

Renewal of Metropolitan Areas - Social and Collective Housing [A case-study from São Paulo, Brazil]

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Abstract

The development of architectural interventions in great cities opens up a debate about new forms of performance in urban space. The explosion of the so called “global cities”, linked to an international net of economical corporations and stimulated by the transnational capital, breaks up the modern city [1]. The “social apartheid” leads the city in two speeds and restructures man’s surviving conditions: the “socially excluded” are willing to survive, while the “socially chosen” are supported by the redistribution of power in insurmountable walls: an overrigid distribution of capital and work [2].

Today’s metropolis is the set for several strategies of urban reinvention that analyses the space through the contemporary chaos: they act in its real sphere, not from utopias. The city understood as a mutable and fluid organism puts in question the fragmented space concept: the city is revalued through reterritorializations and collective identities, permanently in change.

The present study intends to create an alternative strategy for urban design in metropolitan areas that takes cultural and historical importance into consideration. It focuses on the excluded people such as recyclable garbage collectors, homeless, informal economy dealers and temporary occupants of abandoned buildings.

The project is a proposal of a new methodology for acting in consolidated metropolis centers with social housing, and other infra-structure. It is located in São Paulo, Brazil.

1 Introduction

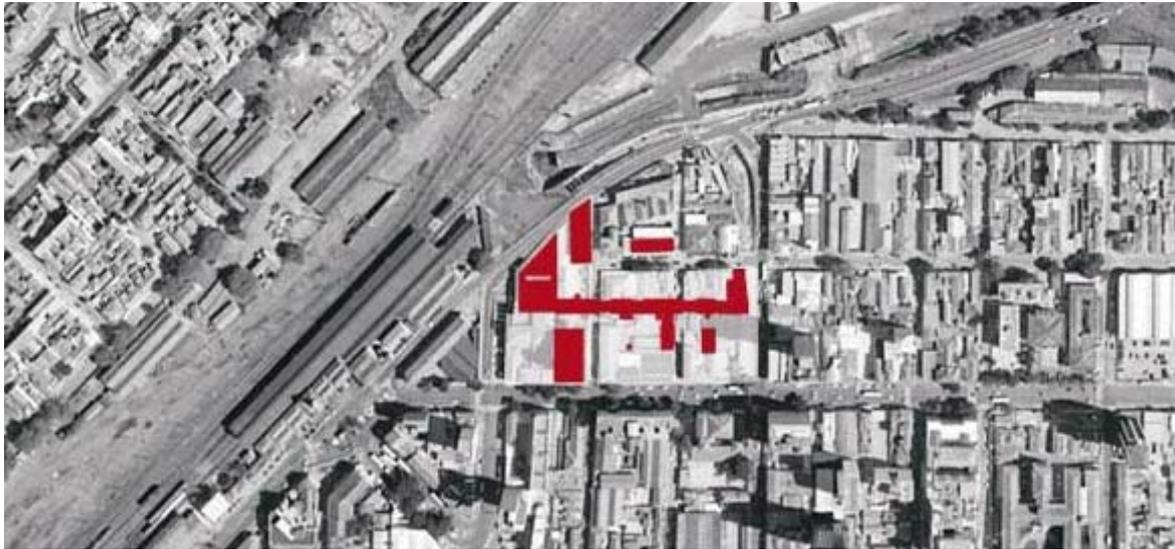


Figure 1: Aerial photo and infographic from the project

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2 Temporality – The Territory of Movement

The territoriality as the feeling of belonging to space is changed by new spatial arrangements of property: the migrant’s imaginary is destroyed and reconstructed through new established values, which points to marketing and global structures [3]. The territoriality that used to refer to a nostalgic memory now disrespects culture for marketing: architecture takes the publicity form just as the Modern idea of the object-house, built over a lot, produced in series [4].

The migrant establishes a micro-physics defined by connections and flows that composes a new zone of imperceptible movements, parallel, that arrange spaces in intervals and fulfills the inner voids of the city.

The migrant moves constantly in order to fight against the excluding space: it is the only way in this fragmentary and rigid city. As time goes by this new lines of attack ends up in a parallel net of secret spaces in the metropolis.

2.1 The nomad in Campinas city – The recyclable garbage collectors

Recycling in Brazil has become an alternative economy for poor people. Once more and more people has started to collect and sell this kind of material, Brazil has become the country that most recycles in Latin America – specially aluminum cans and card boards.

