ABOVE/ARRIBA: SQUATTER DWELLINGS AND A POLLUTED RIVER IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF CURITIBA. Viviendas marginales y río contaminado en el área metropolitana de Curitiba. PHOTO/FOTO: JORGE SAMER.
Curitiba, Brazil, a metropolis of 2.4 million inhabitants in the southern state of Paraná, has demonstrated a rapid improvement in urban quality over the last thirty-five years. The city has drawn worldwide recognition for its achievements and today is regarded by many as a model of urban planning and management. Yet, while some of Curitiba’s successful strategies have received well-deserved attention, this ecological “wonderland” still faces some major challenges. A critical reassessment of the city is due, specifically with regard to the characteristics of the planning model it offers and the role that citizens have played as this model has developed.

In response to urban growth and concerns about sustainability and the environment, the elements of the current master plan for Curitiba were initiated in 1964. Among the policies that subsequently emerged, those that tackled and tightly interwove land-use, public transit, and transportation issues are the ones that have been emphasized most strongly in the development of the city and in promotional media campaigns. These policies, along with others that target solid-waste disposal, recycling, refurbishment of housing, open-space preservation, and the greening of the city, have benefited from the infusion of many creative ideas. (1) However, the rapid improvement in urban quality that the city has boasted about actually took place under a technocratic planning model whose success is largely attributable to the national military regime (1964-1985) and Brazil’s slow transition to democracy. These political circumstances diminished public participation in Curitiba to almost zero during the period when the urban plans we know...
today were finalized, and the most important structural urban projects were carried out. Since the establishment of democracy, local governments have been forced to turn to their constituencies for legitimacy and support. Curitiba’s government, however, has still not adjusted its urban planning and management programs to accommodate democratic participation programs (2) and this has undermined the successes achieved. The lack of such participation is, of course, invisible to the traveler who visits Curitiba and sees it only through a touristic lens.

THE SLOW EROSION OF URBAN PROGRESS

To create the “ecological capital of Brazil,” Curitiba’s government established environmentally progressive legislation that ensured the protection of flood-prone areas, river basins, and forests from urban development. In recent years, however, these environmentally designated zones have been threatened with projects that run counter to the city’s professed ecological goals. For example, the government has signed contracts with

se realizaron y los proyectos urbanos estructurales más importantes se implementaron. Desde el establecimiento de la democracia, los gobiernos locales se han visto forzados a considerar a sus grupos de actores en busca de legitimidad y apoyo. El gobierno de Curitiba, sin embargo, todavía no ha hecho los ajustes apropiados a sus programas de planificación y gestión urbana para desarrollar proyectos democráticos de participación, (2) y los efectos negativos que esto trae al proceso de desarrollo urbano han comenzado a socavar los éxitos obtenidos. Hoy, la carencia de un programa democrático de participación permanece invisible al viajero que visita Curitiba y la percibe únicamente a través de una óptica turística.

LA LENTA EROSIÓN DEL PROGRESO URBANO

Para crear esta “capital ecológica de Brasil,” el gobierno de Curitiba estableció una legislación ambiental progresista que limitaba a impedir el desarrollo urbano en áreas propensas a inundaciones, cuencas fluviales y bosques. En años recientes, la conservación de estas zonas ambientales se ha visto amenazada, sin embargo, con proyectos que se oponen
major global corporations, particularly in the heavily polluting automobile industry, making concessions with respect to location and granting economic incentives that blatantly violate the original environmental legislation and metropolitan plans. Because these companies have been intensively advertised as new sources of employment, the outskirts of the city are undergoing rapid densification as a result of migration from surrounding areas, and this is leading to other disastrous social and environmental consequences. These recent events have distressed and mobilized environmentally conscious institutions and citizens. City authorities, however, have made it difficult for concerned groups of citizens to participate in the negotiation and decision-making processes related to such contracts. Authorities have also discarded professional environmental-impact evaluations that criticized proposed projects. Although a recent law for the district of Curitiba authorized the creation of councils that include representatives of the population, the few councils that have come into being remain dependent on governmental institutions, and they simply do not provide a means to address the environmental concerns raised by the community. The government has financed contracts with large transnational industries, for example, by offering economic incentives and setting aside land for the location of their factories, thus violating the original environmental legislation and metropolitan plans. Due to these measures, the city has experienced a rapid densification of the outskirts, leading to other disastrous social and environmental consequences. These recent events have caused distress and mobilization among environmentally conscious institutions and citizens. City authorities, however, have made it difficult for concerned groups of citizens to participate in the negotiation and decision-making processes related to such contracts. Authorities have also abandoned professional environmental-impact evaluations that criticized proposed projects. Although a recent law for the district of Curitiba authorized the creation of councils that include representatives of the population, the few councils that have come into being remain dependent on governmental institutions, and they simply do not provide a means to address the environmental concerns raised by the community.
adequate public representation. (3) The Environmental Council, for instance, includes one citizen representative who must negotiate with more than a dozen city officials.

