

THE CAMINHO NIEMEYER IN NITERÓI: A CHALLENGE TO THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY CENTER

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ABSTRACT

The regeneration of the Aterrado Praia Grande seafront embankment area by the Caminho Niemeyer development scheme, a signature project designed by one of Brazil's most internationally renowned architects, poses questions for contemporary urban development and urban planning theory and evokes reflections on the subject of strategic planning in the post-modern era. Coastal cities facing pressure from population growth and the expansion of urban real estate, have used brownfield development as a solution to the problem of modernizing their traditional city centers, creating artificial neighborhood areas capable of satisfying the functional requirements of a different era (marinas, road access, administrative centers, parks, residential areas and services, among other uses). Schemes of this nature have in many instances been successful in enhancing the value of land in public ownership and use, during the first half of the twentieth century in particular. This paper looks at urban development schemes of this kind, in "strategic" city locations devised in isolation from the wider planning context but with the potential to have positive impact on the deteriorated urban environment around them. The Aterrado Praia Grande seafront embankment was constructed in the center of Niterói, facing the city of Rio de Janeiro, by the federal government in 1940. Most of the site consisted of derelict under-utilized space occupying part of the city's most public face. The site's development has been beset by legal disputes between various public sector bodies and private undertakings that remain unresolved after more than half a century and have left the legacy of a large semi-derelict area in the heart of the city. Limited progress despite the numerous schemes proposed resulted eventually in the adoption of the Caminho Niemeyer scheme towards the end of the 1990s (Municipal Law 1604 of 30 October 1997). This was inspired by the success of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC), designed by Oscar Niemeyer (1996), as a symbolic image representative of the city. The scheme was envisaged as a potential stimulus to the regeneration and revitalization of a downtown area showing increasing signs of urban decline. Anxious to reinvigorate this part of the city, the city's mayor invited Oscar Niemeyer to design a seafront complex on a 72000 m² site that would serve as a venue for cultural events in the city. Over time the design of the Caminho Niemeyer has undergone a series of substantial modifications to the site itself and to the buildings intended to occupy it

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(theater, memorial center, public open space and parking facility now built, Oscar Niemeyer Foundation, Museum of Brazilian Cinema currently under construction, churches and ferry terminal as yet unstarted). This paper aims to give a brief account of the various development proposals for the area and consider their integration with the city center from the perspective of a "strategic" urban planning approach seeking to rehabilitate the image of the city center and of the city itself.

INTRODUCTION

The cities of the Brazilian coast, facing pressure from [population] growth and the expansion of urban real estate, have turned to brownfield regeneration as a way of modernizing traditional city centers and creating urban spaces that cater to new functional needs (including marinas, road access, administrative centers, parks, residential and service areas) and increasing the provision of public open space and other public facilities. This has often proved a successful approach, during the first half of the twentieth century in particular.

The city of Niterói was laid out in 1819 in accordance with a plan drawn up by the French town planner Arnaud Julien Pallière. It stretches along the extensive shoreline of the Praia Grande beach looking out towards the city center of Rio de Janeiro and turning its back on its earliest settlements, the hillside village of São Lourenço and the more prosperous neighborhood of São Domingos. At the end of the 1920s the São Lourenço embankment was built to protect the city harbour by in-filling an inlet that formerly gave access to Aldeia de São Lourenço dos Índios, the settlement of the area's original indigenous inhabitants led by their chief Araribóia.

The Atterrado Praia Grande seafront embankment was constructed as a Federal Government initiative in 1940. Built over the beach to the seaward side of the city's central area the reclamation work involved substantially increased the area of the existing site. The embankment's construction gave rise to legal disputes involving various public sector bodies and private undertakings that dragged on for more than half a century, leaving a substantial area in the city center significantly under-utilized. The limited progress achieved in developing the area despite numerous schemes proposed opened the way for the *Caminho Niemeyer* development scheme, still unfinished, with other new development schemes for the area in prospect.

