

Mapping Actors in Sao Paulo's Urban Development Policies: Interests at Stake in the Challenge to Sustainability

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Abstract : In the context of global climate change, extreme weather events are increasingly intense and frequent, challenging the adaptability of urban space. In this sense, urban planning is a relevant instrument for addressing, in a systemic manner, various sectoral policies capable of linking the urban agenda to the reduction of social and environmental risks. The Master Plan of the Municipality of Sao Paulo, 2014, presents innovations capable of promoting the transition to sustainability in the urban space. Among such innovations, the following stand out: i) promotion of density in the axes of mass transport involving 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, long-term implementation involves distributive conflicts and may change in different political, economic, and social contexts over time. Thus, the central objective of this paper is to identify which factors limit or support the implementation of these policies. That is, to map the challenges and interests of converging and/or divergent urban actors in the sustainable urban development agenda and what resources they mobilize to support or limit these actions in the city of Sao Paulo. Recent proposals to amend the urban zoning law undermine the implementation of the Master Plan guidelines. In this context, three interest groups with different views of the city come into dispute: the real estate market, upper middle class neighborhood associations ('not in my backyard' movements), and social housing rights movements. This paper surveys the different interests and visions of these groups taking into account their convergences, or not, with the principles of sustainable urban development. This approach seeks to fill a gap in the international literature on the causes that underpin or hinder the continued implementation of policies aimed at the transition to urban sustainability in the medium and long term.

Keywords : adaptation, ecosystem-based adaptation, interest groups, urban planning, urban transition to sustainability

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