualism, the post-modernism, were discussed, which were rejected by the modern ideological militancy, which avoided such kind of fallbacks on the ground that it would weaken our intellectual and cultural autonomy. After this incentive, whose broader consequences are not the object of study of this research, the hypothesis of establishing housing projects in central city areas directed to the low-income population has gradually become more popular; In São Paulo, in the 90s, some promising examples of this process are created, such as the housing projects Vila Mara, Heliópolis, Rincão, and others. These experiences could only be resumed after 2001, through the programs “Living Downtown” and “Social Rent” developed by the management of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Political Party).

Promoted by the City Hall of the City of São Paulo and the Institute of the Architects of Brazil (IAB-SP), the Habitasampa contest is part of these programs that were trying to reverse the progressive reduction of inhabitants in the central areas of the city. The contest, besides focusing on the HIS in central areas, also introduced a new conception in Brazil, the social rent, which is a State subsidy to the tenant with income below three minimum salaries. The accessible price of the rent would guarantee the right to dwelling, not habitation. Such concept, already successfully applied in other countries, such as the Netherlands, Spain and France, would assure quality of life to the tenant with the possibility of physical movement, along with the rhythm of the current transformations in metropolitan areas nowadays, offering dwelling regardless of the right of habitation. Based on these conceptions, the program proposed by the contest should minimize the problems of part of the population living downtown, occupying slum tenement-houses, and precarious housings and under bridges. The subjection of this segment of the population to traditional programs of housing settling have already been proved to be a political, social and economical mistake by national and international studies (Maricato, 2000).

The repercussion of the contest Habitasampa among architects and urbanists had unprecedented dimensions in the recent history of São Paulo and Brazil. With approximately 160 enrolled teams, the contest involved from big architecture offices to architects in the beginning of their careers from several states of the country. The program was carefully elaborated by a technical team from the São Paulo City Hall (involved in the modernization of the existing housing politics) and of the IAB-SP. In order to compose the group of evaluators, nationally recognized professionals were selected: the architects Eduardo de Almeida; Antonio Carlos Sant’Anna; João Filgueiras Lima (Lelé); Helena

Menna Barreto and Joan Villà. However, the projected chosen as the winner raised declared controversy, which would be natural if it weren't for the apparent disagreement between the intentions of the contest and the implicit consequences of its results.

This paper is intended to analyze the result of the contest Habitasampa in its version for the Barra Funda area based on the connection of two themes: 1. The historical and political process that supports the recent habitation interventions in the Center of the city of São Paulo; 2. The contradictions between the theoretical bases of the modern São Paulo architecture and recent studies about modernization and metropolis. As a result of this, we search for conceptual parameters that can eventually help the construction of future housing complexes and buildings in central city areas.

## **2. MODERN TRADITION IN BRAZIL AND SOCIAL INTEREST HABITATION**

Social Interest Habitation was one of the most experimented themes in the Modern Movement; since its formation in the 20s, until its consolidation in the second post-war, this program, which put together technique, form and social intention, consolidated a great part of the ideological arguments of modernism (Kopp, 1990). Furthermore, it was also the social habitation that was the main target of criticism in relation to modern rationalism. In Brazil, the New Architecture had a differentiated cycle in relation to its origin in Europe: it prioritized in its formation, from the mid 30s until the construction of the Federal Capital, the elaboration of a language that tried to imitate the stereotypes of nationality and its process of industrialization, that is, the re-elaboration of an iconic, colonial-based tradition in the settings of the emerging language of the “civilized world” (Arantes, 1998). The preoccupation with questions related to the accelerated growth of four urbanizing cities, as well as with the social interest habitation, are exceptions to the real priorities of the hegemonic matrix of this modern architect in its Brazilian version, more focused on palaces and monuments of centralizing governments (Recaman, 2002).