This paper seeks to provide a brief account of the different development proposals and the extent to which they engaged with the city center, up to and including the *Caminho Niemeyer*, a "strategic" urban project intended to provide the city center and the city itself with a fresh new image.

THE CITY CENTER OF NITERÓI AND THE ATERRADO PRAIA GRANDE SEA-FRONT EMBANKMENT

Niterói occupies a unique location on the eastern shore of Guanabara Bay, significantly influenced by its proximity to the metropolitan nucleus of Rio de Janeiro. With a population of 469,451 (IBGE [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] Census for 2000) the city is sub-divided for administrative purposes into five planning districts and forty-eight neighborhoods, covering a very diverse area of 131 km². Historically the city has been overshadowed and competitively disadvantaged by its influential neighbor, although at the same time Rio has been a source of sustenance and reinvigoration.

For more than a century the ferry network provided Niterói with efficient transport connections that made the ferry terminal the gateway to the entire northern part of the state of Rio de Janeiro as well as to the former Federal capital. With a wide variety of urban services available and seen as a desirable place to live the center became identified with the city itself and so "going to Niterói" came to mean visiting the city center. The situation changed in 1974 with the opening of the President Costa e Silva (Rio-Niterói) Bridge. The subsequent merger of the two states of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara resulted in Niterói losing its status as state capital. The new gateway to the city had a significant impact on the structure of the city itself, with an influx of new residents into well-established neighborhoods and opened up new areas for development, accelerating the exodus from the city center which experienced a loss of jobs, prime commercial and leisure services and a considerable proportion of the resident population seeking more attractive locations and taking advantage of increased private car ownership. This was a common enough urban phenomenon, in Latin American cities in particular, but the impact in Niterói was particularly dramatic due to various historical factors as well as the administrative and infrastructural changes.

During the era of the Estado Novo or New State (the first Brazilian dictatorship), Federal Government Decree 2441 of 23 July 1940, a measure approving the "urban development and reorganization plan for the city of Niterói", transferred right of use and possession of the area of land about to be reclaimed to the State for reassignment to utility companies and licensed developers for a maximum period of 15 years, during which time newly constructed properties were exempt from basic and special taxes and other charges. The local authority was made responsible for implementing the proposals for the development of the shoreline area, over 3 km long, from the Ponta d'Areia area to the Praia das Flechas beach, representing a total of approximately 1,000,000 sq m². This was the beginning of a reclamation project that was under discussion for a long time before actually being put into effect.

In his 1930 doctorate thesis, "Avant Projet d'Aménagement et d'Extension de la ville Niterói" ["Outline Proposal for the Development and Expansion of the City of Niterói"], the architect Attilio Corrêa Lima re-examined the idea of land reclamation and linked it to the need for a bridge or a tunnel link connecting Rio and Niterói at the shortest point between the two cities (Calabouço and

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Gragoatá). He suggested relocating the existing ferry service and using it for tourism purposes.

The Federal Decree was the first stage in the development of the city's shoreline, providing a legal rather than a specific planning framework. In January 1941 the Niterói Improvement Works Company (Companhia de Melhoramentos de Niterói), was formed to undertake improvement works. After the company missed the deadline for completion, its initial license was extended for an additional 5 years subject to the same conditions. Around the same time a development scheme was commissioned from Dahne Conceição (1943) by União Territorial Fluminense SA, successors to the previous development corporation. This plan, which envisaged a grid layout of roads and blocks occupying an area of over 1,000,000 m², diagonally transected by two roads converging at the ferry terminal (which was to be relocated), was a simplified and impoverished version of the original scheme that Attilio Corrêa Lima had proposed.

The new development scheme, to be known as Jardim Fluminense, was approved on the basis of a plan submitted by Territorial Fluminense Co. that gave the city center a new, high-rise skyline and made no concessions to the existing street plan and pattern of use. The only elements of continuity were two roads, the Avenida Feliciano Sodré, created as part of the harbour development plan, and the Avenida Amaral Peixoto, another product of the program of works undertaken in the 1940s.

