Barra da Tijuca

The Political Economy of a Global Suburb in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

by
Lawrence A. Herzog

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's second-largest metropolis, an important new form of early-twenty-first-century peripheral development that deserves critical inquiry has emerged—the "global suburb." In Brazil, these suburbs take the form of gated high-rise compounds providing upper- and middle- upper-income residents enclaves of security amidst what they perceive as the chaos and uncertainty of cities overrun by favelas, crime, and gang-related conflict. The Barra da Tijuca suburban enclave in Rio de Janeiro offers a poignant case study of a development project that was initially conceived as an innovative urban design plan for a modernist "new town" but, with little opposition from government officials and planners, was subsequently absorbed by private developers and turned into an elite, U.S.-style suburb.

En Rio de Janeiro, metrópolis segunda mas grande de Brasil, emerge al comienzo del siglo veintiuno una forma de desarrollo periférico importante y nueva que se merece una pregunta critica—el "suburbio global." En Brasil estos suburbios toman la forma de recitos amurallados de edificios de gran altura los cuales proveen a las clases de gran y alto-medio ingreso enclavas de seguridad en medio de lo que perciben es el caos y incertidumbre de ciudades sobrantes de favelas, el crimen, y el conflicto relacionado con el pandillismo. La enclava suburbana de la Barra de Tijuca en Rio de Janeiro ofrece un caso conmovedor de un proyecto urbano originalmente concebido como un diseño urbano innovador para un "pueblo nuevo" modernizado pero, con poca oposición de parte de los oficiales guberna-mentales y planificadores, fue absorbido por el fomento privado y convertido en un suburbio tipo Estados Unidos para una elite.

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The twenty-first century has witnessed the increasing socio-spatial polarization of Latin American cities. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's second-largest city and a global icon of national culture, exemplifies the growing gap between the spaces of wealth and those of marginality. While Rio's economy slowed after 1990, its population continued to expand, yet growth was skewed toward the marginal

Lawrence A. Herzog is professor and coordinator of the Graduate Program in City Planning in the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University. He was a visiting scholar in the School of Architecture and Urbanism at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 2008. He is the author or editor of seven books, including *Return to the Center: Culture, Public Space, and City Building in a Global Era* (2006) and *From Aztec to High Tech: Architecture and Landscape across the Mexico-U.S. Border* (1999).

zones. The urbanized region's growth rate was around 7 percent, but favelas grew at the rate of 25 percent (Perlman, 2010). During this same period, social unrest was rampant, especially conflicts between gangs and the police. This instability added momentum to a new pattern of upper-class residential geography: the building of enclaves of suburban development—gated condominiums and luxury high-rise complexes set in distant elite subdivisions, or what some writers have called "global suburbs" (King, 2004).

The "global suburb"[1] is a cultural prototype that can be traced to the post–World War II era of suburban construction rolled out in the 1950s and 1960s across the United States. Its form was distinct: automobile-oriented, low-density, single-family subdivisions, always on the outskirts of the urban core. These suburbs were also built in Australia, New Zealand, and eventually across the planet. They were a product of a modernist planning ethic that emphasized "single-use" zoning, the creation of separate land-use districts: residential (housing subdivisions), commercial (shopping malls, strip malls), and office (office parks), all connected by a hierarchy of freeways, collector roads, residential streets, and cul-de-sacs. Many suburban subdivisions were built by large corporate developers; in the United States the housing market was energized by postwar federal housing loan programs for war veterans and by a national fund for highway construction to connect the new peripheral suburbs with jobs in the inner cities. Over the past half century, the American population gradually became suburban, and by the early twenty-first century over 75 percent of Americans living in metropolitan areas resided in these suburbs. This amounted to some 140 million people, or half the national population (Pacione, 2009).

This model has spread to other continents, including western Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa, over the past four decades. Not only did the design model diffuse globally but so did its sociocultural design narrative. Thus, even when global suburbs took on physical forms that sometimes diverged from those of the United States, the cultural values remained linked to American suburban design. Those values include social exclusivity, an increasing desire for private over public space, fear of crime, a preference for predictable, homogeneous built environments, greater emphasis on consumerism, and landscapes of artificiality.

The first wave of suburbs in the United States injected a new pattern of spatial decentralization, or "sprawl." This was followed by a second ring of even more diffuse settlements, isolated in decentralized exurbs farther and farther from the original cities. Sprawl generated a set of well-documented diseconomies. Scholars consider the auto-centric "car/sprawl/freeway/oil complex" ecologically unsustainable (Herzog, 2010; Register, 2006). Researchers have documented public health problems, including obesity, hypertension, and related diseases, associated with the sedentary lifestyle of dormitory suburbs (Ewing et al., 2003).

More important, suburban growth was symptomatic of a new pattern of increased social polarization in which the poor remained in inner-city pockets or in first-ring suburbs, while the middle classes and wealthy moved away from the center. This led to changing social perceptions, including what has been termed a "militarization of urban life." Suburbs came to symbolize greater

physical security and an escape from the uncertainty of cities. Over time a pattern of accelerating privatization has taken hold, along with a gradual decline of public life and a shift toward the "architectural policing of social boundaries" (Davis, 1990: 223). Social polarization and fear of crime also induced greater numbers of people to move behind walls and inside gated communities. Even when the gates and walls did not always reduce crime, their symbolism left residents feeling safer (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Low, 2003).

