

***Citizens' participation in the urban regeneration of informal settlements: policy innovations and their limits in the Nova Constituente neighborhood in the city of Salvador, Brazil.<sup>1</sup>***

Elena Tarsi

Architect, PhD in Urban, Territorial and Environmental Planning at the Department of Urban and Territorial Planning of University of Florence – Italy

Laboratorio Città e Territorio nei Paesi del Sud del Mondo  
Dip. di Urbanistica e Pianificazione del Territorio - Università di Firenze  
and Centro de Estudos Sociais - Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal.

**Abstract**

Based on public policy innovations implemented in a neighborhood in the city of Salvador, Brazil, this article seeks to enhance the understanding of the dynamics of the informal city and the design of public policies for their regeneration in the Brazilian context. This analysis and critical evaluation will contribute to the experimental process of determining appropriate and effective public policies for the management and upgrading of informal areas. And although it focuses on Brazil, results of this study could apply to the same phenomenon in other Latin American countries where informal urban settlements share similarities with the Brazilian ones. Reflections on the structuring of participatory planning processes are also important as a contribution to the international debate on the processes of democratization of society.

**Introduction**

From the 1950s to the mid-1980s, the world's urban population has tripled. But this growth has not taken place uniformly: while in the developed countries city dwellers were doubled, in the cities of the developing world they quadrupled. Migration from rural areas to larger urban centers has in several cases created the phenomenon of the megalopolis, or metropolitan areas with a population that exceeds 10 million.

Since the first half of last century, the accelerated process of urbanization of large and medium cities in Latin America led to an uncontrolled growth of informal settlements, of which management represents one of the greatest challenges of contemporary society. The road to proper management of this phenomenon is still very long and complex, either in terms of methodologies or technical solutions: these areas also comprise of a multiplicity of problems, among them the degradation of the urban environment, poor housing and social exclusion.

A considerable percentage of city residents of contemporary Latin America are excluded from the role of citizens, and are considered, instead, the culprits of urban decay. The phenomenon of the informal city is a structural problem resulting from historical and political development as well as it is dependent on the global economy dynamics. It is also a common phenomenon in Brazil where this study is based. My goal is to enhance the understanding of the dynamics of the informal city and the design of public policies for their regeneration in the Brazilian context. This analysis and critical evaluation will contribute to the experimental process of determining appropriate and effective public policies for the management and upgrading of informal areas. And although it focuses on Brazil, results of this study could apply to the same phenomenon in other Latin American countries where informal urban settlements share similarities with the Brazilian ones. Reflections on the structuring of participatory planning processes are also important as a contribution to the international debate on the processes of democratization of society.

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The chapter is divided into two parts: the first, *Urban Brazil*, is useful to define the context and to develop some critical analysis about the development of the Brazilian city and informal areas. Without understanding the origins of the phenomenon we cannot create the right tools for their management. I also seek to understand in what ways the urban renewal policies have been designed as an opportunity to strengthen local democracy. The second part, *Inclusion Paths*, contains the results of surveys conducted in Brazil between 2007 and 2008 through a covenant between the University of Florence, Italy and the University of Bahia (campus Salvador), which allowed my participation in the project coordinated by the professor and architect Luiz Antonio de Souza. The project goal was the preparation of a regeneration plan for Nova Constituente, a neighborhood in Salvador, capital city of the Bahia state in the Northeast of Brazil.

Located on the outskirts of Salvador, Nova Constituente (New Constituent) is a neighborhood characterized by lack of basic infrastructure, with a strong environmental degradation and a problematic social situation. In addition to assessing the plan developed for its regeneration, this chapter also presents both the history and interpretation of the process towards the development of a methodology for the upgrading of informal areas of the city, through people's participation in the plan. The latter was a pilot project that allowed to test the application of participatory methodologies and theories that can contribute to the effectiveness of policies for social inclusion and urban integration; the project tried to build a methodology that is the basis for an integrated policy that makes the transformation of the built environment a tool for strengthening the local community and citizenship.

## **Urban Brazil**

In Brazil about 80% of the population live in urban areas: in a short time this large country that was prevalently rural became virtually urban. It is clear that such a rapid transformation implies significant qualitative consequences. The results are clearly visible: the inequalities and disparities are reflected in socio-spatial configurations of the territory and the contrasting urban spaces. According to Maricato (2001: 16), globalization has simply reinforced the characteristics that historically marked the process of Brazilian urbanization: regional inequality and territorial exclusion. The Brazilian city is a space divided, fragmented, unequal, schizophrenic, composed of "many islands marked by the quality of their properties, the presence (or absence) of infrastructure and services, by the level of maintenance of public space, and by security conditions" (Balbo 1999: 39). In the Brazilian city, neighborhoods often coexist with faultless infrastructure, reserved for luxury residences beside areas without sanitation, marked by serious environmental problems, whose population is poor and unemployed.

If cities and towns of Latin America are very similar in spatial structures, it is also true that each city brings in its own legacy of its colonial past, its inclusion or exclusion in the different economic cycles and its ability to follow pace with the global economy. The culture, history, colonization, religion are factors that have a profound effect on the organizational form of urban space and the mechanisms for building the city. "There is no doubt that the processes of economic globalization have direct and profound consequences on those mechanisms; and this is because they follow the same logic: in India, Venezuela and Mali, New Delhi, Caracas and Bamako are invested by structurally similar processes" (Balbo 1999: 36). The structure of the contemporary Brazilian city is based on a permanent tension between local and global, between social and political dynamics structured in centuries of history and on the need to rush to a global model of development, modernity and well-being, an ongoing conflict between the removal of all barriers (market, but also social and cultural) and the construction of new walls of division of space. All this in the Brazilian city has become clear, explicit, visible in the contrast between super-luxury high-rise next to slums, the difficulty of public transport to maintain the pace of the working masses on the one hand, and, on the

other, the aircraft fleet of high achievers flying over the skies of São Paulo, even physically moving away from the common and real world.

The city has always been the instrument and product of social and economic development, but as said by Annik Osmont (Balbo 2002: 14) “urban development is seen today more than ever as a component of economic development”. Transformations that affect the urban space will be more and more towards making the city “the best possible support” to the demands of the international market, celebrating the end of the political dimension of urban intervention. Thus, we see adrift “the right to the city”, the latter now guaranteed only to those who contribute to the increase in urban productivity: this becomes the parameter so that the townspeople can be integrated in the economic space.

The spontaneous construction of the city manifests itself in many forms and has different names that define their characteristics: slums, tenements, subdivisions, villages. They are born in abandoned buildings, in public or private land not used, in plots with no economic value (on the banks of rivers, in the interstitial spaces between the infrastructures of mobility, etc.) without any authorization or basic service. There are not cogent data on the presence of informal settlements in Brazil because of methodological issues and because of the complexity and fast pace of the phenomenon. The IBGE - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – provides rather underestimated statistics: for example, the IBGE does not consider any informal area with less than fifty housing units. It is possible to rely on more rigorous figures in studies conducted by some municipalities, academic theses, university centers or state government agencies that provide accurate data. Maricato (2001:38), for instance, lists some data from the University of São Paulo on estimates of population living in the slums of big cities: Rio de Janeiro 20%; São Paulo 22%; Belo Horizonte 20%; Goiânia 13, 3%; Salvador 30%; Recife 46%; and Fortaleza 31%.