In spite of the formal progress of these land use and acquisition proposals, no progress was made on land reclamation. By 1969 the developers' licenses had been extended twice and less than 19% of the area had been reclaimed.

Finally the area was compulsorily purchased on grounds of public interest (State Decree 15553/1971) and the New Niterói Development Executive Group (Grupo Executivo de Urbanização da Nova Niterói), was created (State Decree 15554/1971) with the primary objective of putting the redevelopment plan for the reclamation site into effect. The landfill reclamation operations continued from 1971 to 1974. The government subsequently took part into public ownership on grounds of public interest (Decree 80.693/1977) in order to build the university campus of the city university (Universidade Federal Fluminense).

The various "stakeholders" and "owners" disputed the tenure of the land in the courts and have continued to do so. The abandoned area of existing landfill was seen as an undesirable intrusion in the local landscape and harmed the image of the city center. The municipal authority made various attempts to put the site to use, trying to offset some of the reclamation site's negative impact with development schemes for use by public utilities.

In 1989, the municipal administration embarked on another attempt to find a solution for the reclamation site with its "Niterói City Center Regeneration Plan", (Projeto de revitalização do centro de Niterói) whose primary object was to prepare the reclaimed area for development and develop it in a way that

ensured its full integration with the rest of the city. At the same time a start was made on the process of tenure registration in preparation for the new land use proposals. The most important construction project was the new bus terminal, initiated in December 1992 and opened in 1994 at the same time that work began on turning the existing waterfront access route, the Avenida Rio Branco, into a dual carriageway.

THE SEAFRONT EMBANKMENT AND THE *CAMINHO NIEMEYER* DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The seafront embankment was the outcome of 60 years of discussions, planning applications and legal disputes, all conducted in the absence of a consistent planning framework. From the start it involved competing property developers proposing schemes that were inadequately formulated in every aspect, together with all three levels of government involved and obstructing one another, with glimpses of self-interest at work and many previous failures undermining the credibility of efforts to develop the site. The scheme was not consciously devised as a strategic urban planning initiative but was inspired by the desire to make better use of an under-utilized area of the city and give an identity to a highly visible space that was damaging the image of the traditional city center.

Nevertheless, the development has adopted the “strategic” approach of using individual high-profile projects to promote a positive image of the city, enhancing its “reputation”. This image impacted on the local population’s self-esteem and sense of involvement as they gradually came to regard these new spaces as iconic representations of their city. The phenomenon reflects the trend, that Ascher (2001) terms “neo-urbanism”, for urban development in the environment of uncertainty that characterizes modern society to take the form of organizing “options”. This approach moves away from the traditional attitude in medium and long term planning.

The unprecedented transformations taking place in today’s information society call for a new and different deal with urban living. Urban spaces need to be responsive and constantly evolving, on the basis of regional level planning and development schemes involving the revitalization of historic city centers and waterfront districts and an emphasis on cultural and leisure activities that provide the basis for a complex relationship between culture and consumption.

MUSEU DE ARTE CONTEMPORÂNEA (MAC) - THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AS A STIMULUS FOR OTHER ICONIC DEVELOPMENTS IN NITERÓI

When the city of Niterói lost its role as state capital, a subtle change occurred in the relationship between the *cariocas* (the residents of the city of Rio de

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Janeiro) and the *fluminenses* (residents of the state of Rio de Janeiro). The superior attitude of *cariocas* towards *fluminenses*, and the image that *fluminenses* had of themselves had been shaped by Niterói's proximity to the cultural, political and economic center that Rio de Janeiro has always represented. The image of the city tended to be influenced by decades-old prejudices and stereotypes - "the sister city", "the looking-glass city", "the city on the periphery", "the dormitory city", the city always seen as an adjunct to Rio, through *carioca* eyes.

"For the visitor arriving or departing, or the ordinary passer-by the picturesque ill-proportioned/out of scale statue of Araribóia, looking out across the bay towards the city of Rio de Janeiro in the distance, evokes that mythical being that Niterói personifies for the city's inhabitants. Including, as far as the reactions that the figure of the Indian provokes, the way that he gazes in the direction of Rio, instead of towards his own humble village ..." (Gustavo Rocha Peixoto, 1997).

