

# **Framing the urban**

International urban design  
and planning experiences

Series of the CITERlab's works,  
Architecture Department, University of Ferrara

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# Framing the urban

International urban design  
and planning experiences

Department of Architecture,  
University of Ferrara

La collana, promossa dal laboratorio CITER, presenta esperienze internazionali di progettazione urbana e territoriale, quali workshop internazionali, tesi di laurea, ricerche e progetti di cooperazione. Le pubblicazioni proposte riguardano le pratiche della progettazione urbana con un'attenzione agli aspetti metodologici, alla problematizzazione di questioni inerenti la condizione della città contemporanea, nei suoi multiformi aspetti, le procedure di lettura e interpretazione delle dinamiche urbane, le modalità di rappresentazione delle strategie e dei progetti urbani.

Più in dettaglio le pubblicazioni presentate riguardano: la progettazione degli spazi pubblici; le relazioni tra urbanistica e paesaggio; gli strumenti e i progetti per la riqualificazione urbana; la progettazione urbanistica partecipata; la progettazione del paesaggio ed ambientale; lo studio della città e del territorio.

graphic project by Laura Abbruzzese

# DOWNTOWN SÃO PAULO

## REFLECTIONS OF AN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN LAB

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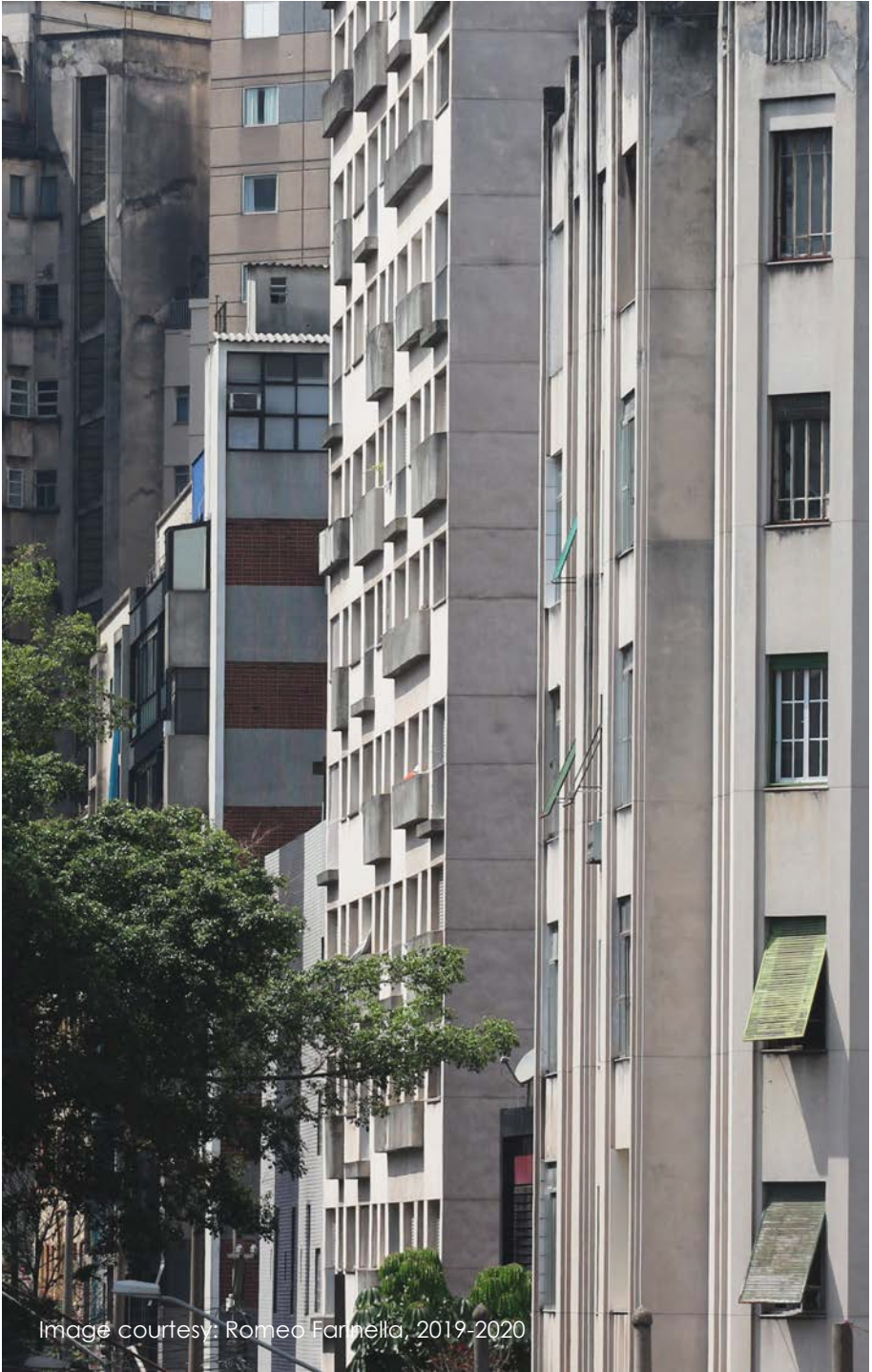


