V!RUS

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MULTILATERAL DIALOGUES PRAXIS INTERLOCUTIONS CONFRONTATIONS

ENGLISH | PORTUGUÊS-ESPAÑOL
REVISTA . JOURNAL
ISSN 2175-974X
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UNIVERSITY OF SAO PAULO
INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM
NOMADS.USP INTERACTIVE LIVING
HTTPS://REVISTAS.USP.BR/VIRUS
DECEMBER 2025

CONTENTS
SUMÁRIO

VI30

MULTILATERAL DIALOGUES: PRAXIS, INTERLOCUTIONS, AND CONFRONTATIONS
DIÁLOGOS MULTILATERAIS: PRÁXIS, INTERLOCUÇÕES E CONFRONTAÇÕES
DIÁLOGOS MULTILATERALES: PRAXIS, INTERLOCUCIONES Y CONFRONTACIONES

EDITORIAL

001 MULTILATERAL DIALOGUES: PRAXIS, INTERLOCUTIONS, AND CONFRONTATIONS
DIÁLOGOS MULTILATERAIS: PRÁXIS, INTERLOCUÇÕES E CONFRONTAÇÕES
DIÁLOGOS MULTILATERALES: PRAXIS, INTERLOCUCIONES Y CONFRONTACIONES
MARCELO TRAMONTANO, JULIANO PITA, PEDRO TEIXEIRA, LUCAS DE CHICO, ESTER GOMES, JOÃO PEREIRA, AMANDA SOARES

INTERVIEW

005 BLACK PEOPLE AND A FIVE-HUNDRED-YEAR SILENCED DIALOGUE
O POVO NEGRO E UM DIÁLOGO SILENCIADO DE QUINHENTOS ANOS
EL PUEBLO NEGRO Y UN DIÁLOGO SILENCIADO DE QUINIENTOS AÑOS
CASIMIRO LUMBUNDANGA, MARCELO TRAMONTANO

AGORA

014 SOVEREIGNTY AND TECHNODIVERSITY
SOBERANIA E TECNODIVERSIDADE
SERGIO AMADEU DA SILVEIRA

024 CITIES FOR WHOM? URBAN LIFE AND VULNERABLE BODIES
CIDADES PARA QUEM? VIDA URBANA E CORPOS VULNERÁVEIS
ETHEL PINHEIRO, JACQUELINE KLOPP

041 PORTO, BETWEEN TWO BRIDGES: IMAGES OF A SPACE IN TENSION
PORTO, ENTRE DUAS PONTES: IMAGENS DE UM ESPAÇO EM TENSÃO
JORDAN FRASER EMERY

062 AUTHOR UNKNOWN
AUTORIA DESCONHECIDA
MARTA BOGÉA, MARIANA VETRONE

081 CASE-EXPERIENCE: METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY METROPOLIS
CASO-EXPERIÊNCIA: DESAFIOS METODOLÓGICOS NA METRÓPOLE CONTEMPORÂNEA
YURI PAES DA COSTA, EDUARDO LIMA, CARLOS MAGALHÃES DE LIMA

095 STATE-PRODUCED RISK: SOCIAL HOUSING AND DISASTER VULNERABILITY
A PRODUÇÃO ESTATAL DO RISCO: HABITAÇÃO SOCIAL E VULNERABILIDADE A DESASTRES
CATHARINA SALVADOR, THAMINE AYOUB, MILENA KANASHIRO

113 HOUSING FINANCIALIZATION IN SHARING ECONOMY CONTEXTS
FINANCEIRIZAÇÃO DA HABITAÇÃO EM CONTEXTOS DE ECONOMIA COMPARTILHADA
VINICIUS BARROS, ÉRICO MASIERO

127 INHABITING THE COMMON: URBAN POETICS IN LEFEBVRE AND IN THE THEORY OF THE COMMONS
HABITAR O COMUM: A POÉTICA URBANA EM LEFEBVRE E NA TEORIA DO COMUM
CAROLINA AKEMI NAKAHARA

141 URBAN PARKS PRIVATIZATION AND THE NEOLIBERAL PRODUCTION OF SPACE
PRIVATIZAÇÃO DOS PARQUES URBANOS E A PRODUÇÃO NEOLIBERAL DO ESPAÇO
ISABELLA SOARES, CLARICE DE OLIVEIRA

155 TOPOLOGIES OF CARE: FROM THE CLEARING TO THE PARK IN PETER SLOTERDIJK
TOPOLOGIAS DO CUIDADO: DA CLAREIRA AO PARQUE EM PETER SLOTERDIJK
BRÄULIO RODRIGUES

167 THE DIS-RE-INHABITING IN THE SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER IN MACEIÓ-AL
O DES-RE-HABITAR NO DESASTRE SOCIOAMBIENTAL EM MACEIÓ-AL
WANDERSON BARBOSA, TAMYRES OLIVEIRA, ROSELINE OLIVEIRA

186 URBAN SOILS AND ORGANIC FARMING: CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE
SOLOS URBANOS E AGRICULTURA ORGÂNICA: CONSERVAÇÃO E RESILIÊNCIA
LUCAS LENIN DE ASSIS

199 URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION
EDUCAÇÃO URBANÍSTICA E AMBIENTAL COMO CONTRIBUIÇÃO SOCIAL
LUIZA HELENA FERRARO, MARIANA PEREIRA, GISELLE ARTEIRO AZEVEDO

214 THE EPISTEMIC PLURALITY OF TERRITORY IN THE CRITIQUE OF URBAN-CENTRISM
A PLURALIDADE EPISTÊMICA DO TERRITÓRIO NA CRÍTICA AO URBANOCENTRISMO
ANGELA ELIAS DE SOUZA, CAIO GOMES DE AGUIAR

230 DATA, GOVERNANCE AND OPACITY: TOWARD AN INFORMATIONAL RIGHT TO THE CITY
DADOS, GOVERNANÇA E OPACIDADE: POR UM DIREITO INFORMACIONAL À CIDADE
MARINA BORGES

240 CHILDHOODS IN THE CITY: TENSIONS, RIGHTS, AND INCLUSION PRACTICES
INFÂNCIAS NA CIDADE: TENSÕES, DIREITOS E PRÁTICAS DE INCLUSÃO
SAMANTHA PEDROSA, ELIANE PEREIRA

253 FRAGMENTS OF 19TH-CENTURY RIO: MISERICÓRDIA AND ITS THOROUGHFARES
FRAGMENTOS DO RIO NO XIX: A MISERICÓRDIA E SEUS LOGRADOUROS
LETÍCIA CAMPANHA PIRES

264 FRANCIS ALŸS' GREEN LINE: IMPERIALISM AND THE LIMITS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH
A LINHA VERDE DE FRANCIS ALŸS: IMPERIALISMO E OS LIMITES DO SUL GLOBAL
YURI TARACIUK

276 RACIONAIS MC'S: THE CONSTITUTION OF NEGRO DRAMA AS A SUBJECT OF RESISTANCE
RACIONAIS MC'S: A CONSTITUIÇÃO DO NEGRO DRAMA COMO SUJEITO DE RESISTÊNCIA
CEZAR PRADO

287 FEMALE GUARANI MBYA VERNACULAR TECHNOLOGY AND BIODIVERSE CULTURAL HERITAGE
TECNOLOGIA VERNACULAR DAS MULHERES GUARANI MBYA E PATRIMÔNIO CULTURAL BIODIVERSO
ANA LUIZA CARVALHO, DINAH DE GUIMARAENS

302 DANCING BODIES, AXÉ ARCHITECTURES: WASHING RITUALS IN PENEDO-AL
CORPOS DANÇANTES, ARQUITETURAS DO AXÉ: RITUAIS DE LAVAGEM EM PENEDO-AL
MARIA HEDUARDA VASCONCELOS, MARIA ANGÉLICA DA SILVA

316 THE PORTRAIT BEYOND THE EUROPEAN CANON: REINVENTIONS IN LATIN-CARIBBEAN ART
O RETRATO ALÉM DO CÂNONE EUROPEU: REINVENÇÕES NA ARTE LATINO-CARIBENHA
JOÃO PAULO DE FREITAS

326 THE REPASSOS EXHIBITION AND THE MODERN INTEREST IN THE POPULAR
A EXPOSIÇÃO REPASSOS E O MODERNO INTERESSE PELO POPULAR
ARIEL LAZZARIN, CARLOS MARTINS

350 DIGITAL CHALLENGES IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM: VIDEO GAMES AND PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS
DESAFIOS DIGITAIS EM ARQUITETURA E URBANISMO: VIDEOGAMES E PRAXIS PEDAGÓGICA
THIAGO RANGEL, ALINE CALAZANS MARQUES

368 FROM COLONIAL GAZE TO DIGITAL VISUALITY: LANDSCAPE, POWER, AND COLLAPSE
DO OLHAR COLONIAL À VISUALIDADE DIGITAL: PAISAGEM, PODER E COLAPSO
JAQUELINE CUNHA

381 YESTERDAY, YOUR FUTURE: THE CITY WHERE I AM TODAY
ONTEM, O SEU FUTURO: A CIDADE EM QUE HOJE ME ENCONTRO
SAMIRA PROÊZA

PROJECT

399 BETWEEN IMAGES AND COMMUNICABLE OBJECTS: EXHIBITION SPACE AS CULTURAL MEDIATION
ENTRE IMAGENS E OBJETOS COMUNICÁVEIS: ESPAÇO EXPOSITIVO COMO MEDIAÇÃO CULTURAL
ANA ELÍSIA DA COSTA, DANIELA CIDADE

415 TEACHING AND OUTREACH: HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PEQUIS NEIGHBORHOOD
ENSINO E EXTENSÃO: MELHORIAS HABITACIONAIS NO BAIRRO PEQUIS
ROSSANA LIMA, NÁDIA LEITE, RITA DE CÁSSIA SARAMAGO, SIMONE VILLA

EDITORIAL
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Tramontano, M., Pita, J. V. C., Teixeira, P. P., Chico, L. E., Soares, A. R. S., Gomes, E. S., Pereira, J. V. (2025). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, And Confrontations. (Editorial) *V!RUS (30)*. 1-4. https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.243966

Multilateral dialogues have become increasingly necessary and, at the same time, increasingly complex. The very idea of academia rests on an intrinsic multilateralism, which involves varied scientific and methodological understandings and attitudes, references with which it engages in dialogue, as well as its relationship with society and the world. That means that criticism grounded in differences and the tensions it induces is the sine qua non for knowledge to be produced. It is not the case in the geopolitical world, especially nowadays, when multilateral political practices are constantly under threat. In fact, although the desire for a multipolar world has been gaining strength worldwide since 1991, following the end of the Soviet Union, and even if many countries have implemented inclusive policies aimed at ensuring a plurality of voices in national debates, multilateral practices seem to result less in building dialogue and more in intensifying capitalist control over peoples and nations.

In the overlap between the scientific and historical worlds, it seems fundamental and urgent to protect and cultivate the idea that praxis and dialogue, when symmetrical, are the unavoidable premises for the emergence of new understandings of the world. Under the title “Multilateral dialogues: praxis, dialogue, and confrontations,” the call for this thirtieth edition of the V!RUS journal proposes a reflection on this theme, based on two complex questions: How can we conceive a technical-scientific contribution to a multilateral world of increasingly multicultural societies in which the globalization of processes and products has accentuated practices of domination and power struggles in all spheres of life and areas of knowledge? How can we articulate differences, conflicts, and convergences, whether theoretical, historical, political, or cultural, through the simultaneous construction of reflection and action, ensuring the horizontality of dialogues and aiming at producing knowledge and social transformation?

The twenty-eight works we publish here focus on the place of conflicts, confrontations, dialogues, and challenges on local, regional, national, and global scales, which are present in the connection between different theoretical-methodological stances and in the multifaceted practices thus constructed. Introducing these works, we present the interview Black People and a Five-hundred-year Silenced Dialogue, with the intellectual and activist of the Black movement, *Casimiro Paschoal Lumbundanga da Silva*, who discusses **the historical impossibility of building dialogues** between the Afro-descendant population, the State, and society, particularly in Brazil.

Multilateralism is perceived through the lens of **technopolitics** by *Sergio Amadeu da Silveira* in the article Sovereignty and Technodiversity. The author addresses the relationship among sovereignty, technology, and technodiversity, highlighting the technological biases of massive data extraction and its ties to Big Tech, as well as the basis for thinking about digital sovereignty. From a **philosophical perspective**, the article Topologies of Care: From the Clearing to the Park in Peter Sloterdijk , by *Bräulio Rodrigues*, articulates biopolitics and geopolitics in the philosophy of Peter Sloterdijk and the concept of anthropotechnics as a key to understanding the genesis of politics and civilization.

Three works address the **multilateral appropriation of the city**, based on Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city: Inhabiting the Common: Urban Poetics in Lefebvre and in the Theory of the Commons, by *Carolina Akemi Martins Morita Nakahara*, which articulates Lefebvre's Right to the City with the Theory of the Commons, postulated by David Harvey, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Christian Laval, and Pierre Dardot; Urban Parks Privatization and the Neoliberal Production of Space , by *Isabelle Mangoni Soares and Clarice Misoczky de Oliveira*, which addresses the issue of granting concessions for urban public parks to private initiative and its multiple ramifications; and Data, Governance, and Opacity: Toward an Informational Right to the City, by *Marina Borges*, which discusses issues related to the capacity to produce and contest the data generated in the city, based on a contemporary understanding of Lefebvre's concept.

Dealing with the **processes of territorial formation and human occupation**, Case-Experience: Methodological Challenges in the Contemporary Metropolis, by *Yuri Nascimento Paes da Costa, Eduardo Rocha Lima, and Carlos Henrique Magalhães de Lima*, highlights the Case-Experience method as a situated and critical alternative for contemporary urban analysis. The text Porto between two Bridges: Images of a Space in Tension, by *Jordan Fraser Emery*, addresses the tensions between city inhabitants in Portugal and mass tourism, while the work The Epistemic Plurality of Territory in the Critique of Urban-centrism, by *Angela Carine Elias de Souza and Caio Henrique Gomes de Aguiar*, opposes the hegemonic idea of territorial formation through the urban environment to present alternative modes of occupation.

Continuing the discussion on **urbanism and its developments**, two works offer reflections on bodies that are frequently ignored in urban planning processes for specific reasons. In Cities for Whom? Urban Life and Vulnerable Bodies, by *Ethel Pinheiro and Jacqueline Klopp*, homeless people are the protagonists of the analyses, giving visibility to this marginalized group. The paper Childhoods in the City: Tensions, Rights, and Inclusion Practices, authored by *Samantha Pires Oliveira Freitas Pedrosa and Eliane Regina Pereira*, addresses the same issues but emphasizes the disregard for children's rights to inhabit the city by urban planning policies fully.

Two studies focus on **housing** from a contemporary perspective. In State-Produced Risk: Social Housing and Disaster Vulnerability, by *Catharina Salvador, Thamine de Almeida Ayoub, and Milena Kanashiro*, the authors address how social housing projects are frequently built on land susceptible to environmental disasters, exacerbated by climate change. The study Housing Financialization in Sharing Economy Contexts, by *Vinicius Tavares Barros and Érico Masiero*, analyzes housing production within the context of the economic phenomenon of financialization, contrasting it with the impacts of economic dynamics such as the circular, sharing, and creative economies.

Cultural heritage is addressed in its material and immaterial dimensions in three works: Female Guarani Mbya Vernacular Technology and Biodiverse Cultural Heritage, by *Ana Luiza Ribeiro Carvalho and Dinah Tereza Papi de Guimaraens*, which highlights ancestral architectural knowledge of women of the Guarani indigenous people; Dancing Bodies, Axé Architectures: Washing Rituals in Penedo-AL, by *Maria Heduarda Nascimento Vasconcelos and Maria Angelica da Silva*, who perceive the city as a territorialized body, through the experience of washing the steps of the Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks Church and the Lazy's Alley in Penedo, Brazil; and Fragments of 19th-century Rio: Misericórdia and its Thoroughfares, by *Letícia Bedendo Campanha Pires*, which deals with the issue of memory in the Misericórdia neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, and its relationship with the historical and social transformations that occurred in the city.

Five of these works are situated within **the field of art and its interfaces with geopolitics, coloniality, and race studies**. In Francis Alÿs' Green Line: Imperialism and the Limits of the Global South, *Yuri Taraciuk* analyzes the artist's performance The Green Line to discuss imperialist states, colonies, and semi-colonies, using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a reference point. The work The Portrait beyond the European Canon: Reinventions in Latin-Caribbean Art, by *João Paulo de Freitas*, articulates the differences in the portrait genre in the European and Latin American and Caribbean contexts, suggesting a necessary decolonial perspective. In From Colonial Gaze to Digital Visuality: Landscape, Power, and Collapse, *Jaqueline de Souza Cunha* discusses the concept of landscape from the perspective of coloniality, updating it through digital media, using art as an object of critical analysis of new expressions of colonialism. In In Racionais MC's: The Constitution of Negro Drama as a Subject of Resistance, by *Cezar Prado*, the themes of race and social critique is analyzed within the Brazilian rap band's discography. Finally, *Ariel Luís Romani Lazzarin and Carlos Alberto Ferreira Martins*, in the article The Repassos Exhibition and the Modern Interest in the Popular, address the Repassos exhibition as an opportunity to understand Brazilian underdevelopment and as an alternative to the logic of capital and hegemonic forms of modernity.

The **interfaces between art, architecture, and urbanism** are discussed in three works. The photographic essay Yesterday, Your Future: The City Where I Am Today, by *Samira de Sousa Proêza*, seeks to engage in dialogue with the Argentinian documentary *Retiro: Dos caras de un mismo barrio*, highlighting tensions between permanence and erasure. In Author Unknown, *Marta Bogéa and Mariana Lunardi Vetrone* address the valuation of the banal and the everyday in art and architecture, in contrast to the spectacular. Finally, in Between Images and Communicable Objects: Exhibition Space as Cultural Mediation, *Ana Elísia da Costa and Daniela Mendes Cidade* highlight the right to culture in peripheral communities through teaching and university extension activities that connect community kitchens to an exhibition proposal.

Three works seek to broaden the theme of **education in architecture, urbanism, and related areas**: Urban and Environmental Education as a Social Contribution, by *Luiza Helena Ferraro, Mariana Coviello Rei Rebelo Pereira, and Giselle Arteiro Nielsen Azevedo*, addresses education as a form of political action, considering its capacity to articulate technical-scientific knowledge, territorialities, participation, and social transformation among children and youth; Digital Challenges in Architecture and Urbanism: Video Games and Pedagogical Praxis, by *Thiago dos Santos Rangel and Aline Calazans Marques*, presents a transdisciplinary pedagogical experience in Architecture and Urbanism mediated by virtual games, to promote engagement with sensory and interpretative aspects of space; and Teaching and Outreach: Housing Improvements in the Pequis Neighborhood, by *Rossana Batista Ferreira Lima, Nádia Gonçalves Leite, Rita de Cássia Pereira Saramago,*

and Simone Barbosa Villa, presents a university extension activity linked to a Design course in the Architecture and Urbanism program at the Federal University of Uberlândia, Brazil, encompassing a social housing neighborhood, a housing adaptation project, and the contact with the community.

Turning to **environmental issues**, the article Urban Soils and Organic Farming: Conservation and Resilience, by *Juliano Batista Romualdo and Lucas Lenin Resende de Assis*, analyzes the relationships between soil chemical properties and land use through organic architecture as a method for preserving soil qualities. The Dis-Re-Inhabiting in the Socio-environmental Disaster in Maceió-AL, by *Wanderson Nascimento Barbosa, Tamyres Fontenele de Freitas Oliveira, and Roseline Vanessa Santos Oliveira*, examines the natural transformations and the confrontation with the built environment that occurred after the evacuation of neighborhoods affected by soil subsidence caused by rock salt mining in Maceió, Brazil.

We hope that this edition of V!RUS will broaden the debate and deepen the understanding of the geopolitical, sociocultural, and technopolitical configurations that mark the multilateral world, and stimulate academic actions and conduct that contribute to the just and symmetrical construction of dialogues.

We wish everyone an excellent reading experience.

IAU-USP, December 2025

ENTREVISTA
INTERVIEW

BLACK PEOPLE AND A FIVE-HUNDRED-YEAR SILENCED DIALOGUE
O POVO NEGRO E UM DIÁLOGO SILENCIADO DE QUINHENTOS ANOS
EL PUEBLO NEGRO Y UN DIÁLOGO SILENCIADO DE QUINIENTOS AÑOS

CASIMIRO LUMBANDANGA, MARCELO TRAMONTANO

Casimiro Paschoal "Lumbandanga" da Silva is a photographer, poet, musician, activist, and staff member at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, working as a technician at the Pedagogical Support Office of the School of Engineering of São Carlos at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. He develops artistic work focused on the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture and African ancestry, standing out for the photographic series Faces, produced after a trip to Angola in 2013. He is recognized for his anti-racist activism and for his involvement in cultural and social initiatives in São Carlos, such as the Afro SoulJazz Choir project

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED ON NOVEMBER 24, 2025

Silva, C. P. L., Tramontano, M. (2025). Black People and a Five-hundred-year Silenced Dialogue. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 5-13
https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.243965

Marcelo Tramontano: It is a pleasure and an honor to engage in this dialogue with you, Casimiro. Among the essential multilateral dialogues that need to be established and cultivated in Brazil, Latin America, and beyond, one of the most urgent is undoubtedly the dialogue with Afro-diasporic peoples. I want to begin our conversation by addressing the history of this diaspora in Brazil, considering that it is often narrated from perspectives that do not fully represent the Black population's viewpoint. Where do you believe the beginning of this history lies—one that is marked by violence and subjugation but also by rebellion, struggle, and achievement?

Casimiro Lumbandanga: The Brazilian Black social movement has very deep roots. I begin our timeline with the arrival of the first slave ship in Brazil, as it marks the start of a revolutionary process of negation of the condition to which we have been historically subjected. Since the Black population began to be brought to Brazil and distributed on farms throughout the country to participate in the process of colonization and economic and cultural construction, we were, in a way, syncretized and transformed because we were not allowed to retain our identities as subjects originating from African countries. Upon arrival in Brazil, our ancestors were given new names assigned by slave owners.

Thus, a revolutionary process of resistance was consolidated in the slave quarters, centered around a powerful issue: the rejection of the condition of being a slave, not only in Brazil but anywhere. Numerous rebellions were staged throughout the period of slavery, many of which have been overlooked and omitted from official historiography. This neglect led to an ideological construct that falsely conveys the idea of passivity among enslaved people and acceptance of their condition. This understanding that this population was complacent and peaceful ended up being internalized by black people themselves after the abolition of slavery in 1888, even obscuring an entire history of revolts. In the official historical narrative, this Black being forcibly brought from Africa to colonize America only gains visibility, unfortunately, by means of the great revolts, such as that of Palmares. It is from this standpoint that a new mentality—of resistance—was built over centuries of slavery, and which was systematically erased by the dominant elites in an attempt to replace it with the acceptance of the slave-owning project, in Brazil and the world.

MT: One century after the beginning of slavery in Brazil, the Enlightenment in Europe formulated the scientific notion of race based on the superiority of the white European race over all other races on the planet, endorsing their subjugation, domination, and even extermination. It is important to remember this fact because the assumption of white supremacy underpinned the Brazilian abolitionist project, which did not include any legal support or social inclusion policies for formerly enslaved people. The connection between these two historical events may help to explain how black people continued to be perceived by the rest of society after the abolition of slavery in 1888.

CL: The place occupied by Black people in the universe of scientific knowledge production places the other – this subjugated Other, without culture, without knowledge, and without technology – in a position of inferiority. This is one of the crucial disturbances that the Black movement has worked on and continues to work on, and which, unfortunately, academia has reproduced. The way in which mechanisms for subjugating this other – this Other-animal, this Other-thing, which is the descendant of Africans – have historically been constructed is an aberration. Regrettably, such a theory gained strength and became legitimate throughout Europe, keeping us in this position of inferiority to this day. It is crucial to understand how subtle and cynical the theorization of racism was, which engendered the construction of this being inferiorized by slavery, a being supposedly without culture, without soul, and without knowledge. We were considered things; we were considered inferior, primitive beings deprived of all the social engineering of white European beings. And since primitives have no soul, the theory of race legitimized our domination and enslavement.

This process was long and intense, with academia playing a significant role, including in Brazil. It created discriminatory mechanisms that, even today, remain complex to deconstruct due to the effectiveness of the theories suggesting the inferiority of Black people compared to white European culture. Academia helped legitimize these theories, including the so-called cranial theory, which compared the shape and size of the Black skull with those of other peoples. It concluded that we lacked intelligence, reinforcing the idea that we were primitive and solidifying Europeans' position as the beings who think, create, and produce knowledge.

It is also noteworthy to emphasize that, in Brazil, both the Black movement and sociology discuss slavery and the Black experience within this three-hundred-year timeframe, between the 17th and 19th centuries. But civilization began in Africa, and by losing sight of that timeline, official historiography legitimizes a racist way of thinking, one of inferiorizing and denying

the humanity of an entire people, based on the examination of a time window of only three hundred years. Where is the black experience in this historiography? It is essential to reflect more deeply on which Black being we are talking about and in what historical period: these three hundred years? Since the assassination of Zumbi dos Palmares[1] in 1695? From the abolition in 1888? Or the centenary of abolition? And what does this time of slavery in Brazil or in the Western African civilizing process mean? The humanization of the Black being was achieved through many struggles after May 13, 1888, led by the Brazilian Black social movement, by Black movements in North America, by African voices, by researchers from Nigeria, Congo, Algeria, Ethiopia, or Senegal, who deconstructed Eurocentric thought, debating with academia the place of this new Black being who, in reality, had already been in the world for a long time. This whole process led us to an awakening of consciousness: "Wow, if we were liberated, then we had some humanity within us." Because if it were true that we lacked culture and technological knowledge, how could we have implemented the cultures of sugarcane, mining, and coffee and mastered the specific expertise they required?

Academia often defines this historical period solely in terms of the revolutionary processes Africans unleashed. However, it needs to remember the liberating forces of the African continent to build a new sociology, a new anthropology, and a new aesthetics of doing.

> **MT**: It seems to me that the abolition of slavery in 1888 involves at least two issues that may interest us here. The first is linked to the fact that it coincided with the state policy of encouraging white immigration, influencing how Brazilian society continued to view the formerly enslaved people. The country's workforce thus became European, white, and Christian, as part of a project to whiten society. The other issue is that the abolition was signed by a princess, which influenced black social movements in the following decades, leading newly formed associations and cultural groups to declare themselves monarchists in a country that had just become a republic. How do you see this?

CL: This topic deserves a detailed discussion. Various sociological theories about the politics of whitening have fueled the fear of both Brazilian society and the state regarding the immense black population of African descent. When Princess Isabel signed the Golden Law[2] in 1888, she was not performing a humanitarian act. The law was enacted because the slave system was already exhausted. Given the broader context involving Brazil, neighboring countries, and Europe, it had become unacceptable to sustain slavery as it was still practiced here. Brazil was one of the last countries in the world to release slaves, after having circumvented all anti-trafficking laws until all possibilities of maintaining slavery were exhausted. Furthermore, there was a desire among the white population to break away from this situation, which was causing discomfort for the political class and Brazilian society as a whole.

The signing of the abolition decree, which, for us in the Black social movement, was a false abolition, did not foresee any mechanism for the social reintegration of the Black people taken from Africa and brought to build Brazil and America. Its main goal was to relieve the conscience of the white coffee-growing elite in Brazil, who did not want to take responsibility for the Black people who, until then, had built their entire economy and the entire project of that intellectual and economic elite. It resulted from a pact conceived in such a cynical, indecent way that it included neither reparations nor the integration of the Black population into the new economic landscape initiated with the proclamation of the Republic in 1889. Despite all the political debate and rebellions occurring throughout the country, the state shirked its responsibility, concluding the abolition process with the supposedly noble act of Princess Isabel signing a law. When asked, "What are we going to do with this mass of freed black people now?", the Brazilian state decided to leave them without any support, without land, and without work. The strategic solution it found was to open the country's doors to European immigration, also as part of a project of eugenics and whitening, given the prevailing fear stemming not only from the abolition process itself, but also from what was already happening in other societies, such as the Haitian Revolution. Out of fear, the Brazilian elites forged this pact, which relied on encouraging white immigration, thus inaugurating a strategy of not guaranteeing inclusion and citizenship in this country.

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1 On Zumbi dos Palmares: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zumbi.

2 On the Golden Law: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lei_Áurea.

All of this apparatus was meticulously conceived and constructed by the elites, and it persists to this day. This new type of slavery that we are experiencing in the 21st century is no different from what happened from May 13, 1888, onwards. We know where these descendants of freed slaves are today, how they live, and what treatment they receive from society and the state within the capitalist system, based on racial differences. If we examine the issue of post-abolition violence over the last three hundred years, we will see that this process is still ongoing: a process of extermination, dehumanization, and the ineffective inclusion of Black people in Brazilian society. Even knowing that the civilizing process of Humanity began in Africa, Europe was very effective in dehumanizing us in different ways, using its culture, its scientific knowledge, its religion, and, above all, the notion of race to distinguish the supposedly primitive being from the European human being. This logic continues to be reproduced by Western society, including Brazilian society, from the perspective of—I don't like to use the term invisibility—the dehumanization of the African-originated Black Brazilian people.

Even today, Brazil is very afraid to recognize the descendants of Africans as the true architects of this nation. And yet, it was the Black people who built the Brazilian economy, contributing their experience, relationship with others, construction techniques, as well as their religious, cultural, artistic, and political syncretisms. Fully recognizing the contributions of all the peoples who participated in this construction remains a significant challenge for Brazil. The politics of whitening or racial democracy arises from this perspective. Soon after the false abolition, the Brazilian state enacted laws such as the Vagrancy Law, according to which if two or three black individuals were found together in a public square, they could be arrested because they would be considered vagrants. Pay attention to this contradiction! Black people were enslaved for over three hundred years—and I return to this timeline because it is emblematic today for understanding what those three hundred years of slavery meant and still mean—but after abolition, freed people found in public spaces without engaging in any activity were considered vagrants by the state, the police, and the justice system.

It is crucial to understand how these nuances of the Brazilian state permeate its actions over time, right up to the present day. This state's desire to exterminate us was not extinguished by what official historiography describes as a noble gesture by Princess Isabel; quite the contrary. With this gesture, the state legitimized the building of policies of repression, erasure, and violence against our people. Over time, they have received peculiar, subtle, and cynical names such as whitening policy, racial democracy, cordial racism, among various other terms. We have been accustomed to hearing and reproducing them almost unconsciously, given the effectiveness of the social engineering that was built to subjugate us and designate us as inferior beings, without culture and without knowledge, therefore without the prospect of truly becoming citizens of this country.

> **MT**: You mentioned cultural and artistic expressions and syncretism, which also encompasses religious expressions. During the period of slavery, there was an explicit reason to maintain these traditions, but after abolition, they merged with the need for Black people to integrate into society. Didn't the beginning of the 20th century also signify, in some way, a fading of African memories due to the desire to integrate, largely catalyzed by the very Black social movements that emerged, including the Brazilian Black Front[3], and which had integration almost as a motto?

CL: Following abolition, the Black population sought to organize themselves in specific enclaves on the outskirts of cities, after leaving the farms and the condition of slavery. This process occurred throughout the country and the Americas. Initially, there was a denial attitude. According to the memories that my grandmother and my parents shared with me, Black people did not like to be identified as black, because the label "Black" was connected to all that past of violence, of slavery, of that non-being. Note that there was an attitude of racial denial among the freed blacks themselves, accentuated by the repressive state policy that classified as vagrants those who could not find work. Many black individuals would have preferred to return to the farms, even without financial reward, because they had no prospects, nowhere else to go. Even in the cities, they agreed to work under the same conditions imposed on them in the *Casa Grande*[4]. So I would say that, after the false liberation of May 13, 1888, the Brazilian state became the new *Casa Grande*.

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[3] On the Brazilian Black Front: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazilian_Black_Front.

[4] *Casa Grande* (literally the Big House) is the traditional Portuguese term for the plantation owner's house.

When the Brazilian Black Front began to expand and debate an emancipatory project demanding rights, the place of Black people in society, and the commitment of the Brazilian state to guarantee land and work for this population, what was the state's response? The repression and the extinction of any national social movement that had as its agenda the inclusion of this new "newly freed" being, who, until then, did not have – never had and to this day does not have – the prospect of an effective project of social integration. As the state realized that the Brazilian Black Front possessed such strength that it could become a political party and gather people to build a project in which Black people would have a voice to debate their future as beings endowed with rights, what was the Brazilian state's response other than to suffocate us? It was about eradicating any perspective that emerged in Brazilian society regarding the truly democratic construction of the inclusion of these people. All our political and ideological will was stifled by the state, not because we became complacent or lacked the competence to transform society or build a new project for the Brazilian nation. We only need to revisit the work of our Black sociologists to see the enormous contribution of the Black liberation movement in Brazil. People have no idea of the scale of our struggle, of the countless libertarian organizations of Black people that emerged throughout the country, nor that they were all stifled.

Conceiving this new project for the Brazilian nation remains the fundamental challenge. And the Black social movement came with force to reclaim, rebuild, rethink, and recover memory, like all libertarian social movements after May 13, 1888. It brought this legacy, but, over time, it transformed itself, until it came to say to the Brazilian state: “Look, this struggle is not just ours. If we are in this situation, if we have to be here demanding, fighting to build a new process of liberation for Black people, the blame lies with you.” And then the state began to integrate this agenda, previously exclusive to social movements. But it enters the debate by crushing and dissolving the Brazilian Black Front during Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship[5] in the 1930s.

These were the issues that the political and social movements after liberation began to debate. Not only the Black Front, but also various organizations, both religious and Black clubs in the interior of the country, became, so to speak, the new slave quarters. These organizations, these social movements that then erupted in Brazil and America, became centers of resistance and effective libertarian construction for Black people. They strategically and syncretically brought people together as a means of survival and as a political strategy to build a project for integrating this "newly freed" black person into society. In this strategy of constructing new slave quarters, the clubs established communication mechanisms to unite the Black community in creating spaces to organize the newly freed population.

We didn't have access to formal education, nor did we have a place in the new economy emerging with the arrival of immigrants. It therefore became necessary to develop cultural and educational training strategies to organize the community and bring the debate about what it meant to be Black in that post-abolition society into the heart of the clubs. We had no other option but to organize ourselves and stick together. Because this is one of the fundamental traditions of African culture: we like to be together. This is one of the fundamental pillars of our culture. It is a collective process in which everyone shares, listens to elders' experiences, and transmits them through our oral tradition – which was also, for a long time, a somewhat controversial issue in academia. Depending on the historical moment in which this Black person is situated, this being together also becomes a revolutionary process, articulated with other varied forms of organization, whether with literate people, such as Luiz Gama[6], or with illiterate people, who equally participated in the numerous revolts that occurred in Brazil.

> **MT:** The transformation of the Brazilian Black Front into a political party demonstrated the understanding, on the part of the Black population and its leaders, that it was necessary to structure a democratic, multilateral national dialogue aimed at the collective construction of a new societal project. The Vargas government refused dialogue, not only with the Front, but with all political parties, initiating a period of repression that would intensify after the Second World War, especially during the military dictatorship, starting in 1964. The military widely used the misleading slogan that Brazil was a racial democracy to demobilize protest movements of Afro-descendants and indigenous people and

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[5] On Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vargas_era.

[6] On Luiz Gama: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luís_Gama.

authorize even more violent and repressive actions. Nevertheless, it was in this extremely unfavorable scenario that groups such as Palmares and the Unified Black Movement[7] emerged.

CL: After the Estado Novo regime[8] dissolved the Brazilian Black Front, the organized Black movement remained dormant for forty years. Its re-establishment only occurred with the creation of the Unified Black Movement (MNU[9]) in 1978, to resume a project of struggle and clearly state to Brazilian society that the fight against racism and exclusion was not and is not solely the domain of the Black movement. It rises against the white ideology engendered during slavery, which has been reproduced and shaped according to the interests of national, state, and municipal political compositions. This struggle is ongoing, not only for the formerly enslaved but for all segments of society that were not included in the republican project established in 1889. The MNU brought forth a discourse on the ethical and moral commitment of the Brazilian state to reintegrate this population that built Brazil and received neither reparations nor recognition for its contribution. This exclusionary project is still underway. We, black people, do not feel free from the shackles of this ideology.

The political act organized by the Unified Black Movement in 1978 on the steps of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo, denouncing the murder of the young black man Robson Silveira da Luz, was a historical landmark that inaugurated a new political moment and struggle for the black movement in Brazil. The MNU recovered the legacy of the Brazilian Black Front and several other black leaders who were silenced during the period of slavery, raising its voice and saying: "Whoever killed this young man is the same one who killed us three hundred years ago, when we were torn from Africa and brought here." The MNU thus became a more radical political movement, spreading throughout the country and reaching entities within the Black movement that had a more artistic and cultural perspective as a strategy of resistance to various forms of oppression and violence. These entities then shifted from a focus on the micro-scale of their cities to a broader, but also more careful, view of the state.

By identifying the hidden political agenda of artistic and cultural movements, the white elite—with its particularities in each city—began to co-opt the leaders of Black clubs and associations, seeking to remove from the clubs the young people who held more radical ideological positions, inspired by the libertarian and anti-colonial movements that were taking place in countries like South Africa and Haiti. Encouraged by the strength of the Unified Black Movement, social movements in the interior of the state of São Paulo began to draw inspiration from this new scenario, becoming politically and ideologically literate, redefining their profile, now openly political, and defending a discourse that would penetrate political parties situated, let's say, more to the left. This process motivated the creation of centers of thought and political debate that converged with the libertarian perspective of Brazilian Black people.

The Black movement then incorporated the discourse disseminated at the time by American civil rights movements, which echoed the agendas of the libertarian movements of Agostinho Neto in Angola and Samora Machel in Mozambique, acting fundamentally as a political movement. This shift created difficulties in dialogue with the traditional leadership of black student unions and clubs in the interior of São Paulo, further delaying the process of reintegrating the movement into political-party organizations. Before that, forty years had passed between the destruction of the Brazilian Black Front in 1938 and the creation of the Unified Black Movement in 1978. Here in São Carlos, only now, almost fifty years after the founding of the MNU, have we elected our first black female councilor. We no longer have that historical time. We can no longer wait forty or fifty years. We must have this real and effective abolition right now. The issues are numerous. The situation of black people has changed little since we arrived in America. We need to radicalize our political agendas to address the challenges we will face, for example, in municipal, state, and federal elections.

The greatest challenge in the current moment of Brazilian politics and the Black movement lies in managing to build a unified agenda. I feel there is a certain conformism among the black population. It is as if everything is fine, everything is in order, because the racial agenda is publicly addressed. On television, you see many black people not only in the roles of domestic

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7 On the Unified Black Movement: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movimento_Negro_Unificado.

8 On the Estado Novo: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estado_Novo_(Brazil).

9 MNU is the Portuguese acronym for Movimento Negro Unificado, or the Unified Black Movement.

workers or security guards; Our education-related agendas are being implemented; The official historiography of Black people in the world is being revised; Apartheid ended in South Africa, and a black president was elected in that racist society. All of this is due to the struggle of Black movements in Brazil and worldwide.

But racism remains among us. I know that education is fundamental to reversing it, but its implementation is very slow and timid. This new Black movement needs to radicalize and engage in confrontation within political party organizations. Black intellectuals must take this deconstruction to the extreme and decolonize the Eurocentric thinking embedded in academia, which reproduces the non-humanity and non-scientific capacity of the Black subject. By occupying these spaces, Black people must make this commitment, understanding that this struggle is an ongoing process that began with the arrival of the first slave ship in America. It is up to them now to assume the historical legacy of so many Black men and women who revolted, and of the many organizations and rebellions that took place. We need to organize new rebellions, not only in the slave quarters, but also in the *Casa Grande*, in academia, in parliament, and in every possible space. And the only possibility of transformation towards radicalism is through education. I believe in the revolutionary process through education, but with radicalism, because without it, we will never achieve true liberation.

I see that Brazil is heading towards a serious crossroads. What social movements and our ancestors bequeathed to us—their struggles and achievements—the contemporary Black movement has, in some way, managed to honor. The problem is what lies ahead. The challenges are profound, as are the mechanisms of exclusion. Education, by itself, will not solve them. I agree that it is necessary to invest in it, but there is a continuous process of exclusion that also involves knowledge. New technologies amplify barriers, and their effects reach not only the Black population but also all those who do not have access to quality education and the required technological literacy. We are facing doors that lead to a new generation of exclusion, a new version of this false abolition. We cannot delude ourselves: simply getting to university and earning a degree does not mean liberation. We may be entering another cycle of exclusion, in which the Brazilian state will continue to mock us. "You wanted education? Here's the education. There is no more racism. Public policies were created according to your demands." But the policy of extermination persists. It manifests itself in police violence, but also in the violence of knowledge and barriers to entry into the job market. The notion of racial democracy, always convenient for whites, continues to operate. Black people in universities—and our white allies—must commit to challenging this structure. The leadership of universities and their departments needs to be questioned. This space remains white, and reversing this situation requires radical action and firm discourse, with the production of meaning and the occupation of spaces.

> **MT:** Entering the sphere of the ordinary citizen and organized society, what is needed for a large-scale national and multilateral dialogue to take place? The primary condition is that everyone is aware of the injustices of this historical process and the scars it has left, including on indigenous peoples, who were also brutally exterminated and continue to be victims of all kinds of violence. An important step was taken with the approval of laws 10.639 in 2003 and 11.645 in 2008. They made the study of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture mandatory in all public and private schools in Brazil, from elementary to high school, aiming to promote anti-racist awareness among future citizens and value the ethnic-racial formation of the country. Of course, this is far from being enough to overcome the many layers of false truths that have been ingrained in the non-Black and non-Indigenous population over centuries. My question is about how we can build this multifaceted understanding. How can we, as the Brazilian people, begin a process of listening to and valuing one another to erect a racially and socially just country together?

CL: I understand that this concern no longer falls solely on us, descendants of enslaved people. The main challenge for Brazilian society today is to face the truth and make it the axis of an effective process of building citizenship. I raise this point because, as a descendant of enslaved people, I carry a name—Casimiro Paschoal da Silva—that my parents gave me, but I still don't know which country I come from. The descendants of the other peoples who helped build this country know the citizenship of their ancestors: Italians, Portuguese, and Spaniards, among others, were recognized as human beings since they arrived in Brazil. We only had our human condition recognized after abolition. Generically considering all enslaved people as Africans means encouraging the rest of society to keep associating our skin color with the African continent, as if it were homogeneous, when it is actually made up of fifty-four countries. We don't know which African country we came from, and this gap in our origin produces constant anguish.

The historiography of slavery in Brazil places Angola among the countries from which the most enslaved people were brought here. On my own initiative, I decided that, upon completing my cycle on this small planet called Earth and on this tiny grain of sand called São Carlos, I would like to reintegrate myself as a citizen linked to an African country. I went to Angola, visited a local village, was baptized there, and received the name Lumbandanga. Today, by signing my name Casimiro Paschoal Lumbandanga da Silva, I express not only the country that recognizes me as a descendant of Africans because of my skin color, but also a link I did not have before: that of my blackness connected to a concrete territory. Today, I am a citizen, someone whose origin is not limited to skin color. The greatest difficulty in establishing this dialogue with the other ethnic groups that built this country is, first and foremost, that of reconsidering the place of origin denied to Black people. If I hadn't received the name Lumbandanga, I would still be called simply Casimiro Paschoal da Silva, like so many other Brazilian Black people who bear names like Silva and Oliveira, which remain traces of the slave-owning heritage.

Therefore, building full citizenship, which is the basis of all dialogue, requires recovering the historical truth about the cruelty of slavery, about the false abolition, and about how the Brazilian state failed to lead a process of transforming the condition of the freed slaves, to cease to consider them as things or machines, and turn them into citizens. Citizenship is not just about fighting for land, but about achieving human dignity. It involves knowing where we come from and what country we represent. Brazilians of other ethnic descent apply for Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish citizenship, but I can't even apply for my African citizenship because I don't know which country I come from. We, descendants of slaves, descendants of Africans, have a very long historical path to cross. Perhaps future generations—my grandson or my great-grandson—will be able to gain a more civic perspective on the meaning of being Black in Brazil and in the world, thanks to the fruits of this intense struggle we are waging.

In Latin America and Brazil, the failure to recognize African citizens and their descendants generates profound contradictions. As a result, social movements, especially political ones, are developing specific agendas related to gender, race, and culture. These issues are brought into political parties, but are not considered in the formulation of a national project that articulates poverty, violence, racism, and gender identity as central elements of the country's development. I speak from experience, having participated in the drafting of many of these agendas within a left-wing party. What I perceive is the subordination of these issues, confined to internal sectors of the parties, almost like ghettos. By isolating these agendas, responsibility is transferred to groups considered minorities—Black people, the LGBT movement, Indigenous people—and the absence of a structural commitment is normalized.

There are also many talented Black Brazilian artists, yet few of them address the issue of racism. There is an evident discomfort in addressing this topic. What happens in Africa is different, where socio-political issues are clearly expressed in music, cuisine, clothing, and territorial struggles. Here, only a few artists and athletes speak openly about poverty, violence, and racism. Many others seem to avoid these topics when they reach prominent positions, fearing it will damage their careers. That's why I see hip-hop and rap as a particularly vigorous movement. Through their music, they denounce the exclusion experienced by Black people since abolition, a condition always marginalized by capitalism and forgotten by the state. This absence is also noticeable in political parties, which often appropriate agendas discursively but abandon them once they come to power. Discourses on racial democracy, cordial racism, or structural racism become traps, reproduced by academia and politics.

It is also necessary to revisit the contribution of African thinkers in all areas: Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology, Medicine, and the sciences. We must not forget that civilization was born in Africa. Mathematics, the pyramids of Cheops, all of that was built by African hands. But European civilization was highly efficient at erasing, stealing, and appropriating this knowledge to assert a planetary hegemonic project, according to which it was white people who built the civilizing process in the world.

As long as this truth is not taught to new generations, from childhood to university, we will continue to privilege European knowledge as synonymous with beauty, wealth, and humanity, and relegate non-white peoples to the status of non-human. The journey is long, and we will only face this challenge when we can forge a broad pact—in academia and in society—that admits this history. We will not make progress as long as popular artists — from samba to maracatu, carnival, and all artistic expressions — fail to speak out about this place of violence, oppression, and racism in which Black people live in Brazil to this day.

MT: Casimiro, we ask this last question to all our guests interviewed by the V!RUS Committee: does the future seem promising to you?

CL: You know, what strengthens me is realizing that I am closing a cycle in my life and that I have managed to establish myself as a descendant of Africans. As I mentioned before, I went to a village in Angola and received the name Lumbandanga. Back from there, I wrote twelve poems, and an extreme, inexplicable emotion accompanied each one. I cried while writing, as if accessing something very ancient. In one of them, I concluded that "now, I can die peacefully" because I was in Africa and had established myself as an African citizen in the world. When I arrived in Luanda, I experienced an unexpected sentiment, like a return to childhood: I looked around and saw only black people. This sense of belonging brought me both joy and tears. But it also brought contrast: I had left a country still consolidating its democracy and found another, riddled with profound adversity. There, I encountered the revolutionary process in the construction of socialism, the internal disputes, the violence, and how far they are from the prospect of a country with a high quality of life, with access to housing and infrastructure. They expelled those who were effectively their enemies, but then experienced another internal revolutionary process, with black people killing black people in the struggle for a project that could instead benefit Namibia, South Africa, or the United States.

What encourages me in envisioning a promising future is that, in the 1970s, when we started the Black movement here, the challenge was much greater. It was only possible to raise a few issues; there were few meeting spaces, and it was tough to address the concerns of the Black movement. Today, fifty years later, we have political representation at the municipal, state, and federal levels, in a growing process that is irreversible. We have moved beyond isolated struggles and are now engaging in dialogue with the whole of society. There is no turning back. The achievements accumulated over these fifty years will not be reversed. When I see young people like Flávio, from UNegro, occupying parliaments and voicing issues we have been denouncing since the 1930s, I see commitment, energy, and historical fidelity. I see our non-Black allies who also carry this banner, knowing the distance we still have to cross and demonstrating loyalty and commitment. This political awareness is what gives me hope.