However after the merger the city, deprived of its former status as state capital, was forced to re-examine its role and discover an identity of its own that transcended its previous identities. New symbols of the city's identity, along with improvements in the quality of life, have enabled the city to transform its image. Some positive signs are already evident, for example the revival of the slogans "City of Smiles" ("Cidade-sorriso"), "the Twenty-First Century City" and "the Quality of Life City".

Urban development schemes have contributed to the process of renewal. Each in turn, in a manner in keeping with its era, has helped to promote the image of the city of Niterói. The construction of the harbour, the development of the Aterrado Praia Grande seafront embankment and the opening of the Avenida Amaral Peixoto in 1940, the construction of the Rio-Niterói Bridge and more recently, the bus terminal and the MAC have all made a significant contribution. The Museum in particular has brought the city to the international architectural map. Culture and leisure have been important strategic components of this new urban renaissance and, in order to maximize the local potential the emphasis has been on the city's image and on emblematic cultural projects, with the city's iconographic architecture a key contributor to its new image.

The Museum of Contemporary Art in Niterói, inaugurated under the Jorge Roberto Silveira administration (1989-1993, 1997-2001), plays an "iconic" role in the city today. The MAC was originally envisaged as putting the city on the artistic map but its impact has far exceeded expectations and other factors, for example the way the building has become an integral part of the landscape of Guanabara Bay, complementing Rio's own natural icon, Sugarloaf Mountain, have contributed to the scheme's success (figure 1).

Political continuity has been another key factor. The PDT (Working Democrat Party), which held power in Niterói for over a decade used new construction projects as a way of stamping the mark of the local administration on the city.

Niemeyer's Niterói building was designed during an era when cities worldwide were using branding and cultural projects to leverage their identity.

For instance in Bilbao the President of the Guggenheim Foundation persuaded the mayor of the city to construct a building that would become the symbol of the city and bring it international recognition. The result was a museum designed by the American architect Frank Gehry, an extravagant structure costing 200 million dollars (construction, licensing and collection)¹. According to Arantes there is still some uncertainty about the museum's contribution to reversing the city's decline but the influx of tourists has exceeded expectations (Arantes 1997, p.60).

Likewise the successful efforts to alter perceptions of the quality of life in Niterói, including the vital contribution made by the powerful image of the building looking out over Guanabara Bay that became the icon of the city, Oscar Niemeyer's Museum of Contemporary Art (Vicente del Rio, 2001 - Special text 091).



Figure 1 MAC Niterói, designed by Oscar Niemeyer, opened in 1996. Photo by of BUDL - UFF (Brazilian Urban Development Laboratory).

THE CAMINHO NIEMEYER

The municipal administration attempted to expand the impact of the great architect's work with the construction of the *Caminho Niemeyer*, a development based on a different model of urban intervention to that embodied in the MAC, encouraging further thoughts concerning the impact on the city.

The municipality took over part of the southern section of the seafront embankment area for the *Caminho Niemeyer* development (figure 2). The scheme received legislative approval under Law 1604 of 30 October 1997, which defined the scope of the development project as an area of special planning, landscape and tourist interest along the sea frontage extending from the MAC as

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far as Rua 5 in the Jardim Fluminense development, with the same boundaries as the Aterrado Praia Grande embankment.

The Caminho scheme was proposed in the wake of the success of the MAC in providing a novel stimulus to the recovery and prosperity of a run-down area, the center of Niterói. Shortly after the Museum of Contemporary Art was completed, Niterói's then mayor Jorge Roberto Silveira invited the architect Oscar Niemeyer to design a new development to be known as the *Caminho Niemeyer* - the "Niemeyer Promenade".



Figure 2 - Location of the Caminho Niemeyer. Image by Silvio Leal Junior of BUDL - UFF (Brazilian Urban Development Laboratory).