Exclusion is a complex phenomenon that involves a considerable part of the urban population in Brazil: it means the impossibility of having access to a decent home; to a good quality urban environment, basic services of sanitation, health, education, employment and to the cultural events and political participation that any urban space should offer. The academic debate and public policies in Brazil, both at federal and local levels, have paid attention, since the beginning of the democratic transition (1985), to the theme of urban exclusion both in its sociopolitical and technical dimensions. The desire to expand the forms of democratic participation has led to the definition of new principles and testing programs which, through the involvement of the population, are trying to solve urban problems.

But before entering the study of the phenomenon of informality in its spatial expression is important to reflect on the concept of citizenship in order to understand the meaning of its denial in the different levels at which it occurs in the Brazilian urban universe. A growing number of people resides illegally occupying spaces within the urban fabric in an unlawful manner, not respecting any official regulation. But the exclusion is not confined to the housing issue: those people are often excluded from many aspects of an adequate urban life. These are “quantifiable and not quantifiable factors such as political vote, a safe home, safety and rule of law, quality education, health services at a reasonable cost, decent transport, adequate income and access to credit and to an economic activity” (Task Force 2005: 51).

In Brazil, the issue of citizenship rights has marked the political debate of the 1980s when the end of the dictatorship gave pace to the process of democratization of state and civil society, enshrined in the Constitution of 1988. Yet, according to sociologist Vera Telles what is happening, in fact, is a dismantling of the concepts of citizenship and law in relation to the reconfiguration of the labor market, paving the way for the “citizen wage”. She contends that the ethical perspective of citizenship is becoming “a kind of ritualistic statement that confuses policy and good sentiments, confuses the differences between rights and humanitarian aid, between citizenship and philanthropy” (Telles 2001: 35). When the universal right to be part of the urban life is no longer recognized, or recognized only for those who are able to participate in the urban economic cycle, then the ways of survival resulting from the exclusion of the urban system have been considered illegal if not even

immoral. This means that when urban policies deal with the excluded part of the city their choice need to be justified by referring to the values of humanitarian aid and not rights. According to Milton Santos<sup>22</sup>, it was the speed and combination of such processes as rural exodus, migration, urbanization and rapid economic growth that led to the formation not of the citizen but the consumer, the user (Santos 1987: 13). The consumer feeds on partiality, is satisfied with sectorial answers, his scope is limited; the consumer has no right to debate the goals of public and private actions" (Santos, 1987: 42). According to this view the mere consumer ignores his own rights. It can be said that the issue of lack of citizenship depends on the process of creation of the state: all forms of political and economic systems were imported from Europe, simply reworded or adapted, without the due process of metabolism within the historic, political and cultural landscape of the country. This means the creation of a democratic state, based on concepts of equality and solidarity in a country where the colonial legacy is still strong, despite being disguised. Brazil is still a country deeply marked by racial and economic differences. Culture and politics in Brazil have traditionally been authoritarian, hierarchical, based on a system of ownership and slavery. "It is a society that has experienced citizenship through an unheard figure: the lord citizen, who holds citizenship as a privilege of class, making it a concession controlled by the ruling class in power, to denying it when wanted (as during dictatorship)" (Chaui 1986: 53).

According to Dirce Koga (2003:33) citizenship means "active life in the territory, where most the social relations, relations of proximity and solidarity power relations materialize". The right to have rights is either expressed or denied in the physical space; rights sacrificed or claimed in concrete places: living, studying, working, playing and living healthy lives, to move, deciding and participating. Santos (1987:8) notes the same thing, with particular attention to the cultural character of rights: "without doubt citizenship is learned. Thus, it becomes a state of mind, rooted in the culture. The metamorphosis of this theoretical freedom into a positive right is dependent on concrete situations".

In Brazil, the right to housing, i.e. to a quality urban environment is confounded in most studies with the right to own a home and this is the object of an ideological discourse. The housing programs are designed from a pattern of sub-standard housing, the units are so small and of poor quality "as if people had needs in accordance to the social class to which they belong" (Santos 1987: 45). What the informal city is still able to produce is that quality of dwelling which Illich (1992: 53) attributes to the pre-capitalist past, when to reside meant "to be present in their own signs, to let the everyday life to write the texture of one's biography in the landscape. The traces of human dwelling were ephemeral as its inhabitants. The houses were never completed before the occupation, in contrast to the contemporary commodity housing which starts to deteriorate in the day that is ready for use".

The encroachment of urban land in Brazil is an intrinsic part of the urbanization process. The illegal production of most urban households, as a means of survival, is a result of a speculative housing market that is sustained by the archaic agrarian structure. The land is a knot in the Brazilian society, even in the city: the owners have resisted over time to all discussions and proposals for change. In this scenario it is essential to focus on Erminia Maricato's statement, according to which "the right to invasion can even be allowed, but not the right to the city" (2001: 39). Land occupation is part of the game, but it is easy to see that "is not anywhere that urban invasion is tolerated: in areas with great market value, the law applies" (Arantes, Maricato, Vainer 2000: 161). The illegal occupation of urban land is, in fact, structural and institutionalized by the real estate market, reinforced by the absence of social policies. The reality is disguised under considerable ideological audacity: to attribute to part of the society the responsibility for what is the result of a process that feeds social inequalities. In the media, dominated by the ruling class, the invasion of land is attributed

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<sup>22</sup> Milton Santos (1926-2001). Brazilian geographer and recognized worldwide for his pioneer work in the field of urban development in developing countries; winner of the Vautrin Lud International Geography Prize – the highest award in the field of Geography.

to the actions of the radical left and to popular movements who want to challenge the law. The conquest of a roof by the poor in the city is often described as an activity not only illegal but also permeated by a spirit of dishonesty. The slums were stigmatized from the outset as the cause and origin of urban disorder and not as a reality arising from the exclusion of Brazilian society. The representations of the causes of violence attributed to the poor contribute to the construction of collective images that prevent the working class to transform access to the values of egalitarian order thus becoming legitimate social actors. At the same time, the effigies of violence encourage the middle class to adopt an attitude of urban secession, reflected in the pursuit of material and symbolic boundaries that separate them from the world of popular classes. Segregation is not only the spatial separation, that is, the concentration of a segment of the population in areas well defined: it also implies the institutionalization of their inferiority.

The deepest exclusion is hidden behind the prejudice attached to the place of the city where all citizens live. The man who lives in a slum, or *favela*, is ashamed of his origins, shame fueled by the media, the aggressive and discriminatory attitude of the police, by the exclusion of funding options. In everyday life, there are endless moments when one realizes the slum dweller being treated as inferior in concrete terms. The slum is a "territory not only of poverty but also of social isolation promoted by the stigma of the slums, the marginality of information networks that allow access to the world of work and lack of access to certain jobs because of discrimination" (Queiroz Ribeiro, 2003: 35). Drug trafficking continues to explore this feeling of inferiority and exclusion, of poverty and lack of opportunity, and at the same time the desire for affirmation and participation in the dominant culture of consumption.

In this scenario, there are, however, very positive experiences of rescue of the identity of the slum. These favorable situations emerge even from the realities of drug trafficking victims, to demonstrate the diversity and cultural complexity that has always permeated the *morros* (hills). Starting with the Samba Schools, the Carnival blocks, then neighborhood organizations, all seek to build better social and economic conditions and strive to appreciate the culture and identity of these areas excluded from the city. Studying a slum today is mainly a way to combat both the common and academic thought which plays only one part of the images, ideas and current practices. Studying a slum means mapping the development phases of the urban myth. The phenomenon *favela* was used as an inverted mirror in the construction of civilized urban identity: the goal is to make of *asphalt* and *slum* just one city.

