

THE GATEWAY CITY CONUNDRUM:

HOW IS SÃO PAULO FARING IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBALISATION?

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Abstract:

This paper draws on advanced producer services data for banking, accountancy, law, advertising and consultancy from the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) research network for the years 2008 and 2010. The aim is to examine the changing position of São Paulo in the ranking of world cities at the time the financial crisis developed. Rossi & Taylor (2006, 2007), have argued that São Paulo is Brazil's 'gateway city' for global banking but how can we explain its rise from 21st to 14th top world financial centre during the crisis? Quantitative data suggest that the financial sector continues to be the main agent in São Paulo's increasing global network connectivity, but the qualitative research discussed here shows that the concept of a gateway city should not be interpreted simplistically. This paper demonstrates that real estate capital flows for the development of prime office space can affect the "physicality" of the gateway city, making it more or less attractive for business, and that complex relational patterns and politics at a regional level, can influence a city's domestic and global network ranking, particularly in an area that it is still trying to prove itself as an attractive and reliable destination for foreign investment.