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**MEGA PROJECTS AND EXPULSION POLICIES:  
VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN  
FORTALEZA, BRAZIL**

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**MEGA PROJECTS AND EXPULSION POLICIES:****Violations of the right to the city in Fortaleza, Brazil.**

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**ABSTRACT**

In the twentieth century Fortaleza went through an intense process of disoriented occupation, becoming one of the most dense and unequal cities in Brazil. For its characteristic as a touristic city, reinforced by the arrival of the World's Cup 2014, this town became a target for the implantation of mega projects, marked by the exclusion of the popular participation and by the violation of rights of the poorest population. This work intends to analyze two relevant cases. The first one is about the light rail vehicle, the spotlight of a package to improve urban mobility in the World Cup. This new equipment should link the hotel sector to an intermodal terminal next to the football stadium, taking advantage of an old freight train rail. However, this project imposes the expulsion of about 2000 families living in communities located in the neighborhoods where the rail passes through, which will have their land financially valued with the new venture. The alternative to the resettlement is the second study case. The Residencial Cidade Jardim, was built up to receive only the lower income families, having in its first stage, about 20.000 people distributed in 5.536 apartments, each one with the same 48m<sup>2</sup> floor plan, in a peripheral area city borders. The research points up that in the mega events, the implantation of huge projects leads to the disrespect of the laws, repeating the old practices of exclusion dissociated from the actual urban planning, denying the poorest people right to the city and reinforcing the real estate market.

**KEYWORDS:** Right to the City, Mega Projects, World's Cup, Expulsion, Fortaleza.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Fortaleza is the fifth biggest Brazilian city in population<sup>1</sup> and presents enormous social disparities, comprising more than 600 favelas as well a housing deficit of more than 100.000 units, according to governmental databases. For being a touristic city in a country that used to call the world's attention for its economic development and for receiving mega events, like the World Cup 2014, Fortaleza receives a lot of investments that accentuates its territorial conflicts, where many times the private interests are prioritized upon the collective ones. Therefore, over the past years, the impacts caused by big interventions in the city are under investigation by the Laboratory of Studies in Housing(LEHab)<sup>2</sup> of the Federal University of Ceará. The action-research done by LEHab is linked to a greater research process, performed in a national network<sup>3</sup>, considering the following thematic: The predominance of the project over the process of planning, the dissociation between the urban and housing policies, the transformation of the social movements and the growing of the involuntary segregation of the poor communities.

The objective of this work is to investigate how the big projects made by the state, can interfere the urban planning process, promoting displacement and naturalizing the expulsion of the poorest population to peripheral areas, compromising their right to the city, as it is understood by Harvey(2008), where the society should have the possibility to participate in the decisive processes, changing the city as they change themselves, taking advantage of an urban space that is built according to their demands and not to the ones of the financial capital. Two cases studies were developed: the first one is the light rail vehicle(LRV); the second one discusses a giant housing complex constructed in its first stage for more than 5 thousands of families.

The LRV corresponds to the main urban mobility project for the World Cup 2014 which implantation process has started since 2012, being characterized by the lack of dialog with the impacted communities and the denial of the rights of the population who have occupied the sides of its path. However, the project was not concluded for the event and its contract was cancelled in 2014. Furthermore, only after different hirings, its construction was reinitiated in March 2016<sup>4</sup>, and the experimental operations should begin in December of the same year.

The benefits of a new public transportation won't reach the poorest population placed nearby, because the plan imposes the displacement of many of those communities that are in central and rich neighborhoods, in order to value even more that part of the city. This population will be reallocated in a huge housing complex named Cidade-Jardim, intended exclusively to the lowest-income families, without mixing the social-economic levels. It will

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<sup>1</sup> All population numbers were took from the database of the Brazilian's Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE*) published in 01/07/2015.

<sup>2</sup> Author's translation for *Laboratório de Estudos em Habitação (LEHab)*.

