

Business Condominiums and urban insecurity in Brazil

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Abstract

In the middle of the 1990s, many business condominiums started to be built in the most important cities of Brazil, especially in São Paulo State, by real estate investments. In the Brazilian context, it is a new urban form that is growing; there are more than 100 developments in São Paulo State and others in major cities like Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba or Porto Alegre. Our research in São Paulo State shows how developers use the sense of urban insecurity to legitimate and commercialize their business condominiums. The sense of urban insecurity is used to promote a sort of security environments in Brazil, not only residential and shopping centers but also business condominiums. These developments result in fortified urban enclaves, whose role is only to increase private spaces, gated communities, segregation or else the urban sprawl without urban planning, because the city is in the hands of real estate investors who use the discourse of urban insecurity to their advantage. Nonetheless, such discourse is more marketing than reality.

Key words: new urban forms; business condominiums; urban insecurity; secure environments

Introduction

Business condominiums are real estate projects aimed at offering spaces for the placement of productive activities, especially industrial units and provision of logistic services. They are linked to the real estate circuit acting in Brazil within the last 20 years, which has diversified its presence beyond residential condominiums and shopping centers, spots that are already quite traditional in this circuit.

The objective of this paper is to discuss business condominiums as new urban spaces in current expansion in Brazil and to analyze how they rely on the discourse of urban insecurity as an influencing factor in the locational decision of companies. Interview data with real estate promoters and companies settled in business condominiums will be used. The focus is the metropolitan areas in the State of Sao Paulo, in which approximately 130 undertakings of this kind were investigated. Moreover, an updated mapping (with a wider view on the entire national territory) has been developed. This allows us to state some things regarding the Brazilian context as a whole.

Characterization of business condominiums

Business condominiums are projects of real estate origin. As such, they can be considered an amplification of the agents linked to the real estate circuit's strategies, since they translate into a new offer of spaces prepared exclusively to receive economic activities. In contrast to other classic forms of industrial agglomeration, which in Brazil are promoted predominantly by the public power (for instance: industrial districts, industrial parks or local industrial arrangements), business condominiums are products of private initiative as a result of the actions of various economic agents that work together, each as a part of the real estate circuit: promoters, constructors, real estate agents and administrators. As such, its main goal is obtaining land or real estate income, revealing the intentionality embodied in the process of production of space. Aerial photographs of two important business condominiums can be seen below (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1- Techno Park Campinas, enclosed allotment, aerial view. Available on: www.technopark.com.br. Date of access: December, 2014



Figure 2- Empresarial Parque Anhanguera, modular sheds, aerial view. Available on: www.retha.com.br Date of access: December, 2014

In order to accomplish their goal and become saleable and differentiated spaces, business condominiums (in relation to the business condos themselves) are adapted to a psychosphere¹⁹ created based on current discourses, such as the development and innovation means, sustainability, familiarity with nature and living/working in securitized spaces.

There is a strong correlation of business condominiums with variables of the contemporary period. This can be stated because elements of the current technical system are densely incorporated to the development to operationalize the discourses and conditions announced by their investors. According to M. Santos (2004 [1996]) the historical periods differ by the developed and applied techniques, and the resulting technical systems “[...] involve forms of producing power, goods and services, ways of relating men among them, forms of information, forms of discourse and interlocution” (2004 [1996]: 115). In this regard, a series of functionalities comes from the technical objects connected to the business condominiums. These are indicative of the association between real estate promoters’ actions, contemporary requirements of productive activity and, the discourses elaborated and disseminated by the marketing, creating a psychosphere of insecurity.

Many characteristics concern what is expected from the organizational and territorial conditions emerging with the productive restructuring started in the decade of 1970 (Benko, 1996). These functionalities, from the security apparatus and access control that reinforce its separateness from the neighborhood to a series of communicational objects that position the places globally, mediate the relationship between companies and the world as a potentiality.

The security apparatuses allows us to define business condominiums as enclosed spaces, comprising walls, gates, gratings, barriers, bulletproof cabins, arming of security personnel and even biometric scanning as well as surveillance tools, constituted by simple video cameras or even thermal cameras. Such functionalities have an essential importance for the

¹⁹ To M. Santos (2004 [1996]) psychosphere relates to the universe of ideas and the dimension in which the production of a sense takes place, providing rules to rationality or stimulating the imaginary. Psychosphere and technosphere must be understood complementarily and as the result of a society.

recognition and distinction of business condominiums, since access control and surveillance comprise one of the most popular slogans used by entrepreneurs and, as will be seen on the following topics, are attractive to companies.

