

**Brazil**

**(31)**

**UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme**

**Progress Report**

**Period of Activity: 2003**

**UNESCO Chair Cities and Environment**

**Report established by:** Professor Barbara Freitag-Rouanet

## **I. Activities**

### **I - Nature and objectives of the research**

The project “Nomad Cities” explores the reasons for the frequent transfer of the site of the “Capital” from one region to another (Northeast to Southwest and from here to the central-highlands) as well as the consequences of these transfers, involving the former “capital” left behind, as well as the newly established capital. As far as reasons were concerned, we assumed as an initial hypothesis that the transfer had a concrete political background, based on economic advantages for the groups in power. But also demographic reasons played a certain role. The consequences might include certain social and environmental damages, possibly irreversible, caused by this transfer, involving the “new” and the “abandoned” capitals.

Taking into account the economic downgrading of Rio and the reduction of its capacity to generate and maintain jobs (see Ruy Castro, 2003), we may formulate the further hypothesis that the proliferation of the “favelas” and the establishment of the narco-traffic drugs and the illegal arm-traffic in these “favelas” are in part due to the transfer of the State bureaucracy from Rio to Brasília, provoking loss of jobs through all levels of the Brazilian bureaucracy.

To avoid jumping from one criterion to another, the research group agreed to introduce different perspectives of analysis, including the urbanistic, economic, political, historical, and cultural aspects. These aspects or perspectives are specified in our electronic site <http://www.unb.br/ics/sol/itinerancias>.

Let me present now the main objectives of our “Itinerâncias urbanas”/ Nomad Cities in Brazil:

(a) In dealing with the phenomenon of urban nomadism in Brazil, with emphasis on capitals, we hope to give a contribution to the understanding of the formation and structure of Brazilian Society, since its origins. In a next

step, we hope to be able to generalize the experience of the federal capital to a great number of state and provincial capitals such as Belo Horizonte, Goiânia, and Aracaju, which took the place, respectively of Ouro Preto (in Minas Gerais), Vila Boa de Goiás (in the state of Goiás) e São Cristóvão (in the State of Sergipe), to mention a few well known historical examples;

(b) In introducing some new concepts, questioning the validity of others, which might be excessively impregnated by historical aspects of European history, and in making an effort to understand the processes of “megalopolization” (Freitag) or “favelization”(R.Daus) in the so called “informational era” (according to M.Castells, 1998), the research group hopes to give some important contributions to theoretical problems of urban sociology. This implies the formulation of new forms of understanding, explaining and theorizing about the new tendencies of “urbanization” and “conurbation” brought to light by recent statistics of world trends in urban studies;

(c) The results of our long term research may suggest some practical solutions for old problems which have been neglected by local and national governments, such as the lack of massive investments in building shelters for the poorer population. Lilian Fessler Vaz (2002) made a historical study of this particular deficit in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The neglect of building houses and developing state subsidised programs in urban and rural living opportunities is co-responsible for the emergence, in recent times, of a large number of socially excluded people, as shown by the study of Sarah Escorel, “Vidas ao léu” (2001); see also Lúcio Kowaric’s research on the subject during the last decades (USP) as we had the chance to here in the Centre during one of his Seminars. In a way this vagrant and jobless population is the Brazilian equivalent to the “homeless” described by George Orwell in his well-known “Down and out in Paris and London” (1935). The same social dynamics account for the emergence of the MST (Movimento dos Sem-Terra), integrated by landless and roofless people. As is well known, the MST plays an important political role in contemporary Brazil. The Government of President Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva created for these and for other reasons the “Ministério das Cidades” (2003), which is conceived to be an important tool to solve the long lasting problems of employment, shelter and welfare.

(d) In reconstructing the historical development of Brazilian capital cities, we hope to formulate proposals for urban development in the future, taking into account that nowadays Brazil has one of the highest urbanization rates in the world (between 85 and 90 %). This means that in the future, if the migration waves continue in the rhythm of the last decades, the majority of rural areas will be abandoned, while the towns (above all the federal and state capitals) will become overcrowded and unsustainable. This was anticipated by Ignácio de Loyola Brandão in his novel “Não verás país nenhum”(1975), in which he draws attention to the ecological imbalances created by the irresponsible burning down of forests and green areas of the Brazilian sub-continent, provoking overpopulation in São Paulo, a typical mega-city, in Saskia Sassen’s terminology.