In the end, American suburbs ushered in an era in which security, shopping, and privacy became more important than living in pedestrian-scale communities with spontaneous public life. This fueled an explosion of "cookie cutter" communities across North America and the loss of what architects and planners term a "sense of place" (Kunstler, 1993). In searching for a substitute for the uniqueness of traditional urban neighborhoods, simulated, idealized, and often fantasy-like environments were invented, mostly in the suburbs. Shopping malls, theme-park new towns, festival marketplaces, and other artificial spaces defined the new landscapes of suburbia (Sorkin, 1992).

Gated suburbs are called *barrios privados* (private communities) in Argentina, "security villages" in South Africa, and *condominios fechados* (closed condominiums) in Brazil. The sprawling suburb of Somerset West outside Capetown, South Africa, has a state-of-the-art electric fence around it. One of the largest gated suburbs in the world lies in the vast community of Interlomas/Santa Fe, on the western edge of Mexico City.

Around the world, global suburbs often employ the cultural branding of U.S. prototypes, for example, through their placenames. One of the most affluent suburbs outside Cairo, Egypt, is called "Beverly Hills." An upper-class enclave on the northern edges of Beijing is named "Orange County." One of Hong Kong's wealthy peripheral residential districts calls itself "Palm Springs." Similar global suburbs have risen outside Jakarta, Manila, Lagos, and Johannesburg (Davis, 2006).

All of this represents a fundamental reorganization of space in urbanized regions, in which wealthy and poor are ever more separated, either geographically or via technology, walls, and fences. The term "global suburb" thus captures the idea of this reorganization that has spread across the globe, a new form of escape from the large cities, twenty-first-century postmodern expressions of evolving personal tastes and identities (King, 2004). These emerging social and cultural hybrids are forming a new social model of cities. But is that new world simply reinforcing the conditions of inequality, allowing wealthy classes to further distance themselves from the realities of urban life?

Brazil offers a compelling setting for understanding this global urban development phenomenon. First, it is the largest and wealthiest nation in Latin America.[2] Along with China and India, Brazil is considered one of the rapidly expanding nations in the shifting global economy. Its economic prosperity, driven by agro-industry, manufacturing, and natural resources, including vast offshore oil reserves along the central and southern coast, has fueled the growth of cities. Brazil is also among the fastest-urbanizing countries in the Americas. Its 15 major metropolitan areas hold some 32 percent of the total population of the country, or 55 million people.[3] Brazil recently attracted world attention when the International Federation of Football Association chose Brazil to host

the World Cup in 2014 and the International Olympic Committee awarded Rio de Janeiro the Summer Olympic Games of 2016.

THE RISE OF VERTICAL GLOBAL SUBURBS IN BRAZIL

The crowning model of suburban growth in Brazil, the place that sets the tone for the rest of the country, is arguably the São Paulo metropolis. São Paulo is the largest metropolitan region in the Americas, with nearly 20 million inhabitants. Along with Mexico City, New York, and Los Angeles, it is one of the major global headquarters and financial mega-cities of the Americas. Its phenomenal expansion over the last half of the twentieth century caused a density, scale, and style of peripheral growth perhaps never seen in the Americas. In every sense, São Paulo represents a template for globalization and urban growth in Brazil, if not the rest of the world (Caldeira, 2000; Deak and Schiffer, 2007).

São Paulo's early-twenty-first-century urban form is notable for its dispersed yet dense pattern. Luxury apartment tower suburbs and elite gated high-rise enclaves dominate the south and southwest, from the original garden districts at the edge of downtown Sao Paulo to the newer, more dispersed high-rise suburbs. The early garden compounds were inspired by the British "garden city" model, though in contrast to the original garden cities the São Paulo versions became entirely automobile-oriented. Today, in the apartment suburbs that have grown beyond the garden districts, the primary gathering spaces are shopping malls, of which there are more in São Paulo than anywhere in Brazil.

São Paulo's vertical suburban model has been the subject of much analysis, since it has become a form that is being reproduced across Brazil (see Caldeira, 2000). Clearly, São Paulo has seen a shift among the wealthy from low-rise "mansions" to dense islands of suburban towers. In Morumbi, one of the first elite suburbs, the Portal de Morumbi project consisted of 16 separate 25-story tower blocks and was built in 1976. The shift from low- to high-rise has been reported to be driven by crime, fear, and violence. As São Paulo grew in the 1970s and 1980s, a large class of underemployed residents turned to violence as a source of survival. As a response to the violence, uncertainty, and fear, middle- and upper-class residents turned away from the street and its unpredictability toward an interior world of high-rise privacy and security. They not only moved inside tall towers but closed the buildings off with fences, walls, or security gates and installed video cameras, television monitors, and computerized alarms. They then hired security companies to maintain 24-hour surveillance. These enclaves further reinforced the contrast between the growing lower-density favela-based settlements of the urban poor, on the one hand, and the increasingly gated high-rise spaces of the wealthy, on the other (Caldeira, 2000; Deak, 2001).

Viewed from the wealthy suburban enclaves, the resulting urban condition is characterized as "a relationship of rupture and denial with the rest of the city, and with what can be called a modern style of public space open to free circulation" (Caldeira, 2000: 258). Indeed, one of the striking characteristics of São Paulo's suburbs is their distinct lack of public places and walkable space. Public

life is increasingly marked by suspicion and restriction. People prefer to remain either inside their "fortified enclaves" or in the privacy of their cars. They emerge only to walk in highly secluded and guarded shopping malls.