The absence of an effective democratic participation program has not only led to ecologically problematic projects, it has also allowed for state-directed cultural projects to proliferate without public consensus. Motivated by its heightened visibility, Curitiba’s government makes efforts to show a progressive and cultural face to the tourists it attracts. On occasion, however, the attempt to do so has led to controversy. For example, in the 1980s, light-house shaped buildings were erected throughout Curitiba to function as neighborhood libraries. These “Lightshouses of Knowledge,” inspired by the ancient Alexandria library and lighthouse that provided, respectively, information and safety, were imposed from above; they were not the outcome of discussions between the public and the government. It is quite likely that the public would not have embraced the lightshouses, given the fact that the government had consistently avoided dealing with the infrastructure of sectors of the city’s periphery. City officials, however, had no problem dipping into their limited budget, under the rationale of promoting higher standards of “culture” and making education more accessible to citizens. Critics of the lighthouse program claim that these attractive buildings promote the idea of an efficient and benevolent city government at the expense of attention paid to the basic needs of the population.

The lightshouses are one of the examples in which architecture in Curitiba has been used to symbolize a government term, as in the case with Mayor Rafael Grecco’s term. By marking the urban space through symbolic architecture, an aura of development and sophistication is created for the city that can hinder more urgent urban problems that remain unattended. As ubiquitous landmarks, the lightshouses stand as symbols of urban services provided to all. The notion of equality that they promote, however, does not correlate with the inequitable distribution of services among the population. Vast areas of the city’s periphery, for instance, have not been provided with a basic sewage system. While other Brazilian cities with similar challenges have implemented participatory programs to discuss how to administer city budgets, the government in Curitiba still has not. (4) Rather, a participation program presented by the political opposition was vetoed down. What is undeniable, however, is that the lightshouses and other public architectural projects in Curitiba make great postcard images, making and promoting an attractive, competitive image of the city.

Other landmarks have also been proposed to promote cultural identity and urban references. Abandoned or underutilized buildings and spaces have been renovated as cultural or recreational centers. Examples are the Palol Theater, the Wire Operas, and government, and simplemente no provee representación pública adecuada. (3) El Concejo Ambiental, por ejemplo, consiste en representante ciudadano que debe negociar con más de una docena funcionarios gubernamentales.

La exclusión de un programa democrático de participación ha conducido no solamente a proyectos problemáticos ecológicamente, sino que también ha permitido que proyectos culturales dirigidos por el estado proliferen sin el consenso público. Motivada por su aumentada visibilidad, el gobierno de Curitiba se esfuerza en mostrar una cara progresista y cultural a los turistas que llegan. En ocasiones, no obstante, estas intenciones despiertan controversia. Por ejemplo, en la década de 1980, se construyeron edificaciones en forma de faros a lo largo de Curitiba para funcionar como bibliotecas de los vecindarios. Estos “Faros de Conocimiento”, que tienen como referencia las antiguas edificaciones bibliotecas y faros de Alejandría que daban información y seguridad a la ciudad, se impusieron desde arriba. Los faros no fueron el resultado de discusiones entre el público y el gobierno. De hecho, el gobierno había estado en discusiones la prioridad dada a la construcción de los faros, dado que el gobierno había evitado repetidamente resolver los servicios básicos de infraestructura de sectores de la periferia de ciudad. Los funcionarios municipales, sin embargo, no tuvieron problemas en justificar el uso del limitado presupuesto urbano en estos proyectos, alegando la promoción de estándares de “cultura” más altos y educación más accesible para todos los ciudadanos. Los críticos del programa de faros argumentan que estos edificios abstractos promueven la idea de un gobierno urbano eficiente y benéfico, a expensas de una atención real a las necesidades más básicas de la población.

