



Urban policies and projects for social housing in central areas. The case of the *Habitasampa* competition (São Paulo, Brazil)



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A B S T R A C T

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The housing shortage in Brazil, which is currently estimated at 5.5 million units, is the constant subject of architectural and urbanistic studies. The theoretical affiliations and methodological tools used in these studies are diverse and, as befits the complexity of the issues involved, utilise ideologies and methods from several fields—even antagonistic ideologies and methods. In Brazil, there is a consensus on the need to reorganise cities, in which approximately 84% of the population lives, through strategies that address the relationship between social housing and urban density. This need exists primarily in major metropolises, where rapid and abstruse growth overcomes collective and sustainable practices. This paper analyzes the relationship between urban policies and social housing in the redevelopment process occurring in the central area of São Paulo. It focuses on transformations that occurred during the beginning of the 21st century, a period when Brazil was prominent in terms of economic growth in the international arena. As a case study, it focuses on the *Habitasampa* architectural competition, which is considered to be one of the most innovative and important contests during this period. This analysis of the winning *Habitasampa* project designs, in terms of their theoretical and political frameworks, will help create new methodological guidelines for the preparation of urban plans and policies related to social housing in dense urban areas.

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Introduction

In Brazil, there are few sites in which the urban designs indicate a past “designed city” along the lines of the great interventions in the 19th century. The Brazilian cities that were established in colonial times grew (and continue to grow) based on the economic and production cycles that redesign the territory in accordance with the economic intentions. The cities are not based on an “urban design” that is intended to qualify the urban area (and its social implications). The significant interventions that were conducted during the second half of the 20th century therefore prioritised the viability of a new economic design that was shaped by advances in industrialisation. This process was performed almost without obstacles in the context of the precarious urban framework that had defined these cities until then. These interventions were supported, in large part, within the theoretical and formal models of the Modern Movement. The interventions were inefficient for Brazilian cities because they failed to organise the functions of the

metropolis and did not improve the increasing flow of people and goods that clogged the old design.

Despite the importance of the country’s economic and social development, the urbanisation process in Brazil still has outcomes that were not intended by planners, managers, or society. During the industrialisation period, the formation of the national market was consolidated through widespread urbanisation, with economic and social innovations that were associated with the demographic revolution and regional integration (Wilheim, 1984). One of the consequences of this process was a major housing shortage that increased in association with industrial development.

The situation worsened after the 1980s because, as a result of economic internationalisation and streamlined communication, Brazil stopped being a production site and became a net consumer, like other countries worldwide (Arantes, Vainer, & Maricato, 2000). The structural disparities in Brazil became even more evident. The current living conditions in urban Brazil thus reflect a history of exclusionary economic policies that created high indices of urbanisation and social inequality. The low-income population is not supported by efficient social housing (SH) programmes and is left with no option but to live in slums. Brazil thus arrived at the beginning of the 21st century with a housing shortage of 7 million homes (Brasil, 2008).

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São Paulo, whose population has increased by 525% since the 1950s, was one of the cities that was most affected by the above-mentioned process (São Paulo, 2010). At the beginning of the 21st century, 10% of the population of São Paulo, the largest and richest city in Latin America, lived in slums (IBGE, 2010).

For several decades, particularly the 1970s, the action chosen to alleviate the problem of homelessness was the construction of large housing projects on the outskirts of the city. In this process, the city extended and replicated housing clusters that were disjointed from the consolidated urban grid (Sampaio de & Pereira, 2003). This process caused the scattering of the city, and urbanism researchers and professionals questioned the underlying growth model (Grostein & Meyer, 2002). The arguments raised included the high cost of horizontally extending the infrastructure network, the environmental consequences, and problems related to urban transportation (congestion, cost, and inefficient public transportation). The accelerated expansion of the city also contributed to the formation of a disjointed socio-spatial structure because it adversely affected the interaction between different social classes and the relationship between housing and the workplace.

Alternative plans for the construction of SH in the peripheries were first put into practice by the city government of São Paulo in the early 1990s. These plans did not advance significantly during the course of the 1990s. In Brazil, this period was marked by economic crises and political situations that did not allow major advances in solving the housing problem (Bonduki, 2008; Valença & Bonates, 2010). Only at the beginning of the 21st century, when the country entered a positive cycle of economic growth, were new perspectives developed with regard to the urban problems in São Paulo. The revitalisation of the decaying historic centre by programmes that encourage housing construction has become a priority for the city administration.

This paper analyzes the relationship between public policy and SH in São Paulo at the beginning of the 21st century, including analysis of the winners of the *Habitasampa* architectural competition as a case study. The theme of this competition was SH in central areas, and the competition is considered to be one of the most important events in recent Brazilian architecture. The applied methodology includes (i) identifying and understanding urban policies aimed at the central area of São Paulo between 2000 and 2004 and (ii) analysing the relationship between architecture and the city in the winning projects of the *Habitasampa* competition.

The central hypothesis of this paper is that the recent advances made in policies and theories in the field of urbanism were not adequately addressed by the architectural proposals selected in the *Habitasampa* competition. This situation, or the gap between planners and architects in the case of São Paulo, had an adverse effect on both architecture and urban policies. Understanding this unique situation will help us understand other similar processes and enable us to improve the relationship between city administrators' plans and the architects' intentions.

