

One out of 6 'paulistanos' is a slum dweller *Estado de São Paulo, Sunday 15 July 2007*

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One out of every six 'paulistanos' (inhabitants of the city of São Paulo) lives in a slum. Of the total number of slum dwellers, 400,000 families (representing between 1.6 million and 2 million individuals) occupy 30 square kilometres of substandard housing comprising a total of 1,538 'settlements'. This population is comparable in size to that of the city of Curitiba (State of Paraná) with its 1.78 million people. Four years ago, when the most recent study on the subject was carried out, 290,000 families (amounting to about 1.3 million people) were found to be living in slums in São Paulo.

The explanation for the increase of 30 percent of this population, according to specialists, is not increasing poverty but mainly the vegetative growth of this particular population. One curious aspect of the phenomenon is that the actual ground area occupied by slums continues to be practically the same, but the slums have become more densely occupied and the buildings more "vertical".

These conclusions are part of an unprecedented study carried out by the São Paulo Prefecture (local municipal government) in partnership with the international organisation Cities Alliance, financed by the World Bank. The findings of this study, to which *O Estado de São Paulo* has had exclusive access, will serve to guide the city's urban development policies regarding slums over the next few years. From December 2007 onwards this data will also be freely available on the Internet.

Previous research on slums in São Paulo was undertaken by the Metropolis Studies Center - the *Centro de Estudos da Metrópole* (CEM) - four years ago. Among the study's findings was the fact that these slum settlements occupied 2 percent of the entire city area of 1,500 km².

Using as a basis the 1987 Slum Census, the CEM survey noted the existence of 2018 settlements. The São Paulo Popular Housing Superintendent, architect Elisabete França, responsible for the newest study, believes that despite the studies having each employed different methods, a high probability exists of their findings both being correct and on target. One of the questions raised by Elisabete is whether 'conurbation' has taken place in the intervening four years—in other words, whether small groups of slum dwellings have coalesced to form larger complexes (hence the fewer number of settlements recorded in the latest survey).

São Paulo's slums have already been the target of a number of studies. However, the main difference between the present study and others is that most of the latter were not based on real field work in the slums. According to Elisabete, this most recent study took a different line, with the Prefecture contracting the Seade Foundation to verify *in loco* the current situation lived by the slum population.

The findings of the study on the living conditions of the slum population were calculated on a comparative scale of 'zero to 10' in order to arrive at a classification of infrastructure conditions within the settlements - from electricity distribution to garbage collection. Data on issues such as social vulnerability, health and average family incomes have been cross-referenced with geological maps of the areas concerned. Once this task is finished, a complete set of data on each of the capital's slum settlements will be made available, together with aerial photographs and maps.

The study includes mapping of the 1,856 clandestine settlements in the city, but final accurate data on the population of these irregular developments is still awaited. The most detailed part of the research is being undertaken by the Seade Foundation and the relevant figures are still being calculated.

Living with heavy traffic on the accessways to the marginal highways

On the 'risk scale' of zero to ten, contained in the latest study, some slums can be seen to be at great risk. The lowest mark on this scale represents a highly precarious situation and the highest mark (achieved by none of the slums) indicates the optimum situation.

One of the favorite targets for land invasions in São Paulo which eventually house new slum settlements are the undersides of the bridges along the 'marginal highways' and the areas of land adjacent to the accessways to these major roads. According to the new study, 19 slum settlements exist under the bridges of the Tietê and Pinheiros highways, although it is worth noting that some of the settlements have been dismantled and reappeared - such as the one at the Julio de Mesquita Neto Bridge in the city's North Zone which has been removed and reoccupied twice.

"Not all slums are the same; each slum is really a neighborhood with its own culture and history", according to Elisabete França, the architect and São Paulo's Popular Housing Superintendent in charge of the latest research.

According to Elisabete França, the study's greatest achievement was the opportunity to reassess the concept of 'risk area' and to change the order of priorities of the urbanisation programmes concerned with São Paulo's slums. Since 2002, the city government has adopted a Term of Conduct Adjustment (TAC) signed with the State Public Ministry (MPE) which puts the settlements that are at the greatest risk of being affected by landslides at the top of the list eligible for remedial civil works.

It was precisely in this way that the Nova Jaguaré and Morro do Sabão settlements in the West Zone began to be urbanised four years ago. However, the risks faced by people living in slums are not confined to landslides. In the case, for example, of the settlements under and near the *marginais* there is an ever-present risk of people being run over by vehicles or suffering from high pollution levels.

