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## LEARNING FROM VILA PLANALTO:

### The Limits of Segregation and Urban Diversity in a Gentrified Neighbourhood

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**MATÍAS OCARANZA PACHECO**

Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, University of Brasília  
 matias@aluno.unb.br

**FREDERICO DE HOLANDA**

University of Brasília  
 Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, University of Brasília  
 fredhol@unb.br

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the scope of the concept of gentrification with regard to the current urban transformations in Vila Planalto, located at Brasilia's central area. The neighbourhood was the first provisional contractors' camp to house workers, architects, contractors, and politicians who participated in Brasilia's construction. In 1988, after a long struggle of the residents to stay, it became a historic heritage site, which started a process of constant changes and real estate appreciation. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Vila Planalto became a fascinating site in Brasilia's socio-spatial landscape. Class conflicts are present here, threatening the right to the city for underprivileged population.

The research aims to understand the process of Vila Planalto's urban transformation, the causes and effects of social displacement, and the limits society imposes to resist market forces. As a hypothesis, we argue that public policies are determining factors for the physical and social elitism of the place, whereas the transformations the residents introduced have been fixing limits to the gentrification process. We examine the case under three aspects: socioeconomic, configurational, and ways of living. We use a survey of quantitative and qualitative data, and two years of ethnographic research, participant observation, and interviews. The study contributes to Spatial Syntax by incorporating other analytical disciplines such as ethnography. The urban configuration indicated the potential spaces of encounter and the ethnography allowed to observe the daily life of those places.

The results indicate that public policies and infrastructure projects carried out in the area and surroundings were decisive in the historical periods identified. In Vila Planalto, the displacement of the original and lower-income residents has been taking place gradually over time. There are no large-scale private investments. Conversely, small entrepreneurs, newcomer residents, and retired people came to believe that it is promising to invest in real state here.

The statistically observed social diversity conceals a reality of polarized social differentiation that dates from the origins of the settlement: shacks built near posh villa-like buildings represent two segregated classes which, in spite of their proximity, do not interact. In the same manner as Vila Planalto is an urban fissure in Brasilia's dominant order, conflicting uses of space withstand gentrification and space disciplining inside its borders.

## KEYWORDS

Gentrification, Urban Diversity, Limits, Vila Planalto, Brasília.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In several cities of Latin America and the world, the processes of 'elitization' of the urban space have evicted the lower income inhabitants and users. This is the process of urban transformation in which the original population of deteriorated or impoverished neighbourhoods is progressively displaced to places further away from city centres and replaced by a population with greater economic, cultural and social capital. This process is defined as *gentrification* (López, 2015).

Gentrification is urban transformation of a poor or low-income neighbourhood into a higher income or middle class neighbourhood, either residential or commercial. This socioeconomic change produces displacement, understood as the phenomenon that occurs when an economically or culturally fragile group must move to a less valued location and be replaced by a stronger group. However, gentrification is much more than a process of change in the social structure of a neighbourhood, it also transforms different aspects of everyday life, especially for the vulnerable population, which ends up being expelled (Janoschka & Sequera, 2014).

Inzulza (2012) examines cases in Latin America and proposes the concept of "Latin-gentrification", relating the processes to more local patterns inside a context of global strategies of urban revitalization. In the same direction, Janoschka and Sequera (2014), discuss the decentralization of the debate in the European context and the necessity to consider the specificities of each site, by recognizing three key elements: 1) the role of the State in the definition of official policies; 2) The symbolic value of the gentrified spaces; and 3) the formalization of the economy and the effort to discipline spaces. Leite (2007) adds a fourth relevant factor: 4) resistance against gentrification and the counter-uses of the city (Leite, 2007).

López (2015) emphasizes that the gentrification of Latin American cities denies the right of the urban poor to occupy central and pericentral spaces. Gentrification is related to the loss of use value against exchange value of space, which means that less favoured population are denied the rights to certain sectors of the city. We understand the right to the city not only as a right to centrality, but also as the right of the inhabitants to think, decide, build, and transform the city and the rhythm of urban life, collectively, according to their wishes.

The case of Vila Planalto in Brasília is a paradigmatic example of the relationship between architecture and segregation. The neighbourhood has a privileged location in the Federal District, located 1.5 km from the Three Powers Square and 3 km from the Central Business District (CBD) (Figure 1). It began in 1956 as a temporary constructors' camp for the companies that built the main buildings in Brasilia. After a process of resistance, in 1988, the neighbourhood obtained permanence by being declared a Historical Heritage Site of the Federal District. In 1992 the residents received an allotment of the properties. This intensified physical and social changes, and the neighbourhood began to lose the characteristics behind its classification as a heritage site, as well as some of its original inhabitants.