That's why I say I can now die peacefully. I got to know Africa, reclaimed my identity, and re-established my connection with an African country. I know my body will be buried here, but my soul will return to that continent, along with the others that were torn from there. Many of them rest in the sea, others in São Carlos, in places we don't even know. But they all await this reunion—and I will go to meet them.

ÁGORA
AGORA

SOVEREIGNTY AND TECHNODIVERSITY
SOBERANIA E TECNODIVERSIDADE
SÉRGIO DA SILVEIRA

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Silveira, S. (2025). Sovereignty and Technodiversity. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 14-23. https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.240239

Abstract

This text addresses the relationship between technology, sovereignty, and technodiversity. Among its objectives is to deconstruct the idea that technology is neutral, that massive data extraction is a path that must be followed at any cost, and that it is possible to develop independently of technologies associating with the native ecosystem of Big Tech companies. To this end, it draws on the key thinkers of socio-technical thought, from the emergence of cybernetics to the present day, and discusses the political implications of data-based Artificial Intelligence and presents important disputes surrounding the concept of sovereignty. It points to AI, data centers, and cloud providers as geopolitical instruments. It presents the perspective of digital sovereignty that enables technodiversity and the inclusion of other worldviews in technological development. This perspective aligns with the construction of multilateral dialogues related to data policy and the development of the AI ecosystem, within the scope of organizations such as BRICS, and confronts the imperialist position of the United States in attempting to impose on the rest of the world the business model and products developed by its Big Tech companies, increasing the dependence and subordination of countries in the Global South.

Keywords: Digital Sovereignty, Datafication, Technodiversity, Artificial Intelligence, Sovereign Infrastructures.

1 Why talk about sovereignty when thinking about technology?

There is an indissociable, though not always direct, relationship between technique, technology, and power. Power defined as capacity is a notion that can be employed in economics, organization, and even computing. Michel Foucault saw power as the emanation of social relations: “power is everywhere; not because it encompasses everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). Thus, devices, mechanisms, and instruments bring about and serve this widespread power, independent of subjects. Foucault saw in history not only oppressive power, but also productive power, which creates and liberates. The way power is organized and realized is also its technologies, a set of techniques that can be reproduced in time and space. From this perspective, power and technology are related.

Karl Marx (2015) perceived power as originating in class domination and as an expression of disputes over the appropriation of produced wealth. Work, an absolutely central category in Marx's thinking, is constitutive of human beings and is what allows them to design and organize techniques and technologies in all societies. Human labor is the action by which nature is transformed, and, in this action, techniques and their replication in technologies are created. These technologies are appropriated to generate power over others. According to Marxist thought, technologies comprise the productive forces. In capitalism, they are vital for the reproduction of capital, since they allow for the expansion of the extraction of value from human labor, increasing its capacity to produce. The ownership of technologies is one of the main means of social power, as it guarantees control over the means of production.

There are several other theoretical perspectives that organize the relationship between power and technology. However, we can observe that some of them place them as a product of society, while others give them primacy over the social aggregate. This is the dispute between the social determination of technology and those who think about the technological determination of society. To what extent is this clash important? By defining the primacy of technology over society, we could try to change social relations by altering technical apparatus. It would be possible to create engineering solutions for social conflicts. Furthermore, a brilliant mind and its ingenious invention could change the world. In general, technodeterministic approaches are linked to the cult of the individual, the genius or superhero who can change the course of humanity.

Viewing society as the realm in which technologies emerge and which, simultaneously, conditions and delimits them, does not imply denying that some technological inventions cause changes in organization or release subjugated cultural energies or even have the power to displace hierarchies and groups, whether in the realm of economic gain or positions of political power. Thinking of technologies as conditioned by society and, at the same time, as vectors of its transformation when appropriated in economic, ideological, and political disputes by conflicting groups is a sociotechnical and technopolitical perspective. In this view, the construction of technologies is fraught with controversy, as Bruno Latour (2012) has shown us, and therefore can embody specific forms of power and domination (Winner, 1986).

Positivist thinking, hegemonic in European modernity, has consolidated the idea that it is possible to develop socially neutral technology. This seductive idea is advancing among the ruling classes and in circles of capitalist power. It is taught in accredited engineering and computer science schools. Mathematics can be seen as distant from any implication in power relations. It may seem naive to say that a quadratic equation interferes or can interfere in class disputes. Even more naive would be to consider that the mastery and the ability to perform calculations with multiple variables at frighteningly fast speeds is not one of the reasons why the United States is trying to block China's access to state-of-the-art chips. Ambivalence is a quality of most technologies.

Because they are ambivalent and presented as universal, technologies have become one of the crucial elements of power today; therefore, they are related to the idea of national sovereignty. We can empirically verify that technology is the source of military, economic, and political power. The idea that technology follows a predetermined rational path is a universalist belief. When something is thought of as universal, it is generally placed above the cultures and worldviews that constitute everyday human practices. The fact is that the view of the modern state as a machine or an organism is a power arrangement that has become established in Europe. Its structure and political dynamics were taken to all continents in the wake of colonization promoted by Europeans.

In the historical process of its foundation, the modern state placed itself as the highest power over a population and a territory. It disarmed all other powers and concentrated the power to act with maximum violence or, in the words of Max Weber (1946), constituted the legitimate monopoly of violence: “the state is a relationship of men who dominate their equals” (Weber, 1946, p. 4). Weber observed the process of power through the liberal lens of the aggregation of individuals. Marx, on the other hand, saw the state from the perspective of maintaining social and economic class power. Individuals do not make history based solely on their will or their ideas, “men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (Marx [1852] 1967, p. 15). The state is a class instrument for organizing society in the interests of the ruling classes.

The various perspectives allow us to perceive that the state as a sovereign power needs to be technologically constituted in order for its power to be viable and legitimate. Viable in order to remain strong and capable of imposing itself in the face of threats to its integrity. Legitimate as a structure that serves the interests of a society increasingly articulated by information networks. The sovereign state is a technological state. Sovereignty requires technological capacity compatible with that existing in society. Sovereignty and technology are allied. The exercise of sovereignty is carried out in accordance with the stage of historical development of the productive forces. It is increasingly clear that, to maintain the sovereignty of the nation-state, it is necessary to possess digital sovereignty.

Digital sovereignty can be understood in many ways, from the most restricted to state power to the most socially comprehensive. In all senses, digital sovereignty is the ability to define, develop, and choose how to use digital technologies to assert the interests and objectives of the state and, more broadly, of society and communities. It is linked to the self-determination of the state and its ability to invent and use technologies without external forces being able to prevent such operations. Undoubtedly, digital sovereignty has economic or techno-economic implications that will be addressed later.

2 Current power is structured around AI and automated systems

Digital technology, understood as the conversion of symbolic production into digits, has been dominated by datafication, that is, the conversion of the flows of life, of the set of human and non-human activities, into data. Datafication has revived the possibility of advancing the connectionist perspective of Artificial Intelligence (AI), whose first experiment was the Perceptron, implemented by Frank Rosenblatt in 1957. Thus, the abundance of data has made machine learning and deep learning approaches feasible. AI as it actually exists is a mega machine. It is not a *software,* nor is it an application that runs on a cell phone or computer. It is a colossal structure composed of *data centers,* computers with high processing capacity, algorithmic systems, and gigantic databases.

The notion of megamachine was developed by Lewis Mumford (1966) and also discussed by Langdon Winner, both in Autonomous Technology (1978) and in The Whale and the Reactor (1986). Megamachine refers to large-scale systems that

incorporate the choices of what Mumford called authoritarian megatechnology, which are preferred over small-scale systems, crafts, and trade, which he called democratic polytechnics (Winner, 1978, p. 109). It would be difficult not to notice that actual AI, especially deep learning models, could be seen as a megatechnological obsession that seeks to control everything, as Mumford indicated.

When we ask ChatGPT a simple question, we move the structure of the megamachine. Just to run the machines that will make the inferences for the answer, we consume the equivalent energy of 2.52 minutes of a 10W LED light bulb. It seems like little. But, calculating seven hundred million queries/day, we can assess that the environmental impacts of these seemingly trivial acts are significant. When we look at this energy consumption in another way, we see that it is “comparable to 35,000 U.S. homes, evaporative freshwater equal to the annual drinking needs of 1.2M people, and carbon emissions requiring a Chicago-sized forest to offset” (Jegham et al., 2025, p. 1).

In the Nooskoop Manifesto, Matteo Pasquinelli and Vladan Joler (2021, p. 1263) stated that “it is more reasonable to consider machine learning as an instrument of knowledge magnification that helps to perceive features, patterns, and correlations through vast spaces of data beyond human reach”. Demystifying today's high-performance automated systems called intelligent, Pasquinelli and Joler identify a machine learning assembly line that, in effective reality, is the AI that actually exists today. Breaking down this line, we have “an object to be observed (training dataset), an instrument of observation (learning algorithm) and a final representation (statistical model)” (Pasquinelli & Joler, 2021, p. 1265).

Existing AI depends on vast databases for its training. But what is trained? Algorithms have been chosen to extract patterns, make classifications and predictions from the databases provided. These algorithms use statistics and probability to generate a model that will do what was intended, read images, organize or generate texts, organize routes, among various possibilities. However, the trained model undergoes numerous adjustments to its parameters. This work is done by data scientists, computer scientists, and statisticians. Despite weekly announcements that AI will take control of humanity, it does not yet have general capabilities, that is, a single AI cannot perform several different activities. What we have today are still systems that perform specific activities for which they have been “trained”.

The process of training a generative AI is colossal. Despite calling itself open, OpenAI is quite closed, not only in the codes of its models, but also in the information about its training and inference processes. It is estimated that GPT-4 was trained with approximately 10,000 to 25,000 A100 GPUs (NVIDIA graphics processing units, specific for *data centers* and high-performance computing). The *dataset* was probably ten to thirteen trillion tokens, and the estimated training time was three to six months. The estimated cost of this training process, in which the model learns the pattern of the data it has received, was at least $63 million (Patel & Wong, 2023).

Few countries have the financial capacity to train such large models. Big Tech companies, or digital oligopolies, know this and are increasing the size of the databases used in their training. They are adding more and more chips and cards specifically for AI, increasing processor speed and data processing, thereby expanding the computing power used. This situation has led to growing asymmetry. Two countries stand out in the training of large models: the United States and China. Europe tries to catch up, but is falling further and further behind the leaders. However, the most worrying information concerns the control that Big Tech companies exercise over scientific knowledge in the current field of AI. According to Nestor Maslej and co-authors,

> Industry races ahead of academia. Until 2014, most significant machine learning models were released by academia. Since then, industry has taken over. In 2022, there were 32 significant industry-produced machine learning models compared to just three produced by academia. Building state-of-the-art AI systems increasingly requires large amounts of data, computer power, and money—resources that industry actors inherently possess in greater amounts compared to nonprofits and academia. (Maslej et al., 2023, p. 23).

In 2024, the Stanford report confirmed this trend of Big Tech controlling techno-scientific development, as they produced fifty-one significant machine learning models in the previous year (Maslej et al., 2024, p. 30). Universities managed to expand the development of notable models to fifteen, and, in addition, twenty-one significant models were created in collaboration between industry and academia (Maslej et al., 2024, p. 30).

Computing power is indispensable for the training and inference of automated systems called AI. The escalation that occurs in the search for greater training capacity and speed is only justified by the logic of domination, whether economic, political, or military. The relentless collection of data is also part of the belief that, with more records on human behavior, it will be possible to act more broadly on populations and their individuals. It is for this reason that the training of Open AI's GPT-3 cost more than US$4 million, while the training of Meta's LLaMA model took one million GPU hours and cost more than US$2.4 million. Training a Generative AI model is increasingly expensive. Even DeepSeek, which greatly reduced the resources for training its large language model (LLM), had to use massive databases and many high-processing cards.

The current leadership in AI is in the United States, under the direction of Big Tech companies. These companies control resources that are indispensable for the development of AI as it currently exists. This is AI dominated by the deep learning approach. Training an advanced AI model consumes millions of dollars and many hours of processing with specific cards, that is, specific chips to perform the necessary operations. These are called *AI inference chips* or *inference accelerators,* which achieve better results in less time. Among them, for example, are Google's Tensor Processing Units (TPUs), optimized for inference and training; Neural Processing Units (NPUs) or Neural Network Accelerators, common in mobile devices and edge computing; and Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), used for training and inference. Currently, these chips are essential for applications such as image recognition, natural language processing, and other real-time AI tasks.

3 The race for AI supremacy is geopolitical

There is fierce competition for AI dominance, which expands the control of digital oligopolies. These disputes are part of projects of global power and domination. The development and use of AI in the capitalist system and based on the international division of labor accentuates asymmetries, putting increasingly isolationist US imperialism on a collision course with China, which proposes more integrative agreements to countries. European countries, for their part, are trying to prevent the collapse of a global structure that is no longer sustainable, while large, populous, and economically relevant countries such as India, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa are advancing their articulations, which must increasingly rely on technology.

To fully understand how the United States acts in relation to AI control, we can look at its policies as expressed in the US Presidential Executive Orders. Executive Order 13859, dated February 11, 2019, entitled *Maintaining American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence*, signed by Donald Trump, states in its first section on the policy and principles that should guide the proposal:

> Artificial Intelligence (AI) promises to drive growth of the United States economy, enhance our economic and national security, and improve our quality of life. The United States is the world leader in AI research and development (R&D) and deployment. Continued American leadership in AI is of paramount importance to maintaining the economic and national security of the United States and to shaping the global evolution of AI in a manner consistent with our Nation’s values, policies, and priorities. The Federal Government plays an important role in facilitating AI R&D, promoting the trust of the American people in the development and deployment of AI-related technologies, training a workforce capable of using AI in their occupations, and protecting the American AI technology base from attempted acquisition by strategic competitors and adversarial nations. (United States, 2019, p. 3967).

While in Brazil most high-level government managers claim that technology is only a means to an end, Americans also work with technology as an end in itself. For this reason, they seek to be at the forefront of technological development, especially AI. Leadership is not merely a desire to be ahead; it is a necessity. Those who lead dictate the direction of solutions and technical standards. This allows them to reap the greatest gains that technology can offer. Therefore, maintaining leadership is a fundamental component of the United States' economic strategy. In addition, technologies embody values and bring ways of doing things that consolidate worldviews and ways of being. By expanding its technologies, the United States is expanding its way of life. That is why Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron (1996) were right to call information technologies Californian.

To remain the largest economy on the planet and reap the benefits that this can generate, U.S. leaders consider it necessary to maintain technological leadership. Thus, in addition to investing in technological and scientific invention and innovation, they are trying to block the sale of semiconductors and state-of-the-art chips to China. The goal is to slow down the Chinese economy and reduce the innovative capacity of its companies. In this context, DeepSeek founder Liang Wenfeng stated that "the problem we face has never been money, but the ban on cutting-edge chips (Xiong & Amadeu, 2025)".

While the United States is making every effort to restrict China's access to advanced chips (below 7nm), China continues to develop its capacity to independently manufacture high-tech chips. China's Semiconductor Manufacturing is likely to be capable of producing 5nm2 chips. Companies such as Shanghai Micro Electronics Equipment (SMEE) are actively developing extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography technology to replace the lithography machines monopolized by ASML[1], which has restricted its sales to China.

The chip war is about the ability to process more data in the shortest possible time. Undoubtedly, it is related to military uses of chips in missiles, drones, and smart weapons. But above all, it follows the capitalist logic of competition and continuous productivity growth. The Qiushi Journal (2024), one of the Chinese Communist Party's publications, presented in an article a phrase that sums up the current Chinese perspective: "The fundamental task of socialism is to release and develop productive forces. The strength of socialism lies in its ability to enable faster and better development of productive forces than capitalism".

4 The dispute over data and "sovereign clouds"

The control and accumulation of data are vital for the development of AI. The training of existing AI depends on data. The accumulation of data follows the logic of capital accumulation. With data operated by algorithms, new solutions are created and expressed in products and services. In this sense, as Jathan Sadowski (2019) pointed out, in today's capitalism, data has become a kind of capital. Recently, Chinese President Xi Jiping used the expression "new productive forces" to include data among them (Qiushi Journal, 2024).

The creation, collection, storage, and processing of data require ever-larger infrastructures; therefore, *data centers* are essential. The expansion of these data warehouses has been linked to the expansion of the business model called the cloud. In the early 21st century, Amazon launched its business model based on so-called cloud computing (Armbrust et al., 2009). Jeff Bezos' company said that the cloud allowed countless computational resources to be accessed over the Internet with payment made according to usage. This marked the beginning of the outsourcing of data and system storage and processing, as well as secure spaces for network servers. Instead of purchasing, owning, and maintaining *data centers* and physical servers, companies and governments were encouraged to use technology services, such as computing capacity, storage, and databases, as needed, using a cloud provider such as Amazon Web Services (AWS).

Cloud providers have started to build increasingly larger *data centers*, reaching what are known as hyperscale *data centers*. These are structures that allow their customers to quickly increase their workloads, that is, scale their data processing, enabling high availability and performance. According to a survey by Synergy Research Group (2025), the number of hyperscale *data centers* doubled between 2019 and 2024, reaching 1,136 units. The United States accounts for 54% of these hyperscale infrastructures, China has 16%, and Europe has 15%. The capacity of a *data center* is measured in MW (megawatts) because it represents the maximum electrical power that the facility can consume to keep all its systems running. According to the same survey by Synergy Research Group, the United States accounts for more than half of the world's total capacity.

Brazil has a General Data Protection Law, but no national data policy. There is no requirement for data localization, not even for the government. Data on the school performance of Brazilian adolescents is stored in Microsoft Azure *data centers*. Part of the SUS data, in 2024 and until mid-2025, was hosted on Amazon Web Server. The sovereign cloud of Serpro and

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1 See https://asia.nikkei.com/business/technology/tech-asia/the-final-chip-challenge-can-china-build-its-own-asml. Accessed on 07/20/2025.

Dataprev includes Big Tech companies as partners. Between 2018 and 2022, the National Research Network (RNP) adopted a policy of advising Brazilian public universities to host their data on Big Tech cloud providers.

When the Ministry of Finance recently proposed a plan to attract *data centers* to Brazil, it disregarded the fact that Brazil was already a destination for large economic groups that want to invest in data centers, mainly because the country has renewable energy and plenty of water. What the Brazilian government did not launch was a plan to build *data centers* for public data and to ensure the needs of Brazilian universities, which no longer have repositories for their research under national control. China, for example, allows companies to set up in the country, but does not authorize them to remove data from the country. Precisely because data is capital, it is a source of strategic information and input for AI. Without a data policy, without sovereign infrastructure, the more we modernize the country, the more we will deepen our dependence and subordination to the interests of Big Tech companies.

ABES – Brazilian Association of Software Companies, which despite its name has the participation of Microsoft, Google, Oracle, Amazon, and other foreign companies, has in the past positioned itself as an opponent of open *software* policies in government. Currently, it is launching itself against proposals for digital sovereignty. The entity advocates for competitive digital sovereignty, that is, sovereignty that promotes the development of local technology in an integrated manner with global innovative ecosystems. In short, it proposes maintaining our degree of subordination to the interests of the United States and its companies, which, not coincidentally, have launched products with the name *sovereignty cloud.* In the international division of labor, ABES ideologues believe that Brazil should hand over data on its population to be processed by Big Tech companies, which will develop products to be offered according to the profile of this mass of individuals. In addition, it is up to Brazilian companies to develop applications that integrate and expand the Big Tech ecosystem.

In the report by the Atlantic Council, *a* US *think tank*, entitled *Four Myths About the Cloud: The Geopolitics of Cloud Computing*, Trey Herr, then director of the institute's Cyber Statecraft Initiative, wrote:

> Cloud computing providers are more than companies—they govern vast utility infrastructure, play host to digital battlefields, and are magnificent engines of complexity. Cloud computing is embedded in contemporary geopolitics; the choices providers make are influenced by, and influential on, the behavior of states. In competition and cooperation, cloud computing is the canvas on which states conduct significant political, security, and economic activity. (Herr, 2020, p. 1).

One of the myths Herr challenges is that the cloud poses no risk to the supply chain, highlighting how the colossal scale of *hardware* and *software* purchases by providers amplifies vulnerabilities (such as *hypervisor* failures), whose impact can affect millions of global users simultaneously. What Herr did not describe were the possibilities of blocking machines and systems wherever they are due to the provisions of the Cloud Act, a U.S. law that extends its jurisdiction to the entire planet. This means that no matter where the cloud provider has its machine, it must comply with the provisions of U.S. law and agencies.

5 The prospect of technodiversity as a real possibility

In the book *Machine and Sovereignty: For a Planetary Thinking*, philosopher Yuk Hui (2024) noted that machines are no longer simple tools and have come to structure systems of government, production, and knowledge. Hui proposed that sovereignty should no longer be thought of solely in terms of Western modernity, based on the nation-state, the autonomous subject, and legal rationality. He argued that the concept of sovereignty should seek planetary technicality and a multiplicity of cosmologies. Therefore, he advanced the proposal for a philosophical and political rearticulation of sovereignty based on the centrality of technologies and machines in the contemporary world.

Contemporary computing, especially in its massive corporate and state expression, is increasingly configured as a Mumfordian megamachine, as a totalizing system insatiable for data, energy, and control. The mantra of “growing computing power” as an end in itself is an energetic and civilizational dead end. In this sense, it is up to the humanities to urgently devise technical systems that are not dictated by the logic of infinite scalability and centralization. Systems that value contextual efficiency, modulation appropriate to local needs, resilient decentralization, and low entropy. Systems that serve life in communities, not ones that require life to adapt to their voracious demands.

We can devise new models for automated systems that overcome the paradigm of surveillance as a prerequisite. How? Through automation based on context and real need, not on predatory data extraction. It is possible to start building and developing robust statistical models that do not depend on enormous databases; we can organize solutions that preserve privacy by design, that seek federated or distributed learning. We need to build federated data warehouses with low environmental impact that overcome the gigantism that Big Tech wants to impose on us as the only way to develop automated systems. We need to block the environmental degradation promoted by unlimited datafication.

Brazil and the BRICS countries have immense socio-environmental and cultural diversity. At the same time, we live under the growing threat of surveillance and digital extractivism. However, Brazil is a crucial field for this reinvention. We must foster new computational discoveries based on free *software and hardware*, autonomous community networks, and deep dialogues between traditional knowledge and critical technoscience. We can and must develop a radically democratic and pluralistic technological ecosystem that reflects our forests, rivers, and peoples, not data monopolies. Overcoming the crisis will require networks of concrete alternatives, woven with threads of different cosmo-techniques, pointing to a digital future that is sustainable, livable, and fair. The time of the universal megamachine is over. Now is the time to bet on technodiversity.

Beyond the perspective of technopolitical plurality, Yuk Hui proposes that we advance the concept of sovereignty beyond its political-territorial aspect. To this end, he mobilizes the relationship between cosmologies, ontologies, and technologies. This implies assuming that technical apparatuses are not universal, as the European worldview claims. The purposes of being and worldviews are expressed in technologies. Hui points out that different cultures can generate a variety of quite distinct ways of knowing and validating knowledge, that is, there are different epistemologies. Instead of subjecting the epistemologies of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, African or Eastern ethnic groups to Western epistemology, Hui suggests an epistemological diplomacy that can be achieved by creating conditions for different knowledge systems to coexist and dialogue without seeking the superiority of one over the other. Based on this concept, we can operate a sovereignty that incorporates the right of peoples to develop their own cosmo-techniques without universalist impositions or isolationist and romantic propositions.

From this perspective, the current AI paradigm should not be thought of as universal or destined to pursue the principle of efficiency. It can be enriched by other worldviews and their techniques, which can coexist and inform each other. Thinking about the possibilities of epistemic diplomacy is not a panacea, since the Western worldview has become globalized not only through discourse but also through colonial violence. Epistemic diplomacy may not be viable when imperialist forces seek to dominate resources and territories. It can also be interpreted as a paralyzing or essentialist relativism that would result in an uncritical acceptance of authoritarian forms.

6 Conclusion

Sovereignty is a contested term. As has been the case almost since it was first coined by Jean Bodin, the definition of sovereignty has been used as a weapon. The word sovereignty is even being used to nullify the possibilities of greater autonomy and technological independence. But the proposition of effective digital sovereignty is advancing far beyond the idea of national sovereignty centered on the elevation of state power. The idea of popular sovereignty, launched by social movements such as the MTST (Homeless Workers' Movement), is emerging. The perspective of sovereignty linked to communities is also advancing. New creative energies are moving towards incorporating into the concept the worldviews of the peoples of the South, ignored and erased by colonizers who imposed their culture, values, and worldview, blocking multiple invented expressions and their conversion into technologies. The struggle for sovereignty is found in the struggle for technodiversity.

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CITIES FOR WHOM? URBAN LIFE AND VULNERABLE BODIES

CIDADES PARA QUEM? VIDA URBANA E CORPOS VULNERÁVEIS

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Pinheiro, E. & Klopp, J. (2025). Cities for Whom? Urban Life and Vulnerable Bodies. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 24-40
https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239946

Abstract

This paper systematically analyzes the spatial dynamics of unhoused people (UH) in Rio de Janeiro and New York City, based on research supported by FAPERJ and CNPq. The article explores and highlights the unpredictable, uneven experience of inclusion and belonging, which is undermined by the lack of rights and forced mobility. The methodology employed involves georeferencing UH through semi-structured interviews and photographic or drawing records. This approach, implemented in several neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro (RJ) and in Manhattan, New York City (NYC), enables more dialogue around the conflict and convergences in experiences across Latin and North American cities. The findings strengthen the spatial visibility of vulnerable populations, who remain part of the urban fabric while simultaneously facing systemic marginalization due to inadequate housing and planning policies. The findings demonstrate how UH communities form in urban areas, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, collectively constituting what we term as *invisible city*. The results also underscore the actors engaged in urban power struggles and the need for counter-hegemonic urban planning initiatives. With the support of David Harvey's concept of the capitalist city, Anderson's Affect Theory, and the framework of public dimensions by Lavalle, the collected data contribute to a realistic and forward-looking understanding of contemporary urban life.

Keywords: Rio de Janeiro, New York, Public Policies, Unhoused People, Urban Planning.

1 Introduction: the dilemmas in urban (contemporary) life

The residents of today's major cities and their ways of inhabiting, desiring, and perceiving urban spaces significantly influence the development of Architecture, Urbanism, and other social sciences, reflecting human aspirations, cultural realms, and the exercise of individual subjectivities. This framework was established over forty years ago as a benchmark for an interdisciplinary scientific field, bridging themes from Architecture and Urbanism with Urban Sociology, Anthropology, and Philosophy (Nesbitt, 2006). The recognition of urban ambiances as a material condition that enables crosscutting analysis this research's first contribution to improving urban life and its contemporary struggles.. By emphasizing the ambiances generated through the movement and presence of unhoused individuals, the research highlights how material and immaterial dimensions of public space intersect. The term *Ambiance* is defined as "(...) a 'state of mind', 'thing' to show that one must look again at the inner dimension that exposes itself to the outer world (…) the material and moral atmospheres encompassing thermal, light, and sound sensations, as well as cultural and subjective perceptions of a place" (Duarte & Pinheiro, 2019, p. 21, our translation), making it crucial for qualitative analysis. Recognizing an ambiance as a geographical and ethnographic explanation of an event underscores the relevance of qualitative analysis alongside quantitative data. Furthermore, it can be argued that the space of daily use and experience can only be imprinted and understood in its emerging value —that is, through the collective and dynamic character shaped by new political and social influences.

The growing centrality of private life in major cities deepens patterns of fear and segregation among those who can occupy a certain protective sphere. The idea of a *protected sphere of intimacy* is a subject for a broader discussion about the similarities and differences between various American cities. Here, in particular, it also emphasizes the need to highlight Latin American dilemmas within the American continent, in contrast to discourses that tend to underscore North American realities as being better resolved. Conversely, the reliance on public and collective spaces for basic survival exposes a fundamental challenge to modern urban planning—one shaped by later reinterpretations of Situationist thought and by humanist geographic approaches to body-environment relations. This paper focuses on the ambiances created by the movements and presence of unhoused individuals (UH) in the streets of major American cities. It is important to note that the term *unhoused* emphasizes that, while some people exist within the city, they lack access to proper housing. The research, titled *Affective Cartographies of an Invisible City: Sensitive Mapping of Unhoused People* has been carried in Rio de Janeiro (RJ) since 2024 and was recently piloted in New York City (NYC) during a Visiting Scholar period at Columbia University, in 2025. The research analyzes georeferenced data on UH locations across various neighborhoods in the studied cities, combining it with qualitative data to reveal urban tensions and the absence of counter-hegemonic policies for creating more democratic spaces. When mapping these invisible spaces, one observes the urban inhospitality characteristic of

metropolises and how this invisible city results more from societal and institutional neglect of UH in spatial terms, than from their actual physical invisibility.

Such neglect underscores the need for methodological approaches that cultivate a finer sensitivity to place and to the narratives of those who inhabit it. This constitutes a socio-technological contribution to the field of Architecture and Urban Planning. As a locus of coexistence of diversity, but also of respect for social inequalities, public urban space has not exhausted its analytical possibilities and, faced with new dilemmas, needs to be confronted. The idea of a *body that survives on the street* is put forward in this research as a way of stimulate a non-hegemonic thought, inverting the logic that a person who is on the street has no choice or no solution. Through on-site verification, conducted during nighttime field trips in Rio de Janeiro, supported by a van rental for this purpose, it has been possible to map several neighborhoods in the Carioca[1] capital where these people construct a geographic and emotional territory. In NYC, due to methodological constraints, the observational walks were conducted during morning and afternoon hours, by walking throught the streets on foot, by subway, or by bus. Applying desk research after each of these walks, we developed a georeferenced wandering map, ultimately creating a sensitive cartography of this invisible city (Rolnik, 2007)—the primary objective of this research. This objective gains relevance in light of the post-pandemic urban environment, which saw a drastic increase in the population experiencing homelessness as well as a deep informalization of work. Richard Sennett (2014) had already anticipated this phenomenon by arguing that the loneliness and individuality of the “person of our time,” together with the capitalist production of the city, would quickly erode work structures.

Informality and poverty stem from the way we engage with urban space and represent manifestations of broader social and urban challenges in both nations. From an urban planning perspective, informal activities require a close look at the quality of daily life in metropolitan centers. Due to diverse historical processes and development delays, several cities in Brazil, particularly Rio de Janeiro (RJ), are unable to deal with the problems arising from the lack of mobility systems, adequate housing, and absence of shelters for combating rising temperatures—something that affects UH and demands urgent urban responses. In NYC, the comparative study reveals that fewer people dwell on the streets of the metropolis due to governmental and non-governmental provision of shelters in the city. However, the lack of shelter from the heat and the absence of adequate policies to care for the mentally ill population that wanders the streets persist. This article ultimately points to a social critique. The right to the city (Lefebvre, 2016 [1968]) and the right to move and experience public spaces are guaranteed for every citizen, but not everyone can enjoy these rights due to the lack of social, political, and economic opportunities.

David Harvey (2014) expands on Henri Lefebvre's (2013; 2016 [1968]) concept in his essay *Rebel Cities*, asserting that the right to the city is among the most crucial human rights. He argues that the distribution of urban resources directly mirrors social inequalities. For Harvey, the body itself becomes a battleground in urban conflicts: Who can access spaces for leisure, culture, and health? Who moves freely without scrutiny or neglect? Whose body truly holds the right to the city? He advances the thesis that urbanization and cities have historically served as mechanisms for absorbing capital and labor under capitalism, making them epicenters of crises, conflicts, and resistance (Harvey, 2014). Thus, demands for *the right to the city* and *urban reforms*—which advocate for the city's social function—must prioritize the rights of the oppressed, especially in major cities that stage urban struggles challenging capitalism's endless accumulation. Similarly, Raquel Rolnik (2019) examines how Brazil's urbanization model has historically marginalized populations deemed peripheral, denying them housing, mobility, leisure, and cultural access. She notes that this exclusionary approach underpins the entire American urban model. From this lens, it becomes evident that numerous groups are barred from urban quality of life—some even deprived of active citizenship. This work explores the idea of unhoused individuals constructing an *invisible city* through their movements, aiming to provoke critical reflection on contemporary urbanism in metropolises and the urgent need to reimagine how we inhabit and experience public spaces.

When discussing the concept of *public space*, it is essential to present it as a multidimensional and dichotomous term, which only makes sense in opposition to the private space, which ultimately imposes its proper boundaries. The ambiguity becomes even clearer with a retrospective of some concepts of the *public*, based on common sense: places and flows; unrestricted or

[1] “Carioca” is the way people who are born in Rio de Janeiro are called in Brazil.

open access; creation and expansion of rights; public man; public faith; public force and public opinion. None of these concepts is allowed to people who lost—if they ever had—their rights as citizens. In conceptualizing public space, Adrián Gurza Lavalle (2005) says that one must establish "(…) three dimensions of 'public' correlated with their adjectives from the 'private' world: 1. Public versus privacy, intimacy, or primary sociability; 2. Public versus property or private interest; and 3. Public versus non-disseminated, private or restricted knowledge" (Lavalle, 2005, p. 37, our translation). These dimensions incorporate the idea of lived space, named as a topological field by Gustave Fischer (1994): "(...) This notion of field, taken from physics, denotes the fact that **a space does not exist in itself, but solely through a set of effects or interactions** that it engenders between its formative elements" (Fischer, 1994, p. 53, our emphasis, our translation). The above statements acknowledge that the values of the public dimension are regularly associated with their opposing private dimension. For the unhoused, these meanings largely lose their original sense: no notion of privacy is experienced, no space is personal; at the same time, despite the invisibility the vulnerable body acquires in large cities, and nothing belongs strictly to that body.

1.1 Unhoused in RJ and NYC

Regarding the situation of UH, over fifteen years ago the Federal Executive Secretary in Brazil issued Decree No. 7.053 of 2009, establishing the National Policy for the Unhoused Population (PNPSR, 2009). This decree officially recognized this population within the Brazilian State, defining them as a distinct group with specific rights and requiring tailored services to address their unique living conditions and challenges. Similarly, Law No. 14.821/2024, which establishes the National Policy for Decent Work and Citizenship for the Unhoused Population (PNTC Pop Rua, 2024), sets out in Article 1 the legal definition of the unhoused population: “(...) a heterogeneous group whose common trait is the absence of housing and whose shelter and livelihood depend on public spaces (...)” (PNTC Pop Rua, 2024, n.p., our translation). Under this definition, the UH category is now much broader and can even include workers who live on the streets, such as those affected by the uberization phenomenon. In Rio de Janeiro, the 2023 Unhoused Population Census[2] showed that 78.6% of this population engaged in some income-generating activity: 57,7% as recyclable-material collectors, 20,7% as street vendors, 3% as parking attendants, and only 3,5% under a formal contract. The most recent study by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) indicated a significant increase in overall numbers between 2013 and 2023 (a ten-fold rise), with 227.087 people registered as unhoused in Brazil at the beginning of 2024.

Resolution No. 605 of December 13, 2024, produced by the Brazilian Observatory of Public Policies for the Unhoused Population (OBPopRua/POLOS-UFMG, 2024a), reports 22.922 unhoused persons in 2013, 242.756 in December 2023, and 309.998 in 2024. The 2023 Unhoused Population Census carried out by the City of Rio de Janeiro identified 7.865 people in the state capital; the same census projects that this figure will approach 10.000 in 2025. It is worth noting that the estimated population of the state of Rio de Janeiro is 16.054.524 inhabitants according to the 2022 Census, while the capital’s population is nearly 6.212.000. For comparisons, according to data collected from *Coalition for the Homeless*[3], homelessness in New York has also reached crisis levels, with an estimated 350.000 people experiencing some form of homelessness. This includes shelter residents, unsheltered individuals on the streets and in the subway, and those temporarily doubled-up in others' homes. In 2025, each night, 106.875 people slept in New York City shelters, roughly 8.000 slept unsheltered in public spaces, and more than 200,000 were temporarily doubled-up in others' homes. The city accounted for 93% of the increase in the state's total unhoused population. In January 2022, there were 45.343 people in shelters; by January 2024, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters housed 89.119 people. The city's shelter population has risen sharply, driven above all by the influx of asylum seekers and by the growing number of unsheltered individuals[4]. According to the

[2] For more details, access https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/navegue-por-temas/populacao-em-situacao-de-rua/publicacoes/relat_pop_rua_digital.pdf.

[3] For more details, access https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/how-many-total-people-are-homeless-in-nyc/.

[4] For more details, access http://comptroller.nyc.gov/services/for-the-public/charting-homelessness-in-nyc/overview/#:~:text=Beginning%20in%20the%20summer%20of,small%20step%20towards%20that%20objective.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), New York City has the lowest share of unsheltered people (3,6%) in stark contrast to the rest of the country (43,8%).

This information is important for highlighting one of the differences between the southern and northern parts of the American continent: while fewer people in vulnerable situations are seen on the streets of NYC due to municipal policies maintaining shelters and housing beds, in Rio de Janeiro the complete lack of adequate shelters fills the streets with people in various precarious situations, sometimes for more than ten years. Similarly, in NYC, a significant number of individuals and families are temporarily living with others, often in overcrowded conditions. Black and Hispanic/Latino New Yorkers are disproportionately affected by the lack of housing, which has increased significantly in the city in recent years, with a 53,1% rise between January 2023 and January 2024, although municipal authorities and various organizations in NYC are working to address this issue through several initiatives, including the expansion of shelters, outreach services, and housing assistance. Nevertheless, NYC has the highest number of year-round emergency housing beds at 127.759, far exceeding second-place California, with 76.000 beds.[5] This data underscores a key distinction between the northern and southern regions of the American continent: while NYC's municipal shelter policies result in fewer vulnerable individuals on its streets, Rio de Janeiro's severe lack of adequate shelters leaves its streets densely populated with people in precarious situations—some for over a decade. Similarly, in NYC, many individuals and families temporarily live with others, often in overcrowded conditions[6]. Black and Hispanic/Latinx New Yorkers bear a disproportionate burden of homelessness, which has surged by 53,1% between January 2023 and January 2024, despite efforts by city officials and organizations to combat the crisis through expanded shelters, outreach programs, and housing assistance[7].

Addressing this subject, the ongoing research does not treat space as a mere collection of material structures where urban plans are implemented or quantified, but as a lived space—a totality where relationships manifest through the interplay of signifiers tied to local use and dynamics. The aim is to use city-space mapping to reveal the invisible city that emerges. The cartography discussed in this research adheres to a cartographer's fundamental principle: a simplified geometric representation of territory through maps and charts. On the other side, cartography based on sensitive data focuses on affectivity: mapping how bodies appropriate spaces. The research draws strength from Suely Rolnik's (2007) *Sentimental Cartography,* which pioneered the analysis of urban subjectivation processes by emphasizing people's role in constructing diverse narratives for the same urban context. Our goal is to demonstrate in the following sections how the employed methodology enables this mapping in both Rio de Janeiro's capital and NYC—spaces with different scales, as shown in Figure 1, and political spatialities. The data collected highlight the weakening of social ties between the active and inactive populations in both cities, and they also show that oppressed groups are increasingly removed from participating in decision-making processes and power disputes, relying primarily on social-democratic governments to reverse this situation. Yet, the several similarities identified—such as the vitality of plazas and urban parks, the collective nature of public life, and the predominance of PEH in the most economically privileged areas—create a set of ideal systems for comparing two major American metropolises.

5 For more details, access https://www.osc.ny.gov/press/releases/2025/01/dinapoli-numbers-homeless-population-doubled-new-york#:~:text=New%20York%20City%20accounted%20for,of%20whom%20were%20asylum%20seekers.

6 For more details, access https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/basic-facts-about-homelessness-new-york-city/.

7 For more details, access https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01037 and https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/how-many-total-people-are-homeless-in-nyc/nyc-agencies-providing-emergency-shelter/.

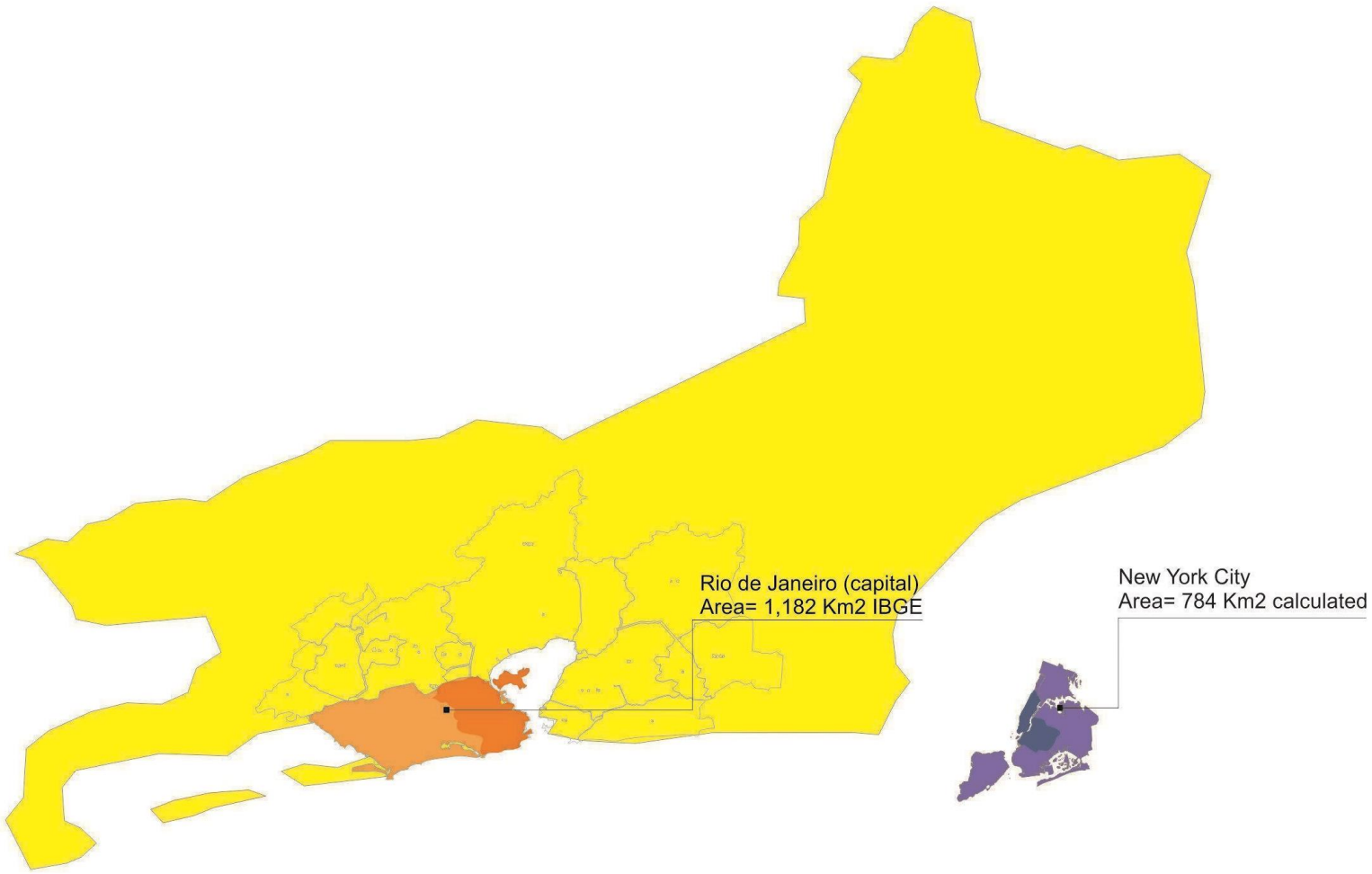

Fig. 1: Scaled interpretation of the size differences between the capital of Rio de Janeiro and New York City. The dark orange shape shows the analyzed area in RJ (the capital of the city) and the dark purple shape shows the analyzed area in NYC. Source: Authors, 2025.

2 Methodology

The debate on the (re)construction of urban space has become crucial since the 1990s, when major discussions took center stage worldwide. While in 1950 only 36% of Brazil's population lived in cities, by 1990 that figure had risen to 75%, and by the 21st century, it reached 87,4%, according to the 2022 Brazilian Demographic Census[8]. In the United States, the vast majority of the population resides in urban areas. Approximately 83% of U.S. citizens live in cities, while the remaining 17% inhabit rural areas, as reported by the 2023 U.S. Census Bureau[9]. While most Americans live in urban areas, population density varies significantly within these regions. For example, the New York–Jersey City–Newark (NY–NJ) metro area has an extremely high population density, whereas other urban areas may be more spatially dispersed. This urban population is not limited to major metropolises but, through inevitable gravitational pull, concentrates most people, both economically active and vulnerable. Projections suggest that by 2050, 89% of the U.S. population and 68% of the global population will reside in urban areas, according to the Center for Sustainable Systems at the University of Michigan. With this massive worldwide urbanization, the dilemmas of shared physical space grow increasingly complex, requiring enhanced interdisciplinary data analysis. Therefore, this action research employs both quantitative and qualitative methods, drawing not only from architecture and urban planning but also from demography, statistics, geography, sociology, anthropology, and social work. In this sense, the attempt to subjectively qualify points anchored to georeferenced maps—with the support of applications such as Google Maps, MyMaps and software like QGIS—has become one of the main foundations for

[8] For more details, access https://censo2022.ibge.gov.br/panorama/.

[9] For more details, access https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases.2023.html.

overcoming the objectification of these bodies that circulate through the city. One way to process and communicate the information sensitively received from UH is grounded in Affect Theory (Anderson, 2006).

In The Affect Theory, as Ben Anderson (2006) explains, the development of a vocabulary tied to emotion starts from the assertion that “the more or less rational cannot be reduced to a set of discrete emotions, since only the construction of experience matters to Affect Theory” (Anderson 2006, p. 735). In essence, any approach empowers the non-linguistic forces that matter to Affect Theory. The affective process, from this perspective, operates at two extremes of a conceptual spectrum: either through an alternative attunement to 'being affected' by events, or through the body's dual capacity to be affected (via an affect) and to affect (through resulting transformations). Drawing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1994) rhizomatic view of reality: “These two capacities surpass the strength of those who undergo them: Affects are beings whose validity is self-contained, transcending any lived experience” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 164). Therefore, when a person spatially affects a place, he or she simultaneously fosters the exercise of Otherness. In short, Affect Theory foregrounds temporality and the immanence of bodies as paramount to observation, unsettling the value of performed gestures and the relationships established with the Other. The combination of casual public contacts in the open spaces of urban life—squares, sidewalks, parks—with the exercise of affect and the recognition of the ambiances where UH live, produces a collective sense of acceptance that can potentially generate visibility and action. The opposite is also true—and more frequent.

In the process of constructing UH identity, we observe the absorption of an intense burden of stigmatization that, as Erving Goffman (1988) argues, conditions recognition of the person to a one-dimensional, partial, and oppressive view. The configuration of this group is thus permeated by social mechanisms that enact its objectification, dehumanization, and consequent symbolic erasure, as leaders of the Open Hearts Initiative (OHI)[10] stated during the *Homelessness: Learning from Experience*[11] meeting held on August 2, 2025, in the Upper West Side neighborhood of NYC. To break this cyclical dynamic—also evidenced in the various data issued by official urban research agencies—we set out the methodological strategies for developing this affective mapping in the sub-section below.

2.1 Methodological steps for Affective Cartographies

To obtain current and reliable information on homelessness, the methodological approach unfolds in three steps: systematic field visits, direct engagement with unhoused individuals, and the georeferencing of collected narratives.. Upon encountering a person or a specific group of unhoused people, the researcher and the team involved (in many cases) perform several actions: 1) welcoming and talking directly with the interlocutors, with food provided; 2) presenting the Informed Consent Form for signature; 3) conducting a semi-structured interview, aiming to map nighttime stays and daytime/afternoon wanderings, as well as recording personal narratives. These three actions supply the raw material needed to build the cartography, which is uploaded both to a readily accessible database for immediate use on MyMaps/Google Maps (Figures 2 and 3) and into a dedicated research database in Q-GIS, from which various graphs and maps can be generated. After georeferencing, the interview data (name, age, overnight location, wandering routes, plus a specific question about street-based work and the desire to move around the city) are entered into a spreadsheet shared via the Google Sheets system, which ensures proper data manipulation across multiple approaches and researchers. Along with this process, photographs are inserted, as shown in Figure 4, and ethnographic sketches are produced, so that each point noted on the map has a graphic representation and contextual explanation, ensuring the accuracy of the survey.