Los faros son utilizados por el gobierno como un símbolo de una gestión gubernamental en Curitiba, con el que se marca notoriedad y destreza en el espacio urbano. De esta manera, a través de la arquitectura se crea para la ciudad en un aura de desarrollo y sofisticación que puede estar desplazando problemas urbanos más urgentes que permanecen desatendidos. Así, como hitos ubicados en lugares estratégicos, los faros se construyen en símbolos de una amplia oferta de servicios urbanos para todas. La noción de igualdad que ellos promueven, sin embargo, no se correlaciona con la distribución desproporcionada de servicios entre la población. Vastas áreas en la periferia, por ejemplo, no han sido dotadas de servicios de saneamiento básico. Frente a esta problemática y mientras otras ciudades brasileñas con desafíos semejantes han implementado programas participativos para discutir cómo administrar sus limitados presupuestos urbanos, el gobierno en Curitiba todavía no lo ha hecho. (4) En vez de ello, la Cámara Municipal de la ciudad rechazó recientemente un programa de participación presentado por la oposición política. Es inescrutable, sin embargo, que los faros y otros proyectos arquitectónicos públicos en Curitiba constituyen imágenes muy sugestivas para tarjetas postales, construyendo y promocionando una atractiva y competitiva imagen de la ciudad.
House, the Botanical Garden, and the 24-Hour Street. Similarly, the German, Portuguese, and Ukrainian memorials, and the Polish and Italian gateways, among others, give different communities of immigrants a sense of cultural representation in the public realm. These buildings, along with the lighthouses, have produced a new cityscape that focuses intensely on image making. The original intention to recover the architecture and "colors" of the old city and to introduce a more dynamic urban quality with new public buildings and spaces, raises some problems. For example, the promotion of cultural identity has been skewed in favor of specific sectors of society. The projects that have aimed to celebrate a multicultural city have almost exclusively concentrated on first-world European communities, whereas groups from other countries and from different ethnic Brazilian backgrounds have not been represented in the same way. Some of these groups have expressed discontent over their exclusion. They may, in fact, have rights similar to or greater than European descendants to claim a spatial expression of their presence and culture in the city. Part of the problem may be that decisions on memorial building remain in the hands of centralized powers. With the exception of some minor projects, the design of most of these architectural icons is the work of the Institute of Urban Research and Planning (IPPUC) or of professionals appointed by the government. The exclusion of other designers from the production of public architecture and urban space reinforces once again the city government's hegemonic planning model. Some architects have even fled the city in search of professional opportunities elsewhere.
In addition to the misuse of some of the preservation areas and the questions that some of the cultural projects raise, some of the city's most notable programs have stagnated or have been discontinued. As an example, the downtown enhancement projects of the 1970s involved pioneering initiatives in Brazil such as closing several streets to traffic. The IPPUC received national and international praise for these significant interventions, which included the preservation of the city's historic and cultural resources, the enhancement of pedestrian streets, the building of a network linking plazas and parks, and the creation of bicycle paths. In August 1997, however, this strategy suffered a setback when a downtown pedestrian street was given back to the automobile, an alarming act that was actually promoted by the IPPUC. One of the city's daily newspapers announced the plans to reopen the street to car traffic, saying that citizens would be consulted. The very next day, it announced that the conversion had already begun, at the request of retailers. Store owners had supposedly complained that their sales had decreased because the streets were inaccessible to car traffic. Citizens interested in the preservation of the pedestrian streets were astonished, but they remained powerless. Although pedestrian streets are heavily used by Curitibanos all day long, the population was not given a chance to express divergent opinions. Such action reveals the government as privileging the middle- and high-income classes, especially the population that uses private cars. These are often the same people who prefer shopping malls to public commercial strips because of the parking facilities, safety, and sense of exclusiveness they offer. In fact, several American-style shopping malls—enclosed, air-conditioned, heavily controlled, and with huge parking structures—were created in recent years in various areas of the city center to accommodate those desires. These megastructures have caused stress to the traffic network, a decline of the public realm, and increased inequality in the social appropriation of the city.