An approach to urban insecurity

The discourse of urban insecurity has been used by real estate promoters for the making of enclosed spaces or “fortified urban enclaves”, as they are defined by Caldeira (2000). In their approach to processes in contemporary cities – the production of enclosed residential spaces – Sposito and Góes highlight that “[...] it is about a new dimension of reality, which can no longer be disregarded” (2013: 3). In analysing business condominiums, it is the surveillance functionalities and access control that allow us to classify them as enclosed spaces. Such functionalities are one of the main concerns of real estate promoters when developing their business condominiums and commercializing them.

The offering of a sense of security from outside the building complex through these modern and sophisticated functionalities may be the best example of one of the emerging characteristics within the context of current urbanization, for which there is a trend for the production of enclosed urban enclaves (Caldeira, 2000), which can be of many kinds (most commonly residential condominiums and shopping centers, but also corporate buildings or business condominiums):

They are physically demarcated and isolated by walls, gates, empty spaces and architectural details [...] Controlled by armed guards and security systems, which impose rules of inclusion and exclusion. They are flexible: due to their size, the new communication technologies, work organization and security systems, they are autonomous spaces, independent from the surroundings, which can be located practically anywhere (Caldeira, 2000: 258-259).

In the case of business condominiums, the installation of restaurants, hotels, stores, or gyms and other spaces of relaxation that signal rationality of a closed space independent of its surroundings can occur. That is why we can state that the real estate promoters aim to install all the equipment needed for everyday business, and workers who attend the venture.

Contradictorily, people who are outside, living nearby or commuting cannot enjoy these services. It is important to highlight these characteristics of the urbanization process triggered by business condominiums because they negatively affect the whole of social life. According to C. de Mattos: “[...]new forms of exclusion, segregation, fragmentation and slums, which have negatively affected the social life of most large urban agglomerations” (2006: 51).

In Brazil’s case, we can also point to a growing appeal of the media reinforcing this urban insecurity discourse, motivating it through news and violent scenes propagated everywhere by TV, satellites and internet that allow real-time contact with viewers. Sposito and Góes warn that these devices cause “[...] fear to circulate through repetition and sensationalism, with results as inversions, from which often the particular assumes the role of rule” (2013: 175).

Fear has worked as justification for the expressive growth of such enclosed spaces, whether residential, commercial or corporate (Caldeira, 2000), or even as new urban habitats as evinced by Sposito and Góes (2013). To Pedrazzini (2006), who compares urban violence in many parts of the world, it is an unrolling of the process of globalization itself and, likewise, would be a factor with universal explanatory power in the world today. Urban insecurity has gradually assumed an important position to explain urbanization:

This context raises, in societies with large disparities as the Brazilian one, the exaggerated valuation of new real estate products which are on the market, holders of control and surveillance systems and representative of the idea that it is possible some security in a world of imponderability (SPOSITO 2011: 140 - emphasis added).

Accordingly, we may ask what this implies in the urban fabric and the sociospatial setting. This phenomenon, whether of residential or business nature, implies the occurrence of a diffuse urbanization, a concept that has been worked in Brazil by Sposito (2005), whose characteristics include spatial fragmentation of the urban fabric causing a discontinuous urban form, followed by the phenomenon of spatial segregation, often motivated precisely by these new forms called urban habitats.

The enclosed space as a factor of locational decision-making

One of the evidences that the enclosed space of business condominiums becomes attractive to businesses is the active engagement of this condition as a factor in locational decision-making. To analyze their participation, we have applied questionnaires to representatives of companies settled in business condominiums that played some role in the locational selection process.

Choice factor	Scoring
Security for operating in a watched area	74
Easier access to the highway system	44
Proximity to Campinas (profile and clients)	25
Proximity to São Paulo (profile and clients)	21
Availability of ready structure	20
Search for an “innovation environment”	19
Means of communication offered by the condominium	13
Availability of human resources in the surrounding area	5
Price of favorable area	-
Proximity to Campinas (research and professional centers)	-
Proximity to São Paulo (research and professional centers)	-
Green area companionship in the condominium	-

Table 1- Techno Park Campinas – Importance of locational factor (by scoring²⁰)
2007

Our analysis begins with a specific business condominium, Techno Park Campinas, as the main case study. We interviewed all companies of this business condominium, reaching a general framework showing the location factors considered by them (Table 1).

The security offer outstripped the other factors such as access to transport routes and proximity to workforce. We can also add, as a way to connect locational decisions to the discourse of urban insecurity, that more companies moved to Techno Park Campinas in 2005 and 2006, exactly after the peak of urban violence in Campinas in the years of 2004 and 2005,

²⁰ Since on average two or three factors have been reported, it is assigned a maximum score (4) for when quality has been identified as the main point and the minimum score (1) for when the identified quality figured in up to fourth place in locational decision.

according to data from the State Secretariat of Public Security of São Paulo (2007).