<sup>3</sup> The network is composed by research groups based in Fortaleza, Belo Horizonte, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and it is funded by CNPq, a public organ, and by the Ford Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> According to the news published in local jornal in 03/03/2016. Access by <http://goo.gl/yHG51t> in 15/04/2016.



receive about 20.000 people and it is located in a peripheral area, exactly in the limits of the city.

A historical study of Fortaleza's urban space production was made as a introductory part of this article to better understand its current urban structure and the context where the new projects were placed. Afterwards, to evaluate the construction some methodological procedures are adopted such as: the analysis of the interviews accomplished by LEHab with members of the public administration, from the companies involved and from the communities affected in order to understand the role of each agent in the process; the analysis of the urban laws to verify if the projects fit in the established standards; the elaboration of maps using Geographic Information System technology which are fundamental to comprehend the urban insertion of the new equipments; and the participation in public audiences and municipal councils.

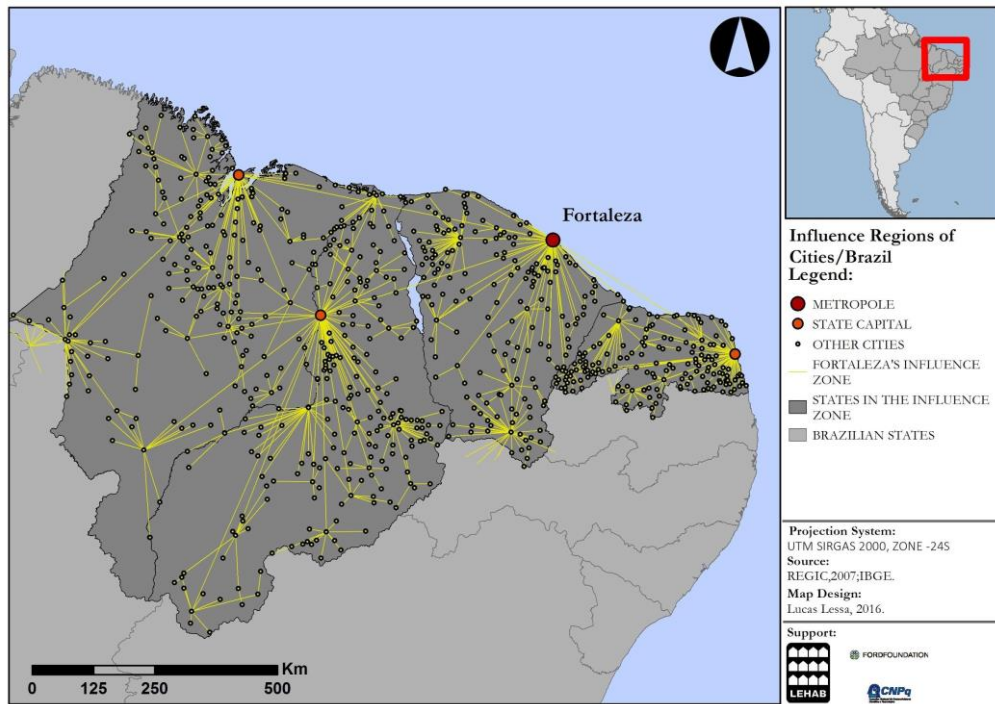
## **2. FORTALEZA IN BRAZIL AND ITS URBAN STRUCTURE**

According to the last study about the influence regions of the cities (Figure 1)<sup>5</sup>, which establishes an hierarchy and several links among the Brazilian urban network, Fortaleza has the third biggest influence region of the country in population terms, with more than 20 million inhabitants (11,5% of the total population), distributed in 786 cities in 4 states. It is located in the northeast of Brazil, the second more populated region among the five of the country, which presents the biggest number of towns with low a human development Index<sup>6</sup>. The metropolitan region of Fortaleza is the fifth brazilian metropole in demographic terms with almost 4 million inhabitants. Considering only the city, its population counts over 2,5 million residents, concentrating approximately 30% of the state's population, being also considered the most dense capital of state in Brazil. To better understand how it came to that context, an historical study is needed to comprehend the actual urban situation.