The stand-alone tower became the model for Higienopolis, one of the first wealthy neighborhoods of São Paulo, built just beyond the edge of downtown. Here, in post–World War II early suburbs, the influence of Europe (especially England's garden cities) was powerful. But several decades later, this influence had waned, and most of the original high-rises and all of the new ones are now gated, walled, and closed off to the public. Condos and apartments have become like mini-clubs for the elite and upper middle classes. Thus the need for public space and leisure—for example, in town squares—was surgically removed and reinserted into controlled private environments. The resulting fragmentation and isolation is even worse than anything one finds in the supposedly impersonal, modernist *superquadras* (superblocks) of Brasília, the planned modernist capital. "The stain of verticalization sprawls through the most diverse places, and buildings with similar height and form can be seen all over, from the flood plains to the mountain ridges and steep slopes" says a São Paulo observer (Soares Macedo, 2009).

A GLOBAL SUBURB IN RIO DE JANEIRO

Rio de Janeiro is, in some senses, a counterpoint to São Paulo, a booming economic engine driven not by finance and manufacturing but by culture, entertainment, tourism, and services.[4] Rio's economy enriched a class of emerging entrepreneurs, business executives, tourism investors, real estate professionals, and others. Both the upper-middle and the upper classes have increasingly moved to the "south zone" of Rio, but, as those neighborhoods have densified, residents have sought out new spaces on the periphery of what is a topographically complex urban setting (Tolosa, 1996).

To understand the context for the rise of Rio's late-twentieth-century global suburbs, one must briefly review the evolution of the metropolis. In the nineteenth century, Rio de Janeiro remained Brazil's most important city, its national capital, and a port that served as an outlet for exporting mining wealth in the interior. In 1872 its population was 274,972, far overshadowing its modern rival São Paulo, which had only 31, 385 at that time. One hundred years later, Rio would have about 8 million and so would São Paulo, but after that the cities began switching places. São Paulo became the demographic and economic giant of the nation, and Rio fell into second place.

In 1900, Rio remained a compact city, its urban development confined within the topographic limitations of a region with steep mountains flowing toward the sea, wide bays, and flat surfaces along the beaches and waterfront. In particular the wall of mountains west of the downtown core pushed the colonial city into the hills north of downtown, while the wealthy class, politicians, and developers began to move to the south along the coast in what is today called the Zona Sul (south zone). The Zona Norte (north zone) was important in Rio's evolution because the royal family had settled there during the colonial period. By the second half of the nineteenth century, new, working- class *subúrbios*

formed along rail lines and near factories in the north zone; the zone was further stimulated by proximity to the booming port. By the early twentieth century, poor squatter communities (favelas) would begin to proliferate here. Today, half of the residents of Rio live in the densely populated Zona Norte.

The turn-of-the-century mayor Francisco Pereira Passos sought to reinvent Rio as a "tropical Paris" (Godfrey, 1991). He improved roads along the spine of the city, transferred the port to nearby Guanabara Bay, and built the first major seaside boulevard—Avenida Beira Mar—to connect downtown with Botafogo Bay. By the 1920s, the first large-scale slum clearance (the first of many) was an earth-moving venture to allow Rio to expand against its harsh mountain relief. The French town planner Alfred Agache, invited to advise the city on a new urban design plan, recommended leveling Castelo Hill and building toward the southeast (Del Rio and Alcantara, 2009). Lower-income residences were pushed toward the new favelas in the hills around downtown and became a trademark of Rio's urban landscape for the next century.

Technology drove the evolution toward the south zone, beginning with the 1891 construction of a tunnel to Copacabana and Botafogo. By the 1940s, construction of additional tunnels had accelerated urban growth through the hills to the south and along the coast. The Leme Tunnel was the first tunnel to open up the new development of a wealthy seaside neighborhood—Copacabana, which by the 1980s had become one of the highest-density residential communities in the Americas, full of condominium and apartment towers, high end hotels, restaurants, clubs, and shops (Greenfield, 1994). Tunnels were also built to connect new beach districts, mainly for the wealthy classes, farther south in Ipanema and Leblon. A major highway was built alongside the giant landfill and public park Aterro do Flamengo, connecting downtown with the newer suburbs along the coast—Copacabana, Urca, and Ipanema.

As the twentieth century came to a close, Rio's growth was characterized by the increasing polarization of rich and poor. By 1989, Rio had the most unequal distribution of income in all of Brazil. Much of the city's demographic growth was fueled by migration of poor people from other regions; the majority of those newcomers lived in favelas, which rose from encompassing 9.8 percent of the city's population to containing 12.4 percent between 1971 and 1991 (Tolosa, 1996). More than 2 million people lived in dwellings lacking piped water. Favela growth spurred the government to engage in slum clearing efforts, employing armies of bulldozers to move favela dwellers out of the urban region toward more peripheral locations. Tension between favelas and the rest of the city increased when Rio was beset with increasing crime rates, some of which became connected to the evolution of gangs, drug smuggling, and favela-based violence.

THE BIRTH OF A GLOBAL SUBURB—BARRA DA TIJUCA

Before the 1960s, the region of Barra da Tijuca and its inland area of the Baixada de Jacarepaguá was isolated from Rio by a set of geographic barriers: mountains, lakes, marshes and sand dunes. It therefore remained largely undeveloped, except for some farms and small residential dwellings. But, as Rio was

booming in the 1950s and 1960s, a number of factors contributed to an interest in developing this space and led to a combination of government, large developers, and global cultural influences that would dramatically transform this subregion within just a few decades.