Housing and central areas

Interest in city centres has intensified in studies in the fields of architecture and urbanism since the middle of the last century. For example, the VIII CIAM (*Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*) subject "The Heart of the City" (conducted in 1951) is dedicated to the renovation of historic centres. Although the strategies suggested by VIII CIAM show strong ties with the Modern Movement, in adapting the central regions to the logic of the Industrial City, the historic city becomes a relevant topic even for "modern" architects and planners. In the following decade, the books "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1961) (Jacobs, 1992) and "The Architecture of the City" (1966) (Rossi, 1984)

reaffirmed the value of the historical past and traditional culture in the development of new urban and architectural strategies.

Following the first theoretical frameworks to value the central areas as an essential theme of urban development of cities, several research projects have been developed on this issue since the second half of the 20th century. In this sense, the city centres are valued in urban policies that consider the following: i) the centres' historical and cultural values, with the implementation of preservation policies (e.g. Choay, 1999), ii) their ability to promote social and cultural diversity (e.g. Bidou, Hiernaux Nicolas, & Rivière d'Arc, 2003; Harvey, 2000), iii) the opportunity to transform their buildings into new and updated programs of social and economic development (e.g. Haar, 1980), iv) their potential as a central business district (CBD) (e.g. Lim, Kim, Potter, & Bae, 2013), and v) the value of the existing social capital, pursuant to the theory developed by Putnam (Putnam, 2001; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994).

In the 1990s, this drift of "returning to the city center" became apparent in the logic of urban occupation of the property market in various cities of the world, in which the process of suburbanization was shared by investments and occupation of the central areas (Bidou et al., 2003). On the one hand, this process has been exalted by planners and architects because it resulted in an appreciation of areas of great importance to the historical heritage buildings. On the other hand, real estate valuation of the central regions caused a change in the social-geography, a process known as gentrification (Smith, 1996).

In the last few decades and especially since the beginning of the century, sustainable development has become an important topic in various fields of knowledge, particularly in the construction sector, which is responsible for much of the damage to the environment. In this sense, the design strategies and construction of collective housing incorporate sustainability as a new indicator of quality. However, studies reveal that adaptation to this new global demand should not be restricted to housing units, but should combine technology development with innovative urban policies that promote social and economic inclusion (Choguill, 2007). In this context, the issue of urban centres becomes even more relevant because it adds desired features to current methods of sustainable urban development, such as the possibility of re-occupation of vacant buildings, proximity to the workplace, density, diversity, public transportation, and local social dynamics (Burchell, Listokin, & Galley, 2000). Considering that many of these attributes are desirable to new developments that are committed to sustainability (Choguill, 2008), the central regions are not merely areas that are preserved for their history; rather, they serve as a social, functional, and typological model of the new urbanisation processes.

SH and the centre of São Paulo

The centre of São Paulo was not built as a homogeneous territory. During its formation, the centre was divided into two sub-regions: the *Historic Triangle*, a region that includes the streets of Direita, XV de Novembro, and São Bento, and the *New Centre*, a region that includes the plazas of Ramos de Azevedo and República, Barão de Itapetininga Street, and São Luiz Avenue. These two sub-regions underwent several changes in their urban layouts because of the increased role of the automobile as the primary mode of transportation. The construction of new radial and perimeter avenues and the widening of certain streets were part of the attempt to integrate these areas into the urban reality based on the increased use of the automobile. In the 1960s, the relationship between the interests of the real estate market and the local government led to the relocation of services and stores from the central region to the region of the Paulista Avenue (a new and modern avenue located in

a prime area). This movement, which had already been occurring with the residential sector for several decades, reinforced the process of decay and abandonment of the city's historical centre.

In the decades following the 1960s, the central region of the city was aligned with the interests of the market and the public administration, which chose to invest in new avenues and neighbourhoods in the southwest region. The *Engenheiro Carlos Berrini*, *Faria Lima*, and *Marginal Pinheiros* avenues played a prominent role in this process. According to the media and promoters, this process confirmed São Paulo's status as a "global city" because some firms were housed in the "advanced tertiary sector". This aspect has been widely criticised in recent studies because it hides large areas of poverty and precarious urbanisation behind iconic buildings of glass and gleaming metal. This process, in addition to contributing to the devaluation of the city centre, accentuated the unequal utilisation of the city's territory.

Since the 1990s, several more effective actions have been taken to reverse the process of decay in the city's central neighbourhoods (Bonduki, 2007; Maricato, 1992a). In general, these actions sought to reconcile conflicting interests that were sometimes associated with different social groups. Briefly, there were two conflicting ideas: (a) the desire to establish a historical and cultural centre (modelled on the International Strategic Urban Plan) and (b) the reorganisation of public and governmental planning by implementing SH programmes for the low-income population.

Initiatives aimed at enhancing the historical and cultural heritage of the central region express the interest in a process of "reurbanisation" based on the recovery of lost connections with the city's elite and the real estate market. Such initiatives therefore invest in the enhancement of cultural activities, plazas, and monuments, the accessibility of individual transport, tourist potential, commercial growth, and increased security through police patrols (Teixeira et al., 2005). This model suggests that SH should be built in less valued areas that are far from the centre. Such a process is a clear example of gentrification (Smith, 1996). Such intentions had already been implemented in urban policies in other countries. The effects and repercussions of these policies were widely publicised but there was no consensus regarding the results. In the view of certain authors, the policies represented a key strategy for joining public power with the interests of new emerging economies; for other authors, these policies constituted a submission to the ambitions of an elite minority that resulted in the centres losing their actual and historical values. In the case of Brazil, and São Paulo in particular, where the inequality between different classes is a key issue, the idea of a "centre monument" would be a mistake for the majority of local planners.