[10] For more details, access https://openheartsinitiative.org/.

[11] For more details, access https://openheartsinitiative.org/events/homelessness-learning-from-experience-meeting-3-33szp-58csp-2kfrj-xz3wm-ew893-ww3sp-9rl2k-fabj9-6wpr2-a7bhe-rll7s-c6xjj-ranp2.

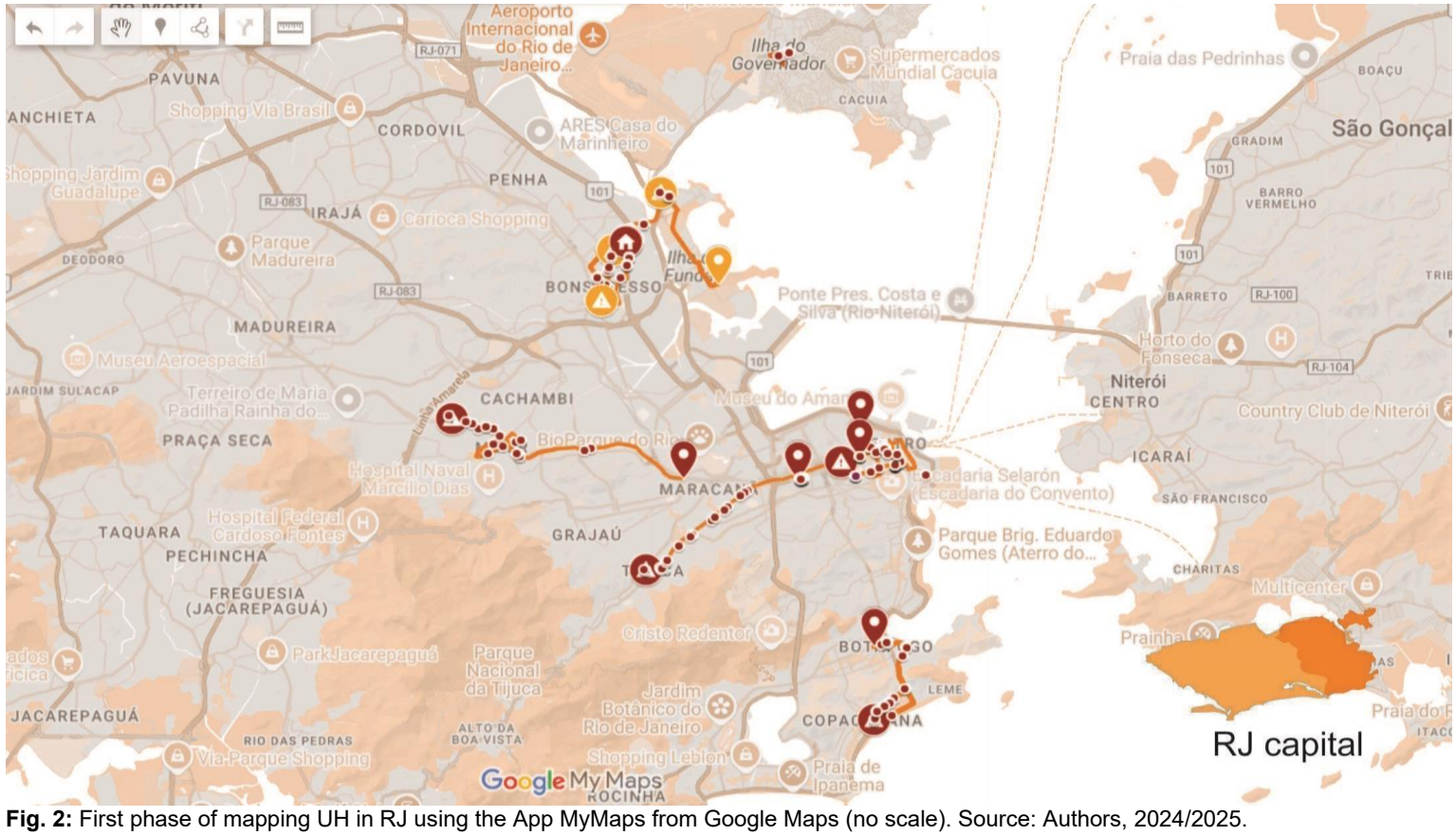

Fig. 2: First phase of mapping UH in RJ using the App MyMaps from Google Maps (no scale). Source: Authors, 2024/2025.

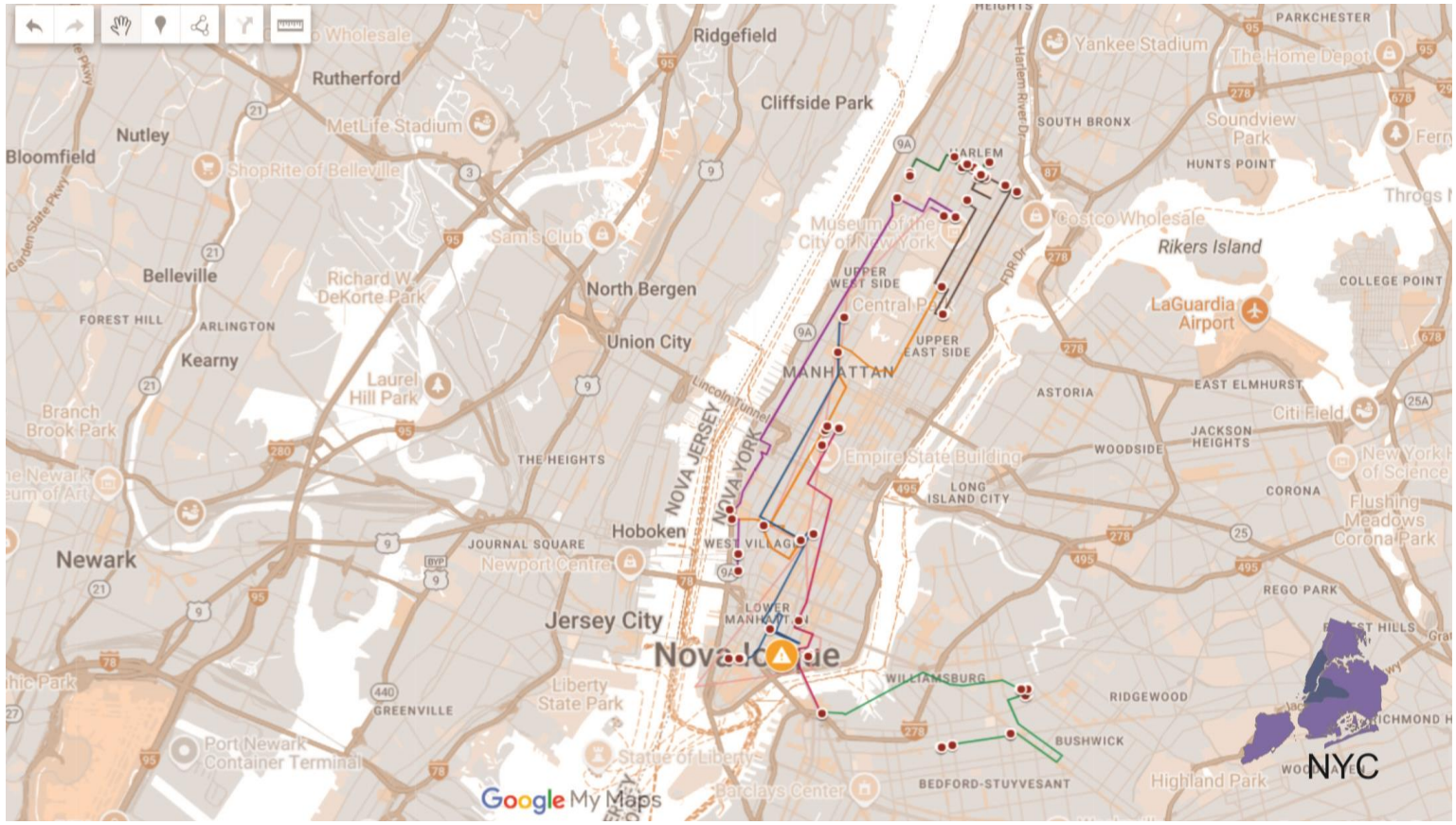

Fig. 3: First phase of mapping UH in NYC using the App MyMaps from Google Maps (no scale). Source: Authors, 2025.

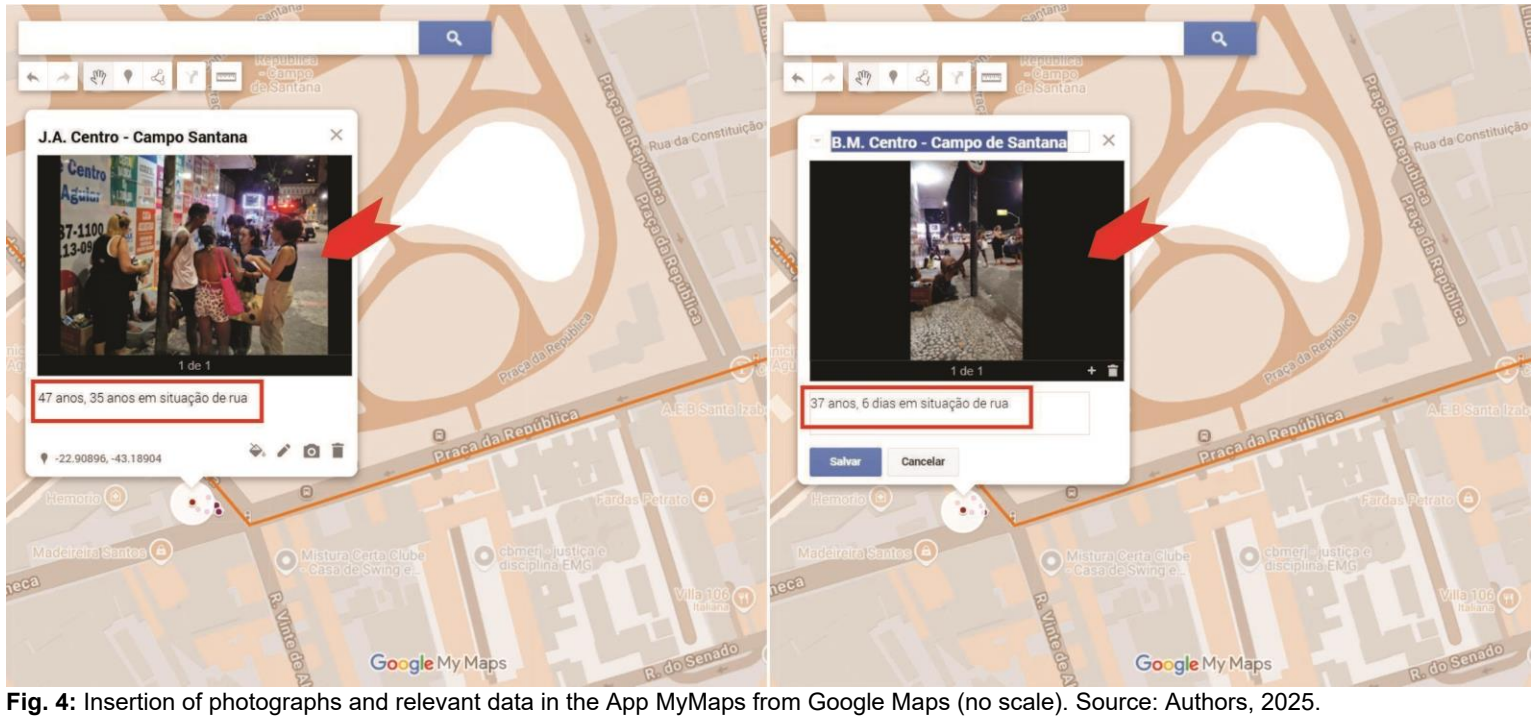

Fig. 4: Insertion of photographs and relevant data in the App MyMaps from Google Maps (no scale). Source: Authors, 2025.

This procedure has been used in Rio de Janeiro, where a group of researchers—including undergraduate students, a social worker, a geographer, and graduate students—travel together each night in a van rented specifically for this purpose. In NYC, since the project coordinator conducted the comparative research by herself, during a *Visiting Scholar* Period at Columbia University in 2025, the surveys have not included interviews up to the phase illustrated here. It is worth noting that, in Brazil, the research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of 2024 and has followed the guidelines for ethical and committed treatment of people in vulnerable situations (CAAE 77880024.2.0000.5582), with appropriate anonymization of interviewees' names and assurance of data adequacy and anonymity. When photographs cannot be taken due to contexts of heightened insecurity, ethnographic sketches are used by researchers as a tool for interpreting the situation and providing nuanced information for analysis (Figure 5). Another key point is that covering a neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro takes far longer than in New York City, owing to greater distances and the geo-spatial complexity typical of a Latin-American metropolis.

Fig. 5: Ethnographic sketches produced during field surveys. Source: Authors, 2024/2025.

The lack of interviews in NYC did not impede data comparison, since the main objective has always been to evaluate urban UH clusters in both metropolises. Each week a set of neighborhoods was selected in each city, and the number of visits proved sufficient to build a systemic qualitative portrait of the cities rather than a strictly objective or quantitative one. In RJ, the neighborhoods surveyed in 2024 and early 2025 were: Centro/Castelo, Cidade Nova, Gamboa, Botafogo, Largo do Machado, Copacabana, Tijuca, Méier, Cachambi, Bonsucesso and Ramos. In turn, in NYC, the neighborhoods surveyed in July and August 2025 were: in Manhattan - East Harlem, Central Harlem, Upper West Side, West Village, Chelsea, Midtown, Lower East Side/Chinatown, and in Brooklyn - Dumbo, Astoria, Brooklyn Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant, and Bushwick. These neighborhood sets enable a comprehensive analysis of each city, as they encompass multiple zones and quadrants with distinct social realities and urban dynamics. A second phase, which began in March 2025 in RJ, involves two steps: 1) distributing metallic self-removing stickers to UH to monitor the UH wandering locations (Figure 6); and 2) distributing paper notebooks and pencils, which will allow future contact with informants to better understand their representations of the city. The stickers contain a catchphrase: "streets are not my house”, intended to popularize the research and foster a sense of (re)discovery of urban places, giving civil society visibility into the use of these spaces by people with disabilities.

Fig. 6: Metallic self-removing sticker produced by researchers, with the sentence “streets are not my house”. Source: Authors, 2025.

3 Outcomes and Discussion

The informant pool for the ongoing study (roughly 180 people in Rio de Janeiro and 80 in New York City) identified through fieldwork since early 2024, shows that popular ideas about how the city is occupied and used do not match current urban planning, which assigns fixed activities and functions to every designed space. The study points to a new way of conceiving RJ’s "working class" for three reasons: 1) the recognition that people experiencing homelessness perform socially useful tasks—sweeping sidewalks, watching storefronts, or collecting recyclables; 2) the fact that long-term overnight groups (three or more people who have stayed in the same spot for over a year, for instance) treat their situation as permanent, forging a key identity space; 3) the emergence of recurring urban "characters" whose daily circuits illustrate patterned mobility, as described in Sennett’s (2014) essays on the metropolis. Verônica Tiengo (2018) echoes this view, stressing that people living on the street are not without agency: "(...) homelessness is not a condition people choose; on the contrary, they have been placed in it (...) and they use spaces typically unnamed in master plans to carry out their activities" (Tiengo, 2018, p. 139, our translation). Thus, permanence maps reveal that the presence of homeless individuals in central or affluent districts signals a failure to provide adequate spaces for urban mobility and social housing, effectively excluding these people. In Rio, people experiencing homelessness spend most nights in busy central areas and move to peripheral neighborhoods by day, either to visit family (many once lived there) or to trade the proceeds of their work. In New York, constant wandering as a result of work activity on the city streets was not observed. In contrast to that, individualized bodies settled on sidewalks, beside lampposts, and near commercial areas in the cities were identified as *stable,* meaning they do not move much around the city.

NYC MyMaps clearly shows that the dispersion of UH throughout the city reflects an avoidance of institutional support due to mental illnesses that affect this population. According to *New York City Comptroller Brad Lander*, the city provides some form of shelter and services to nearly 120,000 individuals each night, while the thousands remaining on the streets exhibit characteristics such as difficulty staying in shelters or mental health challenges. In RJ, a major city in the southern cone,

there is a significant shortage of shelters and effective support initiatives for residential units, which results in UH being more frequently clustered in communities across the various neighborhoods analyzed. Through interviews conducted in RJ, we were able to identify the diversity of labor activities reported by the UH, including waste pickers, booksellers, “street miners”, and traveling salesmen/peddlers (people who sell low-value products throughout the capital). These accounts revealed that many other UH engage in similar activities—typically those with fewer physical or mental health challenges and an ongoing need to earn money for themselves or their families. Indeed, in RJ, the social cohesion among UH across neighborhoods—forming communities of more than five people (sometimes up to thirty) is readily apparent, stemming from their resigned acceptance of street life as a consequence of precarious conditions that perpetuates the notion of a person's diminished worth, as Judith Butler states: "'Precarity' designates the politically induced situation in which certain populations suffer the consequences of deterioration (...) more than others" (Butler, 2019, p. 40, our translation).

Informal work thus emerges as the main survival strategy for the homeless in Rio de Janeiro, as seen in Figure 7, involving the search for routes and pathways that keep them invisible in everyday life so as not to be interrupted by law enforcement. These escape routes produce corruptions in the city’s urban planning, creating storage and overnight spaces, alternative uses of sidewalks and squares, and a series of re-appropriations of the city that do not always reveal where a body has been—a route erased in the formal city. These alterations also reinforce the stigmas held by the economically active population. In NYC, although no interviews could be conducted, the large number of isolated individuals across the city showed that shelter policies and doubling up in homes (the most common situation, cited by the *Coalition for the Homeless*) are effective. Field observations suggested that many individuals were unable to engage in conversation due to apparent mental-health challenges as it was confirmed by data provided by agencies such as the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). This information also explains why only a few neighborhoods in Manhattan and Brooklyn—those with a lower Human Development Index (Harlem and Bushwick, for example), concentrate more UH in certain locations, close to commercial areas where sources of food assistance or opportunities to barter for small items are readily available. The conditions for living on the streets in NYC differ from those that encourage UH to remain in Rio de Janeiro.

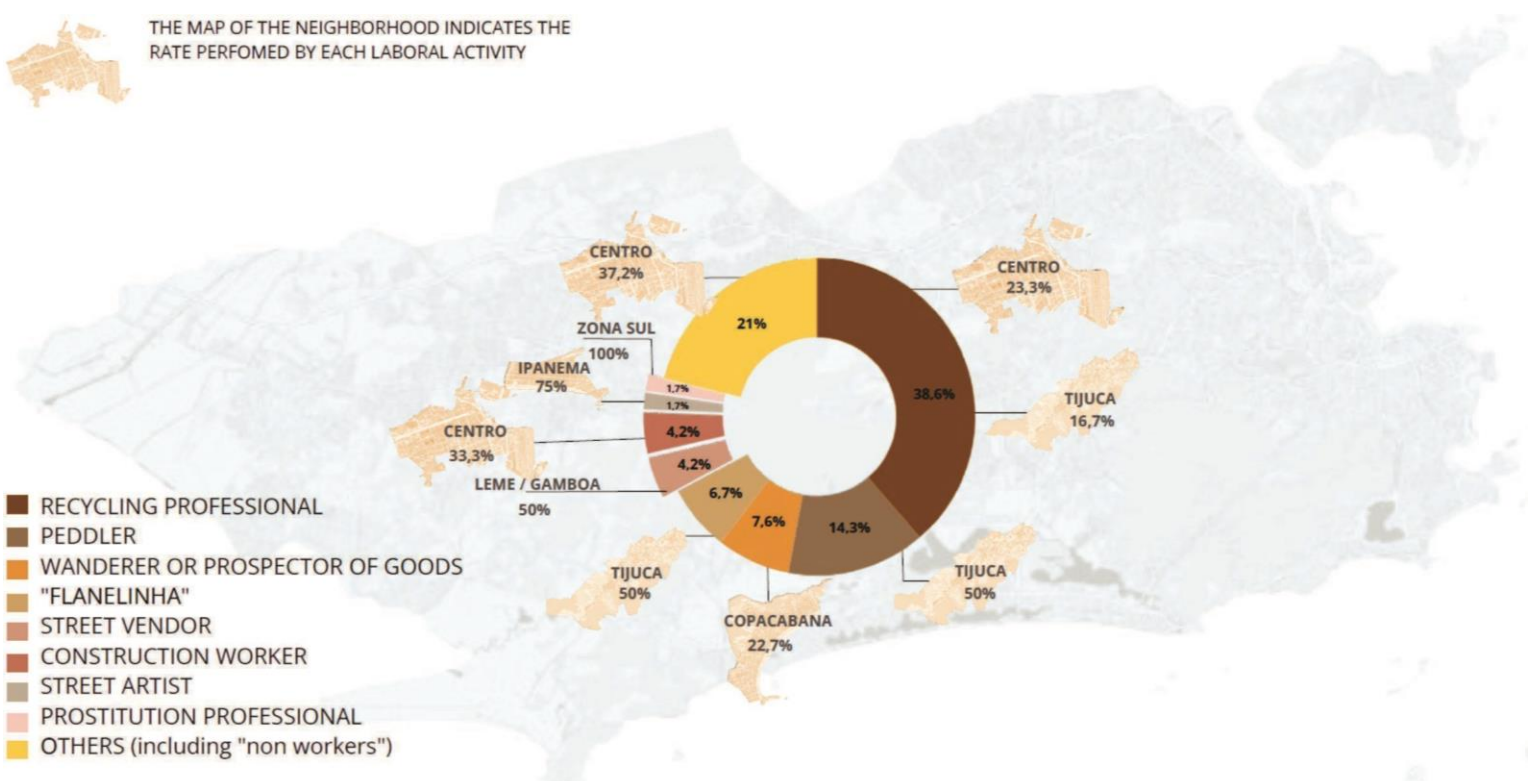

Fig. 7: Labor activities performed by UH in RJ during the year 2024. Source: Authors, 2025.

Regarding this condition of community invisibility, as mentioned earlier, one of the final phases of the research aims to bring it to public attention, with a graphic information that compares both cities (Figure 8). The distribution of stickers in Rio de Janeiro was made in March, April and May 2025 to people who agreed to stick them on objects/places they passed during

the day, as a way of signaling where their presence could be noticed in the city. These stickers (made with non-permanent glue) were later discovered on the walls of commercial establishments (mostly), either at bus stops, or on natural elements within a plaza or park, such as a tree trunk (Figure 9). In NYC, only one sticker was given to a UH in Chinatown who deliberately wanted to speak with the researcher after seeing the notes of his geo-location in the MyMaps, on the cell phone of the researcher, and because the explanation had caught his attention. The next day, during a walk through the same neighborhood, the sticker was found attached to a pole (Figure 10), in front of a commercial establishment, which provides relevant insight into where exactly UH perceives their message to be most effective. This approach not only promotes the visibility of a hidden city, marginalized by the lack of public policies and adequate urban planning, but can also enable the mapping of social differences among those who circulate in the streets, bringing to light the social disparities and struggles for survival that permeate human existence in large cities.

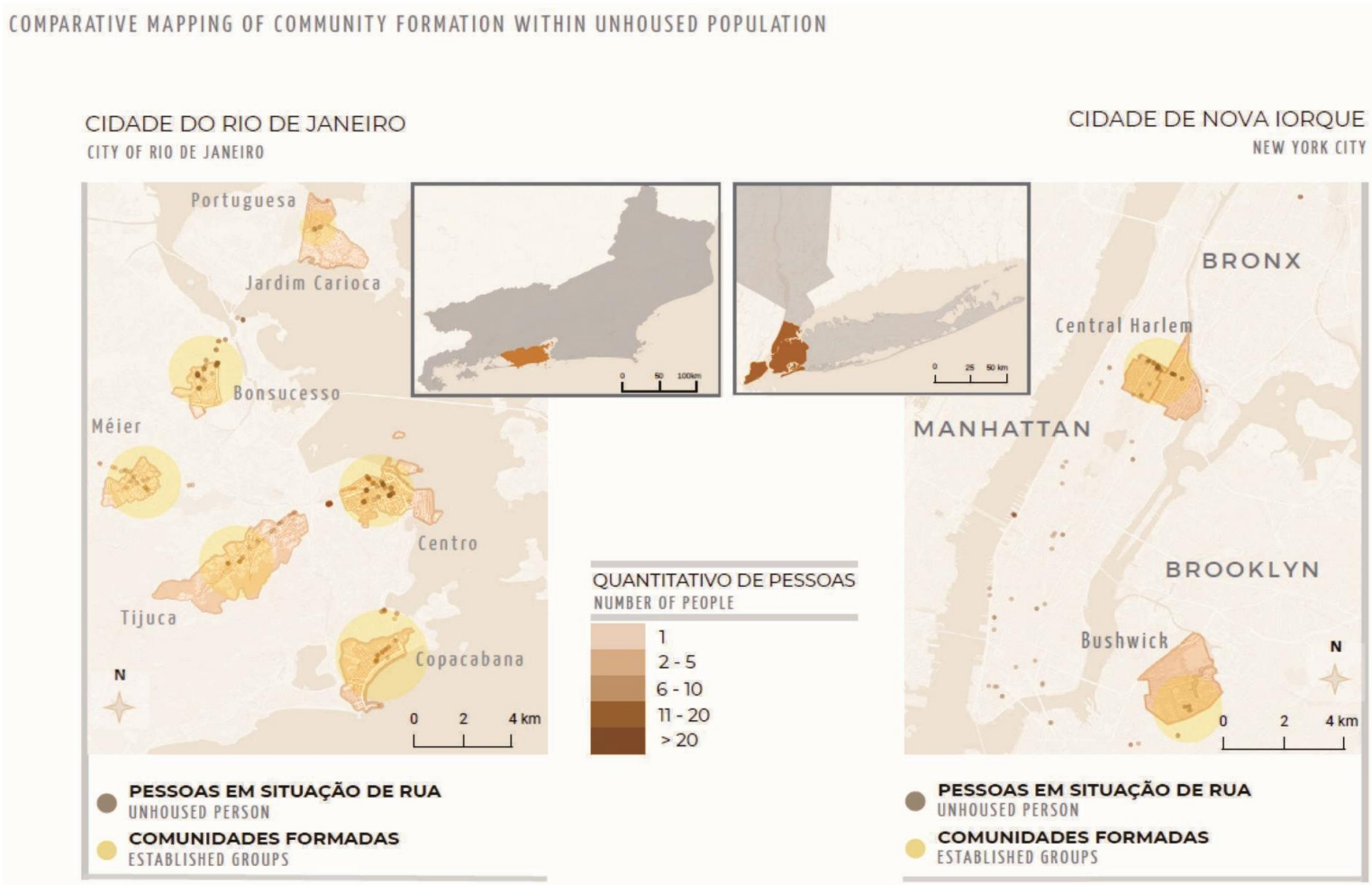

Fig. 8: Graphic comparison between community concentrations of unhoused people in RJ and NYC. Source: Authors, 2025.

Fig. 9: Sticker found on a tree in Bonsucesso, one of the neighborhoods surveyed in RJ. Source: Authors, March 2025.

Fig. 10: Sticker found on a pole In Chinatown, one of the neighborhoods surveyed in NYC. Source: Authors, July 2025.

4 Final Considerations

The city, as a terrain of contestation, must offer its inhabitants a practice that goes far beyond merely ‘being’ in it; it must foster the right to shape it, inhabit it, and transform it in accordance with their own realities, as a concrete act of a free body.

This is a fundamental urban right: to experience spaces according to democratic principles. In this context, the presence of the homeless acts as a social mirror, revealing tensions between the recognition of the Other's humanity and the mechanisms of exclusion that pervade contemporary urban space. Preliminary data indicate the need to rethink the relationship between the public and private spheres through urban planning that is sensitive to difference and capable of incorporating affective and inclusive perspectives. The ongoing study advances an approach that values otherness and draws on Affect Theory (Anderson, 2006) as an analytical tool for interpreting urban environments and for proposing public policies more willing to listen to the individuals who comprise the city's diversity. It is also clear that revising the notions of public and private is a key issue for urban planning, for without guaranteed adequate social housing for the homeless, especially in Rio de Janeiro, public space becomes the primary sphere of cohesion. For a vulnerable person, the notion of 'public' is far more nuanced and demands a closer look at the city's 'rebel' structures that respond to survival needs. Where else could private urban life unfold for those who compulsively roam the streets, if not in the city itself? Where else could the UH earn a living if not on the streets?

This study shows that the growth of the homeless population in large American cities has not altered their apparent invisibility. The absence of participatory initiatives from both civil society and government is striking and reinforces the perceived incivility that the homeless supposedly represent for society, as Patrice Schuch and Ivaldo Gehlen (2012) discuss. Both authors explain that, in the process of metropolitan urbanization, urban public spaces have retained their primary function linked to circulation and passage, and that any other use—such as a vulnerable individual making a home in public space—becomes a social problem, even though the lack of shelter itself is much more visceral. Rio de Janeiro and New York are indeed cities that prize outdoor life, collective activities, and leisure grounded in the nature afforded by their asphalt landscapes. Yet all these activities are geared toward skilled and economically active bodies that experience the public and private realms with a stable balance, following urban-planning guidelines designed for ideal citizens. The multifaceted nature of actions and symptoms in these shared realities demonstrates that the global north and south cones have much to learn from each other and that, in the field of urbanism, global responses can operate within local dynamics by recognizing common dilemmas. The excessive, the counter-hegemonic, and the painful remain obscured on the streets, and the number of people lounging in doorways and outside supermarkets keeps rising. As noted earlier, over the past ten years this figure has soared, yet it has not prompted the necessary shift toward recognizing dissident and vulnerable bodies as citizens deserving of care for.

An interesting example of effective public policy—aligned with the climate crisis dilemmas that hit the urban homeless (UH) hardest—is the provision of clean, potable water in public squares. NYC showed, during the sweltering summer of 2025, that without such water it was impossible to walk the streets for more than a couple of hours. This measure is considered democratic as it supports the most vulnerable groups while simultaneously reinforcing, for all residents, the principle that basic urban rights must be universally guaranteed. In the montage in Figure 11, two unhoused people can be seen bathing on a hot July afternoon in 2025. Minutes earlier, children had been running around them, and adults had seized the chance to splash water on their necks and heads. Another initiative grounded in distributive public policy, which covers actions that meet specific social demands, would be a free point-to-point transport scheme letting the homeless haul their collected recyclables to distant buyers. The system could be controlled by swiping an ID card, much as NYC's DHS or Rio's POP RUA normally registers the UHs. Some of these certainties and ideas came from the various meetings attended in NYC at the headquarter of Open Hearts Initiative, conducted by Will Woods.[12]

[12] For more details, access https://openheartsinitiative.org.

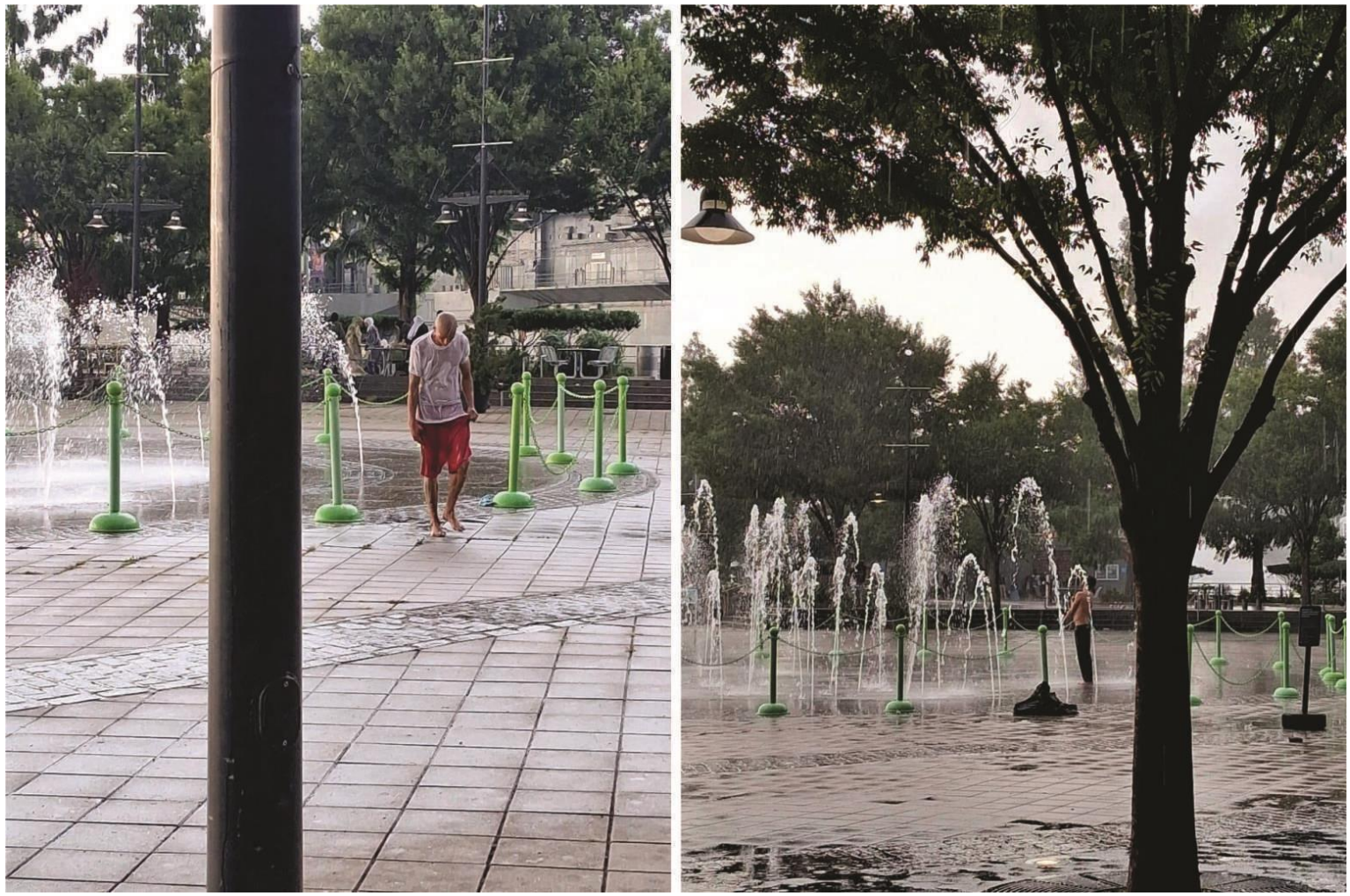

Fig. 11: Montage of photographs of two UH showering moments in NYC, at Pier 84. Source: Authors, July 2025.

In consonance with the discussion, it is worth stressing that the body's bond with historical space and time—together with the individual posture each person adopts in their lived space—has driven most forays into architectural theories on the complexity and future of cities, the latter now changing on a vast scale. Within this horizon, body and city are seen as a broad spectrum of possibilities that feed the contemporary idea of subjectivity. If, from the 1960s onward, this subjective dimension entered the agenda of every architectural rationality—be it existentialist, functionalist or humanist (Nesbitt, 2006)—then subjectivity began to claim its own place and status, undoubtedly reshaping the goals of architecture, urbanism and every other applied social science, while also teaching us new ways of living together. The UH concentration findings for RJ and NYC underscore how vital the study of urban environments is to democratizing cities: person-environment interaction makes it possible to build and plan diverse territories that foster coexistence, safety and the development of identity. Current global research on homelessness shows that people in this situation are highly diverse; mapping how they use urban public space can reveal targeted policy options and highlight the need for supportive urbanism that solves problems for bodies rather than showcasing machines.

Acknowledgment

We thank "Carlos Chagas Filho Foundation for Research Support of the State of Rio de Janeiro"–FAPERJ for the grants and scholarships offered, the "National Council for Scientific and Technological Development"–CNPq for the granted research position, and Columbia University for supporting and enabling the research carried out.

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PORTO, BETWEEN TWO BRIDGES: IMAGES OF A SPACE IN TENSION
PORTO, ENTRE DUAS PONTES: IMAGENS DE UM ESPAÇO EM TENSÃO

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Emery, J. F. (2025). Porto, between two Bridges: Images of a Space in Tension. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 41-61
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Abstract

This article engages with the theme of "Multilateral Dialogues" by exploring the tensions and interlocutions that define contemporary Porto (Portugal), a city emblematic of tourism-driven transformations. The study aims to present a critical and visual exploration of the urban tensions between the showcase city and the inhabited city. The methodology is an experimental praxis framed as a visual archaeology of the present. This praxis is based on an experimental urban walk that combines 360° video, smartphone photography, and 3D photogrammetry[1]. The visual experiment adopts a reflexive "ethno-graphic" approach: the researcher's body is integrated into the image, questioning the stance of the observer as both tourist and critic, and serving as a primary site of interlocution. The main result is a visual essay that does not aim to document the city objectively, but rather to render perceptible the temporal, social, and material strata that constitute Porto's urban landscape. By attending to subtle details, ruins, and spaces, the study offers a situated reading of the conflicts, cohabitations, and (potential) resistances that shape the contemporary Western city. Ultimately, this work foregrounds the complex layering of life, memory, and commodification, revealing a space under the pressures of tourism-driven capitalism as a site of constant confrontation.

Keywords: City, Tourism, Ethnography, 3D, 360°.

1 Introduction

> “There isn't one space, one big space, one big space all around us,
> one big space surrounding us, there are lots of little bits of space”
> Georges Perec (1974, p. 14, our translation[2]).

In July 2025, I once again[3] stayed in the city of Porto, Portugal. I lodged in a downtown flat rented via the U.S. platform Airbnb, at the very heart of an urban fabric where historical layers coexist with tourist accommodations, globalised franchises, everyday life, and precarious forms of living. One afternoon, with a 360° camera in one hand and a smartphone in the other, I walked for a little under two hours along an itinerary that led me from *São Bento* to the *Horta Comunitária da Bananeira*, passing through squares, stairways, alleyways, and passages connecting the Dom Luís I Bridge and the Infante Dom Henrique Bridge. This pedestrian trajectory, filmed in 360°, gradually sketches a visual cut through a portion of Porto’s centre, a city that has become emblematic of contemporary urban tensions in the West, where tourist capital flows encounter the daily lives of inhabitants. With seven million tourists per year[4] (Falco, 2025), and a ratio of roughly eleven tourists per inhabitant, Porto is among the most sought-after—or besieged, depending on perspective—European cities, offering a stratified urban landscape in evident tension. The walk, between overexposed spaces and relegated zones, forms the basis of a short, experimental visual and critical inquiry. With the 10-minute video presented (figure 1), my aim is not to document Porto *per se*, but to situate a gaze itself caught in the tension between touristic flânerie and critical posture. I am at once an actor and symptom of a Western urbanity in mutation: temporarily inhabiting a tourist rental while seeking to grasp the confrontations at play within this urban multitude.

This reflexive tension inhabits all the images produced—mobile photographs, photogrammetries (3D scans), and 360° recordings—conceived not as archives of an objective reality but as visual tools of symbolic displacement (Emery, 2025a). In this sense, the work neither aestheticises ruin and decay nor straightforwardly denounces mass tourism. Rather, it experiments with what I call here a visual archaeology of the present: attentive to neglected elements, inert bodies, and fragile signs of an urban dis/order under strain in the era of the *Capitalocene*: “the Capitalocene thesis does not seek to supplant biology; it incorporates biogeological change to understand capitalism as a world ecology in which power, profit and life are intertwined”

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1 Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlgS4LqJHz4.

2 From the original in French: "il n'y a pas un espace, un bel espace, un bel espace alentour, un bel espace tout autour de nous, il y a plein de petits bouts d'espaces".

3 The first two occasions were in March 2025 and May 2025 during two-day stopovers for a business trip to Portugal, followed by two further occasions for tourist trips in June and July 2025 for stays of three to four days.

4 In 2009, Porto Airport welcomed 4.5 million passengers. Ten years later, in 2019, it welcomed more than 13 million.

(Moore, 2024, p. 41, our translation[5]). My digital gazes thus become witnesses to a space in tension, where multiple urban strata appear to overlap without ever truly converging. This text accompanies that partially controlled urban wandering. It sheds light on its stakes, at the crossroads of urban studies, ethnographic practices, situated epistemologies, and the critique of forms of life in an age of tourism-driven capitalism that *devours the world*[6]. In this paper, I thus directly engage with the theme of Multilateral Dialogues by positioning the city of Porto as a site of critical inquiry. The tensions I explore between the *showcase city* and the *inhabited city* serve as the central confrontations under analysis. The methodology I deploy functions as a praxis, a form of situated research. Finally, my "ethno-graphic" and reflexive stance as a researcher who is simultaneously tourist and critic establishes a necessary interlocution: a dialogue between my own body, the digital tools I use, and the complex, stratified urban space itself.

Fig. 1: Screenshot of the title insert of the video. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025.

2 Theoretical and methodological frameworks

In this section, I outline the conceptual and methodological foundations that underpin this visual experimentation. To outline a visual archaeology of the present, I must first situate the urban space itself as a critical and theoretical field of inquiry, before detailing the specific "ethno-graphic" and situated praxis I used to capture its tensions.

2.1 Contextualising urban tensions in Porto

Urban poetry takes shape within the modern city. As Jean-Paul Sartre (1947, p. 50, our translation[7]) writes, the city is a creation: "its buildings, its odours, its noises, its coming and going belong to the human realm. Everything in it is poetry in the strict sense of the word". Beyond this poetry, however, European authors such as Charles Baudelaire (1811–1867) or Bertolt Brecht (1898–

[5] From the original in French: "la thèse du capitalocène n'a pas pour ambition de supplanter la biologie ; elle incorpore le changement biogéologique pour appréhender le capitalisme, comme une écologie-monde où s'articulent le pouvoir, le profit et la vie".

[6] To refer to Aude Vidal's book (2024).

[7] From the original in French: "ses immeubles, ses odeurs, ses bruits, son va-et-vient appartiennent au règne humain. Tout y est poésie au sens strict du terme".

1956) gradually pointed out that the city is also the product of class division (Klein, 2015); Walter Benjamin even wrote that “cities are battlefields” (2000, p. 248, our translation[8]). My experiment thus situates itself within a critical tradition that interrogates, between *poiêsis* and *praxis*, the urban space, today as a space of tensions within a neoliberal organization of capitalism. Many European cities, inscribed within heritage frameworks, have become an exemplary terrain of the neoliberal city: re/composed *by* and *for* tourism, fragmented by digital platforms, and threatened by the mercantile homogenization of uses and landscapes. As David Harvey (2008, p. 14) argues, “the quality of urban life has become a commodity, just like the city itself, in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge industries have become major aspects of the urban political economy”. Tourism is one of the fundamental stakes of contemporary capitalism, within which many cities sometimes become mere backdrops for travellers (Laffont & Prigent, 2011), at the risk of severing themselves from their original authenticity (Vlès, 2011). Gusman et al. (2019) explain that more than twenty years after being declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, in 1996, tourism has had remarkable effects on Porto's physical, social and economic features; in particular, its city centre and even more specifically the Ribeira district (Jiang, 2025).

The interest of these historic spaces lies in their rapid transformation from a devalued old area into the centre of an important urban tourism destination on a European level. Based on the spatial and temporal analysis of a set of indicators related to tourism, housing and economic activity, results show that this process is promoting an excessive use of space by tourism and an overexploitation of cultural values (Gusman et al., 2019). With his visits between 1980 and 1996, architect and urban planner Frédéric Bonnet (2015) situated Porto over nearly two decades as a city in profound transformation, in which the poor are particularly left behind. Imbued with new suburban infrastructures funded by European funds, Porto saw the emergence of a new economic universe: multiplex cinemas and shopping centres, upscale housing developments, ring roads, and car dealerships. Gradually, Porto entered the ranks of Europe’s global metropolises. By 2015, Bonnet notes how the city centre had emptied of its residents[9] in favour of waves of Europeans arriving weekly via low-cost flights to discover Portuguese particularities in a city structured on a hilly topography, amid globalised franchises and tourist storefronts. This dynamic accelerates what Bonnet calls “Canada Dry urbanism[10]”, meaning “desperate and mediocre, quietly reshaping the city without anyone noticing[11]”. Yet, far from unique to Porto, this trajectory mirrors the intense *touristification* observable in other European hubs.

In Lisbon, for instance, geographers Agustín Cocola-Gant and Ana Gago (2019) describe a transnational gentrification where neighbourhoods like Alfama are hollowed out to serve short-term rentals. Similarly, Barcelona has become the epicentre of “tourismophobia” (Milano, 2017)—a social reaction against the loss of urban habitability—while Venice represents the extreme horizon of this process: a city that Salvatore Settis (2016) characterises as suffering from a monoculture of tourism, where the inhabited city has all but vanished. Porto thus emerges as a local symptom of the global "capitalocene" (Moore, 2024), illustrating how tourism-driven capitalism serves as an extractive force reshaping cities worldwide. In this context, the tensions are not merely local anomalies, but manifestations of a broader logic of commodification that threatens to erode the very specificities that attract tourists. Within this framework, I define *tension* not as a simple binary conflict, but as a stratified state of friction that manifests simultaneously on multiple levels. It is, first, a social and spatial tension between the showcase city designed for tourist consumption and the inhabited city of daily life, memory, and precariousness. Second, it is a material and temporal tension, where the accelerated pace of tourism-driven development and commodification overlaps with, but fails (yet) to erase, the temporal, social, and material strata of ruins, neglected spaces, and local subjectivities. Consequently, I aim to sketch out, in an experimental mode, a visual archaeology of the present: an attempt to render perceptible a layering of traces, residues, and

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8 From the original in French: “les villes sont des champs de bataille”.

9 Property prices have indeed risen significantly and the phenomenon of Airbnbisation is growing at a rapid pace, contributing to a decline in the city centre population (Baumert et al., 2023).

10 "The city centre has been emptied of its inhabitants–tens of thousands of them–to the benefit of the suburbs and, more recently, countries where young people deprived of prospects by the economic depression are emigrating, more or less permanently: Brazil, Angola and Mozambique itself, but also Germany, England and France. As the young architect André Tavares brilliantly explained to us, Europe has had paradoxical effects here: an undeniable contribution through the mixing of cultures and massive investment (including in education and universities), but also ultra-rapid growth supported by a financial industry that is mainly “above ground” and very risky [...]".

11 “[...] entire blocks are being demolished, ‘cleaned up’, and investors are buying up all the buildings and narrow plots of land in a former block for a single ‘clean and safe’ property development”.

ongoing tensions; echoing Alain Mons' "anthropoetics of the time of cities", in which he discusses the genre of "old cities stratified by history" (Mons, 2013, p. 100, our translation)—such as Porto in my eyes.

2.2 Thinking an archaeology of the present

To conceive an archaeology of the present is primarily, as Jonathan Tichit (2023) proposes, to question current societies and what they are leaving behind, by deploying a specific form of metaphorical temporality where one observes "[...] the entanglement of material remains that constitute the heterogeneous mass of our present" (Olivier, 2009, p. 87, our translation[12]). The addition of the term *visual* to this archaeological experimentation stems from my visual research practice, as well as a comment by philosopher Christophe Denis regarding one of my creative works[13]. Tichit further notes that "the traces left by the occupation of a territory raise complex socio-political stakes throughout history. [The visual] contributes to making them appear as symptoms, wounds that time will transform into scars" (Tichit, 2023, p. 9, our translation[14]). Indeed, in this framework, I problematize the image not as a (passive) documentation or a mimetic reflection of reality, but as an active phenomenological operator of this archaeology; I consider that "image is not just a physical-chemical thing, but the mediation between the iconic object, the body and the mental image of the observers, in a social and historical context" (Andriolo, 2018, p. 19). Unlike the smooth and commercial imagery of the showcase city, the images produced here function as heuristic devices. They do not merely show the city; they render the invisible frictions perceptible. The image thus becomes a site of tension itself, capable of revealing the symptoms mentioned by Tichit. Yet, for such a visual archaeology to be possible, I believe one must know how to *see* these socio-political stakes — that is, the tensions that traverse and constitute the urban space in the present; and to see these tensions, nothing serves better than to re/play them in a situated manner.