The informality of the contemporary Brazilian city space does not consist of slums only: it is a complex phenomenon that has distinctive and different characteristics. The origin of the phenomenon is linked to the strong urbanization process which has not met a planned production of urban spaces. Since 1964, and in the 22 years of its existence, SFH/BNH (the federal housing authority) and despite the large amount of investment, could not break the impact of the illegal occupation of urban land, and on the contrary, strengthened the duality between the market and exclusion. In the capitalist developed countries, especially in the industrial period, a close relationship linked the wages to the price of the house. The restructuring of production, which began in the 1970s, saw a reduction in subsidies by strengthening the role of the market, but those countries operated on a basis of access to work, universalization of social security and housing rights. In contrast, in countries of peripheral capitalism, the productive restructuring base was hit by a historically socio-economic exclusion. The consequence was the endurance of a constrained housing market: access to the formal market was hampered by a discrepancy between wages (including those regularly employed by the automotive industry) and home prices. "The salary was never adjusted to the price of the house and, in consequence access to the property market was through an informal parallel market made up of slums, housing and self-construction" (Arantes, Maricato, Vainer 2000: 155). As reported by Maricato, between 1995 and 1999 there was an increase of 4.4 million housing units in Brazil when an estimate shows that were produced by the market only 700,000 households. To give an idea of the extent of exclusion in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, only 40% of households earned in that period more than 10 times the minimum wage: 60% of them were off the

market. Thus illegal forms of housing are quantitatively more important than the legal market (Arantes, Maricato, Vainer 2000: 157).

The provision of drinking water, electricity and sewage is notably absent in the informal city. Years may pass before an illegal occupation will be able to connect with infrastructure networks of the city. This occurs for two reasons: by providing basic services governments may seem as legitimizing the "invasion" and thus encouraging the creation of others, and above all governments may seem to acknowledge the status of "informal citizens". Moreover, in many settlements, investments in infrastructure do not produce fruitful results because families do not have a position to pay for services. Again a solution is found in the illegality: in Brazil is called 'cat' an illegal connection to the drinking water network or electricity; this is a reality in every Latin American country, with its own name and the same dynamic. Sewers are often thrown outdoors and are the real problem: they contribute to the pollution of rivers, groundwater and of the environment in general, besides being one of the greatest dangers to the health of the inhabitants themselves. Secondary services, educational and health centers, security and transportation are the last to arrive at the informal city, when they arrive.

The formal labor market cannot absorb the mass of workers residing in the city. Thus the informal economy covers all public areas of the city, composed of hundreds of activities ranging from sales on the streets to the home services beautician, creating new "types of professionals" without any fixed income, tax payments and access to a retirement fund. A major issue for the informal economy is linked to the garbage: in the large Brazilian cities, as in many large cities in Latin America, an important economic sector is structured around the collection, sorting and recycling of solid waste. This is an economy that grows on the basis of thousands of people who collect and separate waste individually or often organized in cooperatives.

Among the main economic activities there is the informal housing market: it follows the same dynamics as the legal, only with inferior products. The land use follows the same rules: housing prices rise with the arrival of new basic infrastructure or the opening of a nearby supermarket, but they lose value for the arrival of new settlers, perhaps the poorest. In the informal city, a house is "sold" and "paid" with a car, but obviously it is not a property that is bought but just the right to occupy that space. The mobility of people within the informal city is very high, which helps to tear the social fabric. Many families living in shacks in the *favelas* pay rents. This is a relatively recent phenomenon and restricted to settlements that have a prime location near the city center or to some transport infrastructure. Here we see the assimilation of the informal city by the speculative dynamics of the formal.

Urban movements have had and still have a very important role in urban management in relation to informal settlements. During the 1970s, urban movements gained an important role in the political landscape. Fighting against dictatorship and political repression of the time, Brazilian society movements were used the channelized the struggle for democracy and human rights. With the democratization process, started in 1985, urban movements assumed a new role in the political context of the country. Without ceasing to be anti-establishment, they engaged themselves in a space where none existed: to integrate and participate in the new political and democratic institutions that were being formed. The strengthening of democratic institutions created a new target for the movements: to submitted proposals and become policymakers as new public policies and rights were emerging from the new democratic legislatures. Moreover, the new institutional framework stimulated different political processes that led urban movements, along with the entire society, thinking about the management and urban planning, and the democratization of relations between citizens and institutions (FASE/CITY 1992: 5).

A fundamental impulse towards more inclusive urban policies emerged during the government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2002-2010) through the creation in 2003 of the Ministry of Cities whose goal is to manage urban development programs and create policies for social inclusion and human development. The creation of the Ministry of Cities was a step forward in that it goes beyond the sectorial divisions of housing, infrastructure, and mobility, to envision the

formulation of integrated policies. Another key aspect of its creation is the attempt to define a national policy for urban development in line with other administrative bodies (state and municipal), branches of government (legislative and judiciary), and the participation of society, plus the coordination and integration of investments and actions aimed at reducing social disparities and to promote environmental sustainability in the Brazilian cities. The structure of the Ministry is now a reference not only for Brazil but for all Latin America.

In the next segment I intend to show how a multidisciplinary approach and public participation are necessary for effective programs for urban regeneration and social inclusion. The integral and multidisciplinary character of public policy acquires a crucial importance when one considers that the habitat is not limited to the physical environment, but it also includes economic, social and cultural development. In the past years attempts were made in Brazil to correct the historical absence of the state in areas of informal occupation through various experimental types of intervention: yet too often ad hoc and sectorial, the actions let still more acute the feeling that there is a city deeply dual, where some are actual citizens, while others are merely inhabitants. The participation of residents in the process of transformation of the territory becomes in this context not only guarantor of quality of the intervention, but above all it is a real opportunity to enable an effective processes of social inclusion.

### **Paths to Inclusion**

The case study that I examine is an urban policy program promoted by the Department of Housing - SEHAB –in the city of Salvador, through funds provided by the IDB– Inter-American Development Bank and the CEF - Caixa Econômica Federal. This was an experimental program aiming to create new tools for the urban upgrading of informal areas in an integrated approach and with the participation of the population. The program was formed in several through a participatory design process held between December 2006 and October 2007. The opportunity to join the team that tackled the development of methodology and the plan was crucial to be able to make these assessments. Working closely with Brazilian professionals, I learned a great deal, while sharing my own experience and developing my own ideas of what it means 'participation'. I will try to define the context in which the program was created, describe its goals and phases, and through the narrative method, I will reconstruct its development, combining objective data with personal evaluations.

The Neighborhood Plan was born into a political administrative regime characterized by decentralized and democratic structures, in which participation has been institutionalized to ensure citizens have access to public policy decision making, thus contributing to the construction of active citizenship. In a country where the political culture is marked by patrimonial and centralized traditions, the new public programs try to establish new relations and mediations between society and the state in order to treat public goods in more democratic way. In this scenario participation emerged in the program of the Neighborhood Plan, which aimed to build an urban plan for the area of Nova Constituinte, through the involvement of residents; other plan objective was to construct spaces for social inclusion.