Within Rio, a growing upper middle class and elite were rapidly consuming land and space in the south-zone neighborhoods from Copacabana to Ipanema, Leblon, Jardim Botânico, and Gávea.[5] Real estate values skyrocketed in these zones, and residential space was quickly becoming saturated. Meanwhile, people who lived in the northern suburbs wanted to move either south or west. The demand of newly rich residents for coastal property and a "suburban" lifestyle would eventually mean that Barra da Tijuca would become the largest wealthy suburban land development in all of Brazil.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a tidal wave of global factors emerged to influence the direction and style of urban development in Barra da Tijuca. The first global factor was Brazil's booming economy in the 1970s, the so-called economic miracle. This economic boom was largely fueled by courting foreign investment, especially from the United States, which was a catalyst for unprecedented growth in new manufacturing sectors such as pharmaceuticals. U.S. companies like Ford and General Motors opened plants in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s. Before 1960 (when the capital was moved to Brasília), Rio was still the capital, and it benefited directly from these international investment schemes.

Shortly after being elected president in 1955, Juscelino Kubitschek visited the United States in search of foreign capital to exploit Brazil's natural resources. This marked the beginning of a flow of billions of dollars of investments into Brazil. It later helped the government to build mega-infrastructure projects, including the Trans-Amazonian highway, the Itaipu hydroelectric dam, nuclear power plants, bridges, railways, telephone systems, subways, airports, port improvement, urban redevelopment, and industrial expansion.

Politically, Brazil sought closer ties with the United States, beginning in the post–World War II era, as it defined itself as part of the capitalist bloc in the face of global factional splits between socialism, communism, and capitalism. However, as early as 1961 Brazil was building an independent political will; greater autonomy became the cornerstone of the military dictatorship of that period. This assertiveness and increasing autonomy suggests that Brazil was by no means fully aligned with North America at this moment in history.

Still, during the early 1960s, some connections to the United States were unfolding. President John F. Kennedy announced his 10-year Alliance for Progress plan, which sought to increase per capita income, education, and economic growth in Latin America, including Brazil. And, during the same era, there was rising popularity of Brazilian culture in the United States —especially music (bossa nova, samba, etc.). U.S. tourist visits to Brazil and especially to Rio de Janeiro began to rise significantly during this period. It is in this context of a rising global connection between the United States and Brazil that one might view the creation of a new coastal mega-suburb beyond the south zone of Rio.

If any one infrastructure project epitomized Brazil's modernization of the 1950s and 1960s, it would be the city of Brasília. Completed in 1960 but still a work in progress throughout the decade, Brasília symbolized to the world

everything the Brazilian government wanted to promote about itself—a modernizing nation capable of creating grandiose public works and reinventing itself as a modern, industrial nation and not a poor undeveloped one. The shadow of Brasília loomed over every great public works project in Brazil during this period, and it would come to have a critical role in the urban development of Rio's new coastal territory of Barra da Tijuca and the Baixada de Jacarepaguá.

Following on the success of Brasilia, its chief planner Lucio Costa was selected in 1970 to create a pilot plan for Rio's southern coastal development project at Barra da Tijuca. However, times had changed since the creation of Brasília, and although Costa's touch would be infused with the same modernist and rationalist spirit of the national capital, the development of Barra would turn out to be more influenced by privatization, real estate development capital, and U.S. suburban values.

Costa's pilot plan for Barra displayed much of the same thinking he had employed in Brasília, but a number of things had changed by the late 1960s, both in Brazil and in Rio, and thus the way that Barra evolved was quite distinct. Brasília was much more government-driven, with a great deal of emphasis on civic and national pride. It was a city of monumental and ceremonial spaces that symbolized the nation. Barra da Tijuca was envisioned as a new (suburban) town, defined by comfort and security, open spaces, and nature (the ocean).

From the outset, Costa saw Barra as a separate city, not necessarily a place connected to the existing tissue of Rio. In a sense his design philosophy reinforced the notion of an "enclave," a place apart from the rest of the city, a place to escape the increasing stress of urbanization and the chaos of the increasingly unplanned favela growth. Costa viewed Barra as a new city that would be intimately tied to the natural landscapes already there—ocean, lagoons, lakes, waterways. He wrote, "What most attracts one in this region is the ocean air, the openness, the scale, the beaches and dunes apparently without end, and that rare sensation of being in a pristine, untouched world" (Rezende and Leitão, 2004: 38). But he also frequently referred to Barra as a separate city, one that would be "the most beautiful oceanic city in the world" (Gomes and Del Rio, 1998: 108).

In the physical design of the city, the parallels with Brasília must be noted. They include the creation of a crosslike design much the same as the airplane-shaped morphology of Brasília. As in Brasília, Costa also emphasized in Barra the modernist principle of single-use zones, specialized sectors for housing, commerce, offices, and public buildings. He organized the entire new city along two main axes: a horizontal axis currently called Avenida das Américas and a perpendicular axis, now known as Avenida Ayrton Senna, which ran from the ocean toward the secondary center at Jacarepaguá. A secondary axis, Avenida Sernambetiba (today called Avenida Lucio Costa), ran parallel to Avenida das Américas along the ocean, following the natural contour of the coastline. He proposed three centers within the crosslike form. The civic center at the intersection of the two highway axes was proposed to have the same monumental scale as the center of Brasília. Along the main axes, his pilot plan aligned buildings in the same modernist style as Brasília—high-rise towers

surrounded by open spaces. It also has Costa's typical monumental formality and sense of abstraction.