We are dealing with a problem that goes back in time – the fragility of the original basis of our Portuguese colonial occupation cities was not enough for the delimitation of an ulterior regulation parameter, which facilitates and motivates the fragmented and structure of our main cities, stigmatized by an urbanization characterized by the performance of market forces and by processes of social segregation. Thus, the significant interventions realized after the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century prioritized the viability of the new economic conjuncture molded by the advances of industrialization, task performed almost without obstacles considering how precarious the urban waving is and that these cities had defined until then. These interventions, supported by the theoretical and formal models of modernism, were not very efficient around here – they could neither organize the functions of the urban area under formation nor guarantee the growing number of people and merchandise that jammed its old drawing (Rolnik, Nakano e Campos Neto, 2004). From the 70s, such impasse became more evident, but most solutions aimed at accentuate or accelerate such unfinished urban “modernization”. Only in the end of the 80s did some proposals focusing on the reconstruction of urbanity that the views on the transportation system and the model lot/isolated building of modern tradition had destroyed. In the city of São Paulo, these proposals are identified in examples of popular housings constructed under the administration of the Mayor Luiza Erundina (1989-1992), resumed in the

administration of the Mayor Marta Suplicy (2001-2004) (Bonduki, 2001). The ends of these ideas find, still today, consolidated barriers due to the clear disagreement between our theory update and the conservative logics of the real estate market – since the beginning used to controlling the rules, distant from urban collective intentions. In this context, there are left the social interest housings, the low-value lands on the outskirts of the city or lawless residues of the urbanized city (Maricato, 2002).

### **3. SOCIAL INTEREST HOUSING IN THE SAO PAULO DOWNTOWN AREA**

In the central region of the city of Sao Paulo, the aggravation of the articulation among the real estate market, urban transformation and the exclusion areas became more evident after the 60s, when there was transference of elite commerce and services to the Paulista Avenue, which had already been happening gradually for homes (Villaça, 2001). The “modern” Paulista Avenue was the perfect spot for the desires of the tertiary sector and its immediate needs, that is, the new forms of the “international style” present in the buildings under construction and in the transport system for individual automobiles. This original flow in which elite homes and commerce left the downtown area accelerated more in the following decades, which created a fast process of decadence in the area, both regarding public spaces and buildings as well as private homes and commercial buildings.

In the actions for the reversion of the degradation process and emptying of the Sao Paulo Historical Center, more intense in the 90s, we can highlight: on one side, the desire of establishing a cultural and historical downtown area; on another, the re-organization of its public and democratic role on the implementation of housing and social programs to low-income population.

The initiatives directed at valuing the historical and cultural heritage of the central areas of the city of São Paulo, which include the Association Viva o Centro as one its main sponsor entities, invest in the value of cultural activities, squares and monuments, accessibility to personal transportation, touristic potential, commercial growth and safety through constant presence of the police (Comaru, et all. 2005). In relation to Social Interest Housing, the model now supports a distancing of these areas from the now “re-urbanized” downtown area (consequently more valued) as a clear example of gentrification. This attitude in relation to the role of the central area in large contemporary cities could be analyzed in the “Seminário Internacional Centro XXI”, organized by the Association Viva o Centro in 2000, where intellectuals such as Borja, Ascher, Solá-Morales, Gosling and Huet emphasized the necessity of an ample socio-spatial process for the strengthening of the central areas, yet highlighting the preoccupation with the lower-income classes, which could make the whole process a lot more difficult. In the case of Brazil, in specific of the city of São Paulo, where the difference between social classes is a key element in the equation, the idea of a “downtown-monument” serving the elite, exclusively, worried about “global cities”, seems to be a mistake. The hypothesis that this aggravates the difference between social classes has unfortunately already become a characteristic of our urbanization and development process (Arantes; Maricato, 2002).

Another hypothesis that is more focused on the heterotrophic reality of contemporary metropolis supports multi-cultural and multi-functional values of historic centers. This hypothesis is based on theories that value the importance of the socio-spatial

definitions in the configuration of a system of popular and pluralist actions, as describes by Santos (1982, 1996) or Harvey (2004), for example. It supports the role of the downtown area to supply the demand for social housing, one of its earliest attributions, marked by the presence of slum tenement-houses. This demand was reinforced since the late 80s by groups of people who fight for right of living downtown. and, after the mid 90s, the great number of empty real estate in the central area awakens the interest of these movements fighting for dwelling, which start demanding new public politics to solve the problem (Comaru, et all. 2005). As a common point, the revindication of these groups make it evident the urgency of a Urban Reform in the cities of Brazil in order to offer the population decent and democratically distributed dwelling in urban territories. The occupation of abandoned buildings in the central area has been studied as a promising alternative to the existing housing problems, although there is constant conflict between sectors with opposing interests. This is the research theme of ample research projects such as the “Reabilita” (Zmitrowicz, et all. 2006), which analyzes the technical viability of transforming these buildings in low-income housing.. Most of these studies show a necessity of better use of the vast number of empty real estate, making use of the public power as a necessary instrument for such.