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<sup>5</sup> Author's translation to *Regiões de Influências das Cidades*, made by IBGE in 2007.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil of 2013 (*Atlas do Desenvolvimento Humano no Brasil de 2013*) made by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (*Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada - IPEA*).



**Figure 1:** Influence Regions of Cities.

**Source:** IGBE, map by Lucas Lessa.

Costa and Amora(2015) explain that in 1920, the city began to show considerable numbers in the population growth rate, in a period where the economy of the region was based in the agriculture sector. This can be explained by two facts: firstly, the growth of the importance of the city as an exportation point for its strategic geographical location, in relation to the northern countries, secondly due to the drought in the villages in the countryside of the state, which motivated the poorest population to migrate to the capital, seeking better life conditions. In the 1950's, the population growth rate has come to register 90,5% of increase in the number of inhabitants. It all generated a disordered expansion of the city, leading the majority of the excluded population to live illegally in favelas under precarious conditions.

In 1970, an intense industrialization process of the city has begun, linked to the productive reorganization of the sector. Therefore, the industrial growth that was concentrated next to the railways and *Mucuripe's* Port was transferred to the southwestern periphery (The industrial district of *Maracanaú*) and to the logistic corridors in the southeast of the metropolitan region.

At the southwestern direction the industrialization was followed by the construction of big housing complexes built up by public policies during the Brazilian military dictatorship, promoting the conurbation in the west of Fortaleza and creating a growth axis linked to the displacement of the poorest from the center to the outskirts (Pequeno, 2015). Recently, the

expansion of the secondary sector was reinforced with the construction of the Port and Industrial Complex of *Pecém*, in the cities of *Caucaia* and *São Gonçalo do Amarante* placed westernwards of the metropolitan region.

Regarding to the commercial and services sector, the Center of Fortaleza still is the place with more offerings. However, other expansion axes were also developed, especially those linked to tourism, that begins to be seen as a growth engine to the economy of the region. According to Dantas (2015), this caused a change in the relationship of the city and the beach. According to this author, since the 1960's the beach areas began to be investment targets and the upper class population started to concentrate themselves in neighborhoods easternwards of Fortaleza's downtown. As a result, we have the verticalization of the eastern neighborhoods, and the displacement of second residences, to surrounding cities. It should be also remarked that in 1990's, there was an arrival of high local businessmen into the political power, creating infrastructure in the southeastern direction, where big shopping centers were built as centralities for wealthy people, boosting the real estate market (Pequeno, 2015).

This condition, joint with the recent intense economic growth that Brazil was going through in the first decade of the year 2000, attracts the construction industry companies from other states to come to Fortaleza and even local businessmen from other sectors started to invest in the real estate market as their main purpose (Rufino, 2015). The competitiveness of the dispute for vacant lands has forced people with low incomes to continue to live in precarious urban settlements. For a better understanding of the expansion of this problem, it is worthy to mention the first census of favelas in Fortaleza, made in 1973, that pointed out the existence of 81 favelas with more than 35 thousand families. But the last mapping from 2012, revealed a total of 619 irregular settlements, housing more than 220 thousand families<sup>7</sup>. All this territorialized inequality contributed to the election of Fortaleza as the thirteenth most unequal city according to the State of Cities in the World(2010/2011), a study made by the United Nations. However the Municipal and State's governments are more interested to promote public policies to expand business, showing the intentions to hide the image of a poor city and to sell it as a touristic paradise.

### **3. MEGA PROJECTS AND THE CITY OF EXCEPTION**

Since the beginning of the 2000's decade, there was a serie of legal advances towards the construction of fairer cities. Firstly, with the approval of the Federal Law of the Statute of the Cities<sup>8</sup> that regulates the right to housing established in the Constitution of 1988. After, there is the creation of the Ministry of the Cities in 2003, that came to promote the implementation of a national policy of urban development, associated to other sectorial policies such as housing, urban mobility and sanitation. As a action strategy for these policies, raises a movement for the review of the Municipal Master Plans.

In Fortaleza this process took about 7 years, and was characterized by the fight to ensure the popular participation guaranteed by law, despite the opposition of local technocrats.