The plan for Barra has the same Corbusian rationality as Brasília, the same sense of giving priority to machines (cars) over humans (pedestrians), the same slavish insistence on a set of high-rise towers isolated in space, with no public spaces connecting them. One critic succinctly captures the dilemma of designing a place like Barra in a city otherwise so rich in public meeting places: "Barra is the only neighborhood in Rio that does not have a celebrated *botequim* (neighborhood bar), mainly because there are no street corners where one could build a *botequim*" (Gomes and Del Rio, 1998: 111).

As in Brasilia, there are contradictions between the language of Barra's pilot plan on the question of communities and the reality of what was created. Indeed, Costa's plan provides a blueprint for the coming of gated condominiums that are even more exclusionary than the Brasília superblocks. In Brasília, Costa presented the superblock as a socially egalitarian, harmonically conceived environment that would foster collectivity and integration (see Holston, 1989). Indeed, many of Brasília's superblocks have some of the design elements that would support such an idea—parks, gardens, schools, churches, and commercial spaces that offer, at least in theory, nodes or gathering points that could connect residents in time and space. Also, Brasília's superblocks are, for the most part, open. Barra's residential spaces, in contrast, are primarily closed. In Barra, where Costa's plan created a template for bringing in a certain type of modernist high-rise community, most of the communities quickly became closed, gated condominiums, with no public space and few options that allowed outsiders to come inside. Barra became a subregion with isolated, unconnected gated residential complexes.

The first two large-scale condo-residential complexes built in Barra were called (not without some irony) Nova Ipanema and Novo Leblon, thus creating the illusion that the newly affluent migrants, many from Rio's north zone, were moving to a place like the south zone's iconic and much celebrated beach communities of Ipanema and Leblon. In fact, they were notably different. Where Ipanema and Leblon are walkable neighborhoods with cafes, restaurants, and human-scale spaces around residential buildings, the two new Barra communities consisted of separated high-rise buildings surrounded by empty green space and single-family, high-end houses (mansions) on exclusive lots. Later, schools were added and even shopping malls appended along the primary auto axis. The second development, Novo Leblon, built in 1980, was described as "towers spaced across a platform of leisure space, with swimming pools and recreational infrastructure, all apart from cars" (Gomes and Del Rio, 1998: 112).

There is, in the end, a hint at why Barra turned out the way it did. Apparently, many politicians and prominent officials were disturbed by the original seaside development for the wealthy, Copacabana. Copacabana, by the 1960s and 1970s, was viewed by modernists in Rio as a flawed design. Costa himself once described it as "concrete barriers built right against the sea, blocking the view and preventing proper ventilation of residents" (Rezende and Leitão, 2004: 9). But there may be a deeper meaning behind this kind of characterization. Copacabana was a high-density, spontaneous, noisy place, a slice of gritty,

authentic urban neighborhoods reminding one of New York City or Paris. Modernists wanted calm, efficiency, and order. They also may have opted for social exclusion. For them, Copacabana had become too diverse, too unpredictable, too spontaneous, with its multiple uses, activities, social groups, and tightly woven spatial form. Modernists wanted something different. As one critic of Barra later wrote, "it would become an imitation of a city, where what is fundamental about urban—mixture, confrontation, creative disorder—is always exorcised in the name of 'ethical principles' (moral exclusion and security) and aesthetics" (Leitão, 1999: 88).

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the advertising strategies of Barra's developers are characterized by the consistent theme that Barra is not Copacabana—not about spontaneity, chaos, or density but about open space, tranquility, and the feeling of creating something perfect, a Midas touch. For example, one brochure advertising Barra speaks of "escape from urban chaos and the search for nature."

Thus, in the end, Barra would become a more privatized and socially exclusive version of Brasília. One sees this point reading between the lines of the pilot plan when it states that the purpose of the plan was to find "an adequate solution for a program with a recreational, residential, and touristic character" (Cardoso, 1990). Eventually, it became clear that Barra's essence was to create a space of capital where real estate investors could operate more freely than in other parts of Rio.

SOCIAL PROTEST AMIDST A ZONE OF PRIVILEGE

Once the pilot plan for Barra was completed in 1970, the local and state government quickly stepped in to provide supporting infrastructure. In the early 1970s, transit links were built, including the Elevado das Bandeiras (an elevated highway) and tunnels through the mountains at Dois Irmãos and Pedra da Gavea. This created a direct highway connection from the south zone to Barra da Tijuca.

As one traces the history of urban development here, it becomes clear that, from the beginning, Lucio Costa and other government planners and officials allowed Barra's development to be controlled by large-scale developers. Indeed, in the 1970s, much of the land was controlled by a small group of mega-developers, including ETSA, S.A., Grupo Desenvolvimento, Sr. Pasquale Maura, and Carvalho Hosken, S.A. (Cardoso, 1990). These were mega-land estates, and their dominance of the land market meant that developers had to pay a high price to acquire land from only a few sources. This drove up the price of Barra land, thus ensuring that it would mainly house upper-middle-class and wealthy landowners (Cardoso, 1990). From 1976 to 1985, during the first big wave of land development, it was dominated by large-scale projects. These produced high-rise luxury apartment and condominium towers or groupings of towers around a central nucleus and a smattering of single-family homes, generally inside the luxury tower developments. An analysis of real estate deals during this period shows that only 7 of 31 were in the medium-sized to small category (Cardoso, 1990).

