Sao Paulo – City of Contrast

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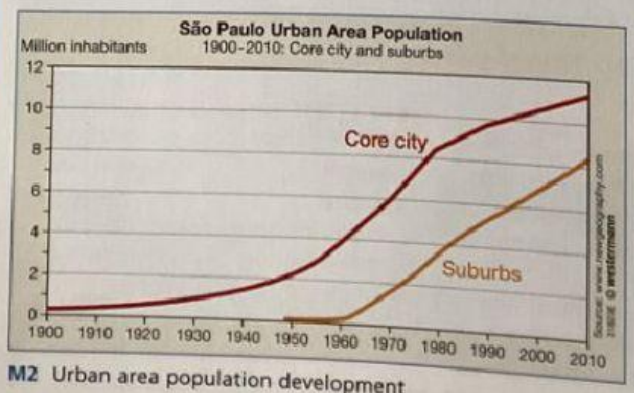
Greater São Paulo is the largest urban area in the Southern Hemisphere. It is one of the megacities in the world with about 20 million inhabitants. It is both the economic and financial heart of the country and the richest city in Brazil.

Nevertheless, São Paulo is also the city in Latin America with the highest number of people living in slums (M1, › pp. 160). Many such people try to earn some money in the informal sector, for example by cleaning windscreens at traffic lights. The crime rate has dropped in recent years but still remains relatively high.



M2 Urban area population development

Urban growth

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the demand for many workers in new industries has attracted many Brazilians from remote regions. Push factors such as poverty and poor education in many rural areas and the pull factors of São Paulo have made people migrate to the city. There, they hope to find a better life with a job, good education and a beautiful home. Thus the city has grown rapidly (M2).

Today São Paulo is the centre of Brazil's industrial development, hosting a number of important industries and manufacturers from all over the world, which provide many jobs. São Paulo's economy continues to grow as many firms recognise the city's locational advantages, such as its pleasant climate, a modern transport system and abundant workforce.

However, São Paulo's modern industries no longer need large numbers of unskilled workers. Therefore, many rural migrants do not find jobs and end up in overcrowded and insanitary slum areas, which in Brazil are called favelas.

1) Describe Sao Paulo's population development.

2) Which factors contributed to a rapid urban growth of the city in the 20th century?

3) Why is there no longer a great need of unskilled workers in the city?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Hi, Lucas. Can you tell us something about yourself and your family?

'I live in a favela on the outskirts of São Paulo. My dad sells T-shirts at the local market. My mum has a stand next to one of the roads and cuts people's hair. My older sisters are housemaids. They cook and clean for other people.'

Do you live in a house?

'Yes, but our house is small. There are only two rooms. One of the rooms is where we cook meals, eat and relax. The other room is where we all sleep.'

What is your neighbourhood like?

'Our neighbourhood is full of houses that people have made themselves or bought cheaply. Many people still have no electricity and they have to get their water from a nearby well. Some toilets are not connected to any drains, so sewage flows in ditches next to the streets. The smell is unpleasant and diseases can spread. Last year one of my school friends died from diarrhoea. We only have dirt tracks which are very narrow. Sometimes you can hear gunshots ringing out because of all the gangs.'

Do you go to school?

'Yes, I go to the school in the morning. There are not many books and pens at school. I like going to school. I can have a free meal there. My dad says I might have to stop going to school soon, so I can have a full-time job on the stall where I already work in the afternoons. We need all the money we can get.'

Hi, Gabriela. Can you tell us something about yourself and your family?

'I live with my parents. I have no brothers or sisters. My dad works as a manager of a factory. He has to work long hours. To avoid the traffic jams he takes the helicopter to get to work. My mum works as a lawyer in the city centre. We also have a maid, Fátima. I think of her as part of the family.'

Do you live in a house?

'No, we live in a flat which is very modern. There are three bedrooms. Attached to my room there is a bathroom, just for me. The flat also has a big kitchen, a dining room, a living area and a big balcony. Downstairs there is a garage for our cars and a swimming pool. We feel safe because we live in a gated community with a fence and a doorman who controls the electronically-operated gate.'

What is your neighbourhood like?

'We live quite close to the city centre! Everything we need is either there or in our neighbourhood. Sometimes I go to the cinema with my friends or to the shopping mall with my mum.'

Do you go to school?

'Yes, my school is great. I have a different book for each of the subjects and a cool outfit for playing games on the field. I have private guitar lessons and extra English lessons. When I finish school, I would like to go to university. I need to study hard because I want to be a doctor.'

Living conditions

	Lucas	Gabriela
Neighbourhood		
Housing conditions		
Parents' jobs		
School		
Free time activities		

LIVEWORKSHEETS