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Fig . 0: Marcos Zerbini and ATST*

Popular Urban Production. Case-Study: *Associaçao dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra,* São Paulo, Brazil.

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Can popular logics lead to a new era of urban production? Facing what critical aspects? On what principles? This position paper investigates those logics in the context of Brazil, a country under transformation, with a rising middle class. The main goal is to identify the potentialities of ongoing processes and popular manifestations to develop in this direction. With the hypothesis that the relation between the individual, the collective and the different domains are key factors of alternative urban models. The case-study is *Associaçao dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra,* a non-governmental association based on a relational process that accompanies the self-construction of houses and the collective development of urban settlements for lower-income sectors in the city of São Paulo.

Popular Urban Production.
Case-study: *Associaçao dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra*, São Paulo, Brazil.
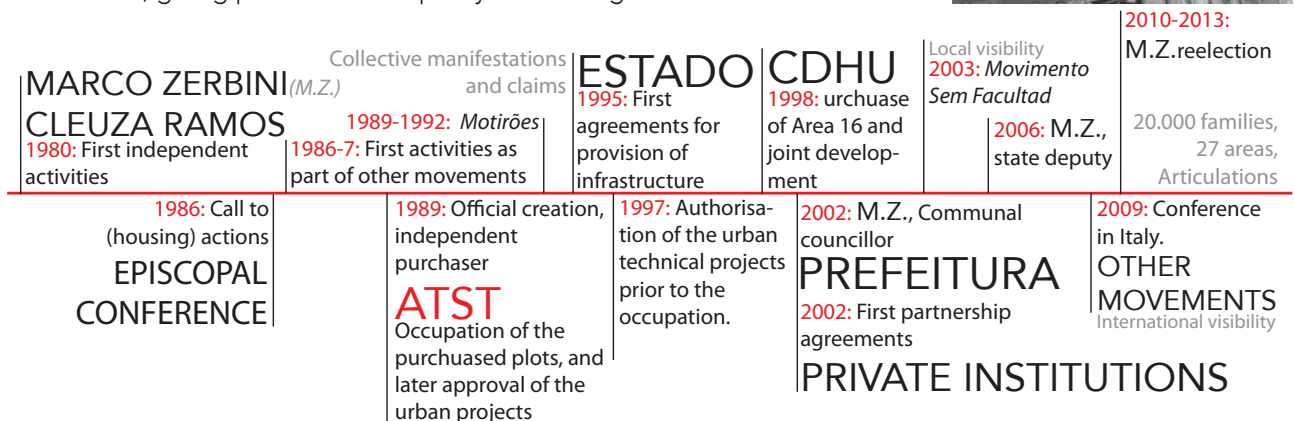

Introduction: The case-study

It is Saturday afternoon in a quiet neighbourhood in São Paulo. Thousands of people have gathered in a piece of open ground, focusing their attention on a man at the microphone. He is talking about a new agreement signed with the authorities to supply water to the area they began building a while ago. He is explaining the procedures and steps when he suddenly asks the audience what this event has to do with them, with their personal experience. That discussion though is for later: *now it is time to celebrate.*
The man at the microphone is Marco Zerbini, who together with Cleuza Ramos (Fig. 1: Founders and Leaders), founded in 1989 the *Associaçao dos Trabal-hadores Sem Terra* (*ATST*)[1*]. *ATST* is a non-governmental association that addresses the housing condition of low-income sectors by accompanying a self-construction method. The audience, a fraction of the 200.000 people involved with their proposal. Finally, the physical environment[2]: urban settlements in the peripheries of São Paulo, the megalopolis of Brazil[3].

Fig. 1: Founders and Leaders of *ATST* Marco Zerbini and Cleuza Ramos
Fig. 2: Evolution *ATST*

Condensing ongoing processes, *ATST* takes on form popular productions: the members of *ATST* are part of a rising lower-class, living most in rented accom-modations that take about 50% of their incomes, and are trying to find suitable way to improve their living conditions. Through *ATST*, they have developed agency to build their houses, and since the '80s 27 new areas have been erected, mostly in the north-westrn outskirts of the city. *ATST* has become an independent land-purchaser and adopted the self-construction of houses and the authorisation of the urban projects as the standard procedure (Fig. 2: Evolu-tion). Along with this, the association encourages the personal responsibility of the members through a relational process and new social relations start to be established, giving place to develop ways of dealing with the urban conditions.

