THE OTHER LOW-CARBON PROTAGONISTS

Poor People's Movements and Climate Politics in São Paulo

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In the São Paulo of the late 2000s, two civil society projects rose to prominence. Each aimed to make a brutal city more humane and livable for its residents, starting with the downtown core. But each group framed its efforts in different ways and pursued its goals using different methods. While the city's housing movement occupied vacant buildings to pressure state actors to build up affordable housing and democratize urban planning, green policy elites worked closely with city managers on a downtown revitalization plan that would model a more intelligently dense, and hence lower-carbon, style of urbanism. Groups that might have cooperated in building a more democratic and more energy-efficient city ended up on opposite sides of a great battle over how the city would be transformed. Years later, these two camps tentatively explored working together. How did this estrangement take hold? And why is there now a tentative basis for cooperation?

There is more to this case than a one-off puzzle of working-class and professional-class ships passing in the night. For São Paulo's developments speak to a broader puzzle in accounts of urban ecological politics: Why is the implementation of urgently needed, apparently broadly beneficial, low-carbon policies, passed by city governments, stagnating in the real world (Bulkeley 2011)? The stakes are high. As the planet warms, and as the pressure on all levels of government to slash heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions grows, urban politics will increasingly be structured by the logics of climate politics. The question is less whether urban regions manage to shrink their carbon footprints at all; rather, what is up for grabs is how fast they slash emissions, and who wins and who loses from the policies that are ultimately implemented. Whose consumption will be curbed to keep a lid on emissions?

There can be no success in "right to the city" struggles that is not, simultaneously, a success in democratically decarbonizing urban life. Once we realize that several core stakes of right-to-the-city struggles—especially housing, transit, and land use—are the also the core stakes of low-carbon urbanism, we see that it is no longer possible (or desirable) to deeply distinguish social from environmental politics (Cohen 2015).

São Paulo is a good place to work through our fledgling future, because in many ways, its dynamics reflect worldwide trends among large, relatively prosperous cities of the North and South. As has happened elsewhere with big cities undergoing deindustrialization and in the broader neoliberal context, São Paulo's housing and labor markets have polarized, with local inequality increasing even as countrywide it has gone down. Housing insecurity there has increased massively since the late 1970s, when 1 percent of the population lived in informal, illegal settlements; today, the rate hovers around 30 percent. The explosion in these numbers greatly outpaces the far more modest rate of migration to the city over the course of those decades. It is the result, instead, of rising rents and building abandonment downtown, and the degradation of the labor market across the city (UN-HABITAT 2010). And as congestion has increased, São Paulo's poor have been pushed farther and farther from the job-rich downtown, forced to endure increasingly long and painful commutes by bus. Investments in the built environment, including transit, overwhelmingly favored private automobiles, even as the great majority of commuters continued to travel by public transit (Rolnik and Klintowitz 2011). It is no accident that in June 2013, when massive protests demanding higher-quality and more affordable transportation broke out across Brazil, the greatest numbers mobilized in São Paulo.

Meanwhile, again reflecting a global trend, affluent professionals are moving into São Paulo's downtown core, lured by developers working with city governments. This has coincided with professional-class-rooted civil society groups

joining campaigns to improve the quality of central areas' urban amenities; these campaigns have increasingly taken on ecological themes, from the local environment to global climate change. Green policy elites have argued that cities should be increasing density, reducing car use, and building larger and more energy-efficient buildings, thus shrinking carbon footprints and slowing global warming while boosting their economic vitality and the quality of life of their citizens. In the late 2000s, São Paulo was one of the first global cities whose municipal government, working with environmental groups, passed an ambitious low-carbon policy. Countless other cities have since followed.

Housing-oriented, working-class movements, flying the banner of the right to the city, have also been active in contesting the shape of the city's center, again reflecting global trends. Fighting back against growing inequalities in labor and housing markets, they have demanded higher-quality public services, more public transit, and especially more centrally located affordable housing—in sum, another version of a smart densification agenda. This agenda would also slash carbon emissions, although for the most part housing-oriented movements have not embraced environmentalist rhetoric.

This issue of whether, and how, to understand working-class urban projects as ecologically beneficial is central. So before introducing the São Paulo case, I propose an encompassing reconceptualization of urban ecological politics.

Ecologies Green and Gray, Luxury and Democratic

In the 2000s, some of the world's biggest, richest cities decided to cut their carbon emissions. Ken Livingstone, elected London's mayor in 2000, founded a global network and then merged it with Present Bill Clinton's urban climate initiative to create the C40 Large Cities Leadership Network. New York, Toronto, São Paulo, and others would soon seize leading roles in the C40. In each case, cities took up the argument that intelligent densification involving housing, transit, and land use could at once reduce emissions, increase economic dynamism, and improve residents' quality of life (Greenberg 2015; Seto 2014).