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<sup>7</sup> The databases was made by the Foundation of Social Service of the Municipality in 1973, and by Local Plan for Social Housing (*Plano Local para Habitação de Interesse Social*) made by the municipality in 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Author's translation to Estatuto das Cidades, federal law number 10.257 of 2001.

Actors of different interests in the city's production were in that process which was closed with the approval of the Participative Master Plan of Fortaleza in 2009. Due to the influence of the real estate market agents, this Plan presents lots of advantage to the growth of the sector. Nevertheless, thanks to the community engagement especially of the urban social movements, there were also some advances to promote a fairest city, like the establishment of Special Zones of Social Interests. According to this urban tool, the municipality should promote land and urban regularization, bringing infrastructure to some selected precarious settlements and reserving to them urban voids to the construction of social housing.

Before the end of 2009, Fortaleza was announced as a host city of the World Cup, which brought many requirements to receive the event, creating an urgency to solve huge problems in a short period of time. Vainer (2015) compares this state of emergency to the "State of Exception", because the government ignored the existing laws and especially those ones that includes public transparency, and created exceptions in the urban planning laws on behalf of the international mega event, keeping the real estate market as a partner to solve quickly specific issues, leaving the society without information or power of decision about the ongoing processes, producing a city of exception.

This situation generated other mega projects, aside from the ones linked to the Cup, with the idea of boosting the tourism in Fortaleza, the most important projects are the urban renovations on the coastal areas, the Aquarium in Iracema's beach and the Ceará Center of Events.

The third biggest aquarium in the world, expected to be finished by 2015, would had a 150 million dollars loan from the Ex-Im Bank<sup>9</sup>, but due to the number of irregularities presented on its process, the equipment is not ready yet and the loan was cancelled. This venture shows a characteristic of gentrification of those urban actions made in the coast, and the lack of interest of the government to treat the favela's problems, considering that close to the Aquarium there is the community called *Poço da Draga* which recently completed 110 years of existence, however without no basic sanitation system.

The Ceará Center of Events, opened in 2012, was meant to be the biggest venture of this kind in Latin-America, accomplished to include Fortaleza in the international circuit of business tourism. It also tried to attract activities associated to the World Cup, such as the formation of the first phase groups to the World Cup, which ended up happening in an other city. Located in the southeastern region of the city, it is one more item to strengthen this urban growth axis marked by the presence of the real estate market.

Another project that promoted an increasing on land prices, was the renovation of the *Arena Castelão*, the city's stadium. Its surroundings went through widening of roads, a tunnel construction, and others modifications. Therefore a big infrastructure was created in an area where the flow intensity is limited to game days and to few entertainment events that happens in the stadium, that way, the big empty spaces in the neighborhood had their prices increased, benefiting the land owners.

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<sup>9</sup> According to the new published in Globo jornal in 27/07/2013. Access by <http://goo.gl/Jb4BFR> in 30/04/2016.



The Passengers Maritime Terminal should also be mentioned as important venture to the gentrification process of the coast. It is located next to the community *Serviluz*, a big favela placed between the two most known beaches of Fortaleza, which has been systematically threatened of expulsion by touristic projects. However, they were always stopped due to the brave popular resistance.