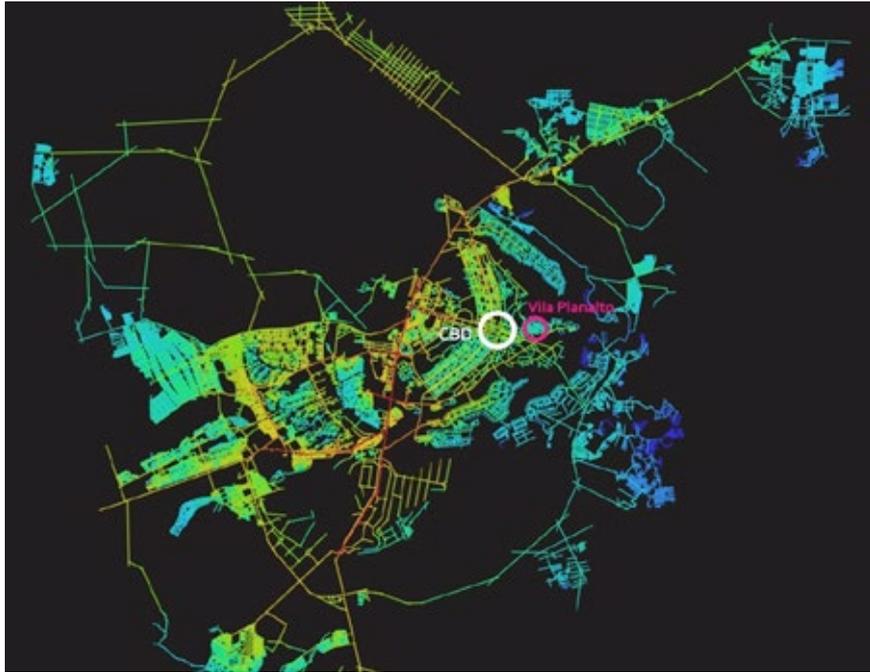


Figure 1 - Axial map of the Federal District indicating Vila Planalto.

During the period that it was a contractors' camp, Vila Planalto was populated by workers, engineers, and businessmen of the construction of Brasília as well as politicians who sporadically passed through until the inauguration of the new capital. Currently, this neighbourhood is the result of the merged remnants of five contractors' camps: 1) Tamboril, 2) DFL (Department of Force and Light), 3) Pacheco Fernandes, 4) Rabelo, and 5) nine lots of EBE camp (Brazilian Engineering Company), plus a Sector of small farms (Figure 2).

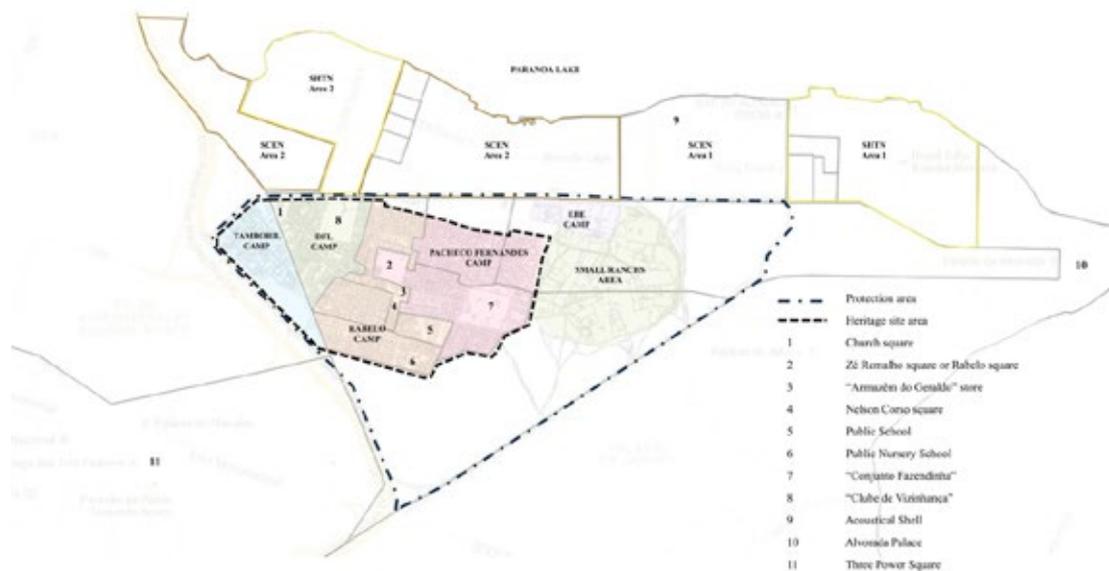


Figure 2 - Map of Vila Planalto map indicating polygons of protection and heritage site area, remaining construction camps, and points of interest

Features, such as the declaration of historic heritage site (set of laws that protect some physical characteristics), the condition of land tenure (impossibility of formal sale), the restrictions imposed by the “force of architecture” (Holanda, 2013), and certain mechanisms used by the inhabitants to stay in their space (Zarur, 1991) limit the process of gentrification in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, these factors have not prevented the neighbourhood from becoming a middle-class sector because of changes in the built environment and especially the elitism of uses and users of the public space.