In the case of Techno Park Campinas, the concern of its promoters with the operation of a gated and guarded space is emblematic. This can be evidenced by partnering with a private security company called Graber, to design the enterprise's sophisticated security system. This did not occur as a contracted service, but really as a partnership because Techno Park Campinas is one of the pioneer business condominiums in Brazil and the concern about surveillance and gating of the space was incorporated into the project from its initial conception.

During the final survey of 113 business condominiums in the State of São Paulo (Finatti, 2011) the proposed review of the location factors for companies in business condominiums was redone. The resulting Table 2 shows the cumulative score of 25 companies interviewed.

Choice factor	Scoring
Security and access control	74
Proximity to circulation axes	46
Divisão de gastos	16
Condominium infrastructures	14
Proximity to workforce	11
Innovation environment	1
Relationship with companies of the condominium	-

Table 2-. Locational factors of companies in business condominiums (by scoring²¹) 2011. Source: Elaborations of the author based on interviews with companies settled in business condominiums, 2011

It is noteworthy that an important pattern repeats itself: the two most important choice factors are security and access control, followed by proximity to circulation axes. Between the first two, once more security stands in first place, with the same 74 proportional points, almost twice as many as the second most important factor.

²¹ Since on average two or three factors were reported, it is assigned a maximum score (4) for when quality has been identified as the main point and the minimum score (1) for when the identified quality figured in up to fourth place in locational decision.

When opening the analysis to 113 other business condominiums, we can observe a similar pattern that appears to have become an inherent characteristic of business condos in Brazil. We can also expose some discourses of real estate developers who take their security systems as publicity, mottos of their enterprise, as shown in Table 3.

Project	Description	Source
San Jose Industrial Business Park	“This development was designed after a complex study of the needs of most small and medium businesses looking for a place to headquarters. The project has the quality of the first world, in a very prime location, with all the infrastructure ready [...] The development was fully designed so that you have broad space, greenery, lighting, cleanliness and safety.”	Institutional (Apr. 2009)
Barão de Mauá Industrial Condominium	“ACIBAM Condominium has complete infrastructure, with total area of approximately 1,150,000 square meters, 750,000 m ² of allotted area, including 400,000 m ² of circulation and preservation [...] passage of natural gas, 24-hour surveillance with concierge and hourly rounds [...] The companies comprising ACIBAM Condominium have their vision centered on integrated and sustainable development.”	Institutional (Jul. 2011)
Techno Park Campinas	“The design of Techno Park Campinas rests on three concepts that resulted in the success of this pioneering venture [...] Strategic location - Anhangüera Highway, 104 km / Modern integrated security system / Environment that encourages the development associated with sharing of services.”	Institutional (Jul. 2011)
Eldorado Industrial Business Center	“Eldorado Business and Industrial Center was an idea that emerged in 1999 to address the lack of supply of land for small industries and service providers in the region [...] It has all the infrastructure that a company needs and is located in a strategic area [...] Integrated security system and 24-hour monitoring. ”	Institutional (Jul. 2011)

Table 3- Discursive elements in the advertisements of business condominiums. Source: Elaborations of the author based on collection of advertisements of business condominiums, 2011

In the examples above, different approaches related to security systems of the projects fulfill the role of attracting businesses. The importance of such discourses is to show how these features are incorporated into business condominiums, given their importance in the real estate promoters' discourses and as a locational factor of effective influence.

It is necessary, finally, to highlight that state security could not be considered as a factor of asset location in business condominiums, because

companies already invest in their own security even outside of condominium spaces. However, we believe that the security systems of business condominiums are attractive because not uncommonly they are more sophisticated and complete than firms would possess in private and isolated locations.

The psychosphere of urban insecurity as a driving force

Once again using Techno Park Campinas as an example, Figure 1 below shows the delocalization sites of the companies within the urban fabric. We can clearly observe that the companies that migrated to the business condominiums were in the safest areas of the city.

However, during the surveys, these same companies stated that the main motivation for them to relocate to a business condominium had indeed been the offer of security. Out of 80 companies that were asked about the real robbery rate in their property, only one answered that was the case.

This situation means that, in fact, in the company's point of view enclosed spaces are an active factor in the locational decision-making of firms, but we can highlight that their influence results more significantly from a psycho sphere attached to what is believed to be a rise of urban insecurity than the real experience of such insecurity.