Between 2001 and 2004, with the maturing (national and international) of the theoretical debate about re-urbanization processes of central areas, some initiatives were organized for the creation of adequate public policies to the viability of balanced re-occupation of the downtown area. Such initiatives accept the clear role of the central area as cultural and historical heritage, motivate its occupation by sectors of city and state governments (including the transference of public offices and even the city hall to central areas), but consider the necessity of adequating the area to the housing sector for several social classes. In relation to Social Interest Housing, the program Living Downtown is one of the most significant of the period– it tries to integrate in one only set of strategies several technical and political mechanisms for the low-income population. The program is subdivided in three sub-programs: Home Leasing (PAR), Social Rent and the program of Integrated Habitat Re-habilitation (PRIH), all of them using the mortgage system of Caixa Econômica Federal. In the program of Social Rent, an innovation in the city scenario, we highlight the project Parque do Gato (previous favela do Gato), the Vila dos Idosos (Housing for Elders) and the reformulation of the Hotel São Paulo. Having the same goal, several other lands in central areas were bought by the City Hall for the construction of housing destined for Social Rent. However, such units couldn’t be finished until the end of the mandate of that city administration. The PRIH, one of the broadest management programs, also couldn’t be implemented in due time. The program consisted of interventions on precarious housing, located according to the sub-division of ten perimeters selected in the downtown area, such as, for example, the Glicério. Still following the same urban political principles, another important program of the time was the Rent-Support, aiming at emergency needs of low-income families.

Still during the management of the mayor Marta Suplicy, in 2002, the New Directing Strategic Plan for the city of Sao Paulo was approved, having in its content, among other objectives, the clear intention of a re-organization of the city, aiming at a more egalitarian social distribution in its urban form. The central area has, among the guidelines presented by the directing plan, its re-urbanization as a priority. The new plan divides the city into two macro-zones: the “Environment Protection” and “Urban Structuring and

Qualification”; the latter is sub-divided into four macro-areas: “Urban Re-structuring and Re-qualification”, “Urbanization and Qualification”, “Consolidation of Urbanization” and “Consolidated Urbanization”. The downtown area, which is part of the macro-area of Urban Re-structuring and Re-qualification, is identified as a region with decreasing population numbers that has its urban infra-structure underused, although it still has as a characteristic a high employment rate. As its main goal, the Directing Plan, tries to reverse the situation of this macro-area. In order to do this, it tries to stimulate the implantation of Social Interest Housing and intensify the real-estate promotion through Popular Market Housing. In parallel actions, it also has as objectives to improve its collective public spaces and the environment; to promote commerce and services; to value the preservation of the architectural patrimony; and reorganize the structure of collective transportation (Plano Diretor Estratégico do Município de São Paulo – Lei 13.430, de 13 de setembro de 2002, art. 155).

The National Contest Habitasampa was launched in November 2003 as complimentary action to this new political agenda aimed at the downtown area of the city of São Paulo. Because of its pertinence as urban politics, innovation and conceptual comprehensiveness, it became one of the most competed and controversial architecture contests of the last decades.

#### **4. HABITASAMPA CONTEST**

In advancing with public policies regarding the central region, the Secretaria da Habitação e Desenvolvimento Urbano (SEHAB) and the Companhia de Habitação do Estado de São Paulo (COHAB-SP) in a partnership with Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil – São Paulo (IAB-SP), have organized a national public contest for projects for Social Housing in two areas of downtown São Paulo: the first a lot on Assemblies street, close to João Mendes Square, and the second on Cônego Vicente Marino Street, in the Barra Funda neighborhood. The contest is part of the Program of Social Rent – with a conceptual refinement widely unexplored in the city urban models, updated by studying and adapting similar European projects.