How were this agenda's social and ecological dimensions connected? Let us first label the density-based, emissions-cutting interventions *gray ecologies*. These "gray" interventions, based in infrastructure and the built environment, yield ecological benefits without looking like typical "green" environmentalist interventions, like ponds, parks, or tree-lined streets. Gray ecologies are good for the environment because they produce little pollution, which is why environmentalists increasingly advocate compact city urbanism.

We distinguish these gray ecologies from more familiar features of urban greening, or *green ecologies*. While the principal virtue of the former lies in reducing (often indirectly) our pollution and resource use, green ecologies' principal ecological contribution is improving the quality of our air, water, and sense of well-being. I place the two ecologies on a continuum, since in practice projects and developments often contain elements of each.
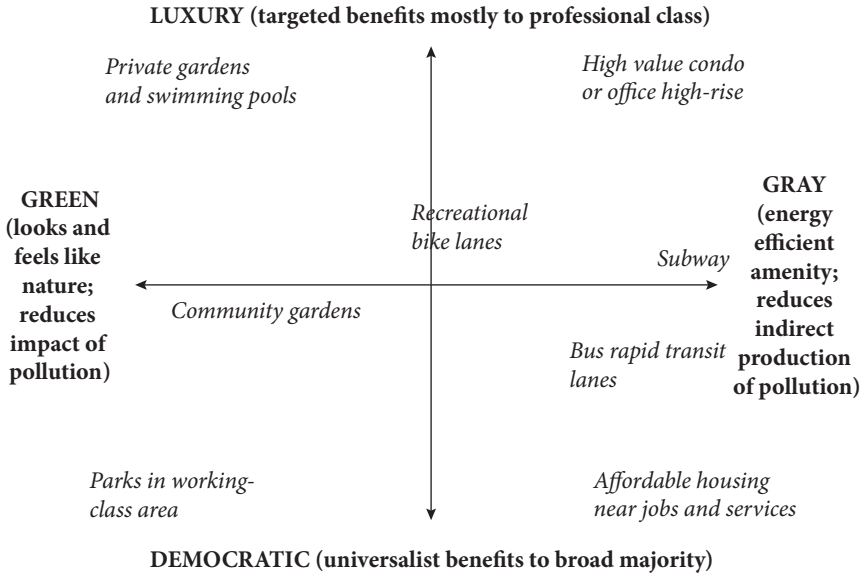
From a social perspective we can understand each kind of ecology in terms of what the urbanist Manuel Castells has termed collective consumption—the state-mediated provision of public services, like housing, transit, and parks (Castells 1977, 1983, 2002; Kowarick 2000). The term once implied universalist services aimed at the broad majority of the population. But in the contemporary, neoliberal period, state intervention has been inverted. Direct grants, subsidies, and public services, as well as tax breaks and other incentives, are now commonly targeted toward business and elites, and the first priority is improving the everyday life of the professional class.

This mode of governance and urban economic development has led to the rise of what I term *luxury ecologies*, denoting projects and developments aimed principally at benefiting the professional class and associated businesses, especially finance, real estate, and the firms that assist and surround these (the so-called "creative" sectors). The term "luxury" refers both to the beneficiaries of individual groups and projects, and to the broader luxury city model notoriously pioneered by New York's mayor Michael Bloomberg (Brash 2011). Luxury ecologies have fit the framework of urban neoliberalism; looking ahead, as pressures to slash emissions increase, we should expect increasing convergence between neoliberal urbanism and luxury ecologies.

In contrast, we can term ecologically inflected projects and developments targeting a city's broad majorities *democratic ecologies*, in reference both to their universalistic orientation and the short-term imperative of helping those in greatest need. Democratic ecologies recall a more social democratic form of urbanism; looking ahead, they are likely to converge more and more explicitly with the right-to-the-city agenda. (For examples, see figure 7.1.)

According to this framework, urban politics in general, including struggles for the right to the city, are increasingly (and increasingly explicitly) dominated by the tension between luxury and democratic ecologies. This requires that analysts look beneath the surface of who is normally labeled as an urban environmental (and climate) actor.

Looking beyond everyday labels is crucial. Few residents of São Paulo (or other cities) complain in everyday life about the atmosphere's concentration of carbon dioxide. For ordinary residents, competing visions and politics of housing and

LUXURY (targeted benefits mostly to professional class)

Private gardens
and swimming pools

High value condo
or office high-rise

GREEN
(looks and
feels like
nature;
reduces
impact of
pollution)

Recreational
bike lanes

Subway

GRAY
(energy
efficient
amenity;
reduces
indirect
production
of pollution)

Community gardens

Bus rapid transit
lanes

Parks in working-
class area

Affordable housing
near jobs and services

DEMOCRATIC (universalist benefits to broad majority)

FIGURE 7.1.   Heuristic grid, with examples. In practice, the placement of any particular project or development will depend on local context.

transit are more likely to be front-of-mind. And yet, since everyone's actions have ecological consequences, *we should understand everyone as an ecological actor, just as we treat everyone as an economic actor*. São Paulo's (and indeed every city's) climate politics coincide with, at minimum, the giant questions of who will be housed, when, where, and how; the priorities and quantities of investment into public transit; how flood and rainwater defense will be organized; which broader economic development strategies will aggregate all the individual pieces of socio-ecological policy; and so on. Green policy elites and scholars often understate the social implications of this situation (Wachsmuth, Cohen, and Angelo 2016). But major social conflict is inevitable around green and gray ecologies because their realization implicates the core interests of all urban residents. The social realm of climate policy making may be small. Its social ramifications, however, are huge.