Además de las violaciones a las áreas de preservación ecológica y a las inquietudes que despiertan algunos de los proyectos culturales, algunos de los programas más notables de la ciudad han suspendido o han sido interrumpidos. Como ejemplo, los proyectos de mejoras del centro de la ciudad que se llevaron a cabo en la década del 70 incluyeron iniciativas pioneras en Brasil, como la creación de bulevares peatonales. El IPPUC recibió alabanzas nacionales e internacionales por estas intervenciones significativas, que contemplaron la conservación de los recursos históricos y culturales de la ciudad, el aumento de calles peatonales, la creación de una red de plazas y parques, e la implementación de canales viales para bicicletas. En el Año de 1997, sin embargo, esta estrategia sufrió un revés cuando una calle peatonal del centro de la ciudad fue devuelta al tráfico automotor, un acto alarmante que fue promovido por el mismo IPPUC. Un día, uno de los periódicos de la ciudad anunció el plan para reabrir la calle al tránsito de automóviles, afirmando que los ciudadanos serían consultados. Al día siguiente, anunció que la conversión había comenzado a solicitud de los minoristas. Supuestamente, los vendedores se habían quejado de que sus ventas habían disminuido porque las calles eran inaccesibles al tránsito automotor. Los ciudadanos interesados en la preservación de la calle peatonal se asombearon, pero permanecieron impotentes. Aun cuando las calles peatonales son usadas intensamente por Curitibanos todo el día, a esta población no se le dio oportunidad para expresar sus opiniones. Este tipo de acción evidencia al gobierno privilegiando las clases de nivel socioeconómico medio y alto, especialmente la población que usa automóviles privados. Con frecuencia, esta es la misma población que prefiere centros comerciales a bulevares comerciales públicos a causa de las facilidades de estacionamiento, seguridad y sentido de exclusividad que ellos ofrecen. De hecho, varios centros comerciales de estilo americano—cerrados, controlados, con aire acondicionado y grandes estacionamientos—se crearon en los últimos años en diferentes áreas del centro urbano para acomodar estos deseos. Estas
Another utopia-reversing scenario occurred when one of Curitiba's most famous sustainable projects was placed on a back burner, so to speak. In 1989, the city implemented a program called "Garbage That Is Not Garbage," which enabled households to exchange recyclable materials for food, transportation tickets, or other items. This program earned international awards in its early years. The government estimates that almost 90 percent of the city's population has contributed to the program (environmental non-governmental organizations in Curitiba claim a much lower percentage). Recently, however, there has been a significant cutback in the campaign to educate people about recycling, and a decline in actual garbage collecting and sorting. Deficits in the infrastructure required for the recycling and resorting of materials have also jeopardized the program. This is indicative of a larger problem: Program organizers in general have not always been successful in maintaining the implementation of their projects over time. Curitiba's government has often concentrated on initiating projects and in widely publicizing them at local, national, and international levels, only to abandon them later. Given the scarcity of resources, the government should concentrate more on educating and empowering citizens to become the agents responsible for maintaining these programs.

mega-estructuras han sobrecargado la red vial, han debilitado el espacio público, y han aumentado la desigualdad en la apropiación social de la ciudad.

Otros escenarios distópicos existen con uno de los proyectos sustentables más famosos de Curitiba, que se ha desatendido significativamente. En 1989, la ciudad implementó un programa llamado "Desperdicio que no es Desperdicio," por medio del cual los hogares podían cambiar materias reciclables por alimentos, boletas de transporte, u otros artículos. Este programa obtuvo premios internacionales en sus primeros años. Según estimación del gobierno, casi 90 por ciento de la población de la ciudad ha contribuido al programa (ONG ambientales en Curitiba consideran que es un porcentaje bastante inferior). Recientemente, sin embargo, ha habido una disminución importante en las campañas que educan a la gente sobre reciclaje, y en la misma colecta y clasificación de desperdicios. Los déficit en la infraestructura requerida para el reciclaje y el reuso real de materias también han comprometido el programa. Esto son indicadores de un problema más grande; en general los organizadores de programas no siempre han tenido éxito en mantener la implementación de los proyectos en el tiempo. El gobierno de Curitiba frecuentemente se ha concentrado en iniciar proyectos y en publicitarlos ampliamente a nivel local, nacional e internacional, sólo para abandonarlos luego. Como los recursos son escasos, el gobierno debería concentrarse más en educar y concientizar a los ciudadanos para que sean los agentes responsables de mantener estos programas.
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN CURITIBA