2.3 A situated ethno-graphic practice

Through this experimentation, I place myself at the edge of a contemporary effort to extend *human ecology*[15]*,* one that pays close attention to the experiential contexts that compose life-worlds (Cefaï et al., 2024). This entails, above all, moving as far as possible away from a moral stance and adopting ethnographic descriptive methods that deliberately avoid a top-down perspective[16], privileging, as Jane Jacobs (1992) once argued, an observation of the city at human eye-level rather than from a bird's-eye view. Accordingly, I use two digital devices to experiment with the partitioning of visual data collection, without, however, attempting to objectively re/present the city: a Google Pixel 8 Pro smartphone (2023) and a Samsung Gear 360 camera (2017). First, I relied on 3D Live Scanner: a free smartphone app developed by Luboš Vonásek (2022), and built on Google ARCore technology and the Huawei 3D Modelling Kit. As shown in Figure 2, it allows photogrammetry with a smartphone. By moving the device around and/or above an element, it automatically captures a sequence of images from different positions and angles to re/construct a 3D model. It allows me to isolate and extract the material strata of the city—ruins, textures, and neglected corners, forgotten—to explore their wear and resistance. Unlike the seamless, mimetic replications found in global mapping services, the 3D models produced embrace imperfection. The glitches and holes in the scans are not errors but data: they render the fragility of these marginal spaces and the inaccessible nature of a past that is disappearing under the unrestrainded pressure of progress. In this sense, the tool does not merely document; it creates a tactile encounter with the city's decay.

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12 From the original in French: "[...] l'intrication des restes matériels qui constituent la masse hétérogène de notre présent".

13 My visual interpretation (Emery, 2023) of a Giuliano Da Empoli's interview posted on Marc Veyrat's LinkedIn profile in June 2025: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/marc-veyrat-9a15458_texte-image-arts-num%C3%A9riques-i-giuliano-activity-7354478764308799490-wNR6?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAA9whEcB8VOBjnz10mlqxfiL0-k-3kaorlU.

14 From the original in French: "les traces laissées par l'occupation d'un territoire soulèvent des enjeux socio-politiques complexes au fil de l'histoire. [Le visuel] contribue à les faire apparaître comme autant de symptômes, de blessures que le temps transformera en cicatrices".

15 Human ecology originated with sociologists Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie at the University of Chicago in the 1920s. It has remained a cornerstone of urban studies and typically serves as the inaugural chapter in urban sociology and anthropology textbooks (Cefaï et al., 2024, p. 11).

16 That of transport and communication networks designed by planners and designers, or that of crime gradients on a map, for example, as designed by sociologists.

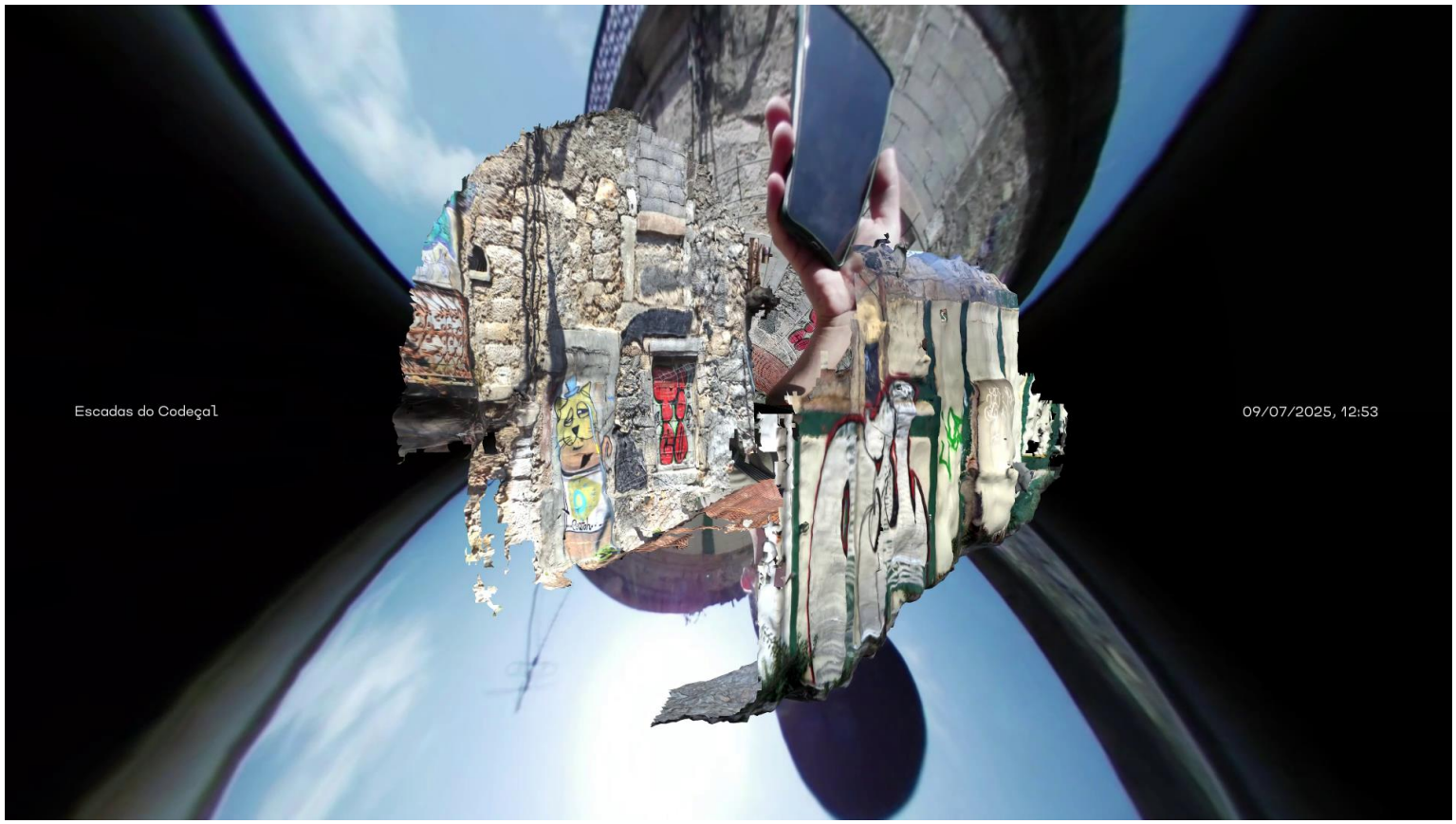

Fig. 2: Screenshot of the video where a photogrammetry (3D scan) is visible. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025.

Secondly, I use a 360° camera. It captures through two 180° lenses positioned back-to-back in a single device; the software then digitally stitches 360° from these opposed perspectives. In this process, the traditional distinction between field/off-field is modified, which prevents me from subtracting my filming body from its own re/presentation (Emery, 2021). My corporeality is therefore subjected to the visual evidence of its own presence: “Their physical presence, which occupies a certain space, moves in a certain way, possesses a certain language, and expresses characteristics of gender, sexuality, generation, race/ethnicity, region, nationality, etc.” (Nascimento, 2019, p. 460, our translation). Crucially, my bodily presence is not neutral; it operates as a *tourist body*, itself an agent of the tensions I investigate. By renting an Airbnb and consuming the city’s spaces, my body becomes the primary site of *interlocution* between the critical researcher and the dynamics of the showcase city. Consequently, the method adopted proceeds from a “situated” visual gesture (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004; Emery & Ibanez-Bueno, 2024), grounded in my own phenomenological experience, as a social observer drawing on my sensitive urban experience (Rocca, 2023). I have sought to assume a position that is not visually external to my research apparatus.

I am, indeed, entirely foreign to the life of Porto, temporarily benefiting from the comfort and atmosphere daily composed by its residents, yet whose very quality of life is questioned by its transformation into a showcase. This ethical ambiguity is constitutive of my approach. It permeates the entire experiment: I do not seek to detach myself from my own involvement, but rather to make it the engine of a visual reflexivity. My use of 360° video allows me to assume this engaged, mobile, and sometimes uncomfortable subjectivity. On my own scale, I participate in what Sharon Zukin (1998) calls the “critical infrastructure” of culture, denoting the ensemble of individuals (journalists, scholars, art critics…) who shape cultural tastes and translate them into the consumption sphere, attributing value in particular through reflexive consumption that emphasises the aesthetic qualities of historical urban elements and spaces, thereby contributing to the production of a symbolic urban economy that accelerates its anesthetisation and, in turn, transforms, defaces or erases the elements and spaces previously valued. In this manner, my gaze upon the urban landscape is itself a social construction (Charmes, 2005), and because my view of the city is associated with a way of investing in and acting upon it (Lucan, 1998), my distant relationship to Porto needs to be formalised visually. Crucially, the choice of these digital tools actively shapes my mode of perception and potentiates the methodological framework.

2.4 Digital tools as praxis extensions

The spherical microcosm of the 360° image is not the reduction of a world enclosing bodies and spaces upon itself; rather, it formalises phenomenological affections where the world and the bodies are intertwined in a single unity and can no longer be considered separately (Emery, 2024, p. 95). Consequently, the traditional analytical distinction in anthropology between an *outside* and an *inside* (Müller, 2015)—now widely criticised–is rendered difficult to maintain. Similarly, the use of photogrammetry potentiates the archaeological aspect of the experimentation. By requiring a slow, circular movement around objects to capture their volume and texture, the tool orients a phenomenological pace of attention. Thus, these digital tools are not simply recording devices but active methodological agents that structure the very possibility of this visual archaeology. Hence, my experimentation situates itself between conducting research by *Walking with video* (Pink, 2007) and a tourist Vlog[17]; borrowing from the urban walks, photographs, and artistic derives of Gordon Matta-Clark, such as his *Walls* series[18] (1972; Figure 3). As with the architect-artist's overall practice, my larger aim is to "juggle with the visual syntax" and its frames (Matta-Clark & Bear, 1993, p. 206). This resonates with the videographic sensibility of *Legoland* (2000; figure 4), Jill Magid's short film shot during a nocturnal urban walk with her *Surveillance Shoe* (2000; Figure 4). With her shoe-camera, the artist privileges a spatial experience in which the body becomes part of a fluid, decentered whole[19]. It is this same desire to question the dis/order[20] of the urban with specific technologies' affordances that drives me. This concept, introduced by psychologist James Gibson (1979), refers to the different behavioural possibilities that an individual can adopt depending on the characteristics of an environment or object. In a technological context, it refers to the opportunities for user interaction enabled by technology. In other words, an affordance is the way in which an object or environment suggests or facilitates certain actions based on its properties and capabilities. Herewith, my entire approach specifically resonates with the notion of an "ethno-graphic" (Fassin et al., 2020) inquiry, positioned between the realms of research and creation.

17 A type of blog whose main medium is video, which may or may not be open to comments.

18 Photographs of walls exposed after the destruction of a building, showing traces of paint or the sedimentation of lives that appear and persist after demolition.

19 The artist explores the tangible and videographic relationship between her body and space, questioning whether, as a woman, she can transition from being the object of gaze to the subject in the urban scene.

20 "Disorder is 'an order that cannot be conceived' (Bergson). Disorder is therefore, in contrast to the established order, whether it emanates from power or the dominant producer, an alteration, an inversion, a negation, or even an aberration" (Maximy, 2000, p. 66).

Fig. 3: *Walls* — Source: Gordon Matta-Clark, 1972.

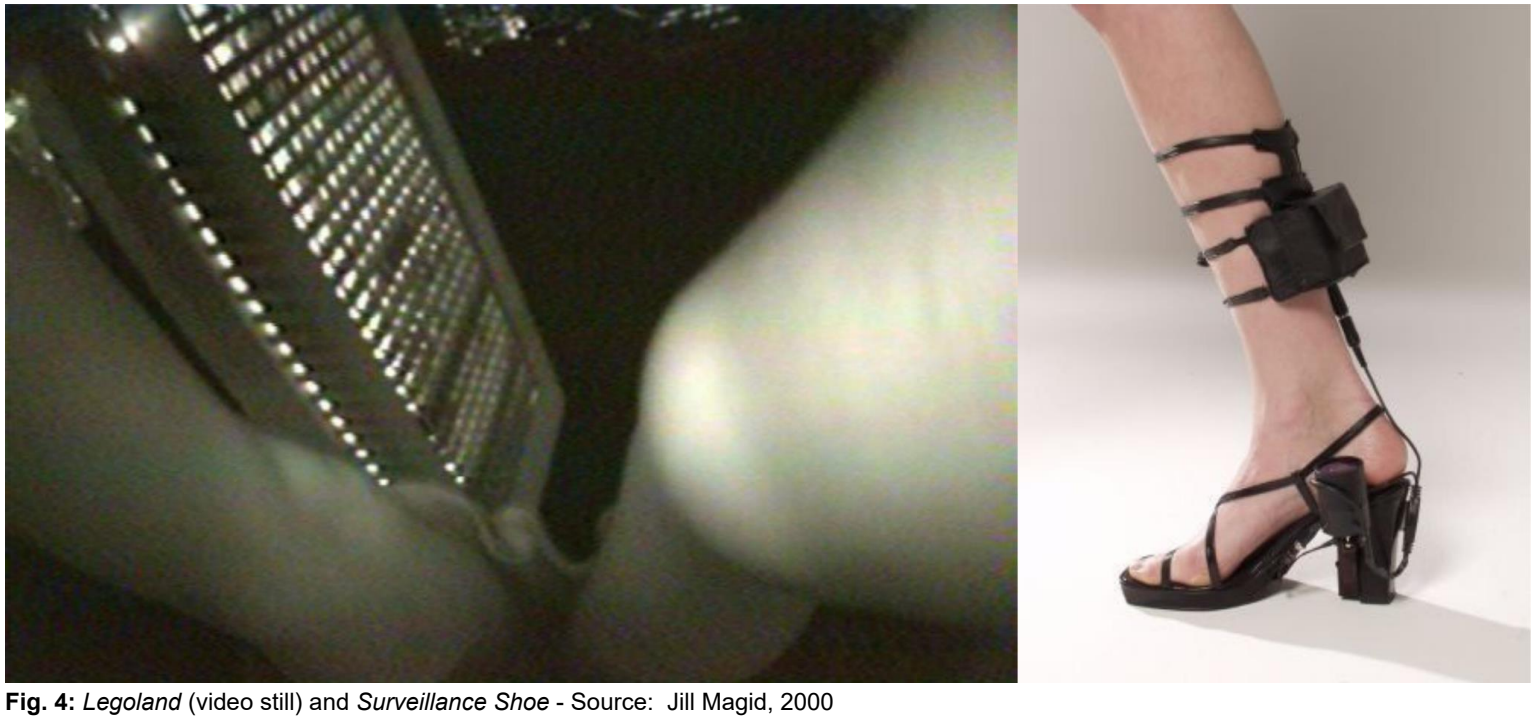

Fig. 4: *Legoland* (video still) and *Surveillance Shoe* - Source: Jill Magid, 2000

Consequently, my methodology extends beyond the moment of capture into the realm of post-production, which I treat as a reflexive laboratory for ethno-graphic analysis. Using the Insta360 Studio software (Figure 5), I can manually de/form, stretch, and contract the 360° image, not only for aesthetic effect, but to visually reveal and play with the tensions: a playful de/formation that comes with presets (Crystal Ball, Tiny Planet, Wide Angle, MegaView and Dewarp) and precise, numerical settings (pan, tilt and roll angles, field of view and distortion control). Herewith, I can invoke Gaston Bachelard, for whom "[...] the imagination of a movement requires the imagination of a matter. To the purely kinematic description of a movement—even a metaphorical one, must always be added the dynamic consideration of matter worked by the movement" (Bachelard, 1987, p. 300, our translation[21]). My postproduction thus functions as a videographic transformation, operating as a kind of *trans-morphosis*, making the video a relay surface: a connective tissue between my body, my movements, and the spaces traversed, where the visual score I carry unfolds. It is a consideration of space from not only an optical but also a sensory standpoint, as it includes the spatio-temporal dimension, with a certain blurring of spatial coordinates to conceive, as possible, a non-distanced relation to space, made of grazings, overlaps and affects. The city is no longer considered merely as decor, but as a sensitive, stratified and dislocated milieu, where my digital eyes capture traces without claiming to totalize them.

Fig. 5: Screenshot of the Insta360Studio software. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025.

As Aude Vidal (2024) points out, there exists a particular approach to travel as a "trophy hunt" in the age of the smartphone, especially in the use of photography, which demands interrogation. In my work, there is no intention to fix a filmic state from a single perspective, as in the imagery of social media flows, which often halts both form and meaning without any conflict of forces. My approach aligns rather with a critique of dominant visual forms: against the informative, advertising, or spectacular image, since I aim to allow incomplete, drifting, sometimes failing images to emerge. Images that seek to resist efficiency, while making a certain use of spectacularly effective methods, and which, in the fragility of this use, might render other urban

[21] From the original in French: "[...] l'imagination d'un mouvement réclame l'imagination d'une matière. À la description purement cinématique d'un mouvement—fût-ce d'un mouvement métaphorique –, il faut toujours adjoindre la considération dynamique de la matière travaillée par le mouvement".

possibilities imaginable. While it can generally be assumed that the image is finished at the moment of the click, here, the capture is merely the beginning. My experimentation consists of visually re/playing urban tensions and my theoretical understanding of them. I thus oppose my image regime to the dominant regimes of urban imagery: the postcard and the Instagram image (linear perspective), which frame, select, idealise, and largely exclude ugliness or context; and the satellite (Google Earth/drone) and architectural views, which offer an objective, disembodied, and seamless view from above. Furthermore, establishing post-production as a crucial stage of my research implies that the image is not an end in itself, but a raw material, used notably to create visual metaphors.

This constitutes a defence of a scientific digital aesthetic (Emery & Ibanez-Bueno, 2024): editing and pixel manipulation as integral to the analytical process–a way of thinking with and through the work of the image. Indeed, technological tools and post-production can expand perceptive capabilities upon reception. In this sense, videography, editing, and special effects serve as "partners of intellection to elucidate the situations encountered" (Viart, 2019, our translation). They represent cognitive resources capable of nourishing and extending the power of ethnographic description and, more specifically, its "vision" (*voyance*) (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 41). This notion from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, developed by Mauro Carbone (2011, pp. 65-68), explicates the capacity to see the visible as much as the conditions of visibility itself. As Lucie Roy expresses, "[the visual] brings thought to language by carrying it over, referring it back, or, in more common terms, by representing screenically its links between thought and the world. Yet, these links are configured within the embodiment and framing that thus orders and hierarchizes the sites of their perception" (Roy, 1996, p. 32, our translation[22]).

3 Experiencing an archaeology of the present

Having established my methodological framework, I now apply it to the specific case of Porto. If I stayed from July 8 to 10 on *Rua do Paraíso*, in the Marquês neighbourhood, it was on *Rua das Flores*, in the Ribeira district, that I began my recordings on July 9 at 12:57 p.m. There one finds *São Bento* station and metro, as well as the tourist office where visitors gather before heading toward the banks of the Douro and the Luís I Bridge, located only a few hundred meters away. The Ribeira district is undoubtedly the most iconic neighbourhood in the city. It has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1996 and, as mentioned before, has undergone significant urban renewal and commodification. Stretching along the riverbank, it features picturesque cobbled streets, historic buildings, traditional shops and numerous places to eat and drink. My walking trajectory, shown in Figure 6, was not pre-planned; rather, it unfolded tentatively, leading me toward sites I had intended to re/discover: the Luís I Bridge to reach, on the opposite bank, an abandoned ceramic factory (*Antiga Fábrica Cerâmica do Senhor de Além*) adjoining a derelict chapel (*Capela do Senhor de Além*), before returning across the Infante Dom Henrique Bridge toward a disused washhouse (*Lavadouro das Fontaínhas*) beside a community garden (*Horta Comunitária da Bananeira*).

22 From the original in French: "[le visuel] porte au langage la pensée en y reportant, en y rapportant ou, en termes plus usuels, en représentant écraniquement ses liens entre la pensée et le monde. Or, ces liens se trouvent configurés dans la mise en corps et en cadre qui ordonne et hiérarchise de la sorte les lieux de leur perception".

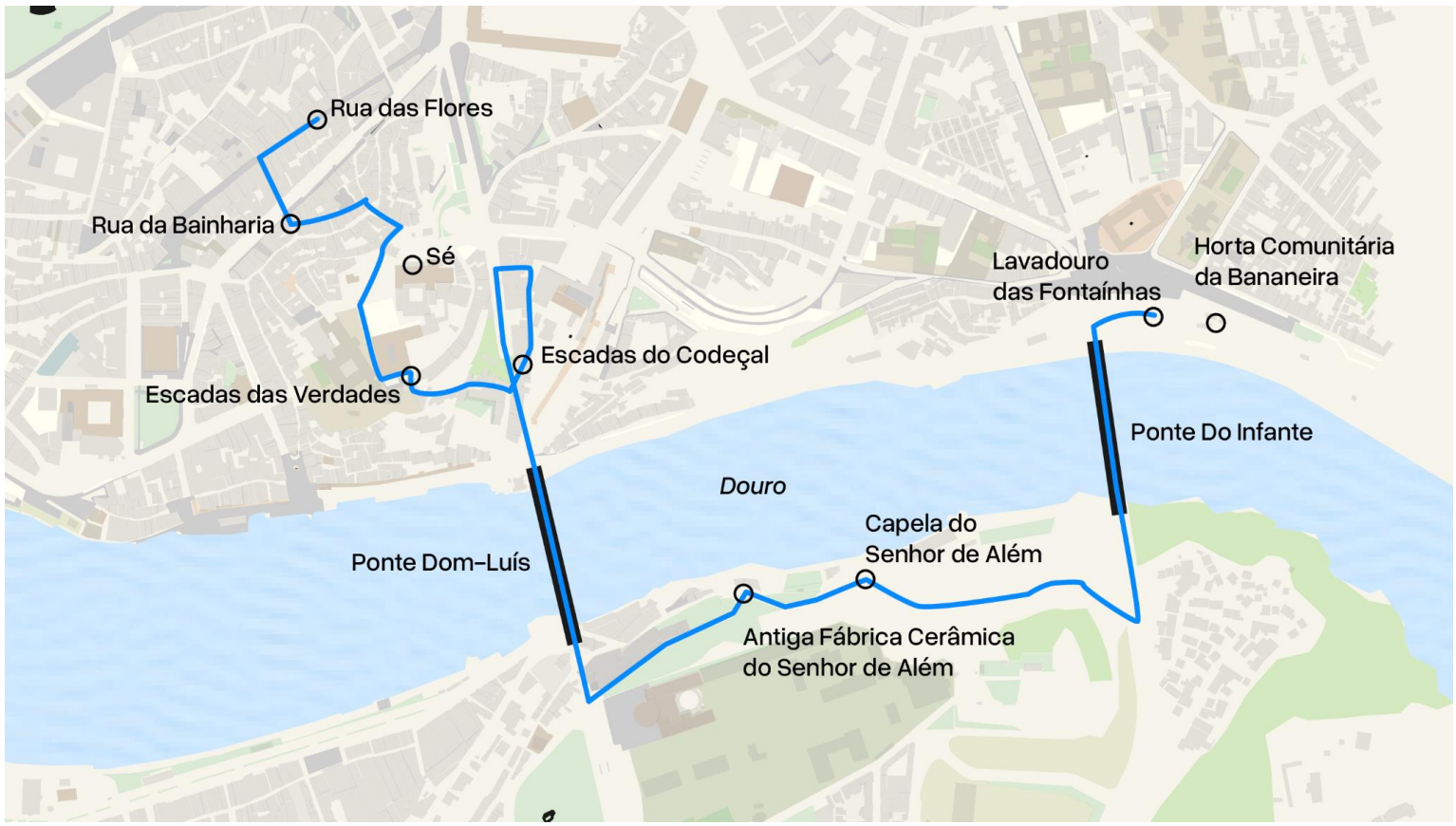

Fig. 6: Path taken and main points mentioned. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025, using Adobe Illustrator and Open Street Map with the author's notes.

As shown in Figure 7, I begin my video with a poster affixed in the street where I am temporarily lodging: it concerns a demonstration called for on 29 June 2025 by the association *Habitação Hoje!*[23]. This visual attests to local resistance against the logics of commodification and real estate speculation affecting Porto. *Casa para viver* (a house to live in) stands as a call for the fundamental right to housing, at the heart of an urban space where the proliferation of Airbnb rentals and soaring rents make life difficult, if not impossible, for many residents. This visual embodies the tension between tourist narratives and local subjectivities; it operates as a sign of struggle, seeking to inscribe a graphic trace into the urban atmosphere, politicising the wall and attempting to restore or grant it a voice. It is precisely to formalise this inherent tension that I embody, as a tourist body, that I appear in the first ten seconds of the 360° video, within a digital wormhole that punctures the image. As the visual journey unfolds, walled-off, dilapidated façades seem to signal the gradual abandonment of a working-class fabric. At the same time, the constant flow of tourists embodies Porto's integration into the global tourism circuit. As shown in Figure 8, this is particularly striking at 02:22, when, from the *Escadas das Verdades*, a spatial juxtaposition in low-angle view reveals an urban fracture: residents disappear behind walls, while the city is staged for visitors from the bridge.

[23] Habitação Hoje! website: https://www.habitacaohoje.org.

Fig. 7: Screenshot of the start of the video. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025.

The high-angle gaze over the same street from that bridge a few minutes later (03:12) captures an urban stratification that is both material and social, where ruin becomes decor and tourist circulation functions as a normalising force. It highlights the disjunction between living in the city and consuming it temporarily as a spectacle, revealing a gap between inhabited spaces and the commodified uses of urban space. This tension becomes particularly evident at 02:50, when my recordings construct a visual bridge between the real estate branding of a portoHaven and the persistence of an urban fabric under construction. This cut juxtaposes two languages: that of the city sold as a sanitised, designed tourist haven, and that of walls that speak a decrepit memory. On the Dom Luís I Bridge, at 3:27, the frame juxtaposes multiple layers of territorial consumption: in the foreground, a commodified, standardised, and branded hospitality space (“Eat. Sleep. Swim. Repeat”); in the background, a tourist boat navigates the cliffs inhabited by the old city. Here, everything functions as a vertical staging of the town, where the act of seeing can become a paid privilege. This perspective is symptomatic of the capitalism of experience: the city is looked at, rented, repeated, while the real–the social tensions, the invisibilized spaces–is diluted within the frame of a consumable image.

Fig. 8: Screenshot of the video at 02 minutes 22 seconds. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025.

These commercial typographies and slogans stand in opposition to the writings of the “urban voiceless”[24] (Emery, 2024, p. 535) and their urban inscriptions (Fraenkel, 2012): graffiti and other contestatory visuals maintain a resistant memory, even at the threshold of erasure, rooted “in a sense of social injustice that is intrinsically connected with the pattern of uneven urbanisation [...]” (Siwi, 2016). The images captured from the two bridges reflect tourist flows and extractive capitalism as much as they reveal a certain resistance from materials, elements, and local subjectivities that crumble yet refuse to disappear. These images illustrate the stratified thickness of Porto, which appears to me as a microcosm of the Capitalocene. The tag *Abandon dreams*, shown in figure 9, which I read and captured at 5:28, serves as a fragment that seems to respond cynically to the promoted tourist dream. The surrounding wild vegetation opposes the cleanliness of commercial slogans, forming a poetics of disenchantment. Everywhere, a discreet despair emerges in the margins of urban experience. I then think of Marie-José Mondzain’s metaphor of *Saxifrages*: these tiny plants that uniquely grow within the cracks of stone, imposing the fracturing order of their presence.

> Saxifrages grow between the paving stones of the pavements, where those who have neither home nor work must be recognised as one of us. Saxifrages attack walls, not to demolish what protects us, but to create openings that allow us to pass through and exchange glances. Saxifrages are the agents of the neighbourhood, and here again they demonstrate their political significance (Mondzain, 2005, para. 8, our translation[25]).

As the journey progresses, my documentation increasingly presents ruins, pierced by graffiti and gnawed by vegetation (3:52; 6:42). Silent witnesses of the city’s past, caught between modern traffic arteries and renovated buildings, they illustrate a layering of urban temporalities and the persistence of spaces no longer in use. These spaces embody a form of architectural recumbent

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[24] “The term ‘voiceless’, which we use, refers to a person who has lost their voice or is unable to speak. We use it here figuratively to describe people who are silenced in an urban context, either by coercion or by an inability to express themselves or, rather, to be heard!” (Emery, 2024, p. 535).

[25] From the original in French: "Les saxifrages poussent jusqu’entre les pavés des trottoirs où ceux qui n’ont ni logis ni travail doivent être reconnus comme étant des nôtres. Les saxifrages s’attaquent aux murs non point pour démolir ce qui en eux nous protège mais pour y inscrire des ouvertures qui permettent aux pas de franchir et aux regards de se croiser. Les saxifrages sont les agents du voisinage et là encore ils manifestent leur inscription politique".

form: traces of a bygone cycle, symptomatic of an urban present discarding what can no longer be capitalised–such as the homeless (00:17), whom I perceive as a contemporaneous recumbent effigy[26] (Emery, 2025b, p. 30)–as in my visual work in São Paulo's streets, *Jacentes GISANT·E·S 001* (2023).

Fig. 9: Screenshot of the video at 5 minutes 28 seconds. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025.

Through my photogrammetries (3D scans), forgetting becomes a visible and marked topography: an act of extraction insofar as it re/presents existential dissonances within the urban order, those that the habitual perception of urban flow renders invisible or accentuates through stereotyping. My low-angle (6:22) or high-angle (9:12) views over community gardens, constructed atop former agricultural or industrial terraces, emphasise these living traces of precarious yet resilient popular urbanism. These collective gardens perhaps constitute a concrete response to the erasure of popular uses of the city. The figure of the gardener (8:42), captured from afar, embodies at least a silent subjectivity that continues to act at its scale–against the monumental tourist gaze. The persistence–neither demolished nor rehabilitated–of ruined buildings where community gardens are traversed or glimpsed suggests localised land pressures, concentrated along certain axes deemed profitable. These suspended margins paradoxically attest to a differentiated urbanisation, where the value of places is measured as much by their visibility as by their potential for return, particularly tourist-oriented. The urban landscape of Porto's city centre thus appears progressively gnawed away by forces beyond the residents' control. As Eric Charmes (2005, our translation) explains, "the fact that many buildings have survived the decades changes nothing: their uses have disappeared[27]". It is therefore possibly also a symbolic loss[28] that such tensions impose upon spaces, since what is preserved, willingly or otherwise, and/or "beautified" are buildings rather than human relationships, to the detriment of the intangible culture tied to individuals (Vitor et al., 2018).

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[26] Reference to Christian funerary effigies ("*gisant*" in French); the recumbent figure is stretched out and lying down. The reference is relevant because capitalism was born in Christianity and there is also, culturally in the West, a link between biological death and social death, with horizontality being the guiding element of this association.

[27] From the original in French: "Que de nombreux bâtiments aient traversé les décennies ne change rien : leurs usages ont disparu".

[28] The symbolic loss of the gentrification process is discussed by authors (Vitor et al., 2018) in the city of São Paulo, where this process takes on particular contours with projects to revitalise the city centre, often questioned for their hygienist logic towards the most vulnerable populations in these neighbourhoods, who are also generally racially segregated.

In Porto, urban normalisation seems to have shaped pre-defined routes for tourists, pathways that run alongside neglected, abandoned areas nestled within the historic city centre. While the major modernised avenues channel flows toward key attractions, side streets, with their dilapidated façades and uneven pavements, reveal a more discontinuous urbanity: abandoned buildings stand here, graffiti-covered walls there, alongside shared gardens and oblique pathways that invite less controlled, more intuitive circulation. These spaces, still uncertain of their future, contrast with the traditionally polished image cultivated by a globalised tourist city; they compose an urban landscape moving at multiple speeds. Above all, these interstices offer passersby a stimulating paradox: between the channelled flows of the showcase city and the glimpses of an urbanity in suspense. My walk leads me to write that a certain weightiness prevails: a spatio-temporal density that bears witness to an ongoing transformation and, willingly or not, displays fragments of history, with the marked presence of anthropological places[29] (Augé, 2010), even as they are being erased or vitrified by the unprecedented expansion of circulation, consumption, and communication spaces.

Fig. 10: Screenshot of the video at 3 minutes 54 seconds and Screenshot of the video at 4 minutes 25 seconds. Source: Jordan Fraser Emery, 2025.

When Roberto Peregalli (2012) denounces the dread provoked by contemporary gigantism, he also dwells on the beauty of imperfection and the splendour of ruins. The fabric of forgotten remnants is precisely what delights “urbex” (urban exploration)—those unauthorised visits to abandoned spaces, where a dialectic unfolds between the freedom of wandering[30] through deserted places and the constraints of signposted itineraries in increasingly codified and designed cities (Offenstadt, 2022). It is precisely this fragmentary nature and the absence of fixed meaning that confer upon ruins their profound significance, as well as a tactile encounter with space and materiality (Edensor, 2005). It is also this latent tension that I have explored in my journey, as with the abandoned ceramic factory shown in Figure 10). Through my postproduction, these spaces regain a certain fluidity and are superimposed or intertwined in layers to mark their porosity. Yet, in most of the film, the 360° images at the centre of the video, the double-fisheye projection draws an hourglass, simultaneously evoking the portholes of an aeroplane; a shape that nowadays becomes a perfect metaphor for Porto, a city traversed by flows of heterogeneous intensities and velocities.

At the scale of the instant, I capture the offsets between the pedestrians’ pace, the rapid passage of a tram, the navigation of boats on the Douro, or the distant movement of aeroplanes. On a broader scale, it juxtaposes the pressing rhythm of the real estate market, the brief duration of a tourist visit, the human time of lived experience, and the long temporality of heritage or administrative procedures. The narrow neck of the hourglass, where my face is concentrated, condenses these intersecting velocities. The metaphorical sand flowing through it embodies the tension between temporalities that ignore each other yet intersect, producing visible tensions in space: renovations, suspended wastelands, parallel circulations, and so on. The effect becomes a sensitive operator, rendering perceptible the city’s spatio-temporal density. Moreover, I sequence the images at an inhuman speed to replay the time of capital and the intrinsic transience that drives it. Indifferent to formats and treating supports and their materials as elements of visual play, I contract and dilate the images, stretching them vertically and horizontally, as if responding to a magnetic field that deforms space and intensifies time.

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29 “[...] any space in which one can read inscriptions of social ties [...] and collective history” (Augé, 2010).

30 “In Urbex, you are completely free to explore these abandoned places as you wish” (Offenstadt, 2023).

4 Final, critical and reflexive considerations

In my approach, it is no longer just the city that is seen or/and consumed, but the implication of a body within the city. We move from the observation of the town to the observation of the tense relationship between the city and its spaces, bodies and their participation in flows. In this experimentation with urban spaces through my digital eyes, space ceases to be a fixed frame. It becomes a field of interaction between my body and the world, where both are in a constant reciprocal relationship. The way I use 360° recording and post-production makes technological perception seem to echo the lived experience of the body — as a body-subject traversing specific spaces. In my opinion, for the viewer of the video, there is an impression of being presented *within* or *in front of* a cavity that ceaselessly re/folds and un/folds: interior and exterior merge to the point of becoming, at times, indistinguishable. Perception is then entangled in both, within a space where the laws of gravitation seem elusive. Both on a sensible and theoretical level, this experience finds an analogy with the crossed structure of the “chiasm”, as considered by Merleau-Ponty (1964, p. 318): the boundaries between inside and outside, between subject and object, intertwine, revealing their permeability and reciprocity. Looking at Figure 10, I make this figure of the chiasm particularly manifest in the way space is traversed and interlaced upon itself with my body, and also through the two ornamental hinges that split the visual space and allow the (black) matter supporting this in/visibility to appear by inference. Videographic space de/forms bodies and spaces into a malleable matter, as the very materiality of the video space seems to be glass heated and blown at very high temperatures, then, in the same movement, immediately stabilised and cooled.

While my approach aligns with an archaeology of the present as analysed by Jonathan Tichit (2023)—alongside artists such as Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joel Sternfeld and Amélie Labourdette–it fundamentally distinguishes itself by the operative status assigned to the image. As shown in Figure 11, with a photograph of Labourdette, pictures of ruins or unfinished buildings, tends to freeze the transitory state in an indexical “that-has-been” (*ça-a-été*) or an aesthetic contemplation. Indeed, Tichit explains that these photographs often adopt a painting aesthetic with highly structured compositions, and distance the subject-object to monumentalise it. Yet, I have shown I do not content myself with recording ruins while merely noting entropy or urban tension; I try to visually re/play it by stretching and contracting space-time on the screen, thereby transforming distanced observation into an ordeal of material friction. For this reason, I worked with various frames (circular, rectangular, 3D) to guide the viewer toward a dual seeing instance normally invisible, that which foregrounds history and makes it visible: the video itself and the body producing it. Here, 360° and post-production helped me exchange the logic of meaning and readability for a logic of the sensible: it is a matter of movement and energy rather than signs and symbols. It is the desire to reveal a connection, as both body and citizen, to space and things: to the “flesh of the world” as Merleau-Ponty would say.

Fig. 11: *"Empire of dust #04", Giarre, Sicily.* Source: Amélie Labourdette, 2015.

Through this videographic and digital play, one can understand that it is possible to act upon urban space. Not necessarily in terms of a physical transformation of space, but at least, primarily, of its perceptive dimension. And through the malleability of this perceptive dimension, perhaps be able to act upon its other parts. It is then no longer merely a question of meaning and signification, but of anthropological and morphological stakes. We rediscover, I believe, a depth of the image with a sense that is no longer exhausted in a mere glance, since the affordance of 360° leads me to play with the image's morphology. And by playing with a *formless resemblance*, we are led to grasp that the image is not necessarily equivalent to the object it represents, that it is a modality of re/presentation capable of operating as imagination. Georges Bataille has, in fact, reminded us of this for nearly a century: "the dislocation of forms leads to that of thought" (Bataille, 1929, p. 82, our translation[31]). Establishing post-production as a crucial stage of my research implies (demonstrating) that the image is not an end in itself, but a raw material, used to create visual metaphors. Notably, to sketch a visual archaeology of the present: the images of a space in tension.

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31 From the original in French: "la dislocation des formes entraîne celle de la pensée".

Singularly a reflexive tension, which is also methodological, experienced by my own body as both a tourist and critic. This specific tension is therefore not a problem to be solved, but a research condition that my ethno-graphic praxis seeks to render perceptible here. In doing so, the visual essay establishes a situated interlocution with the city's transforming landscape, engaging in a critical dialogue between the observer and the stratified reality of the urban space. As a final thought, which opens up possibilities for further exploration, I must note that this visual archaeology captures only a fragment of the city's layered reality. Beyond the records my body acted as a receptor for other contrasts, invisible in the image but fundamental to the experience of space. I perceived a sonic tension: the dissonance between the polyglot, festive hubbub of tourist crowds in the main thoroughfares and the everyday music of the inhabitants, or even the heavy, sometimes suspicious silence of the alleys where laundry hangs to dry. There was also a haptic and thermal contrast: the heat of the sun in busy, exposed and renovated places against the damp coolness of ruined buildings that exude a scent of passing time. These sensory differences, which the video can suggest through the atmosphere, but cannot fully convey, constitute the phenomenological off-screen aspect of my experience, reinforcing the feeling that the inhabited city persists in the shadows, textured and local, as the background noise to the polished, noisy and global showcase city.

Acknowledgements

I am profoundly grateful to Sergio Higuita Montoya, Florence Roque and Veridiana Mantovani for the time we shared in Porto between March and July 2025. With each of you, the city seemed to breathe even more singularly, revealing spaces and fleeting encounters that stretched beyond the boundaries of my journeys, inviting me to continue seeing and living Porto as an ever-evolving urban space. I also thank the journal and its reviewers for their valuable advice during the editorial process, and Veridiana for proofreading the Portuguese translation.

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Bogéa, M. & Vetrone, M. L. (2025). Author Unknown. V!RUS, (30). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 62-80 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.238980

Abstract

This article discusses the processes of re-signifying everyday life through Art and Architecture. It aims to demonstrate that the convergence between disciplinary fields occurs primarily through the recognition of shared values and worldviews, rather than through technical–poetic strategies. The methodology employed involved field research (direct source), access to primary documents (documentary research), and a literature review. *Author Unknown* begins with the reading of an artistic and architectural work, attentive to its praxis and confrontations. Rochelle Costi displaces trivial objects, activating readings of place and memory. The project for the *União Continental* building, carried out by the architectural office MMBB in São Paulo, Brazil, values the ordinary and the preexisting. Rather than treating what exists as a datum to be preserved or surpassed, the cases analysed reveal modes of operation that enchant the banal and make visible the layers of experience that inhabit urban spaces. The text invites careful observation of what tends to remain at the margins, countering the logic of the tabula rasa and the emphasis on the exceptional, in dialogue with Georges Perec, Nicolas Bourriaud, and Walter Benjamin.

Key-words: Art and Architecture, Contemporary Intervention, Re-signification of Everyday Life, Habitual Life.

1 Introduction

What could a plate of food and a building possibly have in common? At first glance, nothing! However, if the analysis is driven by the intrinsic reasons embedded in the thinking that engenders the work, then it could be everything[1]. This essay sets into dialogue the work of Rochelle Costi — specifically the exhibition on view during the preparation of this text, titled *A casa como laboratório* (The House as Laboratory), curated by Alexia Tala at *Galeria Luciana Brito*, in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2025 — and the transformation of the *União Continental* office building into housing units carried out by MMBB Architects, also in the city of São Paulo, in 2022. This text is dedicated to two works from two disciplinary fields that act upon and investigate the productions of the city: one within the sphere of intangible culture (everyday food) and the other within the material sphere (constructions, including those rendered invisible in the field's historiography), each with its own dynamics and reverberations. In alignment with the challenge proposed in the call for this issue of the journal, the text articulates differences and convergences between the two works through the simultaneous construction of reflection and action, aiming at the production of knowledge and social transformation.

The interest lies in the attention to the mobilization of banal, non-spectacular objects, summoned precisely because they constitute the ordinary fabric of the world — the everyday. The analysis draws on clues offered by Georges Perec in the text *¿Aproximaciones a qué?*, published in the collection *Lo infraordinario* (Perec, 2013). Nicolas Bourriaud, in his book *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (Bourriaud, 2009), provides a basis for thinking of editing and montage as the foundation of artistic procedures and, in this text, architectural ones as well. Finally, the text recuperates the moment of hegemonic conviction in the tabula rasa through Walter Benjamin's *Experience and Poverty*, written in 1933. Bringing together authors from distinct intellectual traditions and eras responds to an interest in what they share as a common value — in this case, experience and montage based on preexisting data as a cultural trait to be acknowledged.

This text aims to demonstrate the convergence between disciplinary fields that occur primarily through shared values and worldviews, which are recognizable in the works through poetic strategies that distinguish them as areas of knowledge. The methodology employed involved field research (direct sources through interviews and visits to the exhibition and to the building), access to primary documents (documentary research, including restricted-process records of the architectural project), and a literature review. The analysis is structured from the works themselves; that is, it begins with the empirical

1 The connection between artist(s) and architect(s) through their worldview rather than their disciplinary field was originally explored by Marta Bogéa in the exhibition she co-curated with Abílio Guerra, entitled Territory of Contact, which took place in 2012 at SESC Pompéia.

before the theoretical. In other words, it is first based on data and observations — the results of experience and practice — and only then turns to the concepts, ideas, and abstractions that seek to explain the world.

2 *Prato Feito* (Set Meal)

Grão de arroz tem 8 cm no Arte/Cidade 3 *(A grain of rice is 8 cm in Arte/Cidade 3)* is the title of the article written by Celso Fioravante for the *+MAIS!* supplement of the newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo*, published on Sunday, October 26, 1997[2]. The informational box reads:

> Event: Arte/Cidade 3 (urban intervention project)
> Where: route between Estação da Luz, in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, and the former Matarazzo factories (entrance and parking at Av. Francisco Matarazzo, 1,096), with access from both locations and a stop at Moinho Central
> When: Tuesday to Sunday, from 12 p.m. to 9 p.m.; until November 30
> How much: free admission (Fioravante, 1997, n.p., our translation)

Fig. 1: *Pratos Típicos: Prato Feito (1997). Source: Rochelle Costi, 1997. Available at: https://rochellecosti.com/Pratos-tipicos-1997-1 . Accessed on* 10/06/2025.

[2] Fernando de Mello Franco and Milton Braga participated as invited architects in the same event, carrying out an earthmoving intervention in front of the main entrance of the former Matarazzo factories, located in the city of São Paulo, Brazil.

The article refers to Rochelle Costi's photographs from the series *Pratos Típicos* (typical food), produced between 1994 and 1997 — the year of the exhibition. At *Arte/Cidade*, four photographs depicting meals from the region were displayed; they were enlarged, printed on vinyl using a plotter as advertising-style images, and installed in the openings that once held windows on the top floor of the building. *Pratos Típicos: Familiar (Familiar)*; *Pratos Típicos: Prato Feito* (Set meal); *Pratos Típicos: Sem Teto* (Homeless); *Pratos Típicos: Marmita* (Packed lunch). Figure 1 presents *Prato Típico: Prato Feito.* In the text written by the artist and available on her website:

> Plates of food belonging to residents living around the former mill are photographed and enlarged at a scale and in a medium that evoke advertising billboards, and are displayed inside the factory that, decades earlier, had produced a large portion of the flour consumed in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The identity of the surrounding population is revealed through the worker's *marmita* (home-packed meal carried in a lunchbox), the improvised lunch of a group of unhoused residents, the *buchada* served in the Tuesday *prato feito* (common Brazilian set meal) at a corner bar in the Barra Funda district of São Paulo, and the fried fish prepared by a family. The mill, decommissioned in the 1990s, was gradually informally occupied, forming what is today the *Favela do Moinho*; the actions of the public authorities were limited to demolishing the old factory and promising the settlement's disappearance. (Costi, 1997, n.p., our translation)

Costi produced the *Pratos Típicos* series at the same time that she created *Toalhas* (towels). In an interview with Ivo Mesquita, she reveals:

> *Pratos Típicos* and *Toalhas* took place during my time at the space *A Casa*. When I was invited to the Havana Biennial, I was immersed in domestic rituals—in the repetition of habits that choreograph the intimacy of bodies around the table, the bed, the clothesline, in an arranging and rearranging of countless frequency. (Costi, 2005, n.p., our translation)

Both series are part of a quotidian intrinsic to habitual life—facts that often arise from ordinary situations, occurring in banal places, yet constituting an intrinsic part of memory insofar as their materiality shelters forms of coexistence, places, and events that become inseparable in recollection. (Almeida & Bogéa, 2016) Food is undoubtedly one of these elements. Architecture, even when banal, is another. Costi describes the installation at the former mills, presented in Figure 2:

> The event had "the city and its histories" as its theme, and I was drawn to the idea of speaking about the history of food among the inhabitants living near the ruins of an old mill in São Paulo, Brazil. I therefore photographed a sampling of four types of food: a worker's *marmita* (home-packed meal), a set meal, a family's food, and a group of unhoused people's food. The enlarged images, printed on 2.5 × 3.10 m plotters, occupied a 30-meter room on the top floor of the building. Placed between the openings of large windows, they proposed a dialogue with the city, in counterpoint to advertising backlights. (Costi, 2005, n.p., our translation)

Fig. 2: *Pratos Típicos* installation at *Arte/Cidade II, Moinho Central,* Barra Funda, São Paulo, SP, Brazil. Source: Rochelle Costi, 1997. Available at: https://rochellecosti.com/Pratos-tipicos-1997-1. Accessed on 10/06/2025.

The artist told the reporter that the most significant difficulty in her project was persuading people to allow their plates to be photographed. Was it really shyness, as the photographer interpreted? Or was it astonishment in the face of interest in such a banal, everyday, and deeply personal element — something that "would not matter to anyone"? Such discourse appears in the words of a resident of Croix-Rousse, in the city of Lyon, France, when speaking about memories of her neighborhood in an interview given to Pierre Mayol, cited by Michel de Certeau (1994) in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, *Book 1: Arts of Doing*, in the significantly titled section *Credible and Memorable: Habitability*.