MARCO ZERBINI*(M.Z.)* Collective manifestations and claims ESTADO CDHU Local visibility **2010-2013:** M.Z.reelection
CLEUZA RAMOS **1989-1992:** *Motirões* **1995:** First **1998:** urchuase **2003:** *Movimento Sem Facultad*
1980: First independent activities **1986-7:** First activities as part of other movements agreements for provision of infrastructure of Area 16 and joint develop-ment **2006:** M.Z., state deputy 20.000 families, 27 areas, Articulations

1986: Call to (housing) actions EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE **1989:** Official creation, independent purchaser ATST Occupation of the purchuased plots, and later approval of the urban projects **1997:** Authorisa-tion of the urban technical projects prior to the occupation. **2002:** M.Z., Communal councillor PREFEITURA **2002:** First partnership agreements PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS **2009:** Conference in Italy. OTHER MOVEMENTS International visibility

Urban Production in São Paulo

For 20 years, Brazil has gone through deep transformations. Gaining stability and defining its role as an emerging power, the country got at the spot of the world geopolitical configuration. The profile of the Brazilian society is witnessing the rise of the lower-middle class and according to *Fundação Getúlio Vargas[4]*, between 1993 and 2011, the lower classes "*E*" and "*D*" diminished from 93 to 63 millions people while the middle-class, "*Classe C*", rose from 46 to 105 millions. This phenomenon is expected to continue, with a strong impact on the markets and spatial distribution. Along with the social upgrading and the representative aspirations of "*new life-styles*" big companies and developers try to enlarge the benefits by applying their *modus operandi* while the popular sectors redefine their own values and logics in order to avoid being overrun by them. In this frame of negotiations, the urban production becomes a critical point of establishing order and ensuring control and rights.

The public and private formal and informal sectors review their positions. While developers redirect their marketing strategies and the speculation escalates even in informal settlements, the public sector reinforces its action plans and incorporates partnerships and shared responsibilities within their housing programs[5]. The popular logics start to be progressively embraced. What are the main aspects under discussion? Can popular productions turn into urban alternatives? Based on what principles? What are the ongoing experiments that host the logics of the popular sectors and deal efficiently with those critical aspects?

Fig. 3: General Assembly in Lapa, Sao Paulo
Fig. 4: Sample Meeting Texts

Aspect I: A relational method that links different sectors

What probably best characterizes the approach of *ATST* is the long-term relational process; composed of regular meetings before, during and after the construction of houses (Fig. 3: General Assembly). The main topics are technical, but a variety of texts includes the personal experience (Fig. 4: Meeting Texts). The process is oriented to *build a community* by reclaiming *the central role of the individual in the construction of the environment[6]*. Condensed in the

event of a human encounter lead by free personal verification, *ATST*'s method is openly linked to the social doctrine of the Catholic church[7]. Its principles, universally claimed, do not demande the translation into rituals[8] and endure an open method. Consequently, the internal and external relations get strengthened, and there is flexibility to respond to new situations.

This happens with support of the public and private sectors: the Estate of São Paulo provides infrastructure to the areas since 1995 and Marco Zerbini, involved in politics, encourages discussions and laws related to social housing[9]. In addition, through an agreement with the *Companhia de Desenvolvimento Habitacional e Urbano* (*CDHU*)[10] joint ventures of mixed residential typologies take place in the *Conjunto Habitacional Parque das Nações Unidas* (*CHPNU*)[11]. On the other hand, with the focus on the person, educational and health along with other social expectations are addressed. This is achieved by relating with other movements[12] and private institutions, such as clinics and universities. By now 25 partnerships agreements involve 25.000 members and 95.000 students[13].

ATST does not just bring together people networking for profits, but puts in evidence *a network of sectors and domains*. It provides a *frame of reference*, concerns and experiences[14], not focused on the *whole* nor on the *action plan*[15], but on the *individual* and the *circumstances*. Since the main focus of *ATST* is *the construction of a community around a housing project*, the attempt is tidily linked to all the actors that have a role in the urban production in a broad sense. It is therefore part of the process to relate to them and to move around their domains. The cooperation agreements must be beneficial and enlarged and *ATST* is testing this chance when performing as a *hybrid entity*[16] that links what once was disconnected. There are no limits for popular logics and actions when performed within labile borders of domain, but larger impacts can only be achieved by strongly accelerating the process and reaching the political level.

Fig. 5: Sample Area 7,
Sol Nascente,
Urban Skim (left),
Infrastructure (right, top),
Plots (right, bottom)
Data:
Sub-Areas 11 (1994) and 13 (1997):
Total Area sqm.: 91.988 - 72.600,
Plots units: 562 - 341,
Area %: 63 - 51,
Streets Area %: 21 - 22,
Green Area %: 5 - 26,
Insitutional Area %: 5 - 0

Aspect II: Inside a network of urban production

The land purchased on the name of the association and shared by the members is not appealing to the market for several reasons. The main goal is to shift the tax category to obtain the general approval of the urban skim and the houses, guaranteeing the possibility of subdivision and the progressive supply of infra-structures. The usual outcome is a single-family-house pattern (Fig. 5-6: Sample Area)[17]. The members are assisted to personalise a set of prototypes (Fig. 7: Prototypes), and commit to self-construct their houses with no restrictions of time (Fig. 8: Houses)[18-19].