By the early 2000s, Barra had become a sprawling, privileged zone of nouveau riche residents, many of whom had fled the north zone, which had become increasingly poor and subject to a higher incidence of violent crime. Developers sold these intracity migrants the idea of a "suburban paradise" away from the problems in other parts of the city. They offered the safety of gated luxury high-rise buildings, upscale shopping malls (there are dozens in Barra, the most of any neighborhood in Rio), and giant supermarkets, including Walmart, Bon Marche, Carrefour, Extra, and Makro. The Barra suburb also has an airport, a Formula One Grand Prix racetrack, two theme parks (Rio Waterplanet and Terra Encantada, since shut down), a new sports complex used in the Pan American Games of 2007, and, still under construction in 2012, the largest music performance complex in Brazil, the "City of Music" (Cidade da Musica), designed by the French architect Christian de Portzamparc.[6] This music complex has been heavily criticized as an overblown luxury out of touch with the city's real needs. In the words of one critic: "The City of Music is a block of concrete costing a horrific amount of money for us Cariocas and which won't bring the benefits that the population needs" (Grudgings, 2008).

The elitist nature of the pilot plan demonstrated shades of the Brasília experience but was perhaps worse. In Brasília, modernist architects like Costa used the technique of "shock" to transform the social nature of capitalism, giving the public sector greater power over the way how the city was designed and managed and thus remaking the city for those in power. Observers argued that government planners and those in power tried to blur the distinction between public and private, making the private world more public and the public world more private. This created a "strange" environment in which the government could achieve a "hidden agenda" with a subversive character—one with socialist leanings that created communal spaces (superblocks) that pretended to be egalitarian but, as in Soviet politics, were elitist (Holston, 1989).

Barra's evolution into a highly exclusive gated condominium beach suburb did not go entirely unnoticed. Early in the 1980s, Rio's community leaders realized what Barra was becoming. Under political pressure, the municipal government agreed to hold a public workshop in 1986 called "Seminário Barra '86." Its advertised purpose was to review the pilot plan and seek to make Barra accessible to all social groups. In one ad for the seminar it was announced that the pilot plan had to be democratized (Leitão, 1999).

The timing of the seminar is not surprising. Only two years earlier, Brazil had finally returned to a civilian government after 16 years of hardline military rule. The new president, José Sarney, was in the process of drafting a new constitution. Thus governments were sensitive in that moment to the question of social equity and, in particular, to the critique that Brasília had ended up as a kind of "socialist purification" plan whereby the poor were systematically moved to satellite cities while the privileged classes lived in the newly designed pilot plan core area.

Some observers found even more elitism in Barra than in Brasília. In the words of one, "There are no more superblocks as in Brasília, only exclusive condominiums" (Leitao, 1999: 80). Indeed, while the first-large scale projects like Nova Ipanema and Nova Leblon used the Corbusian modernist idea of the superblock, in Barra it gradually took on a more privatized and exclusive

form— luxury tower blocks entirely closed off from the public— with no pub-
lic gardens and few schools or other civic spaces that the outside public could
have access to. Lucio Costa had been known to have remarked in designing the
superblocks of Brasília that "neighborhoods are not waterproof, they leak"
(Leitão, 1999). He was aware that Brasília was criticized as being rigid and
brutalist, and so he tried to design Barra with an emphasis on nature. But, in
the end, he could not avoid creating a structure that invited exclusivity and
segregation.

This was the underlying theme when the seminar of 1986 unfolded. Critics
blasted public officials for creating such an elitist settlement zone. Community
leaders argued that people of lesser means were being excluded. In the course
of the seminar, a set of policy changes was proposed, among them to make
housing more available and affordable to diverse social groups and to imple-
ment greater environmental controls.When the seminar ended, the response of
private land owners, big capital, the real estate industry, and private develop-
ers was immediate and dramatic. In the words of one observer of that period,
"The sectors of mega capital and real estate development had a different con-
ception of the expansion of Barra da Tijuca, one that was diametrically opposed
to the decisions expressed by the Seminar" (Leitão, 1999: 116). The large prop-
erty owners, financial interests, and their representatives immediately began to
explore their political options in the wake of a seminar whose results worried
them and threatened their financial objectives.

In 1988, private developers and their colleagues announced a formal pro-
posal to annex Barra da Tijuca, along with the Baixada de Jacarepaguá, and
create a separate city with its own government. This would free them from
what they now considered the shackles of Rio city politics, which in that
moment had moved to the left and appeared to be trying to mollify the residen-
tial associations from the poor and working-class communities and other
groups that wanted to make Barra more socially diverse.

It should be noted that this move to annex Barra is taken right from a page
in U.S. history. For much of the twentieth century, American suburbs had
found that the best way to escape responsibility for the social ills of the larger
city was to cut their political ties with the traditional city, incorporate, and form
their own governments. Thus, the new global suburb of Barra was borrowing
from its global partner to the north. However, it should also be noted that Brazil
does not have the same tradition of incorporated, separate suburbs. In 1990, the
petition to separate Barra was reviewed, debated, and finally denied by the
state government of Rio. Everyone agreed to keep the pilot plan of Lucio Costa
as the governing instrument and not to change the political process in any way.

While the developers and landowners may not have gotten their way on the
matter of political separation, the pace of growth accelerated in the 1990s, and
the pattern of exclusivity hardly changed. If anything, Barra became even more
expensive and more of a wealthy suburban enclave. From a population of
45,000 in 1980, Barra grew to nearly a quarter million by the early 2000s, and,
with the growth of the basin of Jacarepaguá, a much more middle- and working-
class zone, the subregion had a half million people and was the fastest-growing
part of Rio.

