

revista



ISSN 2179-0892

Volume 28 • n° 3 (2024)

e214916

Sarau das Mina in São Paulo: plots of a peripheral sociability¹

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How to cite this article: MARQUES, A. C. S.; TURRA NETO, N. Sarau das Mina in São Paulo: plots of a peripheral sociability. Geosp, v. 28, n. 3, e214916. 2024. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2179-0892.geosp.2024.214916en>

¹ This article is financially supported by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), under process no. 2021/05258-2. The work is also linked to two projects: a) “Youth and Multiple Territories: Sociocultural Differences in the Contexts of Medium-Sized Cities and Metropolises” (Call MCTIC/CNPq no. 28/2018, Process 427225/2018-3); and b) “Socio-spatial Fragmentation and Brazilian Urbanization: Scales, Vectors, Rhythms, and Forms,” funded by FAPESP as a Thematic Project. Approved by the Ethics Committee, CAAE: 56224722.5.0000.5402.



Sarau das Mina in São Paulo: plots of a peripheral sociability

ABSTRACT

Peripheral culture encompasses the artistic and cultural expressions emerging from Brazilian peripheries, which are shaped by social exclusion and stand in contrast to the 'center culture' normalized and practiced within spaces of power. This research centers on a feminist collective of peripheral culture in the southern area of São Paulo: Sarau das Mina. Our hypothesis suggests the emergence of a "shifting centrality" that connects peripheries directly, by passing the traditional center-periphery dynamic. Here, centrality is not shaped by static urban spaces offering products and services; instead, it comes alive through cultural events unfolding within specific timeframes. To conduct the research, we used webmetry on the collective's Facebook page and conducted interviews with its members, poets, and artists. By tracing the life paths and spaces of individuals and exploring the significance of this movement in their lives, we concluded that the networks of sociability that territorialize Sarau das Mina exist on the margins of the center, without establishing a relationship of cultural dependency with it.

Keywords: Sarau das Mina. São Paulo. Life courses. Centrality.

Sarau das Mina em São Paulo: tramas de uma sociabilidade periférica

RESUMO

A cultura periférica abrange manifestações artísticas e culturais que ocorrem nas periferias brasileiras, marcadas pela exclusão social, em oposição à "cultura de centro" normalizada e praticada nos espaços de poder. Esta pesquisa tem como foco uma coletiva feminina/feminista da cultura periférica na zona sul de São Paulo: Sarau das Mina. Nossa hipótese é que estamos diante da emergência de uma "centralidade cambiante", que conecta periferias, sem passar pela relação centro-periferia. Nesse caso, a centralidade não é produto de fixos ligados à oferta de produtos e serviços, mas em torno de eventos culturais com durações específicas. Para desenvolvermos a pesquisa, realizamos tanto webmetria na página do Facebook da coletiva, quanto entrevistas com suas membras, poetisas e artistas. Traçando as trajetórias de vida e espaço das pessoas e buscando os significados desse movimento para suas vidas, concluiu-se que as tramas de sociabilidade que territorializam o Sarau das Mina se dão à margem do centro e não estabelecem com este uma relação de dependência cultural.

Palavras-chave: Sarau das Mina. São Paulo. Cursos de vida. Centralidade.

Sarau das Mina en São Paulo: tramas de una sociabilidad periférica

RESUMEN

La cultura periférica engloba las manifestaciones artísticas y culturales que suceden en las periferias brasileñas, marcadas por la exclusión social, en oposición a la "cultura de centro" difundida en los espacios de poder. Esta investigación se centra en un colectivo femenino de cultura periférica de la zona sur de São Paulo: Sarau das Mina. Nuestra hipótesis es que estamos ante la emergencia de una "centralidad cambiante",

que conecta periferias, sin pasar por la relación centro-periferia. En este caso, la centralidad no es producto de factores fijos vinculados a la oferta de productos y servicios, sino en torno a acontecimientos culturales con duraciones específicas. Para desarrollar la investigación realizamos tanto cibermetría en la página de Facebook del colectivo, como entrevistas a sus miembros, poetas y artistas. Al rastrear las trayectorias de vida y los espacios de las personas y buscar los significados de este movimiento para sus vidas, concluimos que las redes de sociabilidad que territorializan Sarau das Mina tienen lugar en los márgenes del centro y no establecen con él una relación de dependencia cultural.

Palabras clave: Sarau das Mina. São Paulo. Cursos de vida. Centralidad.

INTRODUCTION

Sarau das Mina is a feminist² cultural collective that, during the time of the research (2021-2022), was held at a place called Território Samaúma, located in Parelheiros, at the southern edge of São Paulo's metropolis. Organized by women, the collective aims to create safe spaces where other women can express themselves and connect, fostering empowerment and solidarity.

Our research aimed to interpret the biographical and spatial trajectories of those involved in Sarau das Mina and to explore the conditions that enabled the collective's territorialization. We sought to identify how it generates a "shifting centrality" that connects peripheries directly, bypassing the traditional center-periphery dynamic. The centrality we seek to understand is shaped by cultural events rather than by the presence of commerce and services.

By "changing centrality," Sposito (2001) refers to one that emerges temporarily and cyclically within urban space, coexisting with fixed elements that attract flows and remain active. For the author, the fixed elements primarily refer to establishments that provide goods and services. For instance, the most dominant centrality in a city is typically found in its main downtown area during business hours. However, when night falls and commercial and service establishments close, this area, while maintaining its central status, loses its centrality. The flows that continue to move through the urban space are redirected and drawn to other fixed elements that extend their activities beyond business hours in different parts of the city.

Thus, centrality is determined by the attraction certain areas of the city exert, based on what is located and offered there. This type of centrality is tied to the city's rhythms, with its power of attraction reflecting the significance of the area and its activities, both on the scale of the city itself and within the broader urban network. In this sense, centrality shifts through urban space, while the areas themselves retain their status as central locations. The urban forms that create and reflect this temporality of the city can include, beyond the traditional downtown, *shopping malls* and nighttime leisure hubs (Magnani, 1992).

In this research, we expand the concept of "changing centrality" to explore the dynamics of a Sarau, recognizing that a centrality emerges through art and culture—an ability to draw flows of people across urban space, driven by cultural events, even when not anchored in

² We use the feminine noun because this is how the collective organizers identify the group. The term emphasizes that it is a collective organized by women, with gender markers intentionally embedded in their actions. The gender inflection in the term also serves as a political act, challenging the traditional male dominance in peripheral culture. Women-led collectives have destabilized this hegemony, addressing issues of gender and sexuality.

well-defined fixed elements. This centrality, much like the concept of “changing centrality,” has a specific duration within the city’s daily rhythms but operates monthly. In this sense, we take the “poetic freedom” to extend this concept from urban geography to include cultural events that occur across the city. These events have the power to attract people but are not always tied to specific urban forms.