As an alternative to the "centre monument", several actions sought to invest in multicultural and multifunctional developments in the central region of São Paulo and to meet the demand for affordable housing that is one of the city's oldest characteristics (as reflected by the slums inhabited by immigrants and former slaves). These actions—which were tied to the urban ideals of the "progressives"—were encouraged since the late 1980s by organised groups of residents who claimed the right to affordable housing in the centre (Teixeira et al., 2005). The proliferation of social movements, the relationships among different groups, and the formation of a set of claims were key instruments against a government that was located far from the problems of the central region and close to the interests of the real estate market in urbanising new areas (Maricato, 1992b). These actions encouraged urban decisions related to the region to reflect "bottom-up" strategies rather than the "top-down" strategies that were prevalent in the historical development of São Paulo.

Independently of the urban entities that had interests in the central area (real estate market, merchants, banks, social groups, informal traders, etc.), a consensus became evident in the

beginning of the 1990s that the centre should be revitalised. As was widely reported in the literature, this approach encouraged residential use as an essential tool in the recovery of degraded central areas. In the case of the centre of São Paulo, this approach had particular relevance because of the enormous number of abandoned buildings, some of which were occupied by the followers of social movements that claimed a "right to housing" (as mentioned in the Brazilian Constitution).

Thus, after a decade of intense discussions and few actual accomplishments, São Paulo began the 20th century with its central area as one of its priorities. The issue of returning to residential use, as encouraged by various social classes (including the low-income population), reflected the cosmopolitan character of the region, although there were fears regarding the possible initiation of a gentrification process as had occurred in similar cases in other countries.

Interest in this "new" diversified occupation concept provided the basis for urban policies prepared for the city centre. Hereafter, the major actions created for urban development in the city centre of São Paulo will be summarised.

The city statute and the strategic master plan

One of the greatest advances in public policies related to urbanisation in the cities and central areas of Brazil was the approval in 2001 of the *City Statute* (Federal Law no. 10 257, 10 July, 2001).

SH in central areas benefited from the city statute, primarily from the design of two key legal instruments: the creation of Special Zones of Social Interest (*Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social – ZEIS*) that ensure the building of SH in areas indicated by the Municipal Master Plans and a progressive tax on urban property and land (*IPTU-Progressivo*) that has been characterised as a penalty for idle homeowners real estate owners who do not allocate their property to a social function (Brasil, 2001). The *IPTU-Progressivo* defines a tax increase for property taxes based on the period that the property remains unused.

A new Strategic Master Plan (SMP) for São Paulo was approved in 2012 (*Plano Diretor Estratégico – PDE*) that had ideas and mechanisms linked to those of the city statute. The PDE is clearly intended to reorganise the city in favour of a more egalitarian social distribution. The reurbanisation of the central region of São Paulo was prioritised accordingly. The SMP, which is still in force, divides the city into two macro-areas: Environmental Protection and Urban Structuring and Qualification. The latter is subdivided into four macro-areas: Urban Restructuring and Requalification, Urbanisation and Qualification, Urbanisation and Consolidation, and Consolidated Urbanisation. The centre, which is part of the macro-area Urban Restructuring and Requalification, is identified as a region that is undergoing a process of depopulation and has a sub-standard infrastructure, although it does have a high employment rate as a defining characteristic (Matiko Uemura, 2009).

One of the goals of the PDE is to reverse the urban situation of this macro-area. The plan, therefore, seeks to encourage the implementation of SH and to intensify property development by incentivising affordable housing (*Habitações de Mercado Popular – HMP*) (private buildings for the popular classes). In parallel actions, the PDE also aims to (a) improve collective public spaces and the environment, (b) encourage trade and services, (c) encourage the preservation of architectural heritage, and (d) reorganise the collective infrastructure and transportation (Strategic Master Plan for the City of São Paulo – Law n. 13.430; September 13th, 2002, art. 155).

Urban policies and SH

In 2001, a master plan titled *Rebuilding the Centre (Reconstruir o Centro – RC)* was presented to the city of São Paulo and received

the support of both the private sector and the state government. The guidelines of this master plan included the expansion of residential use (primarily SH), the encouragement of diverse functions, the enhancement of public spaces, the encouragement of cultural activities, and social inclusion (PMSP/SEHAB/PROCENTRO, 2001).

The RC master plan sought to establish a participatory intervention policy (bottom–up) that involved many urban entities associated with the central region (public and private entities, NGOs, neighbourhood associations, social movements etc.). The master plan was divided into 8 programmes: (a) Walk in the Centre, (b) Live in the Centre, (c) Work in the Centre, (d) Discover the Centre, (e) Preserve the Centre, (f) Invest in the Centre, (g) Take Care of the Centre, and (h) Govern the Centre. The aim of the master plan was to restore activities in the neighbourhoods that make up the historic centre, with reference to the socio-spatial environment, the existing population, and the search for a better quality of life. These objectives were to be achieved through legislative changes, analysis of urban proposals, information disclosure, and provision of specialised technical services to the community and investors.

Among the programmes created by Rebuild the Centre, the programme Live in the Centre (*Morar no Centro* – MC) is one of the most comprehensive urban actions of the period. The guidelines of MC sought to integrate diverse technical mechanisms and policies aimed at SH into one set of strategies. MC is subdivided in three subprogrammes: the Residential Leasing Programme (*Programa de Arrendamento Residencial* – PAR), the Social Leasing Programme (*Programa de Locação Social* – PLS) and the Integrated Habitat Rehabilitation Programme (*Programa de Reabilitação Integrada do Habitat* – PRIH). Each of these subprogrammes is financed by a bank that belongs to the federal government.