In Vila Planalto, the great spatial diversity is related to a great social diversity. The spatial configuration has been, in part, responsible for the stability of the population for more than fifty years. Five decades after the city was inaugurated, market forces were not able to expel all the low-income residents; manual workers continue to rent residences and move there (Holanda, 2013). However, the picturesque character and the location close to the CBD have increased the prices for sale and rent of the properties as well as the restaurants and bars by outsiders. Thus, many original inhabitants have moved, sold, or rented their houses, which has pressed part of the older residents to move or to transform houses and local businesses into gourmet establishments.

Before this process, a new phase of potential transformations was seen in the spatial configuration, the socioeconomic structure, and the way of life of the inhabitants. The delivery of property titles in 2014 and the formal sale of lots opened commercialization and access to real estate loans, which further increased prices and generated the definitive replacement of the poorest population by a higher income population. Thus, the main question of this paper is: are there limits to the process of gentrification in Vila Planalto? The second question is about the particularity of the neighbourhood, considered as an exception or fissure inside the Brazilian capital: how is gentrification and its limits a product of local or global relations that affect the city?

Our first hypothesis is that Vila Planalto is undergoing a process of gentrification with local characteristics, but in a context of global urban policies. We start from the premise that the neighbourhood is experiencing a process of gentrification of its space, but with limits, due to the conflict between the legislation and the transformations introduced by the residents.

A second hypothesis is: public policies that operate in cultural heritage transform urban space into a place of consumption and real estate speculation, which segregates and excludes low-income residents. Therefore, the process of gentrification is accompanied by transformations in the urban configuration (form-space relations) in the socioeconomic structure of the neighbourhood (cultural and social characteristics) and in its inhabitants’ way of life (system of coexistence and social relations).

The main goal of this paper is to discover and explain the process of urban transformation in Vila Planalto, a case study for the analysis of gentrification in Latin America. Another goal is to observe the different social practices that take place in the public spaces of Vila Planalto to analyse the relations between physical form and society. In the context of the study of gentrification, we incorporated a configurational approach and the application of urban anthropology methods to understand the existing movements, pressures, and disputes that could lead to displacement or expulsion.

## 2. THEORIES AND METHODS

### 2.1 SPACE SYNTAX THEORY

Among the various theories of urban space, the Space Syntax (Hillier and Hanson, 1984) is a valuable analytical tool for the relationship established between social and spatial aspects of urban configuration. Space Syntax Theory (SST) establishes relationships between categories or attributes of two areas: 1) space (public or private) organised for human purposes, and 2) social structure or modes of interaction of individuals and groups, social strata, and their power structures (Holanda, 2001; Medeiros, 2006).

The main focus of SST is the relationships between space and society. The theory highlights the relationships between the spatial structure of the city and its buildings, the spatial dimension of social structures, and social variables as an effort to reveal the logic of architectural space and the logic of societies (Holanda, 2002).

For Hillier and Hanson (1984), space is constructed according to the forms of social solidarity, which, at the same time, are products of the structure of society. For the authors, different spatial forms are reflections of each society, because just as society has a spatial logic, socially organizes space also has an intrinsic social logic to it.

The field of reasoning of SST are the relations between architecture and behaviour. The theory studies potential movements of people and spatial life understood as a system of encounters and avoidances. Space Syntax Theory establishes itself as a “bridge” between social life, understood as a set of socioeconomic attributes that relate to spatial patterns; and spatial life understood as a system of potential movements.

## 2.2 GENTRIFICATION

The theory of gentrification studies the processes of urban transformation in central and pericentral areas of cities and how these transformations relate to other global and local economic and political processes. Smith (2012) comments that the term ‘gentrification’ has evolved from describing aspects of residential changes to the study of capital reinvestments in urban centres as a mechanism for producing space for progressively more affluent users.

According to Lees et al. (2008), gentrification is deeply rooted in social dynamics and economic trends. Characteristics, effects, and trajectories are determined by a variety of reasons, such as local context, physical configuration, social characteristics of neighbourhoods, local actors’ positions and objectives, city functions, the nature of economic restructuring and policy of local governments (Lees; Slater; Wyly, 2008).

The literature about gentrification organises theoretical formulations into two main trends. The first is by the supply of private space producers, who try to create, in urban centres, points of interest for the high-income population in partnership with strategies of public authorities. The second is the perspective adopted in this study, of the demand of the middle classes to recover territories and to return to the centres, after having lived in gated communities in the peripheries, mainly in waves stimulated by the real estate market.

The main axioms of gentrification explain how these processes are related to real estate markets, constituting a return to urban centres, but a return of capital and not necessarily of people (Smith, 2012). In Latin America, López (2015) recognises that three aspects are connected to the causes of gentrification: 1) public policy macro-transformation in the city to the repositioning of the metropolitan economy in the global market (city marketing); 2) public investments in accessibility and mobility, through macro-scale transformations; and 3) micro-economies in the land market, where the higher-status private agents restructure and capitalise revenues, which assure certain continuity for the location of popular housing, fostering or accelerating the expulsion process.