The contest announcement clearly states its aim to promote, as part of the process of downtown re-urbanization, an increase in the offer of affordable housing for lower-income families. The strategy is based on comprehensive theoretical foundation recognized in many national contemporary urban models as well as some international projects already mentioned in this research. Such models present alternatives to sectoring and nonfunctional ghettos which can be found in earlier Brazilian metropolitan models. Besides, these new urban models recognize the singularities of Brazilian metropolis with special attention to the future of central areas – still far away from their place among the “global cities” and the role they play in Transcationalism. This new form of urbanity plans to undo the emptying of downtown during the so-called “dead hours” (the period outside the business hours). An increase in Public Security through new neighborhood relationships and a better use of the infra-structure would add to the aimed benefits.

The proposed program for social housing complexes bear some innovations: they should not only provide living accommodations but they should also incorporate other activities such as schools, day care, tele-centers, and shops; the units should range in type

and space (studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments); besides making 10% of the units available to the physically impaired. Hence, the program also shows ample regard to the contemporary issue of diversifying the model of single-type units, so common in housing complexes for lower-income families. Such model does not take into account the dynamics of modern family structures, especially when they are not owners – which make their living arrangements and temporary (Silva, 2004).

The challenge offered by Habitasampa and the housing policies that make it viable convey unambiguous opposition to dynamics that have dictated the rules to urban formation in São Paulo since the beginning of the 20th century. In the alliance of the political and economical power, in the metropolis' unhinged growth, there is little space for accommodating and understanding urban forms more compatible with fair and quality human sustainable development (Maricato, 2000; Damiani, 2005). There are many explanations to the denial of a city built within more “human” models (social, anthropological, cultural, etc.) in Brazil's own colonial origin, however – as discussed previously —, two questions are clearly evident in this study case: the lack of a significant urban model in the metropolis' origin and its connection to, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Modern Movement (especially the Athens Charter). Such basal fragility would ease the orientation with the industrial capitalism and the Modern architecture which represented it, and deepened, in peripheral form, the discrepancies in our congenital social structure. The Modernism, that acquired here its plastic objective splendor, also affirmed the destruction of the city as a historical, cultural, social, and even spatial, formation. Such data fortify the terms of an equation that has become the token of our urban and architectural devolution. The results of the Habitasampa contest in its version located in Cônego Vicente Marinho Street (Barra Funda) unfortunately confirm these observations.

## **5. HABITASAMPA BARRA FUNDA: RESULTS ANALYSIS**

Located alongside Tietê River, Barra Funda is an example of a chaotic growing neighborhood caused by the city's fast industrialization. Its origin is a land development settled at the end of the 19th century. Being close to downtown and run through by the São Paulo Railway tracks, its growth was determined by the industries and their developmental previews. This socio-geographical configuration draws a singular profile on the area – however close to downtown, the railway is a restraint to its urbanization contrary to more noble neighborhoods. Thus, Barra Funda still shows nowadays little verticalization, displaying mostly two-story houses, inherited from its first expansion. Industries, as it is usual in this new cycle of post-industrial capital, relocated or changed projects, leaving behind unoccupied warehouses that remained so. Some were re-occupied by service businesses, small industries or are now used for storage.

The neighborhood formation peculiarities and distinct geographical situation lend a unique typological, behavioral and social conformation to the area. It is inhabited by multi-scale middle class and still maintains an unusual set of values, rarely seen in metropolitan centers – the streets are used as a public space for leisure activities, the corners are used as meeting points and the neighborhood relationships are strong. Such features, in addition to the predominant typological configuration (semi-detached two-story houses), provide a