Image courtesy: Romeo Farnella, 2019-2020



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# Foreword

**Angelica Tanus Benatti Alvim:** Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the Mackenzie Presbyterian University, São Paulo.

**Alessandro Ippoliti:** Dean of the Department of Architecture at the University of Ferrara.

**Teaching, research, extension  
and internationalization:**  
*synergy in educating architects  
and urban planners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*  
Angelica Tanus Benatti Alvim

I am pleased to present the book *Downtown São Paulo*, organised by Romeo Farinella and Valter Caldana. It synthesizes the activities conducted under the cooperation term between the *Laboratório de Projetos e Políticas Públicas* of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of Mackenzie Presbyterian University (FAU-Mackenzie) and the *Laboratorio di progettazione urbana e territoriale CITER* at the University of Ferrara.

The book gathers the reflections developed by researchers, professors and students about the 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges of downtown São Paulo, the largest and most important Brazilian city. It expresses a collective work, which started just before the Covid-19 pandemic without being reduced by the adverse effects that social isolation imposed on the world. On the contrary, it was strengthened by understanding that education in architecture and urbanism should take advantage of opportunities and understand the historical and current conditions. Accordingly, it contributes to interfering with the spatial organization's dynamics and producing a socially transforming space in a material and immaterial way.

This work synthesizes a rich experience whose assumption is the integration of expertise, the exchange of knowledge between different levels of education and cultures through the synergy between teaching, research, extension and internationalization. Far from dealing with the countless problems of downtown São Paulo, the results of the proposed interventions show that the architecture and urbanism project must be part of a process in which research and dialogue with society may contribute to better face the com-

plexity of a reality in its multiple socio-spatial dimensions.

In a way, the chapters of this book also contribute to promote the didactic-pedagogical project of FAU-Mackenzie. It is based on the articulation between theoretical and practical learning and propositions through the constant interaction between professors and students from different levels of education, from undergraduate to post-graduate. The knowledge produced at the school through integrated workshops is proposed to face the complexity of issues of the contemporary city, understanding research, extension and internationalization articulated to teaching as essential requirements to form a professional committed to his social role in different realities.

This work indeed represents the FAU-Mackenzie of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This school asserts that training in Architecture and Urbanism should aim to prepare proactive professionals able to respond to social demands, with technical capacity and critical thinking to articulate transdisciplinary knowledge with teamwork, identify potential issues and develop innovative solutions in multiple contexts of uncertainty and rapid transformation.

Finally, experiences like this that integrate international partnerships involving students and professors from different schools, cultures and countries are fundamental to enhance the training of students committed to better, more equitable and fairer cities.

# The Challenges Raised by the Contemporary City

*Between Research and Teaching*

Alessandro Ippoliti

*Downtown São Paulo*, edited by Romeo Farinella and Valter Caldana, presents the results of the collaboration between the *Laboratorio di progettazione urbana e territoriale CITER* at the Università degli Studi di Ferrara in Italy, and the *Laboratório de Projetos e Políticas Públicas* at the Mackenzie Presbyterian University in São Paulo, Brazil. The book gathers the reflections developed by professors, researchers and students on the challenges faced by architecture in São Paulo, and the directions outlined by the megalopolis for its development. Using experiences in education, research and by exploring specific themes, the book focuses on two questions: on the one hand, the influence of international and often Euro-centric debate on the situation in São Paulo; on the other hand, the variables that impose increasingly more blurred and indefinite boundaries and the ever more uncertain fulcra used to identify the “centre” of São Paulo.

The *Framing the Urban* series is without a doubt the ideal editorial vehicle for promoting international experiences in research and teaching in the field of urban and spatial planning, precisely like that developed by the two research centres in the urban context of São Paulo.

Despite the clear definition of the topic of study, summarised here in well-articulated reflections and concrete urban design experiences in the city of São Paulo, I consider it important to emphasise the epistemological value of research and the international collaboration underlying it.

Hence it was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to write this short introduction and use this occasion to promote a methodological approach. An approach

that, beyond its professional relevance, may be a valid example of an effective strategy for internationalisation in the fields of university research and teaching.