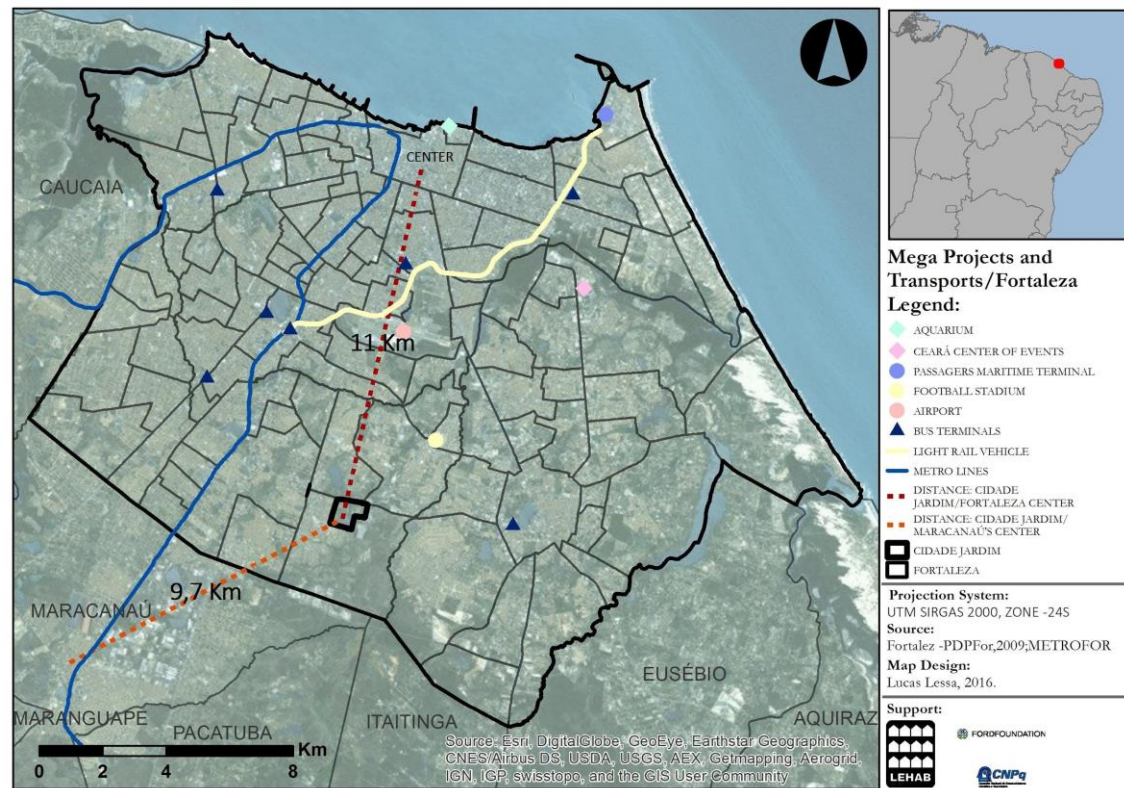
The *Arena Castelão*, the Passengers Maritime Terminal and the expansion of the International Airport of Fortaleza were all part of a venture package that received a public investment of more than 700 million<sup>10</sup> dollars only in Fortaleza. However, the greatest amount of this money was destined to a very deficient field of the city, the urban mobility.

Due to the high number of people living in peripheries and the concentration of jobs and services in the central neighborhoods, Fortaleza presents a huge demand for public transportation. There were made widening of roads, constructions of tunnels and viaducts and exclusive corridors for buses, but everything without following a bigger plan of urban mobility. The truth is that those constructions correspond to exceptional dynamics of the city, showing that they were thought specifically for the World Cup. But in this package the project of the Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) should be emphasized due to huge impacts that it is causing in Fortaleza.

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<sup>10</sup> According to the last balance of December 2014, published in the portal of the Brazil's World Cup the value is 1.565,6 millions reais, the local money, the conversion was made with dolar value to the 1th July 2014. Access by <http://goo.gl/10VD9G> in 21/05/2016.





**Figure 2:** Mega Projects and Transports.

**Source:** PDPFor 2009, METROFOR, map by Lucas Lessa.

#### 4. THE RAIL AND THE FORGOTTEN PERIPHERY

The LRV represents the consolidation of a project that comes from the 1990's and is transforming an old freight train rail laughed in 1942, that links the centrality of the ancient municipal district of *Parangaba* to *Mucuripe's* Harbour. At that time, the rail path was considered as a peripheral area of the city, but with the increasing number of migrants coming to Fortaleza since 1950, many communities occupied irregularly some empty lands on the rail sides. Later, with the city expansion to the East and South, these favelas became part of the rich zones and therefore targets of the real estate market (Pequeno, 2015).

