



Urban Illegality in the Fortaleza Metropolitan Area: Special Social Interest Zones as an Alternative Solution

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This paper presents some results from scientific research on the urban illegality conditions in the Fortaleza Metropolitan Area (FMA). This metropolis has been experiencing an intense growth of the informal, illegal and spontaneous city, a growth which shows itself in many ways and through distinct processes. This expansion is especially associated with the formation of shanty towns, turning areas of disorderly occupation made up of precarious housing units into a part of the metropolitan landscape. Although the expansion of poverty is mostly concentrated in Fortaleza, it is already occurring in other FMA cities. The problem is getting worse due to the fact that there is not a minimal institutional apparatus to put into practice the rules which might have controlled this situation. To better understand these phenomena, the following methodological procedures were used - a survey and analysis of census databases (IBGE) regarding their quantitative and spatial aspects, as well as analysis of technical work commissioned by the Ministry of Cities (Ministério das Cidades); a critical reading of technical reports drawn up by consultancies hired by state and city governments; interviews with the consultants and municipal institutions; an analysis of databanks, field surveys and diagnoses which provided grounds for drawing up urban policy instruments in the list of priorities of the state and cities belonging to FMA; - fieldwork carried out in occupied areas; these were adopted as working themes in subjects of Universidade Federal do Ceará's architecture and urban planning course between 2002 and 2007. The text is subdivided into three parts. The first one provides a context for the issue of land illegality through the analysis of urban planning processes which has taken place in FMA cities since the mid-1990. The second attempts to assess the importance of the problem through several surveys which indicate different results, although they address the same spatial outline. The final part uses the process of revising Fortaleza's Master Plan and the proposal for Special Social Interest Zones as a strategy to promote land and urban regularization.

KEY WORDS: Squatter settlements, irregularity, favelas, urban planning.