Even with comparatively positive social indicators[20], the urban quality of the areas meets some critical points. Most of the them are low-density and slowly consolidated, staying as isolated settlements until integrating with the urban fabric (Fig. 9: Sample Area).

ATST is inside a network of urban production so what is at stake is the capability to construct houses, communities, and the city in general in the case of São Paulo (Fig. 10: ATST's Map). The actual alternatives for the popular sectors to upgrade their living environments are quite limited, unless they get reached by public programs or start self-organizing in popular associations. What is exposed is that there are no single strategies that will achieve the complex task of creating a city that addresses the middle class. Only a negotiation process can bring out positive results. The case of *ATST* gives room to this negotiation. With a strong connection between the relational process and the spatial results, in the case of the *CHPNU* (Fig. 11: *CHPNU*), the level of consolidation allows the area to play a stronger role in the definition of larger strategies. Instead of independent interventions, there is attempt to build a major facility for communal, cultural and educational activities to serve the whole and the surroundings[21].

Fig. 6: Sample Area 7, *Sol Nascente*

Aspect III: The popular leading to alternative urban models

A new type of city is to be created and there are already enough signs to believe that it is feasible to build up on the existing qualities of popular areas. Some of the urban issues to address are the energetic consumption (the increase of consumption represents an increase of energy demand) and the sustainable management of resources, including land, to define the successful models. In addition, the urban quality becomes a strong parameter (issues such as the distribution and attributes of spaces and activities are to be questioned). Ultimately, the urban economy under-laying the urban structures must sustain the middle-class.

In a country where cultural and production practices have historically been hybridized, due to a encounter of ethnics, religions and a peculiar way of interacting, *the case of the urban production cannot be an exception.*
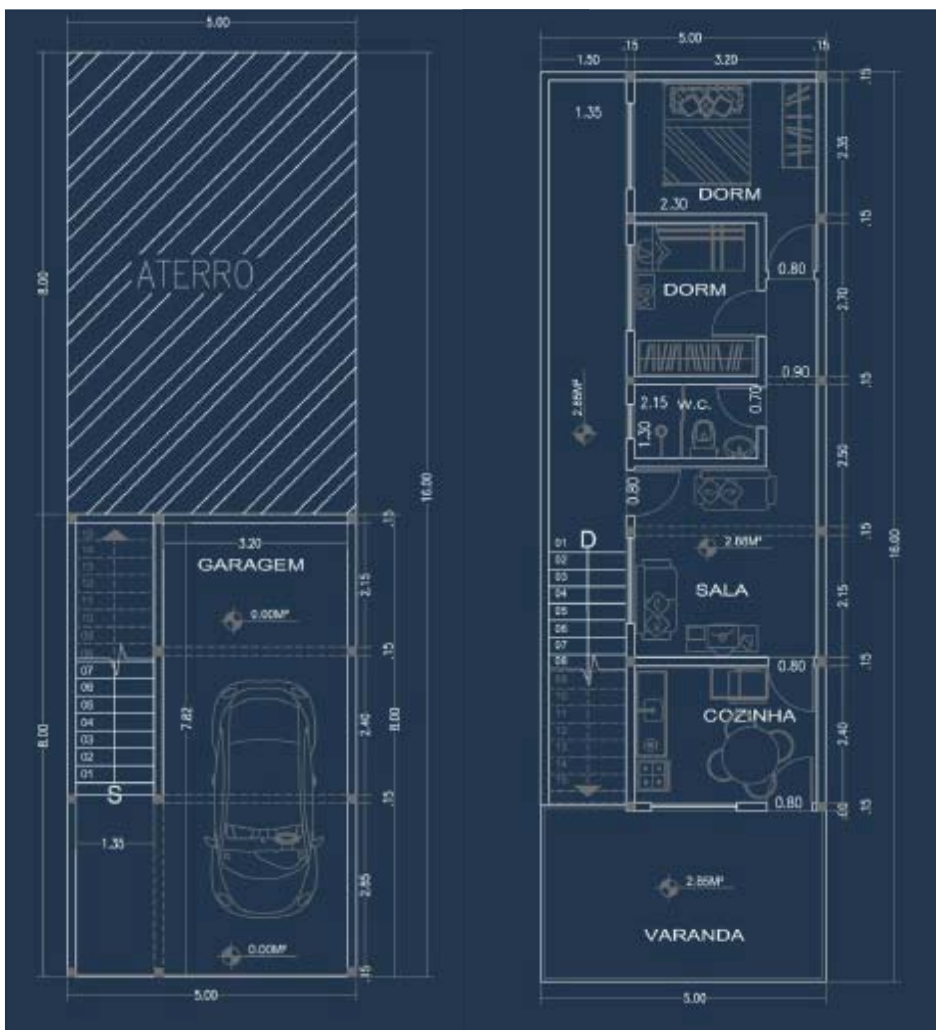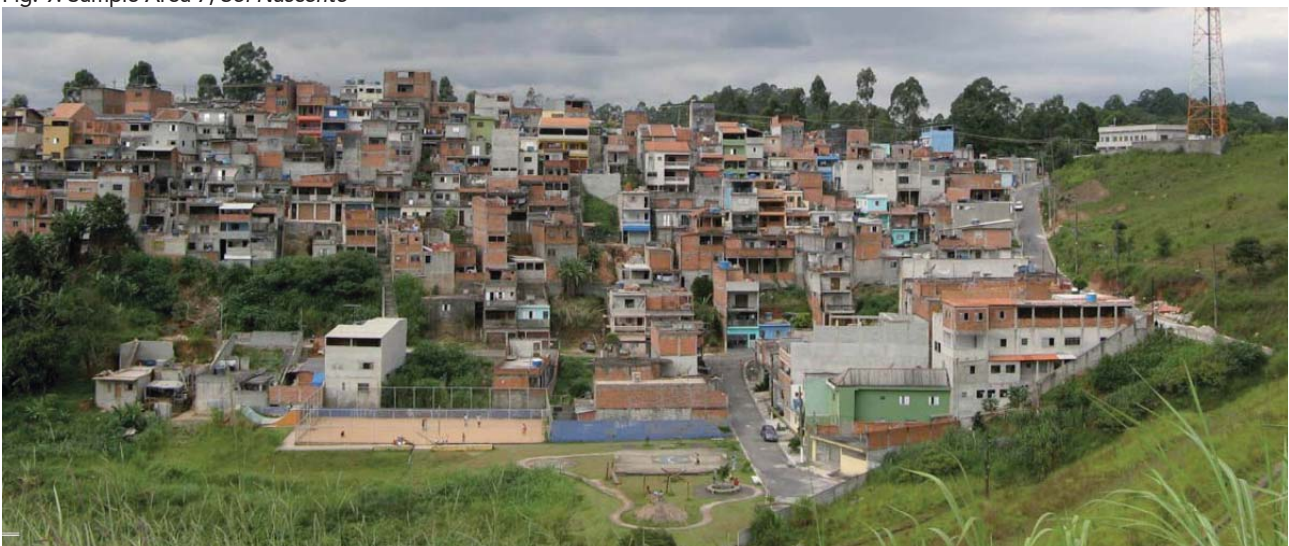

