



centro de estudos da metrópole


ABC
Associação Brasileira
de Ciência Política

URBAN SPOILIATION



LÚCIO KOWARICK



In Memoriam

URBAN SPOILIATION

Translation
Matthew A. Richmond

LÚCIO KOWARICK

Centro de Estudos da Metrópole
and Associação Brasileira de Ciência Política, 2024

This English edition was made possible
by the support of the São Paulo Research Foundation - (FAPESP)

[Grant Number: 2013/07616-7]

and the Leverhulme Trust Leverhulme

[Grant Number: ECF-2019-315]

The photographs included in this edition
were generously provided by Antônio Saggese
(pages 61, 81, 82, 109, 126, 165, and 174)

and downloaded from Memórias da Ditadura:

<https://memoriasdaditadura.org.br/fotografia>

(pages 31, 200)

Original publication:

Kowarick, Lucio.

A Espoliação urbana / Lucio Kowarick.

Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1979.

(Coleção Estudos brasileiros; v. 44)

São Paulo (Cidade) - Condições sociais

Sociologia urbana I. Título II. Série

CDD - 301.36

CDU - 301(1-21)

308(816.11)

CONTENTS

Preface	6
Translator's Preface	10
Original Preface	19
The myth of the amorphous society and the question of democracy	24
The logic of disorder	32
Autoconstruction of homes and urban spoliation	62
The favela as a formula for survival	83
Uses and abuses: Reflections on the metamorphoses of work	110
In shacks of Cidade Jardim	127
The Citizens of the Marginal	174
The conquest of space	200

PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that I write these lines to open the English edition of *Urban Spoliation*. This is a pioneering 1979 classic of Brazilian (and Latin American) urban sociology, one of the most important publications on the topic. Its ideas, however, have circulated relatively little until now, since books at that time stayed in their original languages and had a hard time even circulating physically.

It is somewhat contradictory that even after the intense dissemination of ideas of comparative urbanism and post-colonial critiques, the ideas of classic books like this depend on this kind of effort to become accessible to international audiences. The production of this edition started with Prof. Mathew Richmond from Newcastle University, who approached me in 2023 with the generous idea of translating the book, to contribute to the circulation of its ideas to a broader public.

For many reasons, this book represented the starting point of urban sociology in Brazil, with profound consequences for the development of the field in other parts of Latin America. It is also a fine example of a study about one specific city – São

Paulo – but which sheds light on much broader processes. For the first time, broader economic processes and the political regime were brought together with the daily lives and practices of urban citizens. This combination resulted in an elegant and precise analysis of space production, favelas, and autoconstruction as survival strategies. The order behind the apparent disorder of space production in the metropolis of São Paulo became visible, as did urban inequalities, poverty, and precariousness.

The book combined insights present in Kowarick's previous work with new elements that came from qualitative fieldwork. Kowarick had already contributed to critical debates about marginality with his previous book "Capitalismo e Marginalidade na America Latina", published in 1975, but originally a PhD thesis completed in 1973. Attuned to the theoretical discussions and style of that time, the book developed a detailed Marxist reading of the peripheral condition of Brazil (and Latin America) in the international division of labor as the basis for a strong criticism of modernization theory and a better understanding of labor informality, understood as part of the reserve army of labor.

He also intensely participated in the collective research effort developed at the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (Cebrap) financed by the progressive archbishop of São Paulo that became the book "São Paulo 1975, Crescimento e Pobreza", published in 1976. That book sustained that the so-called economic miracle of the military governments produced simultaneously and as an intrinsic feature, immiseration, extreme poverty, lack of services, and housing precarity. These did not

result from a lack of capitalist accumulation, but were the main results of a certain form of capitalist accumulation. Its political impact was so significant that the Center suffered a bomb attack by right-wing terrorists associated with the military regime.

Urban Spoliation, however, advances further, allowing a dislocation of his thinking toward understanding the city. It shows explicit elements of continuity from those previous publications, bringing together texts written between 1973 and 1979. However, it is clearly marked by the intense ethnographic work done in favelas and irregular settlements by the author in association with other colleagues in the late 70s. In this book, for the first time, peripheral economic processes and the authoritarian regime of the time were brought together with real people, their survival strategies, housing autoconstruction, land occupations, precarities, and struggles. The result is a refined sociological interpretation of the city, at the same time broad, and embedded in its spaces of precarity and urbanization patterns.

This edition of the book resulted from the efforts of several people. The most central person was Professor Matthew Richmond, who generously translated the book. The project also involved the Brazilian Association of Political Science (ABCP), in the person of its president Professor Vanessa Elias de Oliveira, who wholeheartedly embraced the idea of making a classic Brazilian text more easily available for the international public. Colleagues at the Center for Metropolitan Studies also encouraged and supported the initiative, and Professor Maria Cristina Leme helped with contacts with Lucio Kowarick's daughter Isabel, who also enthusiastically agreed and approved the project.

Finally, Antônio Saggese, the photographer who shot most of the pictures that so well composed the original book gave his approval for the use of the images. I did the technical review and tried to assist with Matthew the challenges of translating into English the vernacular formats and vocabulary of the ethnographic quotes. Héric Moura entered the project at the end to design the volume you have on your screen. The publication tries to dialogue as much as possible with the original book, and at the same time, to renovate its format. The São Paulo Research Foundation (Fapesp) generously supports this project.

We all hope this effort helps to disseminate Kowarick's essential work, but also to bring back to light the lives and voices present in the original publication.

Eduardo Marques
Department of Political Science
Center for Metropolitan Studies
University of São Paulo
July, 2024

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

There is perhaps no closer reading of a text than careful translation. The challenge of rendering highly situated ideas and formulations meaningful across linguistic, cultural and epistemological divides demands intense mental effort. (And, even then, the results are not always entirely satisfactory). At the same time, the almost mechanical act of translating simpler passages allows mental space for meandering reflection on what is being said. By the end, one comes away with the sense of having engaged in an animated, extended and wide-ranging conversation – and at times, negotiation – with the author.

Sadly, I never had the opportunity to meet Lúcio Kowarick. Nonetheless, I have felt his intellectual influence intensely. For two years, as a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre of Metropolitan Studies (CEM), I divided my time between three sites that he frequented throughout his career: the University of São Paulo's Philosophy, Humanities and Human Sciences Faculty (USP-FFLCH), where he completed his PhD and spent most of his academic career; the Brazilian Centre of Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP), where he worked as a researcher during the 1970s and produced *Espoliação Urbana*; and my fieldwork in the periphery of São Paulo, the context that inspired some

of the book's most important insights. It was during this period that I first read *Espoliação* and immediately felt it change the way I looked at the city.

This was the late 2010s, and conditions, in São Paulo and in Brazil, were very different to those Kowarick had analysed almost four decades earlier. Then, Brazil had been in the grip of military rule, with political repression and censorship shaping not only the intellectual climate in which he worked, but also his substantive analysis of urban processes. For Kowarick, authoritarianism was the key to explaining why, in the context of the so-called “Brazilian miracle” of industrial expansion and impressive GDP growth, the country's urban centres were becoming even more segregated, less effectively planned and serviced, and displayed increasingly severe conditions of poverty and housing precarity in their favelas and peripheries.

Kowarick argued that the authoritarian state lay at the heart of this apparent paradox, through its role of facilitating the systematic extortion of Brazil's urban workers both at the point of production and in their conditions of urban social reproduction. That is, the dictatorship repressed and co-opted trade unions and other forms of worker representation, preventing them from demanding better pay and conditions, while also denying residents the services of collective consumption that might at least allow them to meet their basic needs in the city – what he dubbed “urban spoliation”. In this way, the costs of the social reproduction of labour under the “savage capitalism” of the semi-periphery were passed on to workers, their families and communities, and the resulting profits appropriated by the capitalist class.

Much of the *Espoliação* is dedicated to analysing how this

system operated and laying out its disastrous consequences, as workers' bodies and hopes were systematically ground down by Brazilian capitalism. However, peppered across the book, and particularly in the final chapter, Kowarick identifies possible changes on the horizon. The trade union movement was becoming increasingly bold, organising outside the narrow bounds imposed by the Generals. In the peripheries, urban social movements were vocalising louder demands for urban improvements. The highly structuralist vision of much of the book gives way to a cautiously hopeful historicism, emphasising their potential collective agency. Of course, there is no contradiction here such a formulation is central to the Marxist tradition.⁴ But, the change of tone speaks to the emergent conjuncture of the late 1970s. Within ten years of the book's publication, Brazil had a new democratic Constitution and a Workers Party, led by a trade union leader, which would narrowly lose out in the country's first democratic presidential election held under a universal adult franchise. That trade union leader, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, would keep trying, and eventually succeeded in being elected president in 2002.

But if the late 1970s showed the embryonic signs of a new era, in the late 2010s it felt like that era itself might be coming to an end. By then, Brazil had benefited from three decades of

4 Kowarick would later acknowledge a tendency in *Espoliação* towards "structural deductivism", of interpreting the potential of urban social and political struggles based on macro-social determinations. Drawing on the work of E.P. Thompson, he would come to identify the importance of experience, meaning-making, and organisational mediations in shaping the subjectivities and demands of the popular classes. See: Kowarick, L., *Sobre a construção de um instrumento de análise*, *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, 39: 03, pp. 567-576.

democracy and over a decade of Workers' Party government. Many positive effects could be seen in the major cities, including their favelas and peripheries. Basic sanitation was now present in most areas, at least in wealthier cities like São Paulo. Many autoconstructed homes and neighbourhoods were now highly consolidated and interspersed with state-subsidised social housing. Health, education and social services were far more widely accessible, even if service quality and coverage still varied significantly. And peripheral high streets buzzed with popular commerce, the product of consumption-led growth underpinned by a rising minimum wage.

These changes seemed to indicate that the basic elements of Kowarick's formulation no longer held under conditions of democratic government and autonomous civil society, where there was at least some minimal redistribution of the proceeds of economic growth. Yet even at the peak of the boom, all was not well. A substantial contingent of the urban population remained largely excluded from the moderate gains of this period. Even among workers who saw their incomes rise, employment had generally become more precarious with the shift towards a service economy. In major cities, speculative development intensified, often accompanied by the displacement of the poor from desirable urban locations. This especially impacted favela residents, who, despite the creation of some protective legislation, remained vulnerable to summary eviction. Meanwhile, with rising car ownership and inadequate public transport networks, commuting times from the peripheries to places of work – a core element of Kowarick's original analysis – continued to increase.

Then global economic crisis reached Brazil's shores and

conditions rapidly deteriorated, coming to even more closely resemble those of Kowarick's earlier diagnoses. Reactionary political forces ranged against the Worker's Party, manipulating democratic process to impeach Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff, and push through a devastating austerity programme. Unemployment rose, public services were decimated, and, in the cities, homelessness and precarious housing spread. Then, in 2018, Jair Bolsonaro, a former low-ranking military officer and apologist for the dictatorship, rose to the presidency, targeting organised civil society and leftwing forces among his many chosen enemies. Brazilian democracy survived Bolsonaro's one-term presidency bruised but not broken. But it revealed that the authoritarian impulse to repress popular organisation and representation, which Kowarick had captured so powerfully, remained very much alive.

The many prominent Brazilian urban scholars whom Kowarick inspired and mentored over the years have emphasised the enduring importance of his body of work, and of *Espoliação* in particular. Eduardo Marques has argued it “marks the origin of Brazilian urban sociology proper” (Marques, 2017).⁵ Following Kowarick's death in 2020, Gabriel Feltran, Vera Silva Telles and Daniel Hirata (2020) affirmed its continued relevance for understanding the structure of Brazilian cities today: “*Espoliação Urbana* lives on. In Lúcio Kowarick's principal book [...], our master shows that there is neither disordered, nor chaotic, growth in Brazilian cities. [...] The apparent disorder of our

5 Marques, E., *A espoliação urbana e o campo dos estudos urbanos no Brasil*, *Blog Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, 2017. Available: <https://novosestudos.com.br/a-espoliacao-urbana-e-o-campo-dos-estudos-urbanos-no-brasil%C2%B9/#gsc.tab=0> [accessed 17/07/24].

cities has a clear logic.”⁶

But *Espolição*, like any great text, is also a living and breathing work that can be continually reread and reinterpreted. Rereading it via the “conversation–negotiation” of translation, I have been struck by several aspects I had previously overlooked. *Espolição* is mainly celebrated for its more “theoretical” chapters – “The logic of disorder”, “Autoconstruction of homes and urban spoliation” and “The favela as a formula for survival”. This seems to be part of an ascribed disciplinary (and probably gendered) division of labour, in which Kowarick is thought of as an urban theorist and contemporary anthropologists such as Eunice Durham, Ruth Cardoso and Janice Perlman as urban ethnographers. This does a disservice not only to the theoretical contributions of those scholars, but also to *Espolição*’s extremely rich and skilfully constructed ethnographic chapters, “In the shacks of Cidade Jardim” and “The citizens of the Marginal”. While, as he acknowledges, Kowarick primarily organises these chapters through the prism of labour, arguably at the expense of other equally important aspects, he also allows his interlocutors – and the places themselves – to speak. In Chapter 7, the encroaching rubble, slowly closing in on the residents of the “buracão”, hangs like an ominous presence and provides a powerful metaphor for the slow, relentless violence that pervades book.

Today, Kowarick’s overriding focus on labour can give the

6 Feltran, G., Telles, V. and Hirata, D., Lúcio Kowarick foi pioneiro em expor a lógica entre crescimento e pobreza, *UOL*, 2020. Available: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2020/08/26/a-atualidade-de-lucio-kowarick-in-memori-am.htm?cmpid=copiaecola> [accessed 17/07/24].

impression of an anachronistic, orthodox Marxist reading of urban dynamics. However, it is important to remember that his simultaneous focus on questions of collective consumption, social reproduction, logics of peripheral expansion, and popular organisation represented important and innovative responses not only to modernisation theory, but also to narrower theorisations of Latin American urbanisation within the dependency tradition centred on the notion of marginality. Furthermore, even if he does not theorise them explicitly, one can detect his curiosity towards other themes that would become more central to urban debates over subsequent decades, such as gender dynamics and inequalities, informal practices of reciprocity and collective organisation, the material assembly of the built environment in weakly regulated spaces, and the subjective and emotional worlds of those living at the urban margins. Kowarick would explore these and other themes over decades of subsequent work, though always maintaining and building on the key ideas that he laid out most clearly in *Espoliação*.

For all these reasons, Kowarick's influence remains palpable in Brazilian urban studies, and significant across the wider Latin American region. However, his name rarely appears in Anglophone analyses of Brazilian cities, let alone broader urban debates. This is troubling at a time when Anglophone urban scholarship abounds with claims of “decolonising knowledge” and “theorising from the periphery”, but still seems to want to do so on its own terms. The project of translating this book is a small effort towards trying to make these claims live up to their promise. I am hugely grateful to Eduardo Marques, Isabel Kowarick, Maria Cristina da Silva Leme, and Vanessa Elias de Oliveira of the Brasileira Association of Political Science

for their support and respective contributions to bringing this translation to fruition. I would also like to thank the Leverhulme Trust for permitting me the time needed for this undertaking.

A few final words are needed on the translation itself. Until the very final draft, I had intended to use a different translation for the book's title and central concept, “*espoliação urbana*”. The staccato, Germanic “plunder” seemed to carry more impact and to better capture the violence of this idea than the Latinate “spoliation” – a word barely used in English, and which felt obscure, academic and almost too elegant for the book's subject matter. Ultimately, however, I opted for the latter. Somehow, the academic, Latinate noun seemed more in spirit with the book's style, even if it would make for a less punchy title. More importantly, I was informed that even in Portuguese the term was barely used in urban debates until Kowarick proposed it. Allowing him to speak as far as possible in his own words seemed to demand that this central term be translated as closely as possible.

However, this was not always possible, and other terms regularly used throughout the book needed to be adapted. Kowarick often describes workers as being subject to the process of “*dilapidação*”, essentially meaning physical and mental exhaustion and eventual ejection from the labour market. In English, “depletion” seemed to better capture this idea than “dilapidation”. On several occasions, he uses terms like “*engrenagens produtivas*” (productive gears) or “*maquinaria econômica*” (economic

machinery) as evocative metaphors for the Brazilian industrial economy. Where possible, I have tried to maintain the industrial references, but for clarity it was often necessary to use more generic terms like “system” or “process”.

By contrast, I sought to retain the original Portuguese terms for key urban categories such as “favela” and “cortiço”, and I translated “autoconstrução” as “autoconstruction”. These are accompanied by explanatory “translator’s notes” on first use, as are the many place names, organisations, and other context-specific terms that may be unfamiliar to many readers. Chapters 6 and 7 contain extensive quotes from favela residents, often including colloquial terms that could not be translated directly into English. Where this was the case, I prioritised capturing the intended meaning. The references in the original footnotes have been maintained in their original format, except in the case of some official reports that had helpfully explanatory titles, in which cases I translated them into English. Kowarick often used colons and semi-colons within long sentences, which would be stylistically inappropriate in English. In most of these cases, I replaced them with full stops, though always seeking to retain the fluency between ideas.

I have said enough, so will now (I hope) allow Lúcio Kowarick to speak – far more clearly than I can – for himself.

Matthew A. Richmond

School of Geography, Politics and Sociology

Newcastle University

July, 2024

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The city, in the contemporary capitalist world, has been conceived of and lived as a deformity: as the Manhattan of every kind of ambition and daydream, or as the Harlem of daily suffering. In the case of São Paulo, even physically you can see either hell on earth or artificial heavens of reinforced concrete. It is the pointed shoots of Avenida Paulista,⁴ showing off implacable glowing clocks that flash on and off, or the pure kitsch of radio antennae, which reign over the vast encampments of dormitory cities and favelas, where shabby-roofed houses crumble like dry leaves in the sad, distant peripheries.

But the city is also, and above all, the ossified morphology of a form of social division of labour that separates countryside from city and that throws those who have had their means of living expropriated into coexistence with the expropriators. It is, therefore, a living web of social relations and, in the case of the proudly capitalist city, it is also the direct expression of a form of social and economic exploitation.

It was from this angle that Lúcio Kowarick laid São Paulo

⁴ Translator's note: One of São Paulo's most famous streets, where many of the Brazil's largest banks were headquartered.

bare for those who see it every day but do not perceive it. The author is not a newcomer to analysing urban phenomena in the context of a broader productive system and identifying it as a social process. His concern with the phenomenon of urban marginality and with the logic of “disorder” that has characterised São Paulo’s expansion have produced important contributions to the analysis of these problems and are now mandatory reading for anyone interested in the subject.

this new book, Lúcio Kowarick brings together some studies, not all of them unpublished, but all of them refined from less polished formulations and repetitions that could tire the reader. This is not, however, a patchwork quilt. On the contrary, there is a common thread that runs through the chapters, and, upon reading it, an analytical perspective emerges that had not yet been systematically explored in the Brazilian case: that of “urban spoliation”.

I highlight this notion because it presents fertile terrain. Behind it lies the claim that the current form of capitalist expansion – under the impulse of large companies, which are concentrated in terms of investment and which concentrate incomes and populations – reorders the social relations of exploitation and turns control of urban land and the infrastructure of cities into powerful instruments for social spoliation. This perspective, outlined in Chapter III of the book, allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the urban process and, at the same time, of the social and economic processes of exploitation that prevail in capitalist societies. It is not necessary to pre-empt what will be elaborated later in the book, nor do I

want to deny the reader the pleasure of following the author's reasoning to see how, from this perspective, the urban question becomes more intelligible.

The other major theme underlying the analyses presented in the book is that of participation. Much is said in Brazil, especially in the field of political analysis, about popular participation or absence thereof. We still need to show how the modern city opens up new arenas of social and political participation that are fundamental for popular mobilisation, for the effectiveness of democracy, and, who knows, for a socialist future. In the case of Spain, there are very interesting studies along these lines, notably the book by Manuel Castells on *The City, Democracy and Socialism*.

I would not say that the present volume directly adopts such a perspective. But it does open new ground in this direction. It begins by discussing the "myth of the amorphous society" and touches on the forms of organisation that allow survival in the favelas. The final chapters, which reproduce dialogues with favela residents and implicitly raise the question of citizenship in a context of immense struggle for survival, demonstrate the limits of processes of social and political participation in the large city of savage capitalism. Data on the living standards and incomes of São Paulo residents, although familiar to specialists, always hit hard and reinforce the need to deepen our reflections on the possibilities of democratic practice in situations of scarcity.

I hope that within a few years, with the city shaken by waves of strikes, urban demands and movements of oppressed mi-

norities (who are, in fact, majorities), it will be possible for Lúcio Kowarick to take up this theme once again and emphasise the dynamic side of social life in cities. In the meantime, grassroots community organisations, the struggles of peripheral populations, urban protest in general, are still drops in the ocean of structural spoliation that the city manifests. The perspective adopted by the author is therefore justified and helps us to understand the powerful mechanisms that reproduce such spoliation. The time for inconformity will come. It seems to me healthy, therefore, that social scientists should begin to sharpen their analytical instruments and to chart, here and there, the movement of the real, so that the city can be seen and might also become the stage of social renewal. At the limits of sociological realism, Lúcio Kowarick lets us glimpse that the stones that built the urban world of spoliation and inequality can also be dislodged. That this book might serve as a stimulus pushing forward the urban social struggle is the best that one can wish for an author so distinguished by the seriousness of his approach and by his commitment to critical thought.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso

URBAN SPOILIATION

I

The myth of the amorphous society and the question of democracy

It is common to hear that civil society in Brazil is amorphous. What is meant by this is that voluntary associations – political parties, trade unions and other groups that defend collective interests – have rarely managed to unify the popular sectors to advance their demands.

Indeed, when we compare Brazilian society to some advanced countries, we see that participation in voluntary associations is extremely low. Few participate in neighbourhood associations, professional groups, or trade unions and political parties. In the city of São Paulo, for example, a survey carried out in 1973 revealed that 93% of those in the low-income class do not participate in any voluntary association.⁵

Hence, the idea that civil society is amorphous, fragile, essentially “gelatinous”. This idea of fragility acquires new dimensions when it is pointed out that the popular sectors do not

5 A good discussion of social participation of the popular sectors is provided by Berlinck, M., *Social Marginality and Class Relations in São Paulo*, Vozes, 1975.

defend themselves in relation to the preservation or conquest of basic urban goods and services: transport, housing, sanitation, etc... In this respect, the most flagrant phenomenon at present may be the expulsion of the poor sectors to the city's periphery, when public and private investments increase the value of certain areas. A typical example in this regard is the construction of the metro, which causes huge real estate speculation in the affected areas, and the end result: the poor leave and the rich enter, and those who lose out have no possibility of defending their interests.

However, we must qualify such statements if we are to properly situate the question of social amorphism. It must be recognised, from the outset, that social conflicts have emerged intensely at various moments in Brazilian history. Without mentioning recent events, it is sufficient to note that there have been times of intense mobilisation during which the popular sectors managed to develop forms of participation and claims that did not fail to shift the pendulum of state power. Just think of the populist period. Not only did voluntary associations have much to say, but what they did say often had to be seriously considered.

Notwithstanding these facts, it is common for the fragility of civil society to be characterised as a kind of "metaphysical vocation", as if the Brazilian people were, by their very nature, impregnated by a kind of peaceful and passive conformism. Such a vision has often been used as an ideological ingredient to justify the intense control that the state has historically exercised over the social and political initiatives of the popular sec-

tors. That is, given the “natural” fragility of civil society, it falls upon the state to compensate for its “deficiencies”, protecting it within the parameters considered desirable and permissible by the established authorities.

Behind this view lies the idea that the masses are unsuited for functions of government. It is as if the act of governing were, by definition, the privilege of a restricted, enlightened elite, who know what is right and wrong for society as a whole. Within this kind of ideology, not only are the popular sectors unqualified to participate in the decision-making process, but every time they do, politics is degraded.⁶

This wholly elitist and authoritarian view has its roots in broader ideological discourses. Firstly, an ideology prevails in certain circles of the dominant culture that Brazilian society – unlike elsewhere – is harmonious. This way of thinking is supported by certain interpretations of Brazilian history, according to which everything that was done on this side of the tropics occurred peacefully: the discovery of Brazil happened by chance; independence was achieved without bloodshed, a cry was enough for the country to gain its national autonomy. In short, everything that happened here took place without violence: the story unfolded naturally. Once slavery was abolished and this black page of our history erased, the ex-slaves were naturally absorbed into a convivial society: they began to live in a “racial democracy”.

6 For an analysis of authoritarian and elitist traditions, see Kornhuser, William, *The Politics of Mass Society*, New York, The Free Press, 4th edition, 1965.

Secondly, a complement to these interpretations is that social conflicts are seen as exceptional, as something that is not part of the harmonious traditions of the “Brazilian homeland”. Thus, for example, the strikes and challenges that marked the First Republic must have been carried out by foreign elements, supported by illegitimate ideologies alien to the Brazilian social body, which is, by its nature, a healthy social body without conflicts.

Perhaps what orients such a stance is the idea of social contamination.⁷ In other words: Brazilian society is good by nature, but it is also fragile and, therefore, can be easily corrupted by foreign interests. In this regard, it is common to hear in a certain type of discourse that, when a group deviates from its “natural” ways, that is when it criticises denounces or exerts pressure, it does so because it has been contaminated by some germ foreign to its body. From the perspective of this ideological discourse, the emergence of demands, social debate or pressure are easily perceived as conspiracies that threaten the social order. In this kind of understanding, the relations between the state and civil society are inverted: it is no longer social groups that must control the state, through collective channels of representation and participation, but on the contrary, it is up to the state to guarantee what, according to dominant values, constitutes the “good society”. It is from here that we get the claim that law emanates

7 The idea of social contamination can be found in Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Mind and Society*, 2 volumes, London, 1963. For a psychological interpretation of the components of the fascist personality see: Adorno, T. W. et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, 2 volumes, New York, Science Editions, 1963.

from the state. It also where the idea arises of the need to guide civil society until a time when, eventually, it overcomes its immaturity and develops the antibodies necessary to be able to defend itself from the contamination to which it is vulnerable.

According to this elitist and authoritarian view, politics is understood as impervious, special and restricted to the few who know what is desirable for everyone. In this view, the majority should not interfere in decision-making processes because, at least for the time being, it is childish, unprepared, contaminable and, as a result, needs to be guided by a small, enlightened group.

Inevitably, such an interpretation of society has direct consequences for the way in which the economy and politics take shape and, ultimately, undergird the country's development. In this sense, it is immediately necessary to point out a question that permeates this collection of essays and which will be detailed in subsequent chapters. It refers to the fact that Brazil's recent economic expansion can be characterised as a wasteful process. Wasteful, insofar as it has preyed on the part of the workforce that drives the production processes. Thus, on the one hand, it should be stressed that during the period that many refer to as the "Brazilian miracle" the minimum and median wages of urban workers decreased in real terms, in contrast to what had occurred in previous periods.⁸ On the other hand, we should note the increase in infant mortality, working hours and commuting times for those who use public transport, as well as

⁸ The median wage is that which encompasses the lowest paid 50% of workers.

the high unemployment rate particularly affecting older groups.

To pursue a growth model that caused an intense deterioration of living standards, it was necessary to dismantle and repress the initiatives of the many and numerous groups that were excluded from the benefits of development. For as long as such processes endure, any conception of democracy will be compromised, given that economic growth of such a clearly savage nature presupposes that civil society is kept inactive so that it cannot defend the vital interests of the popular sectors.

It should be assumed that the impoverishment and deterioration of basic consumption patterns will persist for as long as the organisations that are instrumental in defending collective interests – essentially, political parties and trade unions – remain under the tutelage and control of the state. As long as the dominant ideology – according to which “social debate increases the costs of production” – has the strength to reproduce itself on a day-to-day basis, civil society will remain compromised with regard to its essential role: the right to debate and organise around collective interests.

Reinvigorating and ensuring the autonomy of civil society is the fundamental struggle that permeates the whole question of democracy. From this point of view, politics cannot continue to be the privilege of a few enlightened people. However, it is obviously not just a question of political democracy understood “*strictu sensu*” as the choosing of rulers and expansion of party representation, because the necessary counterpart to this is the democratisation of economic and social gains.

It therefore seems necessary to place in check the question

of civil society and its relations with the state, particularly with regard to the role played by the subaltern classes in the necessarily complex, contradictory and conflictual framework of this relationship. These can no longer be considered commodities that are sold on the labour market at generally derisory prices. We must instead return to the traditional question of citizenship, understood in its classical sense, that is, the set of rights and obligations to participate not only in the creation of social works but also in the control of these works. That is to say: the expansion and guarantee of the rights and obligations implicit in the exercise of citizenship directly entail not only the possibility of enjoying the material and cultural benefits of development, but also, above all, of intervening in determining that development.



II The logic of disorder

The Greater São Paulo Region is the dynamic centre of the country. Industrial production, the financial system, per capita income, in short, any indicator of economic strength reaches greater heights there than in other areas of Brazilian society.

However, remaining at this level of analysis, which ultimately captures economic performance – but not necessarily the “quality of life” of the population – reveals only one side of the issue and fails to relate two processes that tend to be interconnected: economic growth and the immiseration of large parts of the working classes.

Living conditions depend on several factors, among which the dynamics of labour relations are primordial. Nonetheless, it is possible to read these conditions through analysis of urban expansion, with its services, infrastructure, spaces, social relations and levels of consumption, aspects which are directly linked to the process of capital accumulation.

An examination of Greater São Paulo can begin with observation of the physical-spatial aspects of the metropolis, and then proceed to detect the processes that lie behind this set of

appearances. The disorderly appearance of metropolitan growth can be seen in its irregular layout and the disconnection between its vacant and occupied spaces, which already imply disparate forms of land use. This impression of disorder is even more pronounced when you realise the official map of the city does not reflect reality: there are 26,000 clandestine streets and 5,000 clandestine subdivisions.⁹

The spatial distribution of the population within this chaotic growth reflects the social conditions of the city's inhabitants, mirroring spatially the segregation that prevails within the sphere of economic relations. The intensification of problems affecting the quality of life of São Paulo's population does not affect the city in general. Over the last three or four decades in particular, peripheral neighbourhoods have emerged and expanded, which, together with traditional cortiços¹⁰ and favelas,¹¹ house the working population. It is in these areas that the poverty of the city and its inhabitants is concentrated.

It is convenient to begin with a quick historical reconstruction. In the early days of industrialisation and basically up until

9 Translator's note: Clandestine subdivisions [loteamentos clandestinos] are subdivisions of land carried out without prior public authorisation and which fail to comply with planning regulations. Nonetheless, the plots are purchased by the inhabitants, even if not in via legal processes.

10 Translator's note: Cortiços are multiply-occupied dwellings, typically in dilapidated buildings, with shared toilets, kitchens and other facilities. The closest translation in English would be slum tenement.

11 Translator's note: Favelas are self-built housing settlements, initially established through the occupation of public or private land of which the occupiers do not possess land titles.

the 1930s, companies partially solved the problem of housing their workforces through the construction of “workers’ villages”,¹² generally adjacent to the factories, where homes were rented or sold to workers. The provision of housing by the company itself reduced the costs to the workers’ for ensuring their own survival, thus allowing wages to be reduced. This kind of solution was viable for as long as the size of the workforce to be housed was relatively small – considering it was especially targeted at workers who were in shorter supply on the labour market – and low land and construction costs compensated for the costs of retaining the worker in the company. In this case, the cost of reproducing the workforce, at least with regard to housing, was borne by the company itself. The context of Brás, Moóca, Belém¹³ at this time, where life revolved around the “whistles of the textile factories”, was characterised by the concentration of workers’ housing close to the workplace.

As industrialisation intensified, the number of workers grew rapidly, increasing pressure on the supply of popular housing. This coincided with the appreciation of industrial and residential land, which, from the company’s perspective, made the construction of workers’ villages for “its” workers uneconomical, especially once, as migratory flows increased, a labour surplus emerged in the city.

