

THE PATHWAYS TO ENCOUNTER :
REFLECTIONS ON THE SOCIAL STRUGGLE IN SÃO PAULO

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I. Introduction

Metropolitan São Paulo: 14 million inhabitants. Of these, the majority, when not unemployed, earn meagre wages and live in squatter settlements (*favelas*), slums and 'precarious houses on the periphery'. In other words, they are excluded to such an extent that their work capacity becomes weakened. This paper focuses on the social struggles that occurred in the last decade. It is primarily a theoretical and methodological effort to reconstruct the course of the conflicts that culminated in the metalworkers strikes of 1978-1980, indisputably a new high point in the worker-union movement. However, the explanation for such organized and vigorous protests is, in my opinion, to be found in social movements that transcend the ambit of labour relations *stricto sensu*, indicating that there are links, generally not visible, between the *bairros* and the factories.

I have restricted my studies to the richest area of the country, São Paulo, the cumulative center of this dependent capitalism, and to a period of time which, although marked by intense economic dynamism in terms of growth in the gross national product, led to an accentuated wage decrease and a deterioration of urban living conditions for large segments of the labour force: it is in this untamed, predatory politico-social context that the struggles of the workers and the inhabitants of the poorer *bairros* occur.

I begin the article by delineating the essential characteristics of this context, emphasizing that the reproduction of the labour force cannot be viewed exclusively from the point of view of the process of exploitation and the pauperization that results from

it. I then go on to analyse the so-called social contradictions relating the macro-structural determinations of Brazilian society to what I call experiences or praxes of struggle. Finally, I endeavor to interweave the multiple and discontinuous paths that lead to the moment of encounter: when the partial and isolated pathways merge into a conjuncture, in which the practices of resistance and organization, developed in innumerable localities in this complex and contradictory urban-industrial arena, interlace in a broad, collective process of conflict. This is the central objective of the article. Before reaching that point, I have woven my own analytic preamble, which begins with the structural level on which the inequalities and antagonisms of a country, which was a notable and deplorable example of a capitalism that associates growth with poverty, are based.

II. The Structural Level of Urban Struggles: Theoretical and Empirical Considerations.

Despite the fact that Brazil is now eighth on the list of countries of the capitalist world in terms of industrial output, wages, even when compared with those in societies of nascent industrialization, are exceedingly low. The legislation in effect declares strikes illegal and permits intervention in trade unions and imprisonment or dismissal of their leaders, a situation that, considering the frequent pressure upon and repression of the popular and labour movement, together with the existence of a vast reserve army, has fostered a growth which weakens the majority of those who have only their labour force to sell on the market.¹

In periods prior to 1980, when the economy was expanding at an accelerated rate, there was a marked increase in job opportunities, especially in the modern sectors of industry, which to a certain extent compensated for the low wage levels. (We shall see further on that these were drastically depressed). The survival of impoverished families, although in a dramatically precarious manner, was made possible by the entry of other members of the family into the labour market, as well as by the extension of the working day, which was frequently around 11 to 12 hours per day.²

It is useful to remember that Brazil became the most highly industrialized country of the capitalist periphery. The economy which up to the decade of the 1950's had been based on traditional activities - especially textiles and foodstuffs - then came under the dynamic impetus of industrial enterprises producing consumer durables (automobiles and electrical home appliances), intermediate goods (steel, paper, petrochemicals and rubber), and capital goods (machinery and equipment). In fact, between 1950 and 1980, the gross national product grew at the considerable average rate of 7.1% per annum. The secondary sector of the economy expanded in particular, increasing from 20% of the national income to 26%, while the industrial work force grew from 14 to 24%. During the last decade three and a half million new factory jobs were created, a figure that corresponds to a 7.8% annual increase, considerably higher than that of the population increase in urban zones of 4.8%.

This notable increase in wealth was the fruit of changes in the international division of labour. The traditional relationship of dependence - expressed through the export of raw materials and importation of manufactured goods - was replaced by a new relationship in which the more highly developed countries began to produce within Brazil the products that had previously been exported to it. As a result of this new character of dependence, a more extensive, and complex industrial structure developed. Certainly there was economic growth, if by that we mean the formation of additional capital and the increase of the internal product. The poverty that resulted was not, therefore, the fruit of stagnation, but of an extremely dynamic form of capitalism.