3 Ordinary Things

The interest in revisiting existing things is also significant in architecture. An issue inherent to certain artists and architects, it corresponds to a fundamental and ongoing theme. In the disciplinary field of architecture, it dates back — within contemporary terms — to the emblematic example of the transformation project carried out in the *17th arrondissement* of Paris, France: *Tour Bois-le-Prêtre*, by Druot, Lacaton, and Vassal (2011). However, this understanding differs from what is stated by the jury of the Pritzker Prize awarded to them in 2021, which declares that they "find value in what already exists (…) in order to give renewed potential to what already existed" (Pritzker Prize, 2021, n.p.). In this case, above all, what is recognized is that, in discerning the potential of what existed, they intervene by transforming it precisely through the introduction of something that did not exist. It is not, therefore, a matter of acknowledging the given with minimal interference, but of the careful judgment of what is present and what is absent — an evaluation that enables them to intervene, transform, shift, and valorize in order to re-signify.

The image of the DJ evoked by Nicolas Bourriaud (2009) in *Postproduction Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* is an apt one for analyzing these productions. The author explains the adoption of the technical term, used in television, film, and video productions: "It designates the set of treatments applied to recorded material: editing, the addition of other

visual or sound sources, subtitles, voice-overs, special effects." (Bourriaud, 2009, p. 7, our translation) He notes that this operation is connected to the tertiary sector—the world of services and recycling—as opposed to sectors dealing with the production of raw materials. The author identifies, starting in the 1990s, an increasing number of artists interpreting, exhibiting, or using available cultural products or works made by others. Bourriaud clarifies:

> For them, the task is not to elaborate a form from raw material, but rather to work with current objects already circulating in the cultural market—that is, objects that already possess a form given by someone else. Thus, the notions of originality (being at the origin of…) and even of creation (making from nothing) fade in this new cultural landscape marked by the twin figures of the DJ and the programmer, whose tasks consist of selecting cultural objects and inserting them into defined contexts. (Bourriaud, 2009, p. 9, our translation)

The author does not confine his analysis to architecture; his focus is on artistic practices. Yet the argument is equally powerful in architecture, provided that the unequivocal differences between the fields are maintained—for example, the non-portability of data from one place to another in the case of architecture as material. The operation generally occurs between two (or more) moments, beginning from an existing artifact. Returning to Walter Benjamin (1994) in the text *Experience and Poverty*, written in 1933, allows us to trace the origins of what has led us to opt for a point zero at each new action. The text opens with the observation that "experience has fallen in value, and this in a generation that between 1914 and 1918 had one of the most monstrous experiences in human history" (p. 114, our translation). The philosopher notes that a new form of poverty emerged with the monstrous development of technology, which came to overshadow human beings. He asks: "What is the value of all our cultural heritage if the experience no longer relates to us?" (p. 114, our translation). He sees the emergence of a new barbarism. In his words: "What does this poverty of experience yield for the barbarian? It drives him to begin from the beginning, to make a fresh start, to be satisfied with little (…)" (Benjamin, 1994, pp. 114–115, our translation). The author observes the aspiration to free oneself from all experience, stressing that those who defend or enact this condition are not necessarily ignorant or inexperienced: "We may say that the reverse holds true: they 'devour' everything, 'culture' and 'people,' and are left satiated and exhausted" (p. 119, our translation). This trait, according to him, spans from high culture—for example, the Bauhaus — to popular culture — for example, Mickey Mouse. The author concludes that we have become poor, because:

> We have abandoned one after another all the pieces of human heritage; many times we had to pawn them for a hundredth of their value in exchange for the small change of the 'present.' The economic crisis stands at the door; behind it lies a shadow—the next war. (…) In its buildings, paintings, and stories, humanity prepares itself, if necessary, to survive culture. And what is most important: it does so laughing. Perhaps this laughter has here and there a barbaric sound. Perfect. In the meantime, may the individual give a bit of humanity to that mass, which one day may perhaps repay it with interest—and with compound interest. (Benjamin, 1994, p. 119, our translation)

Acerbic in his forceful critique, Benjamin (1994) points out, with lucid disquiet, the delirious project of his time that drives people to move forward and, if necessary, to survive culture itself. A delirium that so exceeds its own moment that it can still be observed in certain hegemonic practices today. The text was written between the two great world wars of the twentieth century; it is important to recall that it dates from the same year as Hitler's seizure of power in Germany, which marked the beginning of the Third Reich. Nearly a century later, it remains relevant[3]. It is worth considering the challenge of not relinquishing personal and collective experience, in the terms proposed by the architect Milton Braga:

> Many people think a house must be personalized, and we do not disagree. As Fernando [*de Mello Franco, founding partner of MMBB until 2012*] and I used to say, a house is personalized not by the architecture—which is infrastructural—but by the reliquary, that which each person carries with them: their photos, their paintings, their rugs, their curtains, their clothes. That is what changes

[3] A rather unsettling fact, considering the rise of the far right around the world in recent decades. Walter Benjamin, a German-Jewish philosopher and sociologist, lived in exile in Italy between 1934 and 1935 and died in Spain in 1940 at the age of 48.

> completely from one person to another and completely transforms a house (…). (Braga, 2024, n.p., our addition, our translation)

In this sense, it is important to observe how Frédéric Druot, Anne Lacaton, and Jean-Philippe Vassal (2011) document the aforementioned project in the 17th *arrondissement* of Paris, France. Through the revealing photographs by Philippe Ruault, which show several of the apartments in their personal states of occupation, one sees a balcony filled with orchids or, in another unit, carnival masks displayed on the wall. From these photographs, one can recognize each "reliquary," in the terms used by Franco and Braga (2024), distinguishing each dwelling. The photographs, in recording the architecture, also allow glimpses of the people who live there. Similarly, Rochelle Costi's series *Quartos* (1998) portrays traces of those who inhabit the place, allowing the architecture that shelters them to be perceived. Some photographs from *Quartos* are included in the artist's current exhibition at *Galeria Luciana Brito*, in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, at the time of writing this text. The series was initially presented at the 24th Bienal de São Paulo, in 1998, and arranged as a set of different frontal views, accentuating the singularity of each room photographed, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Alexia Tala, curator of the exhibition titled *A casa como laboratório*[4] (The House as Laboratory), brings Costi's work into dialogue with Georges Perec in her text *The House as a Laboratory of Wonder: The Infraordinary and the Construction of Dwelling in the Work of Rochelle Costi*. According to her:

> In his brief text *Aproximaciones a lo infraordinario*, Perec asks: "What happens when nothing happens? How can we speak of those hours, those days in which nothing takes place, when nothing occurs beyond what happens every day — the habitual, the everyday, the evident, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the everydayness of life?" For Perec, the infraordinary is what constitutes the real fabric of our lives: not significant events, but the murmur of the habitual, the trace of the minimal." (Tala, 2025, p. 1, our translation)

Through Perec, the curator understands Rochelle Costi as

> (…) an artist of the infraordinary. Throughout her long and productive career, she avoided spectacular themes or grandiloquent settings, preferring instead to explore bedrooms, furniture, closets, ordinary objects, forgotten corners, insects, walls, patterns, textures, shops selling inexpensive items, and even market stalls. (Tala, 2025, p. 5, our translation)

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4 Rochelle Costi's exhibition *A casa como laboratório* (The House as Laboratory), at Galeria Luciana Brito, from June to August 2025.

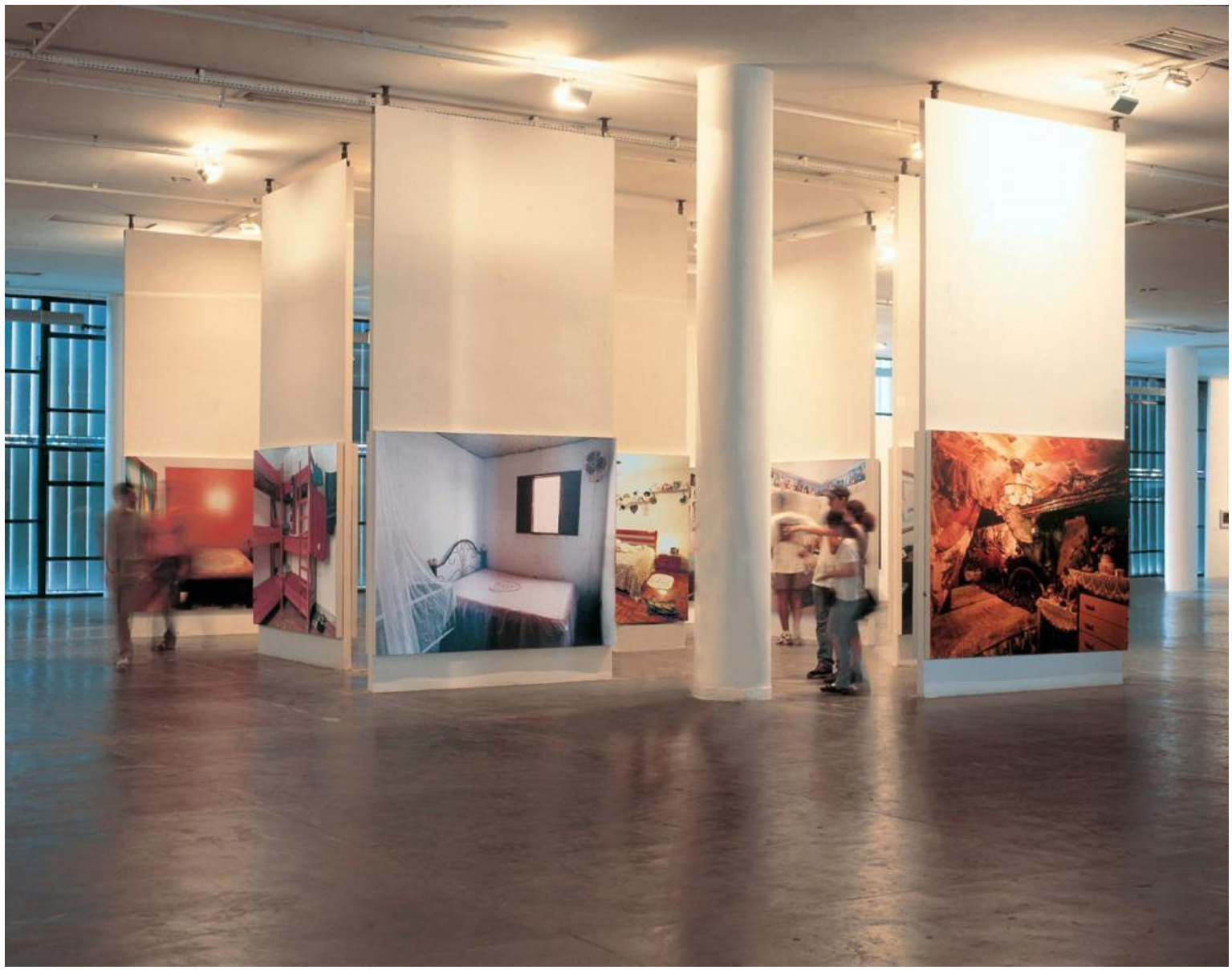

Fig. 3: *Quartos* installation at the 24th Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil. Source: Rochelle Costi, 1998. Available at: https://rochellecosti.com/Quartos-Sao-Paulo-1998. Accessed on 10/06/2025.

In *¿Aproximaciones a qué?,* Georges Perec (2013) opens the text by observing that “What speaks to us, it seems to me, is always the event, the unusual, the extraordinary: the front page spread across five columns, the big headlines.” [5] (p. 13, our translation). He warns that the news prioritizes what is dramatic and unsettling. According to him, behind every event there must always be a scandal or a danger, as if life should only reveal itself through the spectacular. Faced with this, the author asks:

> Newspapers speak of everything except the everyday. Newspapers bore me; they teach me nothing; what they report does not concern me, does not question me, and, moreover, does not respond to the questions I ask or would like to ask. What really happens, what we live, the rest — all the rest — where is it? How can we account for what happens every day and what happens again, for the banal, the everyday, the evident, the common, the ordinary, the infraordinary, the background noise,

[5] From the original in Spanish: "Lo que nos habla, me parece, es siempre el acontecimiento, lo insólito, lo extraordinario: la primera página a cinco columnas, grande titulares” (Perec, 2013, p. 13).

> the habitual? How can we interrogate it? How can we describe it? (Perec, 2013, p. 14, our translation)[6]

Aligned with Perec (2013), we return here to architecture and to the production of the city of São Paulo, Brazil. We revisit a text by Luis Espallargas Gimenez (1993), published in *Revista Óculum* (prior to the current digital archives), titled *Small Architecture: When Simplicity and Correctness Replace Genius.* In this essay, Gimenez draws attention to the "spectacularization" of architecture at the end of the millennium. According to the author, this phenomenon compelled architects "to design under the obligation to invent, to provoke, even to mesmerize — not a single observer, but a crowd so uninformed and alienated that it only reacts and admits stimulation when shocked or subjected to exaggeration" (2009, p. 72, our translation), echoing through a catalog of examples that confirms this ideology. The author warns that, as a consequence, the architect "disdains the simple, economical, efficient, and correct artifact, for it no longer seems plausible to believe that a concise and discreet conception may be timely or endowed with significant aesthetic qualities, hence the disregard for this architecture seen as 'small'" (2009, p. 72, our translation). This argument returns with a precise framing and renewed attention to housing buildings, in dialogue with the publication *On the Judgment of São Paulo Architecture* (2009), Vitruvius portal, Arquitextos magazine.

4 Intervening, Transforming

A recent municipal law in São Paulo, Brazil, also affects the built heritage, regardless of a property's cultural or historical value. To make use of the neglected building stock, the Requalifica Centro Program — Municipal Law No. 17,577, enacted on July 20, 2021 — promotes densification in the central area, offering a series of benefits to projects that convert underutilized existing buildings into housing units. Among the main incentives[7] are exemption from the property tax (IPTU) during the first three years after completion of the works, the waiver of compliance with parking requirements, and the elimination of the active façade requirement, among other benefits.

This shift in orientation redirects the focus of earlier rehabilitation programs from the 1990s and 2000s — which were primarily aimed at monumental buildings and at creating cultural facilities for tourism purposes (Marins, 2017) — toward buildings of everyday heritage, those more closely tied to daily life. This not only signals a change in relation to previous policies, valuing the presence of ordinary uses in the city center, but also highlights an interest in reusing the extensive built stock that had been emptied in recent decades as the city expanded into new axes of real estate valorization[8] (Sant'Anna, 2017). In this sense, it aligns with the protection of a built inventory that extends beyond the monumental. This change in legislation, informally called the *Retrofit Law*[9], established new instruments to encourage the rehabilitation of buildings in the city center, marking an important departure from the exhausting practice of simply starting anew. This practice unfortunately remains prevalent in São Paulo.

The legal stance supporting investments in existing buildings — regardless of whether they are recognized as heritage — aligns with the central issue of the doctoral dissertation *Renovation Is Not Construction: The Rehabilitation of High-Rise*

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[6] From the original in Spanish: "Los diarios hablan de todo, salvo lo diario. Los diarios me aburren, no me enseñan nada; lo que cuentan no me concierne, no me interroga y además no responde a las preguntas que planteo o que quisiera plantear. Lo que pasa realmente, lo que vivimos, lo demás, todo lo demás, ¿dónde está? ¿Cómo dar cuenta de lo que pasa cada día y de lo que vuelve a pasar, de lo banal, lo cotidiano, lo evidente, lo común, lo ordinario, lo infraordinario, el ruido de fondo, lo habitual? ¿Cómo interrogarlo? ¿Cómo describirlo?" (Perec, 2013, p. 14)

[7] Full tax incentives: Remission of outstanding property tax (IPTU) debts; Exemption from IPTU during the first 3 years following the issuance of the certificate of completion of works; Application of progressive IPTU rates for a period of 5 years after the exemption described above. In the 6th year, the property reaches the full tax rate; Reduction of the services tax (ISS) rate to 2% for services related to the requalification work (engineering, architecture, construction, cleaning, maintenance, environment); Exemption from the property transfer tax (ITBI) for properties undergoing requalification; Exemption from municipal fees for installation and operation for 5 years. — Requalifica Centro Program (Law No. 17,577/21).

[8] The emptying of functions in the city center of São Paulo, Brazil — particularly in office buildings — began as early as the 1960s, when economic and financial centers migrated to new areas such as Avenida Paulista, Avenida Faria Lima, and later the region of Avenida Berrini.

[9] *Requalifica Centro* Program (Lei 17.577/21).

Buildings and New Ways of Living in São Paulo in the 21st Century, by Alejandra Maria Devecchi, supervised by Maria Ruth Amaral de Sampaio and defended in 2010 (Devecchi, 2014). It also directly challenges the still-dominant practice of wholly replacing tall buildings with entirely new built volumes. The market's response to the legislation is already underway, and currently involves a significant number of investments in preexisting buildings. Somauma Inc., for example, states on its website:

> We develop and construct projects that renovate empty, abandoned, or underutilized buildings, opening the doors to new opportunities for life in the city! We incorporate retrofit into its original conception. Much more than a simple renovation, it consists of producing a new property—new in all its systems and guarantees, but also new in its urban meaning. (Somauma, n.d., n.p., our translation)

Among the projects presented in the catalog is the Virgínia Building, located at the corner of *Martins Fontes* Street and *Álvares de Carvalho* Street, in the center of São Paulo. It was approved in September 2023, with construction scheduled for completion in September 2025. The project, authored by *Metrópole* Architects (2024), stands out for the preservation and enhancement of the preexisting aesthetic elements, even though heritage preservation agencies do not formally list the building. Another agent in this market-driven transformation is the developer Planta Inc., whose presentation reads:

> With a focus entirely on retrofit, Planta Inc. seeks to attract residents to central areas in a rational, environmentally friendly way, thereby contributing to a city with more equal access to opportunities. (Planta Inc., n.d., n.p., our translation)

In the available catalog, buildings such as the Renata Sampaio Ferreira Building are listed — a modernist building designed by Oswaldo Bratke in 1956, located at the corner of *Major Sertório* Street and *Araújo* Street, also in the center of São Paulo. In a project by METRO Architects (2024), its commercial floor slabs were reconfigured to accommodate ninety-three apartments, while maintaining preexisting elements of the landmarked façade, such as the symbolic *cobogós*. The work was completed in October 2023 making it the first building to receive an occupancy permit under the program. The same catalog includes the *União Continental* Building, a renovation project developed by MMBB Architects in 2022. This project differs from the others by requalifying an ordinary building described as being of "unknown authorship," as indicated in the technical sheet available on the firm's website. What is of interest here, above all, is the transformation of an everyday, unremarkable building — one without any apparent singularity that might distinguish it from the typical production of its time (Figure 4).

Fig. 4: *União Continental* Building before the intervention. Survey photograph. Source: MMBB Architects, 2020.

In the project brief available on the website of MMBB Architects (2022), the authors state:

> União Continental is a characteristic example of the anonymous modern architecture of the mid-twentieth century (sic), predominant in the center of São Paulo, Brazil, and responsible for transforming this real-estate stock into one of the most prominent modernist ensembles in the world. Regardless of its quality and global relevance, the modernity of São Paulo's historic core is one of the most striking aspects of the city's urbanization, making the importance of its preservation unquestionable. Therefore, the appreciation of the building's modern features was one of the project's fundamental premises. (MMBB Arquitetos, 2022, n.p., our translation)

Milton Braga analyzes the building, pointing to the guiding principle of the project, recognizable in Figure 5:

> União Continental is a magnificent building to recycle, because it has no central column. It is small, but it has large spans, so you can do whatever you want inside. At the same time, because it was a service building, designed for work, it was not as committed to natural light everywhere (…) its floor plates are very deep. And so the only viable typology is that of the small apartment, with few occupants, in which spaces can be completely integrated. Thus, in the same window, you can have

> sleeping, eating, or working, cleaning the house, cooking, and so on. (Braga, 2024, n.p., our translation)

The architects describe aspects of the transformation — which they refer to as a recycling project — while intentionally distancing themselves from the term retrofit, used by the developer Planta Inc. in accordance with current real-estate market terminology. This difference in terminology is not trivial: one emphasizes the procedure; the other, the commodity. Braga observes:

> Today, there is increasing attention to the recycling of buildings. This is the term I have used in place of retrofit, which is the more common jargon. It makes us think about new buildings being designed now, and how they will be recycled in the future. Today, more than ever, we are aware that every project must also be conceived for its future recycling, and eventually its re-signification. I believe that the great challenge of contemporary architecture is to make something that can be recycled or transformed, but that at the same time does not degenerate and, if possible, retains something of its origin, so that history is not lost. (Braga, 2024, n.p., our translation)

While recycling refers to the process of transforming waste — in this case, obsolete built matter — the term retrofit, adopted by the real-estate market, signals a focus primarily on the enhancement of functional improvements and the updating of systems and infrastructure to meet the parameters and requirements of contemporary efficiency standards (Powell, 1999). Even when some architectural features are preserved and valued, the focus of retrofit is not on valuing or re-signifying the preexisting material, but rather on improving the product.

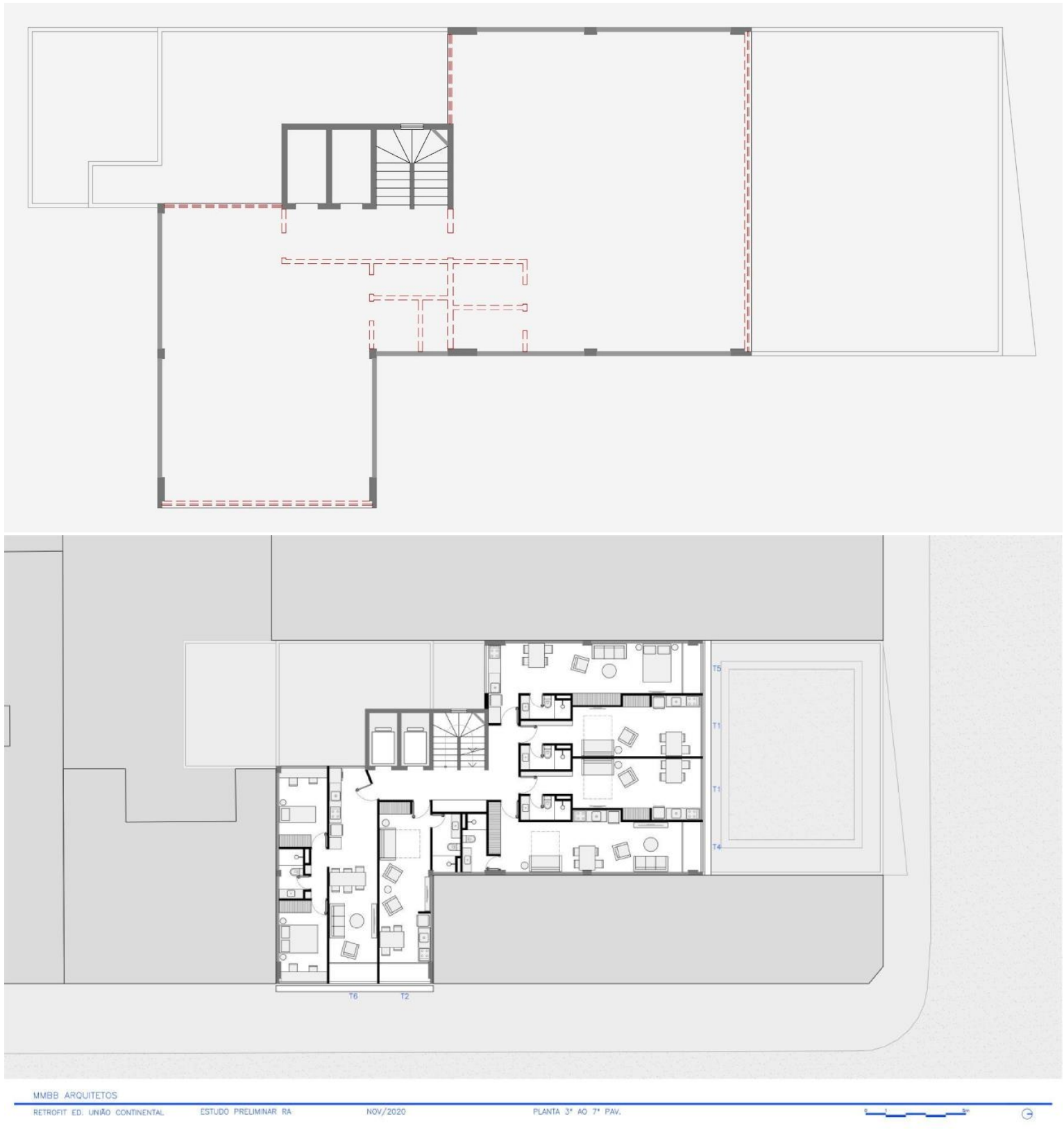

Fig. 5: União Continental Building, typical floor plan: to retain/demolish and intervention. Source: MMBB Architects, 2020.

The *União Continental* Building received its first occupancy authorization upon completion of construction in 1973. According to records obtained from the Municipal Archive of the city of São Paulo[10], Brazil, the original project dates back to 1963 and was developed by Sorenc Engineering for the owner Luiz Vicente Barros Mattos. In 1966, the property was transferred to BARMA Inc., and a modification project was submitted. In 1973, the occupancy permit was issued along with the final inspection report. In the drawings held at the Municipal Archive, the official stamp identifies the project's author: Eng. Ulysses Pasqual. Because he is not an author repeatedly recognized for his architectural production, his name ultimately disappeared from contemporary records. It is relevant to observe how the authors of this ordinary, everyday city vanish from the field's historiography, even when the quality of what they were capable of producing is acknowledged:

> We preserved that architecture, even though it is neither listed nor particularly notable; we made use of what already existed. The light is somewhat diffuse, distributed through several windows, so we created floor-to-ceiling windows. There are all the ribs of the structure, which we ended up exposing, because it is very well-made concrete for its time. (…) concrete that was not intended to be exposed, and which we chose to reveal. (MMBB Arquitetos, 2022, n.p., our translation)

There is a condition not mentioned in the architects' records that warrants attention: the corner features a small structure with a fiber-cement roof and graffiti on its façades, as shown in Figure 7.

Fig. 7: Corner of *Marquês de Itu* Street and *Rego Freitas* Street, São Paulo, Brazil. Source: Mariana Lunardi Vetrone, 2024.

[10] Research of project records conducted at the Municipal Public Archive of São Paulo, Brazil, in January 2025.

Noisy — both in scale and in appearance compared with the building that frames it—the small structure is consistently kept out of focus in the project's presentation drawings. Within the terms of this analysis, however, it is valuable precisely because it exists as it is. A curious contradiction emerges between modes of documentation and representation and the convictions already assumed, at least by one of its authors, Milton Braga (2024):

> Traditional cities worked with what was already there or with what was available, like the *bricoleur*[11]. And I think that the view of the city is still this: the city is a process; whether we like it or not, we will have to incorporate things that are not ideal. But perhaps this is, at heart, the ideal of the city—the correct view of the city. Moreover, it is more beautiful this way, isn't it? As Colin Rowe argues in the text[12]. (Braga, 2024, n.p., our translation)

A previously unseen aspect redefines the building's perception within the landscape: its chromatic planes. Located in the *Vila Buarque* neighborhood, at the intersection of Marquês de Itu Street and Rego Freitas Street in the center of São Paulo, the architects emphasize its "L" configuration, which gives it two street façades — an evident distinction in Figure 8:

> This double frontage, together with the profusion of party walls that result from it, inspired a color composition that highlights this geometry as a virtue. (…) those who walk along *Rego Freitas* Street always encounter a burgundy tone, while along *Marquês de Itu* Street, a light blue stands out. Two streets, two colors, two distinct presences. At the corner, where the colors meet, a third appearance emerges, the result of the combination of burgundy and light blue, which accentuates the building's peculiar condition in the city. (MMBB Arquitetos, 2022, n.p., our translation)

[11] Term used by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (1978) to refer to the individual who engages in "bricolage" in the traditional city.

[12] The architect is referring to the work *Collage City* by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (1978).

Fig. 8: Renovated building within the urban landscape. Source: Israel Gollino / Planta Inc., 2024**.**

The project is rich in delicate and carefully considered details. For example, to reduce the lack of natural light at the depth of the floor plate — which reaches up to 11 meters in some cases — a glass block and an elegant enclosure are inserted to bring in light. Three on one façade, two on another, and one on the smallest façade. This pattern produces a kind of pointillism on the façades, certainly more visible at night when illuminated from within. In the published drawings, these details do not appear; they are present only in the construction documents, shown in Figure 9. However, this aspect is perceptible on the façades when closely observed in photographs of the built work.

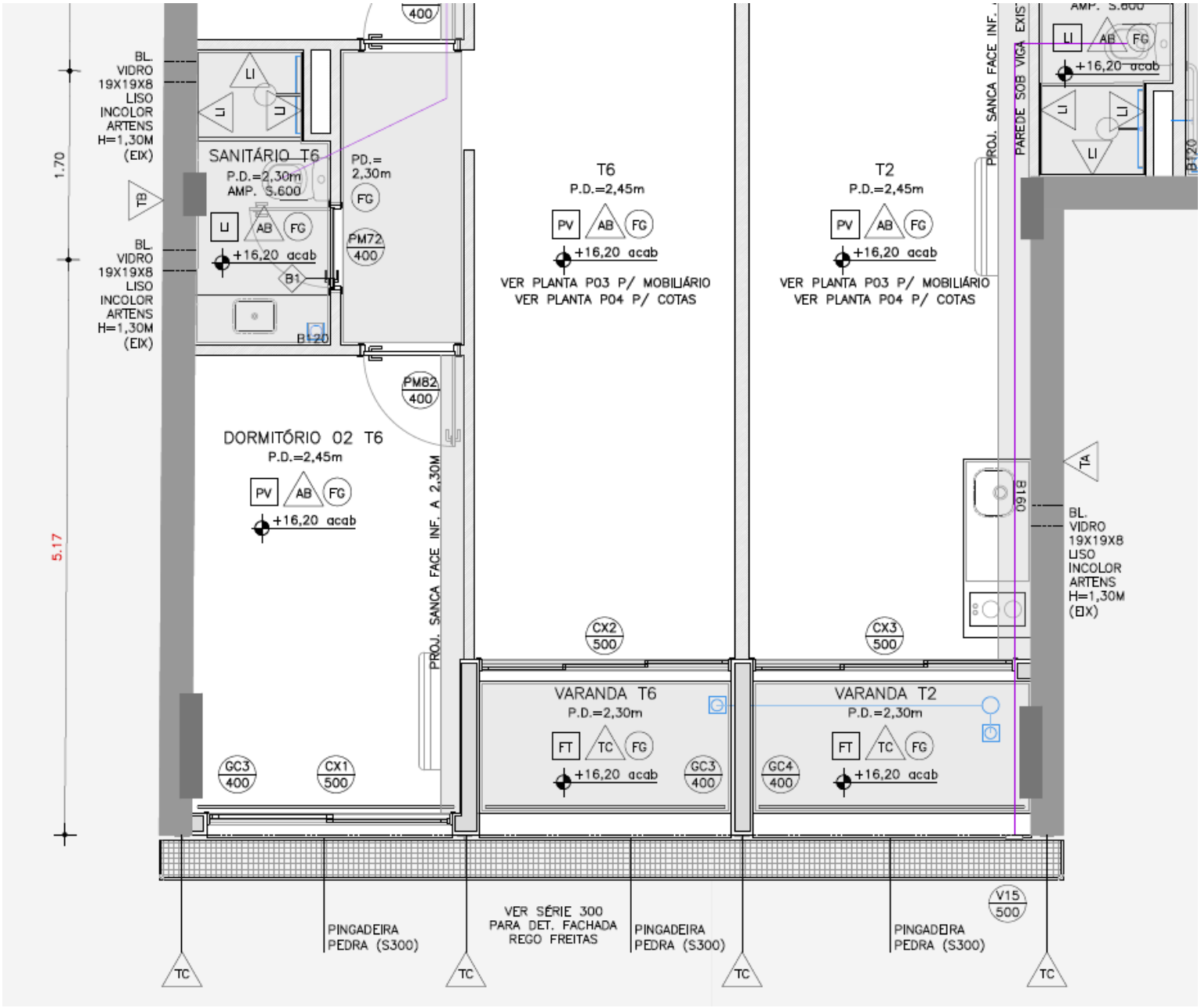

Fig. 9: Detail from the construction documents showing the insertion of glass blocks in the building's party walls. Source: MMBB Architects, 2022.

5 Final Considerations

Rochelle Costi and Milton Braga, in co-authorship with Marta Moreira and Maria João Figueiredo, even while working through distinct poetic languages, share a common value: they know how to mobilize the habitual in ways that restore attention to what has been treated as banal. They know how to re-enchant the world by allowing themselves to pause, to look closely, and to work with what is already there. Without prior judgment and without diminishing existing values, they act with the freedom to construct value beyond what already exists. Through their gazes, the bases thus altered acquires new potency.

The case studies presented here belong to a topic of longstanding interest. They bring to it, however, a renewed freshness by drawing upon this attention to the everyday banal in the face of contemporary challenges, among them the need to counter a still-prevalent practice of demolition/reconstruction within the disciplinary field of architecture. The *União Continental* Building makes visible a common practice in the ordinary construction of the city — though less common in formal architectural production — of valuing the continued existence of an ordinary building. By intervening in its entirety, rather than in one or another unit, the project aligns itself with the urgent conviction that renovating is better than demolishing/building anew — a local action that engages with an international commitment.

It is valuable to observe that, although indifferent to the name of the building's author, the architects do not overlook the quality of the built work. Might this indicate a renewed attunement within the disciplinary field of architecture? One hopes so — at least in the careful analysis and appreciation of the artifact itself. Although the practice of reconstruction has always been part of the making of places, the reasons and interests at stake today are current and generate renewed forms of knowledge through transformation. This action allows for the valuation of memory and of invisibilized heritage, revealed through architectural and urban design interventions.

Bringing it into dialogue with *Pratos Feitos* arises from the interest in fostering exchanges — between distinct fields of practice, though in permanent contact. Both works, each in its own field, operate as practices. This association also confirmed the initial hypothesis, the objective of the analysis: what allows these two works — in the visual arts and architecture — to be brought together is the set of values they mobilize, rather than the poetic domains that engender them. Their value lies in the way they look in order to re-signify, to intervene, to invent, and no longer in the stable recognition of what is already there. They undertake the sophisticated and difficult task of enchanting so that they may re-enchant the world — estranging and inventing from what was found, without simply accepting it. They make the world turn without annihilating the time made perceptible through things. They lead us to recognize what Perec (2013) warned about when dedicating attention to common things, to what already exists, to what we are.

Acknowledgments

We thank CNPq for supporting this research (PQ – 305509/2022-5).

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CASE-EXPERIENCE: METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY METROPOLIS
CASO-EXPERIÊNCIA: DESAFIOS METODOLÓGICOS NA METRÓPOLE CONTEMPORÂNEA

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Costa, Y. N. P.; Lima, E. R.; Lima, C. H. M. (2025). Case-Experience: Methodological Challenges in the Contemporary Metropolis. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Ana Carolina Sousa. 81-94 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239659

Abstract

This paper aims to establish the case-experience method as a situated and critical alternative to the prevailing analytical approaches in Architecture and Urbanism. Drawing from empirical research on the *Habitar en Igualdad program*, which developed housing blocks for women and the LGBTQIA+ community in La Rioja (Argentina), we argue that urban knowledge is rooted in ethical engagement, attentive listening, and the researcher's embodied presence. The case-experience method is implicated, adaptive, and responsive, positioning itself to challenge normative categories, incorporate corporeality into knowledge production, and address specific subjects and territories. Additionally, this approach supports critical dialogue within research in Architecture and Urbanism, particularly in connection with social movements, vulnerable groups, and diverse contests over housing. We found that this method is pivotal for capturing the nuanced content of research involving multiple and complex urban social strata, especially in cities of the Global South. Furthermore, informed by feminist, decolonial, and queer perspectives, we contend that re-examining urban epistemologies is essential to addressing the inequalities that shape Latin American cities.

Keywords: Critical Methodologies, Situated Epistemologies, Dissidence, Housing Policies.

1 Introduction

Studies on contemporary metropolises have undergone significant transformations. The sources are diversified, with emphasis on the role of archives. Infrastructures began to be thought of in conjunction with other (non-human) species, resizing political approaches and perspectives (Tsing, 2021). At the same time, readings that place the body at the center of the debate gained momentum, repositioning gender and race as structuring elements of the urban scene. In this context, Judith Butler's (2018) formulation of the alliance of bodies stands out, as the collective presence in public space constitutes a political paradigm that, through appearance, redirects the agenda of struggles, expands the topics under debate, and stimulates mobilization. In this paper, we analyze how urban approaches have been affected by this context. We argue that the presence of the body in research concerns not only methodological choices, but also the means of investigation. We propose the term case-experience as an analytical key to understanding the horizontal, decentralized, and multiscalar tensions in processes of spatial production, even when marked by asymmetries.

The case-experience concept emerged from an empirical study—a master's research—on the implementation of two housing blocks in La Rioja (Argentina) for the LGBTQIA+ population. We understood, in that research, that the La Rioja case was not a referential case, as Rosângela Cavallazzi (1993) proposed, a paradigmatic example of a pre-existing theory, but a study that requires the researcher to approach the agents of this spatial transformation directly. The case experience leads us to other ways of knowing the city, based on the researcher's situated experience in dialogue with the research subjects, not as objects but as producers of knowledge (Ribeiro, 2010). This perspective values the diversity of bodies and subjects that build the city on a daily basis and recognizes, in urban conflicts, a key to thinking about its transformations. This requires rethinking the analytical instruments of Architecture and Urbanism, overcoming the limitations of theoretical orthodoxies in the face of the complexity of social struggles. The approach proposed here is situated and critical, aligned with investigations of urban space that have sought new methodological paths, primarily through insurgent methodologies and epistemological indisciplines (Tavares & Ramos, 2021). The paper is structured in three parts: the first presents the theoretical-methodological framework; the second, the empirical case of La Rioja; and the third, a discussion about the limits and powers of the case-experience as an investigative tool in Architecture and Urbanism.

This study contributes to ongoing critical and multilateral discourse in Architecture and Urbanism, characterized by engagement, debate, and dialogue regarding the metropolis as a contested space. By foregrounding the housing struggles of women experiencing violence and LGBTQIA+ populations, our objective is to challenge established research practices and highlight the non-linear, conflictual nature of habitat production in the Global South. Rather than emerging from consensus, urban development is shaped by the interplay of institutional housing models, insurgent collective practices, marginalized voices, and alternative modes of inhabitation. Within this frame, case experience is defined as a situated praxis that mediates these dialectics, aligning this paper with multiscalar approaches to urban inquiry.

2 The crisis of classical methods and the emergence of new urban sensibilities

Traditional knowledge production in Architecture and Urbanism, especially in Latin America, is marked by colonial legacies and struggles to reflect critically on present urban conflicts. The methodological crisis begins with confusion between epistemology, methodology, and method. Epistemology critically reflects on the foundations, limits, and validity of scientific knowledge, asking who can know, from where, with what criteria, and with what interests (Japiassu, 1991; Baumgarten, 2016). Methodology is the theory of scientific investigation—a system of principles that guides the application of methods and connects research objectives to techniques (Marconi & Lakatos, 2003). Method refers to specific techniques used in research, such as interviews, observations, or cartographies (Cardoso, 1971). Rossana Tavares and Diana Ramos (2021) note that confusion between these concepts affects how knowledge is produced, taught, and validated in applied social sciences. Antonio Chizzotti (2003) argues that methodology ensures justification and coherence between theory and empirical procedures. Although essential, the method alone does not ensure critical knowledge. The lack of distinction among epistemology, methodology, and method perpetuates a technocratic model that often devalues undisciplined approaches, such as decolonial, feminist, and insurgent knowledge. We clarify these concepts to establish the basis of the debate.

For Miriam Cardoso (1971), using a method that views the object of research universally, without accounting for the historical and political conditions that shape it, will lead to assumptions incapable of addressing social problems that require greater engagement and critical thinking from the researcher. In Architecture and Urbanism, this implies that using methods as neutral tools, not considering the voices of the subjects participating in the research, “often marked by their surrounding social reality” (Chizzotti, 2003, pp. 230-230, our translation), can also lead to the disregard of the singularities of the research objects, in addition to contributing to reinforcing hegemonic structures of knowledge instead of questioning them. Once the conceptual confusion has been overcome, the field of Architecture and Urbanism must confront the fetishization of the technical method. It is necessary to reflect on the uncritical and systematic reproduction of methods within the teaching, investigation, and praxis of Architecture and Urbanism as a symptom that warrants deeper understanding. Part of this problem lies in treating scientific categories as universal, fixed, and immutable, while disregarding their historical, ideological, and social contexts of formulation. As Sandra Harding (1986) argues, mainstream epistemology itself ignores that its analytical instruments are also historically situated and politically implicated. For the author, the categories used in the social sciences are not static, and their instability must be recognized as a critical force. Instead of compromising science, epistemological instability enables analyses that are more sensitive to the power relations that permeate research.

Recognizing the situated character of knowledge does not entail relativism. As Donna Haraway (1995) warns, there are real risks in denying the materiality of the body and its pains, of territory and its conflicts. What is proposed is an embodied objectivity, a partial science, yes, but committed to life and to the collective construction of localized truths. It is not a matter of deconstructing everything, but of opening the way for practices that are more attentive to the concrete reality of urban subjects, including insurgent peripheries, collective occupations, and dissident bodies. The way in which science is told, therefore, as well as its narratives, strategies of visibility, vocabularies, and procedures, determines what can be recognized as truth (Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1995). Thus, every production of knowledge has political and symbolic implications, which make it necessary to pay attention to who tells it, how it is told, and what effects it has. In the field of Architecture and Urbanism, this means understanding that the chosen research method can operate as a mechanism of erasure, rendering subalternized bodies and popular knowledge invisible and treating spatial norms as technical and immutable truths, detached from their historical and political contexts. Therefore, rethinking methods is not a theoretical luxury, but an ethical and political urgency in the face of contemporary urban complexity and the structural inequalities that shape our cities.

Faced with the limited capacity that traditional methods of Architecture and Urbanism often offer for recording and analyzing the complexity of contemporary phenomena in Latin American cities, new investigative sensibilities have emerged from insurgent, gendered, racialized, and embodied perspectives. It is a set of practices and reflections that places at the center of the production of knowledge elements often ignored by the canons of urbanism and architecture, such as differences, the body, affection, conflict, and the contradictions of subjects and spaces. For Butler (2018), for example, bodies, when present in the public space and in alliance, produce not only a political presence but also an embodied, materialized knowledge, a form of collective intelligence that manifests itself in the streets and in material disputes for the city. Haraway (1995), on the other hand, when proposing localized knowledge, emphasizes that all knowledge is partial, situated, and relational; that is, it cannot ignore the positions and bodies from which one speaks, nor the effects of power that this entails. In this sense, the city itself becomes the work (Lefebvre, 2010) of multiple and contradictory knowledges, which challenge epistemic hegemony and require other forms of listening, analysis, and recording. In short: other more sensitive methods.

In this sense, undisciplined practices (Tavares & Ramos, 2021), critical and/or collective practices that emerge from researchers or popular expressions and collectives, such as urban, artistic, and technopolitical interventions (Lima, 2015), are options that are more ethically committed to the diverse sociopolitical reality of Latin America. In addition, these new methods can contribute to ways of reading, recording, analyzing, and constituting alternative collections of subaltern territories, destabilizing the disciplinary limits of Architecture and Urbanism, and proposing new embodied epistemologies. This does not mean rejecting or erasing all the knowledge already accumulated, as if we were condemned to absolute skepticism. On the contrary, it is precisely against the trap of total cynicism, as Haraway (1995) calls it, that we need to take a stand. The critique of the dominant epistemic structures does not imply the annihilation of the past. However, rather the proposal of insurgent deviations and reuses capable of building and elaborating other research methods and practices within the research body. As Anna Tsing (2021) suggests, amid the ruins and uncertainties left by the modern project, it is still possible to find precarious alliances, contact zones, and new forms of life in common. Within this scenario of instability and multiplicity, the task of urban research is also to open the way to possible worlds in which embodied knowledge can flourish. These new urban sensibilities not only strain the epistemological limits of the field but also require other ways of conducting inquiry. It is in this context that we propose the concept of case-experience as an insurgent, embodied, and critical methodological strategy, which we deepen in the following sections.

3 The experience of La Rioja and the emergence of the case-experience

Traditional case study methodologies are often anchored in comparative strategies aimed at extracting patterns, identifying recurrences, and formulating generalizations applicable to a universe of similar situations. This approach, although useful for some investigations, tends to disregard singular dynamics and the multidisciplinary contexts marked by political tensions that shape contemporary urban experiences. As proposed by Cavallazzi (1993), the concept of case-reference thus emerges as an alternative to this model, offering a critical lens of an interdisciplinary nature for analyzing singular urban scenarios situated in concrete reality, capable of illuminating theoretical premises without necessarily generating general rules. To put it more explicitly, according to Cavallazzi (1993), the case analyzed would not be the empirical purpose of the study, but rather a point of support for constructing theoretical categories, in a logic opposed to the merely illustrative or exemplary use of classic case studies. The methodology developed by Cavallazzi (1993), therefore, is profoundly marked by a broad vision, carried out interdisciplinarily with seams of normative analysis, observation of the territory, and theoretical reflections, presenting, in the end, criticisms that help to destabilize the universal, abstract, and functionalist forms of Urban Law and Urban Planning.

Thus, except for the methodology of the reference case proposed by Cavallazzi (1993), the master's dissertation from which this text is based was prepared (see note 1). In it, a very unique case was addressed because it was the first housing block fully financed by the Argentine government to provide housing to the LGBTQIA+ population, especially transvestites and transsexual sex workers. Throughout the research, it was necessary to distinguish between the case study and reference case categories. The second stage included analyzing various experiences with housing policies aimed at women and the LGBTQIA+ population in Latin America and Europe. Examples such as housing cooperatives in Uruguay, shelters in Colombia, legislative advances in Brazil, as well as projects such as *Lebensort Vielfalt* and *L.O.V.O* in Berlin and *Rainbow Houses* in Belgium and the Netherlands, were examined. These studies helped situate the research within the state of the art and recognize the exceptional character of *Habitar en Igualdad*, at least in the Latin American context. Unlike other cases, the Argentine program provided for professional training of future residents and did not require financial compensation. It also stood out as a policy of redistribution and recognition.

In turn, the analysis of the *Renacer blocks I* and *II* in La Rioja as a reference case (Cavallazzi, 1993) was important because it allowed: 1) to understand the institutional design of the program that financed the construction of the houses; 2) to visualize which political and social agents were involved in the process; 3) analyze legal guarantees that made it possible to pursue the policy; 4) analyze stages of the implementation of the policy and the construction of housing. In the end, it was also possible to measure the policy's projected objective advances not only in Argentina but also in South America, as well as the limits and obstacles that compromised its continuity. However, at the end of the dissertation, the limits of the notion of case study and case-reference became evident as we sought to decipher urban processes marked by contemporary conflicts that include intersectional issues and that cross the researchers themselves through a sensitive field experience. In other words, it was evident that although both models could offer valuable tools for the La Rioja scenario, direct contact with the

subjects and spaces researched could yield results not only on paper but also in the researchers' own reality. This demanded the proposal of a new methodological category: the case-experience.

Unlike studies based solely on bibliographic and documentary sources, case experience requires incorporating experience as a constitutive part of the analysis. The research carried out *in loco*, through field visits, conversations with residents, public and private agents, and third-sector organizations, showed the importance of this situated and implied dimension. The focus is no longer on rational, distanced explanation, but on an embodied mode of knowledge, attentive to the territory's tensions and powers. From the beginning, *Habitar en Igualdad* escaped the usual classifications in Architecture and Urbanism. It was not a conventional case study, as it lacked systematized data and replicability between provinces. Nor did it fully fit the case—reference model, as it was formulated in an uncertain, both legal and empirical, manner. Despite official announcements between 2019 and 2023 in cities such as Resistencia, Puerto Madryn, Santa Rosa, and Bariloche, only in La Rioja have the twenty-five units for women and the LGBTQIA+ population been effectively built. The singularity of the experience and its fragile institutionalization imposed direct presence as an investigative condition.