The recyclable material collectors have a recent story in Campinas. The “alternative economy” has been organized only in the last five years, and it has taken a capitalist form: the public space is now property, with marketing connections, the informal trade is controlled by also informal groups by means of strategies of territory and capital domain.



Figure 2: Garbage collector of Campinas

In Campinas the “intermediates” (the ones who pay the collectors for their job and then sell the separated material for recycling companies) usually gather together in groups in specific spots in the city centre, while the collectors ride their carts looking for recyclable things. This way, the centre is more attractive, once it has the biggest amount of office buildings – a nice source of clean garbage (paper, plastic etc).

Today, after several changes of space, the “intermediates” work inside a never-activated tunnel that should link the centre of Campinas and a residential neighborhood (Vila Industrial). They have created a kind of “recycling plant” inside the tunnel, paying a ludicrous salary for those who collect the garbage.

3 Campinas – a brief story

Campinas came to sight as a crossroad of gold hunter travellers, in the country side of the state of São Paulo. The city’s development was very similar to that in other São Paulo’s cities, with overwhelming growth explosions trough coffee economy times and industrial setting. Campinas became an industrial city – and soon urban – in the late 50’s. During the 60’s the city had finally changed from rural to one of the most urbanised cities in the country. The fast implementation of infrastructure in a disordered form and the constant changes in the laws of using soil (occupation, zoning etc) transformed the city into a fragmented space, with several voids in a private space net.

The city of Campinas developed very fast after the 60’s, so fast that its center lost some peculiar characteristics, mainly with the devaluing and abandonment of the buildings. In the 70’s the centre of Campinas was occupied by low-class population: it was when the shantytowns “exploded” and abandoned buildings were invaded.

The reoccupation of the city's centre by this population – mostly poor people – remodels some activities such as commerce, housing and culture, and redraws new social and physical connections. Migrants of all kinds invade public and semi-public spaces taking possession of its urban structures and clashing with formal commercial systems. The new instruments of survival and permanence, moved at constant velocity – street vendor commerce, garbage collectors, homeless -, are informal kinds of economy, working side by side with capitalism in big metropolises but in opposition to inflexible social and spacial conditions.

3.1 Today's situation

The site in question is part of a group of blocks with similar buildings, all of them with low height (two pavements) and a past of industrial usage – supporting the railroad that is just on the other side of the street. Nowadays these constructions (large sheds mainly) are no longer used and were dumped. The abandonment of industrial areas – the so called “*friches industrielles*” – sets on a huge potential of reurbanization / requalification / reoccupation of their space. These squares, though settled in the center's perimeter, have very different characteristics from the dense and vertical buildings of the surroundings.

The project of reurbanization is based on implanting new equipments for structuring the migrant population not in static conditions but havconsidering movement as a mechanism of reconquering the urban territory.

4 The urban program

The creation of a recycling cooperative for garbage collectors is the central nucleus of this project. Keeping their jobs as garbage collectors is a way of transforming it into an alternative job for survival, understanding its meaning as a collective identity, a strategy for survival.

The shelter building, for 320 innkeepers, means housing as an instrument for the development of new urban structures such as commerce, leisure centers etc. Other structures are still in this program, such as leisure and culture centers, commercial rooms, school, refectory; all of them open to the public. The choice for using the inside voids of the squares comes from the need of restructuring the neighborhood from its influence.