From the outset, the planning process implemented in Curitiba developed amidst constraints on free public expression and citizen participation that were imposed by the military regime and the prevalent technocratic model of government and planning. Furthermore, the fast-track decision-making process that changed Curitiba's face so abruptly left little room for citizen participation. And even though the players that have guided the planning process have worked under different political systems, the results have almost always disfavored public involvement. Jaime Lerner, architect, urban planner, and three-time mayor of Curitiba, led the city's planning through its most important stages. Lerner is a charismatic politician who has waged a vigorous campaign to promote Curitiba. When he was first appointed mayor in 1971, Brazil was under military dictatorship. In 1979, when Lerner was appointed to his second term as mayor, he continued working with IPPUC under a technocratic planning model to carry out the radical transformations that thoroughly changed the appearance of the city. In 1988, Lerner was for the first time elected mayor under Brazil's new democratic regime. At the end of that third term, in 1992, his 92 percent popularity rating gained him the post of governor of Paraná, and in October 1998, Lerner was reelected as governor for a second term. The inertia of technocracy, however, has remained.

As citizens and groups increasingly pressure the city government for greater involvement, the time has come for Lerner and his team to read the new sociopolitical signs. They should redirect their proven creativity and professional expertise toward the transformation of the city's development model, opening it up to more democratic participation. According to a politician of the opposition, Lerner made some effort to be more democratic, but the mayors that succeeded him did not follow his lead. (5) For example, Mayor Rafael Greca's "Total Neighborhood" (Bairro Total) project invited citizens to a ceremony with the mayor so that they could learn about the budget and the plans for their communities. While these events were a step toward raising citizen consciousness, they generated little dialogue. The current mayor, Casio Tanigushi, has made comments on participation that are even less encouraging. Direct democracy, in his view, is only practiced at election time. (6)

An assessment of Curitiba's planning model and the role participation has had in it requires a review of the redemocratization process in Brazil and its consequences for the nation's cultural and political structure. Brazil has only briefly experimented with a democratic system, and as a result, Brazilian governance, with the exception of a few local cases, remains rigidly structured in a top-down fashion. Power is centralized,
and mechanisms of involvement and inclusion of citizens have operated in a controlled, paternalistic way. In many cases, poor, disempowered classes have not developed an awareness of the power that can be gained by organizing to fight for certain benefits. Sufficient, and appropriately varied, mechanisms of participation have not been developed, and communities have become accustomed to abiding by the implicit rules of the government, pleading only for their immediate needs and believing that they are receiving the best that could be hoped for. Today, with a few exceptions, the country's highly centralized form of democracy continues to offer little room for massive and coordinated citizen involvement.

It is possible that public participation may even have been side-stepped intentionally in Curitiba to avoid the difficulties and delays that this process frequently causes. The limited budget may also have been a factor if participation programs were seen as too costly. The intense pressure to address basic needs might have been another factor that inhibited the creation of mechanisms for citizen participation at all levels. Public transportation and other essential urban services had to be provided quickly, creatively, and inexpensively.

It is fair to say as well that the public might not have participated even if invited and provided with the mechanisms to do so. After all, there is no local tradition of participation, and besides, an average person's time is overwhelmingly consumed with trying to meet basic personal and family needs. That being said, the option to participate in the shaping of the public realm should in principle be available to all, the decision to exercise it being a matter of individual discretion. In a population without a solid tradition of citizen participation, Lerner's strong leadership certainly stirred admiration and expectations. Curitibanos gained insight into what they could obtain from the urban development process if they played according to the rules and performed the determining, yet not very demanding, act of voting.

Class distinctions are of particular importance to the issue of participation. The middle classes tend to dominate leadership positions, while lower-income sectors are almost always absent from the planning process. This helps to explain why lower-class interests and expectations are never sufficiently reflected in the plans. The process produces urban outcomes that institutionalize or, worse yet, promote inequality. Finally, there is the perverse possibility that aggressive and well-tailored media campaigns effectively coerced lower-income classes to suppress their own natural spatial practices. Such campaigns can lead people to assimilate to patterns of spatial appreciation and appropriation characteristic of other social sectors.