Companies thus transferred the costs of housing (purchase,

12 Translator’s note: “Vilas operárias” in Portuguese.

13 Translator’s note: Inner-city neighbourhoods in São Paulo’s East Zone, where early industrial activity, and the kind of workers’ housing described, were concentrated.

rent, maintenance costs) along with workers' transport costs and those related to urban infrastructure services, where they existed, to the state. From this moment on, the "workers' villages" tended to disappear and the housing question came to be resolved through economic relations within the real estate market.

From this moment on, what came to be known as the "periphery" appeared on the urban scene: agglomerations far from city centres, whether clandestine or not, which lacked infrastructure and where a growing part of the labour force came to reside.

As accumulation and speculation go hand in hand, the location of the working class began to follow the lead of real estate interests.¹⁴ In the explosive context of metropolitan growth, the public authorities only belatedly developed legal instruments to try to impose a minimum of order on land use. However, this only occurred once the urban layout had, for the most part, already been established via the retention of land parcels by private groups. In this way, government action was, and has remained, limited to following the creation new urban spaces by the private sector, and public investments came to place themselves at the service of the appreciation-speculation dynamics of the real estate-construction system.

Some figures serve to illustrate the consequences of this

14 See Wilhelm, Jorge – *São Paulo Metrópole 65*, Difusão Européia do Livro, São Paulo, 1965. I analyse the issue of urban speculation in more detail in chapter IV.

disorderly logic. In the capital¹⁵ there are 4.5 m² of green space per inhabitant, whereas the minimum level expected is 8 m². In the metropolitan region, of the 8,000 km that constitute the local road network, only 40% is paved.¹⁶ Only around 30% of households are connected to the sewage network and 53% to the water network. The result: “populations generally use open cesspits, dry toilets and septic tanks and draw water from shallow wells, generally contaminated by their proximity to open cesspits”.¹⁷ In the “peripheries” the situation is even more drastic: only 20% of houses have a sewage system and 46% have piped water. To get an idea of the high rate of environmental contamination it is enough to mention that three quarters of the houses in the periphery “discharge sewage into simple open cesspits, if not on open land”.¹⁸ Even in large areas of the capital, many streets are not paved and there are vast areas that lack street lighting.¹⁹

It is necessary to trace the broad outlines of this situation.

15 Translator’s note: The “capital” refers solely to the municipality of São Paulo, which is the capital of the state of São Paulo. The larger “Metropolitan Region” also encompasses a further 38 municipalities.

16 Source: São Paulo: Secretariat of Metropolitan Business – São Paulo Metropolitan Region: Diagnosis 75. Urban Conditions: Transport. São Paulo, 1975, mimeo.

17 Source: Metropolitan Region of São Paulo: Diagnosis 75 – Urban Conditions – Health, Government of the State of São Paulo, 1975, pp. 28 and 14-15, mimeo, *op. cit.*

18 Idem, Diagnosis 75 – Socio-Economic Development, Social Promotion, *op. cit.*

19 São Paulo. City Hall – Multi-year plan of CURA project. São Paulo, 1974.

In the disorderly process of urban expansion, the real estate sector led the process of spatial occupation, holding back vast areas closer to the city centres, waiting for their value to appreciate, while more distant areas, lacking any infrastructure, were made available to the poor classes. The occupation of new areas, far from following planned criteria, was based on the speculative hoarding of land, a phenomenon that is still common in the capital – where unused parcels are abundant, especially in the peripheral areas of the east, west, northeast and southeast – and also, increasingly, in Greater São Paulo.

The phrase... “this is the price of progress” accounts for and simultaneously justifies the chaotic growth of the metropolis. It points, firstly, to the inability of the public authorities to project more rational forms of land occupation. Furthermore, it underpins a form of expansion that, due to popular organisations’ fragile participation in decision-making processes, confers huge freedom of action on private actors entirely oriented by profit.

It is worth describing the process by which the speculative dynamic plays out. “Real estate speculation (...) developed its own method for parcelling the city’s land. This method consisted (and still consists) of the following: new subdivisions were never built in immediate continuation of previous ones already that already benefitted from public services. Instead, between the new subdivision and the already serviced one, an area of empty land was left unparcelled. Once the new subdivision was completed, the bus route that served it was necessarily an extension of that already operating in the serviced area. Once ex-

tended, the bus route would pass through the unparcelled area, thus immediately increasing its value. The same would (and does) also occur with other public services: to reach the newly parcelled distant area, they would pass through empty areas, which would immediately benefit from public investments. In this way, public investments were transferred directly, and generally in advance, to the value of the land. Still today, whenever you arrive in a sub-centre of the city – from Santo Amaro to Penha,²⁰ without exception – and continue towards the peripheries, this process is visible (and now also in various parts of Greater São Paulo): between each subdivision you reach, there is an area that remains empty.”²¹

Parallel to this process, from the 1930s, an industrial boom began along the railway axes heading outward from the capital. On the one hand, the Santos-Jundiaí Railway²² boosted economic activities in Santo André and São Caetano.²³ On the other hand, along the Brazilian Central Railway line,²⁴ some small

20 Translator’s note: Neighbourhoods in the south and east of São Paulo, respectively, that represented important subcentres at the time of the book’s publication. Santo Amaro was a separate municipality until 1935.

21 Cardoso, Fernando Henrique, Camargo, Candido P. Ferreira de, Kowarick, Lúcio – *Considerações sobre o desenvolvimento de São Paulo: cultura e participação*, São Paulo, CEBRAP, 1973, pp. 9-10, Cadernos CEBRAP, 14.

22 Translator’s note: A railway line connecting the city of Jundiaí, lying to the northwest of São Paulo, to Santos, a major port city on the coast, which passed through São Paulo and other metropolitan municipalities.

23 Translator’s note: Municipalities in Greater São Paulo, lying to the southeast of the capital, that are part of the so-called “ABC Region”, known for its large industrial manufacturing sector.

24 Translator’s note: A large rail network, originally constructed in the

industrial centres, but mainly the so-called “dormitory cities”, cropped up, which initially supplied companies in the capital and subsequently in other industrial centres in the region. Following the Second World War, and especially with highway construction after 1960, São Bernardo and Diadema, Guarulhos and Osasco²⁵ – all municipalities adjacent to the capital – have undergone, at different times in the last 20 years, a rapid industrialisation process.

The important thing to highlight is that as these centres expanded they, in turn, created their own “peripheries”. These began to reflect, perhaps even more dramatically, the socio-economic problems already identified for the case of the capital.

The region’s vertiginous demographic growth, which between 1960 and 1970 reached 5.5% per year, combined with the process of speculative land hoarding, led to the growth of increasingly distant neighbourhoods.²⁶ Populations became crowded into remote areas, far from their workplaces, entailing increasingly large commuting distances. The creation of “dormitory cities” – veritable encampments lacking any infrastructure – intensified.²⁷ In this context, in addition to work and

second half of the nineteenth century, that connected São Paulo to Rio de Janeiro and other urban centres across the southeast of Brazil.

25 Translator’s note: Other major industrial cities in Greater São Paulo. São Bernardo and Diadema are part of the ABC Region. Guarulhos and Osasco lie, respectively, to the northeast and northwest of the capital.

26 As is well known, migration played an important role in the demographic growth of the metropolitan region, as shown in Table 1.

27 It should be noted that 12 of the region’s 37 municipalities had, during the period covered here, population growth rates of over 15% per year.

housing, which will be analysed below, the transport system – another basic element in the reproduction of the workforce – became a central problem.

“Those who work in Diadema live elsewhere. Those who live in Diadema work elsewhere”, said the mayor of this particular municipality which has seen huge industrial expansion, capturing a situation that constitutes a general rule for Greater São Paulo.²⁸ Commuting, then, takes on a chaotic character. In fact, the average travel time has risen by 30% in recent years, while the distances to be covered, in particular for the working population relying on mass transport, have increased: “users who live in the peripheries of the city... (spend) 3 to 4 hours a day in the vehicles that take them to work and back home”.²⁹ Furthermore, the dramatic increase in driving in recent years, evidenced by the number of vehicles on the roads, which grew from 120,000 in the capital in 1960 to almost 1 million in 1974, has greatly increased traffic congestion. In 1968, there were 7 million daily journeys, rising to 13.9 million in 1974. However, the important thing to highlight is how these daily journeys

28 To illustrate with some other examples: according to sources within the Osasco City Government, half of the economically active population works in another municipality, while, in 1973, 50% of the 102,000 employees in São Bernardo lived outside the municipality. Furthermore, we know that around 100,000 people reach the capital or the industrial region surrounding São Paulo via the Dutra Highway. In 1973, Greater São Paulo lost 6 billion dollars due to hours lost to commuting. Countless other examples could be cited.

29 The data cited here were basically taken from: *Metropolitan Region of São Paulo – Diagnosis 75: Urban Conditions – Transport*, op. cit.

are carried out. On the one hand, is in the form of individual transport: wealthy groups who own cars, which have an average usage of 1.2 people per vehicle. On the other side is mass transport via buses, which transport 6.8 million passengers, and at peak times carry around 130 passengers per vehicle – twice their official maximum capacity. Suburban rail transport carries 900,000 passengers per day: they are the daily reality of the “hanging passengers”, that is, the 700 people who, twice a day, travel on trains that should carry no more than 300.

Table 1 - Greater São Paulo:
Annual Rates Of Population Growth: Endogenous, Migratory And Total

Period and region	Annual rates of growth		
	Endogenous	Migratory	Total
1960/50			
Municipality of São Paulo	2.49	3.76	5.60
Other Municipalities	2.14	6.16	7.50
Greater São Paulo	2.45	4.20	5.95
1970/60			
Municipality of São Paulo	2.13	2.85	4.57
Other Municipalities	3.28	6.75	8.74
Greater São Paulo	2.36	3.76	5.54

Source of data: IBGE, Demographic Censuses of 1950, 1960 and 1970.

Of course, so-called “traffic problems” affect everyone. The exasperation arising from congestion, beeping horns, lack of parking, stress caused by the general chaos on the roads, and, to an extent, the difficulty of covering growing distances over

longer periods of time affect people who travel in their cars. This kind of exasperation captures just some aspects of the intense and exhausting forms of mobility that occur daily in the metropolis. But the most severe problems affect the users of public transport, which mostly covers journeys between passengers' homes and places of work.

Queues, overcrowding, delays, lost workdays are not just simple "traffic problems". The hours spent waiting and traveling both before and after the working day, which itself is usually extremely long, reveal the strains inflicted on those who rely on mass transport to reach their jobs. In other words, ensnared in an economic apparatus from which he cannot escape, if he is to reproduce his condition as a salaried employee and urban resident, the worker must subject himself to this fatigue, which further depletes all that he has to offer: his labour power. And as this is abundant, at least at the lowest skill levels, the economic apparatus can easily replace him as soon as the wear and tear to which it subjects him causes his productivity to decline.

We have already identified the role played by the transport system in housing the working class, creating the "peripheries" via the flows of real estate speculation. More recently, these have become common in almost all the urban areas of Greater São Paulo, where around 96% of the region's inhabitants live.³⁰

Of course, real estate speculation is not limited to the hoarding of land between a centre and its peripheral areas. It also ap-

30 Translator's note: Kowarick is referring to the fact that most residents in Greater São Paulo lived in areas defined as urban, rather than rural.

pears with force in central areas, when stagnant or declining areas receive investments in services or basic infrastructure. The construction of a major road or expressway, the canalisation of a small river, in short, any kind of urban improvement, has an immediate impact on the price of surrounding land. In this sense, perhaps the most flagrant and recent example is what has occurred in areas adjacent to the present and future network of the city Metro. When it passes through certain neighbourhoods, it redefines the uses and types of existing properties, dramatically increasing the price of available lots. In this way, a new spatial configuration is established – and the public authorities directly participate in this process through evictions and “re-urbanisation” plans – oriented towards the residential and service markets catering to the wealthy, while poor groups tend to be displaced to more distant areas. In this way, mass transport, which should serve the mobility needs of the working population, becomes an instrument of the interests of privileged groups via the speculative alchemy of the real estate-construction sector and the technocratic “neutrality” of urban planners.

This expulsion process is intense in areas of the metropolitan area that are undergoing rapid valorisation. The Martinelli Building³¹ is an example of processes of “recuperation” carried out in certain areas, in which real estate appreciation becomes incompatible with the presence of a low-income population. The public authorities implement reforms, the cost of which is beyond the means of the poorest residents, thus driving their

31 Translator’s note: An iconic skyscraper in the centre of São Paulo.

displacement to peripheral areas. This “cleansing” process is also reflected in the capital’s favelas, which have expanded substantially despite an official ban on their growth. Following widespread favela removals in the capital in the 1960s, favela growth has had tended to follow the economic development occurring in the most industrialised areas of Greater São Paulo. Although there are no precise data on the favela population, we know it is numerous in certain municipalities – Guarulhos, Osasco, Diadema, São Bernardo do Campo – and that these have socio-economic characteristics similar to those of the capital.³²

The location of favelas has tended to follow the path of industrialisation, clustering in areas where there is demand for unskilled labour. When real estate pressure or the designation of certain areas for public works becomes more intense in a particular city or area, new favelas appear or are displaced to neighbouring municipalities, where the real estate sector is not yet as

32 The latest data available from the PNAD [National Household Sample Survey] indicates that, in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo, there were 54,739 shacks housing 318,285 inhabitants at the end of 1972. If this growth has continued at the same pace, there must be approximately 830,000 inhabitants of Greater São Paulo living in shacks today. Not all of them can necessarily be considered strictly favela residents, but this data gives us an idea of the magnitude of the problem. In São Bernardo do Campo, the number of favela residents rose from 281,000 in 1974 to 374,000 in 1978, representing 9.1% of the municipality’s population. This is according to Favela Registry, São Bernardo do Campo, 1978, São Bernardo do Campo City Hall, p. 21. In the capital, in the same year, there were around 500,000 favela residents. In Diadema, there were around 12,750, which corresponds to 9% of the municipality’s population. This is according to Diadema City Hall, 1978. I return to an analysis of favelas in Chapter 4.

profitable. In this regard, a typical case is the displacement of favelas from São Caetano to Mauá, which occurred a few years ago, and which constitutes a blatant example of “cleansing” a region experiencing intense land valorisation.

In addition to favela residents, there are 615,000 residents of cortiços in the capital. Meanwhile, 1.8 million individuals live in “precarious houses” in the “periphery”. These numbers refer solely to the capital for the year 1975. We know that the number of precarious homes has increased in recent years, a phenomenon that has also occurred in other municipalities in the metropolitan region where the working population has settled.

More recently, with the explosion in land prices, the tendency has been to accelerate the expulsion of the population to the “peripheries”, where shacks and precarious houses are growing far from their residents’ places of work. This is the most recent stage in the process of “expulsion-fixation” of the working classes, which, of course, is not limited to favela populations. In the so-called “precarious homes” of the “periphery” lies the core of the problem, presided over by the speculative logic of “subdivisions” where a large part of the working class has become fixed in their “own” homes.³³ Many of the newer working-class neighbourhoods, both in terms of the quality of construction and basic infrastructure, and in terms of the legal conditions of land ownership, do not differ substantially from

33 I analyse the issue of precarious homes in the periphery, mainly in relation to the process of autoconstruction of housing, in chapter III.

favelas.

It should be noted that just over half the private homes in Greater São Paulo are owned outright or with a mortgage. On the one hand, through the National Housing Bank (BNH),³⁴ the middle classes became homeowners, purchasing homes located in well-serviced central areas. Meanwhile, the working classes became fixed in the “periphery”, building their own homes in their spare time, with the unpaid help of relatives, neighbours and acquaintances from the same places of origin.³⁵

Building one’s own home, via mutual aid, represents the only possibility of housing for less skilled workers, whose low incomes do not allow them to pay rent, much less apply for BNH loans. On the other hand, this “solution” to the housing problem has contributed to depressing the salaries paid by companies to workers. By eliminating an important item like housing from the survival costs of the workforce, salaries need

34 Translator’s note: A federal public bank created during the military dictatorship period. It specialised in providing mortgage loans and was supposed to target the poor, but in fact ended up catering primarily to middle-class house-buyers.

35 Some studies suggests that the vast majority of houses in the peripheries are autoconstructed. For example, a research project led by Carlos Lemos showed that 88.5% of houses in the peripheral area he and his team studied were built by the residents themselves. See *Jornal Opinião*, 7/18/75.

There is an average of 1.85 people per room in the peripheries of the capital for those with a family income of up to 3 minimum wages, that is, 78% of people. The figure for those with a family income of 3 to 6 minimum wages is 1.58, or 19% of cases. See: Aspirations in relation to the Basic Education program, *CADERNO SEBES*, 1973. However, when the number of people per room is calculated for the metropolitan region, the proportion reaches an average of 2.6 people in the peripheries.

only cover other essential expenses, such as transport and food.

The periphery as a formula for reproducing the workforce in cities is a direct consequence of the kind of economic development that has taken place in Brazilian society in recent decades. On the one hand, it has enabled high rates of labour exploitation, while, on the other, it has subjected the working class to spoliative arrangements with regard to their urban conditions of existence.

Then there are the cortiço residents, concentrated in decadent parts of more central neighbourhoods: Bom Retiro, Brás, Bela Vista. As central neighbourhoods are re-urbanised, cortiços tend to expand in other devalued areas, especially those that border the railway lines in areas like Perus and Pirituba.^{36 37} In cortiços, there are an average of 3.6 people per room. A quarter of these rooms do not have external windows. However, in 67% of cases, residents spent less than half an hour commuting to work.³⁸

Favelas, precarious homes in the peripheries, and cortiços house the working class, whose housing conditions reflect the precariousness of their wages. Their conditions tend to worsen in line with the deterioration of their salaries. For the basic expenses of a family – food, housing, transportation, clothing,

36 Translator's note: Perus and Pirituba are suburban neighbourhoods in the northwest of the city that originally grew up around the Santos-Jundiaí Railway.

37 The data cited are taken from: *Diagnosis of the phenomenon of cortiços in the Municipality of São Paulo*, São Paulo HABI-SEBES, São Paulo, 1975.

38 In 90% of cases, travel times were less than 1 hour, which contrasts hugely with the inhabitants of the peripheries. *Idem*.

etc. – someone earning a minimum wage in 1975 had to work 466 hours and 34 minutes per month, which amounts to around 16 hours a day for 30 days a month.³⁹

These figures take on their full dimensions when we consider that, in Greater São Paulo, in 1973, around 19% of employees earned up to one minimum wage, 54% up to two, and 75% up to three monthly minimum wages.

It is important to remember not only that the income levels and living conditions of a large proportion of workers have deteriorated, but that this deterioration has occurred exactly when the economy was growing at the impressive rate of 10% per year, giving rise to what many have called the “Brazilian Miracle”. We must ask: what kind of miracle is this that presents rapid growth, but, at the same time, excludes the majority of the working class from this growth? It is certainly a perverse kind of saint who gives to some with one hand what he takes away from many more with the other.

The logic of accumulation that characterises recent Brazilian development is built precisely on the depletion of the workforce. In the presence of a vast reserve army of labour and in the absence of robust working-class trade union and political organisation, it was easy to increase rates of exploitation. The demoralisation of a workforce subjected to long working hours and harsh urban conditions was possible because most of that workforce could be readily replaced.

Although there are no precise data on underemployment,

39 Source: DIEESE, April 1975.

we do know that... “for the population aged over 10 years old, the proportion of the unemployed male workers reaches the substantial figure of 11.4 %. Among females, the rate of unemployment is only 6.9%.⁴⁰ But, as we know, the female unemployment rate hides another phenomenon. It is the unemployment, referred to as hidden because it does not appear in statistics, of a huge contingent of women who do not have jobs or study, but who, *pro forma*, carry out domestic activities and therefore do not declare themselves as unemployed. Moving from younger to older groups, participation rates decrease: for women, especially after the age of 30; for men, particularly after 50. These data reveal a process of selective use of the workforce in terms of when they are excluded from productive structures. This selectivity is based on the fact that the male contingent is large enough to make most female work after the age of 30 unnecessary, and to replace the over-50 male workforce with younger workers. It is significant in this regard to see that, before the 40-49 age band, male unemployment is only 4.6%; in the subsequent age groups there is a dramatic increase: for the 50-59 band the proportion is 24%, in the following band it rises to 43%, and from the age of 70 it is 64%.

Thus, a ‘productive life’ cycle is created, in which companies

40 In addition to unemployed people who are looking for work, the unemployed category includes individuals in the “other” category of the PNAD who are capable of working. The percentages presented here combine the unemployed and “other” columns from the PNAD figures. “Others” are those outside the workforce who are not engaged in domestic tasks, do not attend school, and are capable of working. See Table 2.

can abuse their workforces, jettisoning ageing workers from the labour market. The latter are declared incapable of work thanks to the presence of an available labour pool, and the category “old” is invoked prematurely, even though, in many cases, the excluded workers are still in full possession of their physical and mental energies.”⁴¹

41 Kowarick, Lúcio and Brant, Vinicius Caldeira (eds.) – São Paulo, 1975, *Crescimento e Pobreza*, op. cit. pp. 82-83.

Table 2 - Participation Rates Unemployment And Inactivity By Sex And Age In Greater São Paulo, 1972

Age Groups	Participation Rate		Unemployed as % of the Workforce		% of Others in the Population Aged 10 or Over	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-14	9.4	7.7	12.2	6.6	10.8	7.7
15-19	70.0	49.5	8.6	7.2	6.5	2.9
20-24	91.0	51.0	4.7	4.6	2.3	1.0
25-29	96.8	38.7	2.5	1.4	1.4	1.1
a30-39	94.8	34.2	1.3	2.4	1.6	0.6
40-49	92.6	30.6	1.3	0.5	1.9	0.4
50-59	74.9	20.3	0.7	0.3	23.3	2.9
60-69	46.0	10.3	0.4	-	43.0	4.4
70 and over	16.1	1.5	-	-	64.1	18.3

Source: PNAD, Metropolitan Regions, 4th Quarter 1971-1972, Rio de Janeiro IBGE, p. 233.

Aside from the aspects already mentioned, we should highlight the issues of undernourishment and the enhanced risk of infant mortality. In this regard, we should highlight that between 1940 and 1950 the infant mortality rate fell by 30% and in the following decade it fell by 32%. This can be contrasted with an increase of 37% that occurred between 1960 and 1975.⁴² The main causes are linked to infectious diseases directly related to sanitation and undernourishment, which also tend to be associated with each other. Regarding the first, as has already been analysed, we should note that the population of the capital connected to the water network fell from 61% in 1950 to 56% in 1973, while the population connected to the sewage system remained stable at around 35%. However, if we include all the municipalities of the metropolitan region, in 1971, 35% of the population was connected, whereas, four years later, this had fallen to 30%.⁴³ With regard to nutrition, deep analysis is unnecessary: “among lowest income classes, food consumption, as well as declining in quantitative terms, now consists of lower quality or types of food, at lower prices. (...) With the decline in purchasing power (falling real wages), the nutritional conditions

42 The infant mortality rate in the capital in 1940 was 123.99 per 1,000 live births; in 1950 it decreased to 89.71 and in 1960 to 62.94. Between 1961 and 65 the average rate rose to 66.33, in the following five-year period it rose again to 79.19, and between 1971 and 75 it reached 90.53 per 1,000 live births. Source of data: Statistics Department of the State of São Paulo.

43 Metropolitan Region of São Paulo, *Diagnosis 75 – Urban Conditions – Health*, p. 5, *op. cit.* Life expectancy at birth in the city of São Paulo was 62.39 years between 1959-67, and 60.83 between 1969-71, decreasing by a year and a half.

of the poorest classes have been significantly impaired... Malnutrition can be a direct cause of death, and act as a primary and aggravating factor in infectious diseases, increasing the infant mortality rate: 52% of the capital's population and 73% of other metropolitan municipalities are undernourished.⁴⁴ Health conditions are further aggravated by the fact that a considerable proportion of workers do not receive social security benefits. Leaving aside the 490,000 self-employed workers in Greater São Paulo in 1972, the vast majority of whom do not have a worker's card⁴⁵, and considering only salaried workers, it appears that no more than 70% have a signed worker's card. When only male workers are considered – as female labour is largely concentrated in paid domestic activities – the proportion of those who do not have a worker's card falls to 20%.⁴⁶

44 *Idem*, p. 19. Malnutrition appears as the primary or associated cause in 28% of deaths of children under the age of 1 in Greater São Paulo; excluding neonatal deaths, the proportion rises to 45%. Meanwhile, 65% of recorded infectious diseases in the region were associated with malnutrition. Source: Inter-American Investigation of Childhood Mortality, District of São Paulo, 1968-70.

45 Translator's note: A worker's card is an official document that must be signed by a registered employer, which then entitles employees to receive state benefits.

46 Source: Metropolitan Regions, 4th bimester of 1971-1972, Rio de Janeiro, IBGE, 256.

Furthermore, 40% of those who visited INPS⁴⁷ centres in 1974 were not seen, which amounts to a total of 4 million appointments. Such situations paint a very clear picture of the vulnerability that even registered employees face in the event of unemployment, illness or a work accident, events that affect a considerable portion of those who depend only on their labour power to survive.

In this respect, the sharp increase in workplace accidents in Brazil is also symptomatic. The State of São Paulo, far from defying the national trend, accounts for a large proportion of the victims of such accidents: 712,000 in 1973 and 780,000 in the following year, which corresponds to around a quarter of the registered workforce. The real significance of this figure becomes clear when we consider that in France the proportion is three times lower.⁴⁸ Again, it seems reasonable to suppose that what lies behind these international records is the use and abuse to which capital subjects workers in the production process. Of almost 4,000 industrial accidents in São Paulo, the causes of which have been researched in detail, 23% were due to human error, while in the rest... “there were unsafe conditions, whether isolated or associated with the origin of the ac-

47 Translator’s note: The National Institute of Social Security [Instituto Nacional de Previdência Social] was created under the military dictatorship in 1966, through the merger of a range of social security agencies previously established under Getúlio Vargas.

48 São Paulo Metropolitan Region: Diagnosis 75, Development and Technological Innovations, *op. cit.*. In the State of São Paulo, the proportion of accidents per working day has increased annually by almost 10%.

Table 3 - Municipality Of São Paulo: Spending On Food And Proportion Of Income Spent On Food, By Income Class (1971-1972)

Family income classes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTAL AVERA-GE
% of total families	0.95	5.45	45.41	13.40	9.00	5.88	4.66	2.19	2.51	1.97	1.38	4.08	3.02	100.0
Spending on food in cruzeiros	131	200	352	486	553	636	618	677	772	781	787	832	1.095	466
% of income spent on food	51.9	51.3	44.0	37.1	35.1	32.9	27.0	27.1	28.1	28.7	25.1	21.2	16.7	31.5

Source: Kirsten, J. T. et al – Family budgets in the city of São Paulo: 1971-1972. São Paulo, IPE-USP, 1973, (IPE Monographs Series, 3).

cident".⁴⁹ But even accidents attributed to human error result from larger-scale processes. Inside the factory, they are associated with the monotony of the repetitive acts of assembly line production, which requires concentration, little memory, no imagination and great physical effort over long working days in which the pace of production is extremely fast; and outside the factory, they are linked to travel time, undernourishment and individual health, factors that ultimately result in extreme worker fatigue.⁵⁰

Data on both working processes and living conditions reveal the worsening conditions facing working families in São Paulo. Of course, not everyone has been equally affected. The considerable accumulation of wealth has also benefited certain parts of the working class, especially the specialised segments

49 Research carried out by Leda Leal Ferreira, the results of which were published in the weekly *Opinion* on 7/18/75.

50 More than half of accidents affect workers' upper bodies and, according to analysts from the Ministry of Labour, the use of gloves would reduce accidents in 22% of cases. There is no reason to doubt this. However, in-depth interviews reveal other aspects of the recent history of industrialisation. Workers in a section of the factory must weld a certain number of points onto a plate which remains in front of them for a given amount of time. If there is an error in the welding, the plate is lost. The average number of plates to be welded per hour is also determined by studies of time and movement and a minimum production target is established based on the performance of the most skilled workers. The most skilled can perform such operations with gloves. The others cannot. They work without gloves. When they are injured, they are fined. Sometimes there is total or partial loss of nails or fingers. This phenomenon occurs in a multinational, modern and dynamic company based in São Paulo. There are other examples with similar working conditions and results.

that, with the development and diversification of the industrial sector, managed to increase their salary levels and benefit, albeit timidly, from the gains of industrial society.

Despite the poverty and deteriorating urban conditions, for many who have arrived from other regions of Brazil, settling in Greater São Paulo has brought economic and social improvements. But this point should not be exaggerated. Ultimately, it is this same process that drives the overall economic and social exclusion experienced by the growing population displaced from rural areas. Furthermore, considering the fall in levels of basic consumption, it is fair to assume that the widespread and persistent belief that “life has improved” reflects a sense of inclusion that occurs more on the symbolic plane than in reality. It is the result of a dynamic inherent to mass society, whereby the media nourishes what can be described as a “market of illusions”. It is the world of shop windows, television, billboards, where those who have experienced upward mobility offer an example and hope for those who can only consume the winners’ lifestyles in their fantasies.

In fact, recent economic growth has produced a sophisticated consumer society, but access to it is heavily restricted. The dynamic core of industrial expansion over the last 15 years has centred on luxury durable consumer items which has necessarily focused on the narrow circles of middle- and high-income groups, whom economic growth effectively benefits. The lower strata were not only excluded, but also paid a high price for the increase in wealth.

It has been pointed out that the logic of accumulation pre-



vailing in Brazilian society has led to the depletion of the workforce. From the point of view of business, where the ultimate objective is profit, this logic is impeccable. However, this does not only prevail among private companies. It also occurs with public financing in civil construction: it is revealing that 80% of loans made by the National Housing Bank were channelled to middle- and high-income groups just as the few housing plans directed towards those on lower incomes were shelved. We can see the contrast in the fact that those earning fewer than 4 minimum wages constituted 55% of housing demand, whereas homes placed on the market by the Housing Finance System rarely included families with an income of less than 12 minimum wages. What occurs in the construction sector also occurs at the urban level. We have already noted that the public authorities trail behind the private subdivisions. When, a few years ago, the road network finally began to be considered at the city scale, one might have assumed that the common interest would prevail. However, the vast investments, with the creation of new avenues, expressways and elevated highways have mainly been aimed at the rapidly growing fleet of private vehicles, whose rate of use is low (1.2 passengers per vehicle), to the detriment of public transport, used by the majority of the population.

In truth, in a context where collective demands and protest are blocked, “social needs” are instrumentally subordinated to the “needs of accumulation”. Thus, those investments dominated by the state aim to lubricate the economic machinery, and the problems faced by the population only become public

problems to the extent that they are shared by the dominant classes.

To illustrate the issue of public problems, one could take, for example, pollution or meningitis, issues that have been the subject of public concern.

Without downplaying the scale of the problem, we can say that, although it is more extreme in industrial areas, air pollution affects everyone. There is, of course, a clear correlation between poverty and meningitis. However, while the virus is selective, it is in the air and can affect anyone, or at least cause concern for all. Traffic also affects everyone in a way. But there is nothing “democratic” about malnutrition or workplace accidents. They are clearly restricted to the working population, and the harm they do, although huge, seems to reverberate far less widely. It appears as a secondary problem because it is not directly experienced by the dominant groups and because those who are directly affected do not have the means to transform “their” problem into a “collective problem”.

This is what lies at the root of increasing poverty and deteriorating urban conditions, which could occur in striking ways once rigid control had been established over popular initiatives.

Clearly, the depletion of workers and ecological or urban degradation are reflected in the process of capital expansion itself to the extent that they channel resources that could otherwise be used for productive investments. But, for now, big business does not seem overly concerned about the costs arising from the Brazil’s prevailing development model. They focus on profit and ignore the damage they inflict on society. Meanwhile,

in a context in which popular initiatives are suppressed, government policy is geared towards feeding the interests of private appropriation. Its parameters are dictated by the imperatives of the accumulation process, which are exclusionary and predatory, and not by “social needs” that transcend logic of these economic arrangements. Where possible, they address the negative effects of such processes to the extent that they impact upon the logic of accumulation, under which the working class, weakened both politically and socially, has been reduced to a mere instrument in the service of capital expansion.