Among these is how we understand prospective political alliances. Both my analytic framework and empirical findings suggest that there is a possible alliance between segments of the professional class and the broad working class around intelligent, low-carbon, affordable and accessible densification—in short, democratic gray ecologies. I am arguing that the climate crisis, and the fact that efficient low-carbon urbanism tends toward egalitarianism (or its undesirable opposite, a vicious eco-apartheid), could ultimately drive some green policy elites and some

of their professional-class constituency to support a right-to-the-city agenda if it is (as I argue) the best bet to slash carbon emissions. In terms of the analogy of the city as a factory, this recalls something like the tense, uneasy, but productive class alliances involved in the New Deal, and especially during the subsequent war economy.

Putting such emphasis on carbon probably seems far-fetched. But in my view, progressive scholars and thinkers have, for the most part, simply not reckoned with how quickly and intensely the climate crisis will dominate our politics, along with the dangers and opportunities that this fact represents (see Klein 2014; Cohen 2015). Since prosperous areas will need to cut emissions by 100 percent by the mid-2030s to prevent catastrophe (Anderson 2015), struggling with those goals is bound to dominate politics. Looking ahead, it is not in abstract historical time that the broad right-to-the-city movement will develop, but in the crisis time of growing pressures to slash carbon emissions and in the context of increasing extreme weather events (Cohen 2016; Gotham and Greenberg 2014). We must study the present in terms of how it is changing in the face of new pressures.

My account of the São Paulo case is based on primary and secondary data gathered during thirteen months of fieldwork, undertaken in several waves between June 2010 and May 2015. I conducted semi-structured interviews with fifty-five key government actors, green policy elites, and poor people's movements' leaders—largely housing-focused.[1] I spent dozens of hours observing public political meetings and events. And I have collected evidence from secondary sources, including newspapers and magazines; academic articles, reports, and graduate theses; policy documents provided by interviewees or accessed in public (and online) archives; and records of political meetings. In what follows, I introduce the São Paulo case, outline its leading players, and explain its low-carbon policy stagnation by tracing the estrangement of poor people's movements and green policy elites. I then show how a recently elected center-left government has brought elements of these groups back into dialogue.

Climate Politics in São Paulo

An Exemplary Case

Metro São Paulo has twenty million inhabitants; municipal São Paulo, eleven million. Every global city is unique. Still, in a warming world characterized by planetary urbanization (Brenner 2014), São Paulo resembles other big cities in several ways. It suffers from cities' typical vulnerability to extreme weather. Already-severe seasonal flooding—from swelling rivers and rainwater runoff—will worsen with global warming, further paralyzing traffic, cutting off

electricity, and sometimes killing residents (Nobre 2010). Drought and water shortages have also lately plagued the region (Cohen 2016).

Also like cities worldwide, São Paulo suffers from paralyzing congestion—only worse. A recent study found that average commutes were longer in metro São Paulo than in nineteen of twenty comparable cities worldwide (Pereira and Schwanen 2013). Vehicles cause most of São Paulo's greenhouse gas emissions (Prefeitura do Município de São Paulo 2005). Other effects of cars' pollution are less abstract. An autopsy technician has said that pollution is now so bad, he can no longer tell from the lungs of the corpses on his table whether or not they were smokers (Burgierman 2011).

Congestion results from the concentration of employment in central areas, while workers have been pushed into the metro region's sprawling peripheries of low-slung homes they often had to build themselves. There is also the middle-class romance with the automobile; municipal São Paulo's eleven million residents today own seven million cars, which clog city streets, while most residents ride the underfunded public transit system, mostly in overcrowded buses. City government is under pressure from all sides to improve central areas' socio-ecological qualities. Yet there are starkly different programs for how to carry out this agenda, paired with competing visions of whose needs it should prioritize.

A Climate Law Enters the Picture

One such agenda, developed by the 2005–2012 center-right mayoral regime, was to combine ecological policy making with a finance- and real-estate-oriented growth policy anchored in downtown redevelopment. São Paulo's center-right mayor Gilberto Kassab strongly supported a climate law to this effect, which the city council passed with a unanimous vote in September 2009.

The climate law's headline target was an ambitious 30 percent reduction of the city's greenhouse gas emissions (against a 2003 baseline) by 2012—that is, in just three years. This expectation was not realistic. But it was reasonable to expect that at least the city's highest-profile, climate-linked projects would get off the ground, building political momentum for greater emissions reductions down the road. Of central interest here were the measures proposed to reorganize city life to reduce vehicle emissions. Strategies included policies to increase the quantity and the energy efficiency of public transit and to impose the concept of "compact city" planning on subsequent developments and redevelopments.