In Barra, the form of growth had become even more privatized and exclusionary—this was observed by various city planners and writers who tracked urban development in the south and west zones. In one study, it was noted that development became more and more restricted inside gated complexes (Eppinghaus, Poppe, and Tangari, 2007). Further, shopping malls began to add security and put up other real and psychological barriers to public entry.

FINAL THOUGHTS: A GLOBAL AMERICAN SUBURB IN BRAZIL?

Barra da Tijuca offers an important lesson about global suburbs in general and about changing metropolitan space in Brazil more specifically. Global suburbs reflect a worldwide trend toward the privatization of urban space with greater exclusivity. Typically, this phenomenon has anchored itself in new elite spaces on the urban periphery, whether in China, Egypt, South Africa, or Brazil. Because the periphery of developing nations was often solely occupied by squatter settlements and the urban poor, this shift is quite dramatic and significant.

I have argued here that these new global suburbs take their cue from the original exodus of upwardly mobile city dwellers in the United States to decentralized new residential subdivisions carved out on the outskirts of American cities in the 1950s and 1960s. The new Brazilian global suburbs are by no means exact copies of the U.S. phenomenon. Rather, they retain some of their own unique cultural and architectural character, from the *condomínio fechado* to the high-density, modernist high-rise that is uniquely Brazilian. Still, one must acknowledge that global elite zones like Barra da Tijuca were profoundly influenced by changing social space in U.S. cities from the suburban era. Consider, for example, the words of the former director of the City of Rio's Department of Urbanism (from 2001 to 2006), reflecting on his childhood in Rio. "We lived in Flamengo. My dad had an American car, a Mercury. He worshiped that car and he prayed that the tramways would be eliminated, since they interrupted cars at that time" (Alfredo Sirkis, interview, Rio de Janeiro, May 2008).

This admiration of U.S. culture and lifestyles in cities is highlighted by what many have called the "Miami effect." Barra da Tijuca has periodically been referred to by some as a "Brazilian Miami." Many Brazilians frequently travel to Miami for business, tourism, or to make consumer purchases. It is often the first city Brazilians see in the United States, and thus, in a sense, it is a gateway city and a cultural symbol of the United States. It is also viewed as a "success story," a prosperous city with Latino culture. It has skyscrapers along the coast, so it looks and feels familiar to Brazilians.

The Miami effect dates to the 1980s and 1990s, according to one expert on Barra: "During the 1980s, many investors and developers wanted to recreate Miami in Barra. Miami was a place many Brazilians visited to shop or be tourists. It was a symbol of many things Rio's north zone residents (the ones who moved to Barra) wanted—security, shopping, consumer goods, the whole package" (Leitão, interview, Rio de Janeiro, May 2008). Miami was not, however, necessarily the city that Barra most resembled. "In terms of its scale,

automobile orientation, and playful shopping mall architecture, Barra is more like Las Vegas than Miami," said one architecture critic (Ana Luisa Nobre, interview, Rio de Janeiro, May 2008). "Barra is not really Miami. It's worse than Miami," said another Rio urban planner. "Miami has high density and a sense of place. Barra is an American freeway in the middle of nowhere. It's isolated condos and shopping malls. As an urban design experience, I hate it," he adds (Alfredo Sirkis, interview, Rio de Janeiro, May 2008).

If reference to Miami was meant to copy the sense of well-being and consumer success connected with North America, it is also true that developers and real estate agents wanted to sell Barra as a safe place to live, like a quiet U.S. suburb. Given all the violence in Rio and especially in the north zone, this became as important in Barra as in other large cities like São Paulo. In fact, the 1990s murder of the son of a supermarket owner on the streets of Barra and the kidnapping of a businessman in a condominium in Novo Leblon caused public officials to install special gates on all the main roads leading in and out of Barra. This meant that police could cordon off the city in the event of a kidnapping or an assault.

Privacy and security have come to dominate the culture of Barra. One publication jokingly describes a fictional residential project in Barra: "The Barra 2000 project, conceived as an Iron Curtain, will install automatic controls for road access into and out of the zone. . . . The project will add to the autonomy and independence, will be fenced and fortified. Passports will be requested of all foreigners . . . all administered by armed militia and commanded by a computer named Hal" (Gomes and Del Rio, 1998: 113). Even shopping malls in Barra emphasize security and privacy. They are enclosed, protected from the street, and generally entered only by automobile with guards in kiosks inspecting each entering vehicle. Security guards can be seen throughout the malls. Many are enclosed, air-conditioned, and give a feeling of privacy and security.

Advertisements by developers and real estate agents for Barra also emphasize security, privacy, and exclusion. Phrases like "a new lifestyle" or "a new paradise" are often used. By the early 2000s, most of Barra consisted of enclosed, privatized tower blocks, shopping malls, or high-security office buildings. Civic and public spaces were nowhere to be found. Most of the shopping malls are located along the Avenida das Américas, which is a fast-moving car-oriented corridor that cannot really be reached on foot from the residences. One does not see many people walking on the streets of Barra. This reminds one of the pedestrian-free streets of residential subdivisions on the outskirts of most American cities.