This enormous accumulation of riches was concentrated in Metropolitan São Paulo, which became the fundamental locus of accumulated capital and the concentration of the labour force. By around 1980, this area accounted for 46% of the total industrial wages paid in the country, 40% of the total value of manufacturing industries, and capital investments in industry, and 24% of the gross national product. This region accounts for 70% of the industrial value added in the branches of vehicles, electrical home

appliances and rubber; 60% of pharmaceutical and plastics products; and 55% of the machinery sector, in addition to a significant segment of practically all the manufacturing industries.

These observations serve to demonstrate a fundamental contradiction in the nature of that economic growth, conventionally referred to as 'dependent-associated', expressed by the fact that such growth occurred concomitantly with accentuated socio-economic exclusion: the enormous progress achieved was accompanied by a drastic decrease in wages and a deterioration of urban living conditions.³

Proof of this lies in the fact that the minimum wage decreased in real terms, between 1959 and 1982, by approximately 50% (see Table 1). This immense reduction acquires real significance if we consider that this was not, at least until 1981, an expression of a moment of crisis, but a structural tendency present over decades. The weakening of the labour force becomes obvious: the employee who earned a minimum wage in 1981 had to work 84.35 hours longer per month to acquire the same essential staples as the worker who received the minimum wage 22 years before. Even in 1981, the worker who earned two minimum wages per month, had to work approximately 20 hours longer per month to acquire the same basic food package, as compared to the purchasing power of one single minimum wage at the end of the decade of the 1950's. It can be argued that very few workers earn the minimum wage. Without doubt, this argument is valid, for 11% are included in this category and even this sector had tended to decrease in the last few years. What is important, however, is the fact that, although few workers are affected, the minimum wage serves as a parameter that exercises a braking effect on the wage levels immediately above it. It is, in fact, the beam that illumines the wage spectrum of the working class, especially when we consider the fact that 39% of workers earn up to 2 minimum salaries and that 77% of the labour force does not exceed five times that wage level.⁴

It is not the intention of this paper to enlarge upon the combination of processes that 'permitted' enormous economic growth to be associated with severe pauperization of the workers.

Table 1. The Municipality of São Paulo

Evolution of the Price of Land per Square Meter, Minimum Wages, and Work Hours Required to Earn the Essential Staple Consumption.

(1959 = index 100)

Year	I. Price of land per SQ.M. (Index)	II. Real average mini- mum annual wage (Index)	III. Time required to earn the essential staple consumption		
			hrs.	min	(index)
1959	100,00	100,00	65	05	100,00
1960	64,99	83,96	81	30	125,22
1961	-	93,36	71	54	110,47
1962	73,95	85,24 (1)	94	48	145,66
1963	-	75,02	98	20	151,09
1964	73,38	77,42	-	-	-
1965	-	74,35	88	16	135,62
1966	76,26	63,65	109	15	167,80
1967	-	60,31	105	16	161,74
1968	126,44	58,92	101	35	156,08
1969	-	56,70	110	23	169,60
1970	170,70	57,70	105	13	161,60
1971	-	55,22	111	47	171,75
1972	185,39	54,24	119	08	183,05
1973	-	49,70	147	04	225,97
1974	266,61	45,60	163	32	251,27
1975	-	47,60	149	40	229,96
1976	292,87	47,33	157	29	241,97
1977	-	49,32	141	49	217,90
1978	273,38	50,79	135	37	211,45
1979	-	51,26	153	04	235,00
1980	-	52,10	157	31	242,04
1981	-	52,94	149	40	229,97
1982	-	46,23*	-	-	-

Sources: I. Evolution of the price of land (1959-1978), Municipality of São Paulo.

COGEP (prices of 1975, average).

II. - DIEESE - Minimum Wage - Boletim of DIEESE, April 1982.

(1) from 1962 on, includes 13th salary.

* March 1982.

