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## ***Anthropologies of the Urban Periphery: Salvador, Bahia***

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## **Abstract**

Brazilian slums and squatter settlements have acquired a generally unattractive public image that often obscures differences between peripheral urban situations. Based on research in a socially stigmatised neighbourhood of the city of Salvador, Bahia, this paper begins with a broad structural view of the processes that have shaped the situations of its poor residents, from the conservative modernisation led by the Bahian strongman and protégé of the military, Antônio Carlos Magalhães, to a multi-cultural present of anti-poverty and Afro-Brazilian empowerment initiatives, NGO interventions, and private-public partnerships. It then illustrates a range of variables that influence the ability of poor communities to counteract tendencies towards social and political fragmentation. It highlights the need to consider the particular histories of poor neighbourhoods, their differing relations with richer surrounding areas, their internal divisions and the way these reflect links with broader social, political and religious forces, and the social networks between different poor neighbourhoods that the poor themselves construct as they pursue strategies to maintain livelihoods and acquire assets. Consideration of the processes involved suggests a need to question conventional accounts of social segregation in Salvador and indicates ways in which more rounded ethnographic perspectives on how people live their lives help us to understand their greater or lesser capacity for collective action and why, in some cases but not others, residents are still trying to build 'places' that conform to their long-term aspirations to live better.

## **Keywords:**

Urban development, Housing policies, Brazilian politics, Community organisations, Social networks, NGOs

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## Introduction

In this paper we use the case of Bairro da Paz, an irregular settlement in the predominantly Afro-Brazilian city of Salvador, Bahia, occupied by around 60,000 residents in 2008, to reflect on the changing spatial, social, political and symbolic meanings of 'peripheral urban social situations' and the social heterogeneity of the *favela* zones of Brazilian cities. Since *favelas* are generally places that are socially stigmatised by other urban residents – even if some become especially strongly stigmatised, in terms of associations with crime and violence in particular – it remains easy to overlook significant differences in the internal social and political organisation of different *favelas* (within the same city and comparing different metropolitan cities), along with social and economic differentiation amongst the families who live in such settlements.

Yet particular irregular settlements develop in different historical contexts and distinct circumstances in different zones of cities undergoing broader economic and social transformations. The individuals and families who come to live in these spaces of irregular settlement have different origins and different motives for locating in a particular place. Furthermore, at any particular moment, family members may be found living in different areas of the city, and extended families may disperse and later regroup as they attempt to maximise their long-term opportunities for work, housing and access to urban services, and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. It therefore seems vital to use ethnographic methods to understand the movements of poorer people within cities as the result of particular strategies that correspond to particular family circumstances.

The residents of *favelas* are, however, also engaged in more collective social acts of 'place making' that shape the social environment in which residents live, through community organisations, churches and other kinds of associations that have a positive influence on the quality of life in the community. There are, of course, forms of association in slums that have at best ambiguous and at worst highly negative consequences in this respect, notably those associated with youth gangs and drug trafficking. Other kinds of associations and networks, such as those based on religion, may have positive social value for those they include, but also become a source of tension between residents who hold different beliefs. An example is the case of neo-Pentecostal churches, such as the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, which build their liturgical practices around the exorcism of what they present as the malignant spiritual forces of Candomblé. Some sources of social differentiation within *favelas* will be individual, idiosyncratic and contingent, but it also seems important to look at broader structural factors that condition these processes and contribute to the production of variation between 'peripheral urban situations' in time and in space. Yet it remains vital to look ethnographically at how conflicts and divisions are handled at community level in

different cases. To the extent that individual residents or groups of residents are 'captured' by political and religious networks operating on a much larger scale, some of the sources of conflict and division within slum communities appear to be external to them, but their impact in a particular case is likely to be mediated by the evolving politics of everyday life and sociality within the community itself. We need to be attentive both to the specific social contexts of individual low-income communities and to the broader factors that help us to explain why those contexts differ.

Variations in 'peripheral urban social situations', along with an understanding of the social logics that underlie the way that poor people use and move through urban space, are likely to be relevant to the formulation of public policies in two respects: one is the determination of residents' 'needs' and appropriate responses on the part of governmental and non-governmental bodies; but the other, more political dimension, relates to the facilitation of the residents' capacities for active participation in the process of building a more equitable society and transcending their currently stigmatised status. Our research in Bairro da Paz aims to make a contribution in both of these areas, by providing detailed ethnographic data on family social and livelihood strategies and inter-household networks, on the one hand, and by providing logistical support and advice to grassroots initiatives designed to give greater substance to 'participatory' models of urban development. It seems essential that government and NGO interventions become more informed both by social research and by attention to community voices. The 'social problems' that long made irregular settlements targets for interventions have multiplied, in part because of the growth of new sensitivities, from above but also from below, about issues such as domestic violence. In accordance with neoliberal logics, such interventions are increasingly targeted at individual families whose needs and worthiness of support are assessed through monitoring and bureaucratic surveillance by governmental agencies or through NGO-government partnerships. Yet not all the interventions from above have proved welcome, let alone effective: those focused on the rights of children and what middle class people defined as 'the problem' of child labour have proved deeply contentious, for example, despite a general desire on the part of parents to improve the access of their children to education (and keep them away from gangs, an objective to which engagement in paid work is seen as making an important contribution).

Yet academic research in and on poor communities is in danger of becoming blinkered if it is only focused on improving 'interventions'. Poor people do, after all, have lives whose contents transcend their condition of poverty and the quality of those lives should actually be integral to the debate about what poverty means. In this paper we argue that the subjective experience of being poor is not identical in each and every one of Salvador's slums, and that we are in danger of missing crucial variables if we do not consider why that is so. We also need a better understanding of how differences in social conditions and organisation, along with different histories of slum formation and

settlement, affect the capacity of what are generally internally contentious communities to come together sufficiently to engage with greater or lesser success in a contentious politics with NGO patrons, state agencies and politicians.

Our principal study community, Bairro da Paz, is a relatively recent settlement, established from 1982 onwards by invasions of what was then still an unoccupied forested zone along the main road leading to the city's airport. Since the first invaders moved in during the time of Britain's conflict with Argentina in the South Atlantic, and resisted violent police actions to evict them from the land, they called their community 'the Malvinas'. Although invasions have a longer history in Salvador, for reasons explored in more detail in the next section of this paper, the 1980s saw an intensified wave of illegal occupations, now occurring in virtually any vacant space available for settlement (Gordilho Souza, 2000: 145–146). The Malvinas invaders received the support of the *Movimento de Defesa dos Favelados* and the radical Catholic *Centro de Estudos e Acção Social* (CEAS). The municipal and state governments, however, continued to pursue an eviction strategy, until the first democratic elections since military rule produced a short-lived conquest of the state governorship by more left-leaning forces under Waldir Pires in 1987. At this point the negotiations that enabled the invaders to stay led to their neighbourhood being renamed Bairro da Paz.

Before 1987, invaders were sometimes offered relocation, generally to the public housing lots that the municipal government had been developing since the end of the 1960s. An offer of this kind was made to the Malvinas invaders in 1983, discussed in more detail below. Relocation did not necessarily offer a more attractive option for the longer term. The public lots tended to be located in zones that were peripheral to middle and upper class neighbourhoods of the city, and were generally densely occupied: houses had to be expanded upwards, were sometimes in a precarious condition, and illegal constructions invaded free public spaces (Gordilho 2000: 148). As de Almeida, D'Andrea and De Lucca (2008) show for the case of Cidade Tiradentes in São Paulo, public housing complexes constructed to re-house *favelados* removed from other parts of the city in areas that are spatially distant from more central areas and sources of employment often come to be seen as 'depósitos de gente' (people dumps), socially stigmatised as an option of last resort for people whose economic circumstances have become so dire that they can no longer get by anywhere else. Furthermore, as in Salvador, even where the original scheme was designed to create a fully 'legalised' residential situation, the arrival of new residents and further unauthorised building and house occupation creates major pockets of 'illegality' that undermine the state's efforts to exercise its powers to regulate low-income populations and make them 'legible' to government (Scott, 1998), even within these supposedly 'planned' developments.