With a view to promoting the regeneration of the city's downtown area, he opted for an architectural complex on a 72000 m² waterfront site that would host cultural events in the city. The original design has been revised and the overall promenade concept has been lost but as a punctual intervention it still attempts to recapture the architect's original vision and will unquestionably have a major impact on Niterói. The various features of the development are worth examining, along with the question of its eventual overall relationship to the city.

Niterói followed in the footsteps of other cities by commissioning a prestige project, as the choice of an architect of international importance emphasizes, as a means of attracting international attention to the city, a strategy previously adopted by Barcelona, Bilbao and other European cities. Over time the *Caminho Niemeyer* schemeⁱⁱ underwent a number of modifications to the site and to the buildings intended to occupy it, as well as to the architectural design itself.

Another factor that delayed the start of work was the high cost level compared with most other municipal investment projects, due to the complexity of the design of the buildings. The solution involved partnership schemes with private sector undertakings to carry out the work. In order to ensure adequate initial funding for the construction of all the *Caminho Niemeyer* buildings, other buildings were added to the architectural complex, including the Espaço BR de Cinema cinema museum and the Charitas ferry terminal. The original complex (figure 3) consisted of two cathedrals, one Catholic the other Baptist, a Maronite chapel on an island site surrounded by water, the Teatro Popular theater, the Oscar Niemeyer Foundation building (a venue for conferences, lectures and classes on architecture), the Roberto Silveira Memorial Center housing a collection of images of the city of Niterói, and the Praça Juscelino Kubitschek, a public plaza above a 1500-vehicle capacity underground car-parking facility.



Figure 3 Promotional material showing all the buildings comprising the complex.

The development incorporated subsequently comprised the Espaço BR de Cinema Museum of Brazilian Cinema (Figure 4), a three-storey five-screen multiplex theater, and the new Barcas ferry terminal, linked to the proposed parking area.

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Figure 4 The Cinema Museum, part of the proposed development. Image from BUDL - UFF (Brazilian Urban Development Laboratory).

The entire complex (figure 5) is contained lies within the development scheme area with the exception of the Cinema Museum and the plaza and car park. The Cinema Museum, Espaço BR de Cinema, is the building that interacts most directly with the city. Located near the university campus in an area of particular historical and cultural interest, it has a more contextually-based relationship with the city.



Figure. 5 The Caminho Niemeyer and its neighbors. Image provided by BUDL - UFF (Brazilian Urban Development Laboratory).

The project is restricted almost entirely to a single site location, bounded by the ferry and bus terminals and cut off from the city center by a busy road, making connections with the city extremely difficult and isolates the complex from the traditional city center (figure 6).

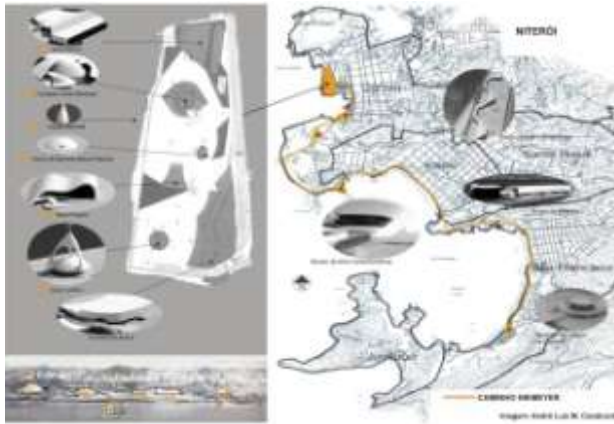


Figure 6 Caminho Niemeyer, main buildings. Image by André Cavalcanti for BUDL - UFF (Brazilian Urban Development Laboratory).

The development scheme survived the transfer of power when the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT) took control of the local authority (Godofredo Pinto, 2002-2008). The Federal government was sympathetic to the incoming administration, belonging to the same party as President Lula, and due to Ministry of Tourism support Niterói was included in the Niemeyer Circuit as one of the Brazilian cities, along with Brasília and Belo Horizonte, hosting the most impressive selection of the architect's works. Inclusion enabled Federal funding to be secured for the completion of the Teatro Popular theater as well as the conclusion of a new agreement with Petrobras for the completion of Espaço BR do Cinema.