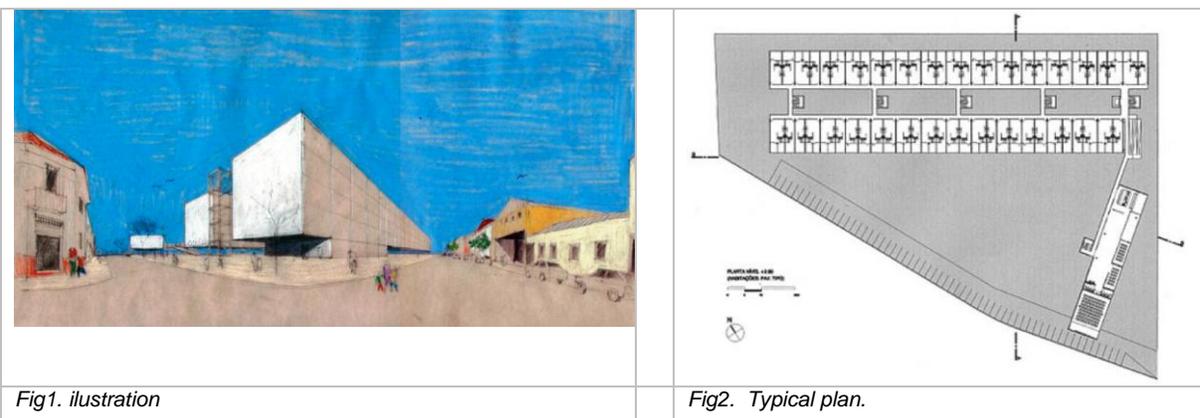
better understanding of the area. Nevertheless, they do not justify or deny any proposal of radical transformation to the neighborhood.

The Habitasampa Barra Funda contest specifies that the 240 proposed units be distributed in proportional typology as follows: 30% of studios, 40% of one-bedroom apartments and 30% of two-bedroom apartments. It is also expected a project for Professional Qualification Center, as well as areas for leisure activities, etc. The contest area is 700m<sup>2</sup>, trapezoidal and sloped. The submitted projects should also propose adequate solutions to the area alongside the railway tracks.

## 5.1. Winning Project

### ARCHITECTURE SCHOOLS

Architects Juliana Corradini and José Alves



The winning project opted for constricting the housing units in a high-rise two-block single volume, aligned with the bigger face of the terrain. The project's implantation strategy confirms, as stated in its memorial, its goal of freeing space to collective and public use. The Professional Qualification Center is located in a far corner of the area in order to establish an independence from the main apartment blocks. These considerations, identified by the jury in their deliberation, along with the buildings' floor plan, reveal a clear intention of the panel of judges when they chose this as the winning project: to hold honor to the heroic phase of São Paulo Modernism and to indicate that its formulae still pertain to the present metropolis' state. The blatant identification of the project's theoretical foundation with Brazilian Modernism is, especially the golden era between the years 1930 and 1960, also reveals its identification with ulterior consolidated appropriations, namely the "School of Sao Paulo". That is, a moment in which a new iconic tradition – with cubical, monolithically, pure – is implemented to validate, through architecture, our fast-paced industrialization (Conduru, 2004; Recaman, 2004). Some considerations about the project emphasize such intentions:

I. The main volumes are projected according to the figure-ground concept and distinguish themselves from the terrain and surrounding areas. More than an option of the party, a planned accentuation of architecture is expressed here in its form-object – a mark

of Brazilian high Modernism and symbolic value of the country's increasing modernization. Besides the given critiques of the previous model, one cannot avoid questioning its reviews: without the basal ideology of the former, what the meaning of the late "updating"?

II. The main housing block brings an implicit reference to one the most publicly acclaimed models of Sao Paulo architecture – the building type of the complex Zezinho Magalhães Prado (1967), a project from architects João Vilanova Artigas, Paulo Mendes da Rocha and Fábio Penteadó. It is inevitable this comparison with the most relevant national exemplar of the orientations of the CIAMs and their major mentor, Le Corbusier. In the winning project, similar to the 1967 project, the units are located side by side in two parallel lines, between which we can find vertical and horizontal circulation areas; the bedroom are located in the external face of the project whereas the living-room and kitchen areas are located internally. In the present case, the pre-molding technique, the 1967 project's both major advanced and failure (Conduru, 2004), has been replaced by conventional building with concrete blocks. The pre-molding system was one of the most important "ideological" conquests of the 60's.

III. Even though the "Morar no Centro" Project and the contest announcement clearly divulge an intention to promote multi-functionality in new housing models, the option for isolating the Professional Qualification Center from the main housing blocks reveals a sectoring strategy which was inherent to the theoretical foundation of the rational urbanism as proposed by the Athens Charter in 1933.

Regarding the adopted party, its major feature is the concentration of housing units in a single piloti-raised building with parallel blocks. The Professional Qualification Center is detached from the main building, which allows the creation of a vast free area – a feature which was emphasized in the project memorial and a major foundation of the party. The units' arrangement, as well as their internal organization, is consequence of the urban condition as widely experienced by Modernism.