Bairro da Paz was born in illegality and, as we will see later, even today remains a settlement in which the property rights of some residents remain insecure and vaguely

defined. Yet living there does offer some apparent advantages in comparison with other poor neighbourhoods of the city. In 1991, as a result of the community's Residents' Association having agreed to assist in the limitation of the numbers of new settlers in return for the Prefecture's agreement to allow the community to remain and regularise its situation, those who had stayed in Bairro da Paz were still living in a community with a population density of still only 200 inhabitants a hectare. This was far below that of zones invaded in the 1940s or 1950s and other established working class areas of the city, and compared with a city average of between 300 and 599 inhabitants per hectare, including open and public spaces (Gordilho, 2000: 148). Those who stayed also faced a different longer-term scenario from those who accepted resettlement, since this once 'peripheral' area was becoming increasingly 'central' in an increasingly 'polycentric' metropolitan city. Even if their richer neighbours still place the residents of Bairro da Paz at the bottom of the local social hierarchy, the relationships between different social groups and institutions have developed in recent years on lines that are not easily captured by models that simply emphasise the spatial and social 'segregation' of the poor of the kind offered, for example, by Moreira de Carvalho and Corso Pereira (2006) in a recent mapping of the spatial distribution of the city's residents by educational, occupational and household income differentials.

This is not to suggest that we should ignore the structural power relations that are central to socio-spatial patterns of urbanisation, the reproduction of inequalities, and indeed, to the politics of the processes which strengthen or inhibit the efforts of poor citizens to claim 'rights to the city' in the 21st century. It is, however, necessary to pay careful attention to variations in these conditions and processes within and between cities. We will begin with a brief survey of the socio-spatial development of the city of Salvador and its metropolitan region that seeks to capture the specific political as well as economic dynamics of this process and the relationship between them.

### **(Dis)Placing the poor in Salvador's modernisation**

Founded in 1549, Salvador became the commercial and administrative hub of an Atlantic-orientated economy based on the enslavement of Africans and the export of sugar and other plantation products. Most of its population, free and slave, rich and poor, lived in the administrative and religious centre of the 'upper city', built on the cliffs overlooking a 'lower city' containing financial, port and market facilities, built along the edge of the Baía de Todos os Santos. Since slaves lived on the lower floors of buildings occupied by their masters, and some slaves as well as free blacks (who might also own slaves) hired out their services on the urban labour market, this colonial urban world involved some social intimacy between classes and races, although this did not prevent major slave rebellions within the city itself, notably the Muslim Slave revolt of 1832 (Reis, 2003). Replaced as colonial capital by Rio de Janeiro in 1763, Salvador's elite lost their

pre-eminence in the Atlantic agro-export economy to Rio and São Paulo in the 19th century, and Bahians migrated southwards in increasing numbers as these cities became the centres of Brazil's industrialisation in the early 20th century.

Although cacao emerged as an alternative export crop in the south of Bahia at the end of the 19th century, supplanting sugar exports as the state's most important source of income, the prosperity of a landowning oligarchy that controlled smaller producers' access to credit as well as local politics, in their role as *coroneis* ('colonels', meaning local political bosses), did not compensate for stagnation in other sectors of the rural economy, particularly in the agricultural hinterland immediately adjacent to Salvador, the Recôncavo. Bahia's traditional exports, sugar and tobacco, lost market share to the more modern agro-industries of São Paulo, southern Brazil, and even Pernambuco in the Nordeste, whilst cacao offered fewer possibilities for agro-industrial development: although a small industry of cacao derivatives developed in the 1940s, Bahian production of the raw product lost its primacy in the world market after the 1920s to competing centres of production in British Africa, and never offered the same stimulus to urban-industrial development as the coffee industry of São Paulo. Meanwhile, much of the profit the Lhéus-Itabuna region generated was transferred to the central and southern regions of the country through purchases of goods and services and interest payments on bank loans (Almeida, 2006: 11–13).

A few textile factories and other industries catering for the regional market did develop along the railway line connecting the port to the Recôncavo along the line of All Saints Bay, but their subsequent decline produced what is now one of the major zones of poverty in Salvador, the Subúrbio Ferroviário. Lacking a dynamic capitalist agro-industry that could stimulate the growth of interior towns and produce a rural class structure in which middle income sectors and wage labourers could stimulate demand in the regional market, Bahia's interior provided Salvador with a narrow base for further industrialisation during the first four decades of the 20th century. In contrast to cities such as São Paulo and Porto Alegre, at the end of the 1940s, the foundations of Salvador's economy were principally commerce and public administration, its major occupational sectors personal services, artisan production, civil construction, small-scale retailing and state bureaucracy, and a good part of the economically active population were illiterate descendants of former slaves (Almeida, 2006: 16). A conservative agrarian oligarchy that had largely failed to modernise production and transport infrastructure in its own sector, to the detriment of the wider economy, thus remained entrenched in political power, because the social forces that could have contributed to political change, in the shape of middle classes enjoying some economic autonomy and organised industrial labour, were still relatively absent from the Bahian scenario. Even the demographic growth of Salvador was negligible between 1920 and 1940, the city population increasing by only 10,000, to a total of 290,000 inhabitants.

As a consequence of this slow process of 'peripheralisation' relative to the more dynamic centres of the national economy, Bahia's elites subsequently sought to adapt themselves to new possibilities for economic modernisation that were largely driven by external forces. The most important development was the discovery of oil and Petrobras's establishment of extraction and refining operations in the Recôncavo. The consequences went far beyond the immediate impact on land use and labour markets in the Recôncavo itself, whose already declining significance to the regional economy as a producer of traditional agro-exports deepened. The construction of the BR-116 highway that links Salvador to the industrial regions of the Centre-South of Brazil began in 1949, while road-building within the Recôncavo disarticulated the old transport networks of the region, which had been based on railways and riverine and coastal steamship transport within All Saints Bay. Old Recôncavo ports such as Cachoeira declined, whilst towns located on road transport junctions, such as Santo Antônio de Jesus, experienced growth and development (Almeida, 2006: 36). Although the impact of direct investments by Petrobras should not be exaggerated – even in 1959, the peak year for investment, Petrobras investments amounted to less than eight percent of the state's total gross internal product – they had further indirect effects and created a new labour market for skilled workers, the most highly qualified of which became residents of Salvador (Almeida, 2006: 22). The construction of the Landulpho Alves oil refinery made it possible to develop secondary petrochemical and metallurgical industries in Bahia. First came the Centro Industrial de Aratu (CIA), in 1967, followed by the Pólo Petroquímico in Camaçari. The latter began operation in 1978 and is the largest complex of its type in the southern hemisphere, now containing, amongst 60 other enterprises, a Ford plant that prides itself on its 'flexible' work regime, in which workers can perform different jobs, and the largest Monsanto plant outside the United States, which produces raw materials for the company's 'Roundup' herbicide.

The creation of the Banco do Nordeste do Brazil and Sudene in the 1950s laid the foundations not simply for new industrial investments and modernisation of existing plant, but also for some modernisation of the urban infrastructure of Salvador, including transport systems and telecommunications as well as drinking water and sewerage systems. During the 1960s and 1970s, these banks acted as channels for an increasing flow of public, private and foreign investment directed towards Salvador and its Metropolitan Region with federal fiscal incentives (Almeida, 2006: 20–21). Under the military regime, National Development Plans sought to reduce regional disparities, whilst the CIA was presented as a 'growth pole' whose dynamism would stimulate the entire regional economy through 'backward and forward linkages'. Yet the CIA was a producer of intermediate goods for the industries of the Southeast of Brazil. It utilised capital-intensive technologies within the logic of the import-substituting industrialisation model that had run its course by the end of the 1980s: lacking sectoral coherence, generating limited employment, and weakly linked to the local economy, the CIA had come to be seen as a 'graveyard of enterprises', unable to compete in the new neoliberal



environment of reduced state support and openness to world market forces, by the start of the new millennium (Almeida, 2006: 23). Although the Pólo Petroquímico has proved a much more robust and integrated investment, it too failed to produce the multiplier effects on the surrounding economy that advocates of this model of industrialisation predicted, whilst the scale of the investments required reduced the possibilities of financing other types of industrial development (Almeida, 2006: 25). Although there were indirect beneficial impacts for employment in the construction sector and services, the direct employment generated by the Pólo in 1990, 24,000 jobs, represented a return of three jobs on every million dollars of investment (ibid.)

Between 1950 and 1990, Salvador's population grew at an annual rate of three to five percent, bringing the total population of the Metropolitan Region to three million inhabitants by the end of the 20th century, of whom 80 percent lived in Salvador itself. Almeida suggests (2006: 46) that one could see the recent development of the urban economy of Salvador as largely autonomous from that of the industrial centres in its metropolitan region, since it is essentially service-based. Tourism, business and financial services, telemarketing and cultural and knowledge-economy activities have now become leading sectors, and around ten percent of jobs are in public administration, creating an important middle class in government service (Almeida, 2006: 33). Although these patterns in part reflect indirect effects of the industrialisation process, and there are arguably positive aspects to a model of economic development based on some of these tertiary sector activities, the other side of the coin of a pattern of industrial development that continues to reduce its use of labour is a relatively high rate of unemployment and the dependence of many of the city's residents on casual and informal work. Much of the employment that the service economy generates is poorly paid and many opportunities for employment are related to the fragile spending power of the expanded middle sectors of Bahian society. Even after a year in which the number of new jobs increased faster than the number of new entrants to the labour market, and the total unemployment rate fell 8.7 percent, open unemployment in the Salvador Metropolitan Region stood at 12.2 percent of the economically active population and hidden unemployment at 7.6 percent in August 2008 (DIESSE, 2008).