Pedro Costa, 71 years old and retired, lives in a small brick-built dwelling under the Anhangüera Bridge in close proximity to the hundreds of trucks using the Tietê marginal highway. He says that he inherited his home from his father-in-law Joaquim Alves Pereira, who lived in it for 27 years until he was knocked down on the bridge at the age of 92. He says "I used to live in Medicilândia, in the state of Pará, until I came to live in this place". Despite the noise which leaves a buzzing sensation in his head at bedtime, Pedro Costa nevertheless

claims that he prefers the noise of the trucks on the bridge to the poverty of the small village where he used to live. "This is much better. I can get medicines straight from the local health post and there is even a school for the kids (3 grandsons that he is raising—Hércules (9), Vanderson (8) and Sandro (7). The slum where Costa lives is in the 'high risk' category, but from an infrastructure point of view it is not too bad.

Some slums exist that benefit from garbage collection, officially-supplied electricity and water (by SABESP in the latter case - see chart), while others do not possess even access to a rogue lighting connection. "Paraisópolis in the South Zone is an example of a sustainable part of the city. Everyone there walks to work," according to Elisabete França.

CITIES ALLIANCE

Cities Alliance provided the funds for mapping the slums existing within the area covered by the Prefecture of São Paulo. Cities Alliance is an international organisation consisting of 24 members, including foreign governments such as those of Italy and Germany and other organisations including the World Bank and UN-Habitat. The organisation possesses its own resources fund which depends on donations. In addition to its partnership with the capital of São Paulo State, Cities Alliance is also working in Minas Gerais and Bahia, mainly on urban development in slum areas.

RANKING

Largest slum: Heliópolis, in Sacomã (South Zone of São Paulo) is the city's largest slum, containing around 20,000 households.

Smallest slum: Favela Barzan, in Santana (North Zone) has only one household.

The best structured slum: Favela Mariliza, in Pirituba (West Zone) that even benefits from garbage collection.

The most precarious slum: Favela Haddad, in Lapa (West Zone) that has neither piped water nor electricity.

The richest slum: Jardim Colombo, in Morumbi (South Zone). Has heads of household earning up to R\$1,000 a month.

University student discovered "only recently" that she lives in a slum

The development assistant Daniela Elídio, 20 years old, works at Unilever and studies publicity at the Universidade Sant'Anna. She lives in a slum located on the accessway to the Anhangüera Bridge in the West Zone of São Paulo. She tells how she was born and bred in the slum called *Ilha Verde* (Green Island), but that she realised only quite recently that this place was in fact a slum.

"It was my first year at secondary school. I invited some school friends home so that we could do our homework together. I waited for them all day but none of them turned up. I was

told later that their parents had stopped them from coming here", Daniela recounts with no trace of sadness.

She says that she would be much sadder if she had to leave the slum. *Ilha Verde* is being dismantled by the local government authorities because major works are scheduled for the bridge, including the building of a viaduct linking the Anhangüera with Lapa. Half of the *Ilha Verde*'s 300 families have already left. They were presented with a number of different options, including the chance to live in apartment blocks built by the City Housing and Urban Development Company (CDHU) in José Bonifácio in the East Zone.

The oldest residents in *Ilha Verde* like Daniela's family were presented with the option of going to live in the nearest apartments in Jaraguá in the West Zone but, according to Daniela, "That is not the same. Here we are near to everything. We're on the marginal highway and the bus stops at our door".

She goes on to say that she hates it when friends tell her that the work to be done on the viaduct will make the slum much prettier. "Their comments don't bother me too much but it's not pleasant to hear them. Most people think that our slum is dirty and they want to prettify everything with green lawns and so on... but for me who was born and grew up here, *Ilha Verde* is already a nice place".

Inside the slum, with its main street and very few narrow alleyways, an extension of the São Domingo Parish Church exists, with a well cared-for community meeting place with a pulpit and wooden pews, where most of the children in *Ilha Verde* received their First Communion, including Daniela.

All the dwellings are brick-built, with the majority of them plastered and painted in bright colours such as lemon green and peach. Daniela's mother, Cezarina Elídio, 48 years old, came from Minas Gerais directly to *Ilha Verde* 31 years ago, and complains that the local authorities are bringing pressure to bear on residents to make up their minds to accept one of the different housing options open to them.

"This is a really difficult decision", says Cezarina, "it means that we shall have to leave behind everything that we have built here in order to start from zero in a CDHU apartment... paying for everything with no discounts". The Prefecture has responded by claiming that none of the residents are being pressured.