Fig. 7: Sample of prototypes (left),
Fig. 8: Images of houses (right)

How do hybridized practices, that merge different logics and origins, can be pushed forward and translated into spatial manifestations? *Acknowledging the outcomes of the popular opens up alternatives.* The challenge is to connect with the social networks that make it happen. Individually or collectively performed, the popular actions are not only about fulfilling the basic needs in self-sufficient manners, but mostly about guaranteeing the reproduction of a particular way of life. *A popular way of life that is truly urban.*

This is guided by a set of principles, such as *reciprocity*, *solidarity* and *commons*. The first one defines the direct exchange of tangible and intangible goods where prices are determined on a case-by-case basis not only in monetarial terms. This translates in new exchangings, for example, when the partnership institutions find collaborators of trust among *ATST*'s members, which help each other during the tough starts ups of the areas (Fig. 12: Mutual help). Secondly, the focus on the local creates new solidarities, such as the "*share*" of infrastructures by the inhabitants while the supply is enlarged; or the training, educational and entertainment activities that are voluteerally offered in the community centres (Fig. 13: Activities at the community centres)[22]. Finally, keeping the commons at the centre (as shared pool of *sources*, necessarily created by *communities*, through flexible *communizing processes*)[23] leads to new manifestations. The collective clamming of services or the celebration of achievements reinforces the value of the areas as common concerns (Fig.14: Collective and commons).

Fig. 9: Sample Area 7, *Sol Nascente*

State Deputy

Negotiations for
not-appealing land (sloped terrain, badly connected or serve...

Pritate Inst

Negotiations for
Partnerships

Marco Zerbini
Lawer, born in 1963, Founder of ATST
"I life politics as I live life".

Independent
activities since the '80s

Increased Visibility
Other Services
Work posibilities

Partnerships
Fee reductions

Ind...
U...

Cleuza Ramos
Born in 1954, Founder and President of ATST

*"The main goal of ATST is not the
construction of a house, but the
construction of a community, the
construction of a conscience of
citizenship, of the role of the subject
in history as a transformation
agent." "This is only done through a
company, a friendship".*

Found and lead since 1989

Visibility

Frame of social action

ATST
Non-governmental
non-profit associati...

