

**Urban planning** – After decades of abandonment by local authorities, the São Paulo downtown area rises back to the top of the governmental agenda. Reversing falling demographics and attracting investment to leverage the economy of the area, which already boasts an excellent infra-structure, are some of the challenges to be met.

**Design** – After using imported patterns and models in its production lines for quite a long time, Brazil is beginning to acknowledge the quality of national design, a trend that is even thought to be contributing to a better positioning of the country's industrialized goods' exports.

**Biodiversity** – A world-scale phenomenon, not completely identified as yet, is causing the extinction or the sharp decline of entire populations of amphibians. Given their importance to the preservation of the environment's equilibrium, scientists all over the world have been working to discover the causes of the problem and measures to reverse them.

**Brazilian economy** – The "Simplifying Brazil" project is the result of a study undertaken by a team of economists for the purpose of identifying the hurdles impairing the country's growth and proposing roads that lead to development. Among the main obstacles surveyed are the Brazilian economy's extremely high transaction costs.

**Diplomacy** – After centuries turning its back on its continental neighbors, Brazil refocuses its foreign policy and prioritizes actions designed to stimulate regional economic blocs and political forums. Among the initiatives to that purpose, stand out the strengthening of the Southern Common Market (Mercosul) and the constitution of the South-American Community of Nations (Casa).

**History** – A number of popular revolts that took place in Brazil during the Empire period are, still today, treated in the Brazilian official historiography as *sertanejo* (Northeastern outback) banditism. This is what happens, for example, with the Balaiada, an armed movement that broke out as a reaction of those less favored against the oppression of the authorities.



**Culture** – In the early 1910s, the society and political figures of São Paulo City's Belle Époque were showered with criticisms by a comical and big-mouthed character known as Juó Bananére, who wrote his chronicles in a language that imitated the Italian immigrants' speech.



**Interview** – Writer, translator, journalist, and publicist, among the many other trades he took up, Hernani Donato tells us a little about his adventures. He talks of his childhood in São Paulo's countryside, of his books and how they became movies, and of his great obsession: archeological research.

**Memory** – This year marks the birth centennial of a highly controversial Brazilian public personality: Augusto Frederico Schmidt. A well-succeeded businessman, a lyric poet, an overzealous Catholic and a conservative yet gifted man who had the vision and political skill to influence President Juscelino Kubitschek, Schimdt stirred up the anger and the admiration of many people.

**Health** – A little known and incurable hereditary illness, fragile X syndrome mainly compromises intellectual development. Lack of information, by doctors too, makes it difficult to diagnose and treat the disease.

**Thematic panel** – Donna J. Hrinak was US Ambassador to Brazil and held diplomatic posts in several countries. With the experience and knowledge acquired while in Brasília, she spoke to the members of the Federação do Comércio do Estado de São Paulo's Council of Economy, Sociology and Politics on US–Brazil trade relations, focusing especially on the misunderstandings concerning the FTAA and farming subsidies.