Unfortunately, because the research was conducted during the pandemic, which restricted press conference activities and our ability to monitor them, it was challenging to engage with the public. This limited our capacity to gauge the scale of the centrality—whether it was neighborhood-level, southern zone, or citywide. Therefore, the argument we developed to support our initial hypothesis is grounded in interviews with members of the collective and artists who participate in the Sarau, as well as webmetry analysis of Sarau das Mina’s Facebook page.

The initial approach to the press conference began in 2021³ through the internet. In that period, events occurred remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the initial outreach, a meeting was organized to present the research and extend an invitation for participation.

In May 2022, after vaccination coverage had expanded, we were able to make two visits to Território Samaúma. The first visit was to participate in a coconut samba workshop, and the second was to attend a music, arts, and poetry gathering. Interviews⁴ were conducted with four young participants of the collective: Jessica, Yebora, Dani, and Rodrigo⁵. Jessica and Yebora are the organizers; Dani, while not an artist herself, is one of the poets; and Rodrigo, a trained artist, contributed to the collective’s activities, particularly through music. The interviews were semi-structured, guided by a script designed to explore the biographical trajectories of the participants, addressing their childhoods, transition into youth, and their current life stages. Given that biographical trajectories are inherently linked to both time and space, we aimed to explore the educational environments they navigated and the encounters they experienced, leading to the moment when their lives intersected and Sarau das Mina came into being, allowing it to establish itself in the southern zone of São Paulo.

This approach, which traces biographical trajectories and their connection to sociability networks resulting in youth cultural collectives, draws inspiration from the work of Turra Neto (2004, 2014). In his studies, the author examines how trans-territorial youth cultures like punk and hip-hop were rooted in cities within the interior of Paraná. Our objective here is to identify similarly the conditions that made these events possible and to reconstruct the process of territorialization by using, like the author, the memories of the young people who were central to these cultural formations. However, unlike the author, we will explore the possibilities of life course theory, as outlined below, to analyze biographical trajectories, turning points, and the connections between lives.

³ In 2021, the approved research project was titled “Youth Collectives in Presidente Prudente and São Paulo: The Case of Sarau das Mina,” conducted by Giovanna Camargo dos Santos, under the supervision of Professor Dr. Nécio Turra Neto.

⁴ The interviews were conducted by one of the authors in collaboration with researcher Giovanna Camargo dos Santos, except for the interview with Rodrigo, which she conducted alone as part of her undergraduate research project. All interviews took place via Google Meet.

⁵ With the interviewees’ consent, the names Jessica, Yebora, and Dani are real. At Rodrigo’s request, his name is a pseudonym. After drafting the text, the material was sent to the collaborators for review and feedback. Individual online meetings were then held, where they suggested changes, they deemed necessary, ensuring their approval before we submitted the article for publication. At this point, we received authorization to use the real names of three interviewees.

On the other hand, webmetry emerged as the most feasible methodology during the pandemic period to access and stay in contact with the collective. By tracking Sarau's activities through Facebook, it quickly became apparent that the traces of its journey through urban space were documented there, from its origins up to the time of our research. These traces could be mapped to reveal geography. Drawing inspiration from Bernardes (2020), we define webmetry as the collection and statistical processing of public data accessible through personal profiles and social media accounts, which reveal patterns of connections and interactions between subjects. Our work was conducted "manually," accessing each event post from 2015 to 2020, when the gatherings took place in different locations before settling in Território Samaúma. In this process, we recorded the location, date, number of confirmed and interested attendees, proposal, and comments. The primary outcome was a map illustrating the spaces initially occupied by Sarau das Mina.

In the following sections, we begin with a brief discussion of peripheral culture—a movement that encompasses peripheral saraus. We then introduce the Sarau das Mina collective and, finally, delve into the biographical and spatial journeys of the four young participants, exploring the possible rise of a "peripheral centrality" through their own perspectives on the spatial dynamics of peripheral culture in São Paulo's southern zone.

PERIPHERAL CULTURE IN THE SOUTHERN ZONE OF SÃO PAULO

São Paulo is a city of stark contrasts and deep inequalities, shaped by socio-spatial differentiation and segregation throughout its history, consistently favoring the upper-income strata (Caldeira, 2000; Alves, 2011; Sposati, 2001).

Although not uniform, the impoverished periphery of the southern zone is a product of these processes that structure inequality within urban space, involving classic urban agents, and especially the State, real estate developers, and excluded social groups (Corrêa, 1989). In its neighborhoods, some defining features are long distances from the traditional city center, a concentration of those excluded from the city's modernization, self-built housing, and limited access to full urban infrastructure and services (Almeida, 2018). To illustrate, the Parelheiros district is located about 40 km from Praça da Sé. According to Almeida (2018), 70% of the dwellings in the Parelheiros region are irregular and situated in Permanent Preservation Areas (PPAs), highlighting the socio-spatial inequalities where occupying protected areas is one of the few housing options available for the impoverished population. The southern zone is also often portrayed in the media for its high rates of violence and crime, feeding a negative perception of the area.

Amid this scenario of state neglect, socio-spatial segregation, and stigmatization, marginalized culture (Nascimento, 2005; 2011) emerges as a form of leisure, self-expression, community building, and social engagement. In this field, the southern zone assumes the most prominent position in the metropolis, with a broad and diverse cultural scene.

This area was also where Hip Hop culture found fertile ground for its consolidation in São Paulo during the 1990s, particularly through the influence of the group Racionais MCs. Later, saraus emerged, closely linked with peripheral literature. Events and collectives born from these local and global movements—Hip Hop, saraus, and other collectives like slam—form the fabric of peripheral culture. As D'Andrea (2022) explains, this culture is

not merely a way of life but an artistic production where those living on the city's margins take center stage, creating thriving cultural hubs within the peripheries.

The peripheral literature movement, which began in the 1990s, celebrates impoverished peripheries as spaces of cultural creation, opening opportunities for anyone to express themselves and challenging traditional notions of what is considered literary and what it means to be an artist (Eble; Lamar, 2015; Dalcastagnè, 2012). Composed of groups of socially and culturally marginalized writers, this movement gained national visibility in the early 2000s. Its main actors are people who share experiences in everyday life, who identify them with each other. It elevates the peripheral position and values elements associated with these spaces, such as language, forms of sociability, lifestyles, and music (Nascimento, 2005).