According to available data in the Salvador Master Plan for Urban Development – PDDU\_- about two thirds of city dwellers live in settlements characterized by informality and lack of infrastructure<sup>3</sup>. The guidelines for structuring the municipal Policy for Social Housing - PHIS - made within the Municipal Strategic Plan for Subnormal Settlements - PEMAS - state that besides the need for new housing due to population growth, the housing deficit also includes environmental issues and the shortcomings of physical infrastructure and social development. With the federal law n ° 10 257 of 2001, known as the City Statute, new urban policy mechanisms were created, ensuring the promotion of social and spatial integration in cities. Among these, there is the instrument of the Special Zones of Social Interest - ZEIS as a means of democratizing access to urban land: used in a

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<sup>3</sup> Designed in 2000 the master plan suffered many objections before its approval in July of 2004.

pioneering way by the government of Recife (capital of the state of Pernambuco) in the 1980s, it is a tool capable of creating a flexible and applicable legislation in areas of social interest, whether in public or private lands.

In the case of Salvador, the ZEIS were incorporated in the PDDU, being recognized as a regulatory instrument for urban planning against exclusion and poverty. The creation of ZEIS, with the preparation of plans, programs and specific projects, is a component of the PDDU providing for the regularization and improvement of the areas of hydro-geological risk or incorrectly located; there is also the incorporation of the old areas of socio-ecological protection under LOUOS -Law of Use and Occupation of Land (Law No. 3377/84, amended by Law No. 3853/88). In addition to the Areas of Socio-Ecological Protection previously identified, 76 areas were considered as ZEIS. The legalization and regulation of housing and urbanization in these areas is a key element of the policy of social housing in El Salvador.

To achieve these goals, the Municipality of Salvador elaborated the Neighborhood Plan. With the participation of residents and their representatives, the plan should develop the directions and goals of the actions being taken for urban renewal, under the coordination of government. The Neighborhood Plan consists of a specific Urban Development Plan and a Neighborhood Statute, which aim to establish standards and criteria for classification of land use, construction, maintenance, community structures, collectively agreed between the residents and local government.

Among the expected outcomes of the Neighborhood Plan there are the strengthening of social and community organization, the promotion of local organizations, thus increasing the sense of citizenship and of individual and collective conscience, including the definition of rules of coexistence and use of urban space. The population has been regarded as an active subject, through the training of agents who are able to organize an information network and especially to stimulate discussion and participation of the residents at all stages of the plan elaboration. The new policy sought to overcome sectorial approaches and included all administrative agencies that work directly with the housing sector: the Municipal Department of Housing - SEHAB, a body which has a specific responsibility for the production of the city housing policy; the SEPLAM and SUCOM, municipal bodies for planning and supervision; the SETIN - Municipal Transportation and Infrastructure and, SEFAZ - Municipal Department of Finance. The SEHAB had the role of coordinator of all housing actions, involvement of all organs of municipal administration by streamlining and leveraging the resources and finance. The aim was to establish a technical and institutional cooperation between the city of Salvador, the state health agency, the urban development division and the State of Bahia Company for Urban Development – CONDER - plus public and private universities.

A very important aspect was the involvement of the university that had a responsibility to prepare the Neighborhood Plan under the coordination of Professor Luiz Antonio de Souza, architect and professor of urbanism at UNEB, a state university. To conduct the activities a multidisciplinary team was created, composed of the coordinator, two planners, an expert in communication and two sociologists: a multidisciplinary approach was essential because of the multisectoral nature of the program. Some UNEB students also participated in the last part of the participatory process and cooperated in collecting data on land use and housing conditions.

The area chosen for the pilot program was Nova Constituinte, a railroad area occupied since 1988 with about 12,000 people. The program objectives were:

- To train the experts of the Municipality of Salvador to act in the informal settlements of the city in a planned way and in agreement with the needs and interests of the inhabitants;
- Analyze and describe the area in order to develop a specific urban plan and a specific methodology for the elaboration of Neighborhood Plans, through the participation of residents;
- Set the proper parameters of the area through the instrument of the Statute of the Neighborhood, which defines the standards of construction and urban planning, the identification of conservation areas, the use of social structures and recreational facilities, making them compatible with the Law of Use and Occupation of Land (LOUOS) in force.



On paper, this program represented a fundamental step in establishing a process of social inclusion and urban regulation, because, on one hand it sought to go beyond the conventional sectorial approach for urban policy; on the other hand it introduced a concept of popular participation not limited to the advisory aspect, but rather it saw individuals as actual decision-makers. Unfortunately, we'll see a discrepancy between the goals and program assumptions and the reality of managing the process by SEHAB. Considering that the training of local experts to work both in the informal areas and in the ZEIS was one of the main goals of the program, the work had to be developed with the direct participation of those experts. This participation took place only in the first meetings with the population: this was a great limitation for achieving the goals for transferring of working methods.

The program was divided into four phases, distinct and interdependent, whose objectives and technical and operational processes are analyzed below.

#### Phase 1: Development of the Sensitization and Mobilization Plan

This first phase corresponds to the organization of the participatory process. Not without reason the program has used the word participation in its description, but the expression is replaced by sensitization and mobilization in its developmental stages. The program stated the need to create a "strategy to find the support of political and community leaders": the mobilization plan had to extend support coming from various sectors of society. Fortunately, neither the coordinator nor the other team members reduced the objective of our work, that is, to seek a consensus. In addition, local actors were always conceived as a potentiality of the area: our role was to contribute to the strengthening and expression of that wealth. The participatory process will be discussed in more detail in the next pages.

#### Phase 2: Specific Urban Development Plan of Nova Constituinte

The Specific Urban Development Plan was equipped with an analysis of the social, environmental and legal context of the area, and a set with a set of guidelines and procedures for the implementation of actions required for land tenure, urban planning and improving the living conditions of inhabitants. This plan was intended to be a reference for City Hall to solicit public investments for improving environmental quality in the pilot area. The Plan was divided into two parts: Integral Diagnostic and Priority Actions. The Integral Diagnostic is a tool that includes analysis of the main problems and the potential of the pilot area. The second part of the Plan, i.e. an indication of the priority projects and actions, included the definition of all actions in the short, medium and long term to intervene in the urban fabric. The goal was to achieve integrated solutions to specific problems of the community, thus becoming a tool to guide the decisions of public authorities, companies providing public services, the non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in the area, as well as to facilitate the attraction of resources and the identification of projects to be implemented.

#### Phase 3 - Development of indicators for the Statute of Neighborhood

This phase was intended to develop indicators for the statute of the neighborhood, a tool designed to be similar to a condominium statute, which would serve to guide the co-existence among the inhabitants. This aspect of the program is a very complex issue, mainly because the objectives were not clear. It was never stated what kind of effectiveness of legislation would have this new tool, if the bylaws would be voted on by the City Council and signed into law or not. Therefore, the process for building a real adherence to the new legislation contained in the Statute had to spring from awareness by residents about the importance of the instrument, and especially the establishment of these rules in a participatory manner. To reduce this complex process, as did the program, to a consensus of standard rule is part of an unreliable and ineffective approach. Nobody would respect the new statute, nor would use the legal system to enforce them. It would therefore be one more law

not observed, resulting in frustration of the people involved in new programs without adherence to reality.

Phase 4: Systematization of the methodology for the preparation of the Plan of Neighborhood in the pilot area.

This last phase of systematization of all the work, highlighting the different parts, processes and outcomes, aimed to define an implementation methodology, which takes the form of a technical manual that can be used again in other areas of the Plan of Action of SEHAB. This document is accompanied by the Neighborhood Plans Booklet, made with a simplified language, which serves as a means of effective communication, so that citizens understand the instrument of the Neighborhood Plan and its potential.