The compact-city provision was no mere rhetorical flourish. In São Paulo, climate policy networks, including many with São Paulo offices, pressed this

objective repeatedly to a receptive audience. It was at the 2007 C40 summit in New York City, where the conjoined virtues of density and carbon reductions were trumpeted by New York mayor Bloomberg, that São Paulo's mayor Kassab decided that his city needed a climate law and demanded that his secretary of the environment, Eduardo Jorge, design one. The "compact city" clause harmonized with the administration's already strong emphasis on densifying and revitalizing much of the city's urban core.

The devil would lie in the social detail of the climate law's implementation, especially transit policy and downtown redevelopment. Success would depend on how climate-policy-linked projects related to housing movements, which were battling to implement their own vision for a more compact and efficient central São Paulo. Before I zoom in on these climate-linked battles, I pause to examine their protagonists.

A Tale of Two Compact-City Political Infrastructures

Two political infrastructures of civil society stand out for their pursuit of a somewhat similar vision: more downtown housing, more public transit, greater economic development, and enhanced services distributed in the peripheries.[2] Leading actors from each group pursued this agenda through the 2000s. But they never cooperated, nor saw each other as allies.

One political infrastructure is the green policy elites. They understand themselves as environmentalists, often prioritizing greenhouse gas emissions reductions. They largely come from São Paulo's professional (or in local terms, "middle") class, attend a handful of elite universities, live in well-heeled neighborhoods, have traveled to North America and Europe, and work in networks with global (especially environmentalist) civil society. In the early 2000s (2000–2004) a small network of green policy elites worked with the leftist Workers' Party's (PT) mayoral regime. But when a center-right regime was elected and took power in 2005, environmentalists began to cooperate with the new administration, looking for ways to realign social and environmental priorities. Ultimately, environmental politics in the city came of age just as a new phase of city government-led neoliberal urban governance was taking shape.

A second civil society political infrastructure has been composed of poor people's movements, especially their most dynamic sector, housing movements. In a city with a housing deficit estimated at one million units, the movements have consistently advocated for more construction of affordable housing near jobs and services, especially the downtown core (Fundação Gaspar Garcia 2012). This demand was nested in a national campaign for "urban reform" and the right to the city.

The movement's leadership grew out of the broad ranks of its members—poor and working class, often lacking a home, often based in the periphery, often having migrated from the northeast, and darker-skinned than São Paulo's light-skinned elite. Lead organizers have tended to work closely with academics, acquire graduate degrees, and travel internationally in leftist circuits, from regular occurrences like the World Social Forum to idiosyncratic exchanges, like ones organized from New York by the Pratt Institute and the Rosa Luxemburg Siftung.

The housing movement support hub Apoio exemplifies this. Apoio is connected to the city's most confrontational movements, but also works with foreign funders—especially the British Catholic charity CAFOD—on programming to raise awareness around housing and other social rights among working-class city residents, especially women. Overall, housing movements in São Paulo have sought to pressure and influence PT politicians, while supporting the party at election time. They differ from polite civil society most significantly in their confrontational tactic of occupying buildings to press their demands for more affordable housing. They frame occupations in terms of existing legislation and constitutional norms, including property's obligation to fill a social function (often understood as a right to the city) laid out in the 1988 constitution; specification of this principle in the federal "Statute of the City" was passed under movement pressure in 2001. São Paulo's housing movements cite the law, which in practice is rarely followed. Instead, there is regular police repression of housing movement activities (Fórum Centro Vivo 2006). Their organizing has required painful, grinding work. Two leading movements' slogans are "Occupy, Resist, Build" and "Those Who Don't Struggle, Die."

The anthropologist Teresa Caldeira (2000) has described São Paulo as a "city of walls," with different social classes inhabiting divided spaces under the specter of violent crime, including rampant police violence. But intense class divisions, all on their own, cannot explain the estrangement of green policy elites and poor people's housing movements. In São Paulo, many middle-class professionals have for decades been members and allies of radical left political projects led by the poor. The housing movements' allies include well-known academics and young students from wealthy families. Like green policy elites, poor people's movements have had extensive contacts within city government. If green policy elites chose not to work with housing movements at that time, this reflected not brute class interest, but a political decision based on a context where the center-right was wielding power. Yes, for some greens this was a more familiar political culture; but not for all, and not absolutely. Through the intermediary of the PT, green policy elites have also joined projects and developments—green and gray ecologies—that prioritized the collective consumption needs of the poor when the PT was in power, to a small extent from 2000 to 2004, and more extensively

since 2013. Below, we explore the shifting contexts of the movements' estrangement and rapprochement.

Carbon, Class, and the City Core

In the early 2000s, it was the center-left Workers' Party (PT) mayoral regime of Marta Suplicy that laid the foundation for São Paulo's 2009 climate law. And yet, almost no one to whom I spoke recalled this history. I sketch it here because it reminds us of how fluid the link between social and climate politics can be, both in substance and in political labeling.