In the gentrification of Latin American cities, the action of local and national governments is fundamental. The ambition of some socioeconomically high classes is not enough, it is also a result of complex pro-business public policies that maximise the economic value of urban land. The result of gentrification in Latin America is land and housing markets that increase access to the restructured spaces for the upper classes, while restricting the access to housing for lower-income segments that end up displaced, evicted, or segregated from the location (López, 2015).

## 2.3 HUMAN ECOLOGY

The transformations affecting large cities in the early twentieth century prompted sociologists at the University of Chicago to undertake innumerable investigations and became the main heritage of urban anthropology. Robert E. Park and Louis Wirth represent two of the leading exponents of Human Ecology – they study the sociological structure of the city.

In his text *The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behaviours in the City Environment* (1915), Park considers large-scale urbanism but also notes the city details, especially in neighbourhoods. On a larger scale, the city can be defined, first, as a material organization, with its physical form, its geometry, or from a spatial perspective, as the relations between the “fills” and “voids” – or solids and spaces; and second, as a moral organization, an expression of human nature and of a particular culture, which possesses customs and traditions (Park, 1999).

Wirth, on his part, in *Urbanism as a Way of Life* (1938), formulates a scientific definition of city. He concentrates on identifying the characteristics of urbanism as a differentiated form of life with a focus on the inhabitants. For the author, cities shape the character of social life in a specifically urban form, which dominates and influences a space (hinterland) sometimes larger than the city itself (Wirth, 2005).

One of the main formulations of urbanism as a way of life is to acknowledge three points of view to observe the city: 1) physical structure (ecological order); 2) system of social organization (structure, institutions, and social relations); 3) set of attitudes and ideas (different personalities that result in a collective behaviour subject to mechanisms of social control).

Human Ecology defines its main axiom as: large cities represent laboratories of collective behaviour and are in constant tension due to conflicts over space. These conflicts create boundaries, demarcated within the city, that delimit the natural areas of groups and their patterns.

## 2.4 METHOD

The field of research on gentrification has no defined methodology, and the research paths are diverse and respond to each case. In this work, the case is studied with a mixed design, which is considered adequate for investigations that relate to the phenomenon under study and the social context in which it happens. The mixed design includes quantitative and qualitative techniques in data collection that control a reduced number of variables. The hypothetical-deductive method and observational procedures are also used. The method starts from a problem, for which an attempt is made to explain the theory, and then to test and eliminate possible errors, giving way to new problems (Gil, 2008).

For the development of the socioeconomic analysis, it was necessary to reconstruct the history of the neighbourhood from the events raised in previous surveys, official documents, judicial and legislative proceedings, census data, and 15 surveys in the Tamboril camp. The configurational analysis of Space Syntax allowed the examination of the possible relations between the inhabitants and their space from the analysis of current and historical global integration axial maps and correlations with surveys of land use and others. The ethnographic research, used to analyse the way of life, is a research method in which the daily life of a specific social unit is perceived, through direct observation and interviews. We analysed more than 30 interviews with residents in public spaces and two years of participant observation as a resident of the neighbourhood.

## 3. RESULTS

The urban history of Vila Planalto allows us to identify four periods: 1) provisional (Coêlho, 2011), between 1956-1964; 2) abandonment, stigmatization, and resistance, between 1964 and 1988; 3) official declaration as historical site, colonization, and urban transformations, between 1988-2010; and 4) Vila Planalto gourmet, real estate valorization and consumption of cultural heritage, between 2010-2015.

The first period is the boom and, immediately after, the dismantling of the camps. With the departure of the companies from the camps in 1961, the Vila was abandoned. The majority of the population lived in a precarious situation and a minority had better conditions.

The second period begins with the military coup (1964) and continues through long years of resistance against removals, until the recognition as a heritage site in 1988. This period can be understood as a first phase of the process of gentrification, a stage of apparent abandonment and stigmatization.

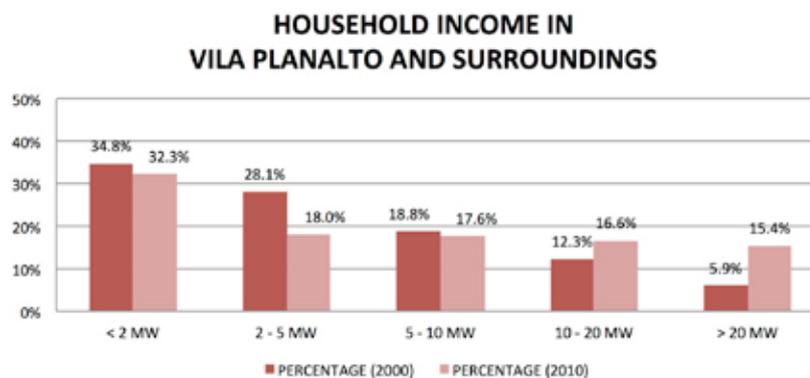
The third period begins with the legalization of the neighbourhood (1988) and extends until 2010. The legalization began a second stage of gentrification, a phase of speculation that resulted in a notable increase in property and living costs. In 1992, with the granting of use concessions, real estate speculation increased. Since the end of the 1990s, with the installation of basic infrastructure, the neighbourhood has experienced raising costs of living, which increased after 2000, with the construction of gated communities, luxury hotels, and nightclubs on Lake Paranoá's shores, nearby.