The southern zone's periphery became the center of this movement's growth, with initiatives like Sarau Cooperifa and Sarau do Binho, which paved the way for the creation of other saraus (Duarte, 2018). The movement developed outside the dominant cultural production and consumption circuits and has since spread across the city and beyond, establishing⁶ a São Paulo circuit of marginal poetry.

Today, these saraus are an integral part of a broader peripheral culture that has, for over 30 years, nurtured a "peripheral or marginal consciousness" among its participants, empowering them to reposition themselves within the city's social fabric. Being from the periphery is no longer reduced to a stigma; instead, it becomes a source of pride and a form of self-affirmation, both socially and spatially (D'Andrea, 2020).

Peripheral culture repositions not only the individuals from these areas but also the periphery itself. In Brazil, the social and geographical components of peripheries often coincide. Geographically, peripheries are located on the outskirts of urban centers, distant from services, cultural facilities, and main flows (Hiernaux; Lindón, 2004). Socially, they are associated with poverty, deprivation, violence, land irregularities, and informality (Mautner, 2015).

Through networks of sociability among young people, collaborations between collectives, and economic engagement, peripheral culture emphasizes the socio-cultural dimension of the periphery that extends beyond its geographical limits. There is a circuit of cultural production and exchange where young people immerse themselves, aiming to make art their primary means of livelihood. This circuit, and the networks that form it, highlight the claim of youth to their place in the city.

Duarte (2018) notes that the movement has significantly expanded, creating partnerships with NGOs, schools, bars, and community centers, forming a geographical and economic circuit of saraus. It involves the commercialization of artistic products and has even become a way of life. The movement has also benefitted from public programs that support cultural initiatives, such as the Cultural Initiatives Appreciation Program (VAI, in Portuguese) and the Cultural Action Program (PROAC, in Portuguese)⁷.

The number and influence of cultural collectives vary across the metropolis' peripheries, which show diversity even within the same geographical region. Districts like Capão Redondo,

⁶ Turra Neto and Alves (2022), in their study of the Slam collective Quilombo de Dandara in Presidente Prudente, highlight the spread of peripheral culture from the metropolis to the state's interior, mobilizing youth through the shared peripheral identity.

⁷ The VAI Program (Law No. 13,540), implemented in 2004 by the São Paulo Municipal Department of Culture, supports productions exclusively by young people from peripheral areas lacking cultural resources and infrastructure. PROAC (Law No. 12,628), implemented in 2006 by the State Department of Culture, supports exchanges, artistic promotion, research, training, cultural diversity, and the preservation and dissemination of the state's tangible and intangible heritage (Duarte, 2018).

Campo Limpo, and Grajaú have a more established, recognized, and diverse cultural scene, while areas like Parelheiros have fewer collectives and artistic activities. Recognizing this disparity, and the cultural gaps in Parelheiros, Sarau das Mina chose this area to establish a more permanent presence when the opportunity for territorialization arose.

SÃO PAULO'S SARAU DAS MINA

The context in which the Sarau das Mina collective was created resembles that of other marginalized cultural groups. As noted by Aderaldo and Raposo (2016), these groups are typically small, operate without a hierarchical structure, and are maintained informally, often lacking consistent funding. The individuals who form them share certain affinities and choose to organize themselves to carry out aesthetic and political interventions in their communities.

Founded in 2015 in the Grajaú district, the collective emerged from a group of feminist women originally part of a movement called Mulheres na Luta (Women in Struggle). After the group dissolved, Jessica conceived and organized what would become Sarau das Mina. Yebora joined in 2016 after meeting Jessica at Caminho Sagrado, a shamanic center in Parelheiros.

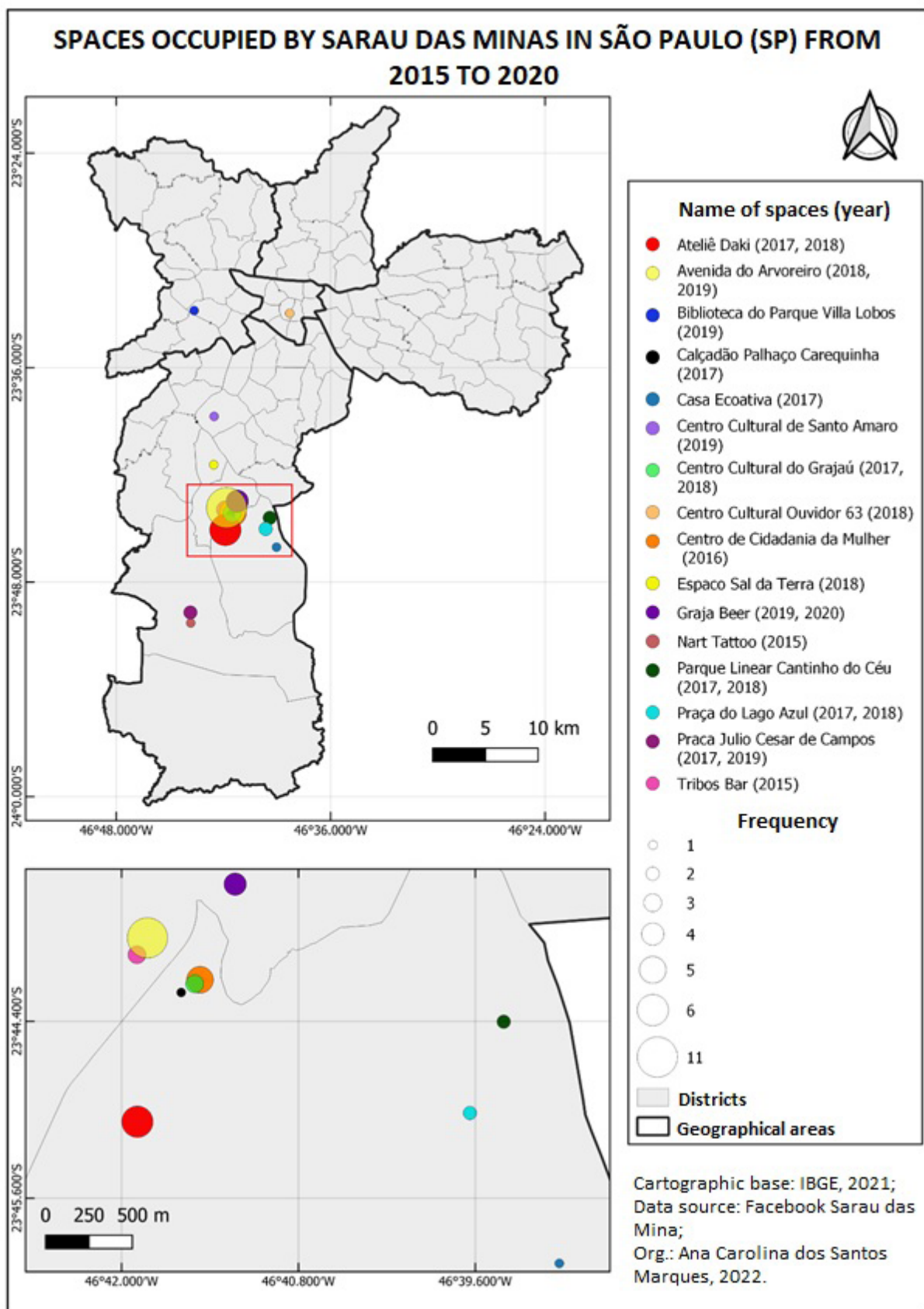
For Yebora, the motivation behind creating Sarau das Mina was, in her words,