Transit—from Democratic to Luxury Ecologies

Suplicy's administration pursued several policies manifesting the "socio-ecological" orientation then circulating on the Brazilian left (see Hochstetler and Keck 2007). The administration passed clean air policies that persuaded the United Nations' urban sustainability policy network, the ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives), to relocate its Latin American office from Buenos Aires to São Paulo. Secretary of the Environment Adriano Diogo then arranged for a detailed audit of the city's greenhouse gas emissions. The audit was completed in 2005, soon providing the informational baseline for the Kassab regime's low-carbon policy making. Diogo also moved to build the city's first biogas plant to slash methane emissions. Both Suplicy and Diogo contributed to ICLEI's Portuguese-language climate policy newsletter, *Conexão Clima*. And the administration passed a pro-density master plan that used "socio-environmental" principles to guide its pro-density policies.

Yet Suplicy's administration never trumpeted, as such, her most effective low-carbon policy: a massive expansion and rationalization of bus service. In 2002, the administration introduced an electronic fare card to facilitate free transfers between buses, and discounted transfers to the subway system—a complex feat because buses were operated by private companies and the subway by the state level of government. The administration also poured cash and political capital into the construction of nearly one hundred kilometers of dedicated bus lanes, dramatically improving the mobility of the city's poor in the face of middle-class opposition to the resulting construction work in (and increased accessibility to) their neighborhoods.

In 2004 Suplicy was defeated in her reelection bid by center-right candidate José Serra, who was succeeded by his deputy Gilberto Kassab in 2006. Each of these center-right mayors worked closely with Secretary of the Environment

Eduardo Jorge, who persuaded them to place ecological politics at the heart of their economic development agenda. Perhaps the most striking departure was the abandonment of bus service expansion as a priority, despite cars' leading role in greenhouse gas emissions, and in other pollutants that damaged public health. Jorge, as environment secretary, lacked the direct jurisdiction over bus policy needed to push bus lanes through. But he could have used his prestige to advocate bus lane policy explicitly. He never did, despite making frequent broad critiques of the city's car culture. Jorge did, however, support aggressive action to expand bicycle lanes—leading to the construction of two hundred kilometers of lanes in eight years, of which a plurality were categorized as "recreational." In that period, the city constructed only twelve kilometers of dedicated bus lanes. In short, the transit policies of the Kassab regime represented a shift from democratic to luxury ecologies, and bus service stagnated as a result.

Indeed, when street protests erupted all across Brazil in June 2013 to protest fare hikes, the greatest numbers mobilized in São Paulo (Maricato 2013). At the protests' peak in late June, crowds numbered in the hundreds of thousands and combined middle- and working-class, white and black city residents. This mass outpouring of rage constituted a kind of accidental low-carbon urbanism, a cry for more democratic gray ecologies, as Naomi Klein (2014) has suggested.

But in contrast to housing organizing, this outburst was almost entirely spontaneous. An organizer of the Free Fare Movement that organized the protests told me that in the months leading up to the protests, about forty activists would attend weekly meetings. In recent years in São Paulo, transit activism has not manifested the kind of lasting social movement infrastructure at the core of the housing movement. If the June Days, as they are known, constituted a pivotal and transformative event in demonstrating the capacity for multi-class outrage over collective consumption, they did not herald a major new organizing force in the city. If anything, it was the traditional housing movements that ultimately grew the most in the long aftermath of those protests (Cohen 2016).

Nova Luz and the Housing Question—Luxury Ecology from Above

By the 2000s, downtown São Paulo seemed to be emerging from a long decline, its streets the sites of a chaotic mix of leading business and governmental functions, services and commerce (much of it informal), elite cultural institutions, and a great deal of poverty and abandonment. In the early 2000s, it was estimated that 17 percent of the housing units downtown were abandoned (Bomfim 2004, 66). Poor families organized by housing movements would break in and squat, announcing their presence by draping movement flags out windows.

But the movements were not alone in seeking to improve the center's socio-ecological qualities. In keeping with global trends, the São Paulo real estate sector encouraged young professionals' changing taste in lifestyle by focusing attention on the historical center's still-vital services and infrastructures, degraded building stock, and fledgling cultural capital. The goal was to transform São Paulo into a "global city" like New York, London, or Paris (Fix 2007). This vision, embraced by the center-right Serra and Kassab regimes, would combine economic development with an increasingly prominent ecological program.

The immediate target was an area near a train station called Luz, where the city had encouraged the construction of new museums and a concert hall. The administration used middle-class fears of crime and degradation, crystallized in the popular image of a tangle of streets known as *crackolandia*, or crack-land, to justify a redevelopment project called Nova Luz (new light). The idea was to implant in a small area a European-style downtown, but dominated by a postindustrial "creative" sector of large tech companies, advertising and marketing firms, and a large cultural nonprofit. Some historic buildings would be restored, others demolished and replaced. The plan's ecological dimensions kept growing. After all, Kassab had asked Jorge to draft a low-carbon plan after they had visited New York in 2007, where Bloomberg had celebrated the confluence of central city revitalizations (as he understood them) and low-carbon, gray ecologies achieved via density. And within Jorge's green secretariat, there was a great deal of interest in leveraging densification to shrink the city's carbon footprint.