In the fourth period, since 2010, the number of bars, restaurants, and shops has increased. In 2010, the government tried to strengthen the neighbourhood by making it a place of consumption and leisure with a gastronomy pole project. This period corresponds to a third stage of gentrification, with the commercialization of the space and the displacement of the poorest original inhabitants.

The four historical periods are strongly determined by the public policies implemented, which mark pivotal points in the history of the neighbourhood. The periods are similar to the steps described in the global gentrification literature. With the delivery of the first property title in 2014, a new stage in the gentrification process was expected. Land regularization contributes even more to the valorization of the land and the building standards are modified, losing what remains of the architectural, urban, and social attributes of the historical site.

The replacement of the original residents has been constant since the official declaration as an historical (heritage) site. However, the displacement of the lower-income population (pioneers or otherwise) has been greater in recent years, with the increase of commercial establishments and the sale and rent of houses. Several houses had selling prices over 2 million reais (USD 560,000). In interviews at the Tamboril camp, owners comment that they would only sell above 3 million reais (USD 850,000). This could incorporate new agents and larger capital in the process of gentrification of Vila Planalto.

Analysis of the 2000 and 2010 censuses in Vila Planalto shows an increase in residents who are renters (from 24% in 2000 to 36.3% in 2010). For the head of household's income, the lowest incomes increased - up to 2 minimum wages (MWs) (from 35.5% to 47.9%) - and all the highest wages fell (more than 20 MWs from 5.3% to 2.5%).



Graph 1 - Income of the head of household in Vila Planalto and surroundings.  
 Source: Census IBGE 2000, 2010.

When we consider the surroundings of the neighbourhood (Graph 1), the situation is the opposite, incomes above 10 MWs increased (from 18.2% in 2000 to 32% in 2010) and all the lower ones fell. These results could have a correlation with the inhabitants' race or colour: in 2010 there were more mixed-race residents (pardos) in the Vila (47.7% in the Vila as opposed to 41.5% in the Vila and its surroundings) and blacks (8.3% vs. 7.4 %); when we consider the surroundings, there were more whites (42.3% in the Vila, and 49.3% in the Vila and its surroundings). Between 2007 and 2010, within the neighbourhood, whites increased (from 34.1% to 42.3%) and blacks decreased (from 14.3% to 8.3%), along with mixed-race residents (from 51.5% to 47.7%) (Figure 3).

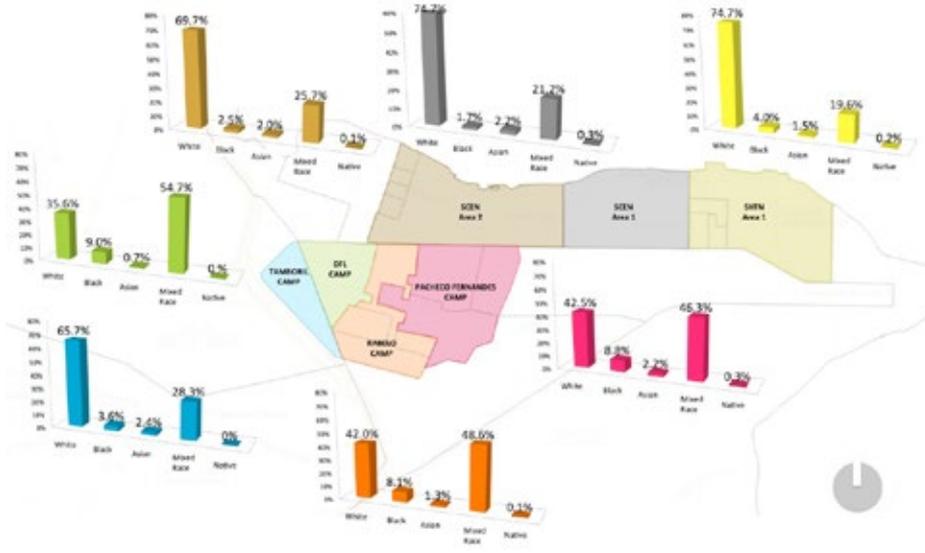


Figure 3 - Map of population distribution according to race or colour in Vila Planalto and surroundings. Source: based on the IBGE Census, 2010.

In Figure 4, it is possible to observe the internal differences in the distribution of rents by encampments and in the surrounding census sectors. There is a contrast in the income ranges between the lakeside condos (Sports Clubs Sector - SCEN and North Hotel and Tourism Sector - SHTN) and the camps of the Vila, with the exception of the Tamboril camp.