Despite being backed by a joint resolution from the ministries of *Territorial Development* and *Women, Gender, and Diversity*, the program lacked robust legal instruments to guarantee federal funding to the provinces. This legal instability, associated with the absence of updated public records and the growing institutional opacity caused by the Argentine political transition, made any attempt at remote research unfeasible. It was in this context that, in October 2023, I contacted various institutional and community actors to organize a field immersion for January 2024. The urgency of the gesture responded to the need to observe, listen, and experience the object of research from a situated presence. Between October and December 2023, I sent dozens of messages to public agencies at the federal and provincial levels, using institutional emails, social networks, and presentation letters. Only the Ministry of Women, Gender, and Diversity and the *Fundación Vamos a Andar* (FUNDAVA) responded, albeit in a limited way, as shown in Figure 1. The information received was not enough to guide the research remotely, but FUNDAVA's availability proved decisive. The institution has committed to establishing contacts with people involved in the program's development and implementation in La Rioja, serving as an anchor for research.

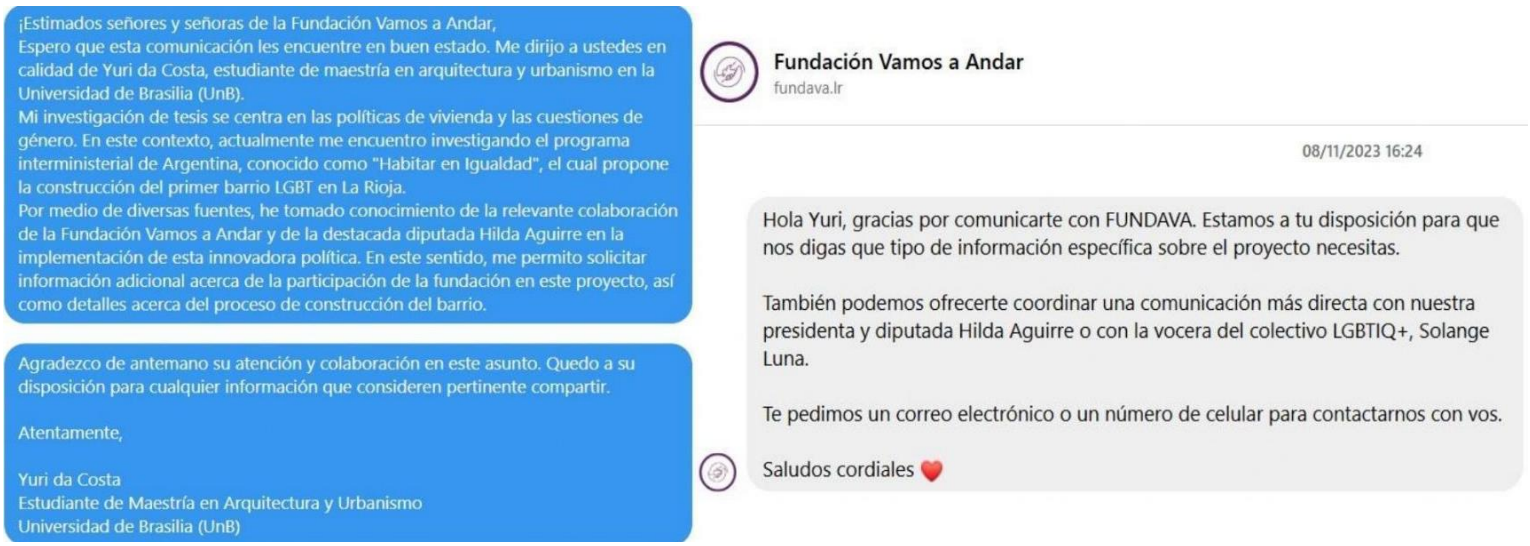

Fig. 1: Initial conversations with *Fundación Vamos a Andar*. Source: Yuri da Costa, 2024.

At the end of 2023, I reduced my contact with FUNDAVA; however, it was evident that the political instability of the presidential elections consumed all of FUNDAVA's and other public bodies' human and political resources in Argentina. The few ministries that had responded no longer provided updates, and Javier Milei's growing popularity also did not make it easy to conduct in-depth research on policies dedicated to gender and sexuality issues, which the far right sees as a preferred political target for criticizing progressive governments. Thus, in January 2024, I landed in Buenos Aires, with a visit scheduled to the *Ministerio del Desarrollo Territorial* and the *Ministerio de Mujeres, Género y Diversidad*, both of which are responsible for creating *Habitar en Igualdad*. However, I faced the abrupt deinstitutionalization of ministries and the suppression of public policies on gender and housing, necessitating the addressing of the vestiges of a collapsing policy. A single official who was

willing to give some information explained to me that not only was *Habitar en Igualdad* suspended, but also all federal housing programs, including the ministries themselves.

The situation led me to think about what Ann Laura Stoler (2013) proposes, that ruins are not limited to rubble from the past, but act as living structures that organize affections and relationships in the present. The buildings of the ministries visited in Buenos Aires, still marked by institutional signs, continued to house civil servants who remained in their posts, even without clear guidelines, as if they were performing an already absent State. Silences and misinformation mark the presence in these spaces, and it revealed not only the technical emptying of the housing policy investigated but also a profound process of institutional fraying. Politics, although still recorded in documents and speeches, no longer materialized as an active practice: it hovered like an interrupted promise and a memory in dispute. Despite this, what remained was to research *Habitar en Igualdad* not only as an empirical object but also as a political and epistemic decision to refuse the disappearance of a policy that made women and LGBTQIA people visible within the scope of housing policies in South America. By insisting on documenting a policy about to be extinguished, the methodological gesture was also converted into a practice of mourning and resistance (Butler, 2011) and a bodily practice felt in the face of the shock there in the ruins of the ministries: an attempt to preserve in the discourse and in studies on public housing policies those lives that the new government was trying to erase, both on the symbolic and material levels.

Therefore, the approach to *Habitar en Igualdad* did not unfold in a linear or preplanned way. It was marked by constant interruptions and rearrangements, requiring a methodological inflection guided by the urgency of establishing direct contact with the subjects involved in the formulation, implementation, and use of public policy. Upon arriving in La Rioja (Figure 1), shortly after the chaotic context witnessed in Buenos Aires, I was able to resume contact with FUNDAVA, primarily through Luciana de Soria, the institution's administrator and the daughter of the founder, national congresswoman Hilda Aguirre. In initial conversations, Luciana de Soria presented the foundation's history, created in 2008 with operations initially focused on the care of children in vulnerable situations. According to her, FUNDAVA has expanded its scope, becoming a reference center in welcoming, training, and assisting historically marginalized groups, such as women and the LGBTQIA+ population.

Fig. 2: Records from the central area of the city of La Rioja. Source: Yuri da Costa, 2024.

After this introductory conversation, Luciana de Soria led me to the *Renacer I* and *II housing blocks*, still under construction, enabling photographic records and data collection for the research. The route to the site showed the distance between the

new housing units and the consolidated urban fabric of La Rioja. When asked about the location of the new blocks, Luciana de Soria explained that the initial area offered by the government of La Rioja was more peripheral and disconnected, and had been replaced by a more accessible one, with the guidance of the then federal minister Jorge Ferraresi. However, what I have witnessed is that the current area, although located between the consolidated neighborhoods of Victoria Romero and Humberto Arturo Illia (Figure 3), is still disconnected from the urban center and has a precarious urban infrastructure, revealing a pattern of spatial segregation that is frequent in urban policies aimed at the low-income population in Latin America.

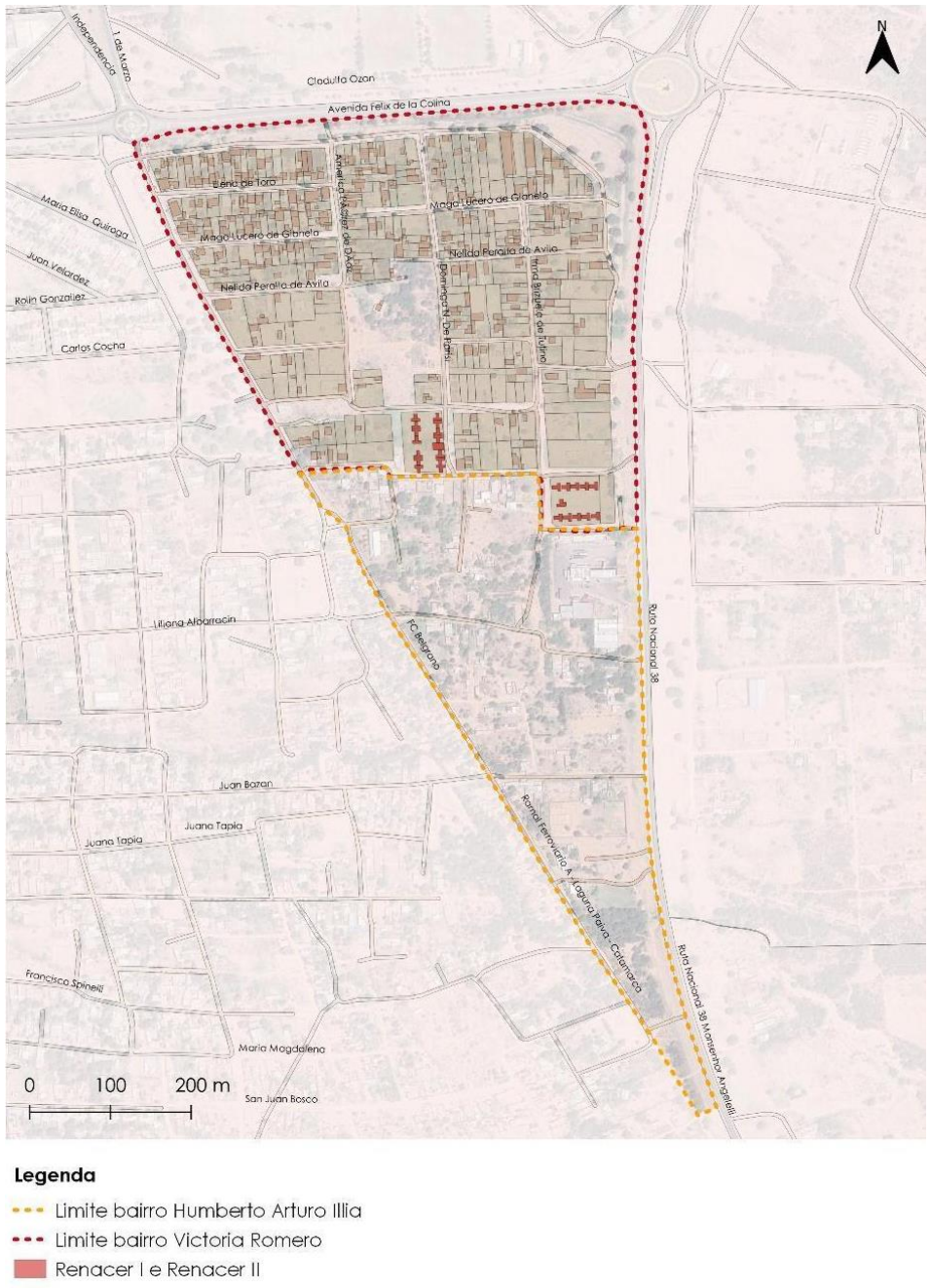

Fig. 3: Location of the Renacer I and II blocks and their respective boundaries with the neighboring neighborhoods. Source: Authors' own elaboration in QGIS software, based on Google Earth images, 2024.

The difference between the urban center and the surroundings of the aforementioned neighborhoods was evident: while the center concentrated buildings with mixed uses, cultural facilities, tree-lined squares, and consolidated urban infrastructure, the neighborhoods around the new blocks had a low mix of uses, low tree cover, and evident deficiencies in basic sanitation. Upon arriving at *Renacer I*, where some units had already been completed, the reality of the complex contrasted with images

of the institutional reports: houses built in raw masonry, without external finishing, flanked a dirt road (Figure 4). The scene clashed with the policy's formal promises, but not with Luciana's enthusiasm in the presence of a Brazilian researcher interested in the experience. Her warm welcome, while genuine, intensified a fundamental tension in me: how to be there to listen and, at the same time, maintain critical responsibility for the act of writing? How to reconcile affective involvement with the necessary analytical discernment? It was precisely this friction between presence and distancing that strengthened the formulation of the case-experience as a method that not only describes the field, but is shaped by the relationships, affections, and fractures that emerge in it.

Fig. 4: Surroundings of the construction of the new housing blocks. Source: Yuri da Costa, 2024.

The houses that were being built in La Rioja were also part of prototypes previously established by the *Prototipos de la Dirección Nacional de Programas de Habitat program*. According to Luciana de Soria, the chosen modality was carried out with the help of the population and is entitled *Individual between Blind Gables* (the lots of the courts were created from a blind gable), giving rise to rectangular terrains next to each other. The typology has two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a kitchen integrated with a living room, with a pre-structure built for future expansion, depending on the residents' needs. When I arrived in La Rioja, I already knew that these prototypes existed, which helped me understand the typology. It was also planned to have landscaping with permeable, natural soil in front of the housing units, a permeable parking lot floor, and permeable soil at the back of the housing units, which I immediately realized would not be delivered, as shown in Figure 5 below.

Fig. 5: Image provided by the extinct *Ministry of Territorial Development* (left) and reality found in La Rioja (right). Source: *Ministry of Territorial Development* and Yuri da Costa, 2024. Available at: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/. Accessed on: August 20, 2023.

I also noticed that the materials used in the final project did not correspond to those foreseen by the *Prototipos de la Dirección Nacional de Programas de Hábitat* or to the publicity images of the *Habitar en Igualdad* program. The housing units delivered in 2024 also do not have the finishes initially planned. It is possible to see, for example, that the houses were not painted in light colors (which would help reduce the impacts of La Rioja's climate), the external surfaces were left untreated against bad weather, and the soil was delivered with compacted earth, making it challenging to absorb rainwater, grow vegetables, and plant trees. Another worrying point is that the blocks do not have trees, the paving of the roads has not been completed, and the promised social facilities (square, social areas, and a hall for commerce and local services to be managed by residents) have also not been built, but have still been delivered and partially occupied as of April 2024.

After visiting La Rioja, Luciana de Soria directed me to two key individuals: the first, her mother, Congresswoman Hilda Aguirre, and the second, Solange Luna, an important activist and representative of the collective of transsexual women and transvestites, La Rioja *Chicas Trans Autoconvenidas.* Informal talks with Hilda Aguirre and Solange Luna took place in Buenos Aires, as Argentina was on the eve of its first major general strike of 2024 in protest of the reforms presented by the newly elected Milei government. In Buenos Aires, Hilda Aguirre received me in her office at the National Congress, where she clarified additional points regarding the construction of the housing blocks. She clarified, for example, that she considers herself a Catholic woman, with a political trajectory marked by initially conservative positions, having even voted against marriage equality in Argentina in 2010, but that her personal relationship with Solange Luna profoundly transformed her performance. The alliance between the two, forged in mutual listening and in the recognition of the dignity of differences, has become a political instrument for the realization of the right to housing for women in situations of violence, transvestites, trans women, and other sexual and gender dissidents, with a strong campaign with the government of La Rioja for the construction of these twenty-five houses.

The transformation narrated by Hilda Aguirre brings us back to Butler's (2018) formulation about precariousness as a basis for political alliances: it is not about shared identity, but about the possibility of recognizing in the other the vulnerability that also constitutes us. In addition, it was evident to us that political practices truly committed to social transformation are not born of ideological purity, nor will they always meet all the premises outlined in the traditional manuals of architects, urban planners, and technical jargon. As Gracia Trujillo (2020) clarifies, when we are faced with systematic violence directed at women and the LGBTQIA+ population in vulnerability, it is not enough for us to affirm difference as a value: it is necessary to build critical alliances that challenge the structures of exclusion and name the devices that sustain cisheteronormative privilege. This perspective allows us to understand the performance of Congresswoman Hilda Aguirre not as a simple contradiction between the conservative past and the progressive present, but as a concrete expression of the ambiguities

that cross the field of real politics. The rapprochement with Solange Luna and the defense of *Habitar en Igualdad* reveal the transformative potential of encounters, even (or especially) when forged in contexts marked by mistrust, risk, and uncertainty.

The conversation with Hilda Aguirre helped to clarify another important doubt: the non-continuity of *Habitar en Igualdad* in the other provinces initially announced. For her, the answer was simple: the growing strength of the far right in Argentina caused great fear among governors and deputies that they would lose political support. This enunciates something old: the use of housing policies as political capital. In this scenario, the right to housing is no longer seen as an ethical and constitutional imperative, becoming instead a symbolic commodity that can be granted to certain bodies but denied to others. As Monique Wittig (2022) argues, compulsory heterosexual thinking, existing within political discourses and imperatives such as that of Argentina, reveals not only a structure of desire but a material and discursive organization of social life, which defines who can have access to recognition, citizenship, and, consequently, urban space and housing. The refusal to implement policies aimed at these individuals does not stem only from cultural divergences, but from the need to maintain a social regime that expels unwanted lives from the condition of subjects of rights.

It is in this context that the insistence of both the congresswoman and the collective of transsexual women and transvestites in continuing with the program, even in the face of local criticism and resistance, gains strategic contours. In addition, Hilda Aguirre pointed out that the accusation that building housing would create ghettos revealed layers of hypocrisy that permeate so-called progressive urbanism. Now, even if Buenos Aires, the cosmopolitan capital, refused to implement more inclusive and plural housing based on the argument of universal integration, in fact, the selective silencing of dissent is what is perpetuated. Hilda Aguirre shares the position of her fighting comrade, Solange Luna, who considers the argument that the new housing blocks would only serve to spatially restrict the LGBTQIA+ population shallow. Solange narrated that more layers need to be analyzed; for that, she used clippings from her own life. Solange Luna spoke, for example, about her adolescence, when she started to live fully as a transsexual woman and that she visited the house of her other transsexual and transvestite friends and already realized the precariousness of housing: *"always renting to three, four, five* [people] *in one apartment... apartments that are actually neighborhood houses or spaces that someone had vacated and that were simply rented"* (our translation).

The conversation with Solange shows that research subjects are also producers of knowledge from the moment they anchor their arguments and reports in their lived experience. Solange's lived experience reveals, for example, that the issue of the housing deficit is not only economic: transphobia is also present in this calculation and is constantly ignored by policies. The refusal of property owners, the marginalization of formal work, and daily violence make up a cycle of exclusions that makes the right to housing unfeasible. For Solange, community life among her own is therefore also part of the policy that must be observed and made visible, since it is a strategy of mutual care, resistance, and survival. Living together, sharing tasks, and creating solidarity networks is part of a way of life that challenges cisheteronormative norms of domesticity. By revisiting these conversations, I realized how much the bodily experience shifted the research's axis. It has become impossible to ignore the abyss between theoretical critiques formulated from urban centers and the material reality of Latin American peripheries. The hypocrisy of discourses that condemn the ghettoization of sexual dissidence while systematically refusing its presence in consolidated spaces has also become evident. The arrival in La Rioja, with its conservative atmosphere and hostility to dissident bodies (including mine), revealed a field tensioned by inequality, but also crossed by radical forms of solidarity and political imagination. It was in this clash between institutional invisibilities, the experience of dissident bodies, and community resistance that the case-experience emerged not only as a method but also as an ethics of critical presence.

4 Weaving paths from paradigm to experimentation within the contemporary metropolis

The transition from paradigm to experimentation in the contemporary metropolis requires a critical review of traditional ways of knowing and researching the urban. In this item, we propose consolidating the case experience as a response to the logic of analytical distancing that still prevails in Architecture and Urbanism. As mentioned, the theories and practices of Architecture and Urbanism are historically structured under Eurocentric and disciplinary premises, which necessitate the exploration of new instruments capable of addressing the complexities that characterize cities and the urban experience of inhabitants of the Global South. This was evidenced, for example, when carrying out fieldwork in La Rioja, where it was not enough to describe *Habitar en Igualdad* as an innovative policy; it was necessary to experiment with another way of doing urban research, one that was not restricted to the collection and analysis of data, but that was capable of implicating the

researcher himself as a body and situated presence. What emerged, then, from this experience was not just a case study or case-reference (Cavallazzi, 1993), but a sensitive process of presence, listening, and political implication. It was from this experience that the proposal for a case-experience method emerged, an alternative to conventional analytical methodologies predominant in urban research.

Unlike the reference case, whose legitimacy is anchored in exemplifying theories or modeling good practices, the case-experience proposed here is built on the intertwining of research, experience, body, and territory. The production of knowledge does not take place on the margins of the processes but is incorporated into them. Starting from a critical epistemology (Harding, 1986) that refuses, therefore, neutrality as a criterion of scientificity, the case-experience calls on the researcher to recognize the place from which they produce their knowledge. The epistemological displacement that this method requires also implies a revision of the traditional categories that organize scientific practice. In La Rioja, the notion of object of research proved inadequate, exterminating bodies and their experiences, as it sought to encapsulate a set of lives in dispute for recognition, space, and dignity within abstract categories. The subjects of the research, dissidents of sex and gender, social and political actors, were not givens, but rather presences that spoke, resisted, and populated their places with power. The logic of objectification, characteristic of technocratic urbanism, was interrupted by the need to build a methodology oriented by relations rather than representations. The proposal of the case-experience is, therefore, to refuse distance as a criterion of validity and to institute another grammar for producing knowledge, one that starts from the bond, from listening, and from the committed response.

This type of investigative practice demands sensitivity, but it is not limited to affection; It requires care, but it is not depleted in listening. The case-experience aims to be both contributive and responsive: it responds to the bodies and territories that summon it. This implies understanding that it is not a matter of applying a method to a field, but of letting it be transformed by the field, constantly reconfiguring the paths of research. This transitory and unstable character of the method brings it closer to embodied objectivity (Haraway, 1995), in which knowledge emerges from assumed partiality, commitment to situated life, and refusal of epistemic cynicism. The ethics of this method are thus organized around responsibility rather than alleged impartiality. This is manifested in how the silences of the documents are heard, the absences in the urban layout are perceived, and the fractures between what is planned and what is realized are noted. In La Rioja, the non-fulfillment of the program’s architectural promises, such as collective spaces and community facilities, was not only an empirical fact but also a sign of the precariousness of public policy toward dissident bodies and, at the same time, an invitation to situated and responsive criticism.

Going further, what is proposed here is also a disobedience: it is not intended to separate technical knowledge from experiential knowledge. We understand, as Beatriz Preciado (2011) does, that there is no way to maintain a disruptive and dissident practice without questioning the body itself, its normativities, and its forms of presence in space. Incorporating this perspective, therefore, means understanding the territory not only as a physical and analytical support, but also as a space of symbolic, performative, and micropolitical dispute. Therefore, the case-experience aims to throw light not only on what is visible, but also on what is silenced. In the case of La Rioja, not only is access to housing at stake, but also the very possibility of reconfiguring the ways of inhabiting and imagining the city, even in the face of contexts hostile to minorities of sex and gender. Briefly, the case experience, as developed in this research, is a method situated in and grounded in an embodied, politically implicated conception of science. It is structured based on five main characteristics: 1. Ethical and political implications, recognizing the presence of the researcher as part of the field and rejecting neutrality as a condition of validity; 2. Epistemological instability as a critical power that allows challenging fixed analytical categories and opening space for the complexity of urban territories and their subjects; 3. Methodological corporeality, which understands the body of the researcher and the subjects involved as a place of knowledge production and reciprocal affectation; 4. Intersectional sensitivity, which understands the relations between gender, sexuality, race, and class as constitutive dimensions of urban processes and not as isolated analytical cuts; 5. Methodological responsiveness requires research to be committed to the subjects and contexts investigated, seeking not only to represent but to respond ethically to the demands that emerge in the field.

It is important to note that the proposed systematization does not seek to mold the case experience into a normative mold. It is a situated and changeable description, formulated from empirical experience and the analytical demands of research. Recognizing epistemological instability as a central feature entails acknowledging that these guidelines can be reformulated,

nuanced, or discarded depending on the context. This ambiguity is part of the method, which does not intend to offer a fixed grammar of urban research but to inspire other forms of listening, presence, and production of knowledge in dialogue with the territories and subjects involved. The development of the case-experience was only possible because it did not come from an abstraction, but from a concrete experience, crossed by tensions and ethical decisions in the field. During the master's research, it was evident that the very choice of the theme—investigating housing policies for women and the LGBTQIA+ population in vulnerable situations in Latin America—was already a political position, given the scarcity of references and institutional invisibility. Persisting was, above all, a gesture of resistance. The case-experience proposal enabled us to recognize and legitimize this situated and engaged position as a strategy to address the absence of sources and to build knowledge from experience.

Choosing a critical theoretical basis was also a political gesture. It would not be possible to analyze housing and gender from cisheteronormative categories; it was necessary to deconstruct, disassemble, and reorganize the theoretical field of housing studies itself, as part of the research experience. Instability, in this sense, did not paralyze the course: it moved it. This time, the epistemological instability did not represent a fragility, but rather a strong opening to question the very foundations of pre-established canons by the field of Architecture and Urbanism, such as: What is gender? What is family? Who can be considered a priority public in a housing policy? Finally, the case experience is continuous: the research did not end with the dissertation's defense. The commitment to the subjects and territories investigated remains alive through continued research in the doctorate, feedback on the results to the community, partnerships with research groups, and dialogue networks built throughout the process. It is, therefore, a methodology that not only interrogates the world but is committed to it, affected by it, and, whenever possible, transformative.

5 Final considerations

This paper began with the observation that scientific research in Architecture and Urbanism in the Global South needs to find paths distinct from the categories of thought imposed by the Global North. The path taken was the development of the case-experience method, used to investigate and understand the struggle for the right to housing of transsexual women in La Rioja (Argentina), which led to the construction of housing enclosed within a pre-existing urban fabric. In this way, the research was concerned with articulating new contributions to scientific thinking in Architecture and Urbanism in South America, along with debates over different ways of inhabiting and perspectives on gender and sexuality, issues explored within the academy and in the practice of architects and urban planners.

We understand that thinking about the urban from experience implies the researcher's body as an instrument of listening, analysis, and response. Thus, this paper showed the limits of the traditional methods of Architecture and Urbanism, often anchored in technocratic rationalities, in the face of the ethical and political demands of contemporary urban territories. This became evident in the investigation of the housing blocks in La Rioja, built for dissident subjects of gender and sexuality within the framework of the *Habitar en Igualdad program*. The case-experience method, developed from this empirical immersion, does not radically oppose disciplinary legacy, but proposes a necessary displacement. Its construction emerged from the tension between theory and field, observation and experience, revealing itself as a critical practice of knowledge that transforms research into a space for radical listening and co-presence. The methodological experience allowed us to affirm that situated and embodied knowledge intensifies the analysis of complex urban processes.

The results found in the empirical investigation of *Habitar en Igualdad* validated the ethical and political urgency of the case--experience method as follows: 1. by observing instability and institutional ruins (the presence in Buenos Aires and La Rioja revealed the institutional fraying of politics, however, the method allowed us to face this situation not only as an empirical fact, but as a gesture of resistance (Butler, 2011) to document a policy about to be extinguished; 2. through the mismatch between the institutional promise and the project's execution (the absence of finishes, afforestation, and promised social equipment was not only a technical failure, but a sign of the precariousness of public policy when it is aimed at dissident bodies); 3. rescue of voices and displacement of subjects (the method enabled the displacement of subjects—trans women and transvestites—from mere objects of research to co-producers of knowledge); 4. identification of epistemic tensions (conversations with Hilda Aguirre and Solange Luna highlighted the hypocrisy of discourses that condemn ghettoization while systematically refusing the presence of dissident bodies in consolidated spaces).

Thus, the presence of the researcher as a Latin American queer subject involved in the field revealed dimensions inaccessible to detached analysis: the silences of the territory, political absences, and the fractures between promise and execution. Therefore, to assume the case-experience is to accept incompleteness as rigor, instability as deepening, and responsibility as an epistemic principle. It is not a prescriptive norm, but a critical experimentation, always situated. It invites other researchers to recognize their positions and limits, and to investigate the urban as a living field of dispute in which we are all entangled. Far from being a replicable model, the case-experience is, finally, a critical tool that is sensitive to the specificities of urban contexts, calling for methodological and epistemic responsibility. It does not end but instead invites the continuous inquiry into urban processes that challenge the ways of knowing and intervening in cities.

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STATE-PRODUCED RISK: SOCIAL HOUSING AND DISASTER VULNERABILITY

A PRODUÇÃO ESTATAL DO RISCO: HABITAÇÃO SOCIAL E VULNERABILIDADE A DESASTRES

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Salvador, C. C.; Ayoub, T. A.; Kanashiro, M. (2025). State-Produced Risk: Social Housing and Disaster Vulnerability. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 95-112 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239949

Abstract

The intensification of extreme weather events in Brazil poses growing challenges to housing policy (HP), revealing structural contradictions in the State's actions. This study questions the role of public authorities in producing and perpetuating the exposure of Social Housing (SH) developments and territories to disasters. Despite the relevance of the topic, the analysis of Brazilian HP still lacks comprehensive investigations into the relationship between the location of these projects and socio-environmental vulnerability, remaining restricted to specific case studies. Thus, this article investigates, at the local, regional, and national levels, the relationship between state production of SH and exposure to disasters, with an emphasis on floods. By combining a literature review and a systematic survey of news reports, twenty-seven cases of SH associated with disasters were identified. The findings indicate that HP does not eliminate risks, but redistributes them, transferring the social and environmental costs of housing to the population. By highlighting the state-produced risk and the perpetuation of socio-spatial injustice, the study reveals the contradictions, conflicting conceptions, and divergent interests that shape public policies and the ways the city is produced. It demonstrates that, rather than correcting historical inequalities, housing policy reproduces them, consolidating exclusionary urban models.

Keywords: Public policies, Housing programs, Affordable housing, Climate adaptation, Social justice.

1 Introduction

The city is the result of complex and conflictual processes in which technical and political decisions intertwine structural inequalities and reinforce exclusionary urban models. A paradigmatic example of this process is the designation of areas for the implementation of social housing initiatives (SHI), which exposes the contradictions of Brazilian housing policy. Often, the choice falls on environmentally fragile land, in conflict with environmental preservation policies, revealing tensions between social, economic, and territorial interests. This scenario raises questions about the role of the state in the production of disasters, linking to reflections on the social construction of risk, which offers crucial analytical tools for understanding such processes. In this sense, Maria Auxiliadora Ramos Vargas (2006) points out that problematizing the social construction of the notions of environment and risk is a way of opposing their naturalization.

Susan Cutter (2024) emphasizes that there are no purely natural disasters, as complex interactions among natural systems, the built environment, and social systems amplify existing risks and create new ones. Social risk theory offers analytical tools by recognizing that risk is culturally and socially constructed (Beck, 1992) and that state action can expose vulnerable communities to socio-environmental threats. This perspective appears in the study of dams, roads, railways, and mining areas, showing that exposure to risks is not a new phenomenon. Henri Acselrad (2002, p. 52) argues for the need for intersectional approaches to environmental risk and points to the “link between environmental degradation and social injustice,” which is particularly striking in the Brazilian case.

Kátia Canil and co-authors (2020) emphasize that understanding disasters—whether associated with physical-natural processes or not—must consider, in addition to conditions of vulnerability, the social, economic, and political processes that shape the generation of risks, among which disputes over access to urban land for popular housing stand out. Despite this, little is discussed about risk exposure in the construction of new social housing (SH) developments. However, “risk conditions” are recurring justifications for forcibly removing communities and social groups from their territories of origin. Maria Auxiliadora Ramos Vargas (2006) reveals that, in the field of SH, the notion of risk emerges from the articulation of technical perspectives and popular knowledge. While technical statements tend to be guided by institutionally accepted standards of normality—often blaming vulnerable groups—the daily experience of these groups is marked by multiple layers of precariousness, which reconfigure perceptions of risk. Thus, certain technical risks are marginalized in the face of so many other urgent issues.

Several authors associate the production of SH with the dispersion of urban growth, the lack of infrastructure, and the provision of precarious urban services (Honda et al., 2015; Pequeno & Rosa, 2016). Studies on the urban insertion of these housing units

also point to their recurrent implementation in environmentally unsuitable areas, without coordination with environmental, social, and urban policies (Menzori & Falcoski, 2016; Sousa & Braga, 2020). Ana Carolina Carvalho Figueiredo and co-authors (2021, p. 166, translated by the author) observe that "(...) it is common for (SH) to be implemented in peripheral areas, lacking basic infrastructure and close to risky locations." This finding shows that the production of SH, whether by the state or by private initiative, is relegated to urban areas of little interest to the real estate market, often characterized by conditions adverse to urbanization. These characteristics make these areas more prone to extreme weather events, for example.

The State's deliberate choice of environmentally fragile and vulnerable areas, and/or areas prone to disasters, for the implementation of SH creates one form of risk and exacerbates others. However, although Latin American literature has advanced critical analysis of housing policies, there are still few studies that thoroughly investigate the relationship between the location of these developments and exposure to socio-environmental disasters. Reviews such as that by Sara McTarnaghan and co-authors (2016) highlight the disproportionate vulnerability of low-income housing to climate change, but remain at the level of general diagnosis, without examining how specific developments—especially those resulting from public policies—interact with vulnerable territories. Raquel Naves Blumenschein and colleagues (2015) propose criteria for assessing the urban and environmental quality of the *Minha Casa Minha Vida Program* (PMCMV) developments, including consideration of flood-prone areas. However, the work remains in the field of methodological propositions, lacking empirical application.

Some studies identify cases of SH in flood-prone areas, near Permanent Preservation Areas (*Áreas de Preservação Permanente* – APPs), on hilltops, and on steep slopes (Rufino, 2015). However, even when physical variables such as topography, proximity to water bodies, and elevation are considered, there is a lack of critical articulation between these factors and the actual occurrence of disasters (Honda et al., 2015; Pequeno & Rosa, 2016). Furthermore, despite identifying weaknesses in the implementation of these projects, the analysis remains limited to specific case studies and does not extrapolate to the national context (Schumann et al., 2021). Thus, there is a critical gap in current studies: although efforts are made to assess the quality of the urban integration of SH and their compliance with environmental legislation, there is little discussion of the concrete effects of these locations in contexts marked by recurring disasters. This absence compromises the analytical capacity of housing research and hinders the development of effective, adaptive policies in response to climate change.

Given this context, the present study investigates the relationship between state-led social housing production in Brazil and vulnerability to socio-environmental disasters, with a focus on flooding. Specifically, it aims to: (i) map existing academic research on the relationship between disasters and housing policies, articulating multiple scales (local, regional, and national); (ii) identify concrete cases of SH affected by floods through the analysis of news reports; (iii) examine the extent to which SH policies incorporate—or neglect—environmental and climatic criteria in defining the location of developments; and (iv) discuss, in light of empirical data and the literature, the need to review the criteria for implementing social housing, considering the intensification of extreme events and territorial inequalities in Brazil.

2 Methods

The critical-analytical methodology adopted combines a qualitative approach and documentary research, structured around two complementary components: a literature review and a systematic survey of news reports. The review, conducted using different databases and sources, sought to map scientific production on the relationship between socio-environmental disasters and housing policies aimed at SH. Given the scarcity of academic studies that directly address the relationship between floods and state-owned developments, a complementary search was conducted in digital media to identify actual cases of SH affected by flooding, flash floods, and inundation. The focus on hydrological events is justified by the recurrence of such phenomena in the Brazilian urban context and by the concentration of developments in environmentally fragile areas, such as floodplains, riverbanks, and areas subject to overflowing urban canals and streams. By privileging this focus, the study highlights how location decisions contribute to the production and reproduction of risk in territories marked by inequality and exclusion, emphasizing that, although geological risks—such as landslides—receive greater institutional attention due to their immediate lethality, the daily impacts of hydrological events remain underestimated. The flowchart in Figure 1 summarizes the methodological strategy.

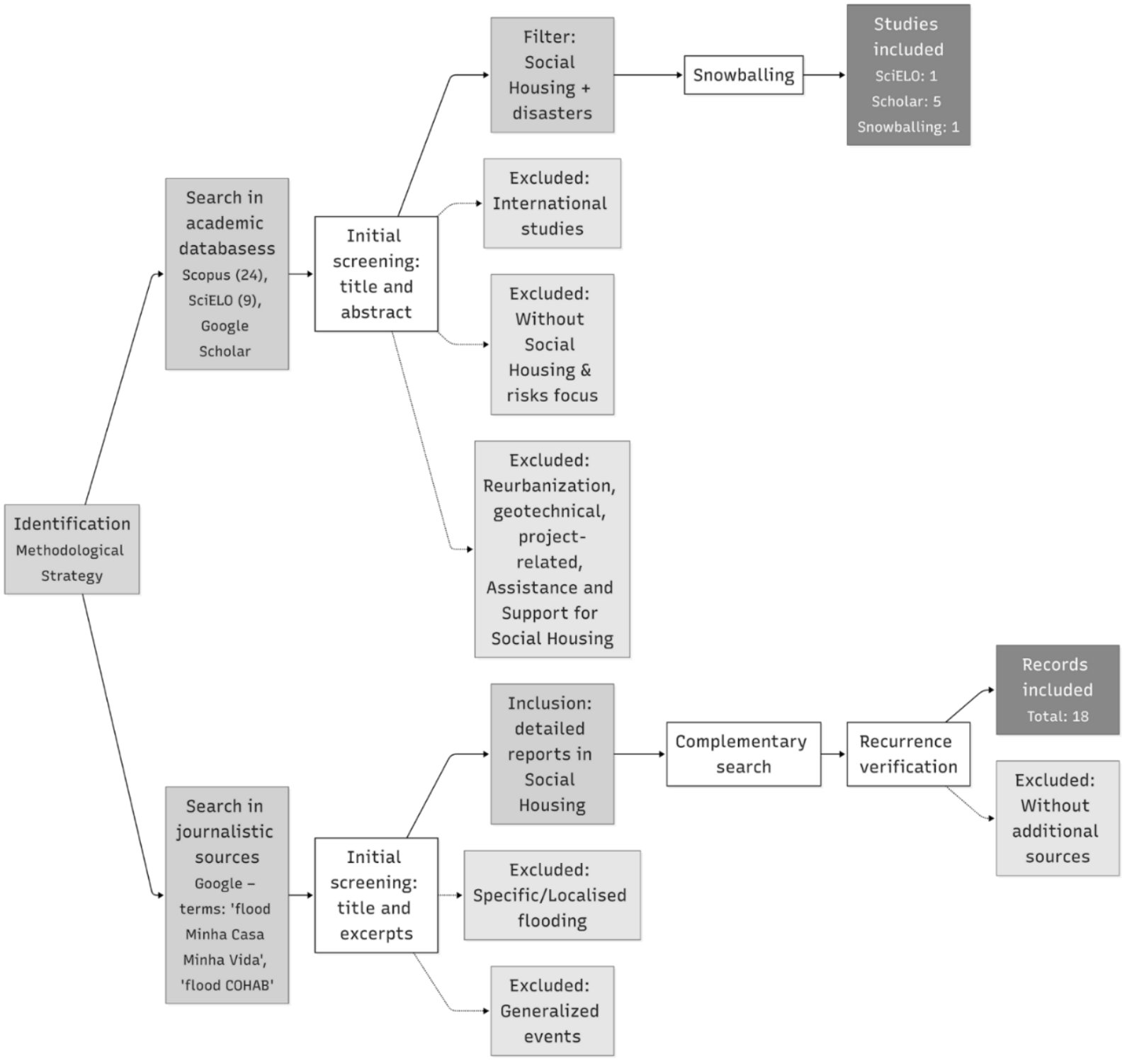

Fig. 1: Flowchart of the procedures for searching, screening, and filtering the analyzed material, including the final selection of investigated cases. Source: Authors (2025).

2.1 Search in academic databases

The search was conducted between December 2024 and January 2025 in the Scopus and SciELO databases. The search string was developed from recurring terms in the paper abstracts, aiming to identify studies that simultaneously addressed SH and disaster risk. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to broaden the scope and precision of the search, along with terminological variations and synonyms. The search included expressions related to housing policies and programs, social interest developments, and affordable housing, as well as terms associated with environmental vulnerability, exposure to disaster

risk, and events such as flash floods, inundation of floodplains, and pluvial flooding. For the Scopus database, the terms were translated into English, maintaining the focus on national studies. Google Scholar was used as a complementary source, using the same keywords and covering the period from 1979 to 2025. The time frame is justified by the enactment of the Federal Law No. 6,766/1979 (Brasil, 1979), a fundamental regulatory milestone that established guidelines for urban land subdivision in Brazil, directly influencing housing production and the organization of urban settlements. The search in the Google Scholar database returned a large number of publications (more than 12,000 results).

After reading the titles, abstracts, and context of the use of keywords—especially in searches conducted on Google Scholar—studies were excluded from the sample that: (i) did not explicitly address SHI; (ii) dealt exclusively with land regularization, urbanization of precarious settlements, or removal and resettlement processes; (iii) did not consider the territorial insertion of SHI in risk areas or their relationship with disasters; (iv) had a strictly geotechnical focus; (v) were produced in international contexts, without dialogue with the Brazilian reality; (vi) addressed project proposals or public competitions; (vii) focused exclusively on Technical Assistance for Social Housing (TASH) actions aimed at self-construction in informal occupations or settlements; and (viii) were limited to the analysis of specific housing reforms or isolated housing improvements, without considering urban insertion or associated environmental risks.

In general, most of the works identified addressed socio-environmental issues in areas of informal occupation, highlighting the tension between housing demand and environmental preservation. As a result, only seven publications were considered relevant, with the high exclusion rate justified by the low adherence of the results obtained in the search. The snowballing technique, based on the analysis of the bibliographic references of the previously selected studies, allowed the identification of relevant studies not captured by the initial strategies. The papers were submitted for validation by all members of the research team to ensure rigor and consistency in the inclusion of studies.

2.2 Search in journalistic sources

To explore socio-spatial dynamics and vulnerability processes that are less covered in the mainstream literature, journalistic sources were consulted. The searches were conducted in January 2025 using Google, employing two main strategies: (i) a broad search using the terms “Minha Casa Minha Vida enchente (*flood*)”—resulting in eight occurrences, of which only two met the selection criteria; (ii) broad search using the terms “enchente COHAB”, aiming to identify cases of SHI promoted by State and Municipal Housing Companies affected by flooding. The focus on housing developments carried out by COHABs and PMCMV is justified by their central role in public social housing policies in Brazil over recent decades, representing different moments of state action in the provision of affordable housing. While COHABs were mainly active between the 1960s and 1990s, playing a leading role in the execution of large peripheral SHI, the PMCMV, launched in 2007, marks the resumption of large-scale investments, with strong private-sector participation and an emphasis on standardized housing production. Both models reveal patterns of urbanization that are relevant to the investigation and provide a structural diagnosis at the national level.

The term *enchente* (often translated as flash flood or a generalized flood event in Brazilian Portuguese) was prioritized in searches, although *inundação* (inundation of floodplains, the technically more appropriate term in the Brazilian context) is technically more appropriate, because *enchente* is widely used in everyday vocabulary, in the media, and in institutional documents (Brasil, 1998), which increases the scope of data retrieval. Cases of pluvial flooding (or alagamentos), defined as the accumulation of water due to failures in urban drainage (Brasil, 1998), were only considered when they specifically indicated structural weaknesses or high vulnerability within the Social Housing developments. The news reports were selected based on the titles and excerpts highlighted in the searches. The criteria adopted include the presence of information on the impacts of flooding on SHI; the existence of complementary records (additional reports, technical documents, institutional databases); and the recurrence or indication of the risk's permanence. Reports with superficial accounts were supplemented with new searches for the terms “enchente” (*flood*) and “risco” (*risk*) associated with the housing complex's name to deepen the context. Videos from social networks were used solely to identify the complexes and were not considered primary sources. The complementary searches were conducted in parallel with manuscript writing and continued until August 2025.

The following were excluded: (i) reports on expropriations and/or new developments; (ii) cases of isolated pluvial flooding events (i.e., ponding due to localized drainage failure) of low severity; (iii) news about assistance actions for SHI residents who did not directly experience the risk; (iv) cases of widespread extreme events that did not reveal a specific vulnerability of SHI. The validation of journalistic sources considered the credibility and traceability of the information, prioritizing consolidated national, regional, or local media outlets, as well as institutional portals linked to city halls and official agencies. The reports were verified for publication date, internal consistency of information, and correspondence between the reported event and the territorial context of the housing development mentioned. Whenever possible, multiple sources on the same case were cross-referenced to reduce biases arising from isolated records or misleading narratives. Even so, the recurrence of events was not adopted as an exclusive selection criterion, since, in the context of the climate emergency, risk situations tend to intensify.

Some records were retained despite information gaps, as the authors reached consensus on their qualitative contribution to the debate. This decision is based on the understanding that the scarcity of records does not necessarily imply the absence of the problem, but may reflect limitations in media coverage or gaps in available records, especially in peripheral areas. This strategy allowed us to quantify cases and identify less visible but equally relevant patterns regarding SHI exposure to flood risks. It is worth noting that some examples occurred in neighborhoods called COHAB, but which seem to include later spontaneous settlements. In these cases, the distinction was explicitly pointed out in the description to avoid confusion between formal developments and adjacent occupations. However, this information was retained because it highlights weaknesses in the urban integration of the complexes, since spontaneous growth in their surroundings is a predictable dynamic associated with the absence of integrated planning and a shortage of housing supply. All journalistic records consulted are available as supplementary material (Salvador, 2025).

For the synthesis, the cases identified in academic production and those recorded by the media were integrated, allowing the construction of a comprehensive overview that articulates different scales—local, regional, and national—and combines scientific and empirical perspectives. A summary chart compiled all identified situations, correlating them with the originating housing programs and the associated risk typologies. For the latter, the Brazilian Classification and Coding of Disasters was used as a reference for categorizing the risks reported in the evidence collected (Castro, 1998; Brasil, 2025). Finally, it should be noted that, both in journalistic reports and in academic works, terminological inaccuracies are common in the designation of hydrological events, particularly in the lack of precise distinction between flash-floods (*enchentes*), inundation of floodplains (*inundações*), and pluvial flooding resulting from drainage failure (*alagamentos*). The same occurs with geological risks, where the subtype landslide is sometimes used generically to describe any event related to mass movements. In light of this, it is acknowledged that small inconsistencies in the classification of disaster risks may arise from ambiguities in the sources consulted.

3 Results

3.1 Academic works

The bibliographic search revealed a significant body of work on socio-environmental vulnerabilities related to the location and designated areas for the implementation of social housing initiatives (SHI). However, studies that explicitly address coexistence with disaster risks—especially floods—remain scarce and sporadic. The analysis of the selected articles allowed for their classification into five categories: a) critical review of the MCMV housing program; b) discussions on the urban placement of housing developments; c) case studies of SHI or special zones of social interest (*Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social* – ZEIS) related to disaster risk; d) post-occupancy evaluation of SHI architectural and urban projects; e) local housing programs. The predominance of case studies in the sample analyzed highlights the recurrence of patterns in which SH is located in peripheral areas, where it is exposed to risks. This spatial configuration, far from being random, is systematic and transversal to the different regional contexts examined. Table 1 summarizes the primary data from the analyzed papers.

Authors	Category	Description	Source
Costa (2019)	Case studies	Undergraduate Thesis that presents the insertion of Special Zones of Social Interest (ZEIS) in areas of geological risk resulting from mining activities in Ouro Preto, MG.	Google Scholar
Figueiredo et al. (2021)	Urban placement	A case in Santo André, São Paulo, involving an area designated for the implementation of social housing. The authors acknowledge the area's propensity for flooding. After the study, it was identified that the project was not carried out.	Google Scholar
Schumann et al. (2021)	Urban placement	Highlights the location of *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (MCMV) housing developments in areas of geological risk or environmentally significant areas in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul.	Google Scholar
Martins (2014)	Case studies	Analyzes the impact of the 1966 flood on the occupation of Cidade de Deus, Rio de Janeiro, focusing on the development of the housing complex and its subsequent irregular occupation.	Google Scholar
Siqueira & Malagodi (2013)	Housing program	The *Morar Feliz* program in Campos dos Goytacazes, Rio de Janeiro, resettled families displaced by flooding of the Ururaí River into filled-in Permanent Preservation Areas (APPs), thereby generating new risks and causing structural pathologies in the housing units, including wall cracking.	Google Scholar
Schäfer & Gomide (2014)	Evaluation	Post-Occupancy Evaluation of the *Moradias União Ferroviária* housing project in Curitiba, Paraná. The study assesses flood risk and the effectiveness of levees in mitigating it. Residents still report flooding episodes.	Scielo
Santo Amore et al. (2015)	Critical review	An evaluation of the MCMV program across six Brazilian states identifies instances of peripheral siting, occupation of flood-prone areas, proximity to APPs, and the placement of projects on steep slopes and hilltops. Particularly prominent cases are observed in Fortaleza (Ceará), the Metropolitan Region of Pará, and the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro.	Snowball

Table 1: Systematization of selected academic works. Source: Authors (2025).