[...] basically to have a safe space for women to express themselves. Of course, there is this questioning of patriarchy, sexism, and how we are treated, but I think that, first of all, we have to remember that this women's collective movement is nothing more than a way to inspire other women to do what they want to do [...] (Yebora, interview, July 15, 2021).

Yebora also highlights the lack of representation for women in male-led collectives and the reproduction of oppressive behaviors in those spaces. While there are some groups where women are heard, they tend to feel more supported and welcome in collectives organized by other women. LGBTQIAPN+ individuals also report feeling more comfortable in these women-led spaces.

Due to the lack of a permanent location and, as Jessica mentioned, the desire to reach different audiences, Sarau das Mina held events in various locations throughout the southern zone until 2020. Their activities extended beyond poetry recitals, including literary fairs, graffiti workshops, and the production of natural sanitary pads. They also partnered with other collectives, such as Casa Ecoativa and Teatro de Rua de Parelheiros. Map 1 illustrates the spatial distribution of the collective's activities during its itinerant phase, using data collected through webmetric analysis.

The first edition took place at Tribos Bar, in Cidade Dutra (2015), and the most frequently occupied locations were: Centro de Cidadania da Mulher (5 times), Ateliê Daki (6 times), and Avenida Arvoreiro (11 times). The Centro de Cidadania da Mulher in Grajaú was a strategic choice due to the collective's focus on gender, providing access to women in vulnerable situations. Ateliê Daki is a cultural space of Grajaú that offers various activities and has an audience adept at the poetry of Sarau. Avenida Arvoreiro, an important avenue in Cidade Dutra, hosts a public space known as Praça da Árvore.



Map 1 – Spatial Distribution of Sarau das Mina in São Paulo (SP) from 2015 to 2020.
 Elaborated by: Ana Carolina dos Santos Marques, 2022.

Most of the spaces occupied by Sarau das Mina from 2015 to 2020 were public or publicly-oriented cultural spaces. The timeline in Map 1 shows that, as the collective established itself, its activities expanded beyond the southern zone, reaching locations like Centro Ouvidor 63 in the city center (2018) and Biblioteca do Parque Villa Lobos in the west zone (2019). In the south, the districts of Santo Amaro, Socorro, and Parelheiros also hosted events by the collective.

The collective operated without any funding for years, limiting its activities. However, in 2020, with support from the VAI public grant, they had the opportunity to rent their own space—Território Samaúma—a long-held dream of the collective’s members⁸. Justifying the choice of Parelheiros, Jessica explained:

“Today, in Grajaú, we have a very strong artistic and cultural scene. So, we thought, ‘Well, maybe it’s time to go deeper.’ We considered Parelheiros, which is an area with little cultural activity. On the other hand, it’s a place with Indigenous communities. It’s a place with a powerful history! [...]”
(Jessica, interview, July 15, 2021).

The collective had already held editions of Sarau in Parelheiros in 2015, 2017, and 2019, and a portion of the audience who traveled to their events in other districts came from Parelheiros and Marsilac. The organizers were thus familiar with the cultural landscape of Parelheiros and recognized the need for a cultural space in the area.

“Going deeper” represents both a challenge and an opportunity. It is challenging because it meant leaving an area with a vibrant cultural scene, a loyal audience, and a network of collectives, to establish themselves in a space with few cultural resources. It also meant that the audience that had been attending Sarau since its inception would have to travel further to participate. However, it was also an opportunity to become a cultural reference point in Parelheiros and to attract a more diverse audience, opening new possibilities for artistic interventions.

Regarding the attendees of Território Samaúma, the organizers noted that most live in the southern zone, particularly in Parelheiros and Grajaú, with fewer people coming from further areas like Campo Limpo, Santo Amaro, and Guarulhos. They acknowledged a decline in their audience after establishing themselves in Território Samaúma but also observed better diversity, with an increase in high school students from the far south of the city.

Having a physical space allowed the collective to offer more workshops, including poetry creation, samba de coco, political education, traditional midwifery, urban arts, peripheral entrepreneurship, hula hoop and bambolê workshops, and forest agriculture. Sarau’s location also fostered workshops on ethnic and racial issues, some led by Indigenous people, valuing diverse knowledge systems. The collective collaborates with Indigenous communities in Parelheiros and conducts cultural interventions in schools, showcasing its educational dimension, where various forms of knowledge are shared through its activities.

⁸ It is crucial to highlight the importance of cultural grants in sustaining cultural collectives. Without funding, organizers must seek sponsorships and donations and often work in other occupations, reducing the time they can dedicate to cultural production, which also leads to a turnover of members. In 2023, unfortunately, Sarau das Mina did not receive any cultural funding, making it impossible to maintain Território Samaúma, and as a result, its actions returned to an itinerant format.

Thus, Sarau das Mina has transformed the peripheral context it inhabits. It represents more than just a space for people to express themselves through art; it fosters support networks, female empowerment, and the development of new projects. Its focus on gender shapes the topics discussed and educates participants about the realities faced by women living in the peripheries of São Paulo. It is within Sarau das Mina and Território Samaúma that diverse people meet and (re)construct their life paths and spatial narratives. The “shifting centrality” it promotes has the power to attract flows not only in terms of physical movement but also in connecting life stories, knowledge, and other lives, together generating new events. Like the collective itself, these events have the potential to intervene and reshape the contexts in which they territorialize. The three young women and the young man interviewed exemplify biographical paths that intersect, creating moments that generate flows throughout the city.