But getting Nova Luz built would cost a lot of money and displace residents and businesses that preferred to stay. The city government, stymied by opposition, decided to outsource the right to expropriate properties in the area to private companies. This subcontracting of a traditionally public function galvanized opposition. Housing movements and an association of small shopkeepers worked together to block the redevelopment. The groups distrusted government promises of new affordable housing, promises that in similar projects elsewhere had been broken.

Neither the city's economic development planners nor environmentalists were able to assuage these concerns. Remarkably, even historically progressive urban policy makers in the environmental secretariat, like the green secretary Jorge, refused to recognize the legitimacy of social movement opposition to the plan. In Jorge's comments recorded at public meetings, he celebrated Nova Luz's ecological potential, lamented the existing poverty, argued that displacing current residents into far-flung favelas would be "illogical, inefficient, and inhuman," and made no mention of organized movements of the poor ("Ata Da 25a Reunião Plenária Extraordinaria" 2011).

Yet one might argue these green advocates were the ones lacking vision. While David Harvey has argued that the right to the city includes both a "right of access

to what already exists" and "a right to change [the city] after our heart's desire" (Weinstein and Ren 2009), green policy elites in São Paulo seemed willing, at most, to engage with the right to access of the generic poor. Working-class social movements' right to *change the city*, with all the political organization and the distinctive normative registers that this entailed, was never taken seriously.

Indeed, São Paulo's housing movements had been articulating an alternative project for the downtown, developed in parallel to Nova Luz. We will see that it was not just an abstract desire for justice that green policy elites ignored, but a concrete, compelling, and well-known project for a more egalitarian and democratic São Paulo, a project equally consistent with low-carbon objectives.

Demanding a Democratic Center

On March 8, 1997, one of São Paulo's housing groups conducted the city's first large-scale occupation of a downtown building; this set off waves of occupations throughout the 2000s (Earle 2012). As federal and municipal law in the early 2000s mandated that city government guarantee property's "social function" by increasing taxes on abandoned buildings, and then seizing them for social housing, the occupations framed themselves as bottom-up accelerators of established legal norms.

At the turn of the century, a multi-class coalition organized in connection with the downtown housing movements, called the Forum for a Living Center, would bring this broader perspective to public attention in São Paulo. In 2000, the forum released a twelve-point platform for the "democratization of the city center," including calls for the defense of property's social function, against its capture by real estate speculation, and for popular, participatory housing policies for central areas (Fórum Centro Vivo 2006, 1–2). Four years later, their coalition released a manifesto "for a living center" to articulate an alternative to the "so-called 'revitalization of the center' that is in fashion" (Fórum Centro Vivo 2004).

In one especially high-profile occupation, there was an attempt to prefigure housing movements' vision of their own success. Just two blocks from the planned Nova Luz's edge, a twenty-three-story building on Avenida Prestes Maia was occupied by hundreds of families, many organized through a close affiliate of Apoio. This was South America's largest squat. Allied intellectuals helped build sophisticated cultural spaces inside, including a library of thousands of volumes. The occupation was chronicled by leading newspapers, documentaries by domestic and foreign filmmakers, BBC reports, academic articles and theses, and a feature article in *Rolling Stone Brasil*.

The occupation would undergo a series of interruptions and revivals. But the most powerful break came in mid-2007. São Paulo's mayor, Kassab, had just attended the April C40 summit in New York, where Mayor Bloomberg and others enthusiastically celebrated the densification of city cores as a critical element of

low-carbon urbanism. At the summit's close, Kassab ordered Jorge to begin the process of drafting climate legislation. Weeks later, Kassab had the Prestes Maia occupiers evicted. The city did arrange housing for many of the occupiers—but mostly in the city's most peripheral areas. The city refused the occupiers' central demand that the city obey prevailing laws and convert a mass of abandoned buildings into social housing.

Meanwhile, the coalition of housing movement activists, small shopkeepers, and the PT had Nova Luz's expropriation efforts suspended in the courts. They also made it an electoral issue. PT mayor Fernando Haddad, elected with support from housing movements, took office in January 2013 and canceled Nova Luz for good.

São Paulo's poor, working class, and small shopkeepers demonstrated the power of a multi-class alliance fighting for a right to the city. And through their projects in and around the Prestes Maia occupation, they prefigured an alternative, long-term model for a culturally vibrant and egalitarian urban core. But they were also alienated from explicit ecological politics by the Serra and Kassab mayoralties' high-profile marriage of ecological discourses, gray and green, to luxury urban projects and developments that displaced the poor and ignored their immediate need for improved public transit.