### **The attempted participation**

The goals of participation in Nova Constituinte were, in substance, three. On one side it was intended to engage residents in defining problems and necessary changes for the neighborhood, so that these were adequate to reality. In addition, it aimed to stimulate a process of critical analysis regarding the complexity of urban management and the phenomenon of socio-spatial segregation, and contribute to the *empowerment* of society regarding the right to city and citizenship rights. Simultaneously, it tried a methodology, to achieve the stated goals that in principle could be effective and applicable in other areas of the city. These three components were always present in the work of defining the appropriate instruments through a continuous process of evaluation and re-definition. The fact that this process was built into the university environment is an additional value. The public university is the place of academic training and research, whose production is aimed at the welfare and development of the community. The preparation of the Plan of Neighborhood was an occasion of confrontation and collaboration between the scientific, the public administration and society realms to build paths to social inclusion.

#### *Resistance to the participatory process*

The lack, in most cases, of schools, kindergartens, public transport, community spaces, represents the absence of the state on the outskirts of the city and contributes to a lack of public confidence in the possibilities of participation and effective transformation of reality. This distrust sets the framework of the difficulties faced in the development of the methodology above described. There was not only the absence of the state but also the frustration with the unmet expectations. Nova Constituinte had been the target of other public policies of previous administrations, but the actions proposed were never implemented.

Facing the need for urgent action to address the lack of sanitation and other public services, the population feeling is that every action in favor of the welfare of the community must produce short-term results: thus, participation in building a plan that provides long-term changes is not very attractive. The value of the Neighborhood Plan is to be an urban and legislative instrument, which for being built with the input of residents, and detached from government changes, citizens should defend it as their right.

What resulted, in fact, was a clear lack of collective articulation, which is the source of popular pressure that can monitor and demand the application of legislation. The most frequent question of residents of Nova Constituinte during the process is illustrative of the situation: "How (or when) we'll see where the Neighborhood Plan will take us?" On the one hand, a legitimate claim; on the other hand, an expression of the patronage or clientelistic practices, and of circumstances that do not include the commitment with the construction of social transformations.

Facing a story that tells about people's frustrations with governmental actions, the team identified one of the variables that explain the low representation of residents in the events promoted. This resistance is a product of different factors that, if explored, become consistent references in

evaluating the results of the process. The resistance of the population regarding understanding, acceptance and participation depends on social aspects such as literacy level, cultural factors, level of trust, without forgetting the difficult material conditions of existence of the majority of population.

#### *The team*

Among the goals of the methodology for the development of Neighborhood Plans was the need to determine the ideal team to be able to manage effectively the process of mobilization. The importance of interdisciplinarity was already present in the program and through the work of experimentation it became fundamental in Nova Constituinte. Interdisciplinarity here understood as a coordinated and intensive cooperation on the basis of a common purpose, which is different from pluri-disciplinarity (juxtaposition of different disciplinary knowledge in order to reveal the relations between them: cooperation without coordination) and from multi-disciplinarity (various disciplinary knowledge without the cooperation among the relevant professionals). The team, led by an architect-urban planner, had the collaboration from two professional planners, a communication specialist and two sociologists. This composition could be effective if it had happened within that very complex process of interaction between the disciplines that distinguishes an interdisciplinary approach; yet this process only happened in the first phase of work which then stood in the hand urban planners only.

An important aspect that merits reflection is the inexperience of some experts with participatory methodologies and working in underserved areas of the city. Far from being a personal criticism, this represents an important element of the experimental process that leads us to consider the importance of the training of specialists and the systematization of experiences and methodologies that can become useful scientific references. A strong limitation was an emotional and little controllable factor such as fear: the lack of knowledge of the outlying districts like Nova Constituinte and the stigma of violence inside it caused in most specialists a feeling of personal insecurity in the neighborhood. This aspect resulted too limiting to build trust with the residents, above all else because it limited the visits to the neighborhood. In building the participatory process the complaints most often heard were about the selection of adequate techniques for engagement and communication. Finding the right methodologies of communication was one of the most complex tasks in working with the population. It was intended through the participatory process to build channels of dialogue and overcoming prejudices between different interest groups to achieve greater social justice. Our goal was both to know, inform, build trust, listen, learn, encourage, building a relationship of exchange and reciprocity. The process of involvement was not limited to the leaders already in the neighborhood, but rather opened up the entire population of all age groups, according to the broad goal of enhancing the knowledge of non-experts and raising awareness in relation to the exercise of citizenship rights.

The specialists from the beginning took the complex role of mediators, helping to establish channels of communication and cooperation between public administration and the local population. The fact that the university is an independent institution for the purpose of training and research has helped people not see the team as directly involved with the municipal administration or the defense of the interests of politicians; rather it was possible to establish some trust as people perceived the process as an opportunity of positive transformation for the community. The relationship between the local community and the public administration went through some conflict and crisis. On the one hand this was due to the mistrust of residents in relation to the public agencies; on the other hand due to the lack of clarity often demonstrated by the SEHAB. In such case the team tried to act as interpreter of the needs of both parties favoring an open dialogue and promoting conflict management.

A very important aspect of the strategy of involving local people was the introduction of *Multiplicadores* (multipliers). Already in the first meeting for the official presentation of project a proposal was made to the population to create a management group, composed of volunteers who were to accompany the development of the neighborhood plan, through a commitment to active participation. This group had the role to be spokesman of the community in the plan activities, encouraging popular participation: the team established 13 Multipliers. Whereas the word Manager

has the implicit meaning of centralization and power, quite contrary to inclusion and responsibility that contains the word Multiplier, the team chose to rename it for the sake of a better definition for community awareness. The meeting for the election of the group of Multipliers was exciting: the first part discussed the eligibility criteria and soon after people went to vote. The moment was important to assess the level of political maturity of the residents who showed interest to take responsibility in the name of collective interest. Unfortunately this strategy did not work very effectively: many of the volunteers elected were not present in several meetings and there were no conditions to create a true collaboration between the team and the group of Multipliers.

The team in Nova Constituente developed a plan of action that relied on interviews, workshops, seminars, visits with residents of the neighborhood and thematic discussions. Paba (2004: 35) shows that "to see and listen to the people, know how to decipher the needs and desires, is a major instrument for achieving quality in the interventions of urban transformation". The team worked always trying to answer questions and take into account the needs of the population, trying to understand the peculiarities of the area and while helping to explain the Neighborhood Plan. For the team, the involvement of residents did not mean only a means to achieve better results: it represented a goal in itself, capable of providing the essential meaning of the policy of transformation of the city.

The components of the task to get the involvement of local residents can be resumed in the following four categories of communication:

- Information (to clarify, explain, advertise)
- Personal communication (presence, availability, reliability)
- Training (creating the conditions for confrontation)
- Dialogue (respect, appreciation and exchange)

A key aspect for the success of a process of popular participation is information. When the target audience has no access to channels of communication (press, internet, etc.), as in the case of residents of Nova Constituente, it is necessary then to find other ways to reach the greatest number of people. In the case of the experiment in Nova Constituente, the solution was the organization of meetings to present the project, and the development of pamphlets to be distributed in the neighborhood, directly into the hands of people, or hanged on the main street walls and in places such as markets and churches.

Regarding the production of information materials and their dissemination it is interesting to evaluate the process of evolution of language and graphic expression used through a comparison between the early and late pamphlets. At the beginning these tools were built upon the importance of the written text, attempting to explain the themes of the Neighborhood Plan and its importance through a very technical language. After the first meetings of the participatory process, knowledge of reality produced simpler solutions through a more basic graphics and reduction of the written text: the attempt was that of finding the most appropriate and effective language to communicate with residents.