THE THREADS OF THE WEAVE: ENCOUNTERS AT SARAU DAS MINA

To understand how Sarau das Mina emerged and became rooted in Parelheiros, it is essential to follow the biographical paths of the individuals involved, tracing the encounters that wove together the collective’s narrative. While acknowledging that other biographical trajectories also contributed to this construction, the research focused on four young individuals who hold central positions within the network. Thus, it is the threads of these lives that we will trace.

Taking inspiration from Pais (2003), we approach life courses as a key methodological tool to explore the connections between biographical trajectories and socialization contexts, between individual lives and historical periods, and between the uniqueness of individuals and social structures, all which shape fields of action and create opportunities for new possibilities. As geographers, we recognize that these trajectories are not just temporal; they occur in space, link places, and establish territories. In this light, we view Sarau das Mina as an event woven from fields of possibilities formed by the meeting of individuals within their life courses, situated in a specific historical and geographical context.

The basic concepts within the life course perspective include cohort, transition, trajectories, life events, and turning points. Cohort refers to the historical periods that shape the biography of individuals at particular stages in their life course. Transition refers to the passage between life stages and changes in social status, without implying a staged or linear view of age. Trajectories are the unfolding of social subjects’ lives, encompassing multiple transitions, events, and turning points. Life events are significant occurrences that may or may not produce long-term effects on individuals’ lives. Finally, turning points refer to major events that cause lasting changes in life courses (Hutchison, 2011).

Among the key themes defined by Hutchison (2011), we highlight three: a) The relationship between life and historical time, which helps us understand the effects of shared formative experiences during youth. b) “*Linked lives*,” focusing on the impact of intergenerational, friendship, and neighborhood relationships on individual lives. c) Agency, which emphasizes individual choices within the structural constraints of a given time and space. The theme of agency allows us to highlight the socioeconomic inequalities and

“cumulative disadvantages” that shape family and life trajectories, as we will demonstrate in the stories of the young women in this research.

Grounded in the life course perspective—still underexplored in Brazilian geography—we trace the threads of individual lives, connecting through encounters with sarau culture in São Paulo’s peripheries. These encounters helped weave Sarau das Mina into existence, establishing it as a significant event that took root in Parelheiros and influenced other life paths, particularly those of young people. The collective⁹, in turn, forms another “shifting centrality” linked to peripheral culture in the metropolis.

The four biographical trajectories we trace here, though distinct, share common threads in both their individuality and the broader context in which they were formed, reflecting the convergence of formative experiences as they transitioned into youth and engaged more fully with the urban environment beyond their homes.

All four are young people from São Paulo’s peripheries. Yebora is from the north zone, while Jessica and Dani are from the south, specifically Grajaú and Parelheiros. Rodrigo, despite living in Mooca—a neighborhood undergoing gentrification—resides in a home secured through his parents’ involvement in a social movement. Apart from Yebora, whose origin is unknown, the others are descendants of Northeastern immigrants with Black and Indigenous ancestry. And ancestry, in turn, finds a positive space through their experiences in the sarau.

These family and housing backgrounds link to the work of Telles (2006), Aderaldo and Raposo (2016), and D’Andrea (2020; 2022), which discuss the reconfiguration of São Paulo’s peripheries and the experiences of its inhabitants, especially a new generation entering “a world already overturned”—a labor market marked by deregulation and unemployment, but also by public policies supporting income transfer, university access, and the spread of cultural movements. These movements, led by youth collectives around poetry sarau, rhyme battles, and slams, have been successful in securing public funding through cultural grants and in promoting a new “peripheral consciousness.”

This historical and geographical context sets our interlocutors’ experiences of city and youth apart from those of their parents, creating the conditions that enabled the convergence of their spatial and life trajectories at Território Samaúma, around Sarau das Mina. These intertwined lives form a context of regulation, identity, and existential support that sustains them in the world. Lives that intertwine to create a context of regulation, identity, and existential support that sustains them in the world (Martuccelli, 2010).

JÉSSICA

The daughter of a migrant from Pernambuco and an Indigenous woman of Guarani descent from the Marsilac village (south of São Paulo), lived until she was 12 in a house given to her near Sesc Interlagos, in the south of São Paulo—a place she describes as a “violent suburb”. She later moved to her home in Jardim Primavera, in the northern part of the city.

The transition into adolescence was a period marked by loneliness and existential challenges, including bulimia and depression. School, where she experienced violence, even

⁹ Zusman (2014) serves as an inspiration for constructing this narrative as a plot, demonstrating how events intertwine to create history and shape geographies.

from teachers, was not a supp. However, she fondly remembers a dance group and theater classes that “saved her life in that depressing place.”

Jessica was drawn to emo and gothic youth cultures and influenced by punk culture, which she was introduced to by an older brother. Around the age of 16 or 17, she became involved in the feminist movement, marking a turning point in her life that would have lasting effects and eventually lead her to create the Sarau das Mina project.

This turning point was not a single event but rather a series of interconnected moments. It may have begun with a media and activism course offered by Sesc Interlagos, coinciding with the 2013 street protests led by the “free pass movement.” Inspired by these experiences, she joined a collective and proposed the project Mulheres na Luta, which brought her back to the southern zone, where she remains today.

[...] so for me it started like that. Within that, I discovered I was pregnant.

I joined a feminist collective from the outskirts when I was pregnant, and we started going into the favelas, having conversations about teenage pregnancy, heavy subjects, and so on. So, it had a very strong impact... Soon after that, we started the sarau, and [son's name] was a little baby... So, there's this issue of motherhood, of the job market for mothers and for women who are from the outskirts. [...] I lost my job after I had [son's name]. So, I started to delve deeper into cultural production.

At the time of the research, her son was eight years old, and Jessica had returned to school. She was studying nursing, working as a doula, and living independently. During her undergraduate studies, she was developing a project on humanized childbirth with Indigenous women from the southern zone.

YEBORA

The young woman describes a troubled adolescence marked by abuse and health issues. During this period, she became involved in political movements and protests, participating in the anti-fascist movement in São Paulo, influenced by friends from the punk scene.

[...] I started engaging in protests early, raising flags, and always fighting for my rights. It was an important phase for me to get to where I am today, in a women's collective from the suburbs.