This would serve as a substantial barrier to movement organizers interested in framing their struggles in ecological terms. Most housing movement organizers I spoke with lamented their groups' lack of recent, explicit engagement on environmental issues, while pointing out that under Serra and Kassab, ecological rhetoric seemed mainly to serve as cover for gentrification and displacement. The irony is that what the poor people's movements demanded would have shrunk the city's carbon footprint by increasing low-income housing downtown for those who worked there, reducing traffic on the roads, and modeling more complete and livable communities accessible to all. Yet trumpeting all this would require the elaboration of a whole other political and discursive framework, one building on a technical grasp of urban carbon-emissions accounting that, understandably, housing activists mired in everyday battles were in no hurry to acquire. But if movements of the poor do not (always) explicitly engage in climate politics, are they fated to play only an oppositional role to elite-backed projects? I argue below that such movements can not only block luxury gray ecologies, but also join coalitions in support of democratic gray ecologies.

Partial Victories

On May 23, 2013, two unrelated roundtables on climate politics were held in São Paulo. The first, at the University of São Paulo, addressed the release of a

greenhouse gas emissions audit, announcing that emissions had increased since 2003, despite the 2009 climate law (Rodrigues 2013). The second, at City Hall, was held to launch a joint project of international aid, with funding from the European Union and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), which had worked for years with the center-focused Apoio and a connected, periphery-oriented group (see www.programaurbano.com). The theme was securing precarious housing in the face of extreme weather caused by climate change. Apoio and its favela-based partner organization brought so many of their members, nearly one thousand poor people of color, that they filled the City Hall's main auditorium, as well as an overflow auditorium with a video link (where I stood) and a courtyard outside with audio speakers.

The roundtable featured representatives of CAFOD and the European Union, leaders of several housing movements and organizations, and three leftist PT politicians. When Apoio's director, Manoel del Rio, rose to speak, he mentioned adaptation to climate change in passing. He then delivered a thundering call for a poor people's compact city. "You want a low-carbon city?" he shouted. "How about more social housing for the poor downtown? How about better public transit? How about urbanizing the favelas, and having economic development there?" The European Union and CAFOD representatives seemed unprepared for the meeting's tone. They spoke politely about collaborations across borders. Other speakers, from the housing movement and the PT, delivered variations on del Rio's themes: espousing the potential of poor people reclaiming from elites the environment as an issue and insisting that confrontational struggle remain a central strategy. Even in the overflow auditorium, audience members frequently broke into applause. Onstage, one PT politician led a housing movement chant: "Those who don't struggle . . ." he cried out and paused. "Die!" The audience roared in response.

Months later, I met with del Rio, one of his colleagues, and CAFOD's principal liaison for the project. How did this democratic ecology vision come about? On CAFOD's end, there was increasing pressure from European Union funders to incorporate climate change into its overseas programming. More interesting is del Rio's trajectory. In fact, he had been developing his own concept of the low-carbon, poor people's compact city for years. This was based on his earlier history as a labor organizer, where he came to view the lengthening commutes of workers as a form of wage theft. From there, he shifted to housing organizing, focused on securing the right of workers to live near their jobs, as a way to more justly balance the working day and everyday life. Del Rio also saw this strategy as a means to combat the sprawl of peripheries into ecologically sensitive waterways at city's edge. Thus, when the discussion of carbon and urbanism arrived in São Paulo, del Rio elaborated a distinct approach to the issue, a democratic gray ecology vision rooted in a long-standing labor perspective on density.

Meanwhile, within governmental policy circuits, green policy technocrats have also begun working with Mayor Haddad's new PT administration on democratic gray ecology projects. On the transit question, the administration has reappointed many of the architects of the 2000–2004 Suplicy administration's bus service expansion. Pressed into action by the June 2013 wave of protests against rising bus fares, the administration recanted on the fare increase and accelerated the provision of dedicated bus lanes, building 327 kilometers by May 2014, more than double the amount Haddad promised in his campaign. The administration then produced hundreds of kilometers of bicycle lanes and promised to extend their network to every district of the city. The bus lanes, in particular, have proved popular in polls (Monteiro 2014). In addition to meeting the needs of low-income commuters, these actions should reduce the city's localized greenhouse gas emissions—a point Haddad rarely makes.

On housing, the issue is more complex. Haddad's administration, far from tempering the roar of São Paulo's real estate boom, is stoking its flames with widespread measures to increase the urban quality of life, including the revitalization of parks and plazas. The administration, under pressure from housing movements, announced in its first month the construction of twenty thousand homes, through a state-supported public-private partnership, in the central region where Nova Luz had been planned. In pursuit of this goal, large abandoned buildings have finally been expropriated—including the twenty-three-story building on Prestes Maia whose mid-2000s occupation captured the popular imagination. What remains unclear, even three years into Haddad's first term (the time of writing), is whether the long-term agenda he has laid out will bear real fruit.

The administration's broader vision is outlined in a master plan whose implementation will take years and whose passage depended on vigorous housing movement support. The basic notion is to establish a more polycentric urban form, with denser, multiuse and multi-class corridors connecting more employment clusters. The key idea is to take existing rail infrastructure along postindustrial and degraded river corridors, turn these into mass transit byways, and encourage tall, dense, mixed-use buildings along their length. There are connected plans to shift housing toward the center and commerce and office work toward the periphery—aiming to move as much economic activity as possible into poorer areas where workers (including much of the middle class) presently live.