It is sufficient to say that, among other factors, the State, in maintaining, by means of pressure and repression, rigid control over civil society and, in particular, over the workers' organizations, put itself at the service of a new modality of capital accumulation. On the other hand, in a much more vigorous way, the State became the most important direct producer in strategic sectors. At the same time, it granted a number of subsidies - tax exemptions, financing at negative interest rates, facilities in the importation of machinery and equipment, which were of fundamental importance in accelerating the rate of capital accumulation. Furthermore, as a result of the rapidity with which the industrial plants were expanded, a vast infrastructure of services was created - electricity, street and highway communications networks, water and sewage systems - prerequisites to the process of accumulation whose level increased rapidly and prodigiously⁵. Hence, a state was organized which, in order to preserve 'social order', permitted capital to follow heinous practices in exploiting labour at the same time that it drained off voluminous resources in order to stimulate the reproduction of capital which was in turn detrimental to the standard of living of the workers.⁶

An example of this process of exclusion strictly within the urban setting is the *Banco Nacional de Habitação* (Federal Housing Bank), a powerful machine created in 1964, that served to boost the economy, financing approximately 2 million housing units, the great majority of which were destined for the middle and upper income levels. While this was taking place, in São Paulo there were 2 million people living in slums, 800 thousand in favelas and 2.6 million in so-called 'precarious houses on the periphery', built by the owners of the lots themselves during what is ironically referred to as 'spare time', in areas with no basic services, located far from work-centres.

These precarious aspects of life in the city prompt a discussion of the socio-economic exclusion that affects labour from an angle that is intimately related but not limited to the degrees and types of labour exploitation that prevail in the process of pro-

duction. The idea here involves what I have called urban spolia-
tion⁷: the sum total of the extortions that result from the non-
existence or precariousness of collective consumer goods and ser-
vices which - together with access to land and housing - are con-
sidered socially necessary in relation to working class subsis-
tence levels, and which aggravate to an even greater degree the
collapse that occurs in the sphere of labour relations.

It must be emphasized, initially, that urban spoliation is not
a process that can be disassociated from capital accumulation
and from the degree of pauperization. This is so not only because

the exploited workers are at the same time spoliated inhabi-
tants, but also because it is the very dynamics of the creation
and appropriation of wealth that gives rise to these two faces
of the same coin. In other words, reproduction of the labour
force reflects the remuneration that salaried or self-employed
workers succeed in obtaining. However, such reproduction is in-
creasingly tempered by the state, which 'regulates' wages and
working conditions in general, in addition to directly or in-
directly generating collective consumer goods and services, es-
sential to the labourers' daily living.

Accordingly, I believe that standards of living are not solely
a question of the degree of pauperization and the standard of
individual consumption.⁸ I consider that in addition to pauperi-
zation there are a variety of collective consumer goods and ser-
vices that are vital to the subsistence of the workers: trans-
portation, health, sanitation, housing - which to be considered
adequate in quality must be served by water and sewage systems -
not to mention other components such as electricity, paving,
day care centres or schools, areas and equipment for leisure and
cultural activities, elements to a greater or lesser extent nec-
essary if labour capacity is to be maintained. Thus, even when
the levels of pauperization are constant, reproduction levels
may improve or deteriorate in relation to what the workers suc-
ceed in 'taking from the State in terms of collective consumer
goods, subsidies for popular housing or access to urbanized land,
processes that vary greatly according to political conjunctures

and which may or may not be associated with the conquests obtained by the workers in the sphere of production relations.⁹

III. Social Contradictions and Experiences of Struggle.

The considerations outlined in the foregoing pages permit us to point out a set of contradictions regarding the urban reproduction of the labour force, which, although intimately associated with questions of production and of pauperism, cannot be limited to them.¹⁰ The contrast between growing historical needs and the precarious nature of popular *bairros* leads workers, insofar as they are spoliated inhabitants, to develop actions that extend beyond demands directed against the process of accumulation-exploitation practiced by companies, and that put pressure on the state to improve specifically urban components necessary for their subsistence. In this sense, it must be pointed out here that these are not only old problems that became worse as the city grew. On the other hand, the nature of the contradictions present in Brazilian metropolises today does not stem solely from the imperatives of the monopolistic economy which requires from the state, as mentioned before, voluminous resources in order to expand in an increasingly broad manner - agglomeration effects - which in turn are detrimental to the collective consumer needs of the working population.¹¹ It also results from the changes that occur in the number of state actions that make it more and more, directly or indirectly, a producing and organizing agent of inequalities, and therefore the focus toward which conflicts and pressures for collective benefits are channelled. In fact, the cities are *loci* of production and consumption, including not only housing, but also highway systems, water and sewerage systems, and other services, in addition to urban land. The material foundation of the city then comes to express marked forms of socio-economic segregation. In this context, the restricted privileged areas destined for middle and high level purchasing power contrast radically with the immense zones crowded with workers who are unable to pay the price of progress based on pauperization.¹²