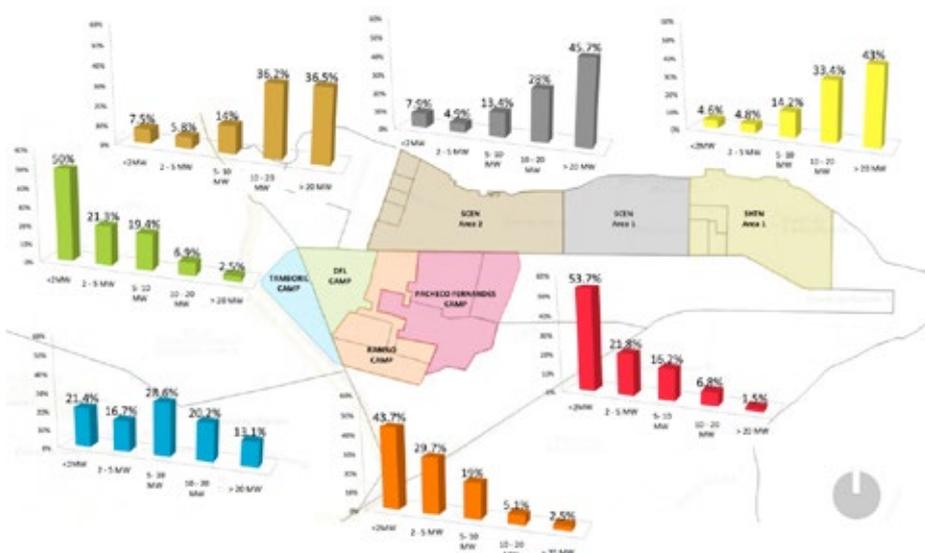


Figure 4: Map of the distribution of household income in Vila Planalto and surroundings. Source: based on the IBGE Census, 2010.

The configurational analysis allowed us to recognize some important points in the urban evolution of Vila Planalto. The diachronic analysis of the axial maps illustrates how the road network was transformed by the inhabitants according to their needs. The transformations made by inhabitants make the road network even more irregular and fragmented. Those conditions are expressed in the reduction of connectivity, the average line length, and the increase of the number of lines in the system (figure 5).

Within the time-span under study (1965-2012), three periods can be considered. The first one, concerning which it was not possible to prepare a map, corresponds to the time of greatest rhythm in the construction of Brasília. Between 1956 and 1964, the Vila was structured by the State, and up to 22 camps were organized, in which segregation and control of space use were extreme.

A second stage took place between 1965 and 1988, with the departure of the builders. They reduced control devices over space and daily life, at the same time that the dismantling of the social equipment began. The Vila went through constant removal attempts. The structure of the urban layout was fragmented, the global lines disappeared, and the axes were concentrated in the space corresponding to four camps.

The third period occurred after the official declaration as an heritage site, from which the legalization of the settlement occurred and the transformations have speeded up (Coêlho, 2008). There is a densification process and an increase of the urban settlement through the occupation of empty spaces in between the ancient contractors' camps. The result was an extremely fragmented and irregular layout.

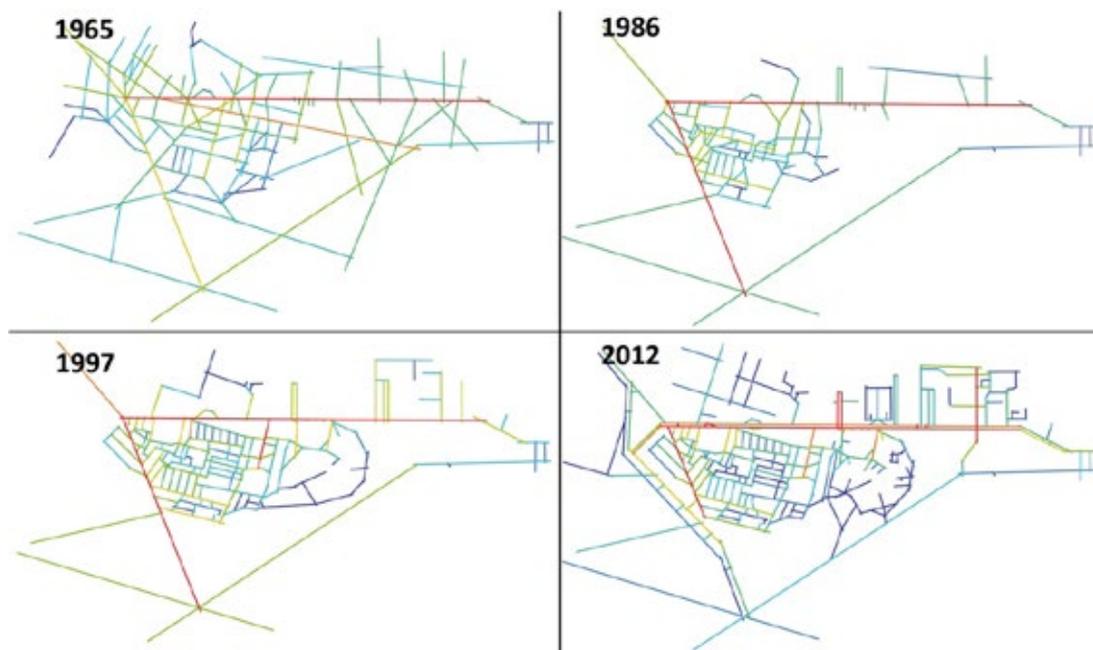
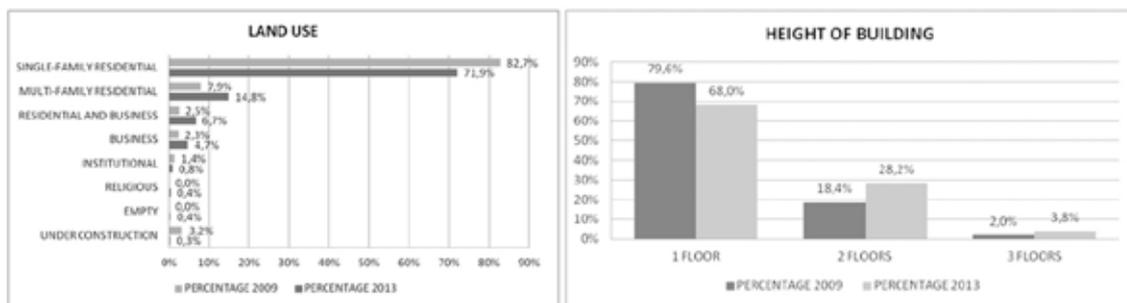