(e) The CNPq-sponsored Project “Nomad Cities” has the ambition to create in Brasília, as the modernist capital referred to by John Holston, a *critical group of researchers (professors and students)* linked to different Departments of the University of Brasília, such as Geography and History

(Aldo Paviani), architecture/urbanism (A. Carpintero, Frederico Holanda), Social Work (Nair Bicalho) and Sociology (Brasilmar Nunes, Angélica Madeira and Barbara Freitag), with the task to observing, analysing and criticising the development of the new capital and its environment. The group will be guided by the need to avoid imminent destruction of water resources and “cerrado” vegetation, problems which have been emphatically referred to by Lúcio Costa, in the justification of his original project. As is well known, Burle Marx and Lúcio Costa also introduced the ideas of Howard’s garden-cities in the Superquadras of the Plano Piloto (the planned capital).

(f) In the eighties L. Costa agreed that the satellite towns, which had not been planned, are now threatening the overall ecological equilibrium, due to their pattern of horizontal occupation, which systematically diminishes the green belt around Plano Piloto. Our intention is to enhance ecological consciousness and provide a sense of social responsibility in dealing with the growing problems of the so called “cerrado” and the area of the Federal District. The authorities are losing control over this area, due to an abusive distribution of land for political reasons and electoral manipulation since 1985, when Brasília was granted the right to elect its own governor.

We also think that it is our duty to draw the attention of local and federal authorities, as well as UNESCO and other world organizations, to the destructive forces unleashed by uncontrolled migration and globalisation processes, and aggravated by short term political interests. Unless such problems are addressed, the modernist and homogeneous character of Brasília may well be jeopardized.

As a research group dedicated to these objectives since the year 2000, we are aware of the necessity a) for more time, b) for a broader framework (including detailed studies of the recent development of Salvador and Rio) and c) for a more specific study of the link between cities and their environment, taking into account the recycling of natural resources, and making special efforts to bring about sustainable economic development and social justice.

## II. Impact

### **II Progress Report of the first three years**

In 2004, we are in fact able to launch systematically our research work. Our first Progress Report (delivered in February 2003) in fact refers to two years of practical work. On this occasion the CNPq (under President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva) changed some of its criteria of fostering (material and travelling grants) what gave us additional financial support for the next three years. The research group benefited from an unusual interest on the part of students and colleagues within and outside the UnB. In these years the group grew constantly, attaining, among volunteers, guests and the “official” researchers, about twenty persons. Obviously not all had the same responsibility to contribute to the general work (cf. Relatório provisório de Pesquisa: Itinerâncias Urbanas - PIP-CNPq – Processo 350010/00-5 from 28.02.2003).

One of our major concerns was to *avoid overlapping of studies*, by ignoring previous research carried out by other groups and entities. So we

invested a lot of time and energy to find out which studies had already been done, therefore one of our first steps consisted in *exploring and enlarging the bibliography* annexed to the original project and developed two years before with the help of some interested colleagues from Salvador, Rio, São Paulo and Brasília. (See the original Project in the site). This task was facilitated by the privileged position of Brasília as a Capital, endowed with one public (UnB) and about 10 private universities or faculties, and several public and private libraries (as Biblioteca do Senado, Biblioteca da Câmara, Itamaraty, but also the Library of Casa Thomas Jefferson, Cultura Inglesa, Aliança Francesa) well equipped with books, documents and photographic and film-archives.

The different titles were divided among the members of the group on the basis of a necessary *division of labour*. Each member was invited to read, summarise and to present a written abstract, which was supposed to be annexed to the bibliography, once the site of the project had been installed, with its own Home Page. The same strategy was developed for newspapers, reviews, journals and important documents. A great help was given through the INTERNET, specially the Informatics Laboratory of our Department of Sociology, to which the students had free access. The collaboration with the Center of Data Processing (CPD) of the University of Brasília was very important for the building up of the Project's site.