I wish to make it clear that I do not consider it possible to separate social struggles from macro-structural determinations, but equally there is no linear connection between the precariousness of living standards and the conflicts carried forward by the groups who are affected by it.¹³ This is so because, despite a variable but common situation of socio-economic exclusion, the conflicts manifest themselves in different ways and, above all, the praxes of struggle have widely disparate trajectories, pointing to impasses and solutions for which objective structural conditions are, at best, merely an enormous backdrop. It is not a case of ignoring them, but of recognizing that pauperization and spoliation in themselves are simply the raw material that potentially nourishes social conflicts.

Between the contradictions and the struggles as such, there lies a whole process of accumulation of experience that is not woven beforehand into the web of structural determinations.¹⁴

Before going on to develop this point, it seems advisable to touch on several questions that I believe to be strategic in any analysis of urban struggles. The first observation to be made refers to the fact that it is not from the sudden and discontinuous nature of such struggles, as part of the literature on the subject has emphasized, that one can infer their political potential. Indeed, some researchers are surprised by the fact that urban movements appear and disappear in a constant ebb and flow, with no apparent continuity or evolution. The error in such interpretations lies in their being based on the immediate pulsations of the social conflicts, using as a reference a parameter, equally immediate, of the effectiveness of the movements in creating space for struggles of greater amplitude. When some of these achieve their demands and lose their vigour of protest, they are, as we say, co-opted by the state. When, weary of demanding, they recede without achieving anything, disbelief in the effectiveness of this type of popular struggle becomes general. But surely it is not by means of reconstructions, bound in time and space to a natural history of the occurrences, that one can analyze the influence of the multiple and apparently extinct struggles that evolve within the ambit of our cities.

Conversely, there is a whole series of interpretations that claim that the objective demands are the factor that determines the political horizon. In the opinion of some, the struggle for self-construction of housing would, by definition, be reformist or petty bourgeois, not only because it is easily manipulated by state agencies, but also because it is contaminated by the ideology of private property.¹⁵

In this sense, I am inclined to favour the demands related to basic subsistence necessities as the ones that can develop into struggles of greater political amplitude, insofar as they penetrate further into the contradictions that structure the forms of domination and exclusion within a society. However, the potential of the conflicts is not made up of the content of demands taken separately. The discontinuous paths of the various struggles only achieve their full dimension in the ambit of certain conjunctures; that is to say when the fragmentation of everyday occurrences tends to coalesce around oppositions that intensify conflicts of a collective nature. In other words, self-construction, demands for land or public services may show little capacity for transformation, in the sense that they only aim at partial and isolated results, but they may also, on the other hand, establish themselves within a process of radical and strategic confrontation - as, for example, in the case of the urban conflicts at the time of the overthrow of Somoza, or during the recent clashes in the '*barrios*' of El Salvador, which were clearly linked to a struggle that directly confronted capitalism at the national level.¹⁶

Although we have not attained the quality of the struggles, characteristic of the Central American situation, it is necessary to criticize that other interpretative fallacy which consists of defining popular conflicts according to a conception that attributes to them, *a priori*, certain historical aims. There is nothing that allows us - as do some of the analyses based on the recent Brazilian reality - to take this point as a premise, attributing a transforming potentiality that would be, by definition, inherent in the struggles that develop in our cities.

In other words, the theoretical and methodological effort to

define the trajectory and significance of the various social movements should discard what could be called the genetic-finalist point of view, in which the popular and union movement would harbour within itself the seeds that sooner or later would result in struggles of an increasingly superior quality.

In this manner, the ebb and flow of social struggles, as judged through positive and negative signs, according to the role they are expected to play on the pre-established horizon, acquire an interpretative colouring that is eminently voluntarist and dichotomous. The state comes to be seen as a perverse agent of the social drama, while the social movement is considered as homogeneous in its composition and aims, in search of an organizational and programmatic autonomy perennially incomplete or simply negated by the concrete dynamics of events. On the other hand, it is from analysis within the movements that their ebb and flow, their capacity for invention and articulation with other social forces, must be understood; and this is especially relevant, in view of the events that take place in the course of the struggle, whose results cannot be stipulated beforehand by analytical categories that bind the various agents to a pre-determined historical scheme.