Figure 5 - Historical axial maps of Global Integration Rn.

The analysis of the axial maps revealed the transformation of the urban configuration, towards a greater urbanity. For Medeiros (2006), urban structures and their resulting forms, on the one hand, are the formal, planned, regulated, legal, and, on the other hand, are informal, organic, illegal, and spontaneous. For Holanda (2002), it is possible to recognize two historical trends, what he calls the "paradigm of formality" and the "paradigm of urbanity". "Formality" concerns what is not spontaneous and something conventional that represents a hierarchy and a sense of authority. "Urbanity" alludes to qualities such as the courteous, affable, and continuous social exchange. Thus, with the transformation of the urban network, which adapts towards an increasingly scarce, irregular, and informal layout, the neighbourhood acquires greater urbanity.

Informality is also expressed in the fragmentation of the plots, new land occupied in irregular areas, the 'verticalization' of the buildings, and the consequent loss of the physical characteristics that had led Vila to be declared as a historical site. Becoming a legalized settlement, no longer an irregular borough as far as urban norms were concerned, was important to make Vila Planalto a more desirable place to live. Because it was forbidden to change the features of houses, one of the mechanisms that people used for their stay was to conceal eventual changes through varied devices. The structure to control the space of the camps was corrected by the dynamics of the social processes, which modified the space by the needs of the population and by pressures of land rising values (Kohlsdorf, 2010).

Between 2009 and 2013, commercial uses (from 2.3% in 2009 to 4.7% in 2013) and mixed use – residences + commerce and services – have increased (2.5% to 6.7%). Consequently, the use of single-family homes decreased (82.7% to 71.9%) and multi-family housing increased (from 7.9% to 14.8%). The appearance of commercial premises, as well as the increase in the height of the 2-storey buildings (18.4% to 28.2%) and the decrease of the lots with a constructed floor (79.6% to 68%) confirm the increase of irregular constructions (just one storey building is permitted by law), and show the potential growth of intensity in the urban dynamics of the neighbourhood (graph 2, 3).



Graph 2 - Land use percentage in Vila Planalto from 2009 to 2013. Graph 3: Height of building for 2009 to 2013. Source: Based on Seduma - CODEPLAN (2009) and data survey in situ.

The configurational analysis showed how society changed its space from social formality and control, during the construction of Brasilia, to an informal space with an irregular road network, intense commercial activity, and a strong condition of urbanity, which reflect the different relations that took place in Vila Planalto.

Studying the way of life made it possible to recognise some important aspects of the daily life of the residents. The legalization meant the beginning of the process of gentrification, with the arrival of the middle class sectors, mainly civil servants and professionals. The case study would fit into the concept of symbolic gentrification (Janoschka; Sequera; Salinas, 2013), as it has happened in other neighbourhoods in which cultural heritage is involved with tourism and leisure in Latin America.

The interviews revealed that the relationships between the older residents of the neighbourhood and the new residents are almost non-existent, just as their ways of life do not seem to mix in the urban space. However, some significant spaces in cultural practice are recognised, such as some squares and Geraldo's Warehouse, a place where individual trajectories coincide and the daily needs of the most diverse inhabitants are fulfilled (Certeau, 1996).