Simple things constantly need to be said: it is capital – and not the workforce – that degrades metropolitan life. For capital, the city and the working class are important as sources of profit. For workers, the city is the world where they must seek to develop their collective potential. Between the two there is a world of differences. And a world of antagonisms.

III

Autoconstruction of homes and urban spoliation

The housing “problem” cannot be analysed in isolation from broader socio-economic and political processes, although it does condense a set of specific contradictions. To begin with, we must consider the forms of production through which housing is made. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the capitalist system essentially presupposes the destruction of autonomous ways of living via the expropriation of productive land and tools. It begins to produce what was previously carried out by independent workers for their own subsistence, creating goods that are consumed via a wage received through the sale of one’s labour power. This is the general historic path of the accumulation process, which is sufficiently obvious to not require further clarifications, except to point out that the development of the productive forces does not occur in a uniform and linear way. Rather, it occurs unevenly, as companies with a high concentration of constant capital coexist in articulation with entities

whose productive processes would be difficult to characterise as fully capitalist.

The interest in this question lies in thinking about its relationship to housing for the urban working classes. If, on the one hand, in almost all branches of the economy, “archaic” manufacturing production units still exist, on the other, the production of goods for subsistence is no longer a widespread practice, particularly in cities. This is inherent to the commodification of the economy, whereby consumption is derived from production carried out via the extraction of surplus value, embodying the process of exchange value from which a commodity gains its full dimensions.

In the process of housing production, there are companies that are clearly industrial in scope as well as those with artisanal features. The working classes, in proportions that vary from city to city, but which are always significant, solve their housing problems – in addition to renting deteriorated dwellings or building shacks in favelas – through the autoconstruction of their homes. There is nothing anachronistic about the logic of this kind of “natural economy” in the midst of a fully urban-industrial system, whose driving and dominant motor are companies with high capital density. After all, capitalist production is organised not to provide workers with the means of living necessary for their subsistence, but to produce a surplus that can be privately appropriated.

We should highlight that the production of housing, whose manufacture entails a range of inputs, is the fruit of a complex network of agents, including commercial and financial institu-

tions, for whom “control” over urban land constitutes a fundamental factor in the price of the products placed on the market.⁵¹ It should also be noted that the economic activities that produce the housing-commodity are increasingly integrated into the dynamics of big capital, evidence of which can be widely seen across different regions of Brazil and especially in São Paulo. From the perspective of the realisation of capital, these interests tend to produce socially appropriate products, in terms of housing standards, for the higher-income groups. However, they block access for the vast majority of workers, who must therefore find other formulas to reproduce themselves in cities as a commodity for capital.⁵²

Autoconstruction, whose purpose and essence should not be understood as a means of saving, but as a subsistence solution, provides one of the essentials of life – housing – in such a way that it constitutes a formula for lowering the cost of reproduction of the labour force, allowing the extraction of the economic surplus through the constant depression of wages. Furthermore, especially in cities, the housing “problem” is directly linked to the supply of goods for collective consumption, over which state action has gained increasing importance, as public investments are increasingly responsible for this other compo-

51 I analyse the issue of urban land in the city of São Paulo in the next chapter.

52 In this text, I will not analyse the mechanisms that, from the perspective of capital, turn the housing commodity into a good that only the highest income groups can access. Among other authors who have addressed the housing problem from this angle, see. Pradilla, Emilio – *Notas Acerca del Problema de la Vivienda, Architettura/Urbanismo*, 7, July-August, 1977.

ment of the reproduction of the workforce. Of similar importance to the “problem” of urban housing is the question of land, whose suitability is linked to the presence of service infrastructure. Therefore, public investments are also a determining factor over the final price of housing, conditioning where and how different social classes become established within spatial configurations that, in all Brazilian metropolises, exhibit clear patterns of segregation.

But it is not only from the perspective of urban land prices, of the structure of the real estate-construction sector, or of the role of the state that the issue must be analysed. Housing conditions, as a basic component of the reproduction of the labour force, are the result of the full social composition of capital and the way in which socially necessary labour time is distributed. This determines the subsistence levels of the working class, whose value may vary hugely depending on the development of the productive forces and the ability of the working classes to appropriate a portion of the surpluses produced by the accumulation process.

In this regard, it seems correct to state that the existence of a vast reserve army, far from being a “marginal mass”, understood as a contingent with little or no bearing on the economic process, has been one of the main levers of accumulation in late-industrialising capitalist countries, among which Brazil is an exemplary case. Via the super-exploitation of labour and urban spoliation, it allows for the depletion of a large portion of the workforce engaged in productive activities to the extent that the depleted segments can be replaced from the vast available

pool of labour.⁵³ It is clear that the mere existence of a labour pool is a necessary but not a sufficient condition, for capitalist growth, preying, mainly, on the unskilled segments of the workforce, which, by the way, constitute a vast majority of those who drive forward Brazil's productive process.⁵⁴ Aside from the abundance of reserve labour, the process of depletion is also directly linked to the capacity of working-class organisation to defend, on the one hand, salary levels and general working conditions, and, on the other, access to collective services, which are directly reflected in the levels of expanded reproduction of the workforce, among which housing constitutes an essential component.

Therefore, when considering the so-called housing "problem", we must take into account two other processes with which it is interconnected. The first relates to the conditions of labour exploitation themselves, or, more precisely, the conditions of *absolute or relative immiseration* to which the different segments of the working class are subject. The second process, which follows on from the first and which only can be fully understood when analysed in light of the contradictory movements of capital accumulation, can be called *urban spoliation*. This is the sum of extortions that operate through the inexistence or precariousness of services of collective consumption that are socially

53 I addressed this issue in *Capitalism and Marginality in Latin America*, Paz e Terra, Rio, 1975.

54 In the State of São Paulo, only 18% of all workers involved in industry in 1973 fall into the category of "skilled" workers. See: SENAI, 1973 Report, São Paulo, 1974.

necessary in relation to subsistence levels, and which further intensify the depletion that occurs within the sphere of labour relations.

In both processes, the role of the state is fundamental. First, it provides the necessary infrastructural support for industrial expansion, offering long- and short-term financing to companies or acting directly as an economic investor. Meanwhile, it is also responsible for producing collective consumption goods, necessary for the reproduction of the labour force. Secondly, it maintains the “social order” needed for the realisation of a particular “model” of accumulation. In this respect, when state resources are primarily channelled towards the imperatives of capital accumulation and to the detriment of those more directly linked to the reproduction of the labour force, thus intensifying the process of urban spoliation. When the creation of a surplus is also realised through of the *absolute immiseration* of vast social groups, to make a “model of order social” with such savage consequences for the workforce viable, the state can only assume an explicitly authoritarian and repressive form. The control and containment of social demands becomes a pre-condition for the implementation of such an exclusionary model of distribution, which has characterised the recent accumulation process in Brazil.

It is only once we take such processes into account that the housing “problem” comes fully into view. In fact, government agencies have ploughed huge resources into housing finance. However, the vast majority follows a logic dictated by the law of profit, directed towards those income groups that can pay

the market price for housing construction.

Programs targeted at demand denominated as “social interest” are not only insignificant in quantitative terms, but the groups that should benefit from them are unable to keep up with the payments dictated by fanciful official plans. The result is that homes either remain empty or end up being transferred to higher income groups, while those for whom the subsidised programs were originally intended end up returning to their original housing options, that is, those that the vast majority of the working class adopt to continue reproducing themselves in the city.⁵⁵ This means, renting a room in a cortiço located in a rundown area or a small house in the city’s distant “peripheries”. Both solutions imply extremely precarious living conditions and, usually, rental expenses that further squeeze the already strained budgets of working-class families. The most economical, but also the most dramatic, survival solution is the favela, into which the poorest segments of the working class are filtered, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In quantitative terms, the most significant solution in the city of São Paulo is autoconstruction, that magnificent formula that dependent capitalism has innovated to lower the cost of re-

55 Similar analysis has been offered of populations who were moved into social housing projects in Guanabara [Rio de Janeiro]. “(The new residents) can be considered, almost entirely, as members of the lower-middle classes. This is to say, judging by the facades of the properties that they occupy, contrasted with those occupied by the original residents, one can immediately infer that they are a population with purchasing power that is several times greater”. Valladares, Licia do Prado – *Passa-se Uma Casa*, Zahar, Rio, 1978, p. 9.

producing the workforce, thus making a high accumulation rate compatible with declining wages. It is worth quoting at length: “A not insignificant percentage of working-class residences was built by the owners themselves, using days off, weekends, and forms of cooperation such as ‘mutirão’.⁵⁶ Thus, housing, a good which emerges from this process, is produced via unpaid work, or overwork. Although this is not directly appropriated by the private production sector, it contributes to increasing the rate of labour exploitation because its result – the house – is reflected in a reduction in the cost of reproducing the workforce – of which housing costs are an important component – and thus of the real wages offered by employers. In this way, a process that, on the face of it, seems like the survival of ‘natural’ economic practices within cities, fits admirably well with a process of capitalist expansion one of whose bases and sources of dynamism is the intense exploitation of the workforce”.⁵⁷

Achieved through additional, unpaid work, often over the course of several years, the construction of a home can only lead to a reduction in the consumption of other essential household items, including a decline in nutritional standards, which, for many families, falls below minimal survival levels.⁵⁸ Thus, auto-

56 Translator’s note: A term roughly translatable as “collective effort” that is widely used in Brazil to refer to forms of popular organisation and mutual aid, whereby local construction and repair projects are carried out collectively.

57 Oliveira, Francisco de – *A Economia Brasileira: Crítica da Razão Dualista*, Estudos CEBRAP 2, October 1972, p. 31.

58 An in-depth study carried out in five “subdivisions” in the periphery of the Greater São Paulo Region shed light on the real meaning of these

construction, as a kind of alchemy that serves to reproduce the workforce at a low cost to capital, further depletes those who only have physical energy to offer to an already savage economic system. Meanwhile, in most cases, this long process results in housing that, as well as lacking basic infrastructure and being located in areas that are distant from places of employment, has very low standards of habitability. Furthermore, the house deteriorates quickly, because it is built by non-specialist workers who use rudimentary techniques and tools, with a practically non-existent division of labour, and with construction carried in piecemeal manner, without planned sequencing. Furthermore, being produced with lower-quality materials, the house requires constant repair, entailing practically permanent efforts at maintenance on the part of families.⁵⁹

processes. See: Bonduki, Nabil and Rolnik, Raquel – “*Periferia: Ocupação do Espaço e Reprodução da Força de Trabalho*”, *Cadernos PRODEUR* no 2, FAU-USP, São Paulo, 1979.

59 “The autoconstructed house may have one or another ‘modern’ component... but the process is predominantly artisanal (...) Relying on traditional materials from familiar sources, simple tools, and, because limited budgets do not permit risk-taking or innovation, traditional construction techniques (...). Construction in stages... can drag on... for over a generation. (...) Aspects of environmental comfort (ventilation, insulation, sanitation, lighting, room size) are more precarious in areas where the autoconstruction process predominates. (...) Waterproofing is rare in autoconstruction. In the development of housing, additional rooms tend to “suffocate” existing ones, making them dark, humid, and poorly ventilated... (...) In more recent subdivisions, over the last ten years or so... we can see a deterioration in housing, which does not meet minimum building standards...” According to: Maricato, Ermínia – *Auto Construção: A Arquitetura Possível*, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, São Paulo,

In sum, we can affirm that the construction of one's own home incurs to debt that, in the context of declining wages, can only be covered through the extension of the already-long working day. If we also include the daily hours spent commuting and those spent on housing construction, we get a clear picture of the depletion to which those who undertake the challenge of becoming homeowners – of properties that will typically have a low resale value – are subjected.

Having discussed the processes and consequences of housing autoconstruction, it is worth addressing some questions focused on recent accumulation processes in Brazil, so as to identify some points relevant to the reproduction of the workforce. The first point to highlight is that, unlike most Latin American countries, Brazil is not an economic region in which multinational companies have created mere export enclaves or where they seek comparative advantage to produce a narrow range of goods with the principal aim of exporting them to the world market. Rather, it is a society in which, over the last 20 years, multinational capital has generated a diversified and complex industrial sector, geared as much to the production of durable consumer goods as to intermediate or capital goods, and predominantly directed at the local market.⁶⁰

It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the contradic-

paper presented at the 28th Annual Meeting of the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science, June 1976, p 1, 12, 13 and 15.

60 See: Cardoso, Fernando Henrique and Faletto, Enzo – Post Scriptum (additional chapter of the book *Dependency and Development in Latin America*) mimeo. 1976.

tions of dependent capitalism. I simply wish to point to some specific processes that seem to be at the root of the intensification of contradictions affecting the reproduction of the labour force. Of course, economic dependence implies the non-internalisation of a considerable part of the locally produced surplus through the creation of high-capital-density technological packages that disarticulate the existing economy, including agriculture. This significantly increases migration to cities, where the employment rate tends to increase at a slower pace than the increase in the potential workforce.⁶¹ Furthermore, the fact that

61 In 1975, the 9 largest metropolitan regions represented 27% of the population of the country, a figure which is likely to rise to around 31% by the end of this decade. It is worth noting that, between 1950 and 1970, the employment growth rate was lower than the increase in population in all metropolitan regions.

Table 4 - Annual Growth Rates, 1950-1970

Capitals	Total Population	Economically Active Population
São Paulo	5.79	5.10
Belo Horizonte	6.30	5.64
Belém	4.76	3.71
Curitiba	4.62	4.60
Recife	4.8	2.97
Fortaleza	5.10	4.61
Salvador	4.77	3.61
Rio de Janeiro	3.99	3.20
Porto Alegre	5.58	3.61

Source: *Retrato sem Retoques da Problemática Urbana*, DM, 1976, pag. 11.

May/June,

multinational companies have pursued a logic of surplus-capture based on the dynamics of interests operating at the international scale has only served to further compromise local development.

There is an issue that will remain unresolved because it lies far beyond the parameters of the current analysis: this is the claim that dependent capitalism, due to a historical law specific to the nature of its “associated” development, is built on the extensive super-exploitation of the workforce, in short, absolute surplus value.⁶² Without pretending to extrapolate general laws of growth for peripheral societies, it is worth highlighting that the Brazilian economy’s recent cycle of expansion saw a notable strengthening of the productive forces, which translated into increased labour productivity in the industrial sector, rising 32% between 1968-73, at the same time as the average wages of urban workers fell by 15% in real terms during the same period.⁶³ There is no doubt that the so-called “Brazilian

62 This is the thesis of Marini, Rui Mauro – *Dialéctica de la Dependencia, La Economía Exportadora, Sociedad y Desarrollo*, vol. 1, January-March 1972, p. 35-51. See also: Frank, André Gunder – *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America, Modern Readers*, New York, 1969. This is a controversial issue and, in my view, still needs further clarification. Among those opposed to the thesis is: Cardoso, Fernando Henrique – *As Novas Teses Equivocadas*, in *Authoritarismo e Democratização*, Paz e Terra, Rio, 1975, especially, pp. 27-33.

63 This deterioration contrasts with the increase in the average salary observed between 1955 and 1959, which occurred as follows: an index of 103 in 1955, and 97, 116, 113 and 114 for the following years. Between 1965 and 1969, on the other hand, there was a sharp decline: 100 in 1965, and 94, 86, 93 and 89 in subsequent years. This is according to: Singer,

miracle”, unlike those which occurred in Germany or Japan, where, between 1958 and 1970, real wages rose 95% and 92%, respectively, was in part enabled by the *absolute immiseration* of at least half of industrial workers.⁶⁴

The claim that the dynamic sector of the economy which uses advanced technologies does not need to base accumulation on falling wages, because its growth can be built on increasing labour productivity, is valid for societies where workers’ organisations are, to a significant degree, able to defend their interests. In the Brazilian case, the resumption of economic growth was accompanied by the repression of organised civil society, with detrimental consequences for the wages of most workers. In this conjuncture, in which the newly adopted development model opened up a vast space for foreign investment, the already discussed process of immiseration became a relevant additional factor in the extraction of surpluses, further increasing the profit margins of companies with high capital density, especially multinationals. Furthermore, the economic model was di-

Paul – *A Crise do Milagre, Paz e Terra*, Rio, 1976, p. 59. Singer’s calculations are based on the *Anuários Estatísticos do Brasil* and mine are based on studies carried out by the Ministry of Labour, using data from the “law of two thirds”. These data refer to Brazil. In the state of São Paulo, between 1968-1973, the decline in the real average wages of urban workers was 11%, which is certainly the reason for the lengthening of the workday, captured in the proportion of the labour force working more than 50 hours per week, which rose from 18% to 39%, according to PNAD, *op. cit.*

64 Besides the evolution of the average wage, we should remember that the minimum wage also fell more rapidly after 1965. In 1973, 35% of non-agricultural workers in Brazil earned less than one minimum salary per month and 67% less than two.

rected towards a quite restricted market, which dovetailed with the policy of intense income concentration within the narrow circles that would consume the sophisticated goods produced by the country's new range of industries.

Undeniably, multinational companies have created a political space that permits the extremely rapid maturation of investments and their withdrawal from the country: preferential tariffs for importing equipment, tax exemptions, credit at falling interest rates, facilitation of the export of surpluses, and a range of measures that generated highly favourable conditions for capital accumulation.⁶⁵ Even if we accept the debatable claim that, for reasons strictly linked to the production process, *absolute immiseration* was not a necessary condition for enabling the expansion of big capital, there is no doubt that an economic model characterised by so many “liberticidal concessions” would necessarily be opposed to a context of “social debate”. As such, and leaving aside the vicissitudes of the accumulation process, it seems possible to affirm that the political viability of the so-called “Brazilian miracle” – designed, fundamentally, for

65 “Upon arrival, the state creates... (for foreign capital) the conditions for oligopolistic gains: captive markets protected by high customs barriers, credit offered at negative rates, the expansion of state-owned companies providing the basic inputs required for constant capital, the containment of the growth of the capital goods sector, which allows them to establish extremely favourable technical arrangements, a liberticidal policy of incentives of every kind, tax deductions that function as though they were financing the concentration of capital”. Oliveira, Francisco de – *Acumulação Capitalista, Estado e Urbanização: A Nova Qualidade do Conflito de Classes*, Contraponto, year 1, no. 1, November 1976, Rio, p. 10.

the benefit of the international oligopoly – implied the stricter control of political parties, unions, press organisations and other civil society actors who opposed the exclusionary growth model. This, in turn, only could lead to the containment of workers' demands, intensifying the decline in wages of the vast majority of the working class.

Furthermore, the speed with which the expansion occurred and the creation of large industrial plants made it necessary for the state to create a vast service infrastructure to establish the necessary foundations for such a rapidly expanding accumulation process. This point, in addition to wage depression, is fundamental to characterise the reproduction of the workforce. In fact, the state invested enormous sums to provide favourable conditions for the oligopolistic companies, placing itself entirely at the service of expanded capital reproduction. At the height of the populist era, the state already positioned itself in this way, though without entirely neglecting certain basic investments for the reproduction of the workforce, as was necessary due to the very ambiguity of the political pact of that period. However, with the advance of the accumulation process, the state shed this ambiguity. It became the basis for the realisation of big capital, providing basic inputs and itself becoming an agent of production, which led to the growing exclusion of the working masses, now also with regard to collective consumption.⁶⁶

66 “The state is forced to clearly define itself, and this abandonment of ambiguity is fatal to its relations with the working classes: it becomes an exploiter of surplus value itself, with the transition of state-owned

In fact, state spending on “social capital”, ie. that directly linked to the needs of capital reproduction, went from 54th between 1950-54 to 83rd during the first two years of the Geisel government,⁶⁷ while the resources allocated to expenditure on “social welfare”, when compared to the years 1970-73, fell from 7% to 2%: “state spending over the last 25 years has been fundamentally focused on meeting the needs of capital development, maintaining the security conditions (social order) of this development, along with a smaller amount dedicated to social welfare (or the needs of workers). That is, a state structurally placed at the service of capital.”⁶⁸

In this case, the National Housing Bank (BNH) not only became a powerful tool of accumulation, mobilising huge resources to stimulate the construction sector – resources that, by that way, mainly came from a fund drawn primarily from

companies from deficits to surpluses, and more importantly, it begins to turn all national wealth into a support for private accumulation, whose limits were narrowed when the state persisted with its agenda of being a non-producer of commodities in a strict sense”. Oliveira, Francisco de – *Acumulação Capitalista, Estado e Urbanização, op. cit.*, p. 10.

67 Translator’s note: Ernesto Beckmann Geisel was an Army General and President of Brazil from 1974-79, the fourth of the Military Dictatorship period (1964-85). His presidency was associated with a decline in economic growth following the so-called “Brazilian miracle” of 1968-73 and by a relative easing of political repression.

68 In 1974, the state spent 1.35% of its budget on the labour sector, in next year it spent 2% on health and sanitation, while expenditure on “defence and security” rose from 15% in 1961-63 to 23% in 1970-73. See: Afonso, Carlos A. and Souza, Herbert de – *O Estado e o Desenvolvimento Capitalista no Brasil*, Paz e Terra, Rio, 1977, p. 51.

comes of the families that should benefit from them.⁷¹ However, it is in the provision of urban services by the private sector that the imperatives of capital expansion have really triumphed. The “solution” to urban problems has been equated with major projects – in particular, infrastructure, sanitation, road and

71 This problem has affected, for example, the poor populations of the Municipality of São Bernardo do Campo, the richest in the country in terms of income: “As ironic as it may seem, part of the water network is idle for the simple fact that residents do not have the purchasing power to connect their homes to the public network”. Maricato, Erminia T. M. – *A Proletarização do Espaço sob a Grande Indústria: O Caso de São Bernardo do Campo na Região da Grande São Paulo*, University of São Paulo, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, São Paulo, 1977, mimeo., p. 56. This case could be generalised to many parts of São Paulo as well as to most Brazilian cities, in which, we should mention, a huge proportion of residences lack water and sewerage.

Table 5 - Metropolitan Areas: Proportion Of Buildings Served By Water And Sewage Network In 1974 (In Percentages)

Metropolitan Areas	Proportion of Buildings Served	
	By Water Network	By Sewer Network
São Paulo	53	33
Rio de Janeiro	70	34
Recife	36	11
Belo Horizonte	67	60
Porto Alegre	98	37
Salvador	68	15
Fortaleza	35	16
Curitiba	58	35
Belém	60	5

Source: Retrato sem Retoques da Problemática Urbana, op. cit., p. 18.

transport systems – that produce an enormous surplus and, directly or indirectly, an expanding range of products serving broader economic interests. These act as a catalyst of the accumulation process while offering meagre results in terms of the improvement basic services for the reproduction of the workforce.⁷²

At heart, however, these issues are political in nature. Higher housing standards, which imply the existence of collective consumption services that are materially and culturally adequate for the reproduction of workers, will only be achieved when the latter are able to develop strong and independent channels for voicing their demands in relation to both working and urban conditions. In this sense, what is appropriate for the reproduction of the workforce not only concerns the degree of development of the productive forces but, above all, the capacity of the working classes to appropriate a portion of the wealth generated by society. In other words, it arises from the degree of organisation of the different social classes and sectors that confront each other in the social arena at a given historical conjuncture. On the other hand, we must note that social necessities are established historically, and, in this sense, there is nothing to suggest that the attainment of certain benefits will lead

72 On this point, see the thesis of Silva, Ana Amélia – *Planejamento Urbano e Conflito Social na Grande São Paulo*, mimeo, April 1978. Francisco de Oliveira straightforwardly and correctly summarises the “problem” of collective consumption in relation to the mass transport system: “Can the state not resolve the demand for urban transport? Given the size of the surplus it manages, it could; but if this surplus comes in part from car production, then it cannot”, *Acumulação Capitalista, Estado e Urbanização, op. cit.*, p. 12.

to a suppression of class conflict. It is, by definition, dynamic and inevitable within a system that is built on the private appropriation of the economic surplus.

Placed in the context of social struggle, the process of urban spoliation, understood as a means of extorting the popular classes in their access to collective consumption services, assumes its full meaning: extortion means denying or taking away something that someone, for some social reason, has the right to. Just as citizenship presupposes the exercise of economic as well as political and civil rights, it increasingly seems possible talk about a set of rights related specifically to urban goods. Of course, such rights are not systematically contemplated by current legislation, but that doesn't make them any less essential or mean they should not be the focus of demands from the masses who endure terrible housing conditions, spend 3 to 4 hours a day commuting, who have no possibility of leisure, receive substandard schooling, and often lack access to health services. Citizenship is obviously not limited to these items, as obtaining them already implies the effective mobilisation of political and civil rights and must be complemented by a set of economic benefits arising from the sphere of labour relations.

Thus, the housing "problem", like other basic elements involved in the reproduction of the labour force, will improve to the extent that urban popular movements connected to struggles within the sphere of work can challenge the dominance traditionally exercised by the state in Brazil, which encapsulates the contradictions of a society riven by inequalities and conflicts.





IV

The favela as a formula for survival

Compared to other Latin American metropolises, São Paulo's favela population is small. In Mexico City, for example, 45% of the inhabitants live in favelas or in settlements with similar characteristics. In Caracas, they account for more than a third of the city's residents. Santiago has a quarter of its population living in "Callampas", and in Lima, half of residents live in "Barriadas".

Even in the Brazilian context, in metropolises like Salvador or Rio, to choose just the most extreme cases, figures are far higher than in São Paulo. In the Bahian case, it is enough to mention Alagados⁷³, which houses more than 100,000 people. In Rio, there are old and substantial settlements nestled on the highly-valued hills of the South Zone. At the end of the last decade, no fewer than 1 million people lived in shacks and, de-

73 Translator's note: A large informal settlement in Salvador, the capital of the state of Bahia, where many homes were built on stilts over mangroves.

spite the removals carried out in recent years, nothing indicates that this number has decreased.⁷⁴

There are no systematic studies identifying the reasons that caused Rio or Salvador to aggregate large numbers of favela residents. One of the likely causes is the existence, in coastal cities, of vast tracts of land owned by the public authorities, in particular the army and navy, where favela residents could settle in areas that were not well suited for construction or were less likely to see their land values appreciate. There is, notably, the issue of topography, a factor that is generally pointed to for the case of Rio, where favela residents climbed the steep hillsides in a moment when real estate developers were not yet interested in these areas of the South Zone, which, at the time, had little value: “for a long time, the favelas remained protected from any speculation, since the land occupied by them, owned by public bodies or private individuals, had topographical conditions that were difficult to exploit, generally being on hillsides or in swampland, without forgetting those of disputed or unknown ownership.”⁷⁵

There are, of course, specific historical factors in each city. In Rio, for example, it is said that the soldiers who returned to the city at the end of the last century, after the War of Canudos, and who had nowhere to live, were allowed to build shacks on land without market value, as a reward for their service to the

74 See: Perlman, Janice E. – *O Mito da Marginalidade: Favelas e Política no Rio de Janeiro*. Paz e Terra, Rio, 1977. In the Northeast of Brazil, around 14% of the population lives in shacks, according to: PNAD, IBGE, 1973.

75 Valladares, Licia do Prado – *Passa-se uma Casa, op. cit.* Rio, p. 31.

nation.⁷⁶

Notwithstanding the diverse factors, it should not be forgotten that, wherever there are large numbers of favela residents, there are always groups interested in offering certain infrastructure services or even guarantees against removal in exchange for a certain number of votes. Without a shadow of a doubt this was the case in Rio, where favelas became places of interest for those who sought political office, and for a long time they were important vote banks for local councillors, deputies or senators. But it also mustn't be forgotten – and this remains particular to Rio de Janeiro – that in certain favelas, organisations have developed to defend and vocalise the demands of residents, leading to the consolidation of those settlements and, in some cases, their ability to resist economic and political forces attempting to remove them.⁷⁷

76 This is where the origins of the term “favela” seem to lie: in Canudos there was a hill called Morro da Favela, which, in turn, refers to a plant commonly found in Bahia. On the other hand, the illustrated dictionary of the Portuguese language of the Instituto Brasileiro de Edições Pedagógicas identifies the name “favela” as referring to one of the hills of Rio de Janeiro.

77 A recent example of this kind of urban struggle is the resistance put up by residents of Vidigal favela to the pressures of real estate speculation that seek to displace them from those highly valued peaks of the city. Unlike in São Paulo, the favela dwellers of Rio, besides being far more numerous, have always shown a capacity for organisation and resistance, within the limits and possibilities available to them, that has allowed them to defend their basic interests, the principal of which is avoiding removal. “Well-known cases of opposition to government action [ie. removal] were initially those of Favela do Pasmado, removed in 1964 only under the supervision of the police armed with machine guns, and Ilha das Dragas,

In São Paulo, favela residents have never had a comparable level of organisation. However, this does not mean that they have less capacity for resistance and political initiative. Attempts to resist removal in some areas in 1978, as well as demands for urban improvements which have recently appeared in some areas, show that favela residents can contribute to the dynamics of emerging social movements in the São Paulo context.

In any case, they have always represented a small proportion of the city's population. Since the end of the last century, a period of significant population growth, the cortiços have been a common feature of the urban landscape. In fact, from early on, in addition to the workers' villages built by employers, cortiços proliferated in the working-class neighbourhoods of the time, including Brás, Belém and Barra Funda, and in more central areas, such as Santa Cecília. This was not simply deteriorated housing rented out to workers who flocked to the city in their droves. Most were built with the specific purpose of housing workers in small units, the rent from which, once added together, offered substantial returns to real estate developers during the early stages of industrialisation.

More recently, with the acceleration of internal migration resulting from the expanded industrial economy established after the Second World War, the working class began to reside predominantly in so-called "precarious houses", located in the proliferating and increasingly distant "peripheries" of the city.

in 1969, where removal was only carried out after the arrest of members of the local Residents' Association". Valladares, Licia do Prado – idem, p. 112.

As explained in the previous chapter, such housing in clandestine subdivisions, devoid of infrastructure and constructed in stages by owners themselves with the help of relatives, is the product of declining wages and is one of the means through which the workforce engaged in the production process could be reproduced at low costs.

In this sense, the reproduction of the workforce, with regard to housing, has most commonly occurred via the “peripheral house” than the *cortiço* or *favela*, despite such forms of housing also representing formulas that low-income workers must resort to in order to survive in the city.⁷⁸

Despite the predominance of “home ownership” in the city’s “peripheries”, it is worth pointing out that, although it remains insignificant, the *favela* population has grown at an intense pace. In 1958, it accounted for 1.3% of São Paulo’s population and, 10 years later, just 0.8%. In 1973, it was once again 1.3% and, in 1975, despite *favela* residents still being proportionately few in number, they already amounted to 117,000 people. The following year there were more than 200,000 and, in 1978, estimates point to the existence of 490,000 residents in *favelas*.⁷⁹

78 The definition of what constitutes “precarious housing” varies greatly, depending on the criteria that are used. By way of illustration, it should be noted that 48% of households in the capital in 1977 exhibited an “extremely poor” [péssimo] architectural standard. This is according to *Pesquisa Origem/Destino-1977*, EMPLASA, Preliminary Results.

79 Source: Municipality of São Paulo – Basic Indicators, Table 7, COGEP, 1978. This number only includes residents whose shacks are located on land that they do not own. If they included shacks that are built prior to the eventual construction of a brick home, as practised by many inhabitants

With regard to this recent increase, we can posit that, in addition to the role of wage repression that lies at the heart of the favelisation process, the dizzying increase in urban land prices – which in recent years has also affected peripheral areas – has simultaneously made building one’s own home even more challenging.

The increase is significant as it has been far more intense than the growth of the city’s population as a whole. Its true significance becomes clearer when we consider that the public authorities have sought to prevent both the creation of new favelas and the expansion of existing ones. Meanwhile, in recent years, the city government has established favela removal programs, which are mobilised as soon as the land on which the favelas are located become “useful” to the metropolis or the shacks within them come to be seen as a “source of discomfort” for wealthier residents. This is the case of the favelas “Parada Agente Cícero”, “Córrego do Tatuapé”, “Sapá”, “Tolstoi”, “Jardim Panorama”, “Cidade Jardim”⁸⁰ and many others that have been destroyed, either to make way for interventions that the city needs to expand, or when their mere presence affected the value of nearby properties. When the land occupied is private property, which is the case of 60% of the capital’s favelas, residents are immediately evicted. In cases where the land is public, the famous removals occur. When residents fail to evade the surveillance of the authorities by moving to other favelas, they are transferred

of the peripheries, the number would be higher.

80 Translator’s note: Favelas removed from suburban neighbourhoods, mainly in the east and southwest of the city.

to Provisional Housing Villages which, besides being far from places of employment, in the extreme “peripheries” of the city, do not differ at all from the favelas themselves.

The so-called “housing problems”, including the favela itself, must be understood in the context of broader socio-economic and political processes, which determine the production of space in a city and establish segregation in urban land that reflects the exclusionary dynamics between the social classes.

In a city like São Paulo, land has been a source of enormous and profitable business. It should be noted that, in recent times, the real profitability of urban land grew by an average of 30% per year, practically double that of the stock market and many times higher than savings accounts. One of the foundations of this huge business is the speculative hoarding of land. In this respect, it is noteworthy that 45% of the city’s total urban area is still made up of vacant land and that in 40% of cases these vacant urban plots are large, ie. over 16,000 m².

A similar process has given rise to the production of starkly segregated urban spaces. On the one hand, it has been a key factor driving the city’s chaotic growth, creating “peripheries” increasingly distant from employment centres and, at the same time, generating a sparse and discontinuous pattern of housing development, meaning that an immense human mass is denied the basic services of collective consumption. On the other hand, because the rapid appreciation of these vacant plots is associated with the installation of such services, the public authorities have played a fundamental role in differentiating land prices, thus fuelling the process of real estate speculation through its

own investments.⁸¹

The huge resources allocated to urban infrastructure, when not linked to the vicissitudes of the economy, has become hugely important to the profits of the real estate-construction sector, which appropriates those spaces that have gained value thanks to public investment.

In São Paulo, where a huge part of the population lacks access to basic public services, the land question appears clearly as a driver of socio-economic segregation. Consider that 70% of hoarded land plots possess some kind of public infrastructure, such as water or sewage networks or paving, remaining socially idle and therefore serving as a powerful component of the dynamic of land speculation.⁸²

There are endless examples of this process and perhaps the most flagrant are those transformations occasioned by the past and present works of the city's Metro system. Worthy of note, in this regard, is the fact that the highest increases in value, between 1973 and 1976, occurred on land located at the edges of the North-South line, especially around the Santana terminal

81 To get an idea of the importance of infrastructure – water and sewage networks, drains, paved streets, curbs and gutters, etc. – on the price of land, it will suffice to know that the cost of basic urbanisation (the simple creation of streets and topography, concrete alleyways, and water collection in low points) is eight times lower than what is legally required by the city government to approve a new subdivision. This difference of 800% clearly indicates the role that urban infrastructure has in the real estate valorisation process.

82 Campanario, Milton and Lucchesi, Denise – *Expansão Urbana*, Department of Urban Studies, COGEP/EM URB, mimeo, 1977.

and in the neighbourhood of Jabaquara, where prices rose 35% more than for the municipality as a whole.⁸³

In a metropolis where the production of space occurs in the absence of a civil society able to vigorously defend the basic interests of the majority of inhabitants, urban transformations are inevitably carried out like a steamroller, crushing all those who lack the resources to capture the benefits injected into the city. Again, the recent works on the East-West line of the Metro constitute a flagrant example of the remodelling of an urban space that, by driving up the value of certain areas, leads to the expulsion of low-income residents. As soon as the works were announced, there was intense real estate appreciation. Even in a distant periphery like the district of Itaquera, which, until recently, lacked investment, the mere installation of a construction site where the future station will be located has doubled the price of land in surrounding areas. In the stretch connecting Praça da Sé to Tatuapé, just the start of the works has led to rents increasing several times over: “With our income”, said a local resident, “you can’t pay what they’re asking for, it’s 50% of our family income”. Even property owners, who constitute around of a third of the area’s inhabitants, in most cases received only “ridiculous and paltry” compensation and were forced to leave neighbourhoods such as Brás, Belém and Tatuapé, with all their infrastructure, to occupy areas that lacked any.⁸⁴

83 Source: Registry of the Department of Patrimony, Municipal Urbanisation Company, EMURB.

84 Solano, Jaene & Zan, Pedro: *A Autofagia da Cidade*, in *O Estado de São Paulo*, October 30, 76. Data based on research carried out by the

The dynamics of the production of urban space, by generating such improvements, simultaneously and continuously displaces and dispossesses countless people who must leave their places of residence to make way for those who can bear the cost of a form of progress that operates via massive real estate speculation. Such urban processes inevitably drive the poor into areas that lack public services, at least until the day when, with the growth of the metropolis, they are also expelled from these places. If, that is, their political initiatives continued to be suppressed.

As was analysed in the previous chapter, to survive in the city, the vast majority of the working class, whether migrant or native, can only settle in areas far from the well-served centres. For those embarking on the long journey of home ownership, the alternative is a drastic reduction in already constrained household consumption, which, over the course of 20 years, allows them to pay for a typically clandestine lot, and, gradually, with the help of family, build a house with poor building standards.⁸⁵

For those who do not have the savings needed to put down

Metro.

85 The number of clandestine subdivisions in the city is not known. Just around the Billings and Guarapiranga reservoirs, in 1973, 200,000 people lived in 130 listed subdivisions, of which 115 were clandestine. Notwithstanding the recent regularisation of structures not approved by the city government, which house hundreds of thousands of people, it is estimated that around 15% of the capital's total occupied area, excluding public spaces, roads and properties, was comprised of clandestine subdivisions.

a deposit for a lot, or who do not have the support of unpaid labour required to build a house, owning a home remains a dream that is continually postponed. In these cases, the alternative becomes a rental house at the back of another house in one of the city's subdivisions, often of just one or two rooms, with a zinc roof and cement floor, lacking sewers and piped water.

Another solution is the *cortiço*, characterised by the crowding of people into shared rooms, where, in 83% of cases, the cost of rent is over one minimum wage per month. Here, we should stress that renting a room in a more central area or a house of minimal dimensions in the periphery costs, on average, one and a half minimum wages.⁸⁶ It is for this reason that the favela appears to a growing number of people as the only way to survive in the city.

We must emphasise that favela residents constitute an extremely poor segment of São Paulo's population. While only 6% of the capital's population has a family income of less than 2 minimum wages, rising to 20% among the working class as a whole, 80% of favela residents fall into this income bracket.⁸⁷

86 50% of house rentals cost up to 1 minimum wage per month. See: Godinho, Marta Therezinha – The Implications of Rent on the Housing Problem, Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration. In 1975, 37% of homes in São Paulo were rented.

87 This is for the municipality as a whole, taken from: Kirsten, J. T. – Family Budgets of the City of São Paulo, *op. cit.* Data relating to the working class, which includes a sample of industrial, service and self-employed workers, come from: DIEESE – Family Salaries and Living Standards no. 2, 1974. The incomes of the favela population were taken from the Boletim HABI/COPED, Caderno Especial no. 1, Study of the Favela Phenomenon in the Municipality of São Paulo. To show the extent of poverty in the favelas,

The favela is mainly home to manual workers who sell their labour power on the market at derisory rates, or who earn extremely low incomes engaging in autonomous work. Given the existing labour supply in the city, still fuelled by high levels of migration, favela residents are at a disadvantage when competing for better wages in the job market. Notably, there is a high degree of illiteracy among favela residents over the age of 14, around four times higher than the average for the municipality.⁸⁸

Men typically work as manual labourers in civil construction or work autonomously as street vendors, gardeners, removal workers, security guards or casually in various other areas, while the majority of working women are domestic workers.⁸⁹ Excluding the physically and mentally disabled, retirees and those in receipt of INPS, 45% of favela dwellers aged 15 or over who are able to work do not engage in any paid activity, including

it is enough to mention that 3% of families earn more than 4 minimum wages, a proportion that is 40% for the working class as a whole. On the other hand, we should note that the incomes of the working class are much lower than the average for the municipality: only 18% of families earn over 6 minimum wages, compared to 52% for the capital. *Idem*. It is again worth highlighting the recent increase in poverty in São Paulo: in 1971/1972, 6% of families earned up to 2 minimum wages, rising to 12% in 1974. This is according to: *Criteria for Socio-Economic Classification, ABA/ABIPENE*.

88 In the favelas, the illiteracy rate is 54%. While 9% of children aged 7-14 in the capital are illiterate, the proportion in the favelas is three times higher. *Boletim HABI/COPED*. *Idem* p. 93.

89 Of the total employed workforce in favelas, 19% are in civil construction, 16% are self-employed and 24% work in domestic services. *Idem* pp. 103 and 104.

the proportionately high 15% who formally declare themselves as unemployed.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, it is also worth noting that 39% of those who are employed are unregistered, meaning they cannot access the social security benefits to which their position within the productive system should entitle them.⁹¹

Unemployment, non-registration, casual autonomous activities and, above all, low wages are common conditions for all those engaged in the productive process. However, due to their greater magnitude in the favelas, the living standards of their residents are below the subsistence levels prevailing among São Paulo's broader working class.

Poor even by the standards of the poor, this segment of the working-class population can only find a solution for survival in the city in the favela. The product of a political and economic machinery that depresses wages and therefore levels of basic consumption, among which housing is an essential component, every individual or family that cannot afford the speculative game of the real estate market ends up in the favela. That is why, despite formal prohibitions on the emergence of new favelas, the freezing of existing ones and the numerous removals that have taken place over recent years, the number of favela residents continues to grow at an accelerating pace.

Traditionally, the favela appeared as formula for survival for

90 *Idem* pp. 102 and 103. It should be noted that only 2.7% of favela residents are in the category "mentally disabled" and "INPS insured" and only 0.5% "retired". *Idem*, pp. 102.

91 *Idem* p. 103. The proportion for the Metropolitan Region of Greater São Paulo is of 30%. Source: PNAD, Metropolitan Regions, *op. cit.*

the poor in at least two ways. Firstly, because it meant saving on housing costs, which account for just under a quarter of the household budget of a typical working-class family. Secondly, because favelas tended to be located close to employment centres, they also implied a reduction in transport costs, which represent around 9% of the budget of the workforce that depends on collective transport to travel between home and work.⁹²

If the favelas continue to offer reduced costs to their residents, as expenses for building or renting a shack are significantly lower than for any other housing type, the role of transport seems, at least to some extent, to have lost its significance in easing the meagre budgets of favela residents. This is because favelas too tend to be expelled to the distant “peripheries”, where there is less real estate pressure and where, aside from the absence of other public services, the daily commute to work is expensive and time-consuming.

The parts of the municipality where most new shacks appeared between 1972 and 1975 point to such a process. Indeed, the biggest increases occurred in Campo Limpo, São Miguel, Ermelino Matarazzo and Butantã, districts located on the extreme “periphery” of the capital, whereas Pinheiros, Sé and Penha, which are more central and consolidated in terms of ur-

92 According to DIEESE, *op. cit.* P. 57. In 1973... “80.3% of favelas... are located close to main roads in neighbourhoods, which suggests that the process of favelisation is closely linked to opportunities for better transport, proximity to workplaces, commerce and urban infrastructure in general. Study of the Favela Phenomenon in the Municipality of São Paulo, *op. cit.*, P. 39.

ban occupation and infrastructure, there was a decrease in the number of shacks.⁹³ The growth of the metropolis based on profit dynamics that constantly drive up the value of urban land has made it increasingly difficult for favela residents to remain on land close to employment centres. As for most workers, the tendency is also... “the expulsion of favela residents to the periphery, further aggravating the ‘exclusion’ of this segment of the population”.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, favelisation represents a survival solution as it offers a reduction in housing expenses. It may also, in another way, lead to a reduction in travel time and transport costs, because erecting a shack offers an expedient in response to the high job turnover rate in São Paulo’s economy. Effectively, the construction of a shack, if there is land available, it is far more feasible, in terms of speed and cost, than selling a house and building or buying another. This is an important fact when we consider that approximately a quarter of workers in the capital do not stay in their jobs for more than a year.⁹⁵

This phenomenon can be extremely useful for certain economic activities. Within the city, the possibility of greater residen-

93 Preliminary Report of the Favela Registry of 1974/1975, Secretariat of Social Welfare, Department of Housing and Work, mimeo. s/d.

94 Taschner, Suzana Pasternak – Favelas in the Municipality of São Paulo: Research Results. Paper presented at the 28th Meeting of the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science, Brasília, 1976, p. 15.

95 Godinho, Marta Therezinha – The implications of rent, op. cit. For the workforce earning up to 2 minimum wages per month, annual turnover is 31%.

tial mobility permits workers to follow the itinerant movements of the construction sector. In the economy more generally, it offers a floating supply of labour, constantly and periodically attracted and expelled by bursts of both urban and agrarian activity, able to move more easily in response to the needs of the accumulation process, as it is, to some extent, unattached to a particular place of residence. In this way, as an exemplary case of a worker that appears as a “jack-of-all-trades”, the favela resident can easily fill the most immediate needs of the productive machinery that, often, in both city and countryside, must quickly mobilise a large unskilled workforce.

As is obvious, living in the favela means living in extremely precarious conditions. In São Paulo, they are often located in legally disputed areas, in backyards, on the margins of highways and rivers, on temporarily abandoned land or structures, in short, areas that have not yet been designated a collective function nor acquired sufficient value to be sold. Around two thirds of favelas are located on land that regularly floods or on steep slopes where they face the risk of landslides. In 66% of cases, there is no public lighting, 98% of shacks are not connected to the sewage network or have a septic tank, 80% lack running water, and in the same proportion garbage is dumped in the “open air”. It is easy to interpret from such data the high levels of environmental contamination in favelas and the consequences for the health of their residents.⁹⁶

96 According to: Study of the Favela Phenomenon, op. cit, pp. 38, 59 and 60. These data contrast with those for the municipality, which, despite displaying high levels of precarity, are still far better than those for the

Meanwhile, housing conditions in the shacks are alarming. In 95% of cases, there is 2m² or less of space per resident. There are also low levels of privacy, as half of shacks do not have internal walls and in two fifths there are, on average, at least 4 people per room. Furthermore, in 93% of shacks external walls are made of used wood, 46% have uncovered floors, and in 26% floors are made of inadequate materials and allow water infiltration.⁹⁷

The precariousness of their living conditions alone makes it unwise to classify the favela resident as an urban citizen. But it is not only in this regard that citizenship, understood as a minimal and essential set of rights, is absent.

If, for urban residents, there is at least the possibility of attempting to organise to resist expulsion from the places they live, or to pressure decision-makers for improvements to collective services in their neighbourhoods, for favela residents even this minimal aspect of citizenship is compromised.⁹⁸

favelas. However, in certain peripheral areas of the city the percentage of households lacking infrastructure is similar to that in the favelas. In São Miguel, Ermelino Matarazzo, Itaquera, Guaianazes and Perús-Pirituba, where 14% of the Municipality's inhabitants live, 95% of households are not connected to the sewage network and 70% are not connected to the water network. Source: Budget 1976, São Paulo City Government.

97 According to: Study of the Favela Phenomenon, op. cit., pp. 53, 55, 56 and 57.

98 Translator's note: Here, Kowarick contrasts "urban resident" [morador urbano] with "favela resident" [favelado]. Today, most scholars avoid the term "favelado", which is regarded by many as derogatory, and understand favela residents as also being "urban residents", albeit ones who are denied certain rights.

If the condition of urban resident does not guarantee access to certain goods, it at least, in principle, opens channels for demanding them. This seems to be the meaning of the organised popular movements, whereby residents organise themselves into various kinds of association to seek improvements that they consider essential. There is no doubt that the provision of urban services in São Paulo has occurred extremely slowly in relation to the minimal needs of the population, and nothing indicates that, in a remotely near horizon, there will be substantial change in direction of public investments. Even in periods when there were greater possibilities for voicing popular demands, when political dynamics had to take the “aspirations of the people” into account, the gains won in terms of both work and housing were quite tenuous. However, precisely because the gains were insignificant, and because the survival of workers is increasingly linked to services that are collective in nature, demands for urban improvements act as source of pressure, whether latent or manifest, that at least hold out the possibility of exercising some limited form of citizenship and raises the issue of minimal rights of urban life.

By contrast, the fact of living in a favela excludes the individual from the status of urban resident, because it denies the very possibility of self-defence in relation to housing. Because it occupies someone else’s land, the favela is defined by its illegality. Thus, the draconian empire of the fundamental rights of society, based on private property, comes down on favela residents, entailing the denial of their rights as residents. Thus, even in this minimal sense, the favela resident is not treated as an ur-

ban citizen, but rather as a usurper who can be removed without even the possibility of defence, because he stands against the kingdom of legality, which reserves the right to expel him. Such is the situation in São Paulo, where only exceptionally have favela residents managed to receive urban improvements and have never achieved, beyond possession, actual ownership of the land. This does not mean that their capacity to resist may not grow in the near future through the defence and expansion of access to urban goods.

In any case, government policies of freezing favela growth, seeking to prevent the establishment of new settlements and the densification of existing ones, destroying many settlements and allowing private owners also to do the same with impunity, has created a “consciousness of prohibition” among favela residents. That is, the experience of illegal housing conditions means the ever-present possibility of suddenly being forced to leave the favela. Facing such conditions, favela residents within São Paulo’s urban context tend to perceive themselves as people without rights and without the organisational means of obtaining them.

The condition of being a favela resident not only means vulnerability in relation to housing, it also affects the very core of his civil rights, as he may more easily and frequently be mistaken for a “crook” or a “troublemaker”, who are special targets of police action. And many are indeed mistaken as such, meaning that even those who have not experienced it directly, internalise the sense of danger. As well as being a focus of police beatings, the favela is also stigmatised by “upstanding” residents as a den

lic calamity”.⁹⁹

Despite the multiple forms of control seeking to prevent favelisation, it is always possible to circumvent surveillance and build a shack in the middle of an already existing favela or in an area that has not yet been closed off. After all, depending on its initial size and the number of people involved, it is possible to erect one in just a day.

Despite the pressure and repression, the removals and expulsions, the number of favela residents has grown at a rapid pace, raising questions about the fate of this growing number of people. The first possible explanation is that the favela is a temporary stage in the migrant’s journey, a period of enforced saving that will eventually allow him to swap his shack for a better-quality home. According to this understanding, the favela is a kind of “stepping stone” from which newcomers to the city, after a certain amount of time, can enjoy higher levels of consumption, including a house with better living standards.

Although it is true that a majority of those living in favelas are migrants, it cannot be said that they constitute a provisional stage in the lives of their inhabitants. In fact, 53% of heads of households in favelas have lived in the capital for more than 5 years and 37% have been here for more than a decade, whereas only 12% have been in the city for less than a year.¹⁰⁰

For many, the favela is a prolonged condition, and there is nothing to suggest that it serves as a process of saving neces-

99 Parisse, L. – *Las Favelas en la Expansión Urbana de Rio de Janeiro: Estudio Geográfico*, *America Latina*, year 12, no. 3, Jul/Sept. 1969, p. 16.

100 According to: *Study of the Favela Phenomenon*, op. cit., p. 111.

of disorder that tarnishes the landscape of the better-served neighbourhoods. They must therefore be removed so that peace can return to the lives of families who feel contaminated by the danger of their proximity to the shacks.

For all these reasons, the favela is perceived as a potential source of delinquency. Contrary to what many believe, it does not primarily contain a population with *lumpen* characteristics. Some beggars, prostitutes and delinquents may be found. But, as in any other poor neighbourhood in the city, most are salaried or autonomous workers who power the productive process. Even in their work relations, favela residents are stigmatised. It is not uncommon for companies to refuse to hire an individual because he lives in a favela, and at times over the last decade some have even displayed signs explicitly expressing this form of discrimination. In the residences of the upper classes, it is common for employers not to hire, or even to fire, domestic workers upon discovering the original addresses of those who occupy the maids' quarters of bourgeois homes.

Without a shadow of a doubt, housing patterns reflect a complex process of segregation and discrimination embedded in a deeply divided society. In more or less intense ways, this process permeates all levels of the social pyramid in that richer groups seek to differentiate and distance themselves from poorer ones. But the favela is the target of extremely forceful stigmatisation from all other residents, constructing an image of a form of poverty, which, because it is extreme, leads it to be seen as vicious and potentially dangerous: "the city sees the favela as a pathological reality, a disease, a plague, a cyst, a pub-

sary for upward socio-economic mobility. On the contrary, for a significant number, favelisation is a necessary expedient to survive in the city and, often, is a destination for those who had previously enjoyed better living standards:... “41% of migrant favela residents... enjoyed other conditions for some time and arrived in the favela via a downward trajectory”.¹⁰¹

In reality, the growing favelisation that has occurred in São Paulo is simply one of the outcomes of the intensification of labour exploitation that inevitably leads to an increasing degree of spoliation in the consumption levels of urban residents. In a context in which wages have increasingly been squeezed in relation to basic expenses – including housing – the favela appears as the only alternative for those who wish to remain in the city. Whether because rents have become incompatible with the meagre budgets of many workers, or because the purchase of land and the construction of a home are too onerous and require a regular income for families embarking on such a long and tortuous process of acquisition, any “crisis” can mean being unable to channel resources towards housing. Such a “crisis” – illness, an accident at work, unemployment –, all frequent occurrences in a workforce that is worn down by the productive process, constitutes one of the drivers of favelisation. For families earning just a few minimum wages, it often means being unable to keep up debt or rent payments at the rates demanded by the real estate market.

101 Tascher, Suzana Pasternak – Favelas in the Municipality of São Paulo: Research Results, op. cit., p. 12.

Of course, the favela also welcomes new arrivals to the city and some of those living in shacks will be able to take advantage of the possibility to save to improve their economic conditions and move into less precarious housing. But nothing indicates that this process of “conquering the city” is preponderant among favela residents. On the contrary, the available data suggest that this transition often does not occur. Only 5.4% of favela families own land in the Greater São Paulo Region, of which 4.7% are still making payments. These are frequently affected by the aforementioned “crises”, which leads to the disruption of payments and the loss of the property.¹⁰²

Leaving the favela is not an easy process. Our observations indicate that, basically, this occurs in two ways. The first is when there is external support, namely relatives who invite the favela resident to live with them or offer to help with the construction or renting of a home. The second is the process of removal, when the city government helps favela residents who have a plot of land, providing them with materials or money to start construction of their own home.

But these processes require a minimum of resources, which in most cases are not available, given that the average family income in São Paulo’s favelas is a derisory 1.2 minimum wages.¹⁰³

102 According to: Study of the Favela Phenomenon in the Municipality of São Paulo, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

103 It is worth pointing out that even in the case of subsidised government housing programs, the experience of Rio showed that the incomes of favela residents relocated into to housing projects was, in the vast majority of cases, incompatible with keeping up mortgage payments: “Although the price of housing offered by COHAB was less than the rental market

¹⁰⁴ In this way, a limited number, through the physical exertion of working overtime and with help from relatives and friends, are able to accrue the necessary savings to acquire a plot of land, generally located in the extreme “peripheries” of the metropolis, and to begin the slow and risky process of building a house. If this is the aspiration of most favela residents, they also know that, in São Paulo, this dream is difficult to realise. That is, unless God, the government or the lottery, entities with equally mythical powers, alter the destination of their current, futureless, path.

As with unskilled workers generally, favela residents encounter increasing difficulties in obtaining regular employment as they age. 30% of household heads aged over 55 are unemployed and half of people in this age group do not engage in any paid activity. Thus, it does not seem difficult to identify the trajectory of this even more underpaid segment of the working class. A very small portion, after much work, experiences a leap upwards into better living conditions. But for most, the favela is not a “stepping stone”, as it does not lead to any place in the

rate, the reality was that for many new residents – especially for those from favelas – the price was still higher than they were able to pay”. Valladares, Licia do Prado – *Passe-se uma Casa*, op. cit. P. 74. We should also highlight that it was common for rehoused favela residents to return to the favela: “While there are no precise data to allow us to quantify the extent to which each of the destinations was taken, the predominant trend, from interviews and indirect information, was a return to the favela”. Idem, p. 80.

104 Translator’s note: COHABs (Companhias de Habitação Popular) are municipal or metropolitan housing companies responsible for building social housing, working with the already mentioned BNH federal bank.

city. Given their socio-economic conditions, their labour power is depleted prematurely in productive processes, making them expendable in a context where youthful energy is abundant. Thus, in many cases, instead of being a “stepping stone”, there is a decline that makes it increasingly difficult to survive in the city. As it is a workforce that only has its physical energy to offer the labour market, the very system that it helped to build makes it superfluous, and it enters the long line of unemployed and underemployed workers who, to a large extent, no longer constitute a reserve army of labour. In this regard, we must emphasise that, unlike the fully developed capitalist countries, where the industrial reserve army is maintained by the state with pensions, social security or unemployment benefits, in Brazil it is the working class itself which, besides sustaining itself on increasingly depressed incomes, must also take responsibility for the reserve army, including those who – often prematurely – have lost the physical and mental energy to sell themselves on the labour market.

A significant part of the unskilled workforce feels excluded from the productive process and, in many cases, unable to continue surviving in the city.¹⁰⁵ It couldn't be any different in

105 It is notable, in this regard, that through SETREM, the official triage and referral service for migrants, around 3,000 people a month are removed from the Greater São Paulo Region. According to: Hillas, Roberto – *A Dura Viagem no Trem dos Desterrados*, *Isto É*, no 65, 1978, pp. 58 to 61. Unofficial calculations suggest that if we add those who return on their own initiative, around 100,000 people leave Greater São Paulo every year, many of whom find themselves in socio-economic conditions traditionally defined as “asylum from the industrial reserve army”.

a system that turns men into commodities for capital, brutally depleting the value of the workforce. Poor among the poor, favela residents – the segment of the working class that is subject to the greatest spoliation – are particularly vulnerable to the uses and abuses of a system whose growth has been achieved via the exclusion of those who produce wealth that is not theirs to keep.



V

Uses and abuses: Reflections on the metamorphoses of work

The analysis developed here is based on in-depth research with some families in two favelas in São Paulo: “Cidade Jardim” and “Jardim Panorama”. Of course, one cannot generalise from such a small number of cases. However, based on these, it is possible to address some broader theoretical problems. Taking into account their life stories, the following analyses offer a reflection on the transformations the manual labour force has undergone in its transition from the countryside to the metropolis, which often also includes experiences of work in small and medium-sized cities. The aim is to link the everyday world of a few families to global processes that shape and give meaning to their lived reality. That is, we sought to identify... “the significant structural characteristics of society of that... (these) poor victims are imprisoned by”.¹⁰⁶

106 Silberstein, Paul – Favela Living: Personal Solution to Larger

The families studied have a rural background. They came to São Paulo, migrating either directly or in stages, squeezed by the extortion that prevailed in labour relations in the countryside or by pre-urban conditions of existence in which unemployment was common. All started working between 8 and 10 years old, typically in the fields, in small family properties or those of others. This includes the women, who combined domestic and agricultural work.

For the latter, this was basically their experience prior to arriving in São Paulo. In this regard, moving to the city entailed greater dedication to domestic work, whether paid or unpaid. From being participants in shared family work, carried out for subsistence in small family plots of or through casual “tasks” on commercial agricultural farms, following urbanisation, women’s activities became limited to looking after the house and children or becoming maids. In practice, there are few professional options available. Internal migration produces a large male reserve army, which means that women have little chance of joining the urban productive sector in manual occupations other than those related to domestic services.¹⁰⁷

Paid female work in the metropolis is used by middle- and

Problems. *Latin America*, vol. 12(3) Jul-Sept. 1969, p. 184.

107 24% of the total employed workforce in the favelas of São Paulo work in domestic jobs, and 30% of the favela population only perform domestic activities in the household. According to: *Boletim HABI*. op. cit, P. 104. On the other hand, 30% of women aged 10 or over in Greater São Paulo are in work, of which 35% are in the category of “providing services”, where domestic work predominates. Meanwhile, almost half of women only perform unpaid domestic tasks. Source: PNAD, op. cit. 1972.

high-income groups or by favela residents themselves and workers living in surrounding areas. Before arriving in São Paulo, the work of these women was mainly carried out with other family members, initially with parents and later with a husband. On the way to the big city, many pass through smaller cities, where they first attempt to become integrated into the urban economy. In these stages of their migratory journey, they try to adapt to new contexts of work, but opportunities for paid work for women are even more restricted than in the metropolis. Domestic service is less common and other jobs even fewer in number. Some families try to maintain their cooperative form of organisation by drawing on family labour, but they are not very successful.

Maintaining the family as a unit of production in an urban context is very difficult, especially when you don't have any capital to allow for the establishment of a small business. The city's greatest attraction is paid work, but this primarily absorbs men.

We see, then, that as manual workers women do not experience a major change in their activities with urbanisation. This continuity also guarantees the reproduction of forms of socialisation that prioritise such activities and links the female condition primarily to domestic work.

In this process, women free themselves from agricultural work, but also see their authority and autonomy within the family diminished. Studies carried out among villagers in the Northeast have shown that housewives maintain vegetable gardens and some farm animals. Although they depend on their husbands to sell these products, they can decide when to sell

them and to allocate the income towards specific purchases. These same women, once they live in the favela, are simply housewives who know little of the city – which restricts their movements to the immediate surroundings of the favela –, and consumers of industrialised products, produced to simplify domestic work. On the one hand, being a housewife feels like a privilege, because time no longer needs to be divided with agricultural tasks. On the other, the low wages of the breadwinner, which must sustain many dependents, mean the condition of favela resident becomes almost permanent.

Despite differences between the ways domestic tasks are carried out in rural areas and in large cities, women's conditions remain similar to those they had prior to migration. When they become domestic workers, they must learn to maintain new standards, especially when they work for middle- or upper-class families. But even so, they have accumulated past experience, which is adjusted, corrected and refined in line with urban and class expectations. Therefore, for this type of female labour, what is required is a deepening of a general process of socialisation, particularly linked to ways of dressing, cleaning, cooking, and interacting, in order to “urbanise” style, taste, hygiene standards, and conduct. When performing domestic services for the working classes, whether favela residents or not, the need for resocialisation is less intense, as is also the case – indeed, the most common of all – in which the woman remains confined to domestic chores.

In any case, this type of female work requires resocialisation that allows for improving practices learned since childhood, and

which is based on a division of labour traditionally grounded in sexual difference. In this sense, the experience of the past does not represent a “loss of cognitive properties”, as the necessary knowledge for the performance of urban activities is built on the same rudimentary foundations. But this “addition” to the rudimentary knowledge of the past has its counterpart: female labour, when transformed into labour power in the metropolis, also tends to reproduce previous working conditions, mainly focused on domestic jobs.

It is important to highlight that the mainly male workforce is subject to two major processes. The first of these is the segmentation of tasks, resulting from capitalist expansion. The worker must submit to a sharp division of work, based on productive requirements that seek to create compartmentalised and precise activities. On the other hand, even in a large urban-industrial centre like São Paulo, capitalism also generates forms of insertion into the social division of labour that tend not to segment the workforce. This includes most of the activities of small businesses operating in the tertiary sector of the economy. The most significant examples are the street vendor, certain repair and maintenance services, cleaning, freight, and security, as well as a diverse range of activities carried out by individuals generally referred to as “task-workers”. Many of these services may also be performed under conditions of employment.

In the industrial metropolis, there is a range of workers, both employed and self-employed, whose activities are not directly based on the machine system, and which therefore differs from the segmented work found in industry. For example,

there is a clear difference in the degree of work fragmentation in civil construction, which employs relatively unsophisticated technologies compared to other industrial activities, and salaried work in freight, cleaning and maintenance, or security. In other words, even in large industrial centres, there is a significant number of autonomous, low-skilled activities, as well as waged manual work, that is not based on the fragmentation of productive tasks.

For entering the industrial sector proper, work experience gained in rural areas or small towns, like those in which the families we studied had previously lived, is worth little. It is well known that the industrial process leads to the fragmentation of workers, who begin to perform partial tasks, determined by the demands of the production process as a whole. The universality of work therefore loses its individual character – whereby the craftsman, transformed matter, in part or in whole, into a useful object – and acquires a social character: individual tasks add up to collectively create commodities.

This process occurred with the emergence of manufacturing, accompanied by the development of machinery and the growth of large industry. This led to segmentation dictated by the connection between complementary machines that gave rise to new forms of social division of labour, into which workers were integrated through the sale of their own labour power.

It is important to note that labour, once it becomes a commodity, loses its character of “integral worker”. If, previously, the artisan produced an individual object, now many workers, partially and together, manufacture a commodity. In other

words, industry no longer needs individual workers to produce entire objects, but for them to be subdivided, added and integrated according to the logic of complementary machines.

The segmentation of tasks leads to a loss of individual skill, and society starts to produce collectively through the combination of fragmented workers.¹⁰⁸ This *mutilation* of work is inherent to capitalism, which no longer carries out accumulation through the expertise of the individual worker. Physical strength, skill, attention become fragmented virtues in relation to different productive tasks, whether simple or complex, which require different degrees and specific types of training.

Clearly, we are far removed from the moment when the independent artisan transformed into the partial worker. This metamorphosis took place early on in the process of capitalist expansion with the emergence of the free labourer, that is, without property or productive means. Even in *late-industrialis-*

108 Marx, Karl – *O Capital*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 2nd edition, 1971, especially book 1, vol. 1, chapters XII and XIII. “The independent peasant and artisan develop, albeit modestly, knowledge, sagacity and will, like the savage who practises the arts of war develops his personal cunning. During the manufacturing period, these abilities become required only for the workshop as a whole. The intellectual forces of production are only developed in one direction, because they are inhibited in relation to everything that does not fit within this unilateral function. What partial workers lose is concentrated in the capital that confronts them (...) This process of dissociation begins with simple cooperation, whereby the capitalist represents to the isolated worker the unity and will of the collective worker. This process develops in manufacturing, which mutilates the worker, reducing him to a fraction of himself, and is completed in modern industry, which turns science into a productive force independent of labour, recruiting it to the service of capital”. Idem pp. 413 and 414.

ing countries, like Brazil, such fragmentation occurred with the industrial expansion that, increasingly, is structured under accumulation processes led by large companies.¹⁰⁹

Such transformations led to substantial changes in the social division of labour, through the introduction of technology that segmented the various moments of the production process, creating relationships in which work is subdivided into multiple tasks and the worker becomes just one piece in an immense and interdependent productive machinery. Simple and complex tasks are combined, always in segmented ways, creating the multiple categories of work that a capitalist system needs to reproduce and expand.

The framework prevailing in the workshops, where a tapestry would be woven from the skill and expertise of an artisan, are a distant memory, and any comparison with the current context only is only valid for purposes of analogy. However, if the general trend of capitalist development is the destruction of autonomous work, we should emphasise that in Brazil this process does not occur in a uniform way. Not only are previ-

109 Lopes, Juárez Rubens Brandão – *Desenvolvimento e Mudança Social*. São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 2nd edition, 1972, especially part I. In other books, the author also analysed the economic and socio-cultural aspects that have shaped Brazilian society during this process of transformation. See: *Crise no Brasil Arcaico*. São Paulo, Difel, 1967, and *Desenvolvimento e Mudança Social*. São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 2nd edition, 1972. Among other authors, see also Cândido, Antonio – *Os Parceiros Rio Bonito*. Rio de Janeiro, José Olimpio Editores, 1964 and Martins, José Carlos – *Imigração e a Crise do Brasil Agrário*, Pioneira, 1973.

ous forms of production recreated, in particular industry at the household level, craftwork, and rural subsistence economies, but also “new archaic” forms are created for integration into productive structures. In the urban economy, this is exemplified by the autonomous occupations that part of the working class develops within the heart of the tertiary sector.¹¹⁰

It is worth emphasising that the segmentation of productive tasks did not occur at the same rhythm and intensity in all regions and sectors of the economy: it was particularly strong within the secondary and parts of the tertiary sectors, and less so in rural areas and cities where the expansion of services occurred independently of industry. Furthermore, it is always worth remembering that Brazilian industrialisation is characterised by intense regional concentration. It is entirely possible, therefore, that the most “backward” areas of the country are belatedly restructuring their economies in line with the model promoted by the most dynamic centres. Such areas may thus be developing forms of work in response to the demands that connect “local” to “global” production processes, which, when compared to large industrial centres, are characterised by more rudimentary technologies and production methods. For the purposes of the current discussion, this means a less intense division of labour.

110 On this point, see: Sá, Francisco – *O Desenvolvimento da Agricultura Nordestina e a Função das Atividades de Subsistência*. São Paulo, Estudos CEBRAP 3, 1973; Oliveira, Francisco de – *A Economia Brasileira: Crítica à Razão Dualista*, op. cit., 1972; Lopes, Juárez Rubens Brandão – *Desenvolvimento e Mudança Social*, op. cit.; Kowarick, Lúcio – *Capitalismo, Marginalidade Urbana e Dependência*. São Paulo, Estudos CEBRAP 8, 1974.

Table 6 - Autonomous Workers As A Proportion Of The Total Employed Workforce¹¹¹

Sectors	Regions	
	São Paulo	Northeast and Bahia
Manufacturing industry	2.5%	37.1%
Civil construction	1.6%	12.0%
Retail	37.3%	62.6%
Services	33.2%	50.9%
Autonomous/Total employed	19.2%	55.3%

Source: IBGE (PNAD) op. cit.

It is well known that the Brazil's interregional division of labour produces specialisation in which the State of São Paulo – and particularly its capital and surrounding areas – operate as a major generator of income and of industrial jobs.¹¹² Despite this fact, such areas of extreme industrialisation also tend to create a vast tertiary sector which, to a large extent, is built on the physical strength of people who are integrated into it as autonomous workers.¹¹³ This means that, as industrialisation

111 Translator's note: There are some inconsistencies in the employment categories used throughout the original book, reflecting the complexity of defining, subdividing and unifying categories related to informal work. Here, "employed workforce" includes both autonomous and formally employed workers.

112 Oliveira, Francisco de and Reichstul, Henri Philippe – *Mudanças na Divisão Interregional do Trabalho no Brasil*. São Paulo, Estudos CEBRAP 4, 1973.

113 An example of this is the increase in the number of self-employed

expands, so does work carried out autonomously. These “new archaic” forms of insertion into the urban market (not only street vendors, but also delivery, cleaning and security services, and various other kinds of work) are integrated into the dominant mode of production. It should be repeated that... “it is not about two structures, one ‘modern’ and another ‘traditional’, ‘archaic’ or ‘marginal’, but in a single structural logic, capitalist in nature, which at the same time generates and maintains forms of insertion into the social division of labour... which, far from being a dead weight in the accumulation process, constitute integral parts of this process”.¹¹⁴

These forms of symbiosis are not a coincidence. On the contrary, they are linked to the logic of accumulation that combines genuinely industrial sectors with others whose dynamic is not typically capitalist. “The acceleration of growth, whose epicentre is industry, demands from Brazilian cities – headquarters par excellence of the new cycle of expansion –, infrastructure and services that they did not previously possess. The intensity of industrial growth, which grew from 19% to 30% of gross product in 30 years, does not allow for a simultaneously intense capitalisation of services, as these compete with industry itself

and unpaid people in the retail sector, which, in the State of São Paulo, rose from 142,000 in 1960 to 263,000 in 1970, representing an increase of 85%, only beaten by the region encompassing Mato Grosso, Goiás and the Federal District of Brasília. This increase means that, out of the total of such activities occurring in Brazil during the decade in question, São Paulo accounted for 30%.

114 Kowarick, Lúcio – *Capitalismo, Dependência e Marginalidade Urbana*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

In other words, the workforce is less segmented, though this does not mean that in the less developed regions activities depend on the skill and expertise of a “classic” artisan.

However, both in the countryside and in the secondary and tertiary sectors of smaller cities, work routines tend to be less compartmentalised and the worker has the greater possibility of performing an entire task himself. That is, under existing processes in settings where there is only a rudimentary presence of industry, or none at all, a division of labour develops that tends to protect a range of activities, which continues to be carried out without segmentation. With the expansion of the market economy and the resulting penetration of manufactured products, non-industrial cities – and also the countryside itself – increasingly consume goods produced by large companies. But, at the same time, complementary activities persist whose productive dynamics are only semi-entrepreneurial in nature. They are characterised by a division of labour that is little diversified, a symptom of which is the large number of people working autonomously in industry and certain services, which is proportionally much greater in less developed regions than in São Paulo.

for the scarce funds available for genuinely capitalist accumulation. This contradiction is resolved by the non-capitalist growth of the tertiary sector. This model is nothing like that of the “bloated” tertiary sector, although the description may coincide (...) The appearance of “bloating” hides a fundamental mechanism of accumulation: services realised on the basis of pure labour power, paid at extremely low levels, permanently transfer a fraction of their value to capitalist economic activities, “surplus value in synthesis ”””.¹¹⁵

It is within these economic activities, alongside civil construction, that a large part of the male workforce in the capital’s favelas are inserted. The families we studied are not active in truly industrial work, where, as already mentioned, the segmentation of work is more intense.

However, productive structures in the metropolis require the adaptation of practices and knowledge that some migrants previously acquired when working in the countryside and in the non-industrial cities. The knowledge gained through practices in the countryside and small towns has little value for segmented work in industry. It needs to be honed and polished in relation to the requirements of industrial work. Even in the case of civil construction, previous knowledge, where it exists, is of little use in relation to the ways that companies in that sector operate. Once it has satisfied the need for certain kinds of skilled work, which entails specific training in industrial production,

115 Oliveira, Francisco de – *A Economia Brasileira: Crítica à Razão Dualista*, op. cit., 1972.



the sector employs abundant manual labour which needs little knowledge to carry out the required tasks.

If the training of migrants tends not to be segmented – at least not in the way and to the degree required by the industry – on the other hand, their original “cultural skills” still require adaptation. That includes for activities that don’t involve a fragmentation of work, such as the aforementioned forms of self-employed or salaried service work. In other words, the migrant needs to “urbanise” their knowledge, internalising, among other things, the rules and values of social “distance” and “proximity” associated with the inter-class relations that prevail in the metropolis. Similarly, he must develop his “street smarts” and “cunning” to obtain a portion of the surplus that for many – security guards, cleaners, delivery men, workers of all kinds – is essential for survival.

For example, even to work commercially as a gardener in the city, it is necessary to master certain techniques, and, for the sake of middle- and upper-class customers, develop a range of aesthetic values. It also shouldn’t be forgotten that the street vendor, in addition to knowing the “points” and forms of transaction, must absorb knowledge related to appearance, posture and language. This typically means internalising a form of “urban sociability”, which can be a slow and complex process. Furthermore, they must learn to deal with regulators, since the vast majority of these self-employed workers do not have legal authorisation to perform such activities.

Thus, the knowledge acquired in rural areas and small towns tends not to be of much use. A typical example of this phe-

nomenon – identified in the favelas studied – can be illustrated with the case of a construction worker who had previously worked in small, non-industrial cities. There, his “expertise” was enough to build a brick house, and he could carry out the various phases of construction work himself. Upon arriving in a city like São Paulo, this pre-metropolitan knowledge proved both unnecessary and below the expected requirements. Industry needs segmented workers, and because his knowledge was inadequate and insufficient for segmented and specialised work – indeed, his prior experience encompassed various productive stages – his accumulated knowledge became unnecessary. The worker, who in the small city is capable of building a house “from floor to roof”, is transformed into a lowly construction labourer.

We should not generalise from this example to all migrants, many of whom have prior work experience and knowledge that allow them to be inserted into the metropolitan productive structure at higher levels. It simply points to a process by which a large part of the stock of knowledge acquired in rural work and in areas with little urbanisation is, in the metropolis, reduced to simple manual activities. Perhaps the starkest example is that of a primary teacher who taught for 12 years in a small town in the interior of Bahia. In São Paulo, he became a delivery man.

In addition to this “loss of cognitive properties”, understood as a store of knowledge that is unneeded by a system that levels out required knowledge with segmented and self-contained tasks, we may identify another “loss”, involving the depletion of the workforce. This process is not only restricted to the gradual

exhaustion of physical strength. “Loss” also occurs, for a considerable part of the workforce, in the form of accidents and illness. And we must remember that the Brazilian accumulation model, given the availability of labour and the prevailing political situation, does not need to channel investment to preserve the strength of the entire labour force (weakened by accident or illness). For the system, it is more profitable to “expel” the old or prematurely depleted workforce, feeding the huge army of the unemployed and underemployed.

These processes affect the whole of the low-skilled working class, among whom favela residents constitute an extremely low-paid segment. With only their physical strength to sell and with this exchange occurring on derisory terms, precluding the accumulation of goods, over time the production system makes these workers superfluous. Eventually, it ejects them from the labour market and, often, also from the metropolis that they have helped to build.

VI In shacks of Cidade Jardim

This chapter is based on the testimonies of favela residents living in shacks in Cidade Jardim.¹¹⁶ It deepens the analysis already presented, detailing the forms of survival practised by this stratum of manual workers. Their biographies, aspirations, opinions and hopes, their conditions of work and of housing, in short, their views of the world are presented through a narrative thread that seeks to preserve the richness of practises rooted in the wisdom of those who live in highly exclusionary situations.

Clearly, the choice and order of the sentences are not random or unconsidered. On the contrary, they were put together with the intention of demonstrating, through people's words,

116 Translator's note: Chapters 6 and 7 contain extended quotes from rural Northeastern migrants, including many regional colloquialisms that do not translate clearly into English (and some of which are no longer in common usage in Brazil). In cases where it was not possible to maintain the original sentence construction, the translation has prioritised capturing the underlying meaning.

that the signification of some biographies has collective meaning, as a result of recent history, which has been predatory on most of those who drive the productive system forward. In a situation where this majority does not have the possibility of expressing itself in organised ways, it may be important to give them the floor.

Seu Zé

Seu Zé¹¹⁷ was born around 50 years ago in Bahia,¹¹⁸ near the city of Poçoões. At the age of 8, he worked on his father's small farm. When he was still young, he moved to Itabuna, "to the cocoa zone, looking for jobs and living in rented accommodation." Once married, he moved to the Zona da Mata,¹¹⁹ where "I lived for 8 years as a settler, I had a house. I also had 15 children. My wife only raised 8, 7 died". Then he returned: "I bought a piece of land next to my father's. It was very small, but it was enough to sustain us for a time." This time is a function of the production value of a small agricultural unit and the number of people who directly depend on it: "Things can be very valuable, but the price is always low." The situation of the settler or employed rural labourer also presents few oppor-

117 Translator's note: "Seu" is Portuguese for Mr. It is commonly used to refer to older men as a sign of respect.

118 Translator's note: A large state in the Northeast of Brazil.

119 The Zona da Mata [Forest Belt] is a humid, forested strip in the Northeast of Brazil, between the Atlantic coast and the dry Agreste and Sertão regions.

tunities: “The bosses don’t have clocks or schedules. We work until night comes, with sweat that will twist your shirt. And the money we earn is so little that you can’t even buy a rope to hang yourself with”.

Seu Zé is a typical rural worker who could not maintain himself as an independent farmer and so, in the city, gradually became an autonomous worker, working as a gardener. “The farm wasn’t working. (...) So you have to migrate. I took a Vera Cruz bus and came straight to São Paulo. I didn’t even stop in Rio. I went past it... in search of money”.

He arrived in São Paulo in 1968. For a while, he lived under the Penha Viaduct, working on construction projects in the surrounding area. With the help of relatives, he moved to the favela Cidade Jardim, where he bought a shack. He worked for a salary as a builder and as a caretaker. He also worked in a gardening business. Initially, he performed tasks that required no skills or experience. Manual labour merely to prepare the ground. His role was that of an apprentice. Then he started to look after plants and gardens and, little by little, graduated to “group leader”. This experience, gained in the context of salaried work, allowed him to go it alone: he became a self-employed gardener.

Aside from saving on rent and proximity to most of his clients, the favela also offers Seu Zé another advantage: as a “single” man – because his wife stayed behind in Bahia –, he eats in other people’s shacks “so as not to burn the pots”, usually Laurinda’s, for whom he buys food. Furthermore, “we live here, so we can send some money to our people in Bahia, and people

help each other a lot in the favela. If I leave here, I'll feel lonely. I'll miss these people.”

And Seu Zé really knows what help means: he carries out repairs and builds shacks. He is a kind of provider: “If I can, I'll give an hour of my time to help those who need it. Women without men. I built Laurinda's shack. Of course! If I could, I would look after all these people. Look, man, the weak only talk to the weak. There are people who are weaker than me. Some who are more downtrodden by their weakness. The strong don't have to work. The weak don't become strong. Unless my luck turns and I hit the jackpot. I won't get anything through work. With the cost of living, nothing is left over. I want to get ahead in this city: I want to earn 1,000 cruzeiros. I want to look after 20 gardens. I currently earn 400 and have only 10”.

Laurinda

In São Paulo, Laurinda does not earn a salary. She cooks and sews for single men in the favela, charging some and not others, depending on a shifting web of relationships. The “charging” and the “free” result from connections that are constantly formed and unformed. She also moves between shacks and changes her status as “married” or “single”.

But there is a constant in all these changes. As a woman who doesn't sell her labour, she needs to form relationships with people, other favela dwellers like her, in order to survive. And it is through these relationships that she “solves” the immediate problems of everyday life, such as food, housing and clothing.

She is also able to achieve some aspirations, such as buying a stove and a sewing machine.

Laurinda started working at the age of 8. He is now 29. She lived in the periphery of Vitória da Conquista in Bahia. She didn't know her father, and her mother died when she was still a child: "I was raised by a woman who lived nearby and worked on her boss's farm from 7am to 5pm. I worked for any payment: they put the workers in front and we went behind digging holes. We went from farm to farm once the work was done".

She married for the first time when she was 13: "Gerson is the father of Branca. He left me when I was 3 months' pregnant". Later she remarried: "Daniel didn't work. When I arrived at back at the ranch in the afternoon, he was making coffee and sleeping. And me there, looking like a beast, with my hands full of calluses."

They were separated for 9 years, meeting every now and then when they worked in nearby farms. They moved back in together when she was expecting her second daughter, Bibiu. "But Daniel was still the same as before: he didn't work. The farm work ended. He wanted to wash clothes but he couldn't, because there wasn't enough demand and whenever he arrived at a house there was someone else waiting in line. One day I couldn't take it anymore and I went out with a small plate to beg. I exchanged things for a bit of food. The last time it was scissors for sugar and coffee. I packed my bags and hit the road. I asked for a ride. The four of us came in a Scania, on top of a load of cotton. When we arrived here, I saw all the cars. Lots of people. I got scared. I walked like a crazy person through the

streets. I was stalked by hunger and suffering. We arrived like a herd at Nena's house. We slept there. That same day we spoke to Seu Zé, who hosted us for 10 days”.

Laurinda has been in São Paulo since 1972. Shortly after arriving they moved to Cidade Jardim favela. They built a shack. But Daniel abandoned her and “Sold the shack with me inside it. Then Seu Zé and João built another one for me.” She started cooking for him and three other workers. They buy the food that Laurinda and her daughters eat and she receives 20 cruzeiros from each of them per month. She prepares their dinners and packed lunches, and washes and sews their clothes.

She organises her life through these connections. She well understands the need for mutual aid. “Seu Zé is a friend. He eats, but I don't charge him. But Bigode (Daniel's brother) has never helped. He eats and leaves. I never denied Daniel a plate of food. This world comes and goes. You don't know what will happen tomorrow. He can help us out. Doing good costs nothing. If tomorrow or the next day I'm bedridden, he'll come and do the same. That's why I never refuse to collect his water or wash his clothes.”

But the methods of survival changed when Laurinda married João: “it became easier and more affordable”. She moved to another shack taking her daughters with her. Now she no longer cooks or washes the workers' clothes: “João doesn't want me to. It doesn't sit right”. She continues to cook for Seu Zé and one of João's brothers: “without charging”.

João bought the shack and what was inside, including a stove, for 400 cruzeiros. He gave Laurinda a machine sewing. “As long

as we're together the things belong to everyone. If we separate, the machine is hers, the stove is mine".

The relationship with João lasts a few months and Laurinda goes back to Seu Zé's shack. She comes back with the machine sewing. And with the stove. And she starts cooking and washing again, free of charge for some, while charging others. And that solves her everyday problems: "I'm not looking for paid work because I don't know anything or anyone here, nothing at all. I never leave the house, I stay at home all the time".

Laurinda's life revolves around the house, the sewing machine, and the stove. Her desires don't overflow this close world: "my greatest desire in life is a house. It could be a small room, as long as it was mine. I wanted to work and buy things for myself. Especially furniture. First a bed, then a better table, chairs, even just two, a shelf, a wardrobe. Then think about luxuries: a better dress, a watch on my wrist, like people have."

Laurinda seems to accept things as they are. Her conformity is relaxed: "the world of important people doesn't interest me, because I know I'm not important for them. For me, there's not much difference between the interests of the poor and the rich, because, as I can't afford things, I don't have much interest in them. The government is just one person. He's the one who's in charge in Brazil. He might even help us, if we told him. But it's very difficult to get to him. The government doesn't dare to speak to people like me. I would love to catch a sight of the government".

Lindolfo and Alvina

Lindolfo was born in Bahia in 1928, near Vitória da Conquista, where his parents had two small farms. He started working on the farm when he was still a child. But “the land is poor, dry, you can only plant once a year”. Lindolfo is a worker for whom working on a small family property was not enough. “That’s why I decided to leave home when I was 18”. He’s also a worker who could not sustain himself with the jobs he did in small towns. He ended up accumulating some assets and achieving relative success in some activities that required learning. But crises caused him to lose what he had gained.

After working as a hotel porter, he learned from “Master Miguel” the skill of painting cars, which he practiced in Bahia and Minas Gerais. Then he became a vendor of ceramics before going to Espírito Santo and becoming a fisherman.¹²⁰ But he says his training is as a builder: “I learned it from my father. He took construction jobs and delivered them quickly. He built a farmhouse and other things.”

He got married at 22. Alvina was also born in Bahia, and worked ironing clothes as a child. She later moved to São Paulo, where she spent some time working as a maid, before returning to her homeland. At the age of 17, she married Lindolfo and started working with him. They sold clothes and trinkets, both in Minas Gerais, where they lived, as well as in Bahia and

120 Translator’s note: Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo are both states in the Southeast of Brazil that neighbour Bahia.

Espírito Santo, which they travel to for business. “One day, I got tired of travelling, talking all the time, and I went to work in Nanuque. I sold ceramics at the market. I didn’t go back to being a builder when I stopped peddling, because there was hardly any construction work in the city. Back when I was a builder, they were still building the city of Nanuque. I built the city. When they were building the city, they needed builders. Afterwards they didn’t. Once there was little construction work, there were a lot of officials there. They harmed the profession: there were more builders than people in the city. I also worked selling meat and made soap from the bones”. In Nanuque, we had our own brick house. Another two that we rented. “I found a way to resolve everything. I really struggled hard. In Minas, there wasn’t much business. I decided to pay a visit to my brothers who were in São Paulo to see if I could get work. I thought I could and went back to meet with the family.”

He sold the house and arrived in São Paulo, aged 42. He worked in construction and, for a while, as a painter in a car workshop. This is his most valuable professional experience. “Then I got ill and couldn’t get any more stable work”. He started washing cars and finally working as a cleaner in a building, earning the minimum wage. On weekends, he still washes cars. He has nine children, the two eldest are married women. They all live in the favela and help each other. Alvina doesn’t work: “I pick up clothes to wash but only once in a while”. Three of the children, Adelardo, Jehovah and Salmim, aged 12, 10 and 8, wash and watch cars, work in the market as carriers, collect discarded objects that can be exchanged or sold, and do

cleaning work. Their contribution is important for sustaining the household: “I give everything to mom,” says Jehovah, “so she can feed us. But there’s a problem with the car watching, because the competition between kids is very unfair and there’s also the law to consider”.

The work of the 3 children earns 350 cruzeiros per month, which is of vital importance when you consider that Lindolfo earns 330 cruzeiros: “As good old Ricardo says, women’s and children’s work is not enough, but whoever turns it down is crazy. Children should only leave the house when they get married. Because that’s the moment for the son to look after his parents. To help sustain the household to pay them back for them raising him. Boys should start working from three years’ old. Taking care of livestock, weeding, cleaning. Outside the house, from the age of ten: washing cars, gardening. The girls, outside from the age of ten: babysitting, cleaning houses, running errands. At home from the age of three: looking after brothers and sisters, cleaning the house, learning to do housework”. And Alvi-na adds: “every member of the family who earns money should help. Everyone. Even married women, if they want to help, I’ll accept”. As she says this, she looks at her eldest daughter, married: “children should never stop helping, because when they grow up, that’s when It’s time to really help. They always need to help.”

Lindolfo’s trajectory is characterised by “loss”: of property, of the ability to work. The city turned him into a manual labourer. “Today, I’m stripped bare. I no longer have a job. I can’t peddle anymore. The naked will accept any clothes. If you’re

working, you have everything is inside: food, medicine. Now we're short on everything. Before we could fulfil all our duties. An unemployed man is like an ox tied to a post in the middle of a field. He eats everything around him in one day. But the next day the owner takes pity on him and moves him somewhere else. I'm like a tethered ox whose owner won't move him around."

At the age of 42, Lindolfo is already close to the point in his productive life cycle in which he will be replaced by the younger workforce. His children's work is already essential to support the family. He's certain he'll go to a place where survival is cheaper: "I've had no luck here in Sao Paulo. I'll go back. I'm going to peddle or work as a butcher".

They often remember life in Nanuque. The house, the work, the river that runs through the city. And Lindolfo remembers when they were young, and Alvina's beauty: "She was beautiful there. A real beauty. One day we were walking in the woods and even a jaguar looked up in amazement. She was so beautiful!"

Joel and Dalva

Joel doesn't distinguish himself from others based on what he earns. Afterall, he only makes around a one and a half minimum wages per month. Nor does he distinguish himself because of his occupation, as he is an unregistered delivery man who works pedalling through the city's streets on his bicycle. He is also not distinguished by the shack in which he lives with Dalva and two children. He is distinguished by his background as a

literate man, who knows things. He realises that his fate is tied up with that of most workers as, aged 36 years old, he already has trouble finding employment: “they choose the 20-year-olds because they have 10 extra years left to work. When I worked at Vitec I was a warehouse assistant, a security guard. I was chosen out of 32 people. First 20, then 18, 17, 15. In that case, I was chosen because I was the oldest, I was over 30 years old, married, more responsible. I inspired more confidence. I’ve managed to get one job since I turned 30. At Firestone, I passed the test, but I didn’t get the job. The worker over 30 is marginalised. But when you’re over 35, you’re still strong enough for construction, concrete. That’s why I’m in a retired person’s job, a side job. I’m a courier: I deliver bills, magazines, letters, newspapers, gifts, free samples, invitations”.

Joel likes to read: José Lins do Rego, Franklin Távora, Guimarães Rosa. He had some books. Others were borrowed. He read them. He liked them. He made a few comments. In his life, he highlights his long period of schooling and training for a specialised job.

“When I finished, I was 15 years old. I didn’t work; I got an allowance from my family, I was a good kid, the kind who finds food on the table and eats it.” Aside from completing primary school, he went to the industrial school in Recife;¹²¹ equivalent to high school. “In the morning, I took the theory course, which included mathematics, which was quite intensive, Portuguese, a

121 Translator’s note: Recife is the capital of Pernambuco state in the Northeast of Brazil.

bit of English and French, and Brazilian history. In the third and fourth years, the curriculum changed, and we studied history, science and geography. Aside from that, we were already semi-professionals and the school sold the students' work at markets and gave us a share. They had everything at these markets: furniture in the wooden section, art, paintings, bolts, locks, latches, keys, railings. I was in the mechanical locksmith section, I did electric welding, doors, gates, latches”.

His first job was as an electric welder, at the Paulo Afonso Plant. “Hydroelectric power is a first-rate business. I had the option of having a career and (or) leaving, discovering other places”. It is precisely here that we see the impasse that characterises, as Joel puts it, “all my life. I’ve lived in uncertainty”. He chooses “uncertainty”. Fifteen years later, in the favela, he says: “I got sick of the work, I didn’t like having obligations and fixed hours. It was stupid!” Or is it the industry chooses its workforce: “the service was tough and I was kind of frail, with a weak physical constitution. In addition to that, I took a ball in the eye in a football game”. He was fired. His eyesight no longer allowed him to work as a welder.

He stayed in his next job as a monitor, on a cocoa farm near Itabuna, for 1 year and 6 months: “the farm had everything, even a nightclub, where men danced with other men. The monitor is a kind of foreman: he gives orders, schedules the hours of the workers, their productivity. He chooses who works and who doesn’t. He’s a watchman. He’s viewed very negatively, as a snitch, a spy, a troublemaker... He’s an ass kisser. I’m not. The work was no good.” He went to Vitória da Conquista to work

in a flour factory, first as a bagger and then as a monitor, and also as a seller. Later, he worked in a cheese factory: “I stayed there for about 4 or 5 months doing a bit of everything. Suddenly, I decided to leave. He had saved up 280 cruzeiros. It was like that, when I decided to leave, just because I could.”

In a chance encounter, Joel was introduced by a colleague as being “very well prepared”, to which he replied: “no, I’m unusual. I have eight years of training and only five years of practice.” Then the cheese farm owner invited him to teach his children. First private lessons, then with a group of 10 students. The following year he had 55 students. “It was difficult to grade them, as there were no standards. The emphasis was on discipline, preventing disorder. And creating trust. If you’ve promised to do something, do it. Punishment is punishment. A stroll is a stroll. This was the period when I most developed.”

After two years, he decided to take the entrance exam to work for the Vitória da Conquista city government. “I came in first place. The mayor was Dr. Orlando Leite.” He then worked as a teacher in a small town in the municipality. He taught at municipal schools and private schools. “When I had time off, I travelled around the countryside, in the surrounding areas. I gave 60-day courses during the holidays. I worked for eight years without resting.”

During this period, he also undertook other activities, such as working in rural registration in Nova Conquista. “João Queiroz had gone to learn this stuff, but didn’t understand it and asked for my help. I picked up the book; but I messed around with the ideas”. At other times, he used his knowledge as a teacher

to help his many friends, and was respected and listened to.

In that city, he met and married Dalva. He continued his work as a teacher and three years later he decided to come to São Paulo. He came alone. He lived on a worksite, working again – “snitch, spy, troublemaker” – as a monitor. He sold the house in Bahia and Dalva came to São Paulo. They spent four months living in Cidade Jardim. They rented a house for 100 cruzeiros, with Joel working as a monitor in a warehouse: “they choose the 20-year-olds because they have 10 extra years left to work”. And Joel returned to the favela: “I’ve been in this type of work, as a courier, for two years. I’m not satisfied. I’m not in the place that I want to be. But I can’t find anything better. Now, I have to marry the useful with the necessary. I have the right to compensation, but the owner doesn’t want to agree. If it happens... if it happens”.

Often Joel thinks aloud: “one million would be a good start in Bahia. I’ll buy land, then fix up the house, the farm, get some chickens. After that I’ll sell perfume. I’ll register the business and I’ll travel around selling it, with invoices and everything. In the interior of Bahia, perfume always gives a crazy amount of money: “Rose Rouge” and “Intimate Moments”, which sell for 3 or 5 cruzeiros, mainly in the favela itself. “But that’s not possible here. I can’t even afford the price of the bottle”.

He knows that for one to get rich, it must be through the work of others: “I work for others with frustration. Others take advantage of the worker’s work, for their own benefit, not his. If I earn 300, I pay 300, the boss is a parasite... The boss acquires the work of the employee without making any effort.

It's the system of the parasite: it sucks and gets fat. And to tell the truth, good work wasn't invented. Work helps to avoid three things: hunger, addiction and want. I hate working, sincerely. If I didn't have to work, I would do the things I like, like traveling and having a small farm where I would plant it for the pleasure of having it, seeing it grow, develop. To be more precise, I hate work out of obligation, but I'm always active. The parasite, the tick, is inactive. I hate them. If I could, I would kill them all. I don't like bosses, or being employed by anyone. The boss is the true beast".

But Joel still says: "necessity is the mother of the invention. When I was a boy, I learned a poem:

"But behold, January comes
 new year, whole year
 of waiting and being blessed
 and the same illusion persists
 whoever didn't have an adventure today
 can be happy tomorrow."

– Did he write it? "No! It's not mine! If I were a poet, I wouldn't live delivering messages. I'd live on letters".

Pernambuco and Carmozina

Carmozina is over 30 years old. She's from interior of Bahia: "the land belonged to the farm owner. My brothers would leave at dawn with our father to work on the plantation, but my

mother said: leave the girl with me because she's too small for that work. So, I stayed with her, learning to do the housework, take care of the animals, and sew. I got married when I was 18 and stayed at home, sewing". After she was abandoned by her husband and with four children, she couldn't survive in Itambé, where she lived: "my parents were dead and my brothers were scattered across Bahia. There was one who was in São Paulo: he had heard that I was in trouble so he sent for me".

Once in São Paulo, she started working as a maid. To remain close, she bought a one-bedroom shack in Cidade Jardim. For 3 months, she worked outside the house, her son delivered newspapers and her eldest daughter took care of the two little ones. She met Pernambuco in the favela and when they married she quit her job and started taking care of the house. "I wash clothes, I cook for some single men in the favela. Then Pernambuco bought me a used sewing machine: I sew for my family and for some neighbours: it's irregular work".

Pernambuco is 24 years old. He has strength to sell. He works as a bricklayer and on weekends as a waiter in a restaurant. He was born in the interior of Pernambuco, where his father was a landless settler. "When I was a boy, I went to work in a pottery yard, to learn how to work. I had a boss, a schedule, and everything. Then I went to work in a mill, because I wanted to earn more and to have an industrial job, not a farm job, which has no future. But I couldn't work the furnaces. So, they sent me to cut sugarcane: any old job, in the fields, low-paid".

"Then I left. There was a guy who had spent some time working in São Paulo and then went to my hometown, brag-

ging about all the opportunities. So, I thought: I'm strong and young, a good worker, if I go there I can earn my own money and go off to get an education and improve my life once and for all."

He came straight to São Paulo. He didn't know the streets and was afraid to ask for directions. His first contact with the city scared him: "when I got off the bus, I had nowhere to go. The taxi drivers shouted, offering to take us, but I was a little confused at first. After a while, I went up to a taxi driver who sounded kind of like he was from Pernambuco and I told him that I was looking for a friend who lived here. He asked me: do you have his address? I showed him the piece of paper and he said: that's easy, it's on Iguatemi. Do you have money to pay for the ride? I said: of course I do, man. And he took me and left me there on Faria Lima,¹²² in front of a brand-new building, and he told me: based on what's on the paper, it's here. I was a little embarrassed to go in, the building had a beautiful entrance, with carpets, glass doors, and I immediately thought it was very luxurious for the guy I knew to be living there. I stayed pacing around outside, until after a long time a guy in overalls came out from the garage. He was dark-skinned and I thought he must be an employee from the building. I spoke to him, gave him the name of the guy I knew, but he just said no there was no one with that name working there, that it must be another building. So, I showed the paper with the address and

122 Translator's note: A major avenue in an upper-income neighbourhood in the west of São Paulo.

he said: yeah, it's here alright, but I don't know the guy, how long ago did he give you this address? I said it had been about 6 months. Then the dark guy said It would be difficult to find him, because a guy will work in a building for a while, then he leaves and goes to another and no one can you tell me where he is, because the guy doesn't have a house, he lives wherever his job is".

"I was embarrassed to ask other people. The people passing by were well-dressed, sophisticated people, I thought they wouldn't understand what I was saying. I was screwed. I thought the guy had tricked me. I was afraid that what the dark guy said was just to get me to walk away. I was thinking all kinds of things, with nowhere to go, without the courage to walk very far from there, because I didn't even know where I was. Imagine it. I was right there on Faria Lima and I was so scared I couldn't move. I thought it would get dark and I would be alone on that street with nowhere to go. Then I saw a bunch of guys coming out of a building under construction. I approached them casually and started talking to one of them about work and housing. He said: hey, man, you've just arrived now, haven't you? He said that I needed to find a place to work and that then I could make ends meet. I didn't understand a lot of what he said, like make ends meet,¹²³ but I didn't ask so I wouldn't look like a fool. This guy took me to speak to the engineer on his site. The man was leaving in a hurry and asked me if I knew how to lay bricks, prepare

123 Translator's note: The construction worker used the slang term "se virar", meaning to do whatever is necessary to get by.

cement, he said everything muddled, in a rush. I hadn't been a bricklayer, but in the Sertão¹²⁴ you do everything and since I was a child I had built walls in my father's house. Then he asked if I had my health card, I showed him my professional card. He said it wasn't that one. I said it was the only one I had. I hadn't heard of a health card and was too ashamed to ask what it was. Then he said that without the card I couldn't work there and he left. The guy who took me to talk to the engineer was waiting to know he said. I didn't want to tell him that I didn't know what that card thing was. I just said that the engineer said he didn't have work for me. The guy saw that I had nowhere to go and he let me sleep at the construction site that night. Early the next day I went walking along the sidewalks of the avenue and went into every construction site I saw. At that time, the avenue was all buildings under construction. But everywhere they asked for the same card and that was it. I went back to the guy's construction site but he said I couldn't stay. He returned my things and that night I walked the streets from one place to the next. Then the next day I put my shame to one side and went to ask the guy what this card was, if it was expensive and all that. He taught me how to get the card. He explained how to get to Largo de Pinheiros,¹²⁵ which was where they did it. I walked, getting all confused, trying to memorise the names of the streets so I'd know how to get back, trying not to bump into people, which is difficult! But getting the card was easy and in the afternoon

124 The Sertão [backlands or bushland] is the dry hinterland covering much of the Northeast of Brazil.

125 Translator's note: A large square in the same part of the city.

I returned to one of the sites, I showed it to the engineer and I got the job on the spot. That gave me a boost. I went to work in that big building on Gomes de Almeida Fernandes, right in the middle of the avenue. And the engineer himself asked if I had a place to sleep and he let me stay at the construction site along with some others who slept there. I stayed all day inside the site, I only left to eat in a bar where the others went, because I didn't know how to get around, I only knew the avenue and Largo de Pinheiros”.

“I've been in São Paulo for two years now and I've learned live with the people here. I don't get lost anymore, I'll go anywhere, I find my way around. But when I arrived, I was a bumpkin. I didn't know how to do anything, not even catch a bus from here to the centre. Do you think I was going to know how to get a INPS guide? Of course not! I could die of illness and I wouldn't know how to take care of myself. Now, I find it easy to learn, and now I get by like someone who has always lived here”.

Pernambuco feels like he has conquered the city. He has taken responsibility for Carmozina's family and by working weekends he is trying to buy land in instalments. He has the energy of a young man, who works 72 hours a week and has been trying study at MOBREAL¹²⁶ to complete his primary schooling: “I don't like bums. People who beg have no shame; you get where you want if you work hard and well. I'm going to study to see if

126 Translator's note: The Brazilian Literacy Movement [Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização] was a programme created by the Brazilian government to support adult learning.

I can be engineer. Then yes, I'll have a respectable profession. Because I'm good at working. What I'm missing is knowledge, a diploma, being able to speak English, those things. I'm strong and young, a good worker. I'm going to try. I'm going to try. Me, you know, I'm good at working".

Manoel, who borrows the name of the state in which he was born,¹²⁷ will keep trying.

Zé Luiz and Dirce

Zé Luiz doesn't know what year he was born. He says he is 60 years old. But he must be around 40. It's very difficult to know what is true with Zé Luiz: "I'm going to tell you everything by half". And it is likely that he'll end up telling everything in double. His words are mixed with fantastic images, colourful and confusing associations, where the imaginary and the real merge. The only "certainty" is that he has lived in Cidade Jardim favela since 1972, when he built a shack. He is married to Dirce, with whom he has two sons: Roberto Alexandre and Totonho. Zé Ricardo, the oldest, who is missing part of his nose – "the rat ate it" – is Dirce's son with Jonas. We also know that that year he worked as a labourer on a construction site close to the favela and he begged together with his wife and three children, almost every night and on weekends in local churches.

Zé Luiz was born in Minas Gerais, where his father had a

127 Translator's note: This is a reference to Manoel's nickname "Pernambucano" (someone from the Northeastern state of Pernambuco), as he has been referred to until now.

rural property: “our land was around 300 alqueires¹²⁸ or more. All ours. But we didn’t plant anything on it, because the land was poor. Nothing grew. It was just straw. He worked on other people’s land. I don’t know what happened on that land. Everyone died. Some died. Others left. The land stayed there. The beautiful people, who have money, stole it. And it’s theirs. I have eight brothers and sisters. I haven’t seen any of them again. Actually, I saw one. Seven, I never saw again. They might be here in São Paulo. I wouldn’t know”.

From an early age, his path diverged from the “normal” trajectories of most workers. His life is marked by imprisonments, escapes, and stabbings, by a countless number of jobs and of women. And Zé Luiz no longer thinks of himself as a worker. He thinks of himself as a man who is physically and mentally worn-out, who, to achieve what he wants, cannot merely sell his labour. Also, because, as a manual labourer, he can only expect “the minimum wage, which isn’t enough”. And Zé Luiz knows what life is like on this minimum: “if I met someone who said: go to my house and I’ll pay you 2 million a month to never beg again. If the poor found that, almost everyone would work there. But the rich guy prefers to call poor people thieves than offer opportunities. The guy who was born poor, to be a servant, farmer, working in the fields, he’s screwed. It’s the way the devil likes it. And he doesn’t even go on crutches, no. He isn’t able to work. He has strength. He’s healthy. But he’s broken.

128 Translator’s note: Alqueire is a traditional Brazilian land measurement that is significantly larger than a hectare, but whose exact size varies between regions.

The poor work to sustain the rich, because the rich have money to buy from the poor. You understand how it is?”

After all, if there is abundance, and if you can't get it through work, why wear yourself out, if there are other, easier ways: “There's work here. If you work, you eat. If you don't work, you eat the same way. We walk around here begging. Lots of people here give us money... Here, you only don't get a job if you don't want one. Here in São Paulo there's no shortage of work. But a guy who's used to hustling can make money easily. Why work?”

At the age of eight, he ran away from home to work in a circus: “Olimpus Circus. The owner was a hunchbacked old woman. I was a trapeze artist, an animal tamer, a chair balancer, I ate banana with fire. I advertised the circus on the street, with elephants, with monkeys. I went wherever the circus went. I left because I was shot.”

He then moved to the state of Rio, where he “became a man”. He ran away with Aliça, the daughter of a Portuguese man where he worked. He didn't want to get married: “I was poor.” He passed through Araçatuba, Tupã.¹²⁹ Then he went back to her. She already had two daughters. “One day I went to work and when I got home, I didn't find Aliça. She'd crossed the tram line and a car had hit her. She died. I decided to leave. I left the daughters there. From then on, I went a little crazy. I've been with four hundred thousand women. I have seven children scattered around. I've never seen any of them again.”

129 Translator's note: Small towns in the interior of São Paulo state.

Zé Luiz travelled through the interior of São Paulo, Minas, Goiás and Mato Grosso. He worked on numerous farms. He was a waste picker, a bricklayer, a street vendor: “I was even a security guard, keeping watch on the workers so they wouldn’t run off when they owed money. Then a police chief asked if I wanted to be investigator. I went to help the police chief on Saturdays and Sundays. I got a little hat, a baton, a .45 revolver and a belt. I went around looking for prisoners. I never arrested anyone. Because I had orders. Even to kill. I always talked with the guys. I divided up the money and the guy would leave. One day in Bauru¹³⁰ I was arrested. In jail they asked if I didn’t want to be a cangaceiro.¹³¹ I did that for four years and six months. My beard grew. I caught animals, Indians, everything... I earned forty bucks for each Indian. I just had to pick them up and take them away. I subdued them in the village of Rondonópolis.¹³² I took the Indians so they could study, work in the farms, in offices. Everything. We were employees of Jânio Quadros,¹³³ of Adhemar de Barros”.¹³⁴

Zé Luiz had seen a lot of violence. In his travels, he’s been through a lot. Love, fights, death are recurrent themes in his

130 Translator’s note: A larger city in the interior of São Paulo.

131 Translator’s note: A rural gunman, outlaw.

132 Translator’s note: In Mato Grosso state, an agricultural frontier zone in Brazil’s Centre West region.

133 Translator’s note: A populist politician who served as Mayor of the city of São Paulo, as Governor of São Paulo State and, briefly in the early 1960s, as President of Brazil.

134 Translator’s note: Another influential politician who also served as Mayor and Governor of São Paulo and was a rival of Jânio Quadros.

accounts. Respecting others' rights, honour, notions of justice and injustice, cannot be clearly detected as a moral code. Probably, because, on many occasions, he has not been treated in this way: "I went to Ubá¹³⁵ and spent eighteen days in jail. The men came up behind me and took my documents from my pocket. They thought I was a thief. So they put me in jail. When I left, I actually wanted to steal. I didn't steal before. But then I started stealing. I broke into a house. I opened the pantry. I took things. Tore things up. There was a TV: I cracked the screen. I slept. I looked for shoes to put on. I didn't find any. I got angry. I threw all the pans into the river. All of them. I took a shit inside. I ran away. They searched for me, dead or alive. I fled. After that I walked around kind of crazy. I went to a church, I ate some soup. Then I went back to São Paulo and met Dirce. I had a waterproof watch on my wrist, lying on the grass. I had nowhere to go. Then Dirce and another friend tried to steal my watch. Then I gave them food. Then she asked if I didn't want to marry her. I rented a shack in Vergueiro. At that time, I sold things in the street".

Dirce was born in Machado, south of Minas Gerais. Aged nine, she started working as a maid, after studying up to the fourth year of elementary school. Next, she was employed at a conductor factory. At fifteen she came to São Paulo. She lived in her sister's house and worked in a building as a cleaner. "When I was eighteen, the courts got me. I spent two years inside. When I left, I went back to working as a maid. I met Jonas who left me

135 Translator's note: A town in Minas Gerais.

when I was four months' pregnant. I was determined for everything to be in order for Ricardo. Then Zé Luiz said we'd live together and he'd to raise the boy as if he were his own son".

Together, they wandered through the interior of São Paulo looking for work: "they said there was work. We arrived there and it was completely dry. There was no work, or even food. We spent a week at the train station. We passed through some farms. We didn't find anything."

Back home, they live in numerous places, always favelas: Osasco, Butantã, Pompéia, behind the Clube Pinheiros, on the Marginal do Tietê, and finally in the favela of Cidade Jardim. He worked as a builder, gardener, street vendor, doing any kind of "odd job".

"What I want now is to move to a plot of land in Vila Olinda and open a grocery store. To have my own business, with Dirce working on the till". They bought a plot, for which they must pay 181 cruzeiros per month. There are several years left to pay and they're often late with their payments. But to date they have found a way: "we made more than 400 bucks yesterday at church. One man alone gave 250. He told us to get out of there, because if we didn't he'd take the money back. We left. But we didn't mind because it was already the last mass anyway. We'll pay the instalments on the land and baptise the children."

Almost every night and weekend, Zé Luiz comes home, takes a shower, eats dinner, puts on beggar's clothes and goes to the churches, when there's a mass, a baptism or a marriage, with Dirce and his three children: "Totonho just sits on our lap; Zé Ricardo and Roberto Alexandre already know how to act".

In addition to this activity, which is in fact the most profitable, Zé Luiz works as a builder's assistant: he makes concrete, cement. He is registered and earns the minimum wage.

He is a man who, in the midst of shoot-outs, stabbings, confusion, fights, love and death, gradually lost his capacity to work. He cannot, or doesn't want to, see himself as a worker. Basically, because while working, both in the countryside and in the city, he experienced the violence of work. He is worn out. It is so long ago that he barely remembers. "I lost my way, I have no hope, no courage, no joy: from then on, I've suffered, until I reached Rio. Until I arrived in Rio I was suffering. Then I arrived in the Rio da Prata. Suffering: no money, no clothes, no address, no sleep, no way out, no way in... nothing. The poor, I'll tell you the truth: the poor... Do you know what you call the poor man? The walking dead."

Zé Bandeira and Cida

Zé Bandeira was born in a rural part of Alagoas¹³⁶ in 1935. "I never studied. In the countryside I only did two months of elementary school. Then, when I was at Volkswagen, I did two more".

He is a worker who can't find stability in the industrial sector. In part, this because he doesn't like "timetables, being disciplined, rudeness from the boss. To earn an income, I'd prefer to work for myself". But it is also because, from an early age, due

136 Translator's note: A state in the Northeast of Brazil.

to illness and accidents, his labour power has been worn out, and he finds it increasingly difficult to find a job in industry, which he starts to see as a “prison. I got ill with sinusitis while I was recovering from a hernia operation that I got through INPS. I was really bad. I had an operation for sinusitis, it got even worse, I started missing work and they fired me.”

At the age of 17, he went to Maceió¹³⁷ as a packer in a guaraná factory. He stayed there for about a year and a half, when he moved to São Paulo. It was 1959, a time when new industries were developing and in need of labour. He had no trouble getting a job as a labourer, earning the minimum wage in a large mechanical company, where he stayed for 15 months. “They never paid compensation, but I had my worker’s card all in order. They also didn’t give a bonus at Christmas. The owner was Jewish. You had to work an hour extra even on Sundays and the monitor was a thief and a bootlicker because he always stole to help the owner”. Then he worked at Volkswagen for a year and seven months: first as a painter, later as a presser.

Zé Bandeira feels the ambiguity of industrial work. The security, work card registration, stable employment are contrasted with the compulsion of the machines, the repetitive routines, the hierarchy. “My time at Volks was the best. If I was still there, my life wouldn’t be like this. They made it easier for us. I went to shop at the cooperative. But I worked three different shifts. The timetable was really bad, especially at night when people got tired. Lots of people cut their fingers in the press. I know

137 Translator’s note: The state capital of Alagoas.

of lots of cases. I worked with two different machines. That helped me not to get too sick of the job”.

In São Bernardo¹³⁸, he met Cida. She had moved to the city at the age of eight and studied until the fourth year of elementary school. They have now been married for fourteen years and have six children. Right after the first was born, Zé Bandeira was hit by the first of many illnesses. He was fired from Volkswagen and remained unemployed for two months, living off his compensation payment. “I had faith in God that I would never carry buckets of cement on my back”. But, despite his faith, he ended up as a construction worker building the Scania Vabis plant: “it was a job working on the foundations and embankments, tough work. I was there for a year. The mud on the site aggravated my sinusitis. They didn’t provide any protective equipment”.

Then he went to Kharman Guia.¹³⁹ By then, the industries expected better skills. There was a large labour supply to compete with and Zé Bandeira went back to being a manual labourer. “I used to be a presser. But they fired me. When I was a presser, we were the most valued employees. They even added me to the register. Then they started to make you do a test where you had to solve problems with the four operations, and I couldn’t pass it. I was a presser, but I didn’t get to that level. It was kind of official. Then I worked for a year as a maintenance assistant, manual labour; I carried the parts for the lathe. Then I got ill.

138 Translator’s note: A municipality in Greater São Paulo that was at the heart of Brazil’s car manufacturing sector.

139 Translator’s note: A Volkswagen car model.

I asked for help with IAPI.¹⁴⁰ They asked me to come back the next day. When I came back, they called me into the office and they'd already decided to fire me. I argued, I questioned, but it was no use. There was a union at that time. It was 1962. But I had no experience of that and I didn't involve them out of ignorance. I didn't know my case could have gone to the union".

From then on, he began to migrate around the interior of the state. First, Araraquara, as a casual rural labourer. Then Campinas: "we sat at a junction on the road into the city", says Cida: "I couldn't take the hunger and tiredness anymore, so we found a guesthouse and ordered food. Then we went to a hostel, where we stayed for four days. From there, near the station, by the warehouses, there was a covered area. I cooked on a makeshift stove. The water source was nearby. Every Friday the truck from the Brazilian Welfare Legion¹⁴¹ came by and gave us hot soup, sometimes even some clothes. We lived like that for two months, Zé working in an oil factory, packing peanuts, carrying things, working as a builder. He even helped to set up a circus." Then they went to Santos,¹⁴² where he worked as a builder: "a man offered and we went. I worked from 6 in the morning to 7 at night. We lived in the building, on the 4th floor, and once the room was ready, we moved to another one. Then,

140 The Institute of Industrial Retirement and Pensions (Instituto de Aposentadorias e Pensões dos Industriários), an agency created during the Getúlio Vargas (Estado Novo) period, which was merged with other social security agencies under the military dictatorship to form the INPS.

141 Translator's note: A private charitable welfare society.

142 Translator's note: A major coastal city and port near to São Paulo.

eventually, the building was ready.”

They returned to São Paulo and went to the Department of Migration, where they remained for a month: “it was in *Recolhimento da Alegria*, those who were arriving stayed in one place, and those who were leaving, in another”.

They heard about a shack in the favela, which they moved to. Zé Bandeira began to take on small jobs: “trying to make it on my own: small jobs like clearing land, cutting down trees, building walls”. However, before establishing himself as a self-employed gardener, he worked as a salaried employee in a company linked to the *Companhia de Gás*,¹⁴³ where he stayed for almost two years. His last experience as an employee was at *Votorantim*.¹⁴⁴ “I unloaded trucks full of cement and took them inside. But one day I fell and broke my back. I was left in a cast for three months, on insurance. When I recovered, I went back to work, but after just 20 days, they fired me. So, that’s when I got into this gardening thing. When there’s no gardening work available, I do whatever I can: I chop wood, cut down trees, build a wall”.

“Registered work is a prison. The only help I’ve received is from those who have given me work. It’s worse without a boss. But even their help doesn’t amount to much, because we can’t escape poverty. Our salaries are low and we can’t charge more because we’re just poor, gardeners, shoemakers, etc. But they help because they give you work. They need a gardener, from the poor people, from us. If they need it so much, I don’t know

143 Translator’s note: São Paulo’s public gas company.

144 Translator’s note: A large Brazilian business group, including a branch specialised in cement production.

why they don't help more."

Cida has worked at Clube das Mães¹⁴⁵ for six years. She earns around 80 cruzeiros per month doing embroidery, which is often extremely valuable, given the instability of her husband's work and the presence of their six children: "every Wednesday there's a lecture on different things: bodily hygiene, domestic hygiene, getting on with neighbours and family. I never miss one, except when it rains or is very cold".

As a rule, the roads that lead to Cidade Jardim begin under living conditions prevailing in the countryside, often with stops in small- and medium-sized cities, where job opportunities are also often quite precarious: "you won't get anywhere on the farm, so you have to migrate. I miss Bahia, but it's very difficult to earn any money in the countryside. São Paulo is better on some points. Bahia is better in terms of housing. Where we live belongs to us and we don't have to pay some costs, like rent. There is also food, and it's good. But there's no money to buy it with. In Bahia there's no work, no work at all. Nothing has value: not a day of labour, not a kilo of food".

Salaried workers, partners and settlers or small landowners move to large centres in search of work. In the city, when they have no relatives or friends to house them, the solution is the favela, which is not always simple, given the prohibition on building new shacks: "I ended up in the favela after leaving a boarding house near the Bus Station, where I paid 100 cru-

145 Translator's note: In English, "Mothers' Club". Probably a local social organisation.

zeiros. We came because the rent there was very expensive. We couldn't, I mean, we had to save money.”

“I asked a bus driver where I could live in the city without paying and he took us close to the favela, and told me how to get there. It was a miserable, drizzly, rainy day. We arrived at the favela without knowing anyone, thinking we could find a place to sleep that night and then find out. There was no shelter there, no tree, no empty place. Then Zé told me: let's rest on the wall of a shack and just sleep there. The people from the favela told Zé that we couldn't stay there, that the police didn't let new people in because the favela had grown a lot, it needed to stop. Then we got disheartened. I was so tired that soon I fell asleep, just like that. It was already night when the woman in the shack saw us there and felt sorry for us. She said: my hut is small, but you can't stay out in this cold. We went in, there was no room, but we slept in the corners, on the floor. Zé went out to look for work with the woman's friend. We stayed in her shack for about 15 days. Then we decided to build a shack there. We were scared, because everyone said the police would arrest us. But I went out and collected wood on the avenue and one day, while Zé out working, I planted some posts in the ground. Then when he came back, we finished nailing them down and put some boards over to cover them. It was pretty basic, but we moved in that day and no one came to remove it.”

The Cidade Jardim favela emerged in the early 1950s when there were still few houses in the area. As the neighbourhood urbanised over time and received improvements serving the wealthier residents, the favela, which had also grown, began to

clash with its surroundings. Located between the bypass that connects Cidade Jardim Avenue to Hungria Road and a stream that flows into the Pinheiros River, providing the foundations for the high walls of the mansions and located on land that is partly owned by INPS and partly by a private firm, the favela's days could be numbered.

The first resident was the "late Pedro", who was allowed to build a shack so he could keep watch on the land. He took care of it, allowing the construction of some shacks for which he charged rent, and if there were any problem, Pedro would contact the landowner. It is Edgar who tells this story: heir of the "late Pedro", who kept control over part of the land, determining the construction of new shacks, based on the owner's moods and the favours that he received. With the increase in the number of shacks, Edgar lost his monopoly, and other residents start to gain similar privileges in other parts of the favela. These areas were owned by INPS and overseen by Mr. Trajano, who did not live in the favela and claimed to be an inspector from the Institute. He exercised and exploited his authority, allowing some favela residents to take control of land in exchange for a small amount of rent: "the late Pedro took up to 1,300 cruzeiros in rent. When the inspector arrived, he put an end to that. His heir still charges some who think that the land belongs to him and are afraid not to pay. If you let just anyone in, this area will turn into a dump, a magnet for rubbish and bums, with no way for a family to live here. For that reason, the inspector left a phone number to call, to inform him if people insist on staying. Then they'll come and remove them, because the INPS

doesn't want them to stay. And if we let it happen, we'll also end up losing our rights and the INPS will kick everyone out".

Despite such "controls", the renting, buying and even building of shacks – because, through friendship, favours or money, it is always possible to get permission to occupy an empty area – the favela grew rapidly, spreading across almost the entire available area. In 1972, the city government already planned to defavelise the area: the land was going to receive investments, the stream would be canalised and the entire area would be integrated into the real estate market of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The favela was seen by residents of the surrounding neighbourhood as a source of contamination, and the mere presence of the favela residents caused them discomfort. This was made worse by the fact that there was no water, which could be obtained from the tap of a building owned by Light,¹⁴⁶ about 100 meters away, in the middle of Hungria Road. But the manager at Light often "got angry and we had to knock on the doors of the houses to ask for water. Some would give it to us and other wouldn't. Many of them got angry just from us asking." As well as the lack of water, the favela also lacked electricity and waste disposal services: rubbish piled up behind the shacks or was thrown into the stream. Excrement was thrown into rudimentary cesspits, often shared between several shacks, or they went straight from the "bathrooms" to the stream, as the sewage network did not reach the Cidade Jardim favela.

146 Translator's note: São Paulo's main electrical company at the time.

The building materials used for the shacks – used wood, cardboard, street signs and posters, zinc sheets, pieces of clay or asbestos tiles, any kind of old iron, used panelling, bits of tarpaulin, in short, the most diverse array of objects, considered useless or already used by urban society – are generally collected from “dumps” in the surrounding area. For the favela resident, this urban waste constitutes the raw material from which the shack is assembled. From the same place, they also recover varied pieces of furniture and utensils. Chairs, tables, and cabinets are collected and repaired or built from assembled materials. Hubcaps are turned into plates and pans, shoe soles serve as hinges, large tins are used as seats. There is, in sum, a constant reuse of discarded items that have already been consumed, the result of survival practices that revive and give meaning to artifacts that society has turned into trash.

These survival practices turn the kitchen into the most important place in the shack. Whenever possible, the wood stove is used for cooking smaller items and the gas stove for the main tasks. The favela residents also channel their investments into the purchase of crockery and pans that take pride of place within the shack, almost always being very bright, decorative and a source of pride for those who prepare the food.

The great aspiration of the favela dweller is to leave the favela and buy a home. Many have tried, but due to constant income stagnation, illnesses, accidents at work or unemployment, they have had to interrupt land purchases, losing what they had already invested. “I started to buy, but I couldn’t keep up with the payments. I lost everything”. Everyone knows that they are

unlikely to be able to buy a property by working: “What kind of salary do I make? I’m not a professional. I’m going to take on a debt so I can pay for a month or a year? My salary doesn’t even pay enough to eat. Housing is the most difficult thing for the poor. Everything that I want, I know I won’t get it, because I’m poor.”

“Everyone can find work. You can even get by just picking up old paper. It’s possible to live on that. Though not to make a future. You can always find a way to eat. The hardest part for the weak is housing. Here in São Paulo, even with all the difficulties, it’s better. It’s better here. There are more solutions for treating diseases. Are there more solutions for improving your life? No! Not for improving things, you know. But you can have more hope. Yes! There’s more hope. Here you have hope. Here you think about getting a cleaning job, or opening a bar, but there you can’t even do that. I have hope: of death or making lots of money or getting ill”.

The Cidade Jardim favela will make way for the progress of the city. The “removal” operation begins. Technicians process the favela residents. A few embark on the adventure of building a house. Others are taken to the city government’s Temporary Housing Villages, located in the distant peripheries of São Paulo, waiting for some longer-term solution. Many, perhaps most, will simply build a shack in one of the city’s other favelas, in the hope that they will not be removed from there. Finally, for others this represents the moment of departure: “I’ve given up on São Paulo. I’m going to see what life is like elsewhere. It didn’t work out here!”

Table 7 - Working Conditions And Incomes⁴

	Seu Zé	Laurinda	Lindolfo e Alvina	Joel e Dalva	Pernambuco e Carmozina	Zé Luiz e Dirce	Zé Bandeira e Cida
Main work	Cook	Gardener	Cleaner	Courier	Construction worker	Begging	Gardener
Condition	Self-employed	Self-employed	Salaried	Salaried	Salaried	Autonomous	Self-employed
Number of hours worked per week	50	20	48	57	54	15	48
Income	400,00	60,00	330,00	450,00	330,00	875,00	400,00
Other work	-	-	-	-	Kitchen assistant	Builder's assistant	-
Condition	-	-	-	-	Salaried	Salaried	-
Situation	-	-	-	-	Not registred	Registred	-
Weekly working hours	-	-	-	-	19	48	-
Total income	400,00	60,00	330,00	450,00	630,00	1205,00	400,00
Total weekly working hours	50	20	48	57	73	63	48

4 Sporadic activities and income from the sale of objects were not included. In the case of Lindolfo and Alvina, we would also have to take into account the work of the children as car washers and guards. This activity generated around 350 cruzeiros per month and responded, approximately, to a work week of 15 hours each.

At the end of 1977 the shacks were destroyed. Trees were planted on the land.

As salaried or self-employed workers, whether through stable or irregular work, the income of favela residents comes from economic circuits spanning the city and only secondarily from the favela. On the one hand, self-employed workers charge prices that offer savings to the middle- and upper-class groups who consume their services. These savings come from the fact that they would pay higher prices if they were to consume the same services from specialised firms. Meanwhile, industrial workers and employees, earning around the minimum wage, allow companies to increase their profit margins.

The construction and repair of shacks, the making and cleaning of clothes, and the preparation of meals are services that cater to the working classes, especially those who live in the favela. Such services, in addition to complementing the incomes of those who offer them, also represent a cheaper solution for those who consume them. They include lunch boxes prepared for workers who live locally, cooking for single men in the favela, sewing or cleaning clothes with water that must be collected outside the favela. Such services, however small they may be, offer a solution for surviving on derisory wages and incomes.

Laurinda is a wife and sometimes cooks for the workers. Seu Zé and Zé Bandeira garden. Lindolfo works as a cleaner, while his children watch and wash cars. Joel is a courier. Pernambuco works in a restaurant and in building construction. Zé Luiz also

works as a builder, but his main source of income is begging.

As a builder's assistant, Zé Luiz earns around one minimum wage, or 350 cruzeiros.¹⁴⁷ As a beggar he earns between 750 and 1,000 cruzeiros a month. That is to say, at least 75% of his income comes from unsanctioned work. The important thing to highlight is that one hour of begging is equivalent to approximately 10 hours of work as a construction labourer. However, it is even more important to note that the other workers do not earn much more than Zé Luiz receives from his sanctioned and regular work. Unless, that is, they stretch their working day, like Pernambuco, whose two jobs amount to 73 hours of work per week. Even so, it does not reach what Zé Luiz earns at the doors of the churches.

These are not workers who remain unemployed for long periods, with the exception of Lindolfo, who, for this reason, depends greatly on his children's help to sustain the family's meagre budget. But, in self-employed work, there are periods of underemployment, when opportunities are diminished. This is the case with gardeners, especially during winter, which forces them to take on other odd jobs that come up.

Self-employment also has other disadvantages. As well as being unable to access social security, the self-employed may not be recognised as workers at all when they, frequently, need to identify themselves to the police as individuals who make a living from regular, sanctioned employment: "the signed work-

147 The minimum wage in 1973, when the fieldwork was conducted, was 312 cruzeiros a month.

er's card is good because it means we don't have a problem with the police. The only disadvantage of not having a card are the rights that I don't have".

Furthermore, it is difficult to obtain and maintain a large and stable clientele. To do so, one must develop a network and spend time looking for clients. Job offers can arrive simultaneously and then it is necessary to manage them at scale. At other times, there's a shortage of work: "I've had a very bad month and a half. I've lived on money from my children and what was left over from the company's last payment. The money varies a lot. It depends on whether the customer is whiny, the precision and condition of the garden. Sometimes I get paid little for high-precision work. September was very good. I worked almost every day and earned 400 cruzeiros. Now, in October, I'll work every day from the 15th to the 24th of October. From the 24th to the 31st I need to find customers. I have work up until the 11th. From the 11th to the 15th I need to find more. I can't waste any time. I subject myself to doing a lot of work that should be 50 cruzeiros for 35 to keep busy. But in winter there's almost no gardening, just covering".

Autonomous workers need to plan their activities, making economic calculations based on the needs of the moment. They also need to certain work instruments, or to share them with those who have them. In the case of gardening, they need to collect manure, earth, plants and grass, transport them, and, most importantly, learn to execute their work in line with the tastes of their clients. Work of this kind, therefore, requires not only an information network to expand one's clientele, but also a cer-

tain “expertise” in performing tasks to the taste of the wealthy classes and astuteness to deal with frequent fluctuations in the prices of services offered. All of this must be learned. Even the work of a street vendor has its risks: “I started right here in São Paulo, selling sweets in the city centre. In just one month I was earning almost 800 bucks. One day the city government caught me, and that was it. Then I started working with fear. I worked in bad locations. I worked in fear. I lost it. You have to have a licence. I didn’t have one”.

With the exception of Pernambuco, who has a young man’s energy and still wants to succeed in the city, everyone else has already seen their physical and mental energies depleted. They can no longer obtain industrial jobs, which they come to view as a “prison”, but which, in reality, are not even on offer anymore: “registered and guaranteed work is a prison. I only accept registered work if I earn more than the minimum wage. Companies only pay the minimum wage. And that just isn’t enough. That’s why I make my own way and get on with it. Besides that, there’s no one to take issue and complain. Employees have rules, timetables. You do anything and they kick you out, and then you’re struggling to find another job. It’s worse for the guys who work hard and earn little because they don’t have skills. They only learned how to do heavy manual work. They suffer more and they earn little. Besides, I’m very old and no-one is going to want to sign my card. The problem is that poor people don’t have the right to get ill.”

All that remains is the option taken by Zé Luiz, who “got used to hustling”. But the dominant apparatus creates an order

that makes workers perceive themselves as labour, as jacks-of-all-trades, and makes them accept highly exclusionary conditions. For the machinery that oppresses them, it is necessary that they do not view themselves as *lumpen*: “the only thing worse than me is a thief. We’re poor, but we’re clean and free. There are lots of people who don’t have work, who beg. I think it’s ugly and we should avoid it. Besides, it’s very visible and I would be ashamed. I don’t like bums, lazy people, people who live off begging”.

But, fundamentally, for the system that exploits workers, it is essential that they do not see themselves as rebellious: “the workers must obey always, because otherwise they could be kicked out at any moment. They must do everything, even work overtime and accept having their rights disrespected. And if you contest anything, you won’t be able to stay, and you’ll have to go and look for another company. The weak can be pushed and pulled around. Poor people don’t go on strike. Poor people must not campaign politically, because the poor have no place. If you’re born to be armadillo, you should just dig”.

In spite of all the constraints that bind people, there is always a sense that the wealth created by work does not belong to those who actually carry it out: “It is the poor who make the country progress. No rich person makes concrete. The poor, who have no profession, who work with their hands, who get down in the mud, these nobodies are the ones who produce progress. They are the ones who carry the biggest load. The owner is not going to turn a concrete mixer to make concrete, or go up a scaffolding to build a roof with tiles. The rich person

only brings money, the poor work. If you look at the inside of a beautiful building, it was poor people who made that.”

It was an extremely risky time for people to see themselves as equals on a shared path. In 1972, it was the height of the “economic miracle” and the peak of the repression.





VII

The Citizens of the Marginal¹⁴⁸

The favela is not exactly a big problem in the capital of São Paulo. After all, there are only 100,000 favela residents – 20,000 shacks – in a total population of over 5 million.¹⁴⁹ The applied technocrat would conclude that it is simply a statistical residual, confident in the neutrality of the numbers and the objectivity of the calculation.

The favela, however, is still a problem, for at least two reasons. First, because it shocks the upstanding citizen. It alarms those of peaceful conscience, who imagine these clusters of shacks as nests of delinquency, promiscuity and vagrancy. Contrary to such assumptions, however, countless data show that the favela is a microcosm that mirrors the full range of socio-economic

148 This chapter was written in collaboration with Margarida Carvalhosa and Eduardo P. Graeff, to whom I reiterate my thanks for allowing me to include it in this book.

149 Remember that this article was written in 1973. Today [ie. 1979] it would be reckless to make such a statement, as favela residents already represent 6% of the São Paulo population.

and cultural situations found among the city's poor. There, like anywhere else, there is social disorganisation and illicit activity. But, primarily, as in any other place where low-income families live, in the favela one finds manual workers who sell their labour power on the market at prices that are almost always derisory. As a rule, it is in the favela where unskilled labourers in the construction industry and street vendors seek refuge. And living in the favela means reducing costs on rent and transport, which, for many, is essential for survival.

On the other hand, the favela becomes a problem when, as the city expands, the areas they occupy begin to appreciate in value. It may be expressways and public buildings that lay claim to the space taken up by the shacks – meaning they must be removed. Or it is the logic of real estate speculation that leads private investors to take initiative with “cleansing” operations. And, as property is the ultimate source of law, favela residents gather their belongings and go to settle in another place, until the growth of the metropolis, which they help to build, expels them again.

Technocratic objectivity would claim that the favelas are a secondary problem. After all, they account for only two percent of the population living and working in São Paulo. It is difficult to disagree. We would just qualify this figure with a reminder that it amounts to more than 100,000 people. But if we cannot create space for favela dwellers from beneath the shadow of the statistics, perhaps we can in the less cold register of individual testimonies.

– I've liked living here, you know, I've liked it. It's a peaceful

little place. We are always cool, it never stresses you out. Now, as you say, I can't say that I won't leave here, because the land isn't mine. It's not mine! If the land was ours, then no, but it's a piece of land that we're just on for now. I mean, we're just like this for now, but that "for now" is for centuries! We come to live for now, and we say, "I'm going to spend about fifteen days, a month." But the city government isn't ordering people to leave, the guy thinks it's good living here, and the time goes by, fifteen days, twenty, thirty, fifty, a whole life. But if the city government comes and says "leave", you have to leave, because no one's in charge in that place anyway. So, we're obliged to leave.

Otaviano speaks calmly, slowly. Not even his still-adolescent face (he is 20 at most) reveals any emotion hidden under his strong Bahian accent. If it wasn't for the roar of the trucks on the embankment above and the noise of the stones on the board of the shack opposite, you could forget that it's his story he's telling. In a few weeks' time, we don't know how many, Otaviano will have to leave the peaceful little place he has found to live in the middle of São Paulo. Someone will say "leave", and he will leave. And the room of used boards that he built himself in the buracão¹⁵⁰ of Jardim Panorama will disappear under the rubble. Apparently, this doesn't bother or anger him or the other residents of this part of the favela.

Jardim Panorama is the official, or officious, name. It is a part of a hill on the edge of Morumbi,¹⁵¹ five minutes by car from

150 Translator's note: This is the name given to part of the favela, used by Kowarick in lower case, meaning "the big hole".

151 Translator's note: An upper-class neighbourhood in the west of

the Jóquei Clube¹⁵² along Avenida Marginal do Rio Pinheiros,¹⁵³ an enclave of poverty next to one of the capital's wealthiest residential areas. "Panorama" must refer to the hazy view of the skyscrapers of Avenida Paulista in the far distance. For those who climb the hill to enter the favela, the view is very different: intimate, almost bucolic. In the many open areas between the shacks, corn stalks and vegetables have been planted. A man passes us on a cart, he raises his hat and says, "good morning". Only the sporadic passing of trucks disturbs the rural atmosphere along the small dirt street. They creak up the hill and disappear around a curve ahead, on the way to the embankment.

It has been around three months since the process began. Rubble is brought in from other construction and demolition jobs, and there is a guy who unloads it, receiving three cruzeiros per truck. Material brought by dump trucks is not accepted, in consideration of the safety of the shacks and residents below (a few days later this concern would be forgotten). Even so, the larger stones gather a lot of speed over the 15- or 20-metre drop. Children who collect paper and iron at the foot of the embankment have already learned to work with one eye at

São Paulo.

152 Translator's note: A historic horseracing club, which is an important institution in São Paulo's high society.

153 Translator's note: Avenida Marginal do Rio Pinheiros is a multi-lane highway running alongside the canalised Pinheiros River. It was created following the Projeto das Avenidas [Avenues Project], conceived in the 1930s, which established several large avenues that would form the basis of São Paulo's modern road network.

ground level and the other looking high up. Aside from these practical details, the guy does not provide a lot of information. He says that he is working for a real estate company, but he doesn't know which one. It is Sergeant Angelim and Antonio Frota who are "in charge" of everything. They are the ones who have direct contact with the company.

Among those who live in buracão, the answers are even more vague:

– They say it's the city government, says Dona Maria, her attention divided between the voice recorder, the food on the fire for lunch, and the children playing around. – I don't know what it's going to be, some say it's for putting up good homes, others say it's for a factory, I don't know. A woman who collects trash there said that on the 23rd we'll have to leave. But Antonio Frota hasn't spoken to us here, she says he said it there... I don't even know what I'm saying, because someone says something, someone else says something else, we don't even know what's going on.

The toothless smile that follows the last sentence seems almost like an apology. Maria recently arrived from the North with her children to meet her husband who had already worked in São Paulo for a year. She must still feel like a stranger in the favela, in the city. However, a couple of older residents cannot add much to what she has said. In short, the area sandwiched between two sides of the hill that they call the buracão needs to be vacated, and it is not known for certain on whose orders or why. The only thing that is certain is the fact itself. Like a wave in slow motion, inexorably, the landfilling advances a little each

day. Two or three shacks are already empty. Zé Luiz's must be next: the stones have already taken over the children's room in the back; the whole family has retreated to the two rooms left. What is to be done?

– He says that Antônio Frota will give us land there, to build another shack. If we can't afford to leave, whoever wants to leave, he says he'll pay for their ticket. And those who don't want to leave, too, who see that they can't leave quickly, like us who just arrived here, he says that he'll give us land there to build a shack, on the other side there. So, I'm still going to talk to him to see if... my boy said today, if he gives us land to build a shack, we'll build a shack there.

The person speaking is Isaurina, another Northeasterner who has recently arrived in São Paulo. The "boy", she explains, is a son, a bricklayer, who lives in the same shack with his wife and Isaurina's two youngest children: Carlito, 15, and Maria das Graças, 17. It seems that Maria das Graças, who also takes part in the conversation, has no faith in Antônio Frota's generosity:

— I don't think he'll do it anymore. He said that... to that 20-year-old woman who lives here, mum, that woman, Dona Nica, he said it won't work.

– But I think they were trying to give like 5 million, and she wanted 10, right. He eventually said, "Now I'm not giving any more."

– He now says that whoever wants to leave should leave, he says that he's not giving any more. And he's right, right? That he gave these people a lot of opportunities. They didn't want to leave, so I guess they want to die under the rubble, right?

– On weekdays no one sees him, Dona Maria explained about her husband, with a mix of resentment and pride. – He’s doing business, working here, working there. He doesn’t come home. He’s only at home on Sunday, Sunday he’s here all day long.

The name of the “businessman” is João: a tough Paraíba¹⁵⁴ with the full strength of his 25 years (10 fewer than his wife). As a street vendor, he takes sweets and biscuits on a bicycle to sell at the entrances of construction sites. Until recently, he was also a construction worker. As is common among people from the countryside, he has the gift of spontaneous storytelling. Our conversation at the door of his shack quickly evolves from the problem of the landfilling into the story of the migrant who became a favela resident. João worked on a farm from a young age. He started in a sugar mill when the family moved to Pernambuco, earning “one hundred and twenty bucks” a week. Later, he went to Jacobina, Bahia, alone. There he met Maria, the daughter of a small farm owner; they got married and had four children. In February 1972, he went down to São Paulo. Why?

– Big crisis! So dry that we were just losing everything, without the power to escape. The countryside mistreats us, it squeezes us dry. Ave Maria! God, I don’t want my children being raised like that, just like I was! If they don’t learn to study, it’s only because God didn’t allow it or if they didn’t have the vocation for it. But if they do, I have to put them into school, God will-

154 Translator’s note: Someone from the state of Paraíba in the Northeast of Brazil.

ing. I came here, I came with borrowed money. I worked for a month or so, got it together, sent the money back. So, I stayed here, I didn't want to go back, back up there. Because there in the North, I had no property, I didn't have a house in the city, no farm. That is, if I find a place that I can live in when I'm passing by, that's gonna be mine (...).

For those who head straight to the big city, it is almost a rule that they must spend some time working in civil construction. There aren't many alternatives for low-skilled workers. Furthermore, the possibility of living on site reduces personal subsistence costs, an important consideration when you have relatives back in the North waiting for help. João lived like this for a year. Helped by some brothers-in-law who were already in São Paulo, he soon found a job in a construction company. Living on site, he managed to spend just 20 bucks a week. The rest of the salary was sent to his wife and children to allow them to "scrape by". With their arrival, the favela was the natural solution to the problem of housing. For a while, he paid rent. Then he bought the shack where they live now, for 100 bucks. Even with a guaranteed roof over their heads, however, it soon became clear that the minimum wage that was enough to support the family in the North could not cover their costs in São Paulo. And three months ago another mouth to feed appeared: João's father, who had been living in Jacobina with his daughter-in-law's family, also came to São Paulo. Saying goodbye to the construction company, João decided to try his luck in the candy trade.

– Because for me to work on a construction site... There's a

boss there who I went to, so I could work, I was there yesterday talking to him. He said, “man, you’re selling candy don’t you earn anything?” I say, “well, I earn more, but it’s a little complicated for us to live like this, negotiating things, without being registered with a firm. Sometimes the law men think that the guy doesn’t work in construction because he doesn’t want to”. “Yes, but it’s not like that, you work there”, he told me, “you earn more, because you have a lot of family”. Because if I do building work, I receive 70 bucks, 75. But if you’re registered, there’s a reduction. I get this money, but for me to be able to feed seven mouths, four children, me and my wife, and my father, my father doesn’t work, the man is 62 years old age. Or is it 64?... Then that’s it, there’s no way to live. Now, if I sell sweets, there are days when I earn 15, I earn 20, or a little more. One day there’s nothing in the house, but I can go straight out and sell some sweets, and go straight from there to a store, a market, and I can bring home some beans, some flour to eat (...)

– It’s not even enough to eat, he explains as if were trying to convince the “men of the law”. – Because here, you know, you only eat beans and farinha, and every now and then a salad, it’s not even every day that there’s a bit of salad, a person like that isn’t really eating, right? You never see any meat!

A month or so ago, João’s struggle for some cruzeiros took him on a seemingly absurd venture. In exchange for 600 bucks saved up when the family was still in Bahia, as well as a harmonica, a bicycle and a battery-powered radio, he became the owner of nothing more, nothing less, than a car. Now the old Ford is leaning against the path that descends from the landfill and

passes next to the shack. The starter engine is broken and there is no money to fix it. Furthermore, João knows how to drive but doesn't have a licence and is afraid to go out in the car.

– I bought the car with the plan of... because in that shack, there was an old man, he was a driver and had a license, right, I bought it with a contract that we would buy fruit in the markets and prepare it, sell it, see if we could get a little more. Then he left for Paraná and that was it, I couldn't do anything else. The car is there, I might try and sell it. If I can get any small amount for it, even a million, I'll send it.

– Oh, of course – says Maria –, the car is great for going out. To go and see things, go to the city, because I want to go to the city, I want to go... I say, “man, with so many kids, please let the car work so we can go out.” Every day he promises to go to the city with me, when the time comes to go, he just hangs around, stalling.

Even broken, the car still carries João's dreams. With the money from the sale he hopes to get a professional driver's license to get a job in a trucking company, or, who knows, as a taxi driver. In fact, it's hard to know how far his purchase of the car had a very clearly defined motivation or whether João allowed himself to be overwhelmed by the magnetism of the machine that seems to embody the spirit of urban life itself. For Honório, the father, the city does not offer many hopes. At his age, he can't get a job anywhere. According to him, it's all due to a mistake with the date of birth on his work card.

– I got the card in Jacobina. They put 62 years old, because the father of this girl here who is my daughter-in-law said, “bud-

dy, let me tell you if you put that you're 58, people might not believe it. Because you're old, people might not believe it, I'm going to put 62". And that was it, he put 62. When I arrived here and I showed my card they said, "no, if you were 58 you'd have a job, but you're 62, you're only good for retirement". If I could still work? Not could, I can work! Now, because of the card, they don't want to give me a job. First they said, "if you were 58 years old you'd have a job, because here they only want to register young guys correctly".

In all the building sites near the favela, the response was the same. And the idea of "not being good anymore" for work disorients old Honório. He feels like a burden on his son's shoulders. All he wants is to return to Jacobina, to the countryside, where the end of a man's life is not so rigidly demarcated.

– I went to the house of my friend, the father of that girl there (his daughter-in-law), to plant vegetables! Cassava, corn, castor beans, beans. What fool's work, man, it's not enough for the guy to live on. Because when you end up renting, your earnings stay in the land and you can't earn anything. And in our farm we go, we take some fava, take some angu,¹⁵⁵ take an ear of corn, take a watermelon, take a pumpkin. It's rented work, at the wheel like that, every day, you can't eat and buy clothes, no. Especially in a place like this. Here, either you live in luxury, or people kick you down, dupe you.

At the end of the conversation, the topic of housing comes back to the fore. Where will João take his family when the land-

155 Translator's note: A porridge made from manioc or corn.

filling reaches their shack? For now, the problem doesn't seem to be worrying him too much. They are at one of the highest points of the buracão. At the rate it is advancing, the landfill will still give him a month or two to find a solution. In any case, he is absolutely resigned.

– As long as I can be here, I will be. When they send me somewhere else, or something else comes along, you have to seize the momentum and move fast. I thank God that I'm living here. If they give me any right to receive something, I'll be satisfied. If they don't give me anything, it's the same thing, I'm not going to complain about what's not mine.

Otaviano is Maria's brother, one of the brothers-in-law who was already in São Paulo when João came down from the North. It was also drought that drove him from his land. When it rained in Jacobina, in 1973, the other brothers returned. Apparently, he stayed out of pride and for the girl Maria das Graças, daughter of the widow Isaurina. Pride, because he didn't want to go back to the house of his parents on the same footing as he left, without even 300 or 400 bucks to prove his success in São Paulo. Otaviano's father is old and sick, as a single son, he feels obliged to help. Then got engaged and assumed new responsibilities. The oldest son of Isaurina, the bricklayer, they say he has a heart that a bit "distant" from his family, he doesn't care much about his mother and brothers. Even before getting married, Otaviano had already somewhat taken on the role of man of the house.

At the moment, Otaviano is unemployed (which is why we were able to find him at home on a Tuesday afternoon). He quit

at the car wash station where he worked, and, until he finds another stable job, is selling sweets at construction sites with his brother-in-law João. Otaviano has a lot to say about work and employment. And on this topic, he shares his experience of two years in the big city.

– Well, at the beginning, when I arrived here in São Paulo, it wasn't easy. Because when I got here I was very skinny, you know. And to work, a job, I didn't have a profession, my job was to work in construction. My brother had already worked at the company for a year, so I arrived and managed to get a job there. So, it meant that I lived there on the site itself. I lived at the site, worked, did everything there. At first, I thought it was really bad, but I had to put up with it because... we couldn't stay there with the weather as it was. Until the time came for me to go home. I'd spent a year to be able to go home, but in that year that I spent there, I never had any money, right? I never had anything, just working and looking after my father, plus another brother of mine who was single, right?

However, the life of a single young man, recently arrived in São Paulo, could not remain confined within the walls of a construction site. What about the other attractions of the big city, the streets full of people, the bars, the football field, the street corners of Rua Aurora, a movie?

– Ok, I'll tell you the rest: I only know what a cinema is because I saw a movie back home. Yes, a little one I saw there, I don't know where it was from. There in Bahia, because here in São Paulo I've never been to a cinema. Look, here in São Paulo I don't know anything but work. Well, I only know a few plac-

es to walk, like, sometimes on a Sunday, right. Just a place, on work holidays, when I go out, walk. That is to say... for me to get to know somewhere other than work, I don't know anywhere. Nothing, just nothing, nothing at all. I'm not... I've never experienced the city here in São Paulo! Only work. Only work...

Perhaps Otaviano is exaggerating a little to impress his fiancée and future mother-in-law, who are busy hanging clothes on the clothesline but clearly eavesdropping on the conversation. The precarious access of the low-income population to urban amenities, however, is nothing new.

For example, in a survey carried out in the Municipality of São Paulo, in 1969, it was found that 20% of interviewees from the lower class did not know the Hospital das Clínicas¹⁵⁶; 54%, did not know where they needed to register to vote; 28%, did not know where to get an identity card. The extremely low rate of participation in voluntary associations of any kind is another indicator of isolation; just 3.6% of those interviewed belonged to neighbourhood associations, and 8.8% were trade union members. The isolation of Maria or old Honório, for example, is absolute. They are in the city only because the place where they live lies within its boundaries. They rarely leave the favela. And, nevertheless, the city is there, it is around them, with all its promise and mystery. Otaviano seems to feel it is almost within reach. He wants it.

– Yeah, if we got a job, if we could get a job where you

156 Translator's note: A large public hospital complex close to Avenida Paulista.

earned well, we wouldn't live as tightly as we do, if you don't have a profession, you don't get a good job, right? That is, you only get weak little jobs, those little jobs where the guy only works. He never does anything, he just works so he can say he's eating. If I could read well enough to get a job, for example, I would work in a bank, in any kind of store, you know, that pays more than this work I do. This work I do doesn't make sense. It only pays enough to eat.

Otaviano knows how to read reasonably and can write a bit. He learned from a brother, who helped him to decipher the letters delivered to their home. Later he took an adult literacy course together with other workers on the site where he worked. But he was only able to attend classes for a month.

– I mean, I worked, the hours were always until six in the afternoon, then it was too late for me go to class and come home, you know. So I left, I left because it didn't work, it got too late. My colleagues who went with me all gave up too. Because we woke up the next day grumpy, having to go and do heavy labour. No-one could handle it, so we gave up, right? If we get a job and work until four, then go to school, the boss will think that we're too lazy to work. So, to please him, we'll work until six, until eight, until ten, depending on the company. Well, the correct law is until four, right? But no company wants you to only work until four. And then, for those of us who earn the minimum wage, working on a construction site, in that kind of work, if you always leave at four you won't even earn enough to eat. If you have a family, you can't even feed them, there's no point in trying.

When he arrived from Jacobina for the second time, once again, he sought construction work. His job lasted seven months and ended up in an employment tribunal. Otaviano explains that his manager at work started picking on him, not recognising the efforts he was making. So, Otaviano decided that the best solution was to deliberately slow down his work, so he'd be fired and would receive his FGTS. It didn't take long to get a reaction: a three-day suspension.

– So I went to court and filed a complaint, right, I filed a complaint in court. Then he got angry and came to complain. So, he got angry, he came and called me I-don't-know-what, that I was a thief and whatever. So, he fired me without the right to anything. Nothing, just the hours I'd worked. Then I went to the trade union, I became a member of the union, I have my union card here, look. I joined the union as a member and they scheduled a hearing, they scheduled a hearing for me to go to and I'd pay the union monthly fee. Then They filed a lawsuit, they opened a case against the company. They summoned the owner to the Junta Seis, on Avenida Ipiranga.¹⁵⁷ So the owner went there, the owner there... they arranged for the owner to pay the hours I'd worked. He paid, and the law... that is, the court said I would receive it on October 11th. The card is there, they made a little card. That I would receive 450 bucks, only 450. This is the company's right, including the redundancy. That is to say, I don't have a profession, I earned a low wage, so

157 Translator's note: A major avenue in the historic centre of São Paulo.

that means the law isn't enough, you know, it's not enough. It's hardly anything. Seven months, they calculated the amount, it only came to 450 bucks.

Otaviano learned about how the union and the labour court work from his brother and colleagues who had been in São Paulo for longer. He explained that, hearing one thing here, another there, he remembered everything, and when he needed it, it worked. In the trade union itself he found out about medical services available for members and their families, a benefit that impressed him at least as much as the legal assistance he could receive on employment issues. But once he left the construction company, Otaviano went to work at a carwash station on Avenida Consolação, and he could no longer remain a member of the Construction Employees Union. Indeed, he wasn't even registered with his new company.

– They were stalling to register me, because they say that people didn't stay long, just a few days and then left, right? So, there was no point in registering with them. At another station where I worked, here on Avenida Morumbi, they were going to register me, but they wanted to... That is, the salary was 312 bucks, but they paid a little extra. But they only recorded that amount, the minimum wage. They had to record what we earned, so if we earned 400 bucks they'd have the obligation to register us with 400 bucks. But they just wanted to register us with the minimum wage, which is for the person... not to accrue much, you know. Because with the Guarantee Fund, if the person earns 400 bucks, that's going to yield more, you know, the INPS that we pay yields more. After I left that station I worked

for two weeks on a construction site there, but it didn't work out either. I only worked until five o'clock, on Saturdays only until four. But the salary was very low. So I went out to look for another one that paid more, that paid more so we could work some overtime, to make some more money. There's a job I'll do on Monday. It's in a warehouse, I'm going to work on the floor, in a car, packing things inside. Heavy work, they've said it's heavy work.

As he prepares to face heavy work again, Otaviano dreams of the North. Not of the small, dry patch of land that he had to leave, of course. In the same excitable way that he imagines himself as banker or shopworker in the big city, he pictures himself as a farmer in Jacobina.

– If God had given me the possibility of being a person who owned a little something, I'd want a little place of my own to live, I'd want to have my own land to work on, to have my own money to buy cattle, so I wouldn't owe anything to anyone. To buy some place, fence my land off and put cattle inside. And start raising livestock, breeding whatever, right? Buy a small barn, put it there, it would produce plenty to eat. Then later expand it. If I could set up something like that, I wouldn't stay here in São Paulo. It's not that it's a bad place, I like it here in São Paulo. The temperature, everything, I've got on well here. I like it here. That's to say, the problem here, the problem isn't in the land, it's me. I'm a person who doesn't have a profession, I can't earn, can't have a future. That is, the defect is in me, it's not in the land.

At the embankment, the movement of the trucks is intense

all week long. At times there are five or six almost at the edge of the shack. While the labourers unload the rubble, the drivers drink in Antônio Frota's tent. The "man in charge" is a big, stout man, the kind who looks out of place if he's not in a wrestling ring. It's curious how the presence of the voice recorder intimidates him, despite his aggressive manner. The information garnered from the guy who monitors the arrival of the trucks, is limited to identifying the name of the real estate agency. Then he tries to end the conversation. The person who might tell us more, he finishes, is Sergeant Angelim, whom he gets his orders from.

It's easy to find the sergeant. He has a tent similar to Antônio Frota's at the top of the hill, close to the first paved streets in Morumbi. Unlike the latter, he is extremely affable and talkative. He quickly explains that he is on leave from the Military Police due to ill health, and accepted the invitation of Mr. Ricardo, the manager of the real estate agency, to take charge of the landfill and of the favela residents. Apparently, Angelim sees positive social effects in the work he is doing. He says he worked on removal of the Vergueiro favela, helping the residents there, and earned everyone's friendship. In the buracão, he hopes to do the same.

– Mr. Ricardo thought that, as a police officer, I would be able to talk to people, and would have their respect, right? Because in a favela you can meet people, for example, uneducated people, you know, there are lots of crooks. But most are not, especially in this favela here, it's not that they're crooks. It's mainly poor people who are occupying the real estate company's land

to save on rent. So, I go up to them and say, “hey man, you need to move, the real estate agency needs the land to develop, this needs to be a more or less tidy area, a place for... yeah, for rich people, right”. There are some who have lived here a long time, I say, “oh, you’ve lived here a long time, now you need to help the real estate agency. If you need anything, even the truck can come and help you move “. As there are some asking for money to rent a shack, they say, “ok, at the end of the week I’ll move”, this is on a Wednesday, so on Saturday he would move. Well, it’s still there today. So, we need to have this patience, you know, until they move. There are two families that went North, I got them train tickets through social assistance at the city government. And I gave them money from my own pocket to get something to eat. That is, I gave it so to request afterwards from the real estate agency, but at the time I gave it out of my own pocket.

The sergeant’s serious face, the measured manner of an older man, lends a tone of sincerity to his words. He explains that he feels comfortable dealing with favela residents, as he was born and raised in poverty like them. And Mr. Ricardo is also a very kind-hearted man. Many families were already settling on the land anyway, but others came to ask him for permission, and he gave it. It’s a pity that now some of them are giving him trouble about leaving, without recognising what the real estate agency did for them.

At least, the information about the real estate agency could now be confirmed. Was it really the owner of the buracão? In a small office, in the city centre, the same Seu Ricardo described

by the sergeant – a nice old man, a little hard of hearing and suspicious – explained that the land had belonged to the firm for a long time. Perhaps its increase in value had been delayed by the proximity of the polluted waters of the Pinheiros River. Now they're going to subdivide it, and, according to the criteria of the current zoning law, it will be an area of large houses. The city government is not directly involved in removing the favela residents. It only assists by occasionally providing trucks for removals or train tickets.

Among the favela residents, however, there is complete confusion surrounding the identity of those responsible for the redevelopment. And it seems that the sergeant and Antônio Frota don't make any effort much to provide clarifications.

– Who owns the land? Nobody knows. The sergeant says it's the city government, someone else says it's the state government, another says it's the real estate agency. It's a complete muddle. One says one thing, another says another, no one's sure. The Sergeant can't explain it clearly, neither can Frota. I went to talk to the Sergeant, I told him about my illness and breathing difficulties, and that I've lived here for time, and that these falling stones could hurt a child. He agreed that could happen, but as it's not his, he's not responsible. It's not his, but it could do damage.