Delocalization of companies which moved to
Techno Park Campinas until 2007

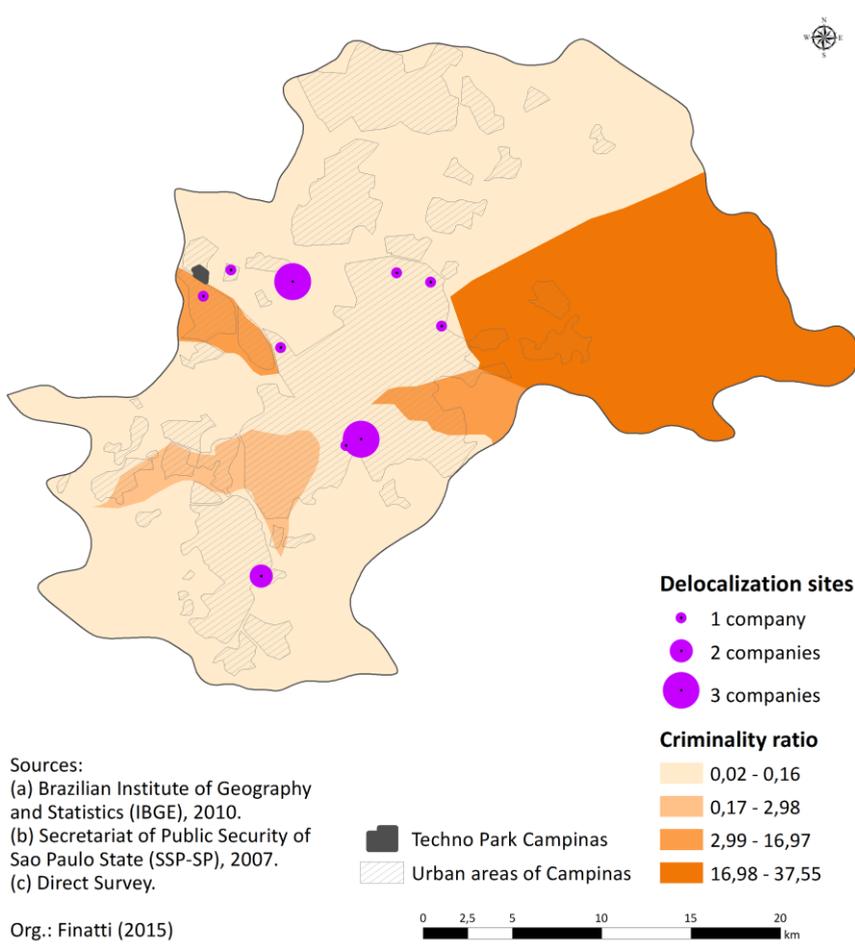


Figure 1

Obviously, we do not intend to use the map and its analysis as the final argument of this matter, since they would be insufficient. In general terms - which is shown also in the researches of Sposito and Góes (2013) on enclosed residential sites - but the fear generated by insecurity has been seriously taken into consideration even when the person or company has not experienced anything real.

Although there has been an increase of criminality (based on the

statistical rates of the Secretariat of Public Security), we can also verify that a well-elaborated discourse is able to shape locational actions and decisions. To M. Santos (2002), the “violence of information” would be one of the striking characteristics of the current period; it creates a new “enchantment of the world” in which discourse and rhetoric are the beginning and the end. Even though it has its bright side, such as allowing the knowledge of the planet and men in their intrinsic reality, the bad side is when we get totally convinced by it. The job of advertising, in charge of convincing people, becomes much more powerful and present once it has turned into something that anticipates production (Santos, 2002). This means that first the demand is produced, and only then the offer.

There is a strong relation between the world of news production and the world of production of things and norms. Advertising and media have today a relevant penetration in all activities. In the past, there was an ethical incompatibility between announcing and performing certain activities, such as in the medical or educational field. Nowadays everything is spread, and politics is largely subordinated to its rules [...] Events are manipulated before being delivered to the reader, listener or spectator, and that is also why in today’s world tales and myths are produced simultaneously (Santos, 2002, p.40).

The resulting psychosphere legitimates the production of new urban spaces such as business condominiums, at the same time as it impels locational redefinitions.

Conclusion

The business condominiums result in a certain specific urban form, with a distinctive spatial configuration regarding the incorporation and distribution of technical devices. In this paper, we highlighted the roles of monitoring and fragmentation of the outside space, with the aim of promoting a securitized environment.

Our analysis tried to show how the appeal to urban insecurity is linked to the actions of real estate developers, either analyzing the form itself (and its purposes) or the discourse of these developers. Moreover, we showed how

actively the psychosphere of urban insecurity participates in the relocation of companies. Insecurity, as a discourse spread by the media and used (or even stimulated) by real estate promoters, or even urban violence in fact - regardless of its intensity - are elements that, as has been highlighted by Sposito and Góes (2013) and directly verified in our research can no longer be denied within the interpretation of cities and the urban. The use of urban insecurity and the promotion of modern conditions to the productive and business activity give support for real estate promoters to amplify their work field. Currently, business condominiums are spreading to the most important state capitals of Brazil, in all regions of the country, both in total number and in territorial extension.

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