We identified several types of residents: 1) original residents (pioneers); 2) colonisers arrived after the declaration as a historical site (civil servants); 3) new middle classes (young students or professionals); 4) Counter-gentrificators, popularization (manual workers).

The former residents come from two different stages in the history of the neighbourhood. The original inhabitants correspond to the pioneers, who have been present for more than 50 years,

since the time of the construction of Brasilia. They are made up of retired civil construction workers or of families who have moved from the removed Vila Amauri to Vila Planalto.

Another group corresponds to the first gentrifiers or settlers of the neighbourhood, composed of public service employees or professionals from other areas who arrived in the neighbourhood twenty years after its declaration as a historical site. They bought the concessions of use from the original inhabitants. Then began a slow arrival of other middle- or upper-middle-class inhabitants and the gradual appearance of commerce and restaurants oriented to a higher-income population.

New residents come from different social classes and different lifestyles. On the one hand, there are immigrants coming from the northeast of Brazil or from other countries, including students and people working in the same neighbourhood. Most popular sectors arrived from the satellite cities to rent informally in the backyard lots, contributing to the popularisation of the Vila. This contrast can be observed in Figure 6.



Figure 6 - Brasília Street, Rabelo Camp, Vila Planalto 2014.

The urban space of Vila Planalto represents a space of routine and transgression of the individual life story of its inhabitants, where streets, squares, bars, and markets are potential places of social engagement and conflict (Giannini, 2013). Despite the strategies of elitism, there are certain transgressions or visual nuisances such as: street people drinking cachaça and enjoying playing cards in Nelson Corso Square, young people smoking marijuana under the shade of a tree in Church Square, or selling drugs in the Mechanical Workshops Sector, among others. These actions form the counter-uses that transform space into contested places and conflict.



Figure 7 - Map of visual integration and security cameras in Vila Planalto

However, the subversion of illegal acts is repressed by the police and by surveillance devices – as in the large number of security cameras installed in the houses that watch part of the public space (Figure 7).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Several cities around the world have simultaneously experimented with various forms of gentrification with asymmetrical processes of capital restructuring, significant flows of people from high and medium incomes, and the displacement of lower income residents through the privatization of central urban areas.

In the southern hemisphere, there have been multiple gentrification processes. The examples of Latin-gentrification (Inzulza, 2012) affect mainly patrimonial areas. The life story of the people who live in these neighbourhoods is affected by the rise of neoliberal policies aiming at sustaining or stimulating gentrification. Gentrification policies are part of global urban revitalization strategies, but there are - in most cases of symbolic gentrification - local patterns. In these cases, gentrification transforms, in addition to the constructed landscape and the socioeconomic structure, the daily life of the residents who manage to remain, reinterpreting the significance of and re-appropriating places.

As to the first research question, we can say that the potential limits to the process of gentrification in the neighbourhood, created by the appropriations and practices of the inhabitants in the occupation of urban space, are limits to gentrification or counter-gentrifying fissures.

The history of the neighbourhood and the practices of its residents create spatial and symbolic demarcations that limit the advance of spatial elitism. However, these boundaries are circumstantial and can be modified or eliminated by legislation or the disciplining of space.

Regarding the second question, we conclude that the process of gentrification of Vila Planalto, despite its peculiarities, is similar to other cases of symbolic gentrification in Latin America, mainly in historical centres.

To conclude, we refer to the hypothesis of the work. After the analysis, we can affirm that the gentrification of the neighbourhood is a silent process that occurs in a small and local scale. We did not identify large investments of capital acting in the physical transformations.

The neighbourhood offers real estate development, commerce, and services that are differentiated according to the demands of each social class. On the one hand, kitchenettes, rooms, and open spaces with more popular activities; on the other hand, apartments, houses, and commercial activities for high income layers, constituting a socio-spatial polarisation. This polarisation is observed in social relations, in the use of public space and in the structure of the road network. From the correlation between Space Syntax analysis and ethnographic research, we recognise that Vila Planalto is divided into two parts. First, an edge of longer routes and connected with the rest of the city, with an offer of more elitist uses. Second, an internal centre of short and difficult access roads, with more popular uses.

In relation to the second hypothesis, we can affirm that the policies implemented in the territory, considered as a cultural asset, were relevant in the different periods of physical and social transformation. The official declaration as a heritage site was based in a renewal project developed by technicians, academics, and residents; but this was ultimately transformed according to the interests of politicians who generated a clientelist relation with the population. The declaration as historical site was important to consolidate the neighbourhood as a desirable place to live, initiating its process of gentrification. At the same time, the law was not able to preserve the attributes of the neighbourhood as a cultural heritage site, which was mischaracterized by real estate speculation. New laws and decrees have sought to foster tourism and leisure, and bills seek to increase the building potential and the height of buildings in the neighbourhood. The delivery of property titles to longstanding residents, which responds to an old desire of the inhabitants, can foster significant increases in real estate values and finally cause the total displacement of the poorest population. Will Vila Planalto become extensively gentrified?

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