Bahia's 20th-century economic transformation began under national governments headed by civilian politicians, with some of the factions competing for power within Bahia adopting a more 'populist' political style, although Dantas Neto (2006: 96) argues that: 'in the 1950s elitism and populism were different sides of a traditional coin, always marked by a combination of aggravated personalism and oligarchic mentality' (our translation). The first significant transformations of the social geography of the city of Salvador also began in the period before military rule, as population growth resumed as a result of rural-urban migration. Better-off families began to move out of the decaying centre of the old upper city towards the Atlantic coast (Orla Marítima), originally occupied only by fishing communities, abandoning the historic centre to a growing number of lower class

residents. As the city began to expand over the series of hills and ridges that characterise the abrupt topography beyond the original colonial settlement, other poor families were able to colonise the unoccupied low-lying valley floors. Given low incomes, relatively high rents in what housing was available for the lower classes, and a lack of public housing provision, settlements were already being formed by land invasions around the old city before 1950. Further irregular settlements began to be established along the Orla during the 1950s (Gordilho, 2000: 195, Map 19). Although it has never proved possible to completely transform a mosaic of urban settlement in which poor citizens live in relative proximity to better-off neighbours, the advent of military rule saw a more determined effort to put an end to this unplanned process of urban expansion, in order to construct a new type of city adapted to an updated vision of capitalist modernity.

Antônio Carlos Magalhães (hereafter ACM), who became Prefect of Salvador in February 1967, had been a vociferously loyal supporter of the 'revolution' of 1964, and was rewarded by outgoing President Field Marshal Castelo Branco with what appears to have been virtually a gift of substantial federal government funds to finance public works in the city (Dantas Neto, 2006: 287–288). His predecessor, Nelson Oliveira, had left office early amidst a welter of accusations of political clientelism and administrative irregularities, prompting ACM to promise a reformed as well as 'austere' administration. To the extent that he assigned administrative offices to technocrats of demonstrable competence, often without regard to their past political or ideological orientations, provided that they manifested the personal loyalty that he demanded, ACM delivered on this promise. Nevertheless, despite the significant injection of funds that enabled ACM to launch his public works programme, further borrowing to finance these programmes proved necessary, since he was unable to avoid making significant concessions to the urban economic elite involved in real estate development on matters relating to taxes on urban property (Dantas Neto, 2006: 300–302).

ACM inaugurated his programme of urban transformation with a spectacular act of political theatre, taking personal direction of the demolition of houses that had been constructed illegally in an area of the Orla Marítima (Dantas Neto, 2006: 305). A highly publicised ritual act performed to a large audience, *Operação Bico do Ferro* was designed to establish the previously absent authority of the city government to intervene in urban development and direct it as a planned process. The evicted residents were of varied social profile, and the Prefect was extremely careful to justify his actions as a move against privileged, middle class people who had disobeyed the law, rather than an attack on the poor, promising that any poor families who lost their homes would be resettled on publicly owned land not far from the original invasion. Further operations of this type were subsequently conducted along the Orla in Ondina and Boca do Rio, and some analysts have argued that ACM's public posture was valid, since members of the middle and upper classes had indeed been using the housing problems of low-income families as a smokescreen for pursuing their own interests in securing a place by the sea

at low cost (Dantas Neto, 2006: 541, n. 44).<sup>1</sup> It is, nevertheless, clear that the evictions did involve poor as well as better-off families, and that the removal of visible poverty from this emerging 'área nobre' of Salvador was not simply desirable from the point of view of real estate development targeted at higher income residents, but also in order to push forward with the development of the Orla and its beaches for national and international tourism (Dantas Neto, 2006: 306). Furthermore, even in the initial stages of his career, ACM also began to speak of the need to rehabilitate Salvador's historic centre, the Pelourinho, and 'return it to the city' (ibid.) Whilst the development plan for the Atlantic coast was couched in the language of urban modernisation, the reconstruction of the Pelourinho appeared at first sight to appeal more to a notion of 'tradition' and aspirations to rescue the city's elite cultural patrimony from the 'degradation' it had suffered as a result of the historic centre's colonisation by low-income families and its conversion into a red light district. Yet both discourses were consistent with the economic project of developing Salvador as a tourist destination, as well as enabling ACM to play to the socio-cultural sensibilities of different segments of Salvador's elite.

Once again, ACM's public statements on the reconstruction of the Pelourinho were careful not to give the impression that the interests and wishes of poor residents would be sacrificed to the interests of developers and the tourism industry, although it was fairly apparent from the beginning that the developments planned would raise property values and other costs to a level that would make it prohibitive for most of the existing residents to remain in the area (Dantas Neto, 2006: 307). In practice, the vast cost of the renovation of the historic centre ensured that the project would be delayed until the 1990s, during ACM's third period of office as governor of Bahia, its declaration a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985 having laid the basis for securing the funds required. The outcome for the poor Afro-Brazilian residents of the area was, predictably, the expulsion of the majority and a failure to include former residents in the economic benefits that resulted from the redevelopment (Collins, 2004).

Dispossession and lack of attention to the interests of poorer families was evident in another aspect of ACM's public works programme as Prefect of Salvador. The construction of interior highways to connect together the zones in which new economic developments were taking place passed through the low-lying valley areas that poor Afro-Brazilians had previously been able to colonise. The new urban traffic arteries were only one of the developments made possible by the most important municipal legislation of ACM's government, Law 2.181/68, the so-called Law of Urban Reform. This dealt a deathblow to Salvador's antiquated leasehold system (*enfiteuse*), which allowed private citizens to acquire long-term or perpetual control of public lands for a fixed annual

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<sup>1</sup> Developers who subsequently achieve control over the invaded land have manipulated popular land invasions in many Latin American countries. Although the longer-term persistence of low-income neighbourhoods created by invasion in all regions of Salvador suggests that this is not the key issue in this context, the case of Bairro da Paz does suggest that invasions may not be unwelcome to developers in some cases.

payment. The Law of Urban Reform authorised the alienation of all public land that was leased, rented or occupied without contract: existing occupiers of the land had the option to purchase, and could actually make the payment required to the Prefecture by returning part of the land to be alienated to its control, for subsequent resale to third parties (Dantas Neto, 2006: 335–337). Once again, ACM put a social ‘spin’ on his measure that suggested that it was beneficial to the poor, because it would dismantle the ‘latifúndios’ that the *enfiteuse* system had allowed to develop on publicly owned land and would enable the popular classes to acquire full property rights over their dwellings. A policy of allowing land invaders the right to acquire permanent property rights over publicly owned land was already being discussed as a solution to ‘urban disorder’ by the end of the 1950s, and by this stage middle class residents of the city were also pressing for a reform of the land tenure system in the face of high rents, adding to the political pressure on landholding elites (Dantas Neto, 2006: 323). Yet removal of invasions could also be justified on grounds of ‘public health’ and the need to ensure more attractive living conditions for the growing urban middle classes. As we noted earlier, military rule provided an environment in which more repressive resolutions of these contradictions became politically feasible. In practice, the implementation of Law 2.181/68 produced major gains for property developers. Of the ten percent of the total public land area of the city alienated, 96.4 percent consisted of high-value properties that occupied more than 5,000 square metres, a mere 6.25 percent of the total number of land units alienated, and developers generally acquired land at a fraction of the price that it would subsequently acquire. The fact that 90 percent of the alienated units of land did pass into the hands of small landholders to become their private property should not, perhaps, be considered of trivial significance, especially in cases where this did correspond to a regularisation of the precarious position of land invaders. However, the overall shape of the redistribution of public land made the populist discourse that accompanied the enactment of the Law of Urban Reform a convenient cover for a process largely driven by a different logic (Dantas Neto, 2006: 336).