Luchar por ciertos beneficios. Los mecanismos variados de participación que se necesitan no se han desarrollado, y las comunidades se han acostumbrado a atenderse a las reglas implícitas del gobierno, pidiéndolo sólo para sus necesidades inmediatas, creyendo que es lo más que pueden aspirar. Hoy, con pocas excepciones, la experiencia de democracia muy centralizada del país continúa dificultando los esfuerzos de participación ciudadana masiva y coordinada.

En Curitiba, es posible que la participación pública haya sido evitada intencionalmente para evitar las dificultades y demoras que este proceso frecuentemente ocasiona. Además, un presupuesto limitado puede haber ocasionado desaparición de programas de participación que se supusieron muy costosos. Las presiones intensas para resolver necesidades básicas podrían haber sido otra factor que relegó la oportunidad y los recursos económicos para idear y mantener mecanismos para la participación ciudadana a todos los niveles. (7) El transporte público y otros servicios urbanos en Curitiba, por ejemplo, tuvieron que suplirse creativamente y a bajo costo.

Es justo decir también, que la población podría no haber participado de cualquier manera, aun siendo invitada y dotada con los mecanismos para hacerlo. Después de todo, no hay tradición local de participación y, además, el tiempo de una persona promedio se consume abrumadoramente tratando de cubrir las necesidades básicas personales y familiares. La oportunidad de participar en la definición del espacio público, sin embargo, debería estar abierta a la discreción de cada individuo. En medio de una población sin una tradición sólida en participación ciudadana, el liderazgo fuente de Lerner seguramente despertó expectativas y admiración de la ciudadanía. Los Curitibanos intuyeron lo que ellos podrían lograr del proceso de desarrollo urbano si jugaban con las reglas predeterminadas, y si manifestaban su apoyo en el fácil y sin embargo determinante acto de votar.

Las distinciones de clase son de importancia particular en relación a la participación. Las clases medias tienden a dominar posiciones de liderazgo, mientras los sectores de bajos ingresos están casi siempre ausentes del proceso de planificación. Esto puede explicar el hecho de que los intereses y las expectativas de las clases bajas nunca se incorporan suficientemente en los planes. Éste proceso conduce a resultados urbanos que institucionalizan o, peor aún, promuevan la desigualdad. Finalmente, hay la posibilidad perversa de que campañas de medios agresivas y bien enfocadas efectivamente coaccionen a las clases de bajos ingresos para reprimir sus prácticas espaciales naturales propias. Las campañas pueden ocasionar que grupos de la población asimilen modelos de apropiación y apreciación espacial que caracterizan a otros sectores sociales.
CITIZEN INCLUSION AND THE SEARCH FOR EQUALITY

In current societies, where overall socioeconomic transformation occurs, the realistic possibility of rigid top-down master planning has ended. Therefore, an important part of the rationale behind citizen participation, beyond the obvious reasons of promoting democratic processes and social justice, is to give people ownership of the plans. They might then be disposed to support those plans and the public officials who are capable of guaranteeing their implementation. If planning objectives and programs are issued by the government through technocratic procedures, without adequate input from society, the process is not only delegitimized, it also loses relevance and the capacity to ensure implementation over time.

Curitiba will therefore have to come to terms with the need to more thoroughly involve citizens and other relevant agents in planning before its process of urban quality improvement, currently at its peak, loses momentum. It is arguable that decline and delegitimization have already begun. Concerned citizens, politicians, and non-governmental organizations are increasing their demands for pluralistic views of the city and for a dialogue on the city's future. (9) With democratic practices in Brazil now falling under the scrutiny of the international community, there may also be additional pressure for greater participation.

Despite the gains in social services and urban quality effectively experienced in Curitiba, the city's achievements have been over-estimated in its strategies of image making and city marketing. In the process, the needs and expectations of the population have been neutralized and homogenized. They have been overshadowed by media campaigns that promote the idea of a city "for all," even though the city really favors the lifestyles and preferences of the middle- and upper-income classes. (10) According to these campaigns, Curitiba delivers the best quality of life in Brazil, but a study conducted by a prestigious urban institute in São Paulo ranked the city ninth in the country. (11) In fact, there is marked inequality in almost all urban services between the central district of Curitiba and the surrounding metropolitan area. Sectors of the rapidly densifying and sprawling urban periphery have minimum or nonexisting services. The same media campaigns that aimed to attract investors to the city also attracted thousands of poor people to Curitiba's outskirts. These people have had little priority in the city's plans and budget, and they never appear in the images that are sold to the public.