#### *Inter-personal communication*

The presence of technical staff within the neighborhood and the availability to answer questions and doubts to clarify aspects of the program made of attention and listening substantial elements to create an egalitarian relationship and one of trust with residents. The majority presence of women within the team contributed to the involvement of females, usually weaker on participation, but they felt the desire to express their own doubts and the ideas themselves. Many people who showed interest in our presence were also trying to understand the nature of our visit: it meant problems or opportunities?

It is natural that the population had defensive reactions in relation to those external agents that came with a project, data and looking dominant. Two attitudes were prevalent: the suspicion and denunciation. Some voiced the concerns in relation to another project that the administration had not

complied with, while others had requests for interventions in specific situations to solve individual problems. As mentioned above, the Brazilian political culture is not conducive to citizen involvement beyond electoral politics; it demands urgent action to meet the basic necessities of life with dignity, without consuming time of people who mostly live in poverty. The university team helped to limit liability and accusations that would have been reserved for the City Hall officials: thus the team contributed to the establishment of an open dialogue by listening, which created trust. Little by little, the team actions turned it an ally of the population and not of City Hall.

Through the trust established in the first phase of promotion it was possible to start the organization of meetings and discussions. According to the educational methodology developed by Paulo Freire<sup>4</sup>, the need for change must be born from the popular discussion, spontaneously, from the social actors themselves through the analysis of various factors determining the life conditions of the place where they live (Freire 2005: 23). Since the first study of the area it became clear the weakness of people to solve social problems in the neighborhood, to fight for their rights of citizenship, not lacking, however, some residents politically mature that naturally became a leadership. What is missing in many of popular movements is not the critical thinking, but rather what they lack is the access to cultural codes that validate the scientific knowledge structure, which is essential for the emancipation of the popular movements and their cause. The difficulty is due to the fact that the issues are political in essence and highly complex: they cannot be resolved by unequivocal solutions. In troubled environments it is easy for residents to become accustomed to uncritical pity, blaming the authority without an elaborated analysis of the factors that are the basis for transformation. The team's objective was to stimulate a critical discourse on the dynamics of city construction, and also foster the ability to imagine change and practical solutions for Nova Constituente.

### *Dialogue*

For that to happen, a real dialogue has to occur under certain conditions: respect and mutual trust and the use a common language. It is essential to express the appreciation for the content of others which is what causes the process to be rich to everyone. Among the structured activities developed to build such a dialogue were the visits to the neighborhood and the thematic meetings. According to Sclavi (2002: 206), "the visit to the neighborhood assumes and affirms in practice a reciprocal relationship between professionals and residents, thus eliminating relations of domination-dependence, and recognizing a reciprocal intelligence and the learning opportunity for both parties".

The purpose of the visits organized by the team along with the group of Multipliers was to recognize and value the people's knowledge of the territory, that is, "ordinary knowledge, neither professional, nor technical, but rather an integrated vision, given by the flow of everyday the environment" (Sclavi 2002: 206). During the trajectory, the residents showed significant elements, stopped to tell their experience or to make reflections on the characteristics of the neighborhood. The specialists asked for clarification on issues of specific importance, stimulating new ideas. This exchange represented a key moment for the enhancement of non-expert knowledge, thus providing a real moment of interaction and dialogue. The thematic meetings were a methodological strategy chosen by the technical team to deal effectively with the vast amount of information they wished to discuss with the population, using an accessible language on several aspects of urban life.

In search of a language accessible to the local population new dynamics were created to generate conflict situations based on the reality of Nova Constituente; residents could then compare the information submitted by the technical staff with their own personal strategies for use and management of space, suggesting the elements to be used in constructing the Urban Plan and in the definition of priority actions for solving the real problems of the community. The importance of communication in the process of community involvement is evident in the training model developed by Freire. Regarding the big picture of urban planning, such relevance gains new perspectives: urban

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<sup>4</sup> Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Brazilian philosopher and educator, proponent of critical pedagogy. Author of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ( 1970 ) and worldwide recognized for his contributions to innovative pedagogical methodologies.

design requires greater attention attached to representation, considering the complexity of the themes. According to the pedagogy developed by Freire, the paths of liberation of the oppressed begin with the "conditions that he must discover himself and conquer as subject of his own historical destination" (Freire 2005: 8).

These conditions in our case, matched the team's capabilities to make the residents express their opinions regarding the neighborhood problems and the desire for transformation. For this purpose some posters were used with photographic images representing the major problems in the neighborhood. On these occasions we used also a model (mock-up building) of the area which was produced in a workshop with teenagers from the neighborhood. The model proved to a very effective tool for understanding the entire locality. The results of the thematic discussions were inserted in Integrated Diagnostics as sources of data and analysis of the studied area.

### *Workshops*

The workshops, proposed and conducted together with the residents of Nova Constituinte, arose from the need to involve and value the different participants, in terms of age and gender that existed within the community and as way to strengthen the capacity of representation and identity of the neighborhood. Seminars and meetings are types of encounters that can involve a proportion of the population fairly homogeneous: in its majority they are adults aged 20 to 50 years. The team wanted to include in the participatory process the other components of the population (children, adolescents and elderly) who were not motivated to take part of the seminars.

Also there were other questions: so far the participatory process was relying very little on instruments of representation of the area contributing to hinder communication with the residents and to hamper the ability to describe and plan the transformation of the neighborhood. As mentioned above, many of the encounters were entirely made up of verbal communication which can hinder the identification of problems and specific places, which was one of the biggest limitations of the participatory process. The aim of the workshops was the representation of the neighborhood with three different techniques: photography, three-dimensional representation with the construction of a model (mock-up building) and video.

### *The Model Workshop*

The extension of the area considered by the plan and the low knowledge of it by most of residents, who often knew only the places near home, complicated the ability to have a complete, unified view of possible changes. The construction of a three-dimensional model (mock-up building) seemed a good solution to solve this problem and allow the population to view the area as a complex and stimulating a process of self-representation. The models are effective study tools that facilitate the understanding of spatial information and of the process to determine the possible and desired changes.

The decision was to involve the neighborhood teams in the construction of the model, for being this a practical activity that could result in interesting and stimulating for them. The recognition of adolescents as active components of the territory was not part of the traditional characteristics of the neighborhood: young people had been affected primarily by the lack of facilities for education, leisure and culture; their presence in the assemblies organized by the team was very limited. Yet, in our opinion was very important the expression of the needs of other categories of residents because in this way the plan would accommodate the demands of all dwellers.

### *The "My View" Workshop*

Women have a key role in urban life and a most important still in the informal city. They often are the only heads of the house, abandoned by their husbands, having to support their children alone, and confronting all problems linked to economic insecurity, lack of basic education and health services, and difficult access to the job market. Women are more vulnerable in addition to being very important actors in the change process: therefore we decided to propose a workshop which, through

photography, would promote and value and the everyday life that women live in the neighborhood. The issue of gender still needs much discussion in the world in order to address the situations of oppression and violence. Through photography each participant could tell something of herself or her reality.

There are three essential elements for making a photograph: the subject, the photographer and technology. This analysis focuses on the act of photographing, and recording an image. Here the photograph is a dual witness: of what reality shows the frozen in the image, and of what tells the author. It represents a fragment of reality selected by a person, which arises from the intersection of the coordinates of the specific situation: space and time. The photographer and the photograph are the components of an indissoluble binomial that characterizes the contents of the photographic image: it documents the world view of the photographer, "her state of mind and her ideology end up appearing within the images themselves, especially in those who she produces for herself as a form of personal expression" (Kossov 1985: 27).