Each member of the group was also urged to pay attention to important concepts relevant to the project, with the aim of *building up a Glossary* that might help the group itself and further researchers in dealing with terminological and definitional problems. The glossary included terms such as "itinerâncias", "nomadism", "migration", "transfer", "peregrination", and so on. Important concepts of urban sociology were also included such as "civitas" and "urbs", originally developed by Cerdas and recaptured by Richard Sennet in his books "The Conscience of the Eye" (1990) and "Flesh and Stone" (1994). It also seemed us to be important to clarify terms such as "urbanism" [we heard an interesting lecture of Cristina Leme "The origins of urbanism in Brazil and its impact on the transformation of Brazilian cities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century" in the Centre (24/02/04) about the development of the concept and the new branch of architecture introduced with this concept in Brazil] See also other sources, such as: Choay, (1965) for "urbanization", or Castells, (1975) with his "the urban question". The glossary should also include (as new sociological concepts) literary terms such as "flânerie", "flâner", "flâneur", created by Baudelaire and used by João do Rio and/or Walter Benjamin. The concept of "Hausmanization" proved to be useful to understand urban renovation in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century both in Brazil and in other capitals of Latin America as I tried to show in my Chapter on "Development and Urbanization in Latin America", written for the UNESCO-collection coordinated by German C. Damas on Latin American History. The glossary could be further enriched by terms used by European urbanists such as Haussmann ("embellissement", "embellissement strategique") and Camillo Sitte ("Stadt-Verschönerung"). (See also Schorske, 1961, among others).

As the general coordinator of the research project, I started to write a *Journal* describing all activities developed during this period. My notes can be accessed by any interested visitor to our site. Many Universities have

invited us to make presentations, as for instance the Universidade Federal do Ceará, Federal de Goiânia, Federal de Pernambuco, PUC de Belo Horizonte, and PUC de Porto Alegre. I made similar presentations in Lyon (France) and Naples (Italy). Angélica Madeira discussed her specific sub-project (Nomadism of artists in Brasília) on two occasions, in N.York and in London.

One specific aspect of our work consisted in *orienting the students to deal with concrete urban problems of their immediate environment*, giving them freedom to choose the subjects of their sub-projects. I insisted on directing their interest into the satellite town they knew best, or the city they came from. All sub-projects should be linked to the general focus of the project as a whole, “urban nomadism”, including governments, people, customs, music, literature, etc.

Two volunteers (Breitner Luiz Tavares and Carmen Batista) contributed studies on the local markets of Ceilândia (“Feira do Rolo”) and Guará II (Feira de Domingo), where they recorded in tape and video, oral memory and traditional songs of migrants (generally coming from the Brazilian Northeast). Simone S. presented the results of the People’s Courts of Small Causes (in Planaltina) showing their effectiveness even among illiterates.

Two students of architecture were interested in the transfer of regional capitals from one place to another. Marcel Santana, linked to the CNPq-financed group, undertook a pioneering study of the transfer of the provincial capital of Cuiabá to Vila Bela do Mato Grosso, and back to Cuiabá, due to the discovery of gold in that region and to the beginning of the Chaco War.

The PhD. student and Assistant Professor of UFG, Márcia Metran, are studying the introduction of Art Nouveau-Style in Goiânia, when the local capital was transferred from Vila Boa de Goiás (UNESCO-sponsored historical town, recently flooded by the river Vermelho waters) to this new capital in the thirties.

Paula R. Gonçalves (CNPq-financed student) who just started her under-graduate studies in Sociology, when she applied to join our group, made an interesting compilation of the history of spontaneously constituted satellite towns such as Braslândia, Santa Maria, Guará, Núcleo Bandeirante, Recanto das Emas, among others. In the second step of her study, she concentrated her attention on Taguatinga, the area where she lives, to inquire about the reasons why migrants from Northeast seek to live in this satellite town, and how they construct their identity “vis-à-vis” the Plano Piloto, the projected capital.

The young designer Cecília Mori, also one of CNPq-sponsored students, concentrated on the period between 1970 and 1985, analysing the specific art-production during these 15 years of military dictatorship, when the Congress was closed. Cecilia focused on the effects of political censorship on art production.