The school of Architecture in Ferrara has always operated in this direction: proof is offered by the constant collaborations between the School's professors and other academic institutions in Europe and the rest of the world, as well as numerous relations developed as part of the Erasmus and Atlante programmes from which our students successfully benefit each year.

The study of the city of São Paulo also confirms the desire, manifest in high profile actions, such as this book, for a concrete educational model based on the synergy between research and teaching. This is a long-standing characteristic of the approach favoured by the School in Ferrara: teaching as a font of inspirations for and contributions to research, thanks primarily to the relationship with students and, of no lesser importance, the role of research in enriching course curricula. This process of reciprocal growth reinforces the School's identity and offers a strategy based on the particularity of the approach to the discipline of architecture, the centrality of determinant sectors of research and the possibility to become part not only of a school but of a true and proper scientific community.

In this fervent cultural context, the *Laboratorio di progettazione urbana e territoriale CITER* has represented an example of excellence for our School of Architecture and the entire Università degli Studi di Ferrara for many years. This has been made possible by research and teaching that has consistently explored themes of urban renewal, the scale of the city, perspectives for its containment and reorganisation. These themes are linked to sustainable mobility and reuse, the relationship between urbanisation and nature in order to contribute to the construction of a new urban landscape. Finally, the contribution that urban planning and the design of the city can make to improving conditions of health for the urban population and reducing social inequalities.

*Downtown São Paulo* presents the most recent critical reflections developed by this international study group on the theme of the megalopolis and its pressing questions. It fulfils the objective of proposing a collection of theoretical and practical experiences necessary for effectively confronting the challenges raised by the contemporary city. The interaction between lines of research and teaching experiences constitutes the most effective methodological approach for providing the correct keys of interpretation and the latest critical considerations.









# Between two worlds

Image courtesy: Romeo Farinella, 2019-2020



# Shared cultural traditions and experimentations between Europe and Latin America

Romeo Farinella

## /. Introduction

It's not easy to talk about a metropolis like São Paulo and a country like Brazil, of its architecture and urban planning, if you don't know each of them well and haven't studied them thoroughly. The risk is to repeat reflections and aspects already deepened by those who know them and have investigated them in depth. But these reflections open a book that reports a shared experience that has seen Brazilian and Italian students and professors questioning the urban redevelopment of the first metropolis of Brazil, associated with joint reflections on similar Italian and European experiences. What can the starting points that unite two groups and that begin from experiences lived in such different urban realities be? Undoubtedly, the fact that in the world today, cities share problems and challenges that bind them beyond local traditions and dynamics, for example, the problems generated by ongoing climate change. A second aspect concerns the European matrix of cities in the New World. European colonization, then subsequently immigration, have generated cultural and social syncretism that we find in the structure of cities, the architecture, and in daily life, with linguistic blends and social practices. For an urban planner, cities are organisms made up of spaces, places and architecture, and we are used to identifying them according to cultural customs that lead us to associate them with particular spatial forms, functions, and activities related to our experiences.

The concepts of 'square', 'street', and 'public space' are emblematic in this regard. But cities and socio-economic

contexts are not the same throughout the world and often the places that we call with the same terms take on different spatial and social connotations. Although Brazilian cities are of European origin, the relationship that is established today between the street and the square in central areas is very different from European realities. The emptiness of the historical central areas of South American cities is an objective fact: these spaces are intensely used during the day for commercial activities but are empty and dangerous in the evening; this is not the case for the historic European public spaces that continue to be both residential and commercial, despite great difficulty. A striking example of social or private use of public space is found in the utilization of the beach. The public space that most identifies Rio de Janeiro is certainly the beach, which everyone can use outside of any form of privatization, unlike in Italy where state concessions have privatized these public spaces. The access and the right to the sea is illegally denied in many Italian seaside resorts as the beach is still state property. The generalization of these spatial concepts and their local interpretation are amongst the most interesting aspects of the comparative study of cities.

There are so many things that Brazil, Europe, and Italy have in common, which have their beginning in Portuguese colonization and the slave trade from Africa. Over time, other communities have taken root, including European and Asian, to where today, São Paulo is the largest 'Japanese city' outside of Japan. Concerning Italy, the most relevant aspect to be mentioned involves the 1.4 million Italian immigrants in the city, shaping the largest metropolis of the country. The importance of architects of Italian origin in the construction of São Paulo and other cities of the country is relevant, while for urban planning, the role of French culture is certainly to be sought out. This statement seems to diminish the role played by the Portuguese colonizers in the construction of the cities of the country, but referring to the concept of 'urban planning', the reflection is limited to the