Figure 3: Model

5 The project

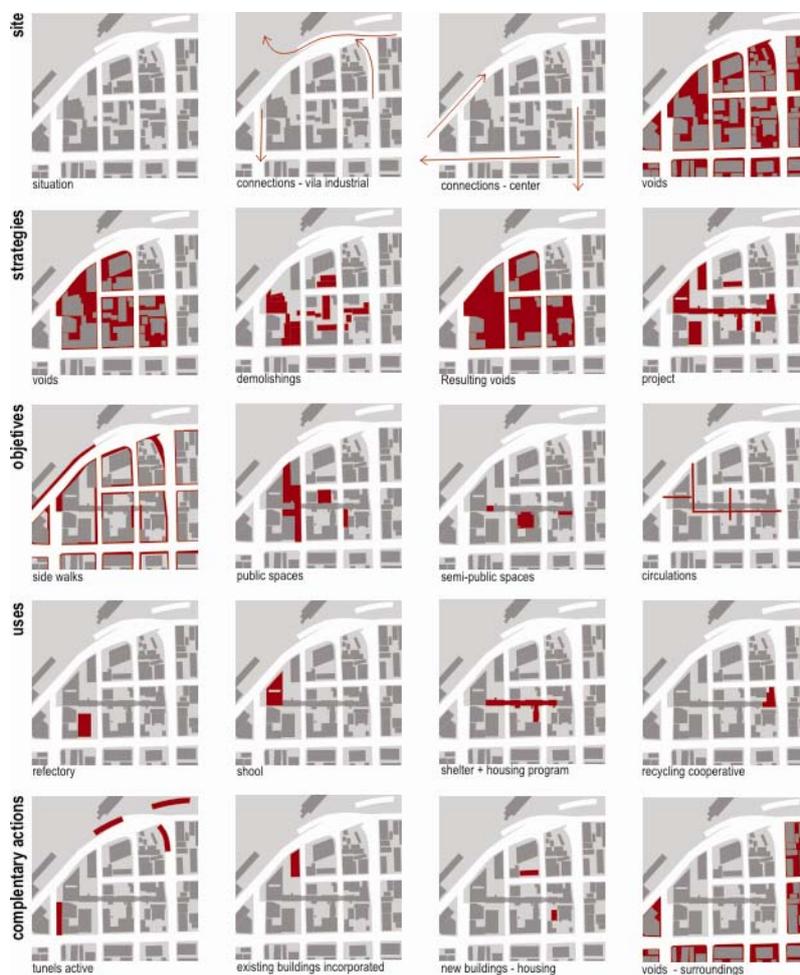


Figure 4: Infographics

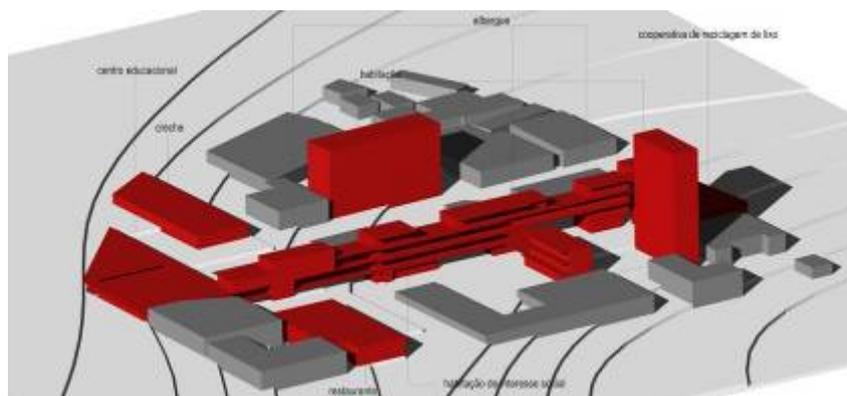


Figure 5: Model

The contemporary city is complex and dynamic, permanently in change. The variety and mixtures of economical, cultural and social differences asks for an architectural project based not only on volumes and forms but mainly on urban strategies, interventions that can reverberate taking part of what is

around and restructuring it. Ideas that can spread a new usage of the city as a house, and redesign its urban drawing.

This project is more than a suggestion; it is a study for strategies of occupation for urban voids. It articulates the disorganization of these urban residues – or their “informal organization” –, get circulations active, free possibilities of new actions: it is a strategy that can be used in other parts of the city, specially in the surroundings.



Figure 6: Implantation

Unlimited spaces, uninterrupted circulations, bridge-buildings: this project happens in a urban drawing filled with voids and it acts like a needle, sewing the residues, opening spaces, changing volumes, remodeling urban designs. The empty are linked to other spaces (voids), the new volume [from the housing program – shelter] connects the squares passing over the streets, overlapping circulations and uses, leaving the street pavement as a permeable public and semi-public space. The intention of taking part of the informal occupation was the instrumental argument to propose new ideas of usage for the land.

The main building contaminates the surrounding squares, being used for other activities in the program: recycling cooperative, refectory, school etc. The external and opened circulation unite the several plans onto a “vertical square”, a semi-public space. There is also a volumetric study for new housing buildings to be implanted in the surrounding area.



Figure 7: Model



Figure 8: East Facade

This Project was presented as a study-case for the city centre of Campinas. Though all the instruments for construction were studied, this structure has no ambition of being built, but it intends to discuss different ways of projecting strategies for the city, specially in residential ways.

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