The data show that scientific production on disaster vulnerability in SHI presents substantial regional inequality. While the Southeast accounts for the highest proportion of recorded cases (5), regions such as the South (2), Northeast (1), North (1), and Central-West (0) are underrepresented in the literature, despite having experienced relevant disaster events. Papers by Marcela Rebello Martins (2014), and by Eduardo Francisco Schäfer and Fernanda Paes de Barros Gomide (2014) examine contexts of informal urban development that have been subject to state intervention, including the production of social housing. The works of Antenora Maria da Mata Siqueira and Marco Antônio Sampaio Malagodi (2013), as well as those of Caio Santo Amore and colleagues (2015), relate housing programs to conditions unfavorable or unsuitable for urbanization.

In the volume organized by Santo Amore and colleagues (2015), three studies address the implementation of SHI of the PMCMV in environmentally sensitive areas: José Júlio Ferreira Lima and colleagues (2015) identify insertions in areas close to water sources in the southern part of Ananindeua (Metropolitan Region of Pará, northern region of the country), while Renato Pequeno and Sara Vieira Rosa (2015) analyze situations in the city of Fortaleza (northeastern region) in which SH interfere with water flow, interrupting streams and natural drainage lines. In the Metropolitan Region (*Região Metropolitana* – RM) of Rio de Janeiro (southeastern region), technical staff from Caixa Econômica Federal acknowledge that many developments in Income Bracket 1 of the PMCMV were built in areas at risk of flooding (Cardoso et al., 2015). More recent studies problematize the designation of areas vulnerable to geological and hydrological risks for the implementation of SH developments, revealing a growing trend in the literature to identify the State's role in producing risk conditions within SH (Costa, 2019; Figueiredo et al., 2021; Schumann et al., 2021).

3.2 Reported cases

The selection process for reported cases resulted in seventeen cities and eighteen cases that met the established criteria, of which only two were within the scope of the PMCMV. The search revealed that a significant portion of news reports on PMCMV developments addressed disasters linked to poor construction quality in the social housing units. This indicates that, when

analyzing disasters resulting from the urban insertion of SH, SH produced by COHAB is more vulnerable than PMCMV. The reports show the recurrence of events across different regions of Brazil, spanning the period from 2000 to 2025. In addition, the cases are distributed across all regions of Brazil: North (2), Northeast (5), Central-West (3), Southeast (2), and South (6). The data in Tables 2 and 3 suggest structural problems, deficiencies in urban drainage systems, and disasters arising from the SH's location.

Region	State	City	Description
North	Acre	Cruzeiro do Sul	Flooding of the Juruá River associated with the annual flood cycle of large Amazonian rivers affected 12 neighborhoods, including COHAB, in 2024. In 2025, the river impacted 25 communities, with no confirmed evidence that the COHAB area was affected. This case illustrates the occupation of areas that are vulnerable to fluvial dynamics.
	Pará	Belém	The COHAB neighborhood in Icoaraci faces pluvial flooding and ponding resulting from deficiencies in the urban drainage system. This recurring problem for more than two decades (2003–2025) highlights persistent shortcomings in maintenance and public investment. Reports indicate relatively lower severity, such that the situation does not constitute a large-scale housing disaster.
Northeast	Ceará	Itapipoca	Three flood events were recorded on the same street—Pedro Moreira Braga Street, in the COHAB neighborhood—within a single year, with water levels reaching up to 1 m inside dwellings. This pattern suggests the occurrence of rapid surface runoff and flash flooding, driven by intense rainfall and inadequate stormwater conveyance. The situation is further exacerbated by proximity to urban streams, which frequently overflow.
	Pernambuco	Recife	In 2022, COHAB was among the neighborhoods affected by flooding and ponding. In 2024, the Lagoa Encantada area within COHAB was impacted, and of the 50 recorded fatalities, 25 occurred in the neighborhood due to slope failures and flooding. Although designated as a single neighborhood, the area encompasses an extensive territory that appears to include informal settlements. Low elevation and intense urbanization contribute to the city's long-standing vulnerability.
	Pernambuco	Palmares	COHAB I was developed in a low-lying area near the Una River. In 2012, flooding was identified as exacerbating public health problems, notably increased dengue incidence. In 2017, an extreme event affected the entire state—from the Zona da Mata to the Agreste—again impacting the residents.
	Pernambuco	Jaboatão dos Guararapes	The removal of residents from the former COHAB Muribeca, due to collapse risk in an area with a history of localized flooding, resulted in displacement toward more vulnerable areas. The 2022 event caused 24 fatalities citywide, seven of which occurred in the Muribeca neighborhood. New housing developments, such as Nova Muribeca and Marcos Freire (possibly linked to the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* , MCMV, program), also experienced flooding in 2024. From 2020 onward, landfilling in Permanent Preservation Areas (APPs) and the diversion of a water channel by private companies intensified flooding in a neighborhood that had already been affected six times since 2004.
	Maranhão	São Luís	Seasonal flooding has occurred for more than 14 years in the COHAB neighborhood, aggravated by infrastructure inadequate for the rainy season. In 2016, the disaster event was accompanied by strong winds and thunderstorms, causing damage to homes.

Table 2: Systematization of selected reported cases for the North and Northeast regions. Source: Authors (2025).

Region	State	City	Description
Central-West	Mato Grosso	Cáceres	The COHAB Velha neighborhood has experienced recurrent river flooding for more than 20 years and exhibits a high level of flood susceptibility. Financed by the National Housing Bank (BNH) in 1971, it has documented flood events since 2007. Engineering works on the Sangradouro Stream—intended to improve the environmental conditions of Cáceres Bay—are identified as an aggravating factor, as the drainage gallery system is unable to accommodate river discharge during flood events.
	Mato Grosso	Cuiabá	The COHAB São Gonçalo neighborhood has experienced recurrent river flooding and inadequate sanitation for decades. Overflow of the Machado Stream affects roadways and primarily impacts informal dwellings located in close proximity to the river, while open sewage (documented since at least 2019) continues to cause public health problems. Despite interventions implemented in 2014 and 2022 that mitigated impacts, flood risk persists.
	Mato Grosso do Sul	Porto Murtinho	In 2017, the COHAB area experienced a major flood, with water entering homes and reaching levels close to window height. The impacts were exacerbated by a channel unable to accommodate stormwater discharge. In addition, the area's flat topography, low conveyance capacity, and minimal slope—the lowest within the urban perimeter—contribute to flood severity. The area was affected by three flood events (2017, 2018, and 2021), with the first being the most severe. Families living in informal settlements were the most affected; however, in 2024 they were provided with new housing units.
Southeast	Rio de Janeiro	Duque de Caxias	The Santa Helena and Santa Lúcia housing complexes (MCMV), built in Parque Paulista to rehouse victims of the 2012 floods, were flooded in 2013 when the Saracuruna and Capivari rivers overflowed, affecting 389 housing units. Caixa Econômica Federal stated that the developments were not located in risk areas; however, residents dispute this claim, arguing that the complexes were built in low-lying areas prone to recurring flooding.
	Rio de Janeiro	Maricá	The Carlos Marighella Housing Complex is affected by flooding originating in the Vigário River basin. Built around 2015 in the Itaipuaçu district under the MCMV program, it experienced a severe flood event in 2016, followed by additional flood episodes in 2018 and 2023. The surrounding area exhibits high susceptibility to recurring flooding.
South	Santa Catarina	Rio do Sul	The COHAB Bela Aliança is located within an environmental preservation area and a zone of high river-flood-risk. In 2023, floodwaters exceeded roof level in several dwellings. Over nearly 50 years, more than 45 flood events have been recorded. Residents have adapted their homes and report fatigue resulting from prolonged exposure to risk.
	Santa Catarina	Joinville 2 cases	The COHAB Aventureiro neighborhood presents a history of pluvial flooding and ponding associated with structurally deficient drainage infrastructure, despite reports in 2021 indicating an absence of recent events. In the same city, the Monsenhor Scarzello Housing Complex, located in the Petrópolis neighborhood, is situated in a high river-flood–risk area, with documented occurrences since 1992. Official documents, flood-susceptibility maps, and judicial rulings confirm its location within a critical sector of the Cachoeira River Basin.
	Rio Grande do Sul	São Leopoldo	The COHAB Feitoria neighborhood experiences recurrent pluvial flooding and ponding; in 2024, a new episode was recorded along Albino Timm Avenue. Accounts from residents on Feitoria Avenue (adjacent to COHAB) indicate a pattern of flooding over the past four years, leading to improvised measures such as the construction of small flood barriers. Official inspections confirm the persistence of critical points, and the problem remains despite localized mitigation works.
	Rio Grande do Sul	Sapucaia do Sul	The COHAB neighborhood comprises COHAB Blocos (multi-family housing) and COHAB Casas (houses) and is located in close proximity to the José Joaquim stream. The area has documented records of flooding in at least three distinct years (2011, 2017, and 2024). In 2017, ground-floor apartments and commercial establishments were directly affected, with floodwaters entering the buildings. In 2025, the dredging of the stream was carried out in the area.
	Rio Grande do Sul	Camaquã	A severe flooding event occurred in 2024, with recurrent episodes documented since at least 2021, particularly affecting public roadways within the COHAB area. Streets such as Breno Veiga Vielitz Street are identified as critical points in reports from 2021 and 2022. The Camaquã River, which crosses the city, has a history of major flood events, the most severe recorded in 1996.

Table 3: Systematization of selected reported cases for the Southeast and South regions. Source: Authors (2025).

3.3 Summary of academic works and reported cases

Figure 2 presents a summary of the cases identified, organized by source (academic or journalistic), the housing programs involved, and the disaster risks reported. These risks range from geological processes (such as landslides) to hydrological and meteorological events, as well as biological risks (such as dengue epidemics) and technological risks (such as cracks in

buildings). Additionally, the regional distribution of cases shows the highest concentration in the South (8 cases), followed by the Southeast (7), Northeast (6), Central-West (3), and North (3). Among the twenty-seven cases identified, nine (33%) originated from academic works. In contrast, eighteen (67%) were obtained from news and journalistic reports, highlighting the relevance of journalistic sources in documenting events that are often absent or underexplored in the literature. The predominance of journalistic records indicates the need to expand and decentralize academic research to include less-considered regions. The recurrence of events and the wide territorial coverage—from Cruzeiro do Sul (Acre, northern region of the country) to São Leopoldo (Rio Grande do Sul, southern region of the country)—reveal that disasters associated with SH are not isolated, but structural. The pattern of negligence in land selection, combined with the failure to update guidelines in the face of intensifying climate change, represents a persistent failure by the State to guarantee decent and safe housing. Thus, the criteria for selecting areas for SH development remain opaque or are loosened in response to real estate interests.

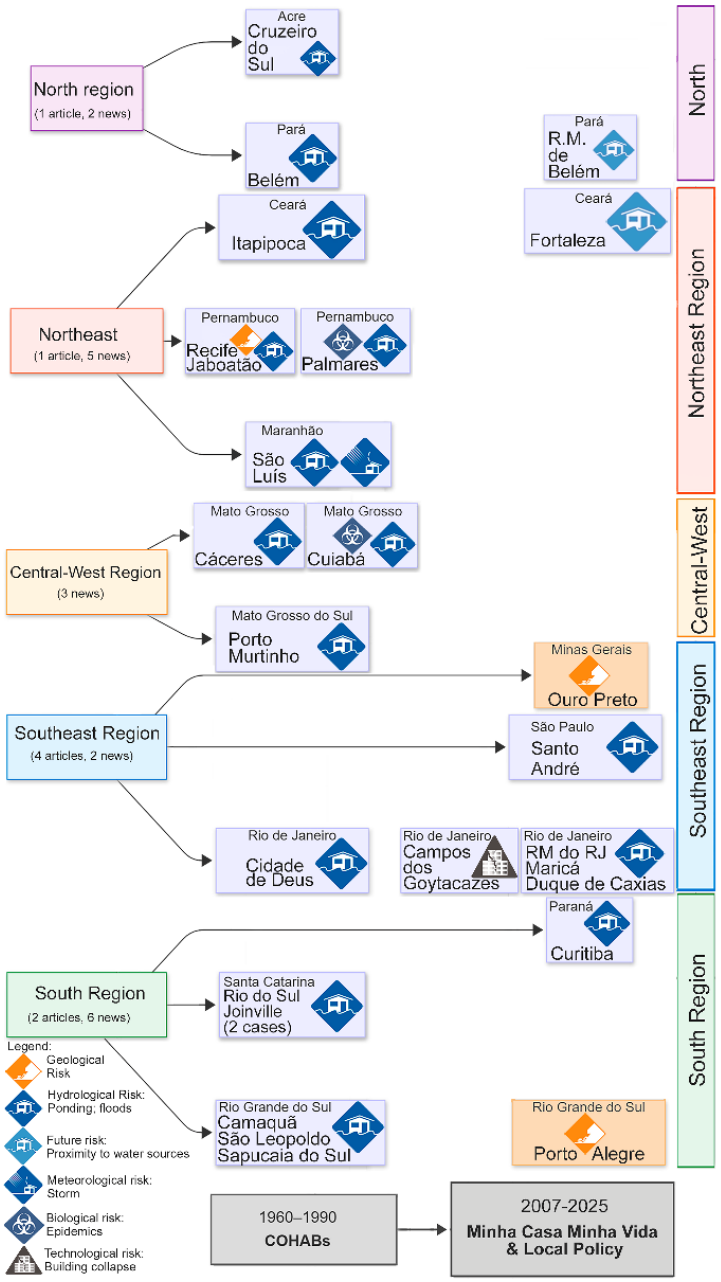

Fig. 2: Summary chart: Regional distribution of cases by source, housing program, and registered risk. Source: Authors (2025).

Figure 2 shows the implementation of SHI in territories with previously known environmental vulnerabilities, highlighting the reproduction of historical patterns of socio-spatial exclusion. Such developments are often located in disaster-prone areas, with records in different regions of the country (Fig. 2). There are also developments located in areas of geological risk, such as in

the Northeast (Recife), Southeast (Ouro Preto), and South (Porto Alegre), and cases involving the occupation of Permanent Preservation Areas (APPs), such as Rio do Sul (South) and Campos dos Goytacazes (Southeast). The latter was targeted by the *Morar Feliz* program, which, according to Antenora Maria da Mata Siqueira and Marco Antônio Sampaio Malagodi (2013), resettled families removed from flood-risk areas into previously filled APPs. The authors note that the choice of these areas sought to reduce land costs and favor infrastructure projects, such as duplicating a highway and enhancing the city's entrance. The emergence of new vulnerabilities—such as structural cracking—reveals a transfer of risk rather than its elimination. The authors highlight the political use of risk mapping to legitimize urban interventions that favor economic interests and shift the burden of socio-environmental impacts onto the most vulnerable social strata.

In the North and Northeast, the situation is aggravated by more intense extreme events and a historical lack of infrastructure. Cases such as that of Jaboatão dos Guararapes (Pernambuco, in northeastern Brazil) show that SH are not only implemented in areas susceptible to flooding, but, once affected, become the target of removal and replacement policies that often relocate populations to new risk areas—an emblematic example of "assisted removal" without the guarantee of effectively better housing conditions (Queiroz, 2024). In Fortaleza (Ceará, in northeastern Brazil), Renato Pequeno and Sara Vieira Rosa (2015) identify that the implementation of SH developments interfered with watercourses and natural drainage lines, and occurred in close proximity to lagoons, highlighting the installation of housing complexes in areas with preexisting environmental vulnerabilities. Similar patterns are observed in the Belém metropolitan region (Pará, in northern Brazil) and in Ouro Preto (Mato Grosso, in southeastern Brazil), where insufficient social rental assistance led families to occupy APPs or remain in areas of geological risk (Lima et al., 2015; Costa, 2019).

Developments in previously vulnerable areas create new risks as the occupation process intensifies. In this context, the spatial configuration of SH developments exacerbates the problem, since many neighborhoods designated as COHAB encompass large areas with informal settlements that emerged near the formal SH complexes. Therefore, projects often disregard the pre-existing dynamics of the territory and the limitations of the physical environment in the face of future urban expansion, favoring disorderly occupation of the surrounding area and increasing socio-environmental risks.

In the North and Central-West, the cases observed are linked to negligence regarding the region's natural dynamics, such as flooding of Amazonian rivers and overloading of urban drainage systems. In Cruzeiro do Sul (Acre, in northern Brazil), prior knowledge of river seasonality did not prevent the implementation of SH in vulnerable areas. In Cáceres (Mato Grosso, in the central-west of Brazil), COHAB Velha has suffered from events for over 20 years and is among the twenty five neighborhoods in the city with high susceptibility to flooding (Santos et al., 2017). In Cuiabá (Mato Grosso) and Porto Murtinho (Mato Grosso do Sul, in the central-west of Brazil), proximity to bodies of water and poor infrastructure aggravate the impacts of rainfall, with inadequate response from public authorities. Even so, it is worth questioning whether the low recurrence of records in these regions is due to climatic particularities, the effectiveness of preventive actions, or simply limited media coverage and academic production on the subject.

In Palmares (Pernambuco) and Cuiabá (Mato Grosso), recurring floods and poor sanitation infrastructure increase biological risks, as evidenced by studies on the incidence of dengue fever in Palmares (Silva & Nóbrega, 2012). The state of Pernambuco, in northern Brazil, also recorded two municipalities with fatalities in SH areas linked to COHAB neighborhoods. In Jaboatão dos Guararapes (Pernambuco), records indicate that other housing complexes, possibly including SH, were affected by flash floods, suggesting a broader territorial scope of vulnerability. This data reinforces the multi-risk dimension of inadequate SH implementation: hazards often interact, cascade, or occur together, intensifying their impacts.

In the Southeast, experiences such as those in Santo André (São Paulo), Ouro Preto (Mato Grosso), Campos dos Goytacazes (Rio de Janeiro), and Maricá (Rio de Janeiro) reveal that the environmental vulnerability of these areas was widely known and, in some cases, documented even before the implementation of the projects—including situations of ZEIS. This practice highlights an institutional logic that not only tolerates but also sometimes legitimizes and institutionalizes the exposure of low-income populations to predictable threats. Rio de Janeiro presents an emblematic example of this dynamic. Created in 1965 to resettle residents displaced by flash floods in the 1960s, the Cidade de Deus (Rio de Janeiro) complex constitutes a historical case of the persistence and reproduction of socio-environmental vulnerabilities. In just a few years, the complex itself became a risk

territory, marked by recurrent flooding and insufficient urban infrastructure, revealing that the housing policy did not eliminate precariousness, but only transferred it to another space (Martins, 2014).

In Santo André (São Paulo), Ana Carolina Carvalho Figueiredo and colleagues (2021) analyze a housing project that was planned for an area with a history of recurrent flooding. Although not executed, the simple targeting of a housing project to an area known to be susceptible to flooding shows that weaknesses in housing policy continue today. This pattern is also observed in Ouro Preto (Mato Grosso), where ZEIS overlaps with areas of geological risk. The allocation of such zones to the production of SH or Popular Market Housing (*Habitação de Mercado Popular* – HMP) reveals the reproductive nature of vulnerability through legal instruments and housing policies that ultimately legitimize permanence in risk territories (Costa, 2019). Such evidence highlights the continued practice of implementing SH in environmentally fragile areas, even in the face of recurring disasters experienced in the country throughout the 21st century.

In the South, this rationale is repeated even with different geographical characteristics. In Joinville (Santa Catarina), Rio do Sul (Santa Catarina), and Camaquã (Rio Grande do Sul), the well-known vulnerability did not prevent the implementation of SH developments. In Curitiba (PR), the SH in the Audi-União sector was implemented in a high-risk flood zone along the Iguaçu River. The urbanization and resettlement of seven irregular villages since 2000, despite extensive flood control works, failed to eliminate underlying drainage issues and recurrent pluvial flooding problems (Schäfer & Gomide, 2014). These factors cast doubt on the appropriateness of the development's location, particularly in the context of climate change. In Santa Catarina, the recurrence of events in complexes such as COHAB Bela Aliança, in Rio do Sul, and Monsenhor Scarzello Housing Complex, in Joinville, shows that, even in places that have been occupied for decades, the risks persist or intensify following recent extreme events. In COHAB Bela Aliança (Figure 3), studies reveal the adaptation of houses to coexist with disasters (Salvador et al., 2024a; Salvador et al., 2024b). A similar situation occurs in Jaboatão dos Guararapes (Pernambuco), where new houses built by former forcibly evicted residents from the Muribeca COHAB are designed as protective measures, featuring elevated structures and reinforced slabs (Queiroz, 2024). Palliative solutions are also observed in the COHAB Feitoria, in São Leopoldo (RS), such as the construction of small retaining walls to hold back floodwaters.

The cases analyzed reveal a systematic recurrence in the selection of areas unsuitable for SHI implementation. Even in contexts where, to date, events have predominantly affected public roads, the history of recurrence and the location of the projects highlight the potential for worsening conditions—as illustrated by the examples of Itapipoca (Ceará) and Camaquã (Rio Grande do Sul). The intensification of extreme events associated with climate change increases the likelihood that future episodes will significantly amplify socio-environmental damage, directly affecting SH residents. Although designed to mitigate risks, the housing policies analyzed demonstrate that, in practice, they reproduce and redistribute vulnerabilities. As Siqueira and Malagodi (2013) argue, these developments do not eliminate the risk; instead, they transfer it to new forms and locations, meaning that the solution to an emergency issue ultimately creates the conditions for the risk to be perpetuated at an amplified scale.

Fig. 3: Flooding in the COHAB Bela Aliança housing complex, Rio do Sul (SC). Source: Ciro Salla (2022). https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1176644339755711

4 Discussion

The research sought to analyze how state housing production is associated with exposure to flood risk, and to identify how housing policies consider (or neglect) environmental risks when choosing the location of developments. The research mapped academic production on disasters and housing policies, identifying gaps in the debate. The lack of academic studies on the topic prompted a search for journalistic reports to identify concrete cases of flooding in Social Housing Initiatives (SHI), including developments produced by COHABs and PMCMV.

The analysis revealed records of hydrological events—including river flooding, flash-flooding, floodplain inundation, and pluvial flooding—along with landslides and other geological risks, affecting social housing areas over almost six decades (1966–2025). This highlights the trivialization of risk and the persistence of flaws in urban planning. A higher incidence of disasters was observed in SHI produced by the COHABs, possibly associated with implementation processes conducted when environmental guidelines were still incipient, with a lack of systematized technical studies and weak mapping of areas susceptible to flooding. Such practices led to the construction of housing in inappropriate areas, contrary to legal provisions such as Article 3 of Federal Law No. 6,766/1979 (Brasil, 1979), which prohibits subdividing land in areas subject to flooding without adequate preventive measures. However, exceptions justified by the need to make SH developments viable often result in the implementation of SH in vulnerable areas, which creates a contradiction in State action between guaranteeing the constitutional right to housing and preventing disaster risks.

The recurrent institutional and media characterization of events as “atypical” contributes directly to the naturalization of risk, shifting the focus away from structural vulnerabilities and territorial inequality processes. This narrative hinders the construction of a consistent debate and the adoption of effective long-term planning, especially given the undeniable intensification of climate change and climatic emergencies currently underway. As a result, reactive logic prevails, in which emergency actions—such as disaster relief services (e.g., post-flood cleanup)—are prioritized over structural interventions. Cases of prolonged permanence in risk areas—such as Cáceres (Mato Grosso, in the central-west of Brazil), exposed for more than two decades, and COHAB

Bela Aliança (Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil), which has been dealing with disasters for almost half a century—reveal state negligence and acceptance of the problem.

The reproduction of denialist statements and perspectives keeps floods framed as isolated and unpredictable phenomena, thereby favoring negligence of continuous preventive measures. This palliative approach prevents the structural causes from being adequately addressed, keeping them invisible in academic debate and the media, and thereby favoring the recurrence of disasters. Tacit acceptance of the recurrence of these events can lead both the population and institutions to minimize perceptions of the severity and urgency of effective solutions, reinforcing disbelief in public management's ability to solve the problem (Vargas, 2006). Therefore, the naturalization of risk not only limits preventive action but also consolidates insufficient responses, perpetuating vulnerability and aggravating its impacts. The persistence of the problem for more than half a century reinforces the urgency of adaptive policies and a review of land-use models, especially in the current context of a climate emergency.

This situation dialogues with Acselrad's (2002) critique of the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on socially excluded groups, linking the concept of environmental racism to the production of popular housing in the country. The lack of coordination between housing, urban, environmental, and development policies (Santo Amore, 2015) deepens socio-spatial injustice, perpetuating the permanence of vulnerable groups in territories unsuitable for housing. Given this scenario, a profound review of the locational criteria that guide public housing production is imperative. This includes the systematic implementation of prior susceptibility analyses—at the scale of the area designated for the SH—considering different types of processes, such as floods, erosion, landslides, settlement/differential subsidence (*recalques*), collapses, extreme temperature variations, intense winds, and coastal erosion, all associated with the ongoing transformations in the climate dynamic. At the same time, strengthening regulatory frameworks and committing to integrated territorial governance could help address the structural inequalities that shape the production of urban space. Without such changes, SHI will paradoxically continue to be both promises of citizenship and mechanisms for producing precariousness and reproducing inequalities.

5 Final considerations

The study confirms the existence of a structural pattern in Brazilian housing policy: the implementation of housing projects in areas prone to disasters. We conclude that Brazilian housing policy, far from acting exclusively as an instrument of social justice and the combating of inequalities, has, in many cases, functioned as a vector for the redistribution of risks, revealing divergent interests that result in conflicts and deepen conditions of vulnerability and exclusion. By prioritizing economic feasibility criteria in land selection, housing programs shift the social and environmental costs of housing onto low-income households. At the local level, the findings reinforce that the flaw begins with the location decision, in which land availability overrides previously known environmental risk (e.g., Maricá, Joinville, and Rio do Sul). On a regional and metropolitan scale, the prevailing market logic in land acquisition, characterized by the search for low-cost land, invariably directs SH developments to environmentally fragile and peripheral areas (e.g., Fortaleza, in northeastern Brazil; Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region (RM), in southeastern Brazil; and Belém, in northern Brazil). On a national scale, the extension of cases from Acre, in northern Brazil, to Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil, demonstrates a structural pattern that cuts across Brazilian housing policy, regardless of region or program, evidencing an institutionalized redistribution of risk. Therefore, the current social housing production model perpetuates risk by lacking effective mechanisms for correction or critical review. The cases analyzed exemplify the concept of state production of risk, which highlights the active role of public authorities in exposing vulnerable populations to socio-environmental threats—either through omission or through actions that create or intensify such risks.

In these contexts, the state not only relocates vulnerable groups to precarious areas but also institutionalizes their permanence through formal policies, legitimizing inadequate occupations under the discourse of housing inclusion. In many cases, state interventions generate new risks, such as poorly compacted landfills that cause cracks (e.g., Campos dos Goytacazes, Rio de Janeiro), the absence of efficient drainage systems that cause pluvial flooding (e.g., Belém; Curitiba, in southern Brazil; Joinville, in southern Brazil), or insufficient social rental policies that keep families in risk zones (e.g., Ouro Preto, in southeastern Brazil; Belém Metropolitan Region, in northern Brazil).

This situation reflects a historical pattern of institutional negligence, in which risk is produced, distributed, and maintained by the state apparatus itself, highlighting the limits of a housing policy dissociated from urban and environmental planning. Vague criteria in the definition of risk areas favor opportunistic practices, leading to the disregard of environmental parameters and the creation of new vulnerabilities, in violation of constitutional principles. Furthermore, hazards tend to be interconnected, triggering cascading effects that amplify their impacts, which reinforces the need for a multi-risk understanding. Thus, the recurrence and normalization of these disasters necessitate reformulating the location criteria and infrastructure requirements in SHI, which, although designed to ensure the right to housing, often perpetuate—or deepen—historical vulnerabilities.

Despite the temporal and geographical diversity of the cases identified, the methodological choice to prioritize journalistic sources related to projects produced by COHABs and PMCMV, justified by the centrality of these programs in social housing policies, imposes a recognized limitation on the sample. Projects developed by state and municipal programs with their own nomenclatures may have been excluded from the search. Therefore, future research should develop strategies to expand the scope and cover additional state and municipal housing programs to offer a more complete overview of state risk production in Brazil. Furthermore, we acknowledge that reliance on journalistic records imposes inherent limitations—such as unequal regional coverage, the lack of detailed technical data, and a tendency to report on events with greater impact or visibility. Thus, even though the survey conducted is comprehensive, the sample should be understood as an approximation of situations in which SHI were affected by hydrological disasters, serving as a starting point for more in-depth future analyses.

The gaps in academic production reinforce the importance of new investigations, primarily through more complete and reliable information. Future studies may include the implementation period of the projects, their alignment with the current legal framework for opening land subdivisions, and their compliance with environmental and disaster-prevention regulations. In addition, new research may adopt interdisciplinary approaches, integrating climatology, urban geography, and public management to examine environmental, territorial, and institutional variables. In the field of architecture and urban planning, additional studies may focus on developing plans and projects—such as Neighborhood Plans (*Planos de Bairro*)—that can support mitigation and adaptation strategies, aiming to reduce environmental (and other) impacts in older SH that are structurally more vulnerable to climate emergencies.

This study contributes to the field of social housing and socio-environmental justice by demonstrating how Brazilian housing policy, when prioritizing economic criteria over environmental and urban safety, reproduces and institutionalizes risks in vulnerable territories. By combining a survey of reported cases with a literature review, the research identifies structural patterns in the insertion of SHI in disaster-prone areas, demonstrating that such developments, rather than reducing inequalities, frequently perpetuate them. Based on an unprecedented overview of the recurrence and persistence of these risks over decades, gaps in locational criteria and integrated urban planning policies are highlighted. Thus, the study directly contributes to reflection and action by illuminating the conflicts inherent in the conception and execution of housing programs in Brazil, thereby problematizing the ambiguities and contradictions of state action. With this, space is opened for future research to delve deeper into situations of socio-environmental conflict and develop concrete propositions aimed at building a more just, integrated, and effective housing policy.

Acknowledgments

The principal author of this work would like to thank the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – CNPq), Brazil, for its support through the doctoral scholarship granted under process no. 140825/2025-8. We would also like to thank Professor Renato Tibiriçá de Saboya for his contribution to improving methodological strategies.

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HOUSING FINANCIALIZATION IN SHARING ECONOMY CONTEXTS

FINANCEIRIZAÇÃO DA HABITAÇÃO EM CONTEXTOS DE ECONOMIA COMPARTILHADA

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Barros, V. T. & Masiero, E. (2025). Housing Financialization in Sharing Economy Contexts. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Jane Susanne Godwin Coury. 113-126 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239867

Abstract

Constructions of urban space in Brazil have been partially shaped by agents and sectors aiming to serve financial interests. Consequently, cities have become increasingly segregated and inequitable. This pattern of urban production is manifested through housing financialization, which was rooted in the 1970s onward. In this context, new economic dynamics with supposedly more sustainable purposes, such as the Circular Economy, the Sharing Economy, and the Creative Economy, have emerged, indicating the establishment of new paradigms in constructions of urban space. However, considering that the city is an object of dispute and interest, the entrenched logic of financialization in the production of space suggests potential tensions with these new economic dynamics. Thus, adopting a literature review combined with a critical discussion as its methodological approach, this essay aims to analyze the context of housing production resulting from financialization processes, contrasting it with the impacts of these new economic dynamics. As a contribution, this essay reflects on the tensions between the reproduction of inequitable cities in Brazil, embedded in new forms of housing production encompassed by financialization but presented under the guise of the sustainability agenda that has shaped many Brazilian cities.

Keywords: Housing financialization, Circular economy, Sharing economy, Creative economy, Urban space.

1 Introduction

The economy encompasses different dynamics that reflect transformations in modes of production, consumption, and interaction. Based on extraction, production, and disposal, the linear economy has proven unsustainable in light of resource scarcity. In contrast, alternatives such as circular economy, which proposes the continuous reuse of materials; creative economy, which values innovation, culture, and intellectual capital; and sharing economy, which encourages reorganizing access to goods and services through collaborative networks, may offer pathways toward more sustainable, inclusive development aligned with contemporary social and technological dynamics. On a global scale, consumer goods are often used without consideration for their reuse by industry or, subsequently, by end users. Over the long term, this logic has become unviable, as the planet is unable to meet such demands while also needing to regenerate its own resources. As an alternative to this model, Alexandra Leitão (2015) underscores the adoption of the circular economy as a promising path for the future. The literature reviewed shows that the concept of the circular economy predates the other economic dynamics discussed and has a more substantial body of academic work, suggesting its broader relevance and diffusion. In this regard, some studies associate circularity with creative or sharing dynamics, so that they can be understood as complementary (European Environment Agency, 2017; Korhonen et al., 2018; Pratt, 2022).

Circular economy limits the throughput flow to a level that nature tolerates and utilizes ecosystem cycles in economic cycles by respecting their natural reproduction rates” (Korhonen et al., 2018, p. 39). Spanning fields such as architecture, audiovisual arts, technology, fashion, and advertising, the creative economy relies on innovation, valuing intellectual property as its principal asset for job creation and overall economic development. It also stands as an alternative to the declining strength of traditional manufacturing industries (Ghazi & Goede, 2017). The sharing economy, in turn, is grounded in the transfer of the right to use goods over idle goods and resources, which are owned by individuals or institutions, to other users, where financial transactions are mediated by specialized platforms. This arrangement allows owners to obtain monetary returns from sharing their assets, which are accessed at a lower cost by users while reducing the assets’ idle time (Zhu & Liu, 2021). In Latin America and the Caribbean, circular economy has gained increasing relevance and political traction in recent years. Numerous public initiatives aligned with circular economy principles have been launched, playing a decisive role in fostering the adoption of circular practices within the economic sector. These include transformations in production chains, from industrial product development to end-of-life outcomes, as well as shifts in patterns of consumption, use, and disposal. In this context, and in alignment with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), it is worth mentioning that the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean proposed the establishment of a Regional Coalition on Circular Economy in 2019 (Schröder et al., 2020).

The logic of the linear economy remains predominant in the Brazilian housing market and aligns closely with housing financialization processes. Large-scale housing production does not always aim to fulfill a social right or meet a basic need;

rather, within this system, the housing unit becomes a financial asset, serving more to generate profit than to ensure improved living conditions in cities. The topic of financialization only gained significant academic attention after the 2007 housing crisis in the United States (Silva & Rodrigues, 2023). Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus that its expansion began in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of globalization and the adoption of neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2014; Klink & Souza, 2017; Rolnik, 2019; Silva & Rodrigues, 2023). While the central role of financial institutions in shaping the conceptual development of financialization is widely acknowledged, its breadth of application is also noteworthy. In this regard, its diffusion is said to have "given rise to the flourishing of a general financial logic that now permeates all capitalist activities and even the reproduction of the labor force" (Sanfelici, 2013, p. 29, our translation). In the Brazilian urban context, space and housing financialization is an issue that must be faced so that new proposals can be devised and implemented to mitigate its effects. Financialization is associated with the growing participation of "financial actors, markets, practices, measurements, and narratives, at various scales, resulting in a structural transformation of economies, firms (including financial institutions), states, and households" (Aalbers, 2019, p. 4, parentheses in original). Overall, what can be observed is that the logic of financialization in Brazil has enabled the entry of lower-income social groups into the real estate market. This incorporation, however, is not based on an inclusive rationale; rather, it relies on the extraction of resources from vulnerable populations for the benefit of dominant sectors, thereby reinforcing an old and unequal economic system. Thus, although the linear economy remains dominant in the real estate sector, the circular economy emerges as an alternative capable of mitigating social and environmental impacts, improving access to housing, and fostering new economic dynamics when applied to real estate development. Accordingly, this article proposes to analyze and discuss the relationship between financialization and circular economy, as well as the influence of emerging economic models, such as Creative Economy and Sharing Economy, on the production of urban space. It therefore aims to identify potential points of tension among these models, which may, in turn, generate impacts on the territory. The article also presents a theoretical discussion of likely

Reflecting on the production of urban space reveals the centrality of the political, economic, and territorial disputes that shape the territory and highlight the involvement of multiple actors. Historical processes of financialization have consolidated patterns of inequality in access to housing, transforming land and dwelling into assets oriented toward financial appreciation (Freitas, 2023). In parallel, contemporary discourses associated with circularity, creativity, and sharing put forward new productive and cultural arrangements that promise greater sustainability, inclusion, and dialogue across forms of knowledge (European Environment Agency, 2017; Pratt, 2022). These models, however, are not neutral. They operate within a contested field marked by tensions among public interests, private actors, and regulatory frameworks that condition how cities are organized. Within this context, one can identify an overlap between emerging economic dynamics and longstanding structures of power, allowing us to speculate on how ideas such as innovation, participation, and socio-environmental responsibility may be mobilized either as tools for transformation or as mechanisms that reproduce hegemonic practices. By furthering the discussion on this interplay, it becomes clear that it is essential to take into account the different scales at which conflicts occur, from urban planning to housing policy, from cultural transformations to forms of governance, in order to critically analyze the trajectories that shape contemporary territory.

The methodology adopted in this essay is structured around a qualitative approach grounded in literature review and theoretical–critical analysis. The procedures were based on mapping key concepts, identifying discursive contradictions, constructing conceptual syntheses, and generating phenomenological interpretations (Volpato, 2019). This methodological strategy enables an integrated understanding of the processes that shape the production of urban space by articulating financialization, circular economy, sharing economy, and creative economy (Charnock et al., 2014; European Environment Agency, 2017; Jover & Cocola-Gant, 2023). The literature review served as the central axis of the investigation, bringing together national and international references that address the formation of Brazilian cities, the dynamics of housing financialization, and contemporary economic transformations. Together, these sources provided the foundation for developing a comprehensive understanding of the issues examined (Aalbers et al., 2020; Figueiredo et al., 2024; Rufino et al., 2018; Souza & Leonelli, 2021b). The theoretical analysis consisted of identifying convergences, tensions, and overlaps between the economic models under study and patterns of territorial organization. This process involved examining how discourses of sustainability, innovation, and collaboration are embedded in contexts historically shaped by real estate speculation and by strong interconnections between public and private sectors. In doing so, the methodology sought to show the ways in which new economic arrangements may be absorbed by the logic of financialization, ultimately reproducing consolidated inequalities. The discussion also incorporates studies on the *Minha*

Casa Minha Vida program (My House, My Life, an affordable housing program), securitization mechanisms, and the territorial impacts of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb, consistently aiming to interrogate the spatial materialization of the processes analyzed. Through this methodological trajectory, and drawing on Marina Marconi and Eva Maria Lakatos (2003), the approach adopted here made it possible to construct a critical reading of ongoing economic and spatial transformations, grounded in the articulation of the references mobilized throughout the study.

2 The Brazilian context

Flávio Villaça (2015) suggests that the process of urbanization in Brazil can be divided into three major periods: the first, from 1875 to 1930; the second, spanning the decades between 1930 and 1990; and the third, beginning in the 1990s. The latter period is associated with the emergence of a process of politicization within urban planning in the country. As public participation increased, methodological and thematic aspects of certain urban plans were discussed and debated in major Brazilian cities. However, in contrast to Villaça's more inclusive perspective, analyses made by Ermínia Maricato (2015) and Raquel Rolnik (2019) reveal a reality that characterized the period and persists today. Influenced by Barcelona's urban planning model developed for the 1992 Olympic Games, the so-called strategic plan[1], adopted by several Latin American cities, "fulfills the same role of deregulating, privatizing, fragmenting, and granting the market absolute power" (Maricato, 2015, p. 89, our translation). Christopher Gaffney (2010) underscores how the staging of the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016 further contributed to spatial segregation in urban environments and brought renewed attention to the relationships between the public sector and companies linked to the construction industry and real estate market. Returning to the 1990s, Brazil witnessed the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks aimed at expanding and consolidating private housing production, including for lower-income groups. Under relatively little public scrutiny, the real estate sector, led by large construction firms and developers, gained ground within Brazilian housing policies (Maricato, 2000; Rolnik, 2006).

However, as noted by Rolnik (2019), within the broader landscape of Brazilian urban policy, there is a longstanding relationship between the state and major construction firms. The development of the heavy engineering sector was strongly encouraged by the state through a pragmatic arrangement that reveals not only the tight interconnection between public and private interests, but also the considerable influence wielded by this business sector, particularly in shaping public policy. Milton Santos (1993) links this relationship to Brazil's colonial past and its enduring patrimonialist practices. In the absence of efficient public administration, private actors, through their capacity to forge direct relationships with public officials, are effectively delegated the task of implementing their own economic agendas. Inherited from the colonial period, this dynamic was further consolidated during the Getúlio Vargas era, when the state assumed a heightened role in steering the economy (Faoro, 2001). According to Eduardo Marques (1999), the sector experienced three different phases. The first, beginning in the 1940s, was marked by the establishment and consolidation of the heavy engineering industry in Brazil, driven by the expansion of the national highway network and by institutional changes accompanying the transformation of the National Highways Department (DNER in Portuguese) into an autonomous agency. The second phase, spanning the 1960s and 1970s, represented the period of greatest dynamism in the sector, as the military governments implemented large-scale projects in energy and transportation. The third phase, emerging in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was characterized by business diversification as major construction firms began acquiring companies in other sectors.

Expanding their market reach into less developed countries, these firms were able (supported by state-backed financial and diplomatic assistance) to take command of smaller and technologically less competitive markets (Marques, 1999; Marques & Bichir, 2003). Rolnik (2022) points out the dynamics observed in the city of São Paulo, in southeast Brazil, during the 1980s, particularly the relationship between public officials and major contractors, which made the political need clear for campaign financing. Powerful construction companies became substantial funders of electoral campaigns. For these firms, campaign contributions aimed to secure future contracts and ensure payment for contracts already underway. For politicians, such

[1] Based on the understanding that the expansion of the global economy and privatization processes are subject to economic liberalization, strategic planning draws on concepts and strategies derived from corporate planning. Its adoption by public administrators stems from the notion that cities are to be managed as enterprises. Consequently, cities are expected to be attractive, for example, in attracting new businesses, technology, and high-quality services (Vainer, 2000).

contributions were understood as a form of gratitude for the support received. By the 1990s, an alliance among construction companies, real estate developers, and investors had emerged aiming to design and build commercial and corporate developments. Drawing on their longstanding influence within the public sector, these actors mobilized the resources needed to implement public and private projects that could foster the development of new growth zones (Villaça, 1995). Regarding this process of privatized urban expansion, Carlos Vainer (2011, p. 12, our translation, emphasis in the original) describes it as the "*direct democracy of capital*." From the 2000s onward, these companies significantly increased the production of housing units aimed at households with access to mortgage credit — families earning between three and ten minimum wages, eligible under the Housing Finance System (SFH in Portuguese). Between 2006 and 2008, the number of housing units priced up to two hundred thousand reais grew by approximately a factor of nine (Shimbo, 2010).

There has been notable growth in mortgage lending and in the number of housing units produced (Rolnik, 2022). In 2009, the *Minha Casa Minha Vida* program was launched. Developed jointly by public and private actors as a countercyclical measure in response to the financial crisis that began in the United States in the late 2000s (Alvarenga & Reschilian, 2018), the program "became the country's housing policy, based on a single model of promoting homeownership accessed through the market and mortgage credit" (Rolnik, 2019, p. 309, our translation). Directed at lower- and middle-income groups, the program was to be administered by the *Caixa Econômica Federal*, whose role was to provide subsidies enabling households to acquire their own homes (D'Amico, 2011). However, Brazil's housing policy during this period resulted from the close association between the state and the market. The so-called *Social Market Housing* emerged from the merging of the terms social and market, which had historically occupied distinct positions within financing systems. Whereas terms such as social housing, affordable housing, or public housing were previously reserved for low-income groups and associated with state provision, in recent years these concepts have been appropriated by the real estate sector to define a newly created market segment (Shimbo, 2010). While the program expanded access to new forms of financing for lower-income households and stimulated major investments in housing construction, its reach coexists with well-documented limitations, most notably, its inadequacy in addressing the national housing deficit, a gap that distances the program from its intended social function (Krause et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the implementation of government initiatives such as the *Procel Edifica* (a Brazilian program promoting energy efficiency in the construction sector) seal in 2003 (Lopes et al., 2024) and the *Casa Azul* (a Brazilian certification recognizing energy-efficient residential buildings) seal in 2010 (Gonçalves et al., 2020) points to an effort by the state to promote more efficient building models and foster a more sustainable urban environment, in alignment with the principles of a circular economic dynamic.

3 Circular Economy and New Economic Dynamics in the 21st Century

According to Jouni Korhonen, Antero Honkasalo, and Jyri Seppälä (2018), ecological economics provided the main scientific and theoretical foundations for the development of the new concepts observed in the circular economy. In this regard, the authors highlight studies addressing topics aligned with the circular economy, such as eco-efficiency and industrial ecology, developed in the 2000s, in addition to research on "the macroeconomic potential of cyclic material flows" (Korhonen et al., 2018, p. 38) published between the 1960s and 1990s. However, although some of these approaches made significant contributions to the field of sustainability, the authors note the difficulty of linking ecological economics concepts to those of the circular economy due to a lack of clarity and understanding regarding ecological economics itself. Nevertheless, the importance of ecological economics in shaping what has come to be recognized as the circular economy is emphasized. Regarding its conceptual definition, it can be described as follows:

> An economic system that replaces the end-of-life concept with reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering materials in production/distribution and consumption processes. It operates at the micro level (products, companies, consumers), meso level (eco-industrial parks) and macro level (city, region, nation and beyond), with the aim to accomplish sustainable development, thus simultaneously creating environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity, to the benefit of current and future generations. It is enabled by novel business models and responsible consumers (Kirchherr et al. 2017, p. 229, parentheses in original).

In the construction sector, adopting circular economy principles has significant potential to optimize materials and waste management. Solid waste generated by the construction industry accounts for approximately 70% at the national level in Brazil (Benachio et al., 2020) and 35% at the global level (Mercader-Moyano et al., 2022; Munaro & Tavares, 2022a). Mayara Munaro

and Sergio Tavares (2022a, p. 66, our translation) highlight political factors as essential for implementing the circular economy, including the need to establish “regulatory instruments, fiscal actions, and governance policies integrated into the sustainable development agenda.” There is also a recognized need for greater attention to the development of integrated information systems that enable optimized material management and data sharing related to construction project phases, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM) and Building Material Passports (BMP) (Benachio et al., 2020; Munaro & Tavares, 2022a). In their review of Brazilian public policies related to the implementation of circular economy in civil construction, Munaro and Tavares (2022b) found that waste management – through federal laws, resolutions, and action plans – was the most recurrent theme across the documents analyzed. Additionally, the authors emphasize the importance of engaging industry professionals, recycling specialists, consumers, and end-users in discussions aimed at formulating new regulatory mechanisms to expand the reach of the circular economy within Brazil’s construction industry.

