
Street vending and urban planning in Belo Horizonte/Brazil

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Résumé

The article aims to investigate the relationship between work and the (re)production of urban space, focusing on street vending in the central area of Belo Horizonte/Brazil. In the context of the restructuring of the global economy and its spatialities, the paper seeks to examine the relations between the financialisation of urban space production and the dispute of street vendors for accessing public space. In mid-2017, the municipal government began implementing a policy entitled "Simplified Urban Operation of the Productive Inclusion Plan for Street Vendors of the Hypercentre" ("*Operação Urbana Simplificada do Plano de Inclusão Produtiva de Camelôs do Hipercentro*"), which aimed at removing street vendors from public spaces in the central area of the city in order to relocate them to popular shopping malls. The policy employs instruments of the celebrated "City Statute" – a Brazilian federal law dedicated to urban policy approved in 2001 – that have been criticized for engendering the financialisation of urban space production. At the same time, the policy has disarticulated a vibrant informal economy that had been providing an important source of income for the urban poor. In opposition to this policy, a resistance movement of street workers was articulated with support from the local social movements for housing and other local organizations. From the analysis of this conflict, the proposed research intends to expose the impasse between the workers' resistance movement and the local government. The paper presents the analysis of data collected - interviews, documents and field notes - during four months of research carried out in the city of Belo Horizonte/Brazil between May and September 2018. First, it discusses the observed continuities and ruptures between the current policy and previous attempts of revitalising the central area of the city in the early 2000s. Secondly, it seeks to understand the discourses and strategies employed by the municipal government and the resistance movements to justify and denounce the policy, respectively. Finally, the analysis attempts to reveal different perceptions of urban space and its social function, focusing on the relationship between work, housing and planning. Based on the points raised, the paper aims to contribute to a holistic view of urban planning that goes beyond the divisions between production and reproduction, highlighting the need to think about the relationship between work and urban space.

Mots-Clés: informal work, street vending, financialisation, city statute, revitalisation

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