ACM’s urban restructuring programme provided a strong stimulus to the formation of new construction companies in Bahia, many of which were founded by entrepreneurs with close links to members of his administration and in one case had held office within it, although the direct participation of ACM’s own family in this sector did not begin until the mid-1970s, with the foundation of the Constructora OAS (Dantas Neto, 2006: 329–330).<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Dantas Neto shows, most of the largest firms had been formed earlier, and the emergence of integrated urban development companies was a national phenomenon after 1964, stimulated by the creation of the *Banco Nacional de Habitação* (BNH) and the *Sistema Financeiro da Habitação*. These federal agencies channelled

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<sup>2</sup> Following ACM’s holding the office of Minister of Communications in the Sarney government in the 1980s, his family’s private wealth and his personal patronage capacity were enhanced by the acquisition of extensive radio, TV and other media interests as the local concessionary of the Globo network.

finance to construct dwellings and underwrite sanitation and other urban infrastructure projects through both private and public sector organisations, including the state and municipal housing companies known as COHABs (Companhia de Habitação). Although Salvador offered particularly good opportunities for capital accumulation to small firms newly entering the sector, this was made possible by the federal funding regime and made compatible with the interests of large companies and continuing concentration of capital through a political system centralised at all levels (Dantas Neto, 2006: 331). In principle the BNH (which was abolished in 1986) was intended to address the question of social housing, and some working class families – in the inland zone known as the *miolo* as well as in other areas of industrial development in the Salvador's metropolitan region – did benefit from housing complexes constructed by the Bahian COHAB in the 1970s. Yet the modernised city that ACM's administration launched had little place for the growing mass of urban poor that was accumulating within it as a consequence of Bahia's overall pattern of capitalist modernisation.

From 1967, planning for other aspects of Bahian urban redevelopment programmes fell under the auspices of the state Conselho de Desenvolvimento do Recôncavo, succeeded in 1974 by the current Companhia de Desenvolvimento Urbano do Estado da Bahia (CONDER). By 1971 ACM had passed from Salvador's prefecture to the governorship of the state, a position he was to occupy twice under the military (from 1971 to 1975 and from 1979 to 1983), before returning for a third time in 1991–1994. The power invested in the governor was, and is, substantially greater than that enjoyed by city prefects. The most important achievement of ACM's first governorship was the federal decision to locate the Polo Petroquímico in Bahia, and the rest of his major actions were focused on Salvador and its metropolitan region. One of the most significant from the point of view of the city's future development was the decision to construct the state government's new Centro Administrativo (CAB) on the Avenida Paralela, halfway between the old commercial zone in the lower city and the airport. The relocation of government buildings to this zone unleashed a boom in land valorisation between the site of the CAB and areas that were forming a new commercial centre for the 'modernised' city. By the end of ACM's second period as governor, many firms were relocating their offices from the old port area, as a new Central Business district, surrounded by upper income housing complexes, developed around Iguatemi – site of the city's first shopping mall, founded in 1975, a hypermarket, and a new bus terminal (Almeida, 2006: 39). The Avenida Paralela also opened the way to the further development of the northern coast of Bahia as a location for weekend homes and tourist resorts, offering rapid access to the city centre and residential districts beyond Iguatemi, such as Brotas and Pituba.

Yet despite his early achievements, ACM's position in Bahian politics was still far from consolidated by the end of his first term as governor. Building the political machine that came to be known as 'carlismo' required this protégé of the military to outmanoeuvre or

compromise with a variety of other political blocs and build up networks of personal loyalty through pragmatic deployment of political and/or material support. Much of ACM's political support came, however, from rural municipalities in the interior of Bahia, despite the fact that most of his political energy was devoted to transforming Salvador and channelling resources to business interests within the metropolitan area (Dantas Neto, 2006: 412).<sup>3</sup> In the longer term, it is difficult to separate the power that ACM eventually acquired in Bahia from his achievement of national roles, first as head of Eletrobras in the period between his first two governorships, and, subsequently, his position as Federal Minister of Communications after he astutely switched his loyalty to Sarney in 1985. But although his later national roles enhanced his ability to pursue a politics of patronage in Bahia, one might argue that the whole of ACM's career reflected the extent to which the future of Bahia had become dependent on political and economic centres outside the region. His initial success over competing elite factions reflected his generally, though not always, successful reading of what it was necessary to do to secure the support of these external forces.<sup>4</sup>

Dantas Neto reads ACM's early contribution to the transformation of Bahia as an exemplification of the Gramscian principle of 'passive revolution', in which political realignments between established and emergent social forces may moderate certain contradictions, but do not produce a fundamental reordering of society to the benefit of subaltern groups. This reading encourages us to recognise that ACM was the instrument for the implementation of a project of 'conservative modernisation' that was shared by other elements of the Bahian elite, despite the fact that it deepened their subordination to political and economic centres of power outside their region to a degree that no amount of rhetorical appeal to 'Baianidade' and 'regional economic interests' could conceal completely. Although the intense personalism of ACM's political management of Bahia often proved tempestuous, he did, in the long term, manage to placate conservative elites, whilst creating the conditions under which new elite factions could prosper and middle-class sectors advance. Yet despite Carlism's use of clientelistic methods, and growing efforts to exploit 'multiculturalist' politics in recent years,<sup>5</sup> the 'populist' dimension of ACM's politics could hardly depoliticise the urban periphery while practices of urban redevelopment so frequently ran counter to the immediate needs of the urban poor. This became all too apparent towards the end of the period of military rule and the second ACM governorship, the period in which the first land invasions that

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<sup>3</sup> This bias could be contrasted with the greater attention paid to the interior of the state and the less affluent sectors of the rural population during the two-year governorship of Waldir Pires from 1987 to 1989.

<sup>4</sup> As leader of the Party of the Liberal Front, ACM subsequently became the chief support for the administrations of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and he initially offered support to Lula's first administration as well.

<sup>5</sup> Dantas Neto points out that the contemporary carlist discourse on negritude and the valorisation of Afro-Brazilian culture is not echoed in ACM's references to popular culture and religion in the 1960s, in which the only positive value assigned to the African cultural legacy is that of a tourist asset (Dantas Neto, 2006: 318).

eventually led to the consolidation of the settlement now known as Bairro da Paz occurred.

### **From Las Malvinas to Bairro da Paz: Gaining a place in the city**

In 1982 invaders began to occupy lands located on the coastal side of the Avenida Paralela, some six kilometres beyond the CAB. They thus inserted themselves into what we have seen was becoming the principle vector of expansion of the city from the point of view of the real estate developers and business classes. This vector contrasted strongly in socio-economic terms with the other two major vectors, associated respectively with the impoverished zones of the *suburbio ferroviário* and the city's geographical centre, the *miolo*, with its mix of middle, lower and popular class occupation. It is therefore unsurprising that the initial response to invasions in this area by the state and municipal governments consisted of determined attempts to remove and relocate these unwanted residents. Although the pioneer settlers rebuilt the precarious shelters that they had constructed after they were demolished by squads of military police and employees of LIMPURB, the municipal agency responsible for street cleaning and rubbish removal,<sup>6</sup> in 1983 the Prefecture combined forced removal tactics with an attempt to negotiate their permanent relocation to public lands in the distant Fazenda Coutos area of the *suburbio ferroviário*. Yet many found this a poor alternative in terms of environment and access to jobs and transport, and returned within a few years to the Avenida Paralela site. A hard core of settlers continued to resist relocation and the settlement also continued to attract new families.<sup>7</sup> As military rule drew to a close and democracy was slowly restored, political opportunities also began to change for the residents of the urban periphery, although not, as we will see, in a straightforward way – not least because the 'stagflation' produced by the debt crisis of the 1980s and IMF-imposed austerity measures left the public sector in a state of virtual bankruptcy, whilst the combined economic and political crisis of federal government that marked the short-lived administration of Fernando Collor de Mello from 1990 to 1992 meant that relative macro-economic stability was not restored until the middle of the 1990s.

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<sup>6</sup> The participation of LIMPURB had a symbolic as well as practical significance, since 'hygiene', public health and creating an environment acceptable to international tourism was one of the official pretexts for forcible removal of irregular settlements.

<sup>7</sup> A survey of 800 households conducted by a team from the Centre for Metropolitan Studies of CEBRAP, the Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning, in 2006 revealed that 60 percent came to Salvador from the interior of Bahia, while only a third were born in the capital, although those who were born outside the city had generally lived elsewhere within it before moving to Bairro da Paz. Seventy-six percent moved to obtain their own house, generally evaluating their new place of residence more positively than the place that they had moved from. Other major reasons for moving were the presence of relatives (13 percent), better work opportunities (5.5 percent) and marriage or separation (seven percent).