LA INCLUSIÓN CIUDADANA Y LA BÚSQUEDA DE IGUALDAD

En las sociedades actuales, donde se desarrolla una significativa transformación socioeconómica, la posibilidad realista de planificación rígida, total y vertical ha terminado. Por lo tanto, una parte importante del razonamiento detrás de la participación ciudadana, más allá de las razones obvias de promover procesos democráticos y justicia social, es dar la titularidad de los planes a la gente. Esto se hace de modo que ellos de hecho puedan disponerse a actuar favorablemente para apoyar esos planes y a los funcionarios públicos que pueden garantizar su implementación. Si los programas y objetivos de planificación son determinados por el gobierno mediante procedimientos tecnocráticos, sin el apoyo adecuado de la sociedad, el proceso no solamente pierde legitimidad, sino también relevancia y la potencialidad de ser efectuado o mantenido en el tiempo.

En vista de esto, Curitiba tendrá que venir a términos con las necesidades de involucrar ciudadanos y otros agentes pertinentes en el proceso de planificación de una manera más completa antes de que su proceso de mejora de la calidad urbana, actualmente en su pico, pierda impulso. Es discutible que el proceso de decline y pérdida de legitimidad ha comenzado ya. Los ciudadanos, políticos y ONGs interesadas están aumentando su presión para promocionar visiones pluralistas de la ciudad y diálogo para discutir el futuro de la metrópolis. (9) Con las prácticas democráticas en el Brasil bajo el escrutinio de la comunidad internacional, puede también aumentar la presión por más participación.

Más allá de las mejoras en servicios sociales y calidad urbana efectivamente experimentadas en Curitiba, los logros de la ciudad han sido sobreestimados en sus estrategias de construcción de imagen y mercadeo urbano. En el proceso, las necesidades y expectativas de la población han sido neutralizadas y homogeneizadas. Ellas han sido ensombrecidas por campañas que promuevan la idea de una ciudad "para todos," el bien de la ciudad realmente favorece los estilos de vida y los gustos de las clases de ingresos medios y altos. (10) Según estas campañas, Curitiba posee la mejor calidad de vida en el Brasil, pero un estudio conducido por una institución urbana prestigiosa de São Paulo la clasificó como la séptima ciudad en el país. (11) De hecho, hay una gran desigualdad en casi todos los servicios urbanos entre el distrito central de Curitiba y su área metropolitana. Sectores de la periferia urbana, que se expande y densifica rápidamente, carecen de servicios o tienen servicios mínimos. Las mismas campañas que ayudaron a atraer inversores a la ciudad, también atraen miles de personas pobres a los bordes de Curitiba. Esta es la población a la que se le ha dado poca prioridad en los planes y el
What then can Curitiba hope for, now that, on the one hand, it has witnessed many urban achievements and its leaders and institutions have gained high popular acceptance, and on the other hand, Curitibanos have broadened their consciousness of environmental and urban issues? The time is ripe for the adoption of a new democratic framework within which the population would be integrated from the very outset in the decision-making process for all programs. The agency of citizens needs to be recognized. Finally, it would be highly beneficial for citizens and the government to engage in a deeper reflection on the historical and cultural developments that gave rise to the present metropolitan condition, and to discuss how to go about shaping a better, more inclusive future. Curitiba the Wonderland may be just around the corner.


2. There are numerous local, international, governmental and academic publications that describe the many programs of Curitiba. This article presents only highlights of some of the major programs.


4. The "Orçamento Participativo" (Participatory Budget) program has been successfully implemented in the Brazilian cities of Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, Santos, Londrina and more recently, in the Federal District.


6. See Samek. Helpful signs are starting to appear. Recently, Mayor Taniguchi has proposed planning at the metropolitan level and is leading projects such as the Employment Belt across a large area of the metropolis that encompasses infrastructural, financial and educational programs. These programs provide opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses.

7. There are other Brazilian cities (as mentioned in note 4) struggling with similar or greater economic constraints that have favored citizen participation.


9. In 1997, the Master Plan of Curitiba, adopted in 1985, was discussed and challenged for the first time in more than three decades at a major metropolitan event held over a period of two months, "Plane Diretora de Curitiba: Uma Abordagem Metropolitana" Seminário Municipal, May-June 1997.

10. See Sánchez.


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