The goals and guidelines of the MC programme are defined in the city government's official publications for the period 2001–2004 (PMSP/SEHAB, 2004):

General Goals:

- Improve living conditions for inhabitants of the Centre;
- Facilitate housing in the Centre for people who work in the region (repopulation);
- Avoid the expulsion process that is often associated with rehabilitation policies in urban centres.

Major Guidelines:

- Prioritise the reform of empty buildings;
- Combine housing solutions with initiatives for income generation; and
- Seek social diversity in the central districts.

In 2003, the Rebuilding the Centre coordination plan was transferred to the Municipal Urbanization Company (Empresa Municipal de Urbanização – EMURB), which launched the Central Area Rehabilitation Programme, also known as the Central Action Programme (*Programa Ação Centro*, Decree Law no. 44.089) (PMSP/EMURB, 2004). The Central Action Programme established the following lines of action:

- Reversal of real estate depreciation and recovery of residential function;
- Transformation of the central area's economic and social profile;
- Recovery of the urban environment;
- Transportation and circulation; and
- Institutional strengthening of the city.

Although the Central Action programme was developed from the Rebuild the Centre Programme, its tactical implementation had to be remodelled to meet the specifications set by the Inter-

American Development Bank (IDB), which was responsible for financing the program. These changes in the programme were associated primarily with the Live in the Centre programme because, according to the IDB, the loan was linked to real estate valuation and the transformation of the social and economic profile. As a result, there were fears that the site would undergo a gentrification process that would hinder both the permanence of low-income residents and the construction of new affordable housing, two priorities of the Live in the Centre programme.

The Habitasampa competition

In association with these policies aimed at the central region, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (*Secretaria da Habitação e Desenvolvimento Urbano* – SEHAB) and the Housing Company of the State of São Paulo (*Habitação do Estado de São Paulo* – COHAB-SP), in partnership with the Brazilian Institute of Architects in São Paulo (*Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil de São Paulo* – IAB-SP), organised in 2003 a national public architectural competition called *Habitasampa*.

Habitasampa was dedicated to two projects for SH located in two areas in the centre of São Paulo. One of these areas is located on the *Assembleia* Street in the Sé district (*Habitasampa Assembleia*), and the other area is located on the *Cônego Vicente Marino* Street in the *Barra Funda* district (*Habitasampa Cônego Vicente Marino*). The competition was part of the Social Location Program (*Programa de Locação Social* – PLS), a conceptual refinement thus far unexplored in urban models for the city. Based on the study and adaptation of similar programs in Europe, the PLS provided for the leasing of housing units and allowed the “right to housing” and simultaneous flexibility of local housing. This solution is consistent with the dynamics of work and family organisation in São Paulo and the contemporary world.

Because of its conceptual breadth and innovative character, *Habitasampa* was one of the most disputed and controversial architectural competitions held in Brazil.

The announcement of *Habitasampa* clearly expressed the competition's goal of formulating ideas to develop HS in the central area (IAB-SP, 2003). This goal, as described in this article, is supported by an extensive theoretical basis and a unique political moment. The competition represented a search for “new” architectural and urban models unlike the experiences of large housing complexes built in the periphery.

The proposed programme for the buildings included, in addition to the location, several other important characteristics: (i) the programme was not exclusively for residential use; it also provided for schools, child care centres, community centres, and businesses; (ii) the apartments should vary in size and type (kitchenettes, one bedroom, and two bedrooms); and (iii) 10% of units should be adapted for people with physical disabilities. The programme thus incorporated a concern from architecture at the time for diversifying the “model apartment” (much publicised by Modern Architecture) that became a standard for housing units for the working classes.

The challenge posed by *Habitasampa* and by the urban policies that made it possible was to establish an urban policy that was clearly opposed to the exclusionary social dynamics that dictated the rules of urbanisation in São Paulo. The expectation was that the selected projects would represent that unique moment in the city and in Brazil.

However, there was an obstacle related to the conceptual bases that marked the tradition of Brazilian architecture, both in its results and its design process: the influence of the Modern Movement. There is an abundant literature concerning the relationship between the Central European theories of the Modern Movement and the development of the so-called *Brazilian Modern Architecture*.

The consequences of this relationship continue to be evident, primarily in the São Paulo version called the *Escola Paulista* (Paulista School) (Forty, 2005).

The Brazilian Modern Architecture sought models of excellence and uniqueness, such as iconic buildings (e.g. the works of Oscar Niemeyer) and housing complexes based on the Fordist system of production and design. As an example from SH, the *Zezinho Magalhães Prado* complex received the greatest prominence in São Paulo. This complex was designed in 1967 by the architects Vilanova Artigas, Paulo Mendes da Rocha, and Fábio Penteadó (all of whom are considered to be great masters of local architecture).

The Master Plans also had a direct influence on “progressive urbanism” in Brazil, which was aligned with the Modern Movement and, consequently, the Athens Charter. Organising the city into sectors and expansion vectors, in view of the existing developmental interests, was the priority of the first Master Plans in São Paulo and most Brazilian cities.

In regard to urban policies and the Master Plans, as outlined in this article, there were clearly advances that occurred before the launch of the *Habitasampa* contest. Our aim was to answer to two fundamental questions regarding the process under study: (a) Did the *Habitasampa* lead to new paradigms for architecture in Brazil? and (b) Did the innovations in the field of urban policies guide the decisions and solutions displayed by the winning projects? These questions are key to understanding the relationship between urban policies and architectural design during the period of study.