It was the stubbornness and militancy of the invaders' resistance that earned the community its original soubriquet of 'Las Malvinas'. In the twilight of military rule, the invaders secured the support of radical political forces and NGOs<sup>8</sup> against government attempts to relocate them by force, and this tradition of militant resistance has become deeply ingrained in the community's own sense of its identity. Yet it is also worth noting that one of the ironic features of this particular invasion is that the forcible removal of the invaders also received support from conservationists, who argued that further human settlement should be prohibited in this zone, in order to preserve the surviving tracts of Atlantic forest to be found there. In the longer term, therefore, the determined efforts of the Malvinas squatters to remain in place also served the interests of property developers, who began to install high income horizontal condominiums in the surrounding area in the course of the decade.<sup>9</sup> From the point of view of the invaders themselves, whilst employment opportunities have remained precarious, this settlement has enjoyed some advantages because of the presence of neighbours with higher incomes seeking suppliers of various low-cost services in the zone as well as construction work (and as time has gone by, of new offices, businesses and a private university).

Some figures will be helpful to provide a basic socio-economic profile of the community today. Of the household heads interviewed by the Cebrap survey team in 2006, 30 percent worked inside the *bairro*, with the nearby middle class area of Itapuã and the beaches of the Orla being the next most common places of work (each accounting for ten percent). Only 36 percent were salaried workers (and only 62 percent of those enjoy formal conditions of employment), compared with a much greater proportion, 46.5 percent, who described themselves as 'working on their own account'. The majority (61 percent) were unskilled manual workers, 13 percent skilled manual workers and 22.5 percent non-manual workers in the lowest skill category. Seventeen percent worked in domestic service, and 11.5 percent had more than a single job, a pattern consistent with low earnings. Yet this is a community of the 'working poor': 34 percent of those without work at the time of the interview had worked in the period of one month to a year beforehand, and 42.5 percent had managed to secure work during the major part of the previous five years. The long-term unemployed might still perform some casual work, have working partners, or receive financial aid from relatives not working in the

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<sup>8</sup> As noted in the introduction, these ranged from politicians, especially those of the Left, and the Movement for the Defence of Slum Dwellers (Movimento de Defesa dos Favelados), to a variety of Catholic Church organisations. Of these, the most important was CEAS (Centre of Studies and Social Action), a Liberation Theology orientated Jesuit NGO created in 1967 to engage in politico-educative activity throughout the Brazilian Northeast. CEAS advised the residents on strategies to secure permanent rights of settlement throughout the 1980s, promoting the development of the first formalised organisation to represent the *bairro*, a Residents' Association.

<sup>9</sup> One of the 'big selling points' of the condominium developments of Alphaville Urbanismo SA in this zone of the city is the degree of forest preservation that has been achieved, whilst the settlement of Bairro da Paz continues to be painted in negative terms from the environmentalist point of view.



community, although levels of household income per capita were also inevitably related to variations in household structure, such as the worker–consumer ratio in extended families. Limitation of space does not permit us to explore these further here. Although the principal means of gaining access to work in Bairro da Paz was through the recommendation of kin or friends, for the employed and jobless alike, some unemployed people sought work directly by presenting themselves to potential employers. Despite these efforts to secure a livelihood, the average total income of the households of employed people was equivalent to 1.7 minimum salaries, whilst those of the households of the unemployed averaged 1.1 minimum salaries.<sup>10</sup>

At first sight, the relative poverty of Bairro da Paz seems self-evident, but statistics of this type cannot tell the entire story about social welfare. The profile that we have just sketched clearly shows a high level of ‘informalisation’ of paid work and modes of gaining a livelihood by working ‘on one’s own account’. Yet we should resist the temptation to consider ‘informal’ modes of gaining a livelihood less satisfactory, given the economic opportunities available, than more ‘formal’ kinds of employment in sectors characterised by low wages and limited benefits. For many, work in the so-called ‘informal economy’ may be a preferable option for a variety of reasons, ranging from higher average earnings to a greater sense of independence and avoidance of relations with employers who are experienced as socially denigrating. Furthermore, our research shows that here, as in many other contexts, levels of household social and economic welfare are influenced by the wider kinship and social networks in which individual households participate, whilst the quality of life in Bairro da Paz was often compared favourably by residents with that available in other low-income neighbourhoods of Salvador for other reasons, such as the lower density of occupation (which may in turn influence social variables such as the incidence and levels of conflict between neighbours). The external image of this settlement is affected negatively by the fact that the media have identified it with the growth of armed violence associated with drug trafficking: although Bairro da Paz is in fact far from being the most dangerous *favela* in Salvador, there have been killings perpetrated by armed groups from outside the *bairro* and residents do complain about physical insecurity within it. A different type of insecurity persists in some residents’ lives because land tenure has not been regularised for the whole settlement. Nevertheless, over the years there has been slow improvement in infrastructure and access to services. The relative stabilisation of the situation reflects

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<sup>10</sup> Most of the indicators used in the survey produced values that suggest a lower level of welfare in Bairro da Paz in comparison with Cidade Tiradentes, the ‘depósito de gente’ on the spatial periphery of São Paulo that we mentioned earlier, to which the Cebrap researchers applied the same survey at this time. In terms of income, the equivalent figures for Cidade Tiradentes were 3.3 and 2.5 minimum salaries, respectively. Income differences reflect differences in the educational qualifications and occupational structures in the two communities, although it is also important to note that a significantly larger number of Bairro da Paz households – 45 percent versus 12.5 percent – were covered by government social programmes, and that there are many qualitative factors that might reduce the apparent gap in terms of welfare between the two communities.

changes in public policies on popular housing and settlement, combined with increasing emphasis on 'popular participation' in urban planning. The latter change is one to which the mobilisation of communities such as Bairro da Paz, and the efforts of radical NGOs aligned with such groups, have made an important contribution over the years through pressure from below. We now turn to consider these developments in more detail.

In 1987, coincident with a new upsurge of land invasions, ACM's political machine in Bahia suffered a temporary reverse in the first truly democratic election after military rule, with the accession to the state governorship of Waldir Pires (then of the centrist PMDB, though later in his career he moved through the leftist PDT and Cardoso's PSDB to the PT<sup>11</sup>). Although Pires's period in power was brief, and Carlismo regained unbroken control over the state government after he resigned in 1989,<sup>12</sup> from 1990 until the governorship was finally captured by the PT's Jaques Wagner in 2006, it was sufficient for the area of the Malvinas invasion to be declared suitable for human habitation. The invaded lands' official owners, the Visco family, transferred their rights over the property to the city government to offset accumulated unpaid taxes, and the prefecture issued a provisional permission to the residents to use it. Although this did not amount to guaranteed rights of property, by 1988 the renamed 'Bairro da Paz' was promised basic infrastructure works by the city government and a further tranche of land was transferred to the prefecture by the Viscos for distribution as housing lots.

The transformation of the Malvinas invasion into an officially recognised neighbourhood of the city, even if it remained one whose legal situation and infrastructure remained precarious, reflected a broader conjuncture. Nationally, an enhanced official attention to problems of poverty and social inequality accompanied the restoration of democratic rule, and major changes were announced in official thinking, both in the new Constitution of 1988, and also in the urban development plans of a number of metropolitan city administrations, which included the idea of 'popular participation' in their redefinition of the social functions of urban planning (Teixeira, 2001; Caldeira and Holston, 2004). As Caldeira and Holston emphasise, and the case of the conversion of the Malvinas invasion into Bairro da Paz demonstrates, this change in official attitudes also reflected the actions of poor people themselves. Although they were obliged to fight to defend the homes that they could build for themselves in irregular settlements, people whom the developmentalist state of the military had regarded as 'pre-modern' masses, incapable of exercising their rights as citizens, came to understand, with the support and encouragement of activist sectors of the Catholic Church and NGOs, that they too could claim 'rights to the city' (Caldeira and Holston, 2004: 402). Such neighbourhood movements from the urban periphery contributed importantly to the return of democracy

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<sup>11</sup> This last move resulted from Cardoso's alliance with ACM's Party of the Liberal Front (PFL).

<sup>12</sup> The resignation was made necessary by Pires's decision to contest national elections as vice-presidential candidate of his party. Not only did he fail in this ambition, but neither he, nor the Bahian Left in general, managed to duplicate ACM's success in federal politics.

and greeted its arrival with demands for inclusion in the process of public planning, rather than simply demanding that government meet their social needs materially by providing services and infrastructure. The problem was that the resources required to implement these new ideas were limited indeed under conditions of economic stagnation and crisis.

The administration of Waldir Pires prided itself on having made the provision of housing for low-income families a priority for the first time in the history of Bahia. It produced a strategic action plan for 1988 to 1991, which aimed to construct 220,000 housing units to benefit a million people in the capital city and interior of the state, of which 100,000 would be urbanised lots, 80,000 units were to be benefited with urbanisation in low-income settlements and 40,000 were conventional units in the popular housing complexes that had been constructed since 1967 by the Bahian state company Urbis. Past public housing programmes had not included the poorest working class families, since their cut-off point was an income equivalent to three minimum salaries, obliging most poor people to seek to solve their housing problems by land invasion and self-construction (Gordilho, 2000).