### **Evaluations and drifts**

At this point it is important to summarize the evaluation of the experience of participatory preparation of the Neighborhood Plan from which are born various reflections. First let's look at the responsibility of governments. If the merit of having conceived and promoted a policy of innovation as the Neighborhood Plan highlights the commitment of SEHAB to deal with the problematic of the informal city, one must say that the difficulties in managing the program have not been few. The basic limitation is certainly a distance between theory and practice that characterized the Neighborhood Plan since the beginning. Part of that attitude has been the lack of transparency that SEHAB demonstrated during the entire project, accompanied by communication difficulties and lack of presence of technicians or specialists. Furthermore, and although the Neighborhood Plan emphasized the importance of going beyond the sectorial approach in urban policy, in fact, the latter proved to be structural in land management and one can consider that the attempt failed. Ultimately, the complex bureaucracy that characterizes almost all governments has created obstacles and delays which have impacted negatively the process: the delay in payments, in money transfer for activities, and in the salary of professional staff has contributed to the halt of the participatory process.

Regarding the methodology developed by the team for the participation of residents, the limits were related to poor knowledge of the reality of informal settlements, and the consequent difficulty of finding the appropriate language for effective communication. The weak presence of community organizations in the neighborhood indicated a generalized indifference of the population in relation to problems, low confidence in the activity of political protests, and the existence of a traditional attitude of patronage.

### *Reconsidering Participation*

"Participation is a term misused almost as globalization" (Mortari 2008: 18). This is not to say that the misuse should force us to abandon participation: on the contrary, we must always give it new meanings, since participation is part of an experimental process that requires constant reconsideration. The terms "participation" and "democracy" in Brazil are widely used by various social sectors. It is possible to find the defense of these concepts in government programs of virtually all political parties. If promotion of the terms can be considered a victory of a civil society that has struggled for the inclusion of the traditionally marginalized segments in political decisions, it is easy to see that beyond the appropriation of terms, the political and cultural meaning and implications are highly questionable. It is a fact, however, that with the Constitution of 1988, participation grew, and subsequently many participatory experiences characterized by intense creativity were developed by local governments.

In 2003, the Polis Institute, organized a seminar entitled "The ways of democracy and participation" which was held in São Paulo with the engagement of NGOs, intellectuals,

representatives of various forums (*Reforma Urbana, Segurança Alimentar*, among others) and research centers in roundtable discussions. The results of the seminar indicate that democracy is understood not as a system of consensus, but as a continuous work on the issue of conflict. It is an open political system, which not only guarantees the rights acquired, but creates new ones, transforming itself over time. "Democracy is a form of politics in which, unlike all others, the conflict is considered legitimate and necessary, generating spaces of institutional mediation where the conflict can express itself "(Chaves Teixeira 2003: 24).

Thus comes to the forefront the difference between the concept of *opposition*, in which conflict is resolved without a change in the structure of society, and of *contradiction* that takes shape only with the actual transformation of society. It is also recognized the "naturalization of economic and social inequality, ethnic differences, considered as racial inequality between superiors and inferiors, religious and gender differences, being the naturalization of all visible and invisible forms of violence" (Chaves Teixeira 2003: 27). These social conditions determine political relations that are hierarchical and vertical, which occur in the form of favors, clientelism or protection, all blocking both the practices of representation the participation. Often, the social characteristics associated with poverty are indeed structural issues that are only made worse by poverty.

The discussion of participatory urban planning in Brazil is not new, and some attempts merit elaboration. Porto Alegre (the capital of Rio Grande do Sul state), which became internationally famous thanks to the design of participatory budgeting, and also a series of experiments conducted in other cities (including Angra dos Reis, Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba), are examples that may provide parameters for the assessment of new models of urban planning based on popular participation. Budget management and urban upgrading of informal areas are very different policies. They require structures of participatory processes quite different, but both are interesting for our reflections. We will try to deepen some specific aspects.

About the Participatory Budgeting, first elaborated by the municipal administration of Porto Alegre in 1989, and subsequently approved and tested in many Brazilian and European cities, Allegretti and Herzberg (2004: 4) said: "Participatory Budgeting is a privileged instrument for promoting a real opening of institutional machinery and an effective direct popular participation in decision making process of the goals and distribution of public investment, overcoming the traditional advisory role only, and thus creating a bridge between direct and representative democracy". Through a complex structure of advisory and deliberative means, citizens were asked to choose how to use a portion of the budget (between 10 and 20%) of public administration in a few sectors of activity (urban infrastructure, culture etc.). For our evaluations it is interesting to consider the conclusions reached by scholars on compared experiences of participatory budgeting in Latin America.

Also according to Herzberg and Allegretti (2004: 3), "the result of a process tends to be proportional to the presence of four basic factors:

- 1) The political will that supports participatory budgeting;
- 2) Associational density and capacity for self-organization of the social fabrics;
- 3) The consistency and refinement of the elements of the process;
- 4) The administrative and financial capacity of the agency that manages the process".

Among examples of successful policies of upgrading of informal areas, we highlight the experience of the Laboratory of Housing, from the University of São Paulo, with the preparation of the Plan of Action for the Jardim Angela (a São Paulo low income neighborhood). In many ways it resembles the approach of the Neighborhood Plan of Nova Constituinte, but it distinguishes itself by the breadth of actors and sectors involved and the effectiveness of the methodology. The program, administered by the university in this case, required the involvement of public officials, health and community workers to conduct a series of local projects developed collectively. This dynamic interactive task, involving all social actors as protagonists of the plan, meant that the Plan of Action



was distinct from more traditional forms of urban planning, without being a set of instructions to be followed literally. Some parameters were defined; a common thread to the experiences of intervention had to be developed through forms of integrated, participatory and co-responsible local management. (Lab Hab 2003: 44). In addition, the program, again, affirms the importance of building policies that are no longer sectorial: the Action Plan should become a beacon for all the state agencies that, according to the instructions, should be able to build shared projects, and support their implementation. Finally, the Action Plan asserts the need to generalize this type of intervention to all remote areas and not just limited to situations of special difficulty.

When it comes to urban policy and public policy in general, it is important to pay attention to the necessary contextualization. What has been possible to develop in Porto Alegre would have been unthinkable in the same period in a city like Salvador. This is because of historical reasons already discussed, and the differences in political and social realities. We, therefore, avoid the use of successful experiences developed somewhere with its own social and political situation, as an evaluation criterion for younger attempts with a strong experimental character.

The two cases reported, without being exhaustive in relation to political democratization and participation in urban management in Brazil, are a pretext to make some points: let us also mention the theoretical elaborations of Italy, especially in relation to the concept of participation produced in academy. Starting from the concept expressed by De Carlo that "there are no recipes for participation; if participants and their reasons change, participation also changes: it is necessary to invent participation and experience it every time" (Sclavi 2002: 245). Thus, we can say that the purpose of research on participation is not the establishment of standardized techniques or parameters, but the creation of the cultural and theoretical foundations that can move with agility. The world of participation is constantly changing and is characterized by a multifaceted nature, experimental and sometimes contradictory. The importance of citizen participation in urban policy has become a widespread concern on the one hand because of the crisis of the traditional system of political representation and changes in the "grammar of life and city space." On the other hand, citizen participation is relevant in recognizing the necessity of "a more nuanced understanding of needs" and a "quality requirement of politics" (Paba, Perrone 2002: 34-35). Reconsidering participation assumes the reconsideration of some aspects that are at its base.