Alongside her involvement with punk culture and political activism, she studied environmental sciences at one of the city's Technical Schools (ETECs) in São Paulo. Around the same time, she met Jessica at the shamanic space Caminho Sagrado. Yebora reflects that joining Sarau das Mina marked a significant shift in her life and worldview, which can be seen as a turning point in her life trajectory. The collective played a *crucial role in her empowerment as a woman and her connection with other women from the periphery*: “[...] the sarau has always helped me with these issues of self-reflection, valuing myself, understanding the woman I am, empowering myself, and respecting my sisters.”

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Yebora joined Sarau das Mina in 2016. Unlike Jessica, Dani lives in the northern zone and must cross the city to participate in the collective's activities. As Jessica mentioned, "[...] Yebora [...] *there was a time when she was in Perus, and she always came from far away,*" first traveling to the itinerant events in Grajaú and later to Parelheiros.

DANI

Dani is both an audience member and poet at Sarau das Mina. Born and raised in Parelheiros, specifically in Jardim dos Álamos, she is the daughter of migrants from the Northeast—a heritage she only recently began to embrace.

Until she was 14, she attended school in her neighborhood. "I was always a very free child, to say the least [laughs], because my mother always worked a lot. *So, my life was all about playing in the street until my brother was born, and I had to help with all the other things.*" She explains that this responsibility made her deal with "life's challenges" at an early age, giving her a premature sense of adulthood.

Dani says she used to explore Parelheiros but never ventured beyond the southern side of the city. In the center of Parelheiros, she noted the importance of the CEU (Eneida Palma Leite Unified Educational Center), especially its library, where she occasionally attended sarau. However, due to safety concerns, she had difficulty getting around after dark and often limited her movements because of her age and gender.

Dani identifies as having been a rebellious teenager, influenced by gothic culture, which heightened her sense of not fitting in with her family. Amid these generational conflicts, she began writing her first poems.

She initially attended high school by commuting to ETEC in Jardim São Luís, also in the southern zone. However, due to psychological struggles and the long commute, she eventually returned to her old school to complete her studies. It was during this period, as she transitioned into high school, that two significant events shaped her life and her experience of the city until she eventually connected with Sarau das Mina: gaining access to the free student pass and enrolling in the popular prep course she started attending. Dani recalls her first visit to Avenida Paulista using the free pass:

I had never been to Paulista Avenue. I was that person who lived in Parelheiros and never had the means to go. Then, I remember I was about 14, the year of the Free Student Pass, and I arrived at the beginning of Avenida Paulista. I got off at Estação Paulista, not knowing it was Consolação, and walked to Casa das Rosas [...] I was completely enchanted: 'Wow, so many buildings, so many things.' I remember that day I visited Itaú Cultural and Casa das Rosas. [...] When we don't have access to the city, we miss out on so many other areas of life, other ways of thinking, other plans of existence. It's really crazy.

Dani says that the teachers at Projeto Raízes, a popular prep school she attended alongside her regular high school, always encouraged students to engage with the city's cultural life. It was with friends from the prep course that she first attended Sarau das Mina in its itinerant format in Grajaú, back in 2016. Despite the difficulty of returning home—a

40-minute bus ride to Jardim dos Álamos—she continued attending other cultural events in Grajaú.

At the time of the research, Dani had less time to participate in the city's cultural life and was even finding it challenging to attend Sarau das Mina. She had moved to Butantã to study Literature at USP (University of São Paulo) and was also interning at a Business Foundation, for which she was paid to afford a life outside the southern zone.

Moving to the Butantã neighborhood has cut her commute time in half. While it used to take her four hours to get from her home in Parelheiros to her workplace and school, she now spends only two hours commuting each day. For her, those extra two hours are crucial for rest and other activities. She reflects on her mother and brother, who still have to travel long distances across São Paulo for work, and mentioned that, even on weekends, she struggles to visit them due to her college workload.

RODRIGO

Rodrigo's life started in a different socio-spatial context, but his path eventually led him to engage with cultural movements in the city's peripheries and to Sarau das Mina. Born and raised in Mooca, Rodrigo is the son of migrants from the Northeast—his father a working-class man and his mother a day laborer—both involved in a social movement for housing rights.

He believes that the working-class atmosphere of his neighborhood in the 1990s, his parents' political engagement, and the freedom he had growing up on the streets shaped who he is today. The family's financial ups and downs led Rodrigo to leave private school and attend public school until high school. At 13, he started drinking, struggled with depression, and had frequent conflicts with his family, while also questioning the system and confronting existential issues. During this period, his godmother paid for a drawing course, and it was his teacher who noticed his depression and reached out to his family. Drawing remained a constant in his life, eventually leading him to study art at a private university through a Prouni scholarship, which he completed in 2016.

At 15, he began attending night school and socializing with older, more mature individuals. He recalls this time as a period when he began to experiment with mischief and rebellion. It was also when a pivotal event occurred, his introduction to punk culture. By that age, he was already mingling with punk groups in São Paulo's outskirts, and while his political activism was still developing, the exposure was meaningful. At 19, he joined a theater group, which he credits as another defining moment, as it link him with numerous cultural groups from the city's peripheries.

"[...] in 2019, she [his friend P. B.] invited me to a circle and said, '[...] I know about your journey, I know who you are, and I want to invite you to a circle to talk with me.' If I'm not mistaken, it was Sarau das Mina, and it was a circle to discuss motherhood, doulas, and related topics. I went and brought my mother, who is also a woman who guided me a lot in my journey as a human being, and I brought a friend as well. [...] My friend and I were the only men there, listening to a lot about midwives and doulas.

[...]

I played at the Sarau, and my friend played with me. We performed, and my mother shared her experiences with masculinity, you know. I was in a circle with my mother, man! It was really magical for me. It was something that caught the attention of the other women there. [...] And I think my mother was the oldest person at the Sarau that day. She told me her story, how she raised my two brothers alone for a period until she met my father. She talked about the violence she suffered at the hands of my brothers' father, and she also talked about the violence she experienced with my father. [...] It touched me. [...] That's how I got to know [Sarau das Mina], and today I try my best to be there whenever I can.

For Rodrigo, his involvement with Sarau das Mina was a journey of rethinking his masculinity. It changed his outlook on life, influenced by the women he met at the Sarau, and led to a different, more profound relationship with his mother and sister. We can view this encounter as a significant event in his life, one that continues to have a lasting impact.

* * *

Having traced these threads and revisited our previous observations, it becomes clear that our interlocutors share several commonalities: their social origins as descendants of migrants from the Northeast, their family and personal experiences of the city's margins, and the existential crises that marked their transitions into youth and engagement with youth cultures.

