

**Cultura e Urbanismo: advertência de um urbanista de Baltimore aos
urbanistas brasileiros**

Charles B. Duff
Jonhs Hopkins University
Estados Unidos

Yesterday (31 / 03 / 2011) was my run-out to Detroit, an unenviable place. One of the capitals of the industrial world for 100 years, it is now shrinking and confused, due to crises in the automobile industry, which reminded me of what happened on a smaller scale in the shoe and leather industry in Vale dos Sinos / RS. The lead article in the morning paper of Detroit reported that 10,000 kids have left the city's schools in the past year. Another front-page story told of 5 undergraduates from a two-year college in another state who had "figured out what to do about Detroit" and were driving 700 miles to meet the Mayor and tell him what to do.

All, I submit, because the place is so ugly – which now will be difficult to change – although my mission (counseling about an art-school complex) is an effort in that direction. While it was rich, and could have made itself into something lovely and fun, it just ran endless wide streets out across a flat landscape and lined them with hundreds of thousands of stupid little houses. The neighborhoods are (or were) too crowded to look like nice suburbs and not dense enough to support the shops and bustle of a livable city. No one felt any loyalty to it, and one ethnic group after another has fled to the suburbs as soon as it got rich enough to buy the cars it was making. Now even blacks, the newest of Detroit's ethnic groups, are leaving at the rate of 25,000 a year, and Detroit may become the first industrial Nineveh.

I mention this because this morning's NY Times has a nice article about how the strength of the Brazilian economy is attracting hedge funds. The Times credits Brazil's "rich reserve of natural resources and growing middle class". It all sounds like America 100 years ago, the America that built Detroit. We didn't care about the future. We just

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built what we were in the habit of building, we liked it when it was new and shiny, and junked it when it got some mileage on it. So my heart goes out to you, the Cassandra of Brazilian urbanism - and to the great-grandchildren of your less prophetic neighbors.

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