#### *Political attitude*

The political attitude in building plans determines the outcome of the project (Magnaghi 2005: 135). The effectiveness of political participation consists primarily of a long-term planning, investment of adequate resources and effective implementation of the proposals arising from the decision making process.

Both planning and urban management, from their inception, were drawn from a privileged place and built on the basis of a "responsible speech" about the city: we can define it as an ideology of power that creates a dichotomy between the knowledge of experts and users, the latter considered those incompetent and bound to obey. The public policy is considered an expert issue and the decisions become purely technical and, therefore, are expressed in languages incomprehensible to most of society. This attitude does not value the "minor" ideas and proposals and the criticism produced in the same professional environment. In the same vein, there are not considered the practices of activists and militants of the social movements, which represent a scattered intellectual memory, usually not formalized.

The recognition of the importance of the non-expert knowledge is the basis of the radical change we need to do to go from a vertical and hierarchical policy to one that implements the principle of democracy in its broadest sense. This is a practice that Paba defines as an "effective participation process", which necessarily requires "a courageous and responsible administration, even willing to take risks for the construction of new public goods" (Magnaghi 2005: 134). The actual process has to be guided by the concept of "libertarian participation", which, referring to the reconstruction made by Mauro Giusti of the three inspirations that guide the practices of planners and managers in the

experiences of participatory planning, is based on "confidence in the creative capacity of the interactive game and on skills of interpretation and design of its inhabitants" (Magnaghi 2005: 133). This approach is still a goal to be achieved.

### *Collective Substance*

One of the goals of participatory processes is certainly strengthen the civic sense and extend the rights of citizenship. This becomes a fundamental value in societies characterized by profound historical exclusion of part of the population such as Brazil. Participation becomes not only necessary for effective policies for urban renewal and transformation, but also the opportunity for a more equitable distribution not only of resources but also the rights and political power. Obviously it is not possible to reverse the direction of city growth without reversing the direction of social relations. As pointed out by Maricato, "the production and appropriation of urban space not only reflect the inequities and social contradictions, but reaffirm and reproduce them" (Arantes, Maricato, Vainer 2000: 170).

The construction of a new urban paradigm is part of the struggle for a new society and the participatory tools, when designed as genuine tools of *empowerment*, become essential tools to win that fight. The definition of a project to transform the everyday experience of the city occupies a key place in the construction of utopia: here the key is not to believe in the transformative potential of a sum of sectorial proposals, but believing in the universal dimension that is present in each one of them. The process of formulating a plan may be more important than the plan itself: for technical or legislative writing, innovative as it can be, does not produce political participation that is achieved through a participatory process.

The characteristics of the exclusion in Brazil, which manifest themselves in the urban dimension, relate to the economic development opportunities, access to education and health services, and more generally the quality of life and opportunities for personal achievement. This type of exclusion is experienced by the citizen and at the same time by a social class that no longer enjoys a collective consciousness. The Marxist reading of society is no longer effective in the contemporary Brazil. This lack of class consciousness, while contributing to maintaining *the status quo*, also forces the civil society to rethink new paradigms of reference and to think of new ways to achieve democracy and justice. If the collective consciousness is the set of feelings and beliefs common to members of a society and it governs individual conduct, in the Brazilian society, for a large part of the population, the consciousness is one of exclusion, resulting not only from an external and coercive dimension, but also from a process of internalization of values and social norms. In this sense, the concept of class was replaced with the community, probably with overconfidence. Class consciousness is the result of a political awareness that the concept of community, much more complex, does not have. Any material or objective link in itself does not produce a sense of belonging, if not perceived as such by social actors.

But the feeling of belonging to the informal city, by the part of its residents, is often denied because it is a place considered second-class by the society; the condition of illegality is often considered morally unacceptable by the people who created it: they refuse to belong to the place and consider it as a period of transition due to necessity, which will soon be overcome through the genuine integration of the city, through the move to a formal neighborhood. There is, however, the opposite trend, which is also very present: to consider the neighborhood itself a sacred place, the conquered access to a house, a place where we can build our own life: this is the affection for the place affirming our right to exist; it produces constructive attitudes, which are based on the recognition of the potential for transformation.

The tendency by the authorities to think of these neighborhoods as structured communities is deeply distorted and it is the result of a naive and distant vision of poverty: the informal settlements in fact offer a variety of needs, often conflicting, and heterogeneous ways of perceiving the city and imagine the future. This government attitude affects the policies, because it does not consider the real situation of internal social fragmentation and therefore does not provide appropriate methods and

actions. If we consider the feeling of belonging to a community a useful feature for a positive transformation of the informal areas, if not the basis for the effectiveness of any social policy, one must look for an intervention strategy which aims to shape the social relations for production of identity and shared values

Therefore it is useful to refer to all the concrete experiences of participation in the transformation of the territory: the spaces of self-construction, called *mutirões*, the creation of small cooperative of services for the neighborhoods, the local associations and, in general, all forms of action and inquiry. The participatory process, therefore, cannot confine itself to a consulting role regarding the changes to be made, but it must involve all forces and resources present in the territory, and, in addition, to find ways to aggregate and make them active on a path of effective and shared transformation.

### *Permanent Laboratories*

The first step to achieve what I have said is to rebuild, or better, to recover an awareness of the value of the territory: this complex and creative task should be the product of a joint effort of all stakeholders and it means to assign a new social and symbolic power to the territory. As stated by Camilla Perrone, to activate "the projective power of citizens requires tools that allow the self-recognition of the community in its territory, to suggest ways and feelings of belonging and responsibility of the places" (Magnaghi 2005:135). We add to this the conviction that the transformations of the territory not only need integrated approaches, but also they must be built on long-term prospects through the creation of entities and structures that know over time the different stages of involvement, planning and execution of plans and that are, in the community, both reference and points of contact between the community and local government.

What in the Neighborhood Plan of Nova Constituinte was just an intuition (the constitution of the group of Multipliers) in other programs it became a structural proposal: this is the case of the Management Group and the Agent of Habitat, proposed by the Lab Hab São Paulo, or the Agency for Local Development of the Italian experience. The local development agencies become important tools preventing that policies are exclusively for emergency situations, contingent and sectorial. These actual instruments for decentralization in the territory become catalytic places for the local needs and tools for coordination between the different actors involved in the transformation. It is important that residents do not only continue to be involved in the process, but that they themselves become promoters of projects.

The road is long and the challenge is enormous. It is necessary to advance towards the creation of real and permanent laboratories of research and planning, involving researchers from various disciplines, technicians and representatives of local residents. These laboratories should be able to give life to a process which first retrieves the peculiarity of the territory and then develop and implement small acts for physical, cultural, economic and educational, changes, all built on synergy between different actors. Initially promoted by the city administration, these spaces of decentralization of power must learn to walk alone, becoming a responsibility of the civil society.

### **In Conclusion**

Given the urgency of the needs of everyday life, research easily loses value, or, paradoxically, it wins. The paradox lies in a temporal component: the distance between the speed with which the phenomena that govern the city advance and the slow pace of the construction of knowledge and formulation of new attitudes. It is a paradox with which, those who decide to face the complexity of reality through processes of experimentation, must learn to live with. In the face of urban poverty we want to have immediate and efficient solutions; but in reality we must accept that solutions are the result of slow and unpredictable processes that require time and energy because dealing with the root of the problems requires patience and determination.

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