Under a new national house building programme for low-income families, *Minha Casa*, promised benefits were to include a regularised electricity supply and a series of public buildings, including a crèche, church, school, medical post and a building for the Residents' Association. In practice, government delivered few improvements to Bairro da Paz during the period from 1988 to 2000. What money was available was concentrated on other poor areas of the city, notably the Subúrbio Ferroviário. Following the end of the BNH system, between 1989 and 1996 financing these programmes depended on the municipality, which concentrated on emergency relief for people whose homes were damaged, and legalising tenure and relocating invaders, negotiating with communities without attempting to enhance their full participation in urban development planning (Gordilho, 2000). In 1988, the electricity company COELBA established a post in the *bairro* to reduce theft of electricity from lines serving other occupants of the Avenida Paralela zone, but progress towards providing electricity to the whole community remained slow. A new urbanisation programme was drawn up in 1999, to be realised as a partnership between the Italian NGO AVSI (Association of Volunteers in International Service) and the Bahian state urban development company CONDER, with World Bank funding. In the end, however, it was not carried through in Bairro da Paz. Given the limited availability of public funds, the bulk of the modest improvements that did occur during the 1990s were delivered through Catholic NGOs, or partnerships between these NGOs and city authorities, under the non-Carlist, centre-left administration of Lídice da Mata of the PSDB, the city's only female prefect to date (1993–1997), and Antônio Imbassahy (1997–2004), then aligned with ACM and the PFL. Although progress also reflected the activism of the Bairro da Paz Residents' Association and the Residents' Council that succeeded it, after a crisis within the community described below,

households continued to depend on wells for water, and community health problems reflected the absence of a modern sewerage system. All that existed to confront these problems was an improvised and understaffed health post, offering a very limited service.

Nevertheless, the number of residence units increased dramatically after 1988, from 2,929 to 5,800 by 1996, when the total resident population was recorded as 35,000. During the Imbassahy administration, progress accelerated. By 2002 a bus line connected the *bairro* to the city-centre, a medical post staffed by four doctors attempted to meet the special needs of pregnant women and newborn babies, and a state primary school had finally been inaugurated, albeit only able to offer the first four years of primary education and lacking the classroom space and number of teachers that would be required to meet the rising demand for its services.

Despite the macro-economic improvements of the second half of the 1990s under the administrations of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, even Cardoso's second term was marked by a major energy supply crisis. Meanwhile the higher rates of growth that were finally achieved after Brazil had been obliged to resort to the IMF again in the wake of the 1997 crisis in East Asia were not sufficient to moderate the nationwide problems of unemployment and low wages that accompanied maintenance of fiscal austerity, preparing the way for Lula's eventual accession to power. What did change after 1992 was that more funding for programmes targeted on the poorest classes of Brazilian society eventually became available through World Bank programmes. These were channelled through national government institutions, but increasingly decentralised to state and municipal administrations. NGO activity amongst more marginal urban populations saw a continuous increase. Although all these developments were a belated response to the catastrophic social impacts of the first round of neoliberal economic restructuring, and the World Bank's posture was primarily motivated by its growing perception that market reforms and privatisation would not be politically sustainable without greater attention to poverty alleviation, the increase in resources was far from trivial.

After the closure of the BNH, the Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF) took over most of its functions in the 'social sector', whilst also becoming the main lender in the market sector (Valença, 2007: 393). The Collor government declared public housing 'a priority', but the new schemes favoured private constructors and were operated in a way that reflected political patronage relations (the exchange of housing funds for votes in Congress): these characteristics seriously limited their capacity to address the housing needs of the poor, and have arguably proved to be enduring problems (Valença, 2007: 407). As we noted earlier, during the first half of the 1990s implementation of social housing and sanitation policies was principally based on the resources prefectures could make available. In the second half of the decade, the Brazilian state assumed a new initiative

in the production of social interest housing, backed by the new international funding available, and new programmes were developed that were implemented through state governments. In 1996, with funding channelled through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and federal Bank of Social and Economic development (BNDES), the Bahia Azul programme was initiated to improve the supply of drinkable water, sanitation system and rubbish collection and disposal in the city. It was to cover the entire metropolitan region, although some priority was given to cleaning up beaches and other measures that would increase the Salvador's attraction to tourists, particularly from abroad (Gordilho, 2000: 161). After 1997, the number of houses built with public funds in Bahia almost doubled, public programmes began to include more beneficiaries on the lowest income scales, and they also gave increasing priority to the urbanisation of irregular settlements and sanitary improvements within them, rather than to the removal and relocation of invasions that were inconveniently located from the point of view of dominant interests (Gordilho, 2000: 162).<sup>13</sup>

Initially Bairro da Paz remained more marginal to these developments than some other low-income zones in the city, which also began to benefit from new measures to legalise property rights. But from the beginning of the new millennium it too began to benefit from the urbanisation measures and an extension of its basic infrastructure of services. This was in part because of the greater attention the community received from the public authorities, especially during the prefecture of Antônio Imbassahy, and in part because of further investment by NGOs. Today, with a population now estimated to exceed 60,000, the community not only possesses a health centre, but also a modest police post, three primary schools, a provisional and badly equipped secondary school, and a 'digital inclusion' *Telecentro* connected to the Internet, which was financed through a partnership between Petrobras, the National Institute of Information Technology, the Information Network for the Third Sector, and the Bairro da Paz Resident's Council, one of whose members is its coordinator. There are community crèches organised by several religious associations,<sup>14</sup> along with a few sponsored by the municipal and state governments, which also contribute some funding to the other crèches. In 2005 opening a 'Centro de Convivência' was opened, dedicated to various kinds of training activities, and funded by the investors behind the neighbouring Alphaville condominium developments in partnership with a private university, the Faculdade de Tecnologia e Ciências (though this latter centre is located outside the community, close to the university).

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<sup>13</sup> A key programme with substantial CEF investments was *Viver Melhor* ('Live Better'), which incorporated both the Pro-Moradia initiative, offering finance for converting makeshift houses into more durable structures, and Pro-Saneamento, orientated to hygiene. The idea that housing was a basic human right was fortified by the second UN conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II, held in Istanbul in 1996, with the participation of more than 40 Brazilian NGOs (Teixeira, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the Catholic-sponsored crèches, there are also a Spiritist crèche, located outside the *bairro*, and another sponsored by a *terreiro* within it.

It remains important to recognise the limitations of the improvements brought about through the more constructive relations established between the *bairro* and public authorities from the late 1980s onwards. Firstly, 'urbanization' in the form of street paving, lighting and improved sanitation is concentrated on the central zone of the community, where the central square (Praça das Decisões), main Catholic Church, and other key public buildings are located. Residents in the zones beyond the centre not only feel some resentment about this, but also find themselves in a particularly precarious legal situation. The Prefecture has thus far only conceded rights to receive permanent titles of possession and use of land to residents in the central zone of the original invasion, defined as the 'polygonal', although urban improvements in the form of schools and plazas have been extended recently to some areas beyond the polygonal. In contrast to some of the other low-income neighbourhoods of the city, no regulations are in force to prevent third parties from buying up and combining adjacent tracts of land sold by existing residents. The confused land tenure situation thus also promotes fears not only of the continuing possibility of future eviction of families living beyond the polygonal, but also of possible dismemberment of the community, should developers seek to acquire land from existing residents in weaker economic positions by offering a favourable price, now that its real estate value is rising as a result of the presence of neighbouring high income condominiums and new service sector and high technology industrial projects in the zone.

Nevertheless, in the new local political climate created by the Lula government's social programmes, the election of João Henrique Carneiro<sup>15</sup> as Salvador's prefect in 2004, originally under the banner of the PDT and promising 'a government of popular participation', followed, in 2006, by the PT's unexpected capture of the state governorship, Bairro da Paz has shown a growing capacity to engage with public authorities and articulate the community's needs and demands through innovative forms of collective organisation. In 2007, the first public meeting of the Forum of Social Entities of Bairro da Paz agreed to establish a permanent Forum for bringing the *bairro*'s different community associations together, across lines of religious, political and generational differences, and this was able to work successfully to stage a second public meeting attended by a larger number of representatives of government agencies than the first in 2008. To a great extent the desire to create such an organisation reflects a widespread awareness of the damaging effect of internal divisions on the community's ability to negotiate further advances in infrastructure provision and environmental improvements, access to social development programmes, and policing that protects rather than victimises residents.

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<sup>15</sup> Son of senator João Duval, the prefect abandoned ACM's PFL in 1994, to be elected, like his father, as a candidate of the PDT, although he moved to the more centrist PMDB, which by then held six ministries in the government headed by Lula, in 2007.