Analysis were based on the documents of designs and texts submitted at the time of the contest, interviews with the authors, interviews with members of the jury, visits to the intervention sites, and a literature review.

Habitasampa Cônego Vicente Marino

(...) “The concept is an internal central plaza, the only proposal of this kind. The other projects selected space and occupied the most land possible, while we seek to leave it as free as possible and without obstacles (...) The most important thing for our team is implementation”.¹

(Corradini & Alves, 2004)

The first place project in the competition chose to compact the dwellings in one volume, with two parallel and elevated blocks aligned with the greater face of the ground (Figs. 1 and 2). The implementation strategy followed the objective stated in the memorial of “liberating” the rest of the lot for public and community use. The Centre for Professional Development (part of the programme required by the competition) is located on one end of the lot and remains independent from the rest of the dwellings. The complex, set completely on stilts, was intended to “open the whole ground floor” (sic), an objective that was emphasised in the project’s theoretical memorial.

The main volume of the project, aimed at housing, clearly referenced one of the most publicised models of the *Escola Paulista*: the “model buildings” of the *Zezinho Magalhães Prado* complex (CECAP), designed in 1967 for the periphery of the city Guarulhos (Fig. 3). The analysis of this project inevitably involves a comparison with that design, which was considered to be the most important national example of the guidelines of the “progressive urbanism”. In the design of the office *Frentes Arquitetura*, certain characteristics stand out that are also present in this “model”: (a) apartments

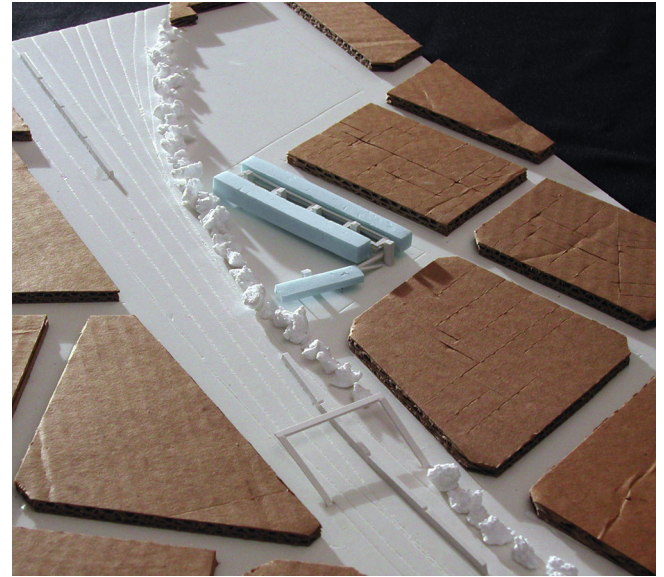


Fig. 1. Physical model of the proposal.
Source: project authors.

arranged side-by-side in two parallel lines, between which are located vertical and horizontal circulation systems (the “H” system, widely used in Brazil); (b) rooms facing the outside of the building, while the living rooms and kitchens are in the internal part of the apartments; (c) the organisation of residences in a long horizontal prism on stilts; and (d) the distinction of programme activities in independent areas (Fig. 4).

What is the meaning of reviving this reference to the 1960s, a project that was originally designed for an area on the periphery? According to the basis of this study, there was no practical explanation related to the process of urbanisation in the central area of that time. Both the jury and the authors described nostalgic intentions related to this great moment of Brazilian architecture.

The winning project thus presented a solution that was far from the original intention of the competition and the urban policies promoted by the Municipality at the time. From a methodological and cultural point of view, it made a choice to reuse a “consecrated” pattern from history, an approach that differed from the search for “innovation” that is a major motivation in architectural contests.

This choice, tied to the process of revaluing Brazilian Modernism that began in the 1990s, appears weakened in the face of historic criticism regarding collective dwellings and urban ideals that was initiated by the Modern Movement (e.g. Kopp, 1988; Montaner, 1993; Tafuri, 1979). That is, the proposal does not demonstrate the level of conceptual progress associated with the urban policies of the period.

The decision to deny the city and to not propose a viable alternative is an unjustifiable impediment to the Live in the Centre program and the contemporary approaches to understanding the city, the central area, and the relationships with social integration programmes.

Habitasampa Assembléia

The winning project *Habitasampa Assembléia* had implementation as its main feature. The project was located across the valley of 23 de Maio Avenue, similarly to the other buildings on the block (Figs. 5 and 6). This solution allowed for the creation of a large space that would become a gazebo and public square. The implementation was justified in enabling continuity for the “dynamic and varied” morphology of the site, which was considered by the

¹ Interview with the architect Juliana Corradini.

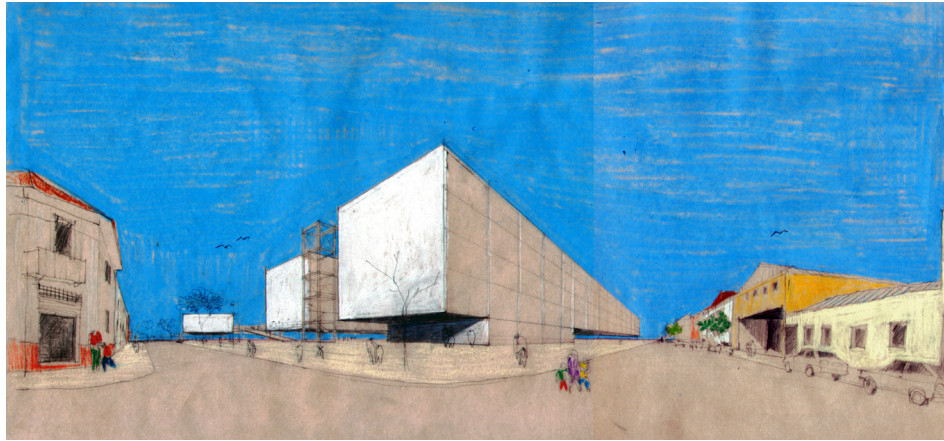


Fig. 2. Graphic design of the proposal.
Source: project authors.

authors as a characteristic of the centre of São Paulo. The proposed building aimed, in the authors' words, "to intervene without negating the existing reality" (Morettin and Andrade, 2004).