Support - Responsibility

Leadership

Registration - Commitment to the proposal
Initial session, general assembles, group meetings (leaders,
coordinators, volunteers)

Technical/ Legal Assistance
House prototypes

Land Purchase

Independent association
Construction of C...

New Solidarities
Reciprocity

MEMBERS
About 2000.000
Low-middle class
Living in rented accommodations
*"Compartilhar as necessidades
concretas para poder compartilhar
o sentido da vida "*
(Share the concrete needs in
order to share the meaning of life
- Frequent statement).

Self - Construction of Houses

AR...
27 areas - 4...
Average 50...
Total: 5.476...

Positive social indicators
Living conditions improvements
Microbusiness - education

Disertation
(from 20 to 5% after first period)

Hear about ATST
by word of mouth

Negotiations
for approval
and services

Vote and Elect
(Communal Councillor: 2002-2006
State Deputy: 2006-2009, 2009-2013)

SOCIETY

PREI

Secretaria Municipal ...
*Change tax status from I...
Imposto sobre a Propriedad...
according to Regional Stra...
Emprendimentos de Intere...

8

Market

Catholic Church

Other Movements

ESTADO S.P.

...titutions

...ed)

...ependent movements
...IVERSITY: 95,000 members
...HEALTH: 25.000 members

Speculation

Social Doctrine Principles

Answer to
Episcopal Conference
call for actions in
social housing in 1986

Link to other movements
from 2009

Relation and cooperation with
non-profit associations around the world (CdO)
and other movements in S.P.

Independence from
Movimento Sem Terra (MST),
União dos Movimentos de Moradia de São Paulo (UMM),
and *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT).

...struction of Community Centre

Progressive urban integration,
articulation of projects

Negotiations

Progressively regularization
of infrastructures and services

Infrastructure and Services

...REAS

...4 ensembles
...00-1.500 lots/area
...6.916 sqm. 6.116 plots aprox.

Apartment buildings
*Programma de Provisão de
Morandias com Parcerias*

Counterparts

Authorizations
of the project*

...FEITURA

...de Habitãoe, S.M. de Desenvolvimento Urbano, S.P.
...mposto Territorial Rural (rural federal tax) to
...de Predial e Territorial Urbana (municipal urban tax),
...ategic Plan and the proposed category of
...esse Social (EHIS, Social Housing)