In addition to the circular economy, it is important to highlight the roles that the so-called creative economy and sharing economy can play in shaping urban space. In the context of ongoing economic development, it is important to link such development with environmentally and socially responsible practices. In this regard, the concepts of the creative and sharing economies gained prominence in the twenty-first century (Hossain, 2020; Khussainova et al., 2024). Introduced by John Howkins (2002), the concept of the creative economy was originally grounded in the circulation of creative assets and products with economic value. In 2009, the concept gained further traction through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which defined the creative economy as goods and services based on creativity that drive economic growth while contributing to socioeconomic development (Saptawan et al., 2024. The creative economy represents a sector focused on generating value through productive innovation and social inclusion, distinguished not only by its capacity for innovation and flexibility but also by its role as a stimulus and foundation for rational economic decision-making, promoting the development of unique skills across different segments of society (Khussainova et al., 2024). At the urban level, Christiano Toralles (2023) emphasizes how urban transformation driven by the creation of spaces dedicated to the creative and knowledge-based economy can, in less consolidated areas, stimulate development, or in already established areas, expand the provision of infrastructure. In Brazil, a study by João Luiz Figueiredo, Ana Flávia Machado, Mariangela Antigo, Sílvia Corrêa, and Veranise Dubeux (2024) on neighborhoods with a significant presence of creative spaces in Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte highlights real estate speculation as a persistent point of conflict in these areas. Establishing new commercial ventures aimed at serving the creative economy could exacerbate issues such as land and property value appreciation, fostering local real estate speculation, reproducing patterns of social exclusion, and diverging from the initiatives’ original socially and environmentally responsible intentions (Toralles, 2023).

Mokter Hossain (2020) and Bru Laín (2024) highlight the difficulty of objectively defining the sharing economy due to the wide range of social contexts, organizations, and business models in which it can be applied. Nevertheless, conceptually, Pablo Muñoz and Boyd Cohen (2017, p. 21, authors’ emphasis) define the sharing economy as “*a socioeconomic system enabling an intermediated set of exchanges of goods and services between individuals and organizations, which aim to increase efficiency and optimization of under-utilized resources in society*.” From the perspective of its emergence as an extension of the neoliberal agenda, Laín (2024) argues that the sharing economy, promoted as a model for fostering greater social connection alongside sustainable economic growth, can instead become a field for the reproduction and advancement of traditional capitalism. Thus, the new economic dynamic primarily serves to consolidate power in the hands of large digital companies, such as Uber and Airbnb, while simultaneously precarizing labor relations. Regarding Airbnb’s influence on urban space, Rafael de Souza and Gisela Leonelli (2021a) examine how the platform stimulates real estate speculation and gentrification in the areas where it operates. This speculation results from the reduction in the number of properties available for long-term rental. The gentrification process is characterized by a shift in the demographic profile of residents, as many Airbnb-listed properties are located in tourist-heavy neighborhoods. This dynamic is driven by the proliferation of digital platforms and their societal impact, which has facilitated the emergence of concepts such as platform capitalism (a development of the capitalist model associated with the community connected to these platforms) and, within urban space, the so-called platform urbanism, a product of this new capitalist structure reflected in the shaping of urban environments (Cruvinel, 2024).

Fernanda Gomide, Luís Bragança, and Eloy Casagrande Junior (2024) emphasize the need to integrate technical and social factors to embed circular practices into daily life, alongside behavioral and climatic aspects. They highlight the importance of accounting for the specific cultural context of each region to achieve sustainable development. In this regard, educational

institutions play a crucial role in promoting these new economic dynamics within urban spaces. In their study, Stefania De Medici, Patrizia Riganti, and Serena Viola (2018) discuss the positive impact generated by the establishment, at the end of the 1990s, of a university on the island of Ortigia, part of the city of Syracuse in southern Italy. Aiming to follow circular economy principles, the authors argue that the involvement of institutional, corporate, and educational spheres is essential for promoting public policies, mobilizing resources, and qualifying professionals to contribute to the local culture. However, it is important to note that alongside these new economic dynamics, the real estate market continues to operate and can negatively influence the way urban space is constructed. Considering this, as shown by Greig Charnock, Thomas Purcell, and Ramon Ribera-Fumaz (2014) in their study of the 22@Barcelona project in the Poblenou district of Barcelona, Spain, although the project's proposal and conceptual discourse suggested developing new spaces incorporating technological and innovative aspects through sustainable economic practices in both construction and subsequent use, the project ultimately served the interests of the real estate and financial sectors. Consequently, it perpetuated the logic of financialization, rather than fostering a more democratic urban space.

4 Financialization

Concerning its mode of operation, financialization is structured around securitization mechanisms implemented by financial agents such as banks and investment funds. According to Fernando Pinheiro and José Savoia (2009), securitization is a financial structuring model that enables raising capital by trading future receivables in the present market. In Brazil, the implications of this logic in urban space can be observed in empirical studies conducted by Wagner Amorim (2015) and Daniela Alvarenga and Paulo Reschilian (2018) in medium-sized cities in the states of Paraná and São Paulo, Brazil, respectively. These studies, focused on social housing production through the *Minha Casa Minha Vida* program, provide quantitative financial and housing data demonstrating the impact of capital on the production of urban space in the cities analyzed. Through investment funds, this system raises capital by issuing securities that are purchased by investors. Regarding methods of financialization adopted worldwide, Manuel Aalbers, Raquel Rolnik, and Marieke Krijnen (2020) emphasize the importance of recognizing differences in practices across countries. While there are convergent points, no process is identical to another. Furthermore, the authors challenge the binary perspective found in some literature, which categorizes financialization processes solely based on a country's economic position (central or peripheral to capitalism) without considering the regional, social, and institutional specificities of each location.

In the context of state-provided housing, and in contrast to the retrenchment of social welfare policies previously implemented in core capitalist countries through measures such as wage suppression and the precarization of labor relations (Klink & Souza, 2017), a transformation in housing policy patterns was observed. This shift came to rely on the establishment of more robust housing finance markets, in which sectors previously excluded from real estate credit, namely the middle and lower classes, could participate (Rolnik, 2019). Regarding the global market for housing financialization, Rolnik (2019) broadly identifies characteristics that subdivide it into three different operational structures: (1) mortgage systems; (2) government-subsidized housing credit schemes for the purchase of market-produced dwellings; and (3) microfinance systems. While many developed countries use financing mechanisms with reduced interest rates or subsidies for housing with environmental certifications or high energy performance, such instruments remain limited in Brazil. This demonstrates the lack of engagement by the financial sector with the environmental agenda, particularly initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Within the Brazilian context, associative credit systems are predominant. However, some developments in the financialization process should be briefly conceptualized, which have occurred in other Latin American regions. The research conducted by Lúcia Shimbo and Beatriz Rufino (2019) provides support for this review by compiling analyses that discuss cases in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico, as well as Brazil. According to the authors:

> In Argentina, from 2016 onwards, a housing credit program increasingly incorporated indexed mortgage loans, strengthening the alliance between real estate developers and the financial sector. In Chile, insurance companies increased their participation in real estate investments by 80% between 2005 and 2014. In Mexico, in 2011, a financial instrument was created and traded on the stock exchange for real estate investments, particularly in office buildings, structured very similarly to real estate investment trusts in the United States (Shimbo & Rufino, 2019, p. 7, our translation, authors' emphasis and parentheses).

Returning to the Brazilian context, linked to the logic of associative credit systems, Mario Schapiro and Saylon Pereira (2019) analyzed the relationship between state and private institutions in housing finance provision. Promoted by the establishment of the Real Estate Finance System (SFI in Portuguese) in 1997, this instrument introduced new regulatory mechanisms and gradually integrated banking corporations and capitalization markets. Based on a model developed in the United States in the 1970s, the SFI sought to strengthen the legal framework related to credit, thus constituting a fundamental institutional basis for transforming real estate transactions into "financialized commodities" (Schapiro & Pereira, 2019, p. 30, authors' emphasis). Bruno Barcella (2024) demonstrated how financialization spread through land acquisition via the securitization of housing debt, generating increasingly recurrent relationships and regulations across different levels and scales between the real estate and financial sectors. According to the author, whenever land rents are promoted and appropriated, that is, in any private property integrated into the market, connections to income-generation circuits can be identified. This perspective corroborates the analysis by Eudes Leopoldo, Alexandre Pereira, and Luis Salinas (2024), who highlight the creation and role of the Association for Real Estate and Tourism Development in Brazil (ADIT in Portuguese), which connects the tourism and real estate sectors in the country. The relationship between these sectors reproduces the logic of spatial segregation, where tourist developments serve as vectors and property functioning as a financial asset. In this regard, Barcella (2024, p. 13, our translation) notes the "transformation of the city into a platform for financial profitability through securitization, representing the capture not only of specific axes or vectors, but of everything that has been or is being produced". From this perspective, cities become platforms of financial profitability, reshaping the relationship between property owners and production, and reaffirming the logic of rentier capitalism in a contemporary context. Thus, by spatializing data on housing finance in Brazil, Barcella (2024) suggests that the primary factor determining whether a property is financed is its performance in the real estate market, namely, its capacity to be traded. In other words, when a property generates capital through financing, it feeds the logic of interest-bearing capital, paving the way for the financialization of the process. Similarly, contemporary business models used by platforms, such as Airbnb, influence urban and housing dynamics and can also be considered agents promoting the financialization of space. In their study of Lisbon and Porto, Portugal, Jaime Jover and Agustín Cocola-Gant (2023) demonstrate that Airbnb operates as a mechanism of financialization by converting housing units into income-generating assets. From this perspective, professionalization of property management in the region has attracted national and international investors, favoring the acquisition of properties intended exclusively for short-term rentals. This process, supported by state reforms and fiscal incentives, intensifies the allocation of capital in the housing sector and promotes the transformation of dwellings into instruments of wealth accumulation.

5 Coexistence in the Construction of Urban Space

When analyzing the current Brazilian scenario, there is still a noticeable absence of robust state-led proposals for implementing a comprehensive circular economy agenda aligned with 21st-century demands. What can be observed, instead, are isolated, small-scale actions and initiatives by companies attempting to initiate the transition from a linear to a circular production model. In this context, the participation of banks and financial institutions as financing agents can be understood as a natural pathway to operationalize and provide cash flow for companies aiming to adopt the circular economic model, as suggested by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in its report on the Circular Economy (2017). However, in Brazil, this aspect warrants careful attention. As noted by the agency, it recommends that banks sell future receivables to shareholders as a means of financing circular business models. This model implies the same logic of financialization discussed throughout this analysis. According to the EEA:

> One key solution to improving access to finance for circular businesses is to partner with banks willing to take on risks and provide services, such as factoring or reverse factoring. Factoring entails a company selling its account receivables to financial institutions or financiers advancing a sum of money to providers to reduce client risk and pressure from cash flows. In turn, financial institutions receive revenues from periodic payments made by the customer base. Reverse factoring implies that financial institutions pay a large sum of money to suppliers upstream of service providers to cover costs for inputs and materials, further reducing cash flow impacts. Meanwhile, service providers repay financial institutions in installments with low financing costs (EEA, 2017, p. 28).

Regarding the connection between financialization and the sharing economy and its influence on urban space, Airbnb operations require careful consideration. A review conducted by Souza and Leonelli (2021a) on the company's impact in cities in countries

such as Australia, Canada, and the United States shows that a large portion of the platform's property portfolio is concentrated in the hands of a small fraction of hosts. In New York City, for example, 13% of property hosts control 40% of the total number of units rented through the platform. In Brazil, according to Souza and Leonelli (2021b), legislation regulating Airbnb has proven insufficient, as it focuses primarily on its impact on the hospitality market, overlooking its broader implications for the housing market. When considering potential conflicts between Airbnb's operations and the traditional rental market, it is clear that existing legislation may not fully account for the specificities of the territory it seeks to regulate, particularly regarding tensions with the long-term rental sector and gentrification processes. It is important to highlight that, in both types of impact, the affected groups are extensive and not easily identifiable as stakeholders within Airbnb's operational dynamics. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the State to recognize Airbnb as a distinct market and act in its regulation, not only to ensure fair competition with the traditional hotel sector but, above all, to mitigate undesirable transformations in the urban and social fabric, preserve the supply of permanent housing, prevent gentrification, and ensure the fulfillment of the social function of the city and property (Souza & Leonelli, 2021b).

In line with this, the flexibilization of regulations proposed in the São Paulo Master Plan, approved in 2014, can be mentioned. Although socially inclusive measures were initially proposed in the Plan, several aspects of the text were subjected to pressures from the real estate market, ultimately diverting its original purpose of fostering a more democratic city (Back et al., 2021). From this period onward, there was an increase in the construction of studio apartments in São Paulo. These units were partially built with public subsidies derived from legal instruments included in the Master Plan. Originally, the type of unit to be constructed was intended to serve lower-income social strata, aiming to reduce the city's housing deficit. To curb the proliferation of this housing typology, the city government introduced regulations restricting the purchase and sale of these units, as well as their rental, based on parameters related to income and rental duration (Toledo & Ferraz, 2025). Amid this restrictive market environment, the launch of the Luggo startup in 2018 by the MRV construction company represents a new financialized model of living through property rental (Corrêa & Barros, 2021). The construction company is responsible for the project's development and building, partnering with investment funds to financially exploit the enterprise through rental income. This business model may signal a preemptive response by the real estate market to the tightening of legal restrictions on property purchases, particularly by investors seeking dividends who are ineligible based on income, as well as the use of public funds intended, at least in principle, for social housing. Instead, these funds have been directed toward constructing units aimed at the traditional real estate market, as seen in São Paulo.

6 Final considerations

It can be observed that both positive aspects and potential negative ones require attention regarding financialization and the new economic dynamics. The fact that the construction sector has adopted circular economy, for example, can positively impact the management of materials and waste, optimizing processes of purchase, use, and disposal. In this context, it can be seen that there is a need to enhance and broaden the scope of circular economy legislation within Brazil's construction sector, giving legal strength to the regulations that encompass it and creating incentives that facilitate its adoption by companies. At the company level, construction management processes need to be optimized, increasing integration between project stages, involved professionals, and utilized resources by combining information systems and data-sharing practices. However, even with the expansion of the sharing and creative economies in Brazil, urban segregation tends to be reinforced, as real estate speculation continues unabated, fueled by increasing land values and higher property sale and rental prices. Thus, when observing the interplay of the concepts discussed in this study and their unfolding in the Brazilian context, within a scenario promoting the continuity of the neoliberal agenda, the circular economy could be employed as a tool within the dynamic of financialization. Companies in the construction sector could adopt it as a sustainable discourse capital, fostering and constructing projects that leverage the sharing and creative economies while reproducing the logic of financialization in their operational dynamics and in the production of urban space in Brazil.

It can be observed that an integrated analysis of contemporary urban dynamics suggests that emerging economic models, even when supported by discourses of sustainability, collaboration, and innovation, are not disconnected from the structures that have historically shaped the unequal production of cities. Incorporating circular, creative, or sharing economy practices can, in some contexts, enhance resource-use efficiency and foster more diverse cultural and productive arrangements. However, it can also reinforce real estate appreciation mechanisms, widen inequalities, and reconfigure territorial disputes in new forms. This

ambiguity reveals that urban transformations depend less on the isolated adoption of new economic models and more on their articulation with institutional structures, public policies, and development-oriented interests. Understanding this process requires attention to the practices of different agents, regulatory frameworks, knowledge exchange, and the multiple scales of conflict that permeate the production of space. Thus, a critical reading of the interactions between financialization, economic innovation, and sustainability helps identify the limits and possibilities of urban projects aimed at addressing historical inequalities, leading to more just and democratic cities.

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INHABITING THE COMMON:
URBAN POETICS IN LEFEBVRE AND THE THEORY OF THE COMMONS

HABITAR O COMUM:
A POÉTICA URBANA EM LEFEBVRE E NA TEORIA DO COMUM

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Nakahara, C. A. M. M. (2025). Inhabiting the Common: Urban Poetics in Lefebvre and in the Theory of the Commons. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Jane Susanne Godwin Coury. 127-140 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239784

Abstract

This article stems from a research project that aims to identify the convergences between the Right to the City, as formulated by Henri Lefebvre, and the theory of the Commons, developed by authors such as David Harvey, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Christian Laval, and Pierre Dardot. Based on the distinction between habitat – understood as the technical-morphological configuration of urban space, often associated with private property – and inhabiting, conceived as a collective political and poetic practice, the article articulates these theories to critically reflect on their implications for the production of cities. A theoretical-comparative method of a critical-interpretive nature is adopted, aimed at identifying conceptual resonances and dissonances among the authors mobilised. The objective is to reconceptualise inhabiting as a poetic practice of the common, understanding the common – "a third level" that strains the relation between the public and the private—as the foundation of the right to the city and as a principle of a possible-impossible urbanity, expressed through collective and creative practices (praxis and poiesis). In dialogue with the theme of the call, the results indicate that inhabiting the common constitutes a multilateral horizon of emancipation, capable of challenging preexisting institutional structures and fostering insurgent forms of self-management and co-production of urban space.

Keywords: Right to the City, Inhabiting, Urban commons, Praxis, Poiesis.

1 Introduction: revisiting the Right to the City and the theory of the Commons

In recent decades, the field of Architecture and Urbanism has critically revisited the foundations of modern urbanism and its universal planning assumptions, questioning the conception of urban space as a merely technical-functional artifact, dissociated from the social practices that constitute it. From the 1980s onward, and more intensely after the 2008 financial crisis, there has been a revalorisation of collective urban practices and autonomous forms of social organisation, often led by social movements and urban collectives (Luck, 2018), as well as of everyday experiences of spatial appropriation (Crawford et al., 1999).

Within this context, Henri Lefebvre's work once again gains centrality, especially in the Global South, where his propositions find new critical reverberations, by advancing a conceptual shift: from habitat—regulated, quantifiable, and privatised space—to inhabiting, understood as a quotidian, poetic, and political practice of appropriating space. In parallel, debates surrounding the idea of the common—or commons—emerge, countering the logics of privatisation and commodification of various spheres of life. Although grounded in different approaches, authors such as Elinor Ostrom, David Harvey, Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, and Massimo de Angelis have contributed to formulating a theory of the Commons that emphasises self-management and the active participation of citizen-inhabitants in the social production of goods and space.

In the context of exacerbated practices of domination and disputes between models of urbanity—technical, political, and cultural—this article proposes to articulate differences, conflicts, and convergences, especially theoretical ones, with a view to transformation and the production of knowledge. Starting from a dialogue between two perspectives, the Right to the City and the theory of the Commons, we investigate how inhabiting, understood as a critical category, may be reconceptualised as a poetic practice of the commons. Methodologically, this is a theoretical-comparative analysis of a critical-interpretative nature, aimed at identifying conceptual convergences and friction among the authors mobilised, to clarify how the notion of *poetic inhabiting* can operate as a mediation between the Right to the City and the theory of the Commons. The goal is to contribute to contemporary debates on the multilateral production of space and to broaden the horizon of understandings of modes of inhabiting the city as active and insurgent participation in urban life[1].

[1] This article forms part of a research agenda developed since my doctoral dissertation (From Habitat to Poietic Inhabiting: Participation, Appropriation, and Utopia in Henri Lefebvre, Nakahara, 2021), in which an initial approximation to Dardot and Laval's theory of the commons was undertaken through an investigation of the meanings of inhabiting in its relation to poetry in Lefebvre's thought. The present article derives from the subsequent developments of that trajectory, currently expanded in the project Poiesis: Appropriation and the Production of Space through Participation (IAU-USP), which has also benefited from the undergraduate research project The Commons and Inhabiting in the Right to the City: Typologies of Tactical Urbanism (conducted by the undergraduate student Giovanna Fernandes).

Identifying the convergences between the right to the city and the commons allows us to perceive the city as a field of continuous tension, inherent to the sense of citizenship, that is, less as a finished object than as a process or work in progress. More than claiming a good, it is about thinking of inhabiting as the active production of new social relations and of a shared space—urban commons—created through revolutionary praxis and poiesis. Thus, the critique of private property as the organising principle of space may open the way for alternatives grounded in sharing and co-production of space, supported by relations of reciprocity, mutual responsibility, and self-government.

2 The urban utopia: the city as collective work

The neoliberal expansion has laid bare the consolidation of the city-as-product and the city-as-enterprise. As extensively discussed in the literature (Caldeira, 2000; Shimbo & Rufino, 2019; Fix & Paulani, 2019; Medrano et al., 2021), we now witness the institutionalisation of the very opposite of the urban once envisioned by Henri Lefebvre (1996, 2003) as a space of encounter, appropriation, and collective creation. The anti-urban reveals itself in the widespread commodification of space and life, often through practices reproduced by the very disciplinary field of Architecture and Urbanism (A&U): the alienation of inhabiting into habitat—whether in social practices marked by necessity and precarity or in the isolation of gated communities (the “new enclosures”); the monotony and homogeneity that characterise the design of new neighborhoods; spatial segregation; the transfer of decisions concerning the city as a whole to the real estate and financial sectors; and the elimination of conflictive arenas, namely, of the public space par excellence.

In the face of this contemporary scenario of urban crisis, the right to the city and inhabiting emerge as forms of resistance. Indeed, the thought of Henri Lefebvre offers a conceptual force capable of problematising space not merely as product, but as collective work, dialectically related to social processes and struggles. Such space is constructed not only materially, but also through imagination and the reinvention of everyday life.

2.1 The urban inflection and the enclosures of the commons

Henri Lefebvre opens The Right to the City (1996 [1968]) by stating that urban society itself was born with the Industrial Revolution. However, after a historical overview, the author suggests that the concept of the urban was already present in earlier periods, albeit in embryonic form. His analysis begins in Antiquity, when the urban had a fundamentally political character embodied in the spatiality of the agora; it then moves through the medieval city, a period in which the urban became imbued with the enjoyment, creativity, and playfulness of festivals and games, as well as with social and economic exchanges. Between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, the strengthening of the image of the city—understood as a mediating representation between the real and the imaginary—not only established a counterpoint to the countryside but also expressed an impulse to impose an urban rationality (logos) upon it. It is this imagination that, when transformed into utopia, enables the opening of a properly urban field of virtuality, instigating formulations about what the city could become.

Thus, for Lefebvre[2], the historical shift toward the urban occurred through the strengthening of the commercial city in the late Renaissance, around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—therefore, prior to the consolidation of the industrial city itself. On the other hand, the rampant urbanisation of European cities—Lefebvre’s point of implosion-explosion—took shape through the convergence of emerging industry and the city, in parallel and articulated with the “idyllic” methods of primitive accumulation identified by Marx (2017): the dissolution of vassalage, the expropriation and alienation of workers from their means of production and reproduction. These processes—materialised through the Acts for the Enclosures of Commons[3] and the Clearings of Estates, which expelled peasants from rural lands—were decisive for the consolidation of private property, to the detriment of what had, until then, been regarded as a common good. This point of implosion-explosion found its privileged stage in England during the period immediately preceding the Industrial Revolution.

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[2] Especially in the works *The Right to the City* (1996 [1968]) and *The Urban Revolution* (2003 [1970]).

[3] According to Marx, although these acts began sporadically between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they only became systematic after the Glorious Revolution, when the English Parliament enacted the *Enclosure Acts* throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This clarification allows a counterpoint to the mistaken inference that the urban and the commons occupy opposing poles, or that there is a causal relation between enclosure—thus, private property—industrialisation, and urbanisation. Lefebvre dialectises the connections among these processes, so that any supposed determining relationship between one (as inducer) and the other (as induced) loses its initial and apparent contours. If, on the one hand, industrialisation enabled urbanisation—understood as the growth of cities—to become widespread on an unprecedented scale, on the other hand, this same industrialisation usurped the senses and meanings that the urban had formerly carried, to exclusively incorporate principles guided by a productive and operational rationality. What once formed part of the commons—the city, communal lands, customs and knowledges, festivals, imaginaries—became constrained by the advance of the city-as-product, the realm of exchange value, to the detriment of the city-as-*oeuvre*, the place of use value, characteristic of earlier periods.

As can be seen, Lefebvre draws a clear distinction between the concepts of city and urban, which cannot be treated as equivalents. For the philosopher, the city represents the practico-material milieu that materialises as a “mediation among mediations” (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 101). This intermediate field is formed between social institutions (the “far order”) and everyday life (the “near order”), where these institutions are incarnated in practice. The urban, in turn, indicates something beyond (and beneath) material or practical data. As a concrete abstraction, the urban harbours a utopian dimension relating to the becoming—to what may come to be—namely, to the capacity to imagine other realities based on what has already manifested concretely, albeit only in potential.

Through this historical trajectory, Lefebvre identifies a kind of genetics of urban society, now fully manifest, which unfolds into various dialectical pairs: the expression of the city’s domination over the countryside, but also its emancipatory potential; the tendency toward centrality and simultaneity, through gathering, encounter, and proximity, but also through violence and segregation; the attraction of difference and, at the same time, the homogenising and globalising impulse of the urban logic. Inseparable but not coincident, the city represents “a present and immediate reality, a practico-material and architectural fact, and the urban, a social reality made up of relations which are to be conceived of, constructed or reconstructed by thought” (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 103, emphasis added). This is why, despite its close connection to industrialisation, the urban cannot be defined by it, nor reduced to it.

2.2 The right to the city as *poietic* inhabiting

The complexity of the right to the city stems from the fact that it is not just another institutional right, despite what certain legalistic approaches might suggest. To a certain extent, it can be said to encompass other rights, but not as a simple sum or logical-arithmetic combination. Nor is it just a bureaucratic label that legitimizes isolated practices classified according to specific analytical categories. Its nature requires a different type of understanding: one that is broader and more integrated. On the one hand, the right to the city is what confers unity and meaning upon the set of other urban rights—acting as a founding matrix that shapes and gives form to them, even if it does not coincide exactly with any one of them. On the other hand, it functions as a kind of negative, as in analog photography, an inverted mirror or counter-form: the latent face capable of revealing the virtualities of the existing city by contrast. This counter-form especially involves the right to imagine another city based on what has already been realized and to transform it through appropriation. In other words, it is a right whose realization demands the active and autonomous contribution of the city-dwellers themselves, refusing externally imposed prescriptions. In the author's words:

> The right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualisation in socialisation, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the *oeuvre*, to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city. (...) They would change reality if they entered into social practice: right to work, to training and education, to health, housing, leisure, to life. Among these rights in the making features the right to the city (not to the ancient city, but to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of these moments and places, etc.). (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 173-179, author’s italics and parentheses)

In view of the systematisation, bureaucratisation and institutionalisation of rights, the right to the city is concretised in practical terms, through inhabiting, associated with what Lefebvre calls the “ecological level,” linked to “taking part in a social life” and to

the “singularities of urban life”—that is, to the city’s modes of living, its everyday practices, its forms of enjoyment, and its processes of appropriation (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 76-113). Inhabiting cannot be reduced to a functional or technical-administrative form (habitat) and has poetry, or poiesis, as a constitutive element (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 76[4]; Lefebvre, 2003, p. 82). A genuine “creative impulse”, “‘poiesis’ is a mode of making, and if ‘práxis’ is directed towards other humans, ‘poiesis’ is concerned with the material world outside” (Elden, 2016, p. xviii, emphasis added). In relation to crystallised institutional structures, poiesis appears as a residue[5]: that which “escapes it, resists it, and from where an effective (practical) resistance can take off” (Lefebvre, 2016, p. 299).

In this sense, poiesis is intrinsically linked to the production of space and, consequently, to architecture and the city as spheres involved in the production of *oeuvres*, as Lefebvre broadly defines the term, and therefore in the very act of inhabiting. Within the urban realm, poiesis enables us to view the right to the city and inhabiting as interchangeable expressions—one substantive and the other verbal—of the same creative potential of space. Thus, although the right to the city eludes systematic definition, some of its principal anchoring points may nonetheless be outlined. Firstly, the dialectic of urban form, as mentioned above. In Lefebvre, the utopian element—an ingredient of becoming—manifests itself through the urban and is mediated by the city. Similar to a musical note, which is abstract in formulation but exists only practically and materially when played on an instrument or sung, the urban realm defines itself as a concrete abstraction (Lefebvre, 2003). It bears a utopian dimension through the collective capacity to desire and to imagine other possible scenarios (of becoming) grounded in empirical urban experiences, the city itself.

Secondly, the city-as-*oeuvre*. Exercising the right to the city requires conceiving it as a work collectively produced by its citizens, who enjoy, appropriate, and produce its space in shared, creative, and playful ways. According to Lefebvre (1972; 1978), the production of urban space—as city-as-*oeuvre*, and not merely city-as-product—manifests itself through the unique dialectical relationship between poiesis and praxis. This is expressed as the tension between appropriation—creative impulse, spiritual and qualitative production—and domination—operative repetition, material and quantitative production—within everyday life. Indeed, “the concept of work [*œuvre*] contains a significant ensemble”, so that “the fields of meaning we encounter (music, the image, and also inhabiting, etc.) can only be conceived, in their particularities, as *oeuvres*” (Lefebvre, 1972, p. 127, our translation[6]). Irreducible to the work of art, the *œuvre* participates in the totality of urban life[7], placing forms and institutions under tension—without dispensing with them—so long as it is not obliterated by repetitive, technocratic praxis.

Thirdly, collective appropriation as the negation of private property. Understood as the first form of human alienation, according to Marxist tradition, private property harks back to a “narrow-minded” existence, as it reduces human essence to the purely individual sphere. It is related to a unilateral and virtually instrumental appropriation, restricted to the repertoire of utility, necessity and productivity, whose sole objective is possession, having. Marx contrasts this with the concept of omnilaterality or totality,

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4 The English translation in Writings on Cities is somewhat misleading at this point. While the original French edition states, “ainsi parle de l’habiter, en poète, le philosophe Heidegger” (1972, p. 25), it is rendered in English as “thus speaks the poet and philosopher Heidegger of the concept to inhabit” (1996, p. 76). The latter incorrectly attributes the poetic dimension to Heidegger as a person, whereas in the French text it is inhabiting that is qualified as poetic. A more accurate rendering in English would therefore be: “this is how the philosopher Heidegger speaks of inhabiting, as a poet”.

5 Here, we refer to poiesis as formulated by Henri Lefebvre in Métaphilosophie (2016): as a kind of method of residues.

6 From the original in Spanish: “El concepto de obra encierra el de un conjunto significante (...) Los campos de significaciones que hemos encontrado (la música, la imagen, y también el habitar, etcétera) solo pueden concebirse, en sus particularidades, como obras” (Lefebvre, 1972, p. 127).

7 This becomes particularly clear in La production de l’espace (2000 [1974]) and Contra los tecnócratas (1972 [1967]), where Lefebvre argues that the *œuvre* as such gives way to the work of art – to easel painting, to museums – through a process of individualisation. This consolidates a split between collective appropriation and individual ownership. Art becomes institutionalised; at the same time, it loses its participation in city life. Drawing a parallel with what Walter Benjamin would later formulate in The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (A obra de arte na era da sua reprodutibilidade técnica, 1987), in response to the technical transformations of the 19th century, this démarche marks the shift from the *œuvre* endowed with ritual—magical, symbolic, “dedicated to humans and to spirits”—to an art of a political character, that is, from cult value to exhibition value.

referring to the “total man”, which designates enjoyment or appropriation—understood as processes of subjectification and objectification of the world—of a fundamentally collective order, mediated by human and social relations[8]. In effect:

> Each of his human relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, loving—in short, all the organs of his individual being, like those organs which are directly social in their form, are in their objective orientation, or in their orientation to the object, the appropriation of the object, the appropriation of human reality. (Marx, 2009, p. 45, author’s emphasis)

Indeed, the right to the city, whilst not neglecting individual and embodied experience, invokes an essentially shared construction. In the work (*œuvre*) itself, “the creative capacity is always that of a community or collectivity, of a group, of a fraction of an active class, of an ‘agent’ or ‘actant’” (Lefebvre, 2000, p. 137, our translation[9], our emphasis). It is produced by the citizens themselves (by a group or class), detached from strictly private or financial interests, and oriented instead by common aspirations that momentarily transcend usual divisions and codes, becoming capable of relating to a social totality[10]. Closely related to inhabiting, the foundational element of the right to the city, it involves the totality of urban experience; hence its close relation with poiesis (poetic production). As Lefebvre points out:

> Productive (poietic) activity is, at one and the same time, unknown as such and socially recognised. (...) Works are born from the division of labour, but also from the effort to master and transcend it. For example, the artist differs from the craftsman, the manual labourer, and the factory worker, even if they operate within specific professional structures. His work differs from the product (whether craft-based or industrial) precisely in this respect, namely because it is addressed to society as a whole and has meaning for all classes (for the social whole), rather than responding to the needs of a limited category of people. (Lefebvre, 1972, pp. 130-137, our translation[11], our emphasis)

Finally, the primacy of use value. The distinction between the act of possessing (individual) and enjoying (collective) is anchored in the distance between the use value of spaces—through experience, living and individual (corporeal, sensory) and collective appropriation—and the logic of exchange value, centred on commodification, individualism and the accumulation of capital. The former emphasises the primacy of non-work as opposed to productivism; of excess in contrast to accumulation or economy; of giving rather than exchange; of life rather than survival (the bare minimum). It is excess, including a certain waste, that provides the vital energy required to “modify space or engender a space”. In a word, Eros[12], the opposite of the principle of economy and

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8 In Marx, subjective appropriation is always superseded by collective appropriation. Sensuousness relates to the human being’s first act of appropriation of nature – its immediate object. However, this appropriation also takes place among human beings, as the sensuousness of the human as species-being and, for this reason, it is not merely individual but collective, as “his own sensuousness first exists as human sensuousness for himself through the other man” (Marx, 2009, p. 48, author’s emphasis).

9 From the original in French: “La capacité créatrice, c’est toujours celle d’une communaute ou collectivité, d’un groupe, d’une fraction de classe·agissante, d’un « agent » ou « actant »” (Lefebvre, 2000, p. 137).

10 Social, insofar as it is grounded in a certain political and socioeconomic organisation and structure, in which specific codes and a contract prevail, as well as a division of labour; collective, insofar as it may arise from shared or common interests originating within particular groups, provided that they are capable of transcending the limits of their own singularities.

11 From the original in Spanish: “A actividad productora (poiética) es, a la vez, desconocida como tal y reconocida socialmente. (...) Las obras nascen de la división del trabajo pero también del esfuerzo por dominarlas y superarlas. Por ejemplo, el artista difiere del artesano, del trabajador manual y del obrero, aun si opera en marcos profesionales determinados. Su obra difiere del producto (artesanal o industrial) precisamente en eso y es porque se dirige a toda la sociedad y tiene un sentido para todas las clases (para el conjunto social) en lugar de subvenir a las necessidades de una categoría limitada de gente” (Lefebvre, pp. 130–137).

12 From Greek, its various translations generally refer to love or desire.

necessity, pointing to the “pleasure principle”, the “life drive”, “waste, play, art, festivity”, and therefore “transgression” (Lefebvre, 2000, pp. 206–207, our translation[13]).

This highlights the alignment between the meanings of work/*oeuvre* (as poetic creation), participation (in the urban ensemble) and the commons, understood in its twofold sense: as that which is shared collectively (social, collective, public), but also as that which is ordinary, residual, everyday. In more recent approaches, it is precisely the commons that take centre stage. Understood as a social and collective practice oriented towards sharing, cooperation and self-management, the commons appear to be rooted in elements closely related to those discussed so far. By emphasising collective appropriation of space, urban poiesis and the refusal of the city as commodity, Lefebvre anticipates—albeit through distinct categories—central dimensions of what authors such as David Harvey, Dardot and Laval, and Hardt and Negri would later formulate as the politics of the commons. This will be explored in greater depth in the following section.

3 Towards a theory of the commons

As previously mentioned, in recent decades both the right to the city and the notion of the commons have gained renewed momentum in debates within Architecture and Urbanism, particularly those committed to rethinking design practice through an expanded understanding of space, participation and community engagement. This context also marks the re-emergence of a theoretical dispute concerning the meaning and viability of the commons. The classical and deterministic view expressed in Garrett Hardin’s The Tragedy of the Commons (1968), according to which common resources are doomed to depletion unless protected by privatisation mechanisms or by state control (a Leviathan), has come under direct contestation. In Governing the Commons, Elinor Ostrom (1990) challenges this fatalism by presenting numerous cases of successful community self-management, demonstrating that collective governance arrangements are not only possible, but can also be sustainable and effective.

In this new scenario, the commons return as a critical category and an ethical–political horizon. Conceptually, the commons cannot be defined through either the private or the public dimension; that is, they rest neither on the market nor on the state (Harvey, 2014; Hardt & Negri, 2009; Dardot & Laval, 2019). They constitute a kind of third level which, in a certain sense, places the other two under tension. For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the commons encompass natural wealth and resources, as well as the products of social production, that is, both materially shared goods historically inherited (a priori) and those produced within, or participating in, contemporary social production (a posteriori), “that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. viii).

Authors such as David Harvey (2014) and Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2019) further develop this perspective by emphasising that the commons do not denote what is already shared in advance, but rather what becomes common through an instituting act, through tension and struggle. More than a good, in which the reified aspect is emphasised, that is, relating to things (whether measurable or not), it is about specific social relations, that is, a praxis capable of instituting a process of commoning (Bollier, 2021). Thus, the commons appear as the result of an active, social and political construction, marked by the struggle against enclosures—physical, legal or symbolic—and by the production of new forms of co-obligation[14].

3.1 The common as practical-poietic invention

[13] From the original in French: “Cet excédent, ce superflu, définit ce qui distingue la vie de la survie (minimum vital).(...) Elle modifie l'espace ou engendre un espace. (...) L'hypothese adverse, celle de la necessité – qui fait vertu – du gaspillage, du jeu, de la lutte, de l'art, de la fête, de l’Éros (...) donc de la transgression (...) principe de plaisir (...) pulsion de vie” (Lefebvre, 2000, pp. 206-207).

[14] This dimension had already been anticipated, to some extent, by Massimo De Angelis (2007), who proposes a kind of symmetry between the logic of enclosures, which sustains the reproduction of capital, and the practices of subjects who construct the commons as an expression of resistance. As he states: “The clash in perspective between a social force that produces enclosures and one that produces commons means this: capital generates itself through enclosures, while subjects in struggle generate themselves through commons. Hence, ‘revolution’ is not struggling for commons, but through commons, not for dignity, but through dignity. ‘Another world is possible’, to use an under-problematised current slogan, to the extent that we live social relations of different types. Life despite capitalism, as a constituent process, not after capitalism, as a constituted future stale of things” (De Angelis, 2007, p. 239, author’s emphasis).

In Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century (2019), Christian Laval and Pierre Dardot develop a political theory of the common[15] grounded in the notion of instituent praxis. This form of collective action is distinguished, on the one hand, from formal rights and the already-established institutional apparatus and, on the other, from fortuitous practices devoid of normativity. To construct this distinction, the authors clarify several fundamental conceptual oppositions—between instituent, institution and instituted, between constituent, constitution and constituted, and between praxis and poiesis—which delineate the theoretical contours of their proposal.

Within this conceptual framework, the notion of institution acquires a double connotation, distinct from the idea of constitution—understood as a sovereign power that does not emerge from the commons but results from a process "based on the transfer of rights and powers from individuals to a sovereign authority" (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 286). Institution is, simultaneously, an action oriented towards an end—of a teleological nature—and an objectified structure sustained by a considerable force of inertia: the ensemble of the consolidated state apparatus, with its laws, norms and customs. Although there is a permanent risk of autonomisation in relation to the social *praxis* that originated it, its objective dimension does not eliminate the continuous need for instituent action. It is precisely this practice, reiterated in everyday life, that ensures the reproduction and effectiveness of what has been instituted, thereby reaffirming the dynamic and processual nature of institutions.

Regarding the commons, as pioneered by Elinor Ostrom (2015 [1990]), the contestation and transformation of existing institutions require an *instituent* movement capable of creating its own norms that can be sustained in the long term. This implies establishing practices that become consolidated through the formation of new habits and alternative forms of social organisation. As the activist David Bollier warns, since it cannot be reduced to a natural or pre-existing good, the commons involve "a *community* that manages a *resource* by devising its own *rules*, *traditions*, *and values*. All three are needed. In short, the commons must be understood as a living social system of creative agents" (Bollier, 2021, p. 351, author's emphasis).

For this reason, Dardot and Laval argue that the common can only emerge through a continuous and collective action of social creation. It therefore requires an *instituent praxis*. The authors draw on Cornelius Castoriadis's proposal to understand the imaginary and the symbolic, associated with *poiesis*, as central elements in the production of new significations and in the institution of unprecedented forms of coexistence, indispensable to this *praxis*. Thus, the instituent (or instituting) dimension takes precedence over the institution, establishing a genuine power of social-historical creation. As they state: "what characterises the human 'socio-historical' is precisely the imaginary's instituent activity: 'society is the work of the instituting imaginary', that is, the incomparably radical capacity "to make arise as an image something which does not exist and has never existed" (Dardot & Laval, 2019, pp. 289, authors' emphasis).

If, as the authors claim, "the radical project of emancipation necessitates a society that is *consciously* self-instituting" (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 289, authors' emphasis), it becomes imperative to understand the relationship between *praxis* and *poiesis*[16]. While *poiesis* aims at an external end, whether a transformation of the world or of the self, *praxis* is defined as autonomous action oriented by its own purpose, whereby the end is realised through the action itself. However, Castoriadis's conception of *poiesis*, unlike the Aristotelian tradition, tends to slide towards the notion of "creation *ex nihilo*" (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 292), becoming detached from historical embeddedness. This makes it more difficult to understand institutions as material, dialectical processes in which every action inevitably acts upon an already established basis.

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[15] Dardot and Laval advocate the use of the term "common" in the singular, instead of the expressions "common good" or "common goods". The aim is to avoid the reification of the common as an object liable to possession or materialisation. In fact, as the authors themselves warn, the definition of the common is traversed by difficulties arising from processes of translation. In English, for example, the term commons carries various meanings: while in the historical context of the Act for Enclosure of Commons in 17th-century England the most frequent translation into Portuguese is "cercamento das terras comuns" (enclosure of common lands), in Elinor Ostrom's emblematic work the same term refers especially to resources—natural or otherwise—managed collectively, as well as to the forms of governance and control of these goods.

[16] As is well known, historically speaking, the notion of *poiesis* has its roots in Aristotle (384–322 BCE), as we see in his seminal work—widely known yet little understood, and regarded as unfinished—*Poetics* (*Poética*, 2017). For the philosopher, "the poet does not say what actually happened, but what is possible and could have happened according to verisimilitude" (*Poética*, 1451a-30). Or, in the *The Symposium* (*O banquete*, 2016): "You know that 'poetry' is something manifold, for every cause that brings anything from non-being into being is 'poetry', so that the fabrications of all the arts are 'poetries', and all their craftsmen poets" (*Symposium*, 205b–205c). In the Aristotelian sense (2016), the poetic gesture consummates a doing or producing that revisits and revives the myth: it thus introduces transition, change.

It is at this point that Dardot and Laval return to the Marxian dialectic. For Marx, praxis is neither a technical making nor an absolutely free creation, but an activity that is simultaneously conditioned by the past and capable of creating something new from it: “circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances” (Marx & Engels, 2022, p. 27). Thus, practical-poietic activity—overcoming the division between the two terms—reveals itself as “the self-production of its own subject by the self-transformation in the actor in the very course of this activity” (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 299). It is in this creative tension between conditioning and invention that the instituent praxis of the commons finds its true field of historical realisation.

3.2 The common as spatial co-production

In their archaeological analysis of the common, Dardot and Laval challenge its idealised and trivialised understanding, which is often reduced to a mere “social bond” or “lowest common denominator” with which people of “good will” might identify to rebuild a more convivial world (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 9, author’s emphasis). The Latin etymology com-munus refers to sharing (a making-together), participation, but also reciprocity, the latter being understood as responsibility towards the social and urban totality. The term then incorporates “the Janus-face of the debt and the gift, of obligation and recognition” and “is thus bound up with the fundamental social fact known as symbolic exchange”, which designates “the political principle of co-obligation for all of those engaged in the same activity” (Dardot & Laval, 2019, pp. 10, author’s emphasis).

This approach echoes Aristotle’s idea of koinôn, in which the common is achieved through active participation in the polis. Unlike the hierarchical fragmentation of Plato’s Republic, Aristotle links the existence of the common to co-participation in public affairs, articulating duty and engagement in a collective activity. For this reason, Dardot and Laval reject interpretations that naturalise, reify or essentialise the common, whether as a supreme, universal object; common sense; or an abstract juridical instance (res communis). They insist that the common cannot be reduced to a shared essence or collective identity. In their words, “the common must rather be thought of in terms of co-activity, and not co-belonging, co-ownership, or co-possession” (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 27).

This perspective strengthens the link between the common, praxis and poiesis. Every political common, they argue, requires continuous activity centred on “sharing in common”[17], based on “equality of taking part”, rather than in pre-established identities. In this sense, “belonging is the consequence, not the cause, of this participation” (Dardot & Laval, 2019, pp. 159–161). It is important to note that this participation is not restricted to the deliberative political act, which presupposes the prior existence of an established legislative structure beforehand[18]. According to the authors, this would create a split between praxis (acting) and poiesis (making or producing), which does not correspond to the Greek tradition. In the Aristotelian understanding, the polis, legislation and deliberation form an inseparable whole in which the law is not imposed from the outside but “is both the effect and the cause of this community” (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 160). This highlights the interdependence between participation, autonomy—understood as self-government and self-normativity—and the common.

Although the authors underline the centrality of praxis, it is important to highlight a potential area of disagreement in their theory. By asserting that the common is inappropriable, Dardot and Laval ultimately prioritise political activity, which tends to obscure the poietic dimension of social creation. According to the authors, “putting into common” does not refer to specific goods, but to “words and thoughts”; thus, the common cannot be transformed into property, whether common or private. However, this apparent emphasis on the immateriality of the commons, in which language and the cultural dimension stand out, ultimately marginalises the role of appropriation. Rather than being understood as a constitutive element of the common, appropriation is reduced, in their framework, to the mere conversion of something into property, whatever its nature. Paradoxically, this position distances itself from the Marxian matrix itself, according to which appropriation is the counterpoint to alienation.

Moreover, by linking their approach to the thinking of Henri Lefebvre, especially with his theory of the production of space, it becomes possible to reformulate the question. If the common is intrinsically tied to the polis, it necessarily implies a form of

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[17] When citing Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*, the expression “putting or sharing in common” (*koinônein*) referred to the “activity of putting into common words and thoughts” or “liv[ing] together and shar[ing] conversation and thought” (*koinônein logon kai dianoias*)” (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 159).

[18] According to the authors, this would be one of the problems in the Arendtian interpretation, in which there appears to be a split between the deliberative sphere (*praxis*) and the legislative sphere (*poiesis*).

spatialisation: a putting-in-common that is materially enacted, analogous to a social and political contract that defines modes of sharing embodied in space. Being at once form—such as language, rules, customs or knowledges—and content—constituted by concrete social relations—the common becomes susceptible to collective appropriation, for it involves practices that manifest themselves spatially. Otherwise, one incurs an internal contradiction in the practical-poietic activity itself, which presupposes, by definition, the modification of something objectively given—be it the world or subjectivity. In other words: it implies appropriation.

In this sense, if maintained in its normative abstraction, the conception of the commons in Dardot and Laval risks becoming detached from material reality and hovering in an almost transcendent sphere[19]. While recognising the importance the authors attribute to instituent activity, it is essential to emphasise that, insofar as it is traversed by praxis and poiesis, such activity presupposes both action and appropriation. We therefore propose to understand the common, as a practical-poietic activity, as a co-production that takes place spatially, granting urban space decisive centrality within the discussion.

3.3 The common as a principle of the urban

The writings of authors such as Hardt and Negri offer a valuable understanding of the urban as the place par excellence for the production of the common. Obviously, this does not mean obliterating the diversity of “common goods” that escape the limits of the urban fabric, the so-called natural commons. In Lefebvre's approach, it is a matter of understanding the primacy of the urban as a concept—a concrete abstraction, as discussed earlier—which today extends beyond the morphological boundaries of the city[20] and is configured as a space for encounter, exchange, meeting—of centrality and simultaneity, as well as the presence of a certain Logos (Lefebvre, 1996; 2003).

Accordingly, the common should neither be idealised nor nostalgically projected onto a pre-industrial or pre-urban pastoral community, nor onto the image of the Greek polis, where the status of citizen was restricted to those of the same genos (family). Unlike natural commons, the city is traversed by an “artificial common”, which is expressed through “languages, images, knowledges, affects, codes, habits, and practices” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 250). For these authors, the metropolis functions not only as “one vast reservoir of common wealth”, encompassing both material and immaterial factors, positive and negative alike, but especially as a “factory for the production of the common” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, pp. 153-250). For, in playing the role of the “inorganic body of the multitude”[21],

> The metropolis is the site of biopolitical production because it is the space of the common, of people living together, sharing resources, communicating, exchanging goods and ideas. Contemporary Italian, in fