

Analysis of the Interests, Conflicts and Power Resources in the Urban Development in the Megacity of Sao Paulo

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Abstract : Urban planning is a relevant tool to address, in a systemic way, several sectoral policies capable of linking the urban agenda with the reduction of socio-environmental risks. The Sao Paulo's master plan (2014) presents innovations capable of promoting the transition to sustainability in the urban space, with a view to its regulatory instruments related to i) promotion of density in the axes of mass transport involving the mixture of commercial, residential, services, and leisure uses (principles related to the compact city); ii) vulnerabilities reduction based on housing policies including regular sources of funds for social housing and land reservation in urbanized areas; iii) reserve of green areas in the city to create parks and environmental regulations for new buildings focused on reducing the effects of heat island and improving urban drainage. However, its long-term implementation involves distributive conflicts and can undergo changes in different political, economic, and social contexts over time. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to identify and analyze the dynamics of conflicts of interest between social groups in the implementation of Sao Paulo's urban development policy, particularly in relation to recent attempts at a (re) interpretation of the Master Plan guidelines, in view of the proposals for revision of the urban zoning law. In this sense, we seek to identify the demands, narratives of urban actors, including the real estate market, middle-class neighborhood associations ('not in my backyard' movements), and social housing rights movements. And we seek to analyze the power resources that these actors mobilize to influence the decision-making process, involving five categories: social capital, political access; discursive resource; media, juridical resource. The major findings of this research suggest that the interests and demands of the real estate market do not always prevail in urban regulation. After all, other actors also press for the definition of urban law with interests opposite to those of the real estate market. This is the case of associations of middle-class neighborhoods, which work to protect the characteristics of the locality, acting, in general, to prevent constructive and population densification in neighborhoods well located near the center, in São Paulo. One of the main demands of these "not in my backyard" movements is the delimitation of exclusively residential areas in the central region of the city, which is not only contrary to the interests of the real state market but also contrary to the principles of the compact city. On the other hand, social housing rights movements have also made progress in delimiting special areas of social interest in well-located and valued areas in the city dedicated to building social housing, also contrary to the interests of the real estate market. An urban development that follows the principles of the compact city must take into account the insertion of low-income populations in well-located regions; otherwise, such a development model may continue to push the less favored to the peripheries towards the preservation areas and/or risk areas.

Keywords : interest groups, Sao Paulo, sustainable urban development, urban policies implementation

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