Nevertheless, such internal analysis does not entail focusing on the movements at the margin of, or opposed to the political and social agents carrying forward the organization, since in the course of the formulation of demands political and religious parties and groups, technical personnel and relief organizations are, among others, agents which frequently adhere to popular movements, strengthening these demands and assuming positions of leadership. This 'outside' presence, which often aims to utilize these movements for objectives other than those proposed, and which, also sometimes ensues in the division and destruction of their fighting spirit, is far from being foreign to these movements. On the contrary, it is an integral part of their course.¹⁷ It is this course - marked by diversities, full of deviations, characterized by the constant recomposition of divisions and alliances - that must be reconstituted as we reconstruct the daily paths of the struggles in the *bairros* and factories.

IV. The Moments of Fusion of Conflicts and Demands

To understand the conjuncture of conflicts that marked the period of the large metalworkers strikes in São Paulo and São Bernardo do Campo (1978-1980), it becomes necessary to reconstruct the small conflicts that occurred in the factories and *bairros* from the outset of that decade, when an extremely repressive situation existed toward all forms of social and economic demands.¹⁸ In concrete terms, the vast and severe conflicts of the late 1970s pass along winding and barely noticeable pathways, through the trajectory of the '*Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*' of the Church, through groups linked to the workers' pastoral, and later, through the 'union opposition' of the metalworkers, penetrating as well into the '*Movimento contra o Custo de Vida*' (Movement against the cost of living), the regularization of 'clandestine' real estate subdivisions, and a broad and varied set of demands that rallied residents in defence of urban improvements. All of these processes of struggle, with their ebbs and flows, became channels of an experience, until then, one of resistance and highly centralized in the city's popular *bairros*, that was of fundamental organizational and ideological importance for future areas of conflicts. Along these discontinuous pathways, *bairros* and factories met in mutual opposition to the established order, articulating practices built up, little by little, in scattered and seemingly disconnected day-to-day struggles.

It was not just a question of chance that the great majority of specialists, academic or otherwise, was taken by surprise when the 1978 metalworkers strike broke out in São Paulo. It was simply that - as we now know - small struggles had been developing in a manner that was not perceptible to those who expected and gave credit only to action restricted to organizational instances, disregarding the fragmentary demonstrations that had begun to occur in the places of work and in the squatter settlements and 'clandestine' subdivisions of the periphery where demands, related to health care, water, sanitation, collective transport, housing or access to land, were being increasingly articulated.

These micro elements that had kept alive consciences buried by the repression of the earlier period, were, at a later moment, revived in a collective manner in a movement aimed at recovering an identity against the dominant world that for many years had systematically ignored, disarticulated or repressed the initiatives that arose in the places of work and living. Crushed and fragmented during the peak years of authoritarianism, the strength of this protest can only be fully understood if one looks beyond the broad organizational scenario - unions and parties - to the day-to-day network of struggles that transformed isolated practices into experiences that accumulated into broader conflicts. It is not a question of denying the importance of parties and unions in the unfolding of these struggles; it is simply a matter of adopting a theoretical and methodological focus that incorporates and transcends these levels of interpretation, in an attempt to grasp a history that takes place in innumerable and undefined social spaces of resistance and mobilization. Therein lies the need to approach social movements with the intention of recovering the moments previous to the visible explosion of the conflicts, in order to reconstruct a praxis of struggles that cannot be perceived solely through institutional apparatuses.

Even in the case of the metalworkers strike in São Bernardo do Campo in 1980, a reading of the 40 days of paralysis would be enormously impoverished if the analysis did not incorporate the extremely rich sets of fusions that were occurring in the *bairros* and factories- by which, in this case, union action was nourished, thereby giving impetus to the strike movement. The oppression that ruled in the factory milieu, together with the process of recovery of worker identity, are aspects that are crucial to understanding the force of the strike in that region, which is the industrial heart of the country.¹⁹ However, this force cannot be explained solely in terms of the strength of union organization and mobilization as such; it is also explained by the identification of the population with the metalworkers' cause, transforming the city into a broad supportive network, in which the struggle gained multiple and varied social spaces of solidarity. Although the peak of the conjuncture

- in this case, a strike - was aimed at a multitude of demands in the sphere of factory labour, the long trajectory of which reached its outlet by being fed by innumerable affluents that flowed through converging channels in the scenario of the popular *bairros* of the city, towards a moment of fusion formed of disparate praxes of resistance and conflict.²⁰

This approach makes it possible to identify more accurately the link between demands of the labour world and those related to urban improvement. In this particular case, the strikes of São Bernardo and São Paulo of 1978-1980 indicate multiple and varied trajectories that permit an analysis of *bairros* and factory together. The struggles related to urban demands were of importance in intensifying the labour movement, and also because their support in the moments of conflict served to generalize praxes of resistance that would not exist if the popular *bairros* had not identified and involved themselves with the metalworkers strike. In the same way, in its turn, the union and labour movement influenced in numerous ways the intensification of the urban struggles seeking improvements for the popular *bairros*.

The point must be stressed that the pathways that lead to the encounter of fragmented praxes of struggle never occur naturally, as they would if there existed a spontaneous vocation for identification of interests. Such an encounter comes about as the result of a praxis that builds up within a debilitating day-to-day routine. And everything indicates that the weight of the latter functions, most of the time, as a demobilizing element - insofar as participation in it involves an immediate cost that is immensely greater than that of the results to be achieved, which are always delayed and frequently not obtained. Nevertheless, cynicism, together with the fatigue inherent in the daily routine that takes place between house and work, do not impede the emergence of convergences that in certain moments become mobilizations of greater strength of protest. These movements embody a series of exchanges and social contacts sustained by proximity, a common situation of poverty-stricken *bairros*, delays in transportation, accidents and illnesses and identification with

workers. Also, in spite of the diversity of trajectories, within certain conjunctures, they may create broader and more strongly collective forms of solidarity, at which time the moment of fusion of the conflicts and demands becomes manifest.

Perhaps it would not be too much to say that, despite the dispersion and fragmentation of the conflicts that occur in isolated arenas, without the addition of broad and varied spheres of demands, researchers have been trained to analyze what is isolated and partial so that they have great theoretical and methodological difficulty in perceiving and comprehending the fact that the real movements of the struggles very often interweave in a barely perceptible manner, and that these social movements do not become articulated in a systematic and permanent way.

It is obviously not a question of creating fusion on the theoretical level in order to disguise what does not exist in reality, precisely because the (dis)articulation and (dis)union of each concrete struggle (and above all of their sum total) stems from the opposition of social forces. The most outstanding example in this particular case, is the way in which state bureaucracies give rise to conflicts and demands which are structured in such a way as to dilute and segment - by concession, pressure or repression - multiple groups in their actions to conquer wider socio-economic and political spaces.

In this sense, a great deal of theoretical and research effort still needs to be made in order to obtain adequate concepts that explain the relation between labour exploitation and urban spoliation, topics which can be dealt with separately only for the purpose of facilitating analysis. In other words, the analytical separation that is normally made between the 'spheres' of production and reproduction of the labour force should be eliminated.²¹

In order to do this, I think that it is necessary to discard the approach that considers the movements attaining urban improvements as mere tributaires of the conflicts that occur in the ambit of labour exploitation. This long-standing analytical tradition has weighed not only on the social sciences but also on the action of

political groups, who have viewed urban demands as mere appendages to labour conflicts. Such demands would have a reason to exist - in theory and in practice - only insofar as they served to intensify the labour movement, which alone has been seen to bear the responsibility for striking at the heart of the so-called fundamental contradictions, while all other conflicts are viewed as secondary.²²

On the other hand, it is equally necessary to emphasize that the approach to urban struggles cannot be reduced to the analysis of the demands that occur in the ambit of collective consumer goods and services, access to land or housing. This approach should be related to a broader theoretical and research level, especially to that which is linked to the pauperization that originates in the world of labour relations - which is, at least in the case of the more highly industrialized areas such as São Paulo, one of the dynamic poles of the struggles. Although these struggles develop in parallel, there are conjunctural estuaries into which they flow, so that an understanding of this encounter requires examination of the diverse movements that occur in the factories as well as in the *bairros*, if what I have called the moments of fusion of the conflicts and demands are to be understood. Fusion, however, does not signify unity. On the contrary, it describes the diversity that temporarily embraces convergent elements surrounding a common opponent. Likewise, this fusion is not merely the sum of previous experiences. Although born of the multiplicity of past struggles, its moment of encounter exhibits something new, where social forces are redefined, generating spaces for future events.

The proposals I have introduced in this paper are as yet tentative. They stem from an underlying position that holds that social struggles, understood as those that occur not only in the sphere of labour relations, but also in the popular *bairros*, are movements that, due to the heterogeneity of their objectives and the diversity of the social composition of their members, should be reconstructed in the light of the theory of class conflict. Perhaps simultaneous study of the processes of labour ex-

ploitation and urban spoliation, analyzed along the pathway that reconstructs the moments of conflicts, would provide a theoretical and methodological perspective which would facilitate perception of how deeply class conflict is involved in day-to-day struggles.

NOTES

1. Suplicy, 1978.
2. 'In general, the working day varies between 11 and 12 hours, extending in some cases to 14, 15 and 16 or more hours... The companies plan their production based on a working day of 11 to 12 hours'. Arroyo, 1978: 34. This situation referred to the periods of economic expansion; today, with the crisis, along with unemployment, the working day tends to decrease.
3. Kowarick & Brant, 1978.
4. In order to emphasize even more this savage mode of capitalism, I shall add that at the peak of the economic boom known as the 'Brazilian miracle' (1968-1973) which occurred after the military takeover in 1964, although the economy grew at a rate of more than 10% annually and work productivity increased 33% in São Paulo, the median salary - which corresponds to half of the workers on the lower wage level - decreased 15% in terms of real purchasing power. It was not for nothing that infant mortality, indicator of the standard of living, rose to levels equivalent to those that followed World War II, passing the rate of 90 deaths in every 1,000 live births; Kowarick, 1979: 199-201. It is known that 70% of infant mortality under one year is directly associated with malnutrition; that is, with pauperization, and lack or poor quality of household water supply.
5. Oliveira, 1977: 73.
6. Afonso & Souza, 1977: 51.
7. Kowarick, 1979, specially chapter 4.
8. This is the opinion of Evers et al., 1980: 115. 'The fact that in practically all of the Latin American countries there are 'barrio' movements indicates that in their origin must lie some common problem of general scope. In a word, this problem is: pauperization'.
9. Perhaps it may be useful to elaborate this argument somewhat further. Thus, although the level of pauperization remained practically unaltered, from 1975 on, the infant mortality rate decreased in São Paulo from 87 to 51 per thousand at the end of the decade: this occurred because the number of domiciles served by water and sewage systems increased in those five years from 53 to 92% and from 30 to 47%, respectively. In other words, the inhabitants succeeded in obtaining from the State an essential service for their '*bairros*', thereby basically improving their level of reproduction by means of these collective consumer goods, at the same time that they continued to work many hours per day for insubstantial wages: pauperism continued basically unchanged. Similar reasoning can be applied to the vertiginous increase in the number of slum dwellers, especially from 1975 on. From that date to the end of the decade, there was no increase in pauperization, nor had there yet begun the process of mass unemployment. Such an increase is, in my opinion, more closely related to specifically urban

causes linked to the fact that selfconstruction is possible only in areas extremely distant from work sites. This implies excessive expenses in transportation, physical wear as a result of 3 or 4 hours or more spent in travel per day, to which must be added the enormous sacrifices required in 'self-help' housing.

10. Castells, 1980.
11. Topalov, 1979.
12. Kowarick, 1983: 56.
13. I reproduce here the argument I have developed in my recent work: Kowarick, 1983.
14. Telles, 1982.
15. Pradilla, 1982.
16. 'The political and military contribution to the clash in Moninbo (a small town a few kilometers from Managua) is incalculable in the revolutionary process. It shows that the heart of an insurrection is indisputably composed of the people organized within the structure of the 'barrios', which harbour the unemployed, expelled from or discarded by the labour centres of our particular capitalist development, at least in the urban sectors'. Lungo, undated: 61. See also: Lungo, 1982. In the same manner, the 'barrio' struggles in some Latin American areas of conflict may be thus analyzed. These include the '*paros nacionales*' of Peru at the end of the past decade; Ballon & Tovar, 1982. This is also the case with the '*huelgas cívicas*' of Colombia in the '70s. See: Sandroni, 1981.
17. Valladares, 1983.
18. Telles, 1983.
19. Abramo, 1983.
20. Caccia Bava, 1983.
21. Evers et al., 1982.
22. 'The determining factor is not the factory or the 'barrio', but the political relationships between the classes, in particular those linked to the process of occupation-transformation of the State'. Castells - 1980: 33.

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