The floors of the housing units were accessed via two central elevators or by stairs on the sides. The provision of different housing units on the same floor contributed to coexistence between different family groups, a practice that has been encouraged by studies on the subject (Echeverria, 1995; Gausa, 1999). This practice was also evident in the presentation of the suggested layout for the model floor, in which several provisions of partitions and furniture were explored. The dwellings were in accordance with the standards of the announcement and had varying sizes and internal organisation, as observed in the presentation layout proposed by the architects. The "wet" areas (kitchen, bathroom, and service area) were located along the corridor, whereas the

bedrooms faced the outside of the building. The lighting in the apartments came from windows in the bedrooms and living room on the northeast or southeast sides.

Similar to the example described for *Habitasampa Cônego Vicente Marino*, the winning project showed the clear influence of the "golden age" of Brazilian Modern Architecture and of the Escola Paulista. In addition to the geometric and rational organisation of the compositional elements and utilities, which are present in Modern Architecture in Brazil and other countries, the choice regarding implementation is noteworthy. In contrast to the proposal for the neighbourhood Barra Funda, the environment is not negated but rather assimilated. While this approach might appear to be a "contextualist" option, as in the theories published after the 1960s (Rossi, 1984), the reading is different for the case of this area of São Paulo. As observed in this article, there is no historic or

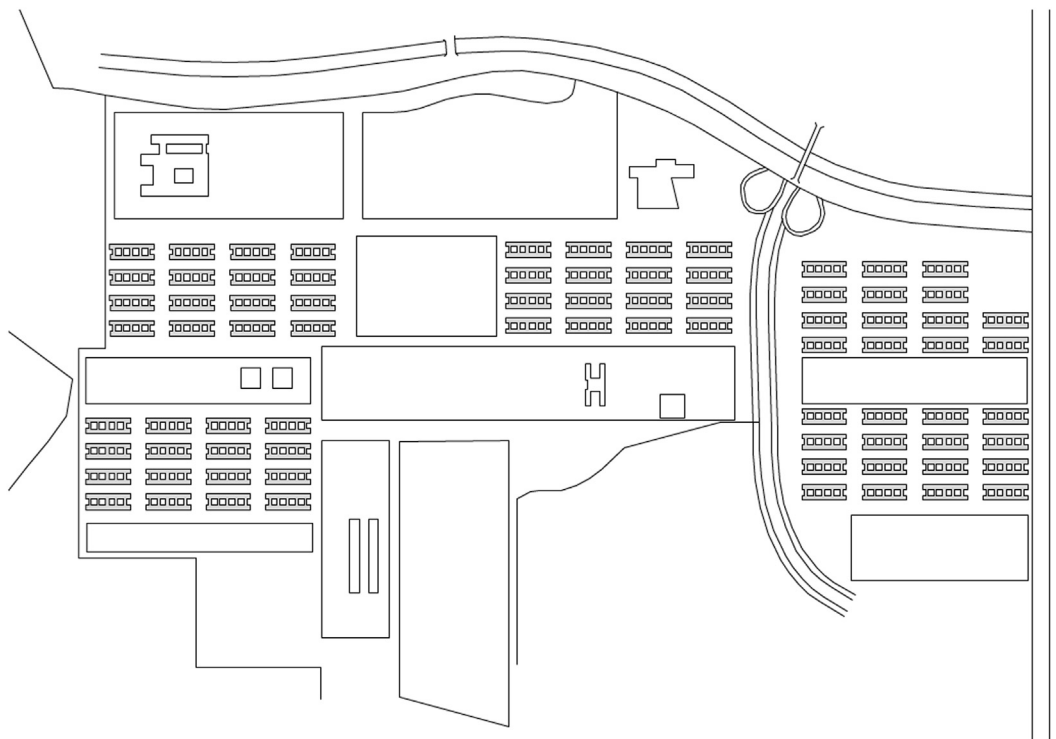


Fig. 3. General plan of housing estate Zezinho Magalhães Prado (CECAP).
Source: authors.