"Our primordial gesture was to raise both the housing units and the Professional Qualification Center from the ground, as to set all the terrain free. Thus, the city ground spreads into the complex ground, making a single space." (project memorial presented by Architecture Fronts, 2004)

As aforementioned, Barra Funda neighborhood show a singular historical and urban condition, which is not taken into account by the project by denying the city and the surrounding areas. The option for the monoblock which is alien to the neighborhood does not make viable either a connection between the complex and the pre-existent urban conformation or the formulation of new urbanity concept. To the contrary, it idealizes past form which have been condemned by history (since the 9th CIAM in 1953), in Brazil, inclusively. From intervention standpoint, projected to be part of the reurbanization process of downtown areas, this project displays a strange and recurrent standard which is common to outskirts "urbanized" by big housing complexes.

Even though this article's is to theoretically analyze the relationship between the the building project and the process of urban, some technical features reinforce the criticism argument: 1. half of the units' bedrooms face Southwest, which is not the best insulation option; 2. all living-room and kitchen areas face the elongated central space between the blocks, with poor insulation and ventilation. In addition, such solution also provides these areas with poor views and isolates them from the neighborhood and the city. Thus, the desired formal concision negatively interferes with the complex functionality, especially regarding insulation, ventilation and view from the main areas.

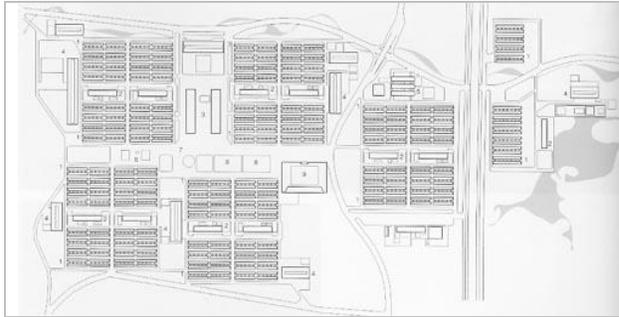


Fig3. complex Zezinho Magalhães Prado (1967).

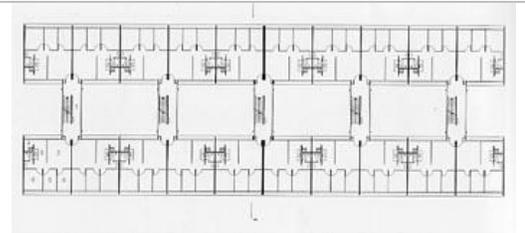


Fig4. complex Zezinho Magalhães Prado (1967).

### 5.1.1. Considerations

The winning project provides a solution that is distant from both the contest and the administration's housing program original. From a historical and cultural standpoint, it opts for the reuse of established models, contrary to the idea of seeking "new models" – a very common characteristic of architecture contests such as Habitasampa. This choice, firmly aligned with the 1990's revaluation of Brazilian (Nobre, 1997; Segawa, 1998), renders itself weak in the face of the model's criticism (especially the model's examples of social housing); amply experienced and recognized by its failures: denial of the established city, standardization of man and his habitat, monotony, de-characterization of collective spaces, etc. Even the arguments proposed by Kopp (1990), a well-known defender of Modern housing projects, do not miss the chance to criticize this face of Modernism and its exemplar failures such as "Lês Minguettes" and "Pruitt-Igoe", among others. Regarding the created urbanity, the option for denying the city is an unjustified major hindrance to the "Morar no Centro" project and to the contemporary forms of understanding the city and its relationship with social integration programs.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The re-urbanization of downtown areas in Brazil has become a significant theme among architects, urbanists and public agents since the years 1980; being social housing one of the most important and controversial points. The consensus about evaluation increase of more dense central areas does not stand from the point of view of social housing. Taking into account the recent process in São Paulo (1990-2005), it is clear that there are many divergent approaches. Some urbanists and governments see downtown areas as cultural and historical patrimonies – an important issue for a city's visibility in terms of