Almost every major study of Barra's development from the 1970s through the 1990s emphasizes the dominance of large-scale property owners and high-end luxury residential development and commerce. The only brief pause was the 1986 seminar to "democratize Barra," and in the end that project did not lead to any long-term changes. The quality of development remained in the hands of developers and the private sector. Some have argued that Barra's planning process was left too much in the hands of one person, Lucio Costa, and that he depended mainly on a somewhat secretive group of advisers who made most of the key decisions with him (Ana Luisa Nobre, interview, Rio de Janeiro, May 2008; Gerónimo Leitão, interview, Rio de Janeiro, May 2008).

The themes and architecture of Barra's commercial centers (malls) borrow heavily from the American experience (Rezende and Leitão, 2004). First, the

naming of the malls themselves is often in English and heavily references the United States and its culture—examples include malls called "New York City," "Downtown," "Midtown," "Barra Garden Shopping," "Open Mall Shopping," "Barra World Shopping," and even "Citta America." The malls also tend to try to create a theme-park-like, fake world, an escape from the outside into a space that allows people to imagine themselves somewhere else and to consume. Perhaps the most extreme example is Barra World Shopping, which attempts to copy Disney's Epcot Center in Orlando, a theme park that simulates different world cultures. In Barra World Shopping, a mall is broken up into themed spaces with references to various world regions—Japan, Italy, France, Holland, the Middle East. Giant iconic sculptures literally bring images of those places into the mall—a two-story Eiffel Tower, a Leaning Tower of Pisa, and a Sphinx, for example. These fake settings copy the trend toward postmodern fake spaces in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s (Sorkin, 1992) epitomized by malls such as Universal Studios' City Walk in Los Angeles, a mall designed by a theme park company to look like a city street but filled with fake scenography and lacking public seating.

The culture of consumerism and the creation of fake consumerist spaces dominate the cultural landscape of Barra, replacing the experience of living and walking in real neighborhoods that dominates the traditional, older neighborhoods of Rio. Authentic streets are replaced with spaces that seek to invent a sense of leisure, safety, comfort, privacy, and exclusivity. The sanitized shopping-mall Barra lifestyle allows people the fantasy of leaving the city even while living there.

This suburban culture of leisure and consumerism is not without its problems. Some observers note that Barra has produced an entire generation of children who are incapable of living outside their gated worlds. They have been to Disneyland in Florida but not to downtown Rio, have flown in airplanes or ridden in a Mercedes Benz but have no idea how to ride a city bus or take the metro (Gomes and Del Rio, 1998). In fact, during the late 1990s, in an attempt to establish intercondominium dialogue through a series of community meetings in Barra, residents reportedly requested that community associations contract with psychologists and social workers to help children and adolescents growing up alienated and isolated in fake cities.

In the end, global suburbs like Barra da Tijuca in Brazil face two resounding challenges that increasingly concern scholars and policy makers in the United States and other world cities. First, they must address the ecological implications of building farther and farther toward the periphery. Second, they must confront the dilemma of single-use zones, artificial spaces, and car-oriented urban design prototypes leading to the destruction of authentic communities, pedestrian life, and healthy public places. Global suburbs could thus emerge as a significant part of Brazil's larger environmental policy agenda for the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. An important clarification must be made about the term "suburb." The word comes from the Latin *suburbium*, which referred to ancient Rome, where poor citizens lived at lower elevations, thus *sub* (under) and *urb* (city), while the rich lived higher up in the hills. In this article I am using "suburb" to refer to the original post–World War II urban design prototype—a low-density,

mainly single-family residential subdivision on the outskirts of a city—that evolved in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. I also consider "suburb" as an urban planning idea that came to represent certain values—privacy, exclusivity, and security. In Brazil, however, the term *subúrbio* has a very different meaning. It is associated with lower-income, peripheral neighborhoods. In Rio de Janeiro, while the Zona Sul or south zone is where the wealthy and upper middle classes live, "subúrbios" generally refers to poor neighborhoods in the Zona Norte (north zone), especially along the railroad tracks and in industrial zones. Subúrbios are different from favelas, because they are not illegal or unregulated. Thus, in Brazil, wealthy suburbs in the periphery are called not subúrbios but *bairros* (neighborhoods) or *condomínios fechados* (gated or closed condominiums).

2. Brazil's population of 180 million is the highest in Latin America; its 2008 gross domestic product of about US$1.6 trillion makes it the eighth-largest economy in the world.

3. See Instituto Brasileiro de Geografía e Estadística, http://www.ibge.gov.br.

4. More recently, the economy of the larger state of Rio de Janeiro has grown as a result of offshore oil production along the coast both north and south of Rio.

5. A clear distinction must be made between the elite zones of Gavea, Leblon, Ipanema, and Copacabana and elite global suburbs like Barra da Tijuca. Barra is distinguished by its modernist fabric—single-use zoning (residents separate from shopping malls, etc.), lower densities, automobile dependency. Leblon and Ipanema have traditional morphologies—narrow streets, higher density, and mixed land uses (commerce and residence in the same space). Further, wealthy city neighborhoods like Leblon or Copacabana are closer to downtown, while Barra is more distant, a highway suburb.

6. When completed, the City of Music will include a concert hall (1,800 seats convertible into a 1,300-seat opera house), a chamber music hall (500 seats), an electro- acoustic hall (180 seats), the headquarters of the Brazilian symphony orchestra, a music school, rehearsal rooms, a media library, two small movie theaters (150 seats each), a larger movie theater (300 seats), a restaurant, shops, administrative offices, equipment rooms, and a parking garage.

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