# CONTENT

## INSIDE CIDADE DE DEUS: THE COUNTER NARRATIVE OF URBAN INFORMALITY

*"Then people from a number of favelas and other towns in the state of Rio de Janeiro came to inhabit the new neighborhood, which consisted of rows of white, pink and blue houses. On the other side of the left branch of the river, The Blocks were built: a complex of blocks of one- and two-bedroom apartments, some blocks with twenty others with forty apartments each, all five stories high. The red shades of beaten earth saw new feet in the hustle and bustle of life, in the stampede of a destiny to be fulfilled."*

*Paulo Lins, City of God* [1]

Popular literature and mass media has forever engraved the story of the neighborhood of Cidade de Deus—Rio de Janeiro's infamous "City of God"—in our collective memory of South American cities. Portrayed in the film *City of God*, an

1. Paulo Lins, *City of God*, trans. by Alison Entrekin (New York: Black Cat Publishers, 2006), 7.

adaptation of Paulo Lins' novel of the same name, the settlement is today synonymous with the movie's grim depiction of adolescents caught in a vicious circle of drug dealing and crime and residents caught between gangs and the police. The international success of the movie reinforced the stigma of living in the favelas, in parallel worlds under criminal control. Yet a closer look at the neighborhood shows that this image no longer accurately represents contemporary Cidade de Deus, which has changed dramatically since the movie first premiered in 2002.

The one-sided representation of Cidade de Deus as a ghetto is in line with the media's narration of living conditions experienced by underprivileged, subaltern classes. However, the "theory of subaltern urbanism" might be told differently if it were to concentrate on everyday life in low-income neighborhoods rather than sensational stories.[2] In 2011, the Master of Advanced Studies in Urban Design at the ETH Zurich launched a research initiative to study the

2. Ananya Roy describes in her essay "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism" how new narratives of the slum are created through mass media and tourism. While Roy highlights the importance of representing a segment of society long neglected in urban discourse, she remains critical of apocalyptic and dystopian counter narratives of the slum. Roy proposes instead to view the subaltern as an "agent of change" and the slum as a place of "vibrant and entrepreneurial urbansim." See: Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism" in *Informalize!*, eds. Marc Angélil and Rainer Hehl (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2011), 114–115.

layered history of Cidade de Deus and how it has changed since the neighborhood was wrestled from the control of drug gangs in 2009. Popular modifications of and extensions to the original settlement have revealed the transformative potential of informal practice; in contrast to previous dystopian narratives, the neighborhood's current condition is surprisingly positive. Did the media's narrow focus on crime overshadow Cidade de Deus' growth from a suburban commuter settlement into a lively, dense, and popular neighborhood, close to the new urban expansion zone of Barra da Tijuca and the 2016 Olympic Park?

The development of Cidade de Deus is not typical of most informal settlements. The government built the settlement in the 1960s to house residents from favelas demolished by the state. Standardized mass housing was adopted as the solution to illegal construction, squatting, and uncontrolled urban growth. But the program succeeded only in moving the problem of unregulated development from the center to the periphery of the city, where it was exacerbated by the remoteness of its new location. In order to compensate

for the project's inadequate housing conditions, residents gradually informalized the serial housing units. As an overcrowded favela, Cidade de Deus faced growing urban violence after Brazil's military regime folded. Struck hard by the economic downturn of the 1980s (the "lost decade") and beyond the scope of governmental control, Cidade de Deus soon became known as one of the most violent places in Rio if not in Brazil. However, what many city officials once considered a hopeless case has transformed with Brazil's economic rise and growing prominence on the world stage. Increasingly, residents from other favelas in Rio are choosing to move to Cidade de Deus, which is developing into a vibrant, local center with a booming economy and its own CDD currency. What's more, since Cidade de Deus' pacification in 2009, the positive impact of informal practice is no longer obscured by media coverage that focuses disproportionally on the disastrous consequences of exclusion and social neglect and not on everyday life in the neighborhood.

The present book, *Cidade de Deus: Working with Informalized Mass Housing in Brazil*, looks

at a phenomenon that challenges fixed categories of urban development. The hybridization of formal and informal practices serves as a starting point for considering a novel model of urban growth that is equally driven by bottom-up and top-down processes. Through research and project—based instruction, the MAS Urban Design program takes inspiration from the case study of Cidade de Deus: testing the performative potential of the model's innovative solutions; and proposing projects that will transform Cidade de Deus into an exemplary model for future urban development in Rio.

Inspired by self-organizing systems and daily life in informal neighborhoods, *Cidade de Deus* is a tribute to both the programmatic qualities and casual beauty of popular Brazilian architecture.

Rainer Hehl

The 2032 Marvelous City Award goes to:

# CIDADE DE DEUS!

*26 Destaques que fazem uma cidade melhor!*

## Destaque No 1:
## Desenvolvimento

CDD cresceu continuamente desde as casas unifamiliares foram construídos na década de 1960. O procedimento foi único, natural, não planejado, adaptativo e incremental.



**GOAL:**
– To grow flexible

**CATEGORY:**
– Growth

**DESCRIPTION:**
Cidade de Deus was built in 1960 by the Brazilian government in collaboration with the American army. Due to population growth and lack of available land, residents modified and extended their original houses. The landscape has changed a lot since it was first built. New interventions are taking place everyday, defining Cidade de Deus as a dynamic and popular place.

1960          2010          2020

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## Destaque No 17: Pavimento Permeável



Pavimento com peças de concreto que permitem que a vegetação cresça entre elas, usado em áreas que podem ser inundadas ou áreas que se tornam parques durante os períodos de seca.

Densidade 1: pavimento em concreto de 60 x 60 cm com abertura de 40 cm de diâmetro para áreas que inundam raramente.

Densidade 3: pavimento de concreto de 60 x 60 cm com abertura de 20 cm de diâmetro para áreas que inundam mensalmente.

**GOAL:**
– To prevent flooding; to pave exterior surfaces without sealing them.

**CATEGORY:**
– Construction / Infrastructure

**DESCRIPTION:**
A permeable paving system offers different degrees of permeability and material consumption. When applied to water basins, the gradient adjusts to different water speeds and durations of water presence. The tile is simple and yet it provides a variety of uses and surfaces. The tiles are similar to common pavers in terms of construction, available sizes, and applications, making this solution affordable for municipal projects.

Elemento arredondado que preenche a fuga e também serve como banco.

Densidade 2: pavimento de concreto de 60 x 60 cm com abertura de 30cm de diâmetro para áreas que inundam anualmente.

Elemento arredondado que preenche a abertura para áreas que inundam regularmente.