Political clientelism, NGO interventions, the socio-economic differentiation that tends to exist in all slum communities – and may be seen as very important by their residents, even when it seems distinctly relative to outsiders – and religious differentiation, have all contributed to past patterns of internal conflict and crises of leadership. A particularly momentous event was the collapse of the original Residents' Association, whose leadership became increasingly impugned for personal corruption, self-serving management of relations with government and politicians, and failure to observe minimal democratic principles.<sup>16</sup> Although this crisis could be considered an illustration of the limits of grassroots politics in one sense, as could the fact that Carlist patron-client relations reached down into low-income neighbourhoods to include some of their leaders, even in communities with strong traditions of militancy such as Bairro da Paz, it could also be considered a positive indicator of the lack of cooptation of other community factions and the existence of a healthy internal political life. The original Residents' Association was replaced with a new Residents' Council, which remains the most influential representative organisation in the *bairro* today (and an important actor in the new Forum). Although the new organisation has been subject to criticism<sup>17</sup> – and criticism of the council's efforts is almost inevitable, given its limited capacity to solve all the structural problems that produce inequalities within the community – the newer organisation has thus far proved more capable of renewing its leadership and maintaining its legitimacy.

Catholic service delivery NGOs have played a particularly prominent part in community life and in the formation of community associations. The political positions of the different Catholic actors range from a relatively conservative 'assistentialist' posture to more radical, Liberation Theology inspired projects. The Dom Avelar Foundation stands at the centre of a Catholic network of support and intervention, working with Bahia's Santa Casa de Misericórdia (founded in 1549) in the funding of the six biggest crèches and, in the provision of educational and artistic courses to young people, with the Cidade Mãe (Mother City) Foundation, launched in 1993, under the administration of Lídice da Mata, with UNICEF funding. But figures associated with the Santa Casa do not have homogeneous views, and the more radical CEAS continues to be active in the *bairro*, although it has again disengaged from the Residents' Council and now focuses on supporting youth groups associated with black 'cultural valorization programmes', whose leaders have often been critical of the way that the Council is run in the past.

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<sup>16</sup> The principal leader, Dona Léia, once ran a crèche with a municipal subsidy, but now lives elsewhere.

<sup>17</sup> Some residents complain that its leaders choose and administer projects in ways that maximise their own personal benefits and those of their families, enjoy salaried jobs within the Catholic NGOs that relate directly to the council's work, and often find their relatives jobs in the projects that they negotiate. The council is also frequently accused of being 'unrepresentative', which to some extent it must be, given its current domination by leaders tied to Catholic foundations and networks.

To a great extent, the Catholic groups can co-exist relatively comfortably with groups associated with the *bairro*'s 15 Afro-Brazilian candomblé temples, one of which also runs a comparatively under-funded community crèche, and is therefore in this sense a 'competitor'. But there are greater tensions between candomblé adherents and members of the community's 40 evangelical churches,<sup>18</sup> while the community's Baptists have recently been led by a politically connected and socially activist pastor, whose role has reflected his own church-building agenda.<sup>19</sup> Yet, although these divisions remain important, the fact that countervailing community efforts to transcend them have emerged has enhanced the 'political voice' this particular *favela* has achieved under the current city and state administrations. Even if some groups within the *favela* have lost out, as a result of political changes that have diminished the value of the patronage networks they previously enjoyed when the state was dominated by the political machine of Antônio Carlos Magalhães, some figures associated with Carlism remain active in the community. One figure, Seu Marcelo, founded his own association, Unidos para Vencer ('United to Conquer'), though he has participated in the work of the regular council and its predecessor, and became active in the Forum. Another is Ronaldo, founder and president of the Luiz Eduardo Magalhães Association, named after the deceased younger son of ACM, who had been groomed to be his political heir in preference to his elder brother Antônio Junior, since the latter preferred to manage the extensive business interests accumulated by the family as a result of his father's long political career. Although Ronaldo's Association cannot now mount a strong challenge to the Residents' Council, which Ronaldo accuses of using its partnerships with other organisations to subsidise 'internal mafias' and diverting money for social ends into private pockets, it does possess some members and resources, and controls a sports league and local FM radio station. It seems that its influence over the flow of funding and projects into Bairro da Paz was probably somewhat stronger in the recent past, thanks to Ronaldo's close relations with Prefect Imbassahy. He was also involved in the initial negotiations with the FTC and Alphaville over the Centro de Convivência project mentioned earlier, though he failed to secure control of this initiative.

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<sup>18</sup> Although 60 percent of those interviewed in the 2006 survey declared themselves Catholics (which is not incompatible with participation in Candomblé), Evangelicals, of which a majority (65 percent) declared themselves members of a Pentecostal church, not only represented the second most significant group in the sample, at just under 25 percent, but also outnumbered the Catholics in terms of the proportion of congregants who regularly participated in the social life of their churches (at 56 percent to 33 percent, respectively). Over half the Bairro da Paz residents saw themselves as deriving some material benefits, and over a third substantial benefits, from their participation in these activities, although a higher proportion of Pentecostals than Catholics took the most positive view. The same patterns repeated themselves in responses on the benefits of sociability deriving from religious participation, where 58 percent of all respondents rated the sociability advantages as very high, but only 41.7 percent in the case of Catholics.

<sup>19</sup> This figure had a formal position within the municipal administration of Prefect João Henrique, who is himself an evangelical, and was another strong critic of the Residents' Council, although he now seems to be dedicating himself to building his church in other settlements.



The FTC-Alphaville project illustrates the way in which private capital can contribute to schemes to improve the social welfare and opportunities for social advancement of the urban poor in Brazil. Yet it is clear that these 'private' initiatives are not independent of political networks. The Alphaville Foundation and the FTC have been able to develop projects that are private-public partnerships, and FTC also received UNESCO money for a course for pensioners. Both the university and Residents' Council members responsible for the coordination of some of its projects or employed as teachers have been accused of misuse of these funds. It is natural enough that the motives of these private benefactors should be questioned, given that the grants received are a significant source of income for FTC. The broader training and capacity-building programmes of the Alphaville Foundation not only provide the condominium's developers with a positive public image of concern for the poor, but also provide them with an opportunity to create allies within the Residents' Council. They are also consistent with the economic interests of the sponsors and the general orientation of a neo-liberal market society, insofar as they promote a spirit of self-help and self-advancement – as in the case of support given for development of cooperatives<sup>20</sup> – or prepare *bairro* residents to fulfil the labour market roles being created by developments outside the *bairro*, including domestic service in the condominiums. These characteristics are not, however, unique to the projects in which Alphaville participates, but are also true of many projects that receive public funding or involve other NGOs, and it should not be assumed that projects that have relatively conservative social intentions necessarily have results that are inconsequential for longer-term patterns of social and political change.

This brings us back to the role of the youth organisations, whose development is a reflection of the expanding range of social projects and programmes that now impact on poor people's lives beyond the more traditional types of handouts<sup>21</sup> and service delivery. Bairro da Paz possesses several capoeira groups, reggae, hip-hop and rock groups, pagode and forró groups, and groups dedicated to various styles of dance, including the Afro-Brazilian Maculelê, and theatre groups. Much of this activity is linked to sponsored 'cultural valorisation' projects, such as *Youth in Action*, which brings together dance, capoeira, theatre and hip-hop, and the self-explanatory *Afrodance*. 'Cultural valorisation' also resonates with the efforts of the many NGOs active in the *bairro* to promote self-

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<sup>20</sup> There are currently nine of these in Bairro da Paz. The first, led by a former member of the Residents' Council, who was employed as a teacher on an Alphaville Foundation training course but is estranged from the current council leadership, produced paper crafts. Those founded subsequently, all on the basis of prior training courses, market sweets, clothing, percussion instruments and various services, the most recent, *Novo de Novo*, being a cooperative that recycles plastic bottles and transforms them into furniture. This developed from a training course in part sponsored by Petrobras, which has injected money into the development of all the cooperatives through the *Cidadania e Paz* (Citizenship and Peace) programme, and is a partnership between an environmentalist NGO founded by Gilberto Gil in 1989, Ondazul, and Apompaz, a *bairro* youth group.