Housing movements have won commitments to affordable-housing construction along the new, dense axes—pushing against the trend where improved mass transit access causes increases in property value that cause displacement. But it remains unclear how much of this will materialize. For the government to implement its affordability mandates will be difficult. It is still counting on private investments from companies that will seek to evade regulations. And the plan depends on heady, "global city"–style growth, despite the model's persistent

association with land and labor market polarization. What is more, Brazil's economic growth has recently ground to a halt.

It is also sobering to note the administration's decision not to trumpet the ecological virtues of its planning measures outside small and specialized audiences of environmental activists. At one level, this seems a missed opportunity. If there is a possible overlap between middle-class environmental objectives and working-class demands for a more decent life, should these not be emphasized?

But this relative silence is not just the administration's preference alone. Many green policy elites have encouraged the camouflage of low-carbon policy in social-justice garb. Adalberto Maluf, the C40's representative in São Paulo, has worked closely with the new secretariat for urban development on a wide range of gray ecology interventions, including the expansion of dedicated bus lines for which Maluf has long advocated. Maluf insists that Brazil's most pressing problem is social inequality, and urban political interventions need to be framed in such terms.

Conclusion

If every actor is an ecological actor, and if the planet's ecological future hangs in part on cutting carbon emissions by making cities denser through changes to housing, transit, and land use, then it follows that housing, labor, and right-to-the-city movements battling over these issues are decisive ecological actors. In São Paulo, as elsewhere, these movements exert a fair amount of power, even if they rarely realize their chief objectives. They exert this power in pursuit of collective consumption objectives, with the prospective carbon gains of reduced car traffic and more efficient buildings compounded by low levels of individual consumption, and by their advocacy for a city oriented more to public services than private consumption. These urban poor people's movements are prospective low-carbon protagonists of serious heft.

This is more than just a politically correct exercise in deductive reasoning. Out on the streets, these movements play a vital role in determining the shape of the city. And some clever policy actors have taken note, seeking in favorable political circumstances to blend low-carbon policy making with measures to increase social and economic justice.

This suggests that there is no basic opposition between green and social priorities in urban politics. Although low-carbon urbanism has often gone hand in hand with the kinds of neoliberal urbanism discussed throughout this volume, alternative low-carbon urbanisms are possible—indeed, already emerging. A core concern for scholars supportive of right-to-the-city struggles must be to recognize and articulate the range of distinctive pathways to the low-carbon city,

including the array of potential coalitions. Increasingly, the key axis of urban ecological politics will not be the opposition between social and ecological, or economic and ecological, but between different class-structured versions of the green city project—between luxury ecologies and democratic ecologies. No one wants to live on a scalding planet; no doubt, few want to live in a world of eco-apartheid. This suggests that there is a strategic opportunity to link right-to-the-city movements with green policy elites whose primary objectives are ecological (rather than the perpetuation of professional-class privilege). What I term democratic gray ecologies could be a site for this alliance.

To be sure, there is no defined model of how to do this. Even in cities where center-leftists have pressed low-carbon policy, like London and Paris, gentrification and displacement threaten the very social fabric of those cities. But recognizing the potential of a democratic gray ecology coalition, which could meet the looming pressures for carbon emissions reductions in a just, egalitarian way, does not depend on already-existing models of complete success.

Meanwhile, just as it is important to test these ideas in other cities, it is also imperative to experiment with them beyond urban cores. The great majority of human beings live outside global cities' central areas. Planetary urbanization is mostly crowding peripheries. In core areas, most elites now recognize the imperative of improving quality of life to enhance economic competitiveness. Social movements can demand that such redevelopments be equitable, claiming a piece of readily available investment funds. But in peripheries, neoliberal economic rationality is more liable to entail brutal, dehumanizing efficiencies—the rampant overcrowding of apartment towers, buses, schools, hospitals, parks, and more. There too, movements of poor are effectively pursuing democratic, gray ecologies. But the suburban terrain is distinctive and in many cases more challenging (Cohen 2014; Charmes and Keil 2015; Keil 2013).

Nevertheless, housing movements in global cities' cores are taking vital first steps, with crucial implications for a warming world. As the radical urbanist Mike Davis argues, "the corner-stone of the low-carbon city . . . is the priority given to public affluence over private wealth" (Davis 2010, 43). Global cities are rich in financial resources and symbolic capital. Money and journalists accumulate there. All their downtowns are a stage, and the world is watching. For movements of the poor to take up the low-carbon cause would require few changes to those movements' objectives; it could, meanwhile, grow their alliances and broaden their messages' appeal. For these movements to achieve even a modest democratization of global city cores, in the process reducing greenhouse gas emissions, would be a major achievement. Then would come the next challenges—linking up with gray ecology struggles in expanding peripheries, building broader coalitions, and deepening the transformative project.

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