Two of our students (Emanuel de Souza CNPq-sponsored and Pedro Jabur, with a CAPES scholarship) are engaged in confronting the initial architectonic/urbanistic concept of Brasília with the reality of today. Pedro analysed the necessary and unnecessary changes introduced by the builders from NOVACAP (the New Capital) interviewing the “sindicatos” and inhabitants in a couple of different *superquadras*.

One anthropology student (Márcia da Silva, volunteer) applied the methodology used by Robert Park and his colleagues of the school of Chicago (consultation of contemporary newspapers) to analyse an important Revolt in the Province of Grão-Pará, the so called “Cabanada”. During this revolt, the city of Belém was captured by citizens of the Amazon area, who tried to declare the independence of the Province, during the Regency period (1831 to 1840).

My colleague, Dr. Brasilmar Nunes (CNPq-financed), is developing theoretical and empirical studies on the political culture and habits of “candangos” (as the inhabitants of Brasília are called) of the “Plano Piloto” in the light of their different regional origins.

Mariza Velloso, also Assistant Professor of the Department of Sociology (UnB) with a CAPES scholarship for her post-doctoral studies in New York, is working on a comparison between the transfer of the American Capital from Philadelphia to Washington, and the transfer of Brazilian Capital from Rio to Brasília.

Maria Angélica Madeira, an Assistant Professor of the Department of Sociology (UnB) and CNPq-financed, is engaged in understanding the artistic dimension of “nomadism”. In order to do so, she has developed a more sophisticated time-table of the history of Brasília: the period of construction until 1964; the military dictatorship, between 1964-85; and the re-democratisation, after 1985. Her next step was to regroup different cycles of art production according to each period. The first period corresponds to the work of the famous artists who gave their name and their art to Brasília, starting with Oscar Niemeyer, Athos Bulcão, Alfredo Sesquiat, Rubem Valentim, and others. The second period may be illustrated with artists such as Cildo Meirelles, Nelson Lerner, Barrancha, among others, who abandoned the paradigm of the “official state art” and introduced the perspective of a market oriented artistic activity. She is now going through a third period, characterized by young artists, born and living in Brasília, trying to find their own aesthetic language.

Besides coordinating these projects and trying to give them a common denominator based on the subject of “Nomadism of Cities in Brazil”, my major concern since the beginning was to *build up a Home Page in the INTERNET*. In this connection, the idea was to establish as many links as possible (for instance with URBAN/DATA, Latin American urban site, etc.) in order to give the project a network character and a structure in depth, allowing us to surf horizontally from one city to the other, and vertically from one level to the next, bringing to light new aspects and potentialities of the original Project. After some administrative and practical problems, it was possible to inaugurate the site <http://www.unb.br/ics/sol/itinerancias> in the beginning of 2003. The idea is to update constantly all information and results such as bibliography, glossary, statistic data, including our publications on the main subject. At the end of 2003 a new site was inaugurated: <http://www.unb.br/ics/sol/urbanidades>. It refers to the electronic Review (“Urbanidades” on line), where articles of the group but also from working groups with affinities to our project, as well as graduate students may publish their contribution to the general subject. The first number is available and the research group is working on the second number.

Since July, 2000, I had the opportunity to *write in the newspaper Correio Braziliense* a monthly article dealing with urban questions. 45 articles were published regularly since then, discussing some of the problems we dealt with during this first research-period, such as “Cidades nômade, capitais migrantes”, “Utopias urbanas”, “Brasília entre a fortuna e a virtù”, “O Familistério de Godin: um Palácio Social” which may be read by interested readers in the Home Page. In February 2004 two thirds of these articles were reunited in a collection and published in Brasília by the Editor Luiz Martins da Silva under the title: “Itinerâncias urbanas” (144 pages).

In October 2002 a collection of my articles related to the research work appeared in a book entitled “*A Cidade dos Homens*”, Editora Tempo Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro (256 pages).

### **III. Forthcoming activities**

#### **III Future Perspectives: 2003-2007**

It is the intention of our research group to continue developing the main idea of our research project “Nomad Cities”, widening its frame of reference in order to emphasize the ecological dimension and the sustainability of city-development. Five important steps, successive or simultaneous, should be considered:

- (a) In addition to Brasília, introducing Salvador and Rio as “nomad cities”, as originally suggested.