<sup>21</sup> It must be stressed that handouts in kind, particularly of food for poor families and for crèches, still remain very significant, along with basic medical services, in this environment.

esteem and capacity for citizenship among young people, and in the emergence of young people as community political actors, we can see that these programmes do have significant impacts. The *Youth in Action* group was the one that rebelled against the Residents' Council and is now being guided by CEAS, and although a few of the young people in *Afrodance* still participate in the Council, the Forum seems to have offered a more open and inviting possibility to most of them. Although *Afrodance* developed out of the capoeira group of the internationally famous mestre Paulo dos Anjos, a Bairro da Paz resident, few of them enjoy any sustained sponsorship and their survival as performers tends to depend on mutual help (to the point of sharing use of instruments in the case of the bands). This may well have encouraged them to come together to discuss their common problems and interests outside the established associational institutions of the community, although, as the experience of the Forum has shown, divisions still exist within as well as between these different groups, and many of their members simply want a chance to perform and gain a livelihood. Nevertheless, in an environment in which Afro-Brazilian cultural performance is being strongly associated with promotion of racial equality, and an ever expanding number of programmes focused on the 'institutional empowerment' of black youth are emerging, with federal and municipal as well as NGO funding, young people have become strongly aware that they have more voice and potential influence.

The development of activism on the part of youth groups promoting aspects of Afro-Brazilian culture that receive positive public recognition has aided the residents' struggle to combat a form of symbolic violence prevalent in the wider society, one that explains persistent inequality in terms of racialised models of the incapacities of poor people. We can thus speak of change in the meaning of being 'peripheral' relative to the established socio-cultural and political 'centres' of a Bahian society still dominated by white elites.

But Salvador has also become more 'polycentric' over time. Bairro da Paz is no longer spatially peripheral in this new order. Located on the main arterial road linking the airport to administrative, commercial and tourist centres, real estate values in the neighbouring area have increased substantially since the time of the invasion and the *favela* is now surrounded not only by condominiums and the Faculdade de Tecnologia e Ciências, but also a growing range of 'new economy' projects that are currently being extended with the construction of a technology park. Relations between rich and poor sectors in this locality have been influenced both by the labour market and by private sector investment in social projects in the slum. They are still coloured by fear of crime on the part of the affluent and fear of eviction on the part of some slum dwellers. The militant traditions of Bairro da Paz remain central to the community's self-image, and the 'engagement' of its contemporary political actors with external agencies is often sceptical and wary of criticism for cooptation. Yet the variety of forms of engagement and plurality of actors and social forces involved invites reflection on whether undertaking research on 'urban

poverty' does not lead to initial definitions of the kind of social situation to be studied that may blinker our vision until they are deconstructed again.

### **Putting Bairro da Paz in broader context**

It therefore seems important to compare Bairro da Paz with other slum settlements. As we have seen, these are to be found in a wide variety of locations in the city. They are distributed along three major vectors of spatial expansion that reflect the particular patterns of social and economic transformation produced by the historical transformation of Salvador and its metropolitan region in the second half of the 20th century.

Different spaces offered different opportunities, advantages and disadvantages, not simply in terms of employment opportunities, travel distances to work (which shifted somewhat in relation to successive economic restructurings), but also in terms of the density and nature of housing. The (self-)built environment of the poor was both a product of their social practices, particularly in terms of the dynamics of extended family structures that are often built around women/mothers in the senior generation (with circulating male members), and also a factor shaping the evolution of those practices and the choices that people could make about what kinds of daily lives they wished to lead and the ways they could relate to each other through secular and religious forms of association.

Bairro da Paz has its own internal social geography, and there are differences between the social situations of residents of different zones (that relate to internal patterns of conflict). Yet, as a result of the agreements reached between the representatives of the invaders and public authorities that promised public investment in return for regulation of the future growth of the settlement, Bairro da Paz is much less densely settled than some of the city's other slums. Given that individuals can move between different spaces in ways that reflect the nature of property relations, as well as systems of kinship, affinity and alternative models for residential groups, what emerges from this wider comparative picture is not a homogeneous 'peripheral urban situation', but a series of rather distinct ways of being poor, building families and earning a livelihood in a complex of situations that are in part determined by the relations between slum dwellers and the non-slum areas that surround them.

An ethnographic example will be helpful at this point to illustrate the further complexities that emerge when we focus on individual family strategies for occupying urban space and their social meanings. Edileusa was the *mãe de santo* who ran the crèche in Bairro da Paz associated with a candomblé temple, which she founded early in the history of the invasion in pursuit of the generally preferred strategy of working to separate the *terreiro* physically from the family home. Mãe Edileusa's original home was, however,

located at some distance from the area of the invasion, in the lower-class part of the Boca do Rio neighbourhood, on the coastal strip and subject of one of ACM's eviction campaigns during his period as Prefect. Boca do Rio has a beach that was much enjoyed by Salvador's liberal artistic community in the 1970s, and more recently has seen new developments for wealthier people, such as a shopping mall and convention centre. Mãe Edileusa not only retained her original home in Boca do Rio, where two of her daughters and three grandchildren formed part of a co-residential unit, but also seized the opportunity provided by the city government's initial efforts to dislodge the invaders to acquire a third house in 1983, when the Prefecture offered to re-house those willing to leave in public housing in Fazenda Coutos. Brought up by her grandparents, whose deaths forced her to begin work as a domestic servant at the age of 11, Mãe Edileusa not only managed to found a *terreiro*, but also completed training as a nursing assistant and left her children three pieces of property. By seizing all the opportunities available within the urban spaces in which she could operate, including the new spaces and contexts created by land invasions, Mãe Edileusa maximised the prospects for the next generation. Yet the fact that family reproduction takes place across this extensive and diversified urban environment also means that which kin stay together or separate residentially in the next generation is related to the resources that can be mobilised and the internal relations between parents and children, and especially, in the social and cultural context of the Afro-Brazilian poor of Salvador, mothers and daughters.

There are processes of partial social segregation in the city, but it is important not to lose sight of the implications of the pervasive physical proximity of the residences of rich and poor<sup>22</sup> and to look carefully at how exactly separation is achieved. For example, one of Bairro de Paz's candomblé houses is patronised by the rich and famous and belongs to a small circle of 'elite *terreiros*' that are the principal object of the official politics of patronage of Afro-Brazilian culture and heritage. Yet this *terreiro* is 'in' but not 'of' the *bairro* as far as the residents are concerned. The candomblé temples 'of' the *bairro* are of a quite different nature (in terms of both religious practice and financial resources) and play a significant role in community politics. There is also a considerable amount of symbolic work being done by other sectors of Salvadorean society – including some that are themselves far from affluent – that seeks to draw boundaries, segregate and peripheralise. A good deal of community politics in Bairro da Paz, and also in zones such as the Subúrbio Ferroviário, is focused on contesting those constructions and projecting a more 'positive' public image, although this is not necessarily always a 'conformist',

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<sup>22</sup> In the case of Bairro da Paz, there are now clear political incentives for the condominium developers and other private interests in the zone to show an interest in investing in social programmes to benefit the poor, although the training programmes offered to residents by the partnership between the private university and developers of the neighbouring Alphaville high-income condominium complex are delivered in a centre located away from the *bairro*, close to the university.

'mainstream' or 'whitened' image under contemporary conditions.<sup>23</sup> But analytically, and in many other senses, substantively, social segregation as a concept perhaps obscures more than it reveals about the ongoing social dynamics of urban life, given the importance of the mobility through urban spaces of members of poor households and the way that specific kinds of interactions between slum residents and other social sectors play an important role in shaping the ways in which many of these poor communities develop.

Our analysis also indicates the importance of each particular political history and context in shaping the development (and capacity to 'act' collectively) of individual slums. Given that, we are drawn to the conclusion that a more sociologically neutral focus on the way people live their lives and relate to each other when they construct spaces and places in which to dwell in the city – a more classically 'holistic' ethnographic vision, as it were – might often better aid us to understand how 'peripheral urban situations' differ in ways that are important both for the people who live in them and also for developing public policies that might give better results for those people. If we allow the frames of 'slum-dwellers' and 'poverty' to foreclose on the possibilities of such analysis before we actually undertake it, we will never understand why some people seem more willing than others to buy into at least some aspects of the 'package' of social development and constructively engage public powers in order to obtain its benefits. This seems particularly important in a case such as Bairro da Paz, in which the constructive engagement remains far from uncritical and subservient at the grassroots level. In a sense, there is, of course, no unitary collective actor here (even if there are organisations to speak for 'the community'). Yet, to understand how fragile balances of counter-hegemonic force can emerge and be fostered by the contributions of academics and practitioners from outside poor communities, we do seem to need the kind of holism that can see the politics in the everyday and apparently apolitical aspects of the flow of life. Even by framing people as poor as a point of departure (as if this were a kind of transcendent subject position) we are in danger of forgetting the need to discover, ethnographically, what their lives are mainly about.

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<sup>23</sup> Even some evangelicals wedded to a theology of achieving material prosperity through self-improvement and enterprise are now engaged with the politics of race and affirmative action rather than the pursuit of 'whitening strategies', for example.

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