The project was implemented in a exceptional situation, that excluded the popular participation of conception and implantation of the LRV, resulting in the organization and resistance of new social and insurgent movements. The opposition to the project brought some alternatives, such as the option of resettlement in a new housing complex, the Cidade Jardim, located in a peripheral area which doesn't have enough social equipments and urban services, compromising the access to the basics rights of the displaced families and highly densifying the outskirts of the city.

##### 4.1 Light Rail Vehicle, rights knocked out and popular resistance



First of all, it is relevant to show some technical features about LVR project pointed by Iacovini (2013). By researching national and international cases, the author demonstrates that some advantages that this modal usually presents will not be possible in Fortaleza, such as low pollution emission and reasonable integration with urban spaces, prioritizing the pedestrians. Fortaleza's LVR runs by using diesel and its route is not well suited to the existing neighborhoods, provoking a huge impact on the low-income families who have been removed from their houses and moved to peripheral lands. Another negative impact is that the railway should be closed by walls along its route. If made, it will frequently preclude inhabitants of the right to the mobility around the city block. In some places, such as in *Lagamar's* slum, the walls would block the access to the neighboring community where there are many public services such as hospitals and schools used by *Lagamar's* inhabitants.

Another of Iacovini's findings points out that the estimated demand of the LRV was oversized, because, comparing to other regions of the city, there are not many attractive points in the project's path, leaving the LRV with limited trips. In addition, it is quite clear that the intention of the project expressed on government's speeches is to link the Passengers Maritime Terminal to the hotel sector of the city and to the intermodal terminal of *Parangaba*, which gives a fast access to the International Airport and to the city's stadium. Thus confirms the hypothesis that its execution main goal is to benefit the tourists despite other urgencies for urban mobility of the local population, which were completely ignored by the government.

The project has 10 stations along its 12,7 kilometers of extension and the LEHab researchers have noticed some strange decisions in the beginning of the conception of the LRV. Next to the community *Lauro Vieira Chaves*, the new path is going to dodge from the old rail, making the new one pass almost over the houses. In other favela, *Aldaci Barbosa*, one of the stations would be placed over the residencial occupations despite the existence of an empty land just next to it that belongs to the municipality. This reveals an explicit aim to remove the population of this irregular settlements. Moreover, the inhabitants speeches shows the difficulty to access information, many of them were only aware of the project when their houses were being marked with signs at their facades by the social workers that visited their residences individually, without any informations, saying that their homes have to be demolished to give place to a project of public interest.

The giant impact of the LRV is revealed in the database published by the Federal Government in July 2014, that estimates a total of 2185 properties affected, among them, 1940 homes, which give to this project the second position in Brazil in terms of numbers of expulsion with 18% of the total number of houses affected by the World Cup's projects<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, in the beginning of the process, the unique alternative to the expropriations in Fortaleza was a compensatory payment, based only in the structure and the constructions materials of the houses, since most part don't have a legal register of land property. The legal urban tools that guarantee the land ownership after years of occupation for living were completely ignored and all this led to assessment of values below the legal

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<sup>11</sup> Database announced by the General Secretary of Republic by the time, Gilberto Carvalho, in 10/07/2014. Access by <http://goo.gl/MPoJ4b> in 17/05/2016.

market, denying the inhabitants the possibility of buying a new home in the surrounding areas, that were financially over valued with the announcement of the project.

This situation caused a high dissatisfaction in the communities and together with some engaged professionals and insurgent movements, they decided to compose the World Cup's Popular Committee, to fight against the human rights violations that the event brought. This popular resistance sent many reports to legal authorities which confirmed process irregularities. After that, some actions were taken to reduce the impacts, such as the change of the wall to a fence along the LRV, the opening of passages to pedestrians and changes along the rail and in the location of the stations, reducing the number of expulsions from 220 to 20 in *Lauro Vieira Chaves* and from 250 to 50 in *Aldaci Barbosa*, for example. It should be also highlighted the changes in the expropriation law, which was approved in December 2011 without any popular discussion, and was modified in 2012 establishing that beyond the compensation for the constructions, the dwellers that had their houses evaluated in less than 20.000 dollars<sup>12</sup> should get a new home given by the government, and those who have a higher compensation can get the same social house, paying an amount below the market price (Frota, 2015).