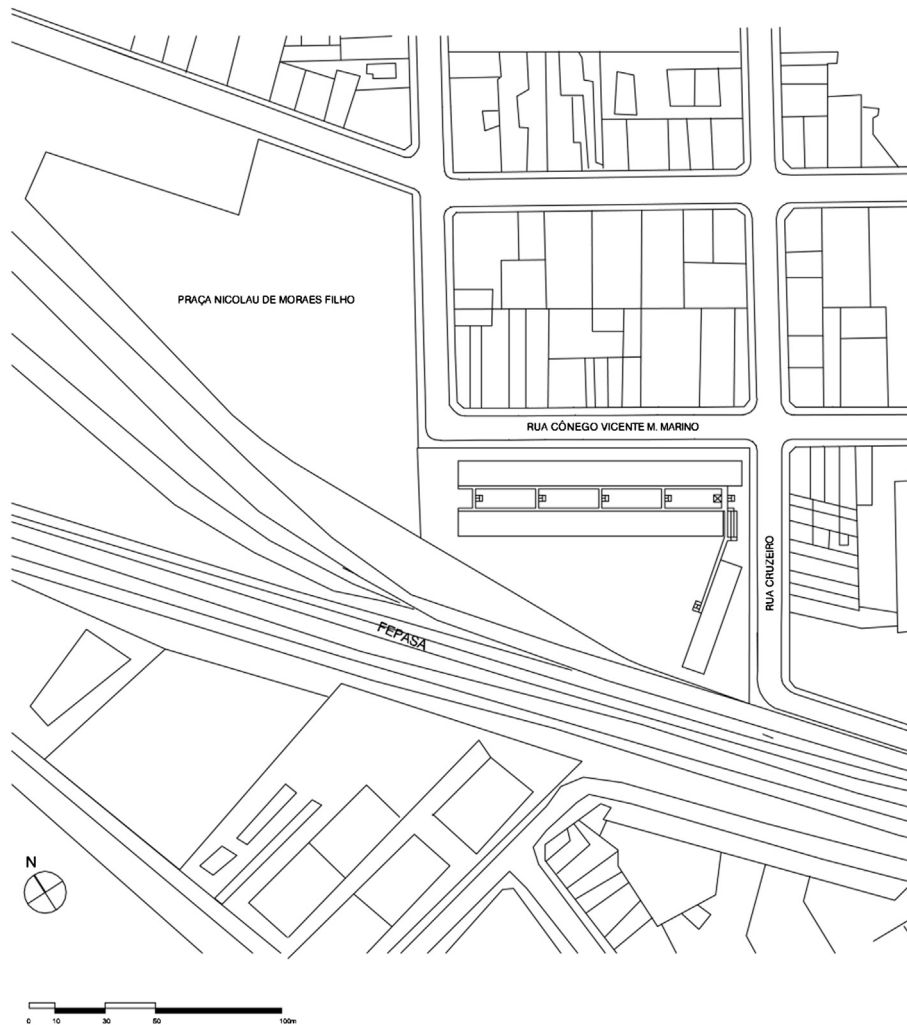


Fig. 4. General plan.
Source: authors.

designed environment in São Paulo along the lines of those in European or planned cities. Instead, there are buildings that opted for the best use possible in regard to construction potential, given the legal limits of the lots (which are variable according to standing law). The choice thus “accepted” the lot as a limit, even though this limit was not mentioned in the contest rules. The proposed building, like those around it, was designed independently from that limit. There was no context, but there was a succession of singular buildings. This idea is clearly demonstrated by the images that were submitted to the contest.

The purpose of this article is not to discuss the architectural quality of the proposals. However, the evidence indicates that there is no innovation related to the practices that are usual in Brazilian architecture. The design process and the result repeat the lessons of the old local masters.

Neither of the winning projects of *Habitasampa Assembléia* or of *Habitasampa Cônego Vicente Marino* was built. A new mayor was elected in 2004, and the new administration did not consider these projects to be priorities.

Discussion

The redevelopment of central areas in Brazil is an increasingly prominent subject for architects, urban planners, and public agents.

One of the most important and controversial points is the relationship between the revitalisation of central areas and SH. Urban policies that aim to balance market interests with the interests of the population and the city seek to understand the central region in terms of its cosmopolitan, multifunctional, and pluralist character. The central region is viewed as a symbolic geographic event in the relationship between different social classes. Affordable housing constructed in the central region is a key to strengthening this idea that aims to redefine the current exclusionary socio-spatial geography in Brazil. There is a consensus among researchers regarding São Paulo’s potential to become an example of a new urban awareness with increased emphasis on avoiding the errors of the city’s original segregationist formation and promoting the growth of a sustainable environment. This goal is clearly present in the urban programmes that were designed for the city of São Paulo at the beginning of this century. However, such ideas, based on these major achievements, are not reflected in the architecture that was designed in response to these original goals.

The winning projects of the *Habitasampa* contest, according to the analysis in this study, reveal the conceptual and theoretical gap between the advancements in urban policies during the period. The projects, regardless of their quality, do not represent innovation in comparison with standing practices. The evidence for this conclusion can be summarised as follows:

