

Pedestrian walkability and accessibility as driver for cultural, economic and social



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Case Study: Ipanema/General Osório, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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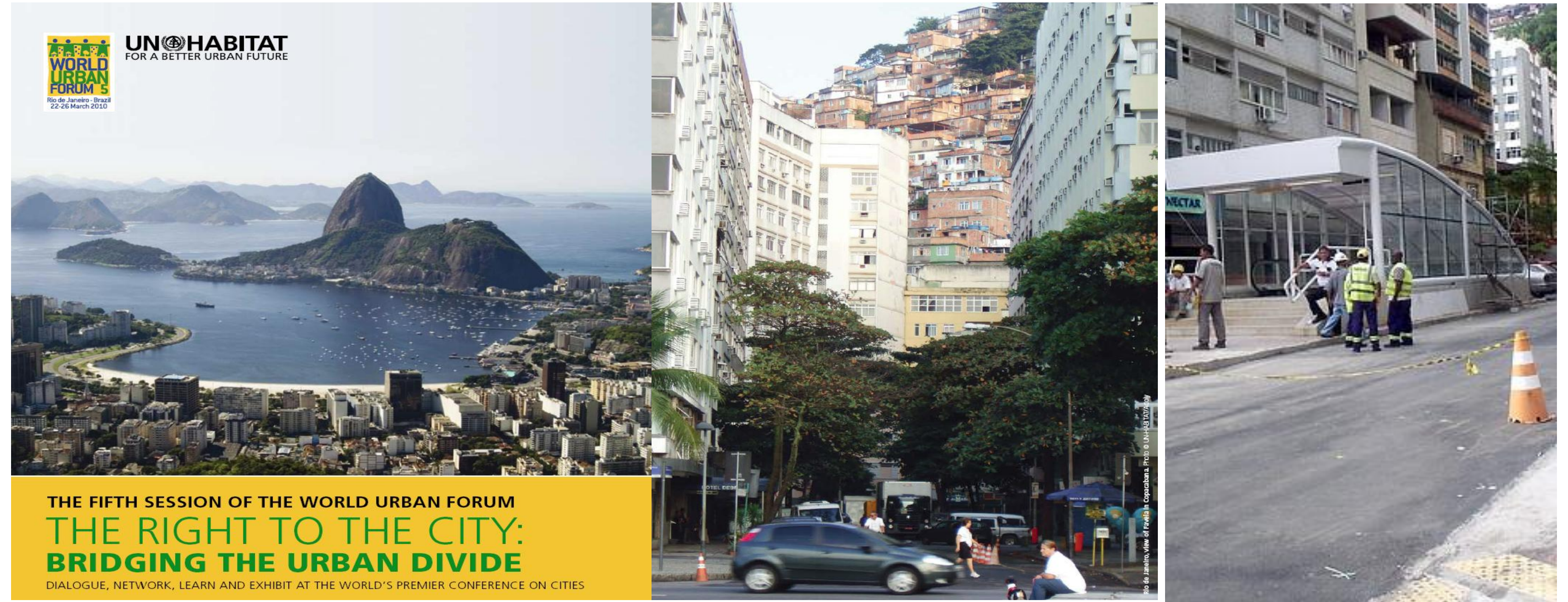
Currently, half of the world's population live in urbanized areas and this is expected to increase to two-thirds within the next half century. With this shift to more high density and urbanized environments, this research reviews how public policy and projects about pedestrian walkability and accessibility can successfully influence cultural, economic and social change.

Aim

Through the Ipanema/General Osório case study, this research explores how improved connectivity, access and walkability can redefine urban dynamics and social interactions. The observation and data collection conducted show how improved access to transportation systems and walkability have reduced social inequality to create a stronger economic, social and cultural city. This research work aims to not only demonstrate how walking environments contribute to renew the city's image and induce social interaction but to also bridge existing inequality gaps.

Hypothesis

Could we measure not only levels of services but also levels of enjoyment? Could we understand not only issues of circulation and accessibility but also topics of isolation and social engagement? This research touches these double questions by focusing not only on components but on relationships among these components, to find a middle ground away from object oriented solutions to improve the environments in which we live by focusing not only on the shapes (components/attractors) but also on the quotidian and eventual performances (relations/attractors).



Events

Activities

Questionnaires

Around 100 questionnaires conducted

Survey

Priority was given to streets adjacent to the square

Counts

Weekday pedestrian flows

Case Study

General Osório, a new subway station in Ipanema which can serve 80,000 passengers a day, is starting to transform the social interactions by providing direct connection between the formal and in the informal city. The project includes a 75-meter tall elevator connects the new station to the Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho favela with Ipanema. The project aspires to connect two physically and socio-economically divided communities. Among the many benefits of the station is to provide access to regional transportation, hotels in more affordable neighborhoods, regional bus routes and some of Rio's best-loved beaches.

Method

Mixed-methods research approaches were implemented. Employing both qualitative (questionnaires and ad-hoc performances, etc.) and quantitative (photo surveys, physical facts, video recording, etc.) were used to uncover the links between different dimensions of social interactions, as well as to construct a more comprehensive picture of the structures, events, and perceptions in the public and semi-public realm.



Although the case studies are not complete, the paper intends to measure how strategies of improving the proximity of public transportation, access across the physical environment, the addition of public facilities and spaces, and the implementation of cultural and educational programs, can contribute to reduce indicators of social inequality and become drivers for cultural, economic and social change. Preliminary results show how the perception of the place is changing with respect to the previous time (before the new subway connection was available), as well as the paradigmatic differences of perception between local and non local users.



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