

## Let's "copenhagenize" our cities

We live in the decade when we will reach complete exhaustion of the transport system adopted in many cities in the world where the automobile is the leading actor.

In March this year, Sao Paulo's fleet totaled seven million vehicles. Nine years from now, it will probably have overcome the mark of 10 million units, immobilizing its streets gradually, if this model is not radically redirected. How can we solve this issue? Certainly, there is no way to prevent the growth of cities. After all, as the urbanism professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Witold Rybczynski stated in a recent interview for a Brazilian newspaper: "In democracy you can not prevent migration."

Would the expansion of the roads be the best choice? Recent experiments have shown that when an avenue is doubled, the population perceives its fluidity and those who did not use it, start to do it, quickly jeopardizing this newly-won improvement.

On the other hand, when cities restricts the access of cars in some regions, drivers, aware of the difficulties to move through those areas, do not dare go down those paths, and seek alternative routes or modes of transportation. Therefore, there will always be congestion in large cities, regardless of the capacity of the existing road network.

Obviously you cannot restrain the movement of cars without offering good quality public transit or nonmotorized alternatives to the inhabitants. Therefore, the constant expansion of total paved area in the city cannot remain the government's only strategy for the mitigation of this chaos, but must be performed as a complement to a rational land use and occupation, combined with new paradigms of urban mobility.

Such paradigms should prioritize: 1) good quality mass transit for the occasional longer travels, 2) the use of bicycles for medium distances routes, in permanent bike lanes, well-protected from traffic, and 3) walking for the most frequent and shorter trips. The car must also be part of the show, but in a supporting role. Its access should be restricted in certain locations that are fully served by other modes of transport.

The access limitations should be applied primarily to gasoline and diesel fueled cars and driven by a single person. At the same time, the use of vehicles with one or more passengers, plus the driver, and renewable and cleaner energy powered cars, should be encouraged, for example, with the possibility to enter in some controlled traffic regions.

"Copenhagenization" is the term that symbolizes the implementation of these concepts in the cities. The word was conceived by Danish urban planner Jan Gehl, who has studied public spaces for 40 years and used Strøget, in the central region of Copenhagen, as a laboratory for his research. He advised several municipalities, including Melbourne, London and New York to replicate the same archetype. These concepts will be detailed in the Secovi Convention [www.convencaosecovi.com.br](http://www.convencaosecovi.com.br) in September, by David Sim, director of the Gehl Architects firm.

We have in our country a successful BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) experience in Curitiba, with quantity, quality and low cost, that was implemented by former mayor and architect Jaime Lerner. In fact, he was hired by Secovi-SP (<http://www.secovi.com.br/en/>) especially to elaborate a proposal for a new model of occupation to Sao Paulo.

The present study, available at <http://slidesha.re/ip6Ybm> articulates sustainable growth through the creation of denser developed micro-regions, balanced in terms of jobs, diversity of use, housing for all social levels, education and leisure.

These centers would be anchored on the main metro-rail network, where there would be the integration of various transportation modes such as subways, trains, buses and even taxis and cars. However, prioritizing the cyclist and pedestrian on a 'promenade', similar to the New York's High Line Park, built one floor above the rails of the trains, which would make the connection between those areas. Those would be more dense and vertical, which would provide the optimization of infrastructure. And when necessary, the investments would be made possible through extra taxes paid to the municipality by real estate developers to increase the build-land ratio.

Lowering the number of trips would reduce energy consumption, emission of pollutants and greenhouse gases.

And most importantly, reducing travel time would provide, thanks to significant savings in time and financial resources, better quality of life for residents, especially the poorest, since despite the traffic being democratic (it affects the whole population), the poor are the hardest hit. As stated by Secovi's president Joao Crestana, "the best way to get around is when you are already where you need to go."

This proposal fully meets the 10 principles for a sustainable urban mobility for the cities, created by ITDP [www.itdp.org](http://www.itdp.org) (Institute for Transportation & Development Policy): 1. Walk the walk: Create great pedestrian environments; 2. Powered by people: Create a great environment for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles; 3. Get on the bus: Provide great, cost-effective public transport; 4. Cruise control: Provide access for clean passenger vehicles at safe speeds and in significantly reduced numbers; 5. Deliver the goods: Service the city in the cleanest and safest manner; 6. Mix it up: Mix people and activities, buildings and spaces; 7. Fill it in: Build dense, people and transit oriented urban districts that are desirable; 8. Get real: Preserve and enhance the local, natural, cultural, social and historical assets; 9. Connect the blocks: Make walking trips more direct, interesting and productive with small-size, permeable buildings and blocks; 10. Make it last: Build for the long term. Sustainable cities bridge generations. They are memorable, malleable, built from quality materials, and well maintained.

These principles will be used by the contestants in the competition "Our Cities Ourselves - Proposals for the Sao Paulo of 2030", sponsored by Secovi-SP and ITDP, which aims to open opportunities for propositions by the society to discuss urban mobility and the future of the city within a horizon of twenty years.

In 2001, Sao Paulo reached the highest point of the curve that records the relationship between the area allocated for parking garages and the floor area in the buildings launched that year: 54%. This ratio began to fall after 2001, but may regress even more if we "copenhagenize" our beloved city.

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