They also share a new field of possibilities, a formative horizon for individuality and connection that significantly differs from what was available to their parents' generation. In the early decades of the 21st century, particularly during the initial years of the Workers' Party (PT) governments, we saw the emergence of a reconfigured periphery, shaped by public income transfer policies and affirmative and inclusive measures (Aderaldo; Raposo, 2016).

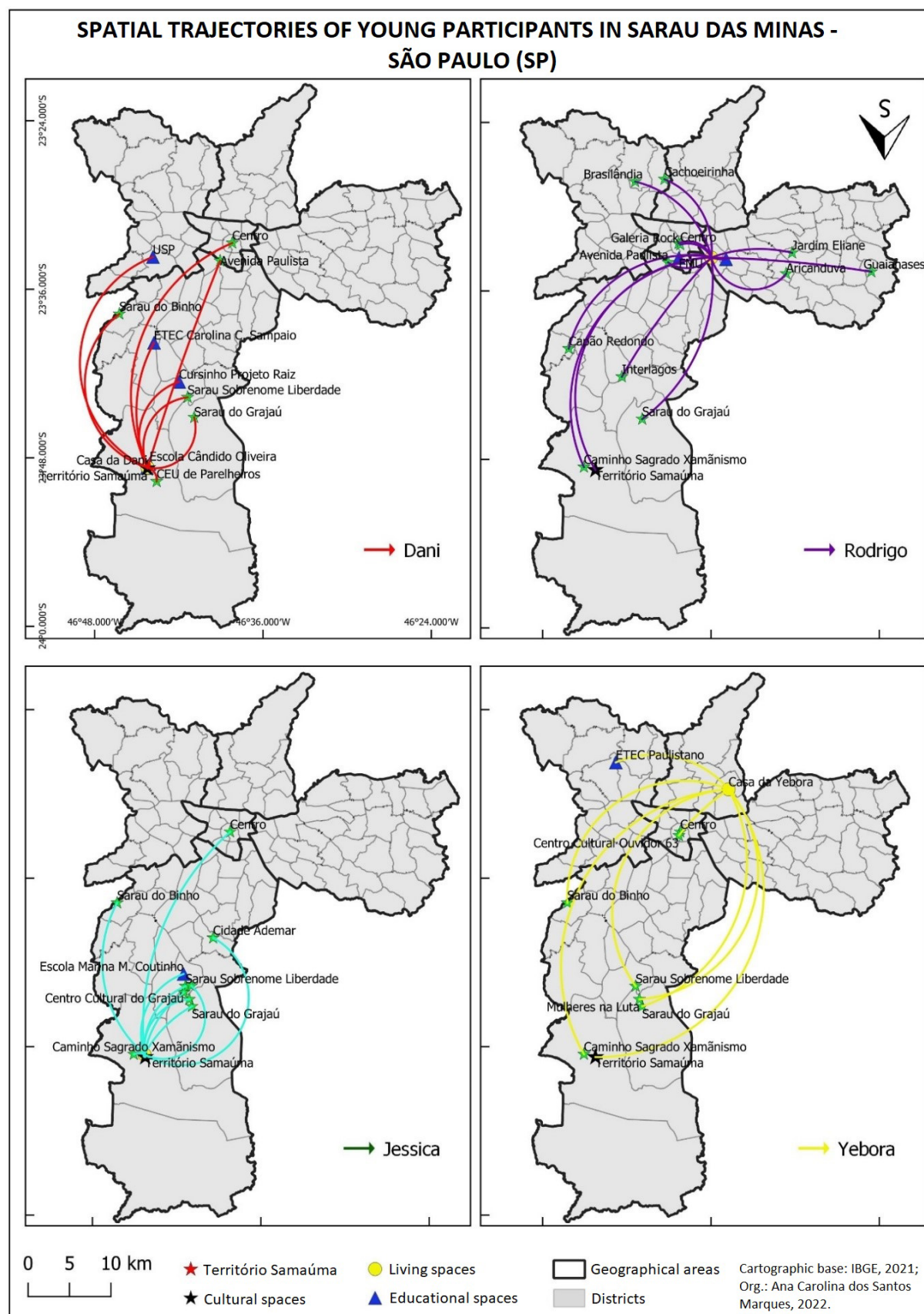
In addition to these policies, numerous political and cultural movements emerged, creating a vast cultural circuit in São Paulo's peripheries, which enabled the formation of collectives where many young people became cultural producers (D'Andrea, 2020). These initiatives were further strengthened by public cultural policies that recognized and funded their efforts¹⁰.

These structural conditions weave the fabric that connects these lives, which intersect and coexist if circumstances allow¹¹. This fabric is composed of life and spatial trajectories that guide their movements across the metropolis, reinforcing the peripheral culture circuit in the city. These alternative routes between various peripheral neighborhoods place the traditional center in a marginal role, as noted by Aderaldo and Raposo (2016).

Map 2 illustrates the formative paths of our interlocutors, highlighting our main argument. It shows that life and city trajectories are inseparable and emphasizes how their formative histories, spatial practices, and cultural engagements often bypass the city center. Instead, their life and city trajectories link different peripheries, creating and reinforcing new hubs

¹⁰ However, this reality of cultural producers, who depend on the circulation of their works in the peripheral cultural circuit and often on funds from cultural grants, has created a new precariat among young people. They lack legal protections but receive training through art and culture workshops and courses (Aderaldo; Raposo, 2016), as seen with Jessica and Yebora.

¹¹ Simultaneously, they reestablish their positions in the world through individualization processes that affirm their origins and even their ancestry—as Black, Indigenous, and from the Northeast—while asserting their identities as cultural agents of the periphery.



of social life, where events set the rhythm for the emergence of “shifting centralities” and temporary cultural moments throughout the week and month¹².

It was the cultural and educational spaces that most influenced the formation of the identities of the interviewees. Rodrigo, the interviewee who moved the most through the city, shows that gender dynamics impact his spatialities, as does his participation in various cultural collectives. The spatial trajectories of Dani, Jessica, and Yebora are more localized, but no less significant. As their paths intersect in the cultural spaces of the southern zone, such as the Grajaú, Binho, and Sobrenome Liberdade saraus.

Dani and Jessica’s formative trajectories, having lived most of their lives in the southern zone, show that most of the spaces they frequented were within these areas. The mobility challenges within the city influenced their paths; however, the southern zone is home to several sub-centers that offer different services. From a cultural standpoint, this context is even more evident:

[...] the southern zone is huge, and what happens is that people from the southern zone have less dependency on the city center and other neighborhoods to access culture. It’s very common to hear people from the south say, ‘I hardly ever leave the southern zone; I live, work, and have my social life here.’” While for those of us from other regions of the city, there’s a greater dependence on the center since there are fewer collectives in these areas, and they are more spread out, making it harder to connect and build partnerships among them [...] (Rodrigo).