The legislation establishing the City Center Urban Conservation Area (Law 1967 of 4 April 2002) confirmed the status of the *Caminho* waterfront as an Area of Special Urban Planning Interest (Law 1779 of 5 January 2002) and included proposals for a connecting walkway with shops and other services linking the two city center areas - the *Caminho* and the traditional city center, as well as setting out guidelines for the first scheme and the setback requirements for high-rise buildings.

The "Viva Centro" ["Live, Center"] development (2006), proposed by the previous administration, was intended to bring undeveloped blocks into use in a way that aligned the development of the area with the city's existing layout and included proposals to achieve this (Law 2441/2006), however, these proposals seem to have been set aside by the new administration (figure 7).

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Figure 7 Proposed Viva Centro development for the city center. Image from the Viva Centro DVD produced by the Niterói municipal authority.

Inside a modified poticial and social scene, it was noticeable that some of the proposed developments have not been left apart uncompleted, such as the religious buildings (the Baptist, Maronite and Catholic churches), others have been add-ons to the project, such as the Charitas ferry terminal (already completed and operational), and others have only recently been incorporated, for example the 60 m panoramic tower with restaurant and observation deck (figure 9, flanked by the Teatro Popular and the Roberto Silveira Memorial, as a result of an agreement between the federal, state and municipal governments, with the support of the Ministry of Tourism. (*O Globo*, 2/12/2009).



Figure 8 - Panoramic tower, 60 m high. Image from the BUDL - UFF (Brazilian Urban Development Laboratory).

Our review of the development scheme has provided us with a brief insight into a punctual development whose impact on the city has yet to be determined. The case study provides examples of forms of intervention and urban management whose scale, together with a lack of adequate financial support, could jeopardize the urban quality of significant areas of the city whose development by a large-scale prestige project could have widespread impact depending on the way in which it interacts with the existing fabric of the city.

THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *CAMINHO NIEMEYER* DEVELOPMENT

Although its origins and relevance goes back much further, strategic urban planning began to attract attention in Brazil with the plan produced by Barcelona when the city was awarded the 1992 Olympic Games. The plan aroused considerable interest worldwide and became a model for other urban development schemes in other parts of the world, including Latin America, where Rio de Janeiro was one of the first cities to produce a plan of this kind, the 1996 Rio Sempre Rio (Rio Always Rio) plan. Supporters argue that strategic planning needs to be implemented at local level because cities face the same sort of environment and competitive challenges that companies do.

Experts stress the need to analyze the distinctive features of each city and the multiplicity of marketplaces in which it operates while at the same time accurately identifying the type of consumer who is likely to be attracted by the city's specific features, which constitute a resource whose value beyond the city's boundaries can make it attractive and competitive with other cities.

The type of strategic plan that today's highly competitive world demands aims to maximize the city's attraction to investors by enabling it to adapt to the market's requirements and engage in a form of "location marketing". This means that cities now have to compete for investment outside their own boundaries.

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Enthusiasts believe that the *Caminho Niemeyer* will stimulate revitalization of the central area of Niterói through the way in which the seafront architectural complex caters to the religious and cultural needs of local people.

Adopting the "city marketing" discourse that the city authorities have used to promote the scheme, we have highlighted the attempt to provide the city of Niterói with an international profile as a center for culture and leisure, in the shape of Niterói's image as the city with the largest collection of buildings by the architect Oscar Niemeyer. We detect a competitive determination to secure a place in the network of international cities.

According to Zeca Brandão "strategically this planning model suggests the linking-up of punctual development schemes carefully sited to achieve impact outside the area of intervention." The original *Caminho Niemeyer* development proposal in fact sought to transcend the boundaries of the development area itself with so-called "center of block buildings," making use of the rear of blocks already developed, usually by buildings of historical value, to build multifamily dwellings with modern urban facilities.