Cláudio talks and laughs, a loud, short laugh, almost a cry. His voice is very hoarse, and although he expresses himself with perfect clarity it is clear that he is mildly drunk. His story, which he hastened to tell even before being asked, is very different from those of the other favela residents. He was born in

São Paulo, 56 years ago. In his youth he knew better days: he was a professional footballer, a goalkeeper, he says he played for Palmeiras, for Guarani, for São Paulo de Araraquara, for the CMTC team.¹⁵⁸ As he speaks, he shows photographs where he appears alongside teammates in classic pre-match poses.

– Ah, this game here was Guarani vs Fluminense, at the Mogiana stadium.¹⁵⁹ When it was almost over, the referee was already looking at his watch... The fans were already leaving, the stadium was packed... When... Adilson played on the right wing for Fluminense, Adilson kicks it, centres the ball, and I gave away a penalty on Tiziano. Russo went up to take the penalty. Russo had a great shot, he was a good right midfielder for Fluminense. I was there, I picked up the ball and I gave it to Russo. The stadium went silent, naturally, right at the death. So he went outside the area, I said, “now a cannonball is coming, it won’t be soft”. He came running up, I pretend I’m going this way (he can’t move his foot), I pretend to go that way, he hits it here, and I go that way and catch the ball. Then the referee ended the game. See how lucky it was! I earned some good money from the game, which didn’t come easy.

Then I left the CMTC and ended up with this life. I started having breathing problems, I started working in the tiling busi-

158 Translator’s note: Except for Palmeiras, which is a major football club from São Paulo, all the others were smaller professional or amateur clubs in São Paulo state.

159 Translator’s note: Estádio Mogiana is the stadium of Guarani in the city of Campinas, São Paulo. Fluminense is a major club from Rio de Janeiro.

ness, as a tiler. Then I couldn't work anymore because I'd get dizzy, breathless when I worked. And the boss didn't want me to work anymore. He was right, because I'd get breathless and I'd fall. The boss fired me because the INPS said I was healthy, but even though they discharged I still wasn't well. They discharged me, I went back to the boss and said: "look, I can't do heavy work" The boss said: "then leave, you don't need to work anymore". That's it, he fired me, what am I going to do? He gave me compensation, he had to go to court to get me the compensation, it took a lot of work, a huge amount of work. And that's it, the breathing problems continued. And I was left in this misery here.

It's been four years since Cláudio came to live in the favela. For a year he paid rent, then he went to a small room that he acquired in exchange for a watch. Now his shack is already being hit by the stones that roll down and pile up against the back wall. Cláudio laments as he explains that he has no-one to help him. A son who works in a workshop in Brás sometimes gives him some spare change, but it's very little. He lives with his father-in-law, and he cannot, or doesn't want to, be joined in the house by his father. The INPS, meanwhile, told him that he no longer has the right to social security due to the time he has spent unemployed. On his work card, which he insists on showing, there is a sequence, with intervals, of six jobs between 1945 and 1970.

– And that's my life. I don't have money to move. If I had money, I'd build a shack somewhere and I'd stick myself inside it. Because it's impossible here, waiting for the bomb to ar-

rive. This morning a stone fell that almost destroyed the entire shack. Even the photograph of Palmeiras was broken, it was there, in a beautiful frame. The stone came down, fell. In three, four days this will be fully blocked, and where will Cláudio live? There's nowhere to live. Eating is my neighbourhood. Today I think I'm going without food, right? I don't see anyone, not even the smell of food. When I get the smell of food, I rush to it. Life is not easy.

The despair of goalkeeper Cláudio and the weariness of the old farmer Honório share something in common: in a way, both experience the end of a party that never happened. They are workers who no longer have the one thing they had throughout their lives: their labour power to sell. They created wealth, they planted, built, saved penalties. But none of this belongs to them. The projects of their lives have been exhausted. For them, no more future is being created. And there is also no anger. There is no feeling of unity, sense of similarity: the tragedies do not add together. There is no perception of differences, of opposites, of those who are opposed to each other: the tragedy is natural, it is like this because things have always been like this. And the encroaching embankment is just another fact of life among many others. This is why they don't see the violence in the stones that fall and bury their shacks. The violence lived and relived in the everyday life of work, both in the countryside and in the city, is impregnated into the very fact of existing. Hence their acceptance of the logic of things. Violence has won. It is not perceived. Consciousness is buried.

João and Otaviano make plans. To leave the favela. To get a driver's license or find a better job. They also have something in common: they have the vigour of youth. They have their bodies' energy to sell. They create wealth and procreate children who will produce the wealth of the future. For Otaviano, there is the dream of returning to the countryside as a farm owner. For João, the hope of conquering the city. Of course, both try will try to give their children the education they themselves did not receive. Both feel that things are not going as they should, that the situation cannot continue as it is. But they don't know where they are going. And one does not recognise the other in their similarities. Nor do they recognise the others, to whom they are opposed. There is no sense of the collective. The immediacy of solutions in the present reign over the future. Maybe that's because both share the feeling that their future is the present of Cláudio and Honório – labour power that is exhausted creating wealth that is not its own. Or is there another end, and another beginning, to this story of buried consciousness?



VIII

The conquest of space

Violence manifests in the everyday life of the working class through wage repression and intensified urban spoliation. To maintain these socio-economic conditions, the state has created a vast apparatus designed to suppress groupings opposed to the rules of a deeply exclusionary system. In this way, popular pressure has been blocked and workers have lost the ability to organise themselves into parties, unions or diverse kinds of association. After all, when they have sought to unite in defence of their interests, they have immediately been constrained or repressed.

In this socio-political context, social debate has been prohibited. The press has been censored, the legislative and the judiciary have become mere appendices of a centralised executive with the power to intervene in the most diverse spheres of society, and various groups and institutions have become objects of suspicion or persecution. In sum, to consolidate a model for the capture of surplus that benefits only a few, a broad purge has been carried out that constantly “cleanses” the

social groupings of elements considered dangerous or undesirable by a regime with clearly discriminatory features.

Thus, individual and collective protest has been muzzled and violence has spread across society as a whole. Its root lies in ensuring that the majority be transformed into a *pacified* and *passive* entity, regarded by the dominant ideology as incapable of making decisions and, therefore, condemned to amorphously receive the trajectories of a historic destiny without the possibility of participation. The ultimate purpose is to perpetuate the enormous inequalities that accompany the relations of appropriation of economic and socio-cultural assets generated by an evidently savage model of capitalist growth.

Surveillance hangs over many like a shadow. Censorship, denunciations and persecution have penetrated trade unions, schools, churches, political associations and, especially, workplaces. At the individual level, it has become risky to complain about or even discuss such matters. At the collective level, any attempt to create channels that seek to intervene in decision-making processes is extremely dangerous. In this way, the very idea of participation has acquired antagonistic associations for an authoritarian order built on an omnipresent conception of national security and which has imposed its stifling tutelage on civil society initiatives.

Acts and words, presences or silences, views and positions, affinities and enmities have been catalogued by a vast information system to monitor a huge number of individuals. Investigations and interrogations have appeared in the most varied of contexts. In this climate, shrouded by the hunt for suspects, in

which the dominance of a few could silence the majority, the best-case scenario was losing one's job for obscure ideological reasons, often due to denunciations made by relatives or colleagues. For many years, it was common for people to disappear, and imprisonment came to be seen as "benign" when it was merely accompanied by psychological and moral abuse.

An endless list of actions and thoughts was considered potentially insurrectionary by the ruling power and was therefore controlled or extirpated. The suspicion of subversion contaminated society as a whole to the extent that the madness of searching for it stemmed from the full discretion to, frequently and with impunity, kidnap, torture and murder.

Eyes and ears pried into every corner. As a result, fear contaminated the relationships between people, creating true "ghettos". Isolated from each other, they developed strategies of resistance as the only alternative for escaping the repression of a regime that, encased in its despotism, boasted a mirage of economic growth and hid its dire social consequences.

In such a conjuncture, economic demands and political participation have become impossible or ritualistic, as there no organised forces could take forward the fight in defence of collective interests.

Table 8 - Record Of Violence: Some Evidence¹⁶⁰

Type of violence	Period	Record
Killed by repression (1)	Since 1964	188 people
“Disappeared”: neither alive nor dead (1)	Since 1964	83 people
Killed under torture during interrogation (2)	1966-1973	81 people
Convicted by military court (3)	1965-1977	Over 5.000 people
Charged by military court (3)	1965-1977	Over 11.000 people
Stripped of political rights (4)	1964-1978	4.877 people
Convicted, prosecuted, indicted or imprisoned (5)	Since 1964	500.000 people

160 Sources: (1) Comitê Brasileiro pela Anistia – Rio, 18/04/1979; (2) Isto É magazine: Record of Repression n. 92, 27/09/1978; (3) Veja magazine, 01/03/1978; (4) Comitê Brasileiro pela Anistia – Bahia, 1, n. 1, 1978; (5) Comitê Brasileiro pela Anistia – Bahia, *idem*, estimate produced by the lawyer Antonio Modesto da Silveira; (6) 200,000 to 1 million informants: O Estado de São Paulo newspaper, 08/10/1977, based on an estimate published in Veja magazine; 500,000 to 1 million informants: O Trabalho newspaper, 20/03/79–03/04/79; (7) Jornal do Brasil newspaper, special issue: The Censorship Documents, 18/06/1978; (8) Movimento weekly magazine, 03/11/1978; (9) Isto É magazine, n. 122, of 26/04/1979; (10) Figueiredo, M. A., Government policy and union functions, Master’s Thesis, *mimeo*. P. 43; (11) Comitê de Apoio aos Demitidos; (12) Serra, José, Income becomes even more concentrated in the 70s, Ensaios de Opinião 8, Rio, 1978, p. 28, according to Table 2; (13) Based on calculations from footnote number 166, later in the chapter.

Professionals and volunteers linked to 16 information organs	Recent years	From 200.000/500.000 to 1.000.000 agents
Censorship orders issued by the government (7)	1972-1975	270 censorship themes
Censorship in the weekly paper “Movimento” (8)	7/1975 – 6/1978	4.500.000 words; 1.876 pages
Prohibited plays (9)	1964-1979	600 plays
Prohibited Songs (9)	1964-1979	1.000 Songs
Intervention in workers’ organisations (10)	1964-1970	536 unions, federations and confederations
Dismissal of workers, mainly metalworkers in the municipalities of São Paulo, Osasco and Guarulhos, participated in the strikes (11)	9/1978 – 1/1979	Over 2.000 workers
Income concentration: 80% poorest (12)	1960-1976	From 46% to 33% of income
20% richest (12)	1960-1976	From 54% to 67% of income
Infant mortality in the State of São Paulo: less than 1 year old (13)	1969-1973	Around 40.000 children lost their lives

Consciousness was buried. The rubble of the embankment covered everyone. Jardim Panorama favela reflects the violence prevailing across society. It is one of numerous examples of living and working conditions among those who, whether they

live in favelas or not, build wealth that they themselves cannot access. Jardim Panorama is one place, among many, where poverty becomes concentrated. And Cláudio is one person, among millions, who no longer has physical strength to sell on the labour market.

– After being a goalkeeper, I worked at CMTC, at SUDAN, at Brahma, in a charitable society, then I went to a personnel management company, and I ended up working at a construction company. I worked for 28 years. There's my worker's card. It's old, but it tells the story of what happened. I don't know what my life will be like. The stones are closing in and in three or four days this will be covered. I need support. But this support doesn't reach me.

Cláudio was alone, without support. Just like the others. But, because he had been a goalkeeper, who had saved penalties, his situation draws our attention more directly. What stands out is the defeat of workers who have been broken by the violence of a daily life, where the most basic rights do not exist. What also stands out is the impossibility of receiving support that is not merely fortuitous or occasional.

The alternative for solving Cláudio's problem would be to call the press: the former goalkeeper would tell his story, a report would be published, and someone might offer some help. But what about the other workers, just as worn out as he is? There was that one, in a nearby shack, who lost his arm in a machine. There are also all those, in and outside the favela, who are similarly being buried.

Between the impossibility of action that could have broader

meaning and support for just one person, it was decided not to notify the sporting press. Doing so before the magazine *Argumento* went to press would mean puncturing another argument: an appeal that could have broader repercussions than just helping one individual.

Argumento went to the newsstands in September.¹⁶¹ Some time later, Cláudio told *Placar* magazine:

I would be happy if I won a box of shoeshine... (...). Sometimes they ask if, rather than living in this situation, I wouldn't prefer to die. Even though it's bad, I prefer to live than die. I'd rather sleep on rocks than underneath them. They say death is rest. If it is I prefer to live tired.¹⁶²

His interview was published at the end of the year. São Paulo Atlético Club offered a box of shoeshine. They went to the favela to deliver it. Cláudio had died a few days earlier. Alone, at night, among the rocks.

It was early 1974. The violation of individual and collective rights had reached a frenzy. Wages were more depressed than ever. Propaganda sold images of success that hid the true reality. The lies of the statistics and achievements were grounded in the strength of a state that, up until that point, by co-opting some, benefiting a few and, above all, manipulating and containing the majority, had been able to declare an end to social conflict.

161 *Argumento* came out about a month after we carried out our interviews in Jardim Panorama.

162 Aquino, José Maria – Christmas Supper, *Placar*, special issue n. 198, 28/12/1973.

But divergences and antagonisms are part of the social dynamic, rich in oppositions that alternate in a complex interplay of forces that shape the contradictory movement of history.

It was clear that the political-institutional rules had become increasingly narrow and illegitimate. Gradually, tears began to appear in a regime whose fit was too tight to contain the energy of the multiple interests cast aside by an extremely wasteful form of economic growth.

In more recent times, embryonic forms of organisation in pursuit of struggle have begun to display relative vigour, both in expressing demands related to the world of work and for those addressing certain urban problems. At the urban level, associations have been formed that bring together everyone from residents of favelas or clandestine subdivisions to a vast and varied contingent of the popular sectors who, through neighbourhood groups, parishes or other forms of defence, are demanding better housing, transport, health or sanitary conditions. The pressure on government bodies to provide collective consumption services is nothing other than a form of struggle, which mobilises workers as residents who are exploited in relation to essential aspects of their reproduction.

But it is within the sphere of labour relations that the struggles have occurred with greatest force. After years of muzzled silence, a strike movement has resurfaced which, through successive waves, has brought thousands of workers to a standstill, even reaching some groups in the public and private service

sectors.¹⁶³

However, nothing could be falser than to assume that popular interests will be secured through entities controlled by the state, whose very purpose has been to channel those interests towards the decision-making centres precisely so as to contain them. The conquest of space depends on the capacity of diverse movements to detach themselves from the dominant spheres and achieve greater and more solid grounding in the grassroots who form the demand-making amalgamations. In this sense, we can highlight the struggles waged in many trade unions that seek to develop forms of action that escape paternalistic and manipulative practices by leaderships that have been imposed on them. On this point, exemplary cases include not only the 30,000 metalworkers in the city of São Paulo, who convened an assembly to decide on the activities of their union, thus openly defying the position of their leaders, but also workers' attempts to establish solid foundations for workers' associations through efforts to organise themselves into sections and create repre-

163 This text had already been written when the strikes broke out in March 1979. On several occasions, the assemblies brought together around 80,000 metalworkers from the ABCD region, clearly showing a new rigour in working-class organising and placing demands. For several days, under the blows of batons, bombs and arrests, the workers resisted the most wide-ranging forms of pressure and repression. Civil mobilisation in support of the strike movement also stands out, revealing a previously non-existent capacity for amalgamation. On the other hand, however, the intervention that ousted the leaders shows not only that the government and businesspeople have significant power to contain and repress the labour movement, but also that the authoritarian and intransigent stance still prevails in the response to social conflicts.

sentative committees in each company.

Rallies, marches, demonstrations, assemblies, study circles have taken over the streets and squares, and also penetrated many spaces where the right to discuss and decide has not been exercised for a long time. Still limited are broader debates on the right to strike, trade union structure, centralised workers' congresses, amnesty, individual and collective freedoms, the right to organise parties, direct elections, a constitutional assembly. It is clear that economic and social benefits, beginning with wage levels, depend on political space that the diverse sectors of civil society – particularly the groupings that bring together the interests of the working classes – are able to conquer, not only through elections, but above all through struggle that unfolds in the workplace and the neighbourhood. In other words, what has been called civil disobedience is nothing more than a practice that seeks to win rights, ranging from strikes to urban demands, from amnesty to freedom of organisation, which concretely raises the question of Democracy, not only political but also social and economic.

Thus, at the end of the decade, a more vigorous process of amalgamation has emerged that is not restricted to students, artists, intellectuals or professional groups, but encompasses broader and more significant social sectors, thus reflecting consciousness of the problems of work and of the city that seem to refuse the styles of struggle that predominated in Brazil in previous decades. On one hand, it embodies an effort at extrication from the state's institutional apparatus, seeking establish trade unions, parties or other organisational structures that can

be untangled from the constraints of the power established by the 1964 coup. On the other hand, it embodies the discrediting of the forms of co-optation characteristic of the populist period. This is due to disbelief in a process of participation whose results were more symbolic and imaginary than effective and real, insofar as they were characterised by intense manipulation of the popular classes to whom a supposedly redistributive model of development had been promised.

In the current conjuncture, besides the trade unions and the popular grassroots associations that constitute the vital poles of representation and demand-making, some groups present in institutions fundamental to the democratisation process, including the legislative and judiciary, the press, the universities, and scientific and cultural bodies, are focused on creating space for struggle. They seek to develop actions of initiative and control over the executive, in defence of citizens, of denunciation and information, of critical learning and intellectual debate, of rethinking the meaning and significance of knowledge and art – fundamental processes for catalysing the exercise of a citizenship that has been decimated in various essential dimensions of individual and collective life.

Despite the reinvigoration of civil society, the working classes continue to be excluded from basic socio-economic benefits. With respect to the process of structuring and expanding the city, a true “primitive accumulation” urban land persists, a kind of modern version of the “enclosure” of space. It arises from speculative and predatory real estate appropriation that entails the “expropriation” for those who lack resources – not only

economic but also political – to establish themselves in the better-served areas and which leads to expulsion to the distant and undeveloped peripheries of the metropolis.

In addition to urban spoliation, a violent process of income concentration towards the wealthiest 20% continues, which did not only prevailed between 1960 and 1970, but became even more intense up to 1976.

Table 9 - Brazil: The Process Of Income Concentration (%)

Bands	Years		
	160	1970	1976
50% poorest	17.7	14.9	11.8
Next 30%	27.9	22.9	21.2
Next 15%	26.7	27.4	28.0
Richest 5%	27.7	34.8	39.0

Source: Serra, José – Income becomes more concentrated in the 70s, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

The minimum wage – the income earned by a large proportion of workers and which establishes a standard that impacts the earnings of the wider workforce – remains extremely low. In this sense, it is enough to point out that half the population of Greater São Paulo earns a monthly family income of three minimum wages and 70% earn less than five minimum wages per month.¹⁶⁴ We should add that, if the minimum wage had increased in proportion to the cost of living between 1940 and

164 Source: *Pesquisa Origem/Destino, op. cit.*

1977 and reflected the rate of economic growth in the country, it should be set at just over 10,000 cruzeiros, that is, nine times more than the negligible figure of 1,106.¹⁶⁵

Just focussing on its most obvious and drastic manifestations, such wage repression entails more working time to ensure that basic consumption needs are met.¹⁶⁶ It also manifests in rates of infant mortality, which, despite having decreased since 1974, remain at higher levels today than in 1965, the year in which a draconian policy of wage restraint was implemented by the authoritarian regime that had recently come to power.¹⁶⁷

165 According to: DIEESE - "*Minimum Wage*", *op. cit.* P. 11.

166 As shown in Table 2, workers earning one minimum wage in 1978 had to work twice as hard as in 1959 to buy the same amount of food.

167 These data refer to the municipality of São Paulo. Similar results can be seen for the São Paulo Metropolitan Region and the wider state, where after a sharp increase, infant mortality began to decline after 1974. Based on these facts, the state government claims that, between 1975-1977, 10,000 children's lives were saved. Without denying the positive side of these results, we must note that the statement obscures the fact that the decline is based on a comparison with the immediately preceding period, when infant mortality was extremely high, having reached unprecedented rates, as shown in Graph 2. As is well known, it had been declining for several decades, basically from 1940 onwards, and that this trend was reversed in 1966, intensifying during the period 1969-1973. If we compare this five-year period with the five years prior to 1969, we can affirm that at the time of the so-called Brazilian miracle, around 40,000 infants in São Paulo lost their lives. On the other hand, if we take the average infant mortality rate of the Brazilian state capitals, the sharp increase has continued in recent years. In 1968, it went from 81 per 1,000 live births and evolved as follows over the subsequent years: 86, 87, 91, 86, 89, 87, 97 and 94 in 1976. This is according to: DNC/SNAPS-Ministério da Saúde, in Folha de S. Paulo,

Table 10 - Deterioration Of The Real Minimum Wage, Increase In The Work Time Required To Obtain The Minimum Food Consumption, And Infant Mortality - Municipality Of São Paulo

Years	Minimum wage (Real value)	Minimum wage (Index)	Working time needed for minimum food consumption (Hours)	Working time needed for minimum food consumption (Index)	Infant mortality (Rate per 1000 live births)
1959	2723.41	100	65h 5m	100	65
1960	2286.80	84	81h 30m	125	63
1961	2542.74	93	71h 54m	110	60
1962	2321.46*	85	94h 48m	146	64
1963	2043.24	75	98h 20m	151	70
1964	2108.78	77	95h 16m	146	68
1965	2025.12	74	88h 16m	134	69
1966	1733.45	64	109h 15m	168	74
1967	1642.80	60	105h 16m	162	74
1968	1605.01	59	101h 35m	156	77
1969	1544.46	57	110h 23m	170	84
1970	1571.63	58	105h 13m	162	90
1971	1504.12	55	111h 47m	172	94
1972	1477.12	54	119h 08m	183	93
1973	1353.63	50	147h 04m	226	94
1974	1242.22	46	163h 32m	251	86**
1975	1297.96	48	149h 40m	230	87**
1976	1289.01	47	157h 29m	242	81**
1977	1343.46	49	141h 49m	218	71**
1978	1383.76	50	137h 37m	211	-

SOURCE: DIEESE - Minimum Wage, Disclosure 1/78, mimeo.

* From 1962 onwards figures include the 13th month payments¹⁶⁸

** Preliminary Data

168 Translator's note: The 13th month is an annual bonus worth one monthly wage, created in 1962.

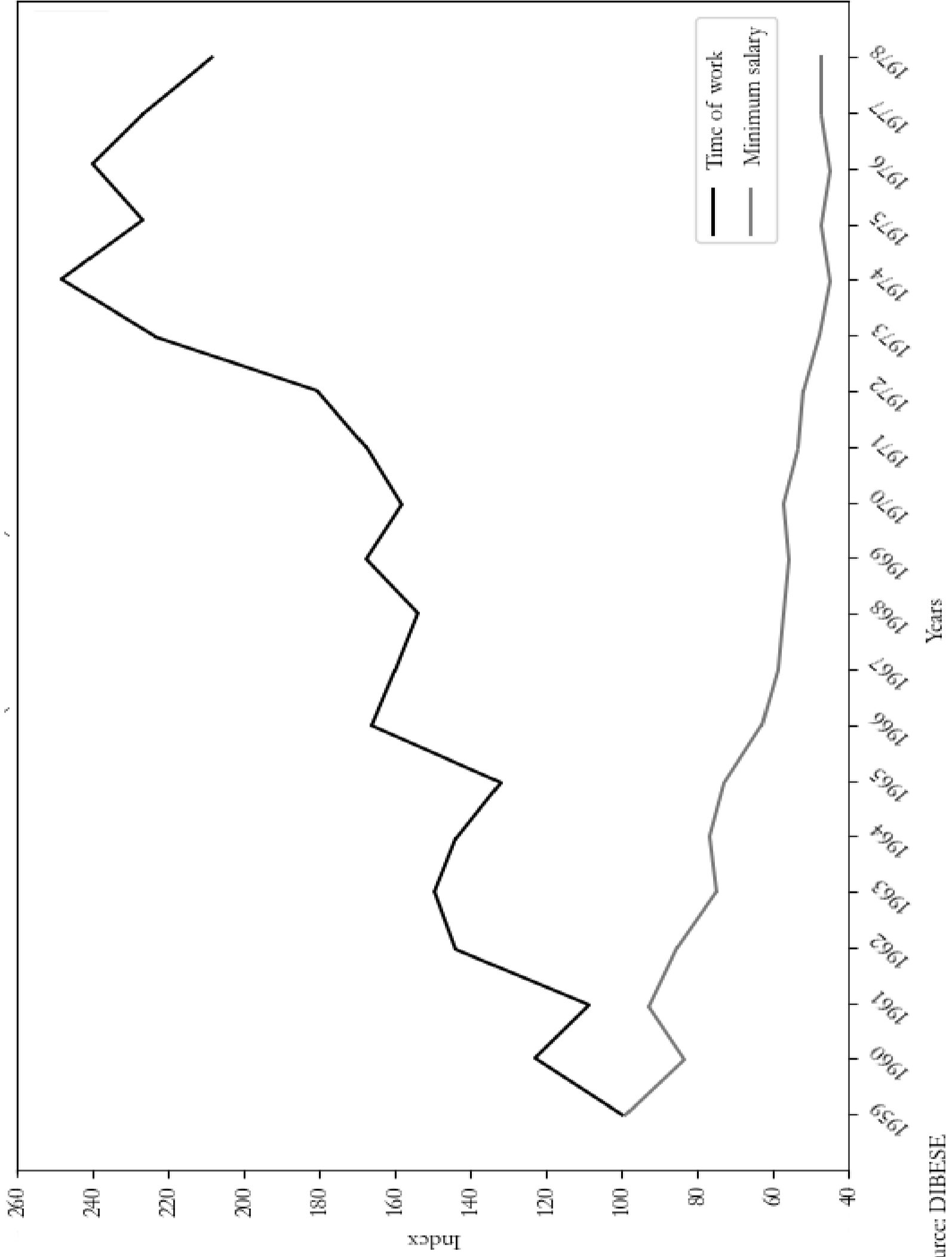
Working time: Hours spent by a minimum wage worker to feed a family consisting of a couple and two children.

Minimum food intake: 13 types of basic food.

Just focussing on its most obvious and drastic manifestations, such wage repression entails more working time to ensure that basic consumption needs are met.¹ It also manifests in rates of infant mortality, which, despite having decreased since 1974, remain at higher levels today than in 1965, the year in which a draconian policy of wage restraint was implemented by the authoritarian regime that had recently come to power.²

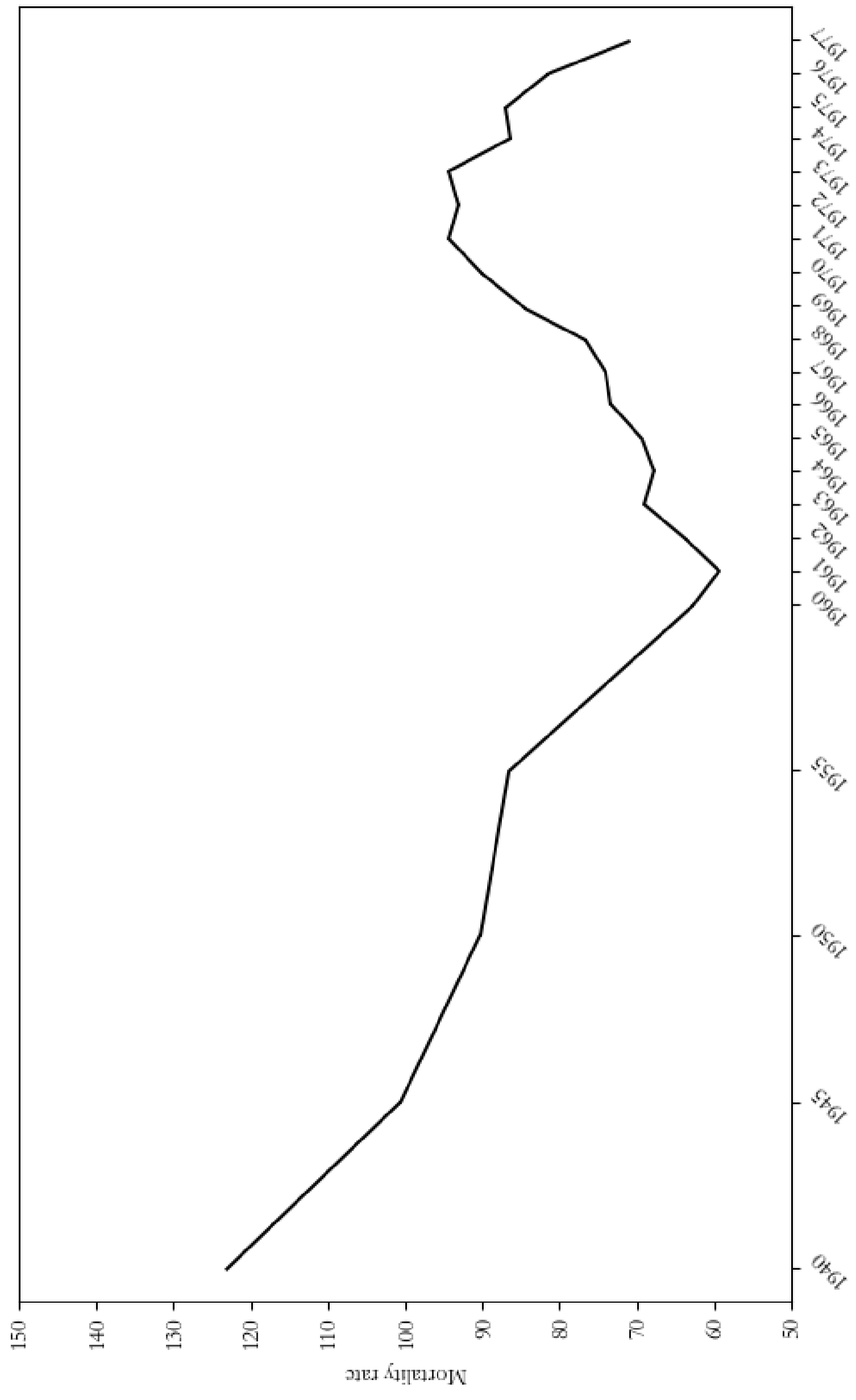
These and other data highlighted in the previous chapters demonstrate the high degree of depletion to which most workers have been subjected. The conquest of greater space does not come from donations from the power holders, but from the ability to struggle and organise. The legacy of so many years of violence can be seen in the posture adopted by dominant groups, translating into clearly authoritarian methods of mediating conflicts and confronting the so-called social question. The political stance that seeks to establish public order through a phalanx of centurions, and which mobilises the substantial resources of state-owned companies through technocratic management, which regards popular involvement in decision-making processes as inopportune and destructive.

Graph 1 - Evolution of real minimum salary and time of work necessary for purchasing a basic food ration (1959 Index=100)



Source: DIBESE

Graph 2 - Municipality of São Paulo: Evolution of the infant mortality rate per 100 live births



Source: Statistics Department for the State of São Paulo

The conception that views the people as childish and immature, and therefore unable to participate in decision making, is rooted directly in the dominant ideology. It sustains practices based on manipulation and control, if not open repression, which regards the popular sectors as an object of political action and which only serves to perpetuate the violence suffered by workers in their everyday lives.

The dominant groups fear collective processes, due to their need to prevent unity and solidarity among workers. After all, the opening of such spaces will necessarily mean the reversal of the historically concentrated inequalities that benefit a tiny minority.

The conquest of space presupposes debate and confrontation, collective organisation and demands, which constitute the raw material from which a truly democratic future, with relativisms, must be built. The construction of a democratic project implies political practice that trusts in the capacity of the subaltern classes to shape their historical destiny and open up necessarily conflictual paths, carved by vigorous and autonomous processes of participation and demand making in relation to the centres of power. These transformations will no longer have a merely reformist meaning if, through these confrontations, political parties are created that can amalgamate social forces and give class content and dimensions to the struggles that will be fought as a result of oppositions that the capitalist system is not able to overcome.