Social Housing
Programs Articulation

CDHU
*Companhia de Desenvolvimento
Habitacional e Urbano, Estado de S.P.*

Social Housing
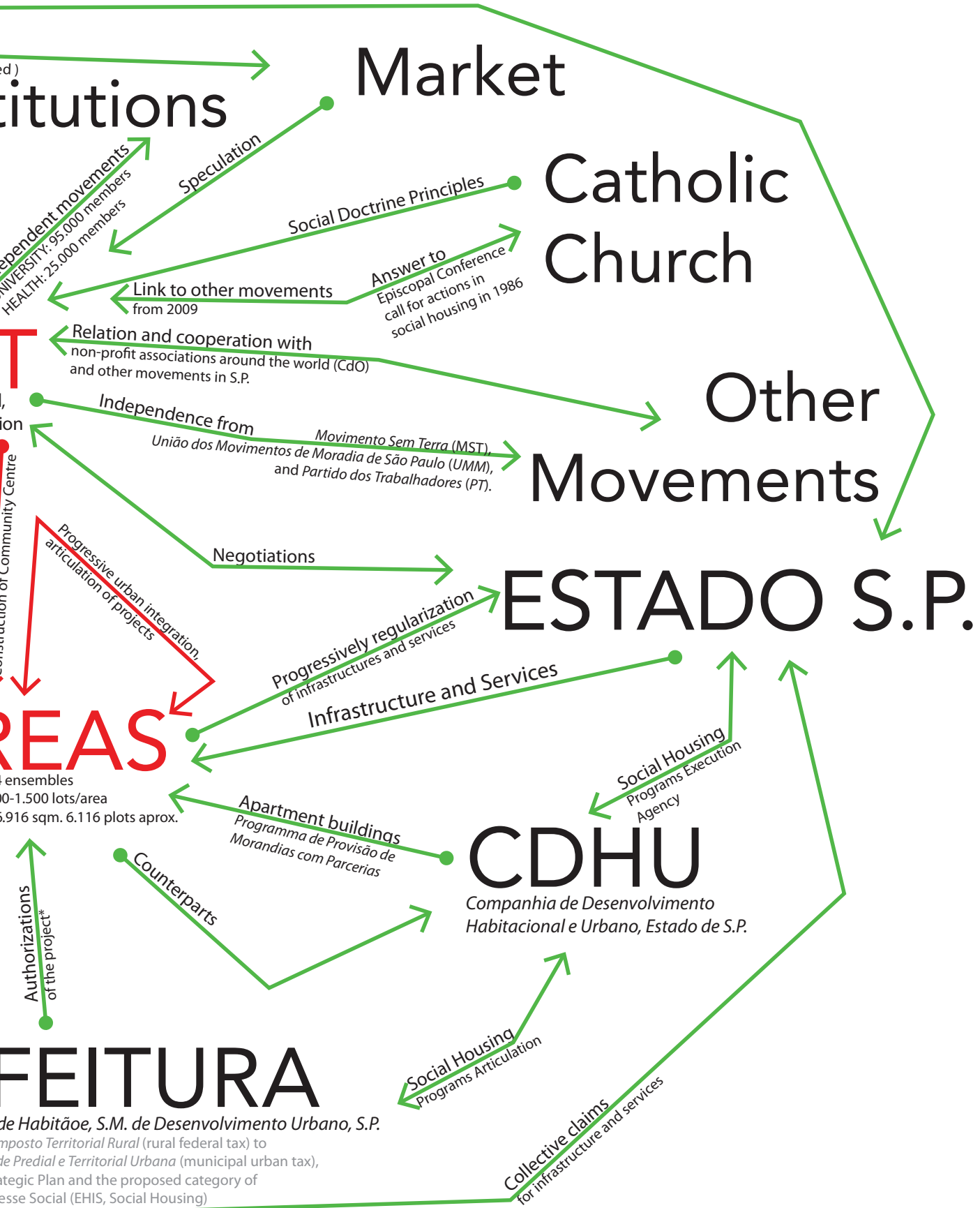Programs Execution
Agency

Collective claims
for infrastructure and services

Conclusion: An open possibility

ATST proves to follow existing popular logics to encourage the construction of the city when turning the houses and settlements into the common concerns. Moreover, accompanying the formation of communities and encouraging complex relational processes, it manages to act within the production networks of São Paulo.
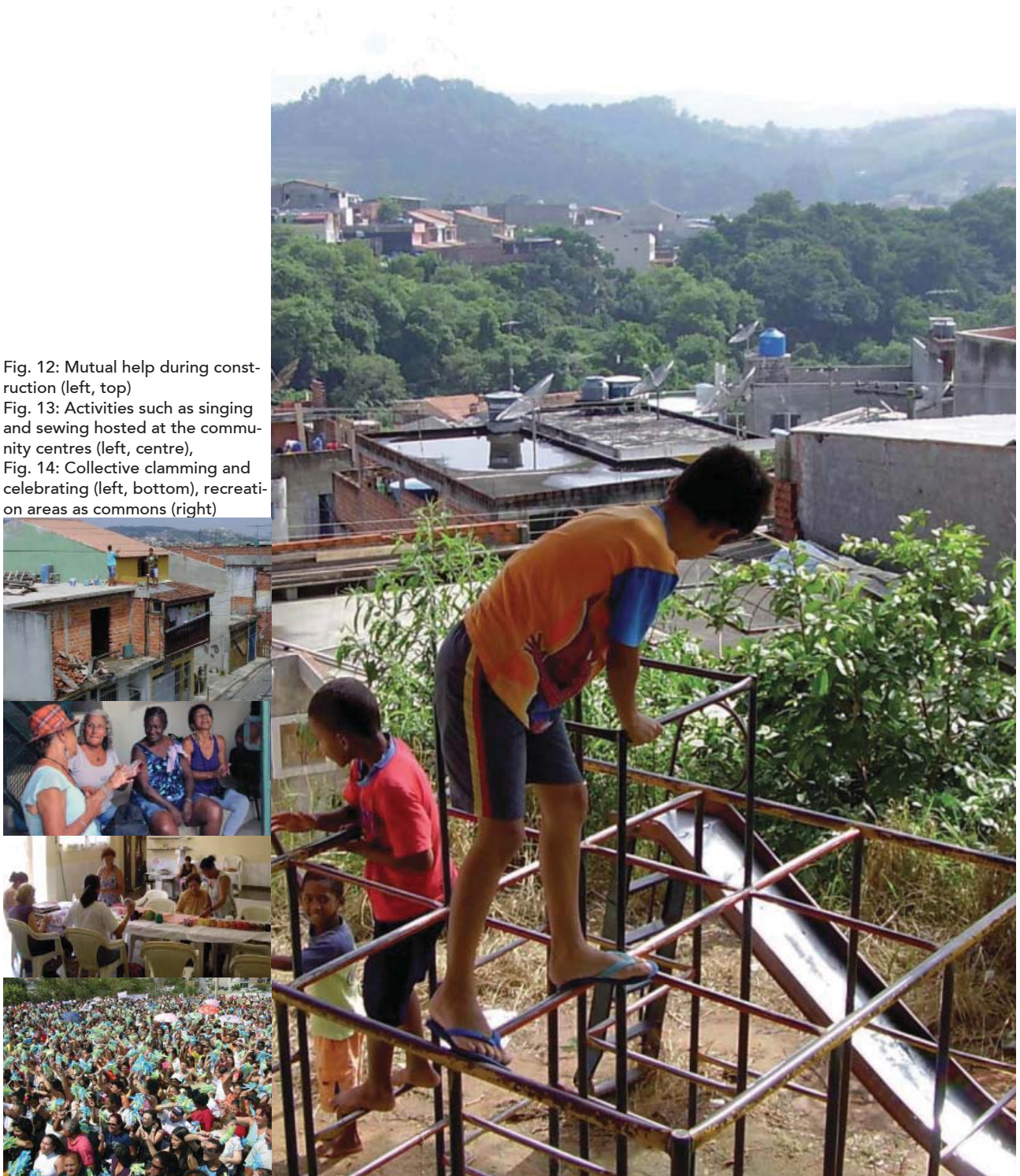
In the open negotiations, *the popular needs to be deepened and empowered*. New attempts are bond to existing networks and potentially translate into democratically managed nonprofit associations, where the individual is at the centre of the collective construction and where resources are reassigned to it. An active cooperation among these associations and the actors involved (in the agricultural, credit, productive, working, housing, building activities) at all levels would lead to new mechanisms of ownership, rights and citizenship.