Despite these changes, the responses to the demands of the families are still disrespecting urbanistic laws, revealing the practice to give easy and fast solutions to the low-income population. An example of that is the local chosen to house the families, a big social housing complex that is 8 to 14 kilometers away from the affected communities, which violates a municipal law that establishes that in case of displacement for a public interest projects, the people have to be resettled in the same neighborhood. This displacement also ignores the existence of Special Zones of Social Interest in urban voids that was destined in the 2009's Master Plan for the construction of Social Housing. Only after hard and intense debates, few communities got the promise of the government to build social apartments in those marked empty lands, but until the beginning of 2016, none of those projects gave any sign of implementation.

#### **4.2 Cidade Jardim, the social housing without social services**

The Cidade Jardim complex came as a response of the State's government to a series of demands for housing: the families afflicted by the LRV, people that were occupying part of the Cidade Jardim's land since 2010 and other social movements that were putting the government under pressure for habitation solutions. The project was sponsored by the Program *Minha Casa Minha Vida* (PMCMV), a federal policy launched in 2009 with the objective to reduce the housing deficit and to move the financial market to retard the arrival of the world's economic crises in Brazil. However, what is noticed is that this program is producing mass housing complexes in peripheral areas where the lands are cheaper enough, leaving the central lands to the real estate market, promoting benefits to the real estate market and to land lords (Pequeno and Rosa, 2015).

The case of Cidade Jardim is an unique exemple. This huge settlement is shared into 5 contracts, all of then with the same company to build in a neighborhood in the border of

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<sup>12</sup> The law establishes the value of 40.000 reais, local money, and the conversion was made by the value of dolar in 28th July 2012, the day that the law was published.



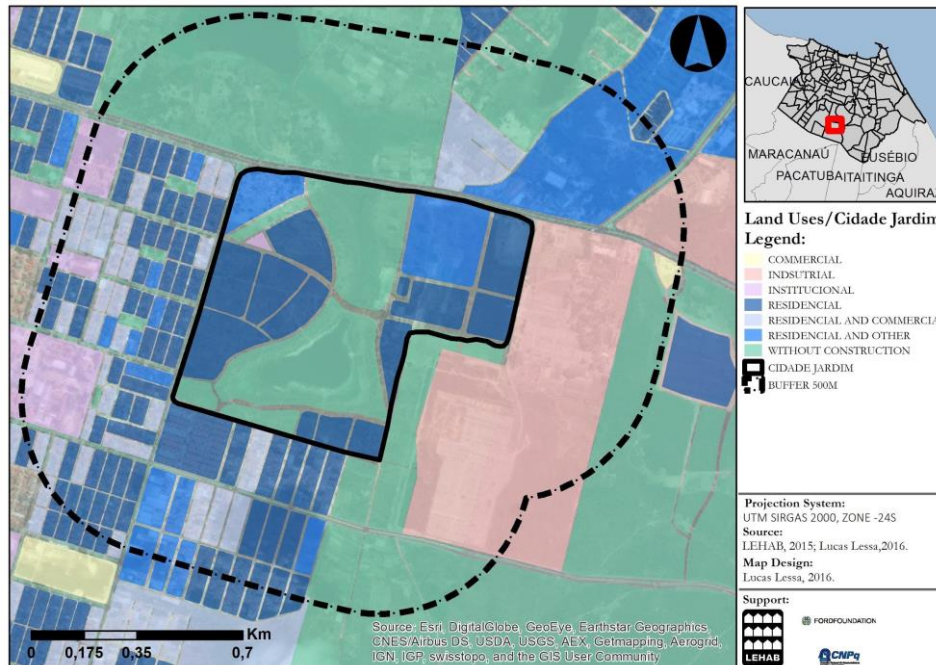
the city, in a big land that belongs to a known family, holder of many lands all over Fortaleza. The project comprises 5536 apartments grouped in blocks with 16 units each and divided into 4 floors, all of them destined exclusively to the lowest-income families, which regardless its size, are receiving the same 48m<sup>2</sup> apartment. In addition to the residences, some public equipments should have been built, but from June 2014 until May 2016, 2.200 apartments were delivered but only one health basic unity was built.