globalization – social housing is the located on the edge of central areas or in the outskirts. According to some evidence discussed in this research, it is a superficial solution – the true area conflicts are disguised with a modernizing gloss and gentrification similar to the new urbanism of global cities, an unwanted strategy due to its deeper segregation effect in upper-middle income countries such as Brazil (Arantes, 1998; Maricato, 1998). Another form of urbanization tries to understand the downtown and its multi-functionality and plurality, taking it as a socio-geographic event that symbolizes the relationship between social classes – social housing in this area are fundamental to strengthening of a concept that proposes a redefinition of the socio-spatial distribution (Maricato, 2002; Rolnik, 2004). Thus, the downtown is essential to build a new city conscience which does not ignore, in the Brazilian example, the need for lessening its original excluding essence and for controlling its growth. Regardless any political judgment, which is not the goal of this article, this intention is clear in the programs proposed by the urbanists of the PMSP administration 2001-2004. However, the architecture projects do not mirror such fundamentals in the light of their main accomplishments. As an example, we can mention the results of the Habitasampa contest, which reveal a conceptual and theoretical unevenness with the public policies of the period. The motives for such conformation can be grouped as follow:

I. The theoretical connection with inhabitation proposal which were influenced by the Brazilian version of the Modernism, used to take social housing as an alternative to the current urban model. In this case, the outskirts represent the ideal area, understood as fertile ground likely to support re-structuralization of its urban conformation and be transformed in new “ideal” territories. This urban growth model, performed in Brazil at a great scale, has been deeply criticized in recent decades. From an economical and political point of view, it is perceived that this model succeeded only because it complied with the interests of the developing industrial capital, despite any humanist ideals. In re-urbanization projects for central areas, the model’s obsolescence is even more blatant, because it inverts the issue without critical, pragmatic or formal actualization;

II. The “post-modern society” concept misinterpretation (or lack of understanding thereof), usually aligned the sterile stylistic form, disseminated through the years 1980 and 1990 (post-modernism or deconstructivism) and misapprehended in its understanding of the contemporary lifestyle, as well as, the cities and their transformations. Such concept, applied to our current production system, be it cultural, economical, etc. (Harvey, 1992) is indispensable to architectural actions which aim to surpass aesthetical or formal values (regarding social housing) and contribute to re-structuralization of the “social form” of our cities (as in urban centers’ interventions). There are few possibilities to succeed in modern architecture, and its need to be authentically contemporary, without the compromise to understand the new fundamental values of the post-modern, post-industrial, or as defined Gilles Lipovetsky (2004), hypermodern society. Modernity, in such sense, is actively achieved by experimenting or re-inventing the values and answers to new questions, and not by applying a style form. Architecture as a “permanent invention of dwelling”. (Eisenman, 2006)

III. Brazilian architects’ poor understanding of and information about the ways of acting upon cities and metropolises, which comprise a redefinition of the concept of space and its sense in the current stage of the transnational capitalism. Opting for a recapture of

values and concepts from great masters, as evident in recent decades, restricted the younger generation's repertoire and ability to invent in as much as legitimate older generations' practices (reinforced by a self-celebrating modern discourse). The consequent failure in updating models (or stalling), marked by an intentional isolation from international production, has not led to a local form of Architecture and Urbanism; to the contrary, it weakened this line of work in Brazil. Countries that dealt with the uncertainties of post-modernity, caused by the broadening of their horizons and frontiers (both in professional practices and class associations, and in the academy), feature a more relevant and participating architecture (Medrano, 2006).

The Habitasampa Barra Funda contest tries to consolidate the hypothesis of downtown as a cultural and social diversity environment – and revert the segregational policies. This clear intention is expressed in the contest's public policies and announcement: the aim was to reveal new housing forms, more adequate for the metropolis' needs. Forms distinct from foreign models, which are usually unable to comply with the local context, nonetheless being innovative when compared to our Modern tradition. The project that won the contest, as aforementioned, does not match these intentions.

More than a punctual affirmation, this is an evident drawback to contemporary Brazilian architecture. On one hand, urban public policies have evolved through a constant process of theoretical development and a concurrent political development; on the other hand, production was confined to re-editing previous models from Brazilian Modernism (especially of "Sao Paulo School"). These mixed signals logically lead to the nullification of architecture's potentials, regarding the projected future of Brazilian cities.

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