As Rodrigo points out, the southern zone does not depend on the city center for cultural consumption. The expressions of “shifting centralities” triggered by peripheral culture are so significant that they attract people from other areas of the city. Rodrigo is an example, living in what could be considered an expansion of São Paulo’s center, toward the eastern zone. Mooca, has good urban accessibility, with public transportation options, especially metro and train. While the eastern zone hosts several peripheral culture collectives, the southern zone stands out as a cultural hub, as young people choose to move there, seeing it as the “epicenter of São Paulo’s peripheral culture,” where the main cultural flows converge. These movements are more accessible for those living near the center, but they also occur among peripheral youth who traverse the city’s vast distances (mainly on weekends) motivated by culture and the social networks they build through it.

Jessica also reinforces the idea of a cultural circuit in the southern zone, highlighting the various saraus she attended even before Sarau das Mina existed and continues to frequent:

[...] it starts to bring your perspective that the periphery can occupy this place, that it can have this power, this space for recognition within your work and your art. So, that’s what changed the most for me. Today, I almost

¹²In the southern zone, the schedule for the most well-known and regularly held saraus includes: Sarau Cooperifa, every Tuesday from 8:30 pm to 10 pm at Bar do Zé Batidão; Sarau do Binho, held on Mondays with additional events in partnership with other collectives and institutions throughout the week; and Sarau Sobrenome Liberdade, which takes place monthly on a Friday. Sarau das Mina, when hosted at Território Samaúma, used to occur one Saturday per month, with workshops also held throughout the week.

never left the southern zone. I do want to, though, to visit spaces of other women who are also working hard, in the eastern zone... [...] creating that affection for the territory, which I think brings acceptance, removing the idea of denying where we come from, our history (Jessica).

Therefore, the importance of peripheral culture in São Paulo's southern zone is explicit in our interviewees' testimonies. The cultural circuit engages many people, enabling them to trace other life and spatial trajectories, characterized by self-affirmation and empowerment. While we focus on Sarau das Mina, there are numerous collectives throughout the southern zone and other peripheral areas of São Paulo that are also empowering people to recognize themselves as peripheral artists, positively affirming their experiences and advocating for better living conditions. In short, peripheral culture has displaced the city center as a reference point for visibility and defining what qualifies as art and culture (even when events still take place in central spaces), leading to the emergence of a variety of new social centers in the peripheries, where centrality is fleeting and shifts according to events.

FINAL REMARKS

The peripheral culture emphasizes the potential of impoverished areas, demonstrating that the peripheries produce and consume knowledge and culture. Through movements like the saraus, artists emerge who engage in cultural production, promoting a reimagined vision of the periphery that breaks stigmas, redefining the meaning of "being peripheral." The southern zone of São Paulo is where the highest concentration of saraus is found, forming a support and cooperation network—a circuit of "shifting and ephemeral centralities" that attract audiences both near and far.

Given the metropolis' vastness and diversity, the locations of the saraus grant them distinct characteristics. In the case of Sarau das Mina, while its editions were itinerant, the main focus was social and gender issues. However, with the opening of its physical space in Parelheiros, new discussions have come to the forefront, especially regarding ethnic and racial issues, due to the area's socio-spatial context.

As shown in our interviews, participation in cultural collectives allows individuals to recognize, affirm themselves, and challenge the inequalities they face daily. It is essential to understand these spaces not only as sites of protest and politics but also as educational spaces, fostering a new "peripheral consciousness" (D'Andrea, 2020) and cultural hubs in the periphery, where the degree of centrality can range from the city scale to the international level. Sarau Cooperifa, for instance, has gained recognition beyond the national scale, with its events being highly sought after.

Sarau das Mina has fostered a "shifting centrality" primarily in Grajaú and Parelheiros, which has evolved since its inception. While it operated itinerantly, the collective took root in events, appropriating cultural centers and commercial establishments, drawing people primarily from the southern zone, but also from other city peripheries and even central areas. The dynamics created by these itinerant events were linked to the moment of the event (e.g., the gathering of people in a specific location) but also had lasting impacts on the participants' biographical and spatial trajectories, such as building social networks and

establishing spatialities in places they might not have accessed otherwise. It was a “shifting centrality,” marked by cycles but also mobile, not confined to a single space. A “shifting centrality” more connected to the cultural collective and its events, which activated social networks rather than a fixed physical space.

With the establishment of Território Samaúma and Sarau das Mina’s fixed location, new dynamics emerged. The “shifting centrality” became less mobile while remaining cyclical and dependent on events. However, its impact in the Parelheiros district has become more enduring and diverse, as it now extends beyond the sarau moments to include a series of workshops for the district’s own audience.

Território Samaúma reinforces the idea of peripheral centrality from a cultural perspective. There are various sub-centralities in São Paulo’s urban space, and given the limited urban mobility, people tend to engage with the sub-centers close to their residences. When we consider how culture is influenced by this socio-spatial context, it becomes evident that people frequently participate in artistic and cultural events that occur in their local area.

Since the southern zone has a wide and consolidated cultural scene, its residents do not need to travel long distances to access culture; the periphery no longer needs to move to the center to (re)exist. On the contrary, “cultural centers” have emerged there, whose visibility and centrality are reaching metropolitan, and even international, scales.

In this context, Sarau das Mina seems to play a more regional central role within the southern zone, putting Parelheiros on the city’s cultural map. However, we cannot ignore that the center still exerts some influence over peripheral cultural collectives, as the cultural grants and public policies essential for sustaining these actions are developed by those in power. Yet, in terms of cultural self-sufficiency, São Paulo’s peripheries show their potential. This does not change their peripheral status in the urban hierarchy, but it challenges traditional notions of music, literature, and poetry, as well as the places where this production occurs and circulates.

Moreover, perhaps the most important outcome of this research is the demonstration that we are witnessing a movement where multiple layers of time and spatial scales intersect, forming the field of possibilities for the formation and territorialization of youth cultural collectives: the reconfigured Brazilian peripheries, peripheral culture and its various manifestations, individual life courses, and the stories that are told through the weaving of these threads, creating territories where new lives can also be transformed.

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Article editor

Rodrigo Ramos Hospodar Felipe Valverde

Received: Sept. 25 2023

Accepted: Aug. 30 2024

MARQUES, A. C. S.; TURRA NETO, N.