Since the beginning, we have had the idea to include in our project at least Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Brasília. Due to financial restrictions, we had to limit ourselves, for the time being, to Brasília. If we are to maintain the original scope of our project, the next necessary step will be to devote special attention to the two other former capitals, while giving continuity to the studies initiated in Brasília. Only this wider context will allow us to test some of our hypothesis concerning the general issue of transfer of capitals and the question of “nomad cities”.

Contacts with different research groups (institutions and persons) in Rio have been established:

- with Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), through Dra. Cléia Schiavo Weyrauch and her group, and
- with Colégio do Brasil, through Dra. Célia Maria Portella and Prof. Eduardo Portella, then President of the Biblioteca Nacional and the research Center ORDEC/Rio;
- UFRJ Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Prof. José Augusto Pádua, whom I met in Oxford and whose book, “Um Sopro de Destruição – Pensamento Político e crítica ambiental no Brasil escravista (1786-1888) Rio: Jorge Zahar 2002 gave new insides for the ecological aspects of our research.

Contacts with two research groups in Salvador have been established between November 2000 and February 2004:

- with Universidade Federal da Bahia/ Centro de Recursos Humanos (UFBa/CRH) – through Profa. Inaiá de Carvalho (who also receives a

- grant from CNPq) and Profa. Ana Fernandes (also CNPq-sponsored) from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the same University
- with Universidade Estadual da Bahia) (UEBa) through Dra. Maria Palácios, who presented in London her M.A. thesis about “Urban problems in LA”, emphasizing the case of Salvador.

All these groups are willing to establish more concrete links to our main project, provided new forms of financing can be found.

(b) Including more Brazilian cities (“capitais estaduais”)

As could be shown in our Progress Report, at least three of our students engaged in studies on regional capitals such as Goiânia (former capital: Vila Boa de Goiás) in the Estado de Goiás; Cuiabá (former capital: Vila Bela) in the Estado do Mato Grosso, and Belém do Pará (temporarily occupied by militants of the “Cabanada” movement, who wanted to fight for independence and create a new capital).

One of the future purposes of our research group is to interest colleagues and students of certain States in studying phenomena of urban nomadism that have taken place in their own State. Among such states are Maranhão, capital São Luiz (former capital: Alcântara); Pernambuco, capital Recife (former capital Olinda); Sergipe, capital Aracaju (former capital: São Cristóvão); Minas Gerais, capital Belo Horizonte (former capital Vila Rica, now called Ouro Preto).

(c) Introducing the question of the transfer of the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, to Brazil in 1808-1822

One of the main chapters in the history of city nomadism in Brazil actually began outside of Brazil. It started when French troops invaded Portugal and forced the court of D. João VI to escape to Brazil. Thus, the capital of the Portuguese Kingdom and its colonial empire shifted from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro. For this reason, Lisbon is an intrinsic aspect of our study, which is devoted to old and new capitals alike. As a new capital, Rio should be studied as an heir to the Portuguese court. A large part of Portuguese culture and civilization, including artists and scientists, was displaced to Rio. Together with European customs and ways of life, the ships brought wealth and knowledge, huge archives, documents, and thousands of books, which constituted the main stock of the Royal Library in Rio, now an integral part of the Biblioteca Nacional. When D. João VI went back to Portugal, after Napoleon’s fall (1815), he left behind him (in Rio) his son as heir of the throne but also the basic stock of the Royal Library, among others. A detailed historical study of this episode, which enriched and embellished the capital of the Reign “Portugal-Brazil and Algarves”, would be one of our concerns. But studying Lisbon as an old capital is also an integral part of our work. It is as important to know what happened to Lisbon when it lost its *de facto* status as a capital – culturally, economically and politically - as it is to know what happened to Rio de Janeiro when it lost to Brasília its status as the capital of Brazil. (see also Freitag, B. “Urbanização de Portugal: o exemplo de Lisboa”, Brasília, 2000).

(d) Including other world capitals such as Canberra, Berlin, Washington