The urban insertion studies made by the LEHab team show that the housing complex is in an area defined in the 2009's Master Plan as a Zone of Restrict Occupation, that according to the law is "characterized by the sparse occupation, by the lack or absence of infrastructure and public equipments(...)"<sup>13</sup>. It is also clear that the Cidade Jardim is far away from economical central areas of the city, from the terminals of public transportation and especially away from the where the families would come from.

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<sup>13</sup> Passage of the 2009's Participative Master Plan. Municipal law number 062 published in 02/02/2009.

In a closer scale, the urban analysis shows that this residential complex is located in an area that is divided between occupied and empty lands. To the west there is a dense social



housing project, the José Walter built in 1970 in a time when there was no urban infrastructure in this zone. But today, this neighborhood is served by some health and educational equipments that are used by many people in the surroundings neighborhoods. However, with the arrival of more 20.000 people, these hospitals and schools should get overcrowded. There are also many empty lands, where the governors intend to build more quarters and blocks by the program MCMV, revealing a practice of urbanization, where firstly the poor people are pushed to the periphery and the urbanization and the social equipments will arrive only afterwards, consequently impacting their living conditions.

**Figure 3:** Mega Projects and Transports.

**Source:** PDPFor 2009, METROFOR, map by Lucas Lessa.

By following the social movements in Cidade Jardim, it was already possible to realize some deficiencies, like the difficulties with the public transportation. Until the beginning of this year, there was only a single bus line that goes through the complex, but in April 2016, two other existing lines were extended to serve the families, after the pressure of popular demand. The dwellers are also manifesting against the lack of comercial and services, many people that used to have small business, now have to adjust their own apartments to provide some profits for the family, losing internal space in a home that is already small. The constructive method of the buildings should be also mentioned, which is made by forms, concreting each apartment all at once, where all walls are structural walls, making it completely impossible to modify the construction according to the need of each owner.



Recently, with the expansion of the economic crises in Brazil, the investments in social housing and urbanizations of irregular settlements are menaced, leading to their reduction. There is no due date for the construction of the Cidade Jardim, but it seems to be almost over, making it the only housing option for all new projects that promote displacement in the city. At public audiences and meetings with the poor communities the government clearly shows their interests. In a last meeting, that happened on April 19th, with the social movements afflicted by the LRV, the governments agents said that the apartments that were promised to be built next to their communities didn't have any estimative of being done, increasing the pressure on the families that have been waiting for a long time to accept the removal to the Cidade Jardim. That exposes the lack of urban planning of this complex, that was oversized without knowing who was going to live there, creating a supply of apartments and revealing a construction policy of roofs and not homes, without the popular participation and not ensuring the access to education, health, culture and leisure, denying these people the right to the city. In fact, the lack of planning tackles not only this housing project, but the city as a whole, making evident the extreme dissociation among the urban and the housing policies.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Through the historical analysis, we can understand that Fortaleza has showed an abrupt demographic growth which, due to the state's incapacity and neglect, has contributed to the densification of the irregular settlements. When the public interventions finally took place, they have come to strengthen the social inequality, by the construction of peripheral housing complexes and the investments aiming the development of tourism, in the name of the construction of a productive city. Therefore, segregated spaces were created, where only a few of the whole population can enjoy the benefits and many suffer from the negligence.

We conclude that the advances promoted in the field of urban planning and the right to housing, through the establishment of a new legislation, has not been able to avoid the occurrence of new favelas, since the submission of the public power to the real estate market brings up the process of gentrification and exclusion of some social groups. Traditional forms of social exclusion keep being repeated, justified by the accomplishment of mega-projects, whose regulation end up violating the law and creating a housing policy separated from the urban planning, denying the right to the city to the poorest population and strengthening the real estate market, which brings the worsening of the territorial disputes.

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