One of the few specific developments proposed for the area was the creation of a walkway linking the blocks on the Avenida Visconde do Rio Branco and the *Caminho Niemeyer*. The proposal envisaged the construction of a walkway of varying heights on the land connecting these two points. Along the route of this walkway - a corridor of sorts, there were to be shops and other services, restaurants and gardens. The legislation governing hotel construction was also relaxed.

However, according to Zeca Brandão, "the strategic potential of these urban development proposals depends on the ability of the developments to interact coherently with other schemes linked by a plan of greater scope, capable of achieving benefits for the immediate environment in the form of socio-economic, physical and spatial improvements. It is precisely this capacity to benefit areas around the development itself that justifies the concentration of public investment in a few city locations of limited size."

The investment of public funds in the *Caminho Niemeyer* provides no guarantee of investment in or benefits to immediately surrounding areas (figure 3 and figure 4), as there is little linkage to other urban development proposals. The city government is not in a position to continue funding other projects of this kind and may well end up providing facilities that will serve only a limited section of the population.

It has been argued that there is an inherent contradiction in this planning model associated with the role of the urban development scheme. While on the one hand it is suggested that schemes of this kind should be less "personalized" in order to increase the possibility of linking schemes together as the Strategic Plan indicates, on the other hand they are employed as powerful "city marketing" tools.

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Culture and leisure activities, the principle attractions in "city marketing", become diluted as they enter the realm of consumption, where commodified in the form of "product" they provide the context for knowledge itself to be turned into merchandise. The planning process becomes dissociated from its social content and the public are turned into spectators of a process that distances itself from their most immediate needs.

So we see the population of the city becoming distanced from the scheme, a rise in the value of real estate, particularly in areas near the MAC attracting new high-quality developments, and the Museum itself catering to local and international visitors with more elitist interests distancing itself from the majority of the city's residents.

In conclusion, this is a development scheme still under construction, with undeniable transformative and regenerative potential. The creation of a new image for the city will depend on how successful it is and how sustainable that success is.

The *Caminho Niemeyer* development scheme poses questions with respect to concerning contemporary planning trends in which the urban development process is becoming increasingly incremental and heuristic, requiring a flexible application of urban planning rules as they become more functionally oriented and the execution of development projects becomes a process of ongoing negotiation and communication.

Notes:

ⁱ Some years ago Bilbao was a city in decline as a consequence of deindustrialization. A strategic plan was drawn up but encountered significant problems. Frank Gehry's bold and controversial development scheme is now a global reference point and the principal attraction for visiting tourists, with over 2.5 million visitors in its first two years.

ⁱⁱ The *Caminho Niemeyer* development scheme, currently under construction, originally comprised the following buildings:

- the Jorge Roberto Silveira Memorial Center is funded entirely by the Universidade Salgado de Oliveira-Universo, including construction, outfitting and maintenance costs.

- the 8000 m² Baptist church's construction is being financed by an international bank, a considerable proportion of the cost being raised by the religious community itself; the church is intended to accommodate a congregation of around 5,000 and possibly a Baptist school.

- the Oscar Niemeyer Foundation's construction is being funded by Barcas SA; completion, finishing work and outfitting are still the subject of negotiations with other agencies and the city authority.

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- the ferry terminal is operated by Barcas SA; the connection with the existing bus terminal enables it to handle 170,000 commuters travelling between São Gonçalo, Niterói and Rio de Janeiro.
- the theater, capable of seating 600 people, can be converted into an open-air amphitheater holding an audience of 20 thousand; it has been built with funding from the city government.
- the cinema museum, funded by BR Distribuidora, has four multiplex screens, with average capacity of 100 to 200 people each.
- the “Chapel in the Sea” has been donated by the Maronite Community; the architect has refused to allow any connection with the land.
- the Catholic cathedral, with an intended capacity of 38,000, has not so far succeeded in raising the necessary funds from the Catholic community, but the Rouanet Law [encouraging cultural investment] has enabled it to purchase cement for the construction work; the church has negotiated the sale of some of its own land for development in order to raise funds for the cathedral's construction.

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