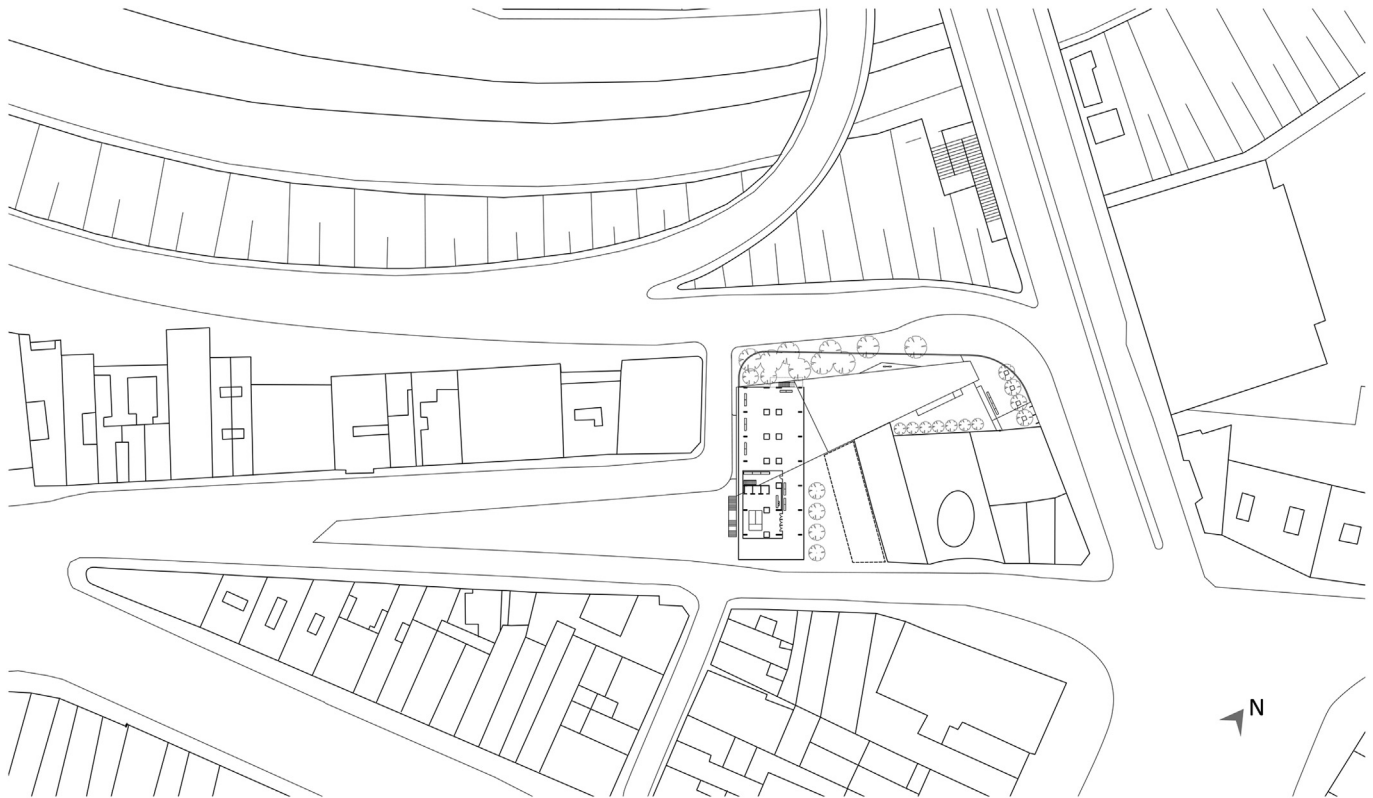


Fig. 5. General plan of the urban insertion.
Source: authors.

I. The projects examined here were clearly influenced by the Brazilian version of the Modern Movement in architecture. This influence was confirmed by the analysis of the projects and their memorials and by the interviews conducted with the authors. According to the Modern ideas of Brazilian architecture, the city is a barrier to new proposals and not vice versa; the Modern Project, as it is known, is aimed towards a new idea of the city (*tabula rasa*) in opposition to the historical construct. Housing complexes that were designed according to the Modern model have received criticism since World War II. In the examples that involve the development of central areas, the obsolescence of this model is even more evident in that the model reverses the question—of a tract with a consolidated city—without critical,

methodological, programmatic, or formal updates. The solutions that are presented replicate models that have been tried in the “non-city” situations (in the periphery or in the city centre) and are thus inconsistent with the intent of the urban plans of the period.

II. There is little understanding on the part of architects regarding the fundamentals that characterise the “post-industrial society”. This term is generally associated in Brazil with the sterile stylistic form that was widespread in the 1980s and 1990s (from post-Modernism or deconstructivism) and is little understood as a condition of contemporary living. As the literature studied and presented here in this paper shows, understanding and defining our current cultural, economic, and social state is



Fig. 6. Photomontage onsite intervention.
Source: project authors.

indispensable for architectural actions that seek to overcome existing aesthetic or formal values (as in the case of affordable housing) and thereby contribute to restructuring the “social forms” of our cities. There are few chances of success in contemporary architecture without understanding the new values that comprise and underlie current society (post-Modern, post-industrial, or, as in the definition of Gilles Lipovetsky, hypermodern). The spirit of modernity, in this sense, would be expressed by experimenting or reinventing of values in response to new questions—and not through the stylistic foundations of architecture.

The results of this study, in addition to addressing specific questions related to SH in urban centres, indicate the need for a greater convergence between urban policies and architecture. In depth understanding of the prominent questions regarding contemporary cities and societies is an essential factor in architectural practices, particularly in the case of SH. In this sense, taking into account the examples discussed in this article, the methodological procedures for performing projects and evaluating contests should be enhanced and upgraded. To do so, it is suggested to: (i) incorporate theoretical, conceptual and urban issues to the guidelines of evaluation, updated to contemporary demands; (ii) include the participation of foreign architects to the jury composition, in order to share and contribute to a better quality result of the final judgement; (iii) promote events such as seminars, lectures and round tables about the issues and themes of the competition, in a way that the communities involved and the professionals inscribed in the competition could contribute to improve general guidelines; (iv) allow foreign professionals in architectural competitions held in Brazil, as contributions to innovation fields and ideas show not be limited by geographic frontiers.

Brazil began the 21st century as an emerging country with rapid growth. In partnership with a group called BRICS, Brazil has an important role in developing architectural and urban practices that are socially responsible and sustainable. The instruments that ensure innovation and upgrades in both urban policies and architecture should be constantly evaluated and improved in the attempt to achieve results that are consistent with the expectations of contemporary societies.

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