It is only with this, that gradual shifts will be triggered, conveying wider sector of the society and tackling the issues of housing, densification, economy and ultimately urban quality. Creating the basis for the development of experience-based models in São Paulo and the city in general, is the open possibility. May be then, *there will be no need to celebrate an urban improvement*.

Fig. 11: *Conjunto Habitacional Parque das Nacoes Unidas* (Areas 16, 21, 22, 23) Urban skim (left), Aerial view (right, top), Apartment buildings (right centre), Single family houses (right bottom)

Fig. 12: Mutual help during const-
ruction (left, top)
Fig. 13: Activities such as singing
and sewing hosted at the commu-
nity centres (left, centre),
Fig. 14: Collective clamming and
celebrating (left, bottom), recreati-
on areas as commons (right)

ENDNOTES

[1.] The main sources of information for this paper are two research studies (Schnyder *et all*, 2010 and Valentino, 2009), and a session held on November 4th, 2011 in *ATST* headquarters in Lapa, São Paulo. This session consisted of meetings with Marco Zerbini, Cleuza Ramos, collaborators, and professionals of the technical office. Further enquiries in different sources, listed in the Bibliography, were made regarding conceptual and technical issues. A tour around the areas is still to be performed.

[2.] Foucault defines Environment or *Milieu as "the field of intervention in which individuals, populations, and groups put into conjunction elements and events that circulate beyond the site itself"* (Foucault, 2007, in Noys, 2010).

[3.] Formally, *ATST* is a private right legal entity with Statute, elected Directors Council, General Assembly, Fiscal Council and Legal Office. About 40 stable people constitute the operative core team of leaders, collaborators and volunteers. The facilities in Rua Felix Guilhem, 37, Lapa de Baixo - São Paulo are open from 9 to 20 hs. during week days and for special events. They consist of one medium-size meeting room (for 500-600 people), one big meeting room (for 2.000-3.000 people), an administration area, and technical offices.

[4.] Source: Brazilian Federal Government: www.brasil.gov.br/sobre/economia/setores-da-economia/ retrato-da-economia-brasileira. Lower classes categories "*E*" and "*D*" have family monthly incomes up to R$ 751, and between R$ 751 to R$ 1.200. Middle-class, "*Classe C*" from R$ 1.200 to R$ 5.174. The current population of Brazil is *circa* 200 million people.

[5.] See as example the *Programma de Provisão de Morandias* by *Companhia de Desenvolvimento Habitacional e Urbano, Estado de São Paulo* : www.cdhu.sp.gov.br/programas_habitacionais/provi-sao_de_moradias/apresentacao.asp

[6.] "*The main goal of ATST is not the construction of a house, but the construction of a community, the construction of a conscience of citizenship, of the role of the subject in history as a transformation agent.*" "*This is only done through a company, a friendship*" (Cleuza Ramos, 2011, traslation by the author).

[7.] A summary of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church can be found in the Encyclical Letters *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) and *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) of Benedict XVI.
Extracts from *Deus Caritas Est*: "*Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.*" "*(...) Love—caritas—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need. The Church is one of those living forces (...) that does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, (...) [to avoid] the mistaken notion that man can live ""by bread alone"" —a conviction that demeans man and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human*".

[8.] This profile transforms the experience in a sample of the most advanced catholic enterprises. In Brazil, the religious dimension tends to be present in the society, its actions and manifestations, mostly in syncretised forms.

[9.] For example, the cost of the deeds in social housing were dramatically reduced.

[10.] *Programma de Provisão de Morandias, Parcerias com Associações e Cooperativas*: www.cdhu. sp.gov.br/programas_habitacionais/provisao_de_moradias/parcerias_com_associa%C3%A7oes_co-operativas.asp

[11.] The *Conjunto Habitacional Parque das Nações Unidas* is an ensemble built by *ATST* composed by the articulated areas 16, 21, 22 and 23. The area 16 was developed as a mix of houses and public apartment buildings; the 23, is composed only by public buildings.

[12.] In 2009, Marco and Cleuza gave a conference in Italy that brought them a certain international attention and put them in touch with initiatives with catholic roots and other social movements in Latin America and the world. RAI International (*Radiotelevisione italiana*) made a documentary movie on them. See *Compagnia delle Opere* (*CDO*): www.cdo.it and www.clonline.org/whatiscl.html.

13. For a list of the partnership universities see: www.educarparavida.com.br/default2.asp?pg=sys/nucleo&cat_cod=1958. *Movimento Sem Facultad* was consequently created in 2003.

14. A [flexible] "*mollusk*" frame, where concepts related to distances and gaps between the components, scale, boundaries, in-betweens, tops or bottoms, get replaced by new characters and attributes (intensity, flows), entities (*actants*) and concerns (attributions, distributions, connections, associations and transformations) (Latour, 2005).

15. Latour, stepping on Tarde says: "*the whole is sometimes inferior, smaller, and less complex than the individuals that make it possible*" (Latour, 2011).

16. For Latour, *hybrids* are *organisms that operate at multiple levels of domain, complexity and intensity. They can only be understood by extending their networks into wider directions and by moving around them* (Latour, 2011).

17. The skims generally include 30% of public facilities and infrastructure space, housing plots of 80 and 130sqm, and up to 10% of commercial plots of 160sqm. 1 to 3-floor-single-family houses and apartment units accommodate about 80.000 people. The areas are managed by an independent association based at the community centre, where annual assemblies and other activities and services are held.

18. See the complete documentation made by Davide Valentino of 24 of the areas (Valentino, 2009).

19. For more information on legislations, see *Departamento de Parcelamento do Solo e Intervenções Urbanas, Secretaria Municipal de Habitação, Prefectura de São Paulo*: www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/habitacao, *Empreendimentos de Interesse Social*: www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/habitacao/departamentos/parsolo/index.php?p=3477, *Zoneamento da Cidade de São Paulo*: www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/desenvolvimento_urbano/legislacao/planos_regionais/index.php?p=1757. *Imposto sobre a Propriede Predial e Territorial Urbana, Prefeitura de São Paulo*: www.capital.sp.gov.br and *Imposto Territorial Rural, ITR, Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária, Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Agrário, INCRA*: www.incra.gov.br.

20. From the point of view of the social development, the research projects carried out by Berfolla, Folloni and Schnyder, (Berfolla *et all*, 2010), provides actual data on the living conditions. The crucial achievement of the house is linked with a shift in the working sectors and a rise in the incomes. With increasing initiativeness, the members have new consumer habits and a general perception of improvement. They have also strengthened their social relations through new types of solidarities and are more interested in formation and education. The next step in this line of research is to compare the figures with other projects managed by the public sector in order to get a complete picture of the similarities and differences.

21. See *Progetto di un Centro Comunitario in un Quartiere dell'ATSTSP* (Pelella, 2012).

22. The community centres hold free activities such as singing, dancing, sewing, manicure and technical workshops, alphabetisation and language courses. It is basically composed by an event room and a kitchen.

23. Definition by Rainer Hehl.

Notes:
- *The exposed event is a construction for argumentative purposes.*
- *The images are taken from the sources as stated explicitly in the Bibliography.*
- *Figs. 2, 10 and 13a were elaborated by the author.*
- *George Freire, Lucinaldo Ferreira and Vincenzo Fraschini from ATST's technical office kindly answered enquiries personally, by email or phone.*

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- *Estado de São Paulo, Secretaria de Estado da Habitão*:
www.cdhu.sp.gov.br/programas_habitacionais/apresentacao.asp
- *Prefeitura de São Paulo, Secretaria Municipal de Habitão*:
www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/habitacao, *Secretaria Municipal de Desenvolvimento Urbano:* www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br//cidade/secretarias/desenvolvimento_urbano
- Benedict XVI. Encyclical Letters. Ed. Vaticano, 2005, 2009:
www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/index_en.htm
- *Compagnia dell Opere*: www.cdo.it, www.clonline.org/whatiscl.html
- *Deputado Marco Zerbini*: www.marcoszerbini.com.br
- *Educar para Vida*: www.educarparavida.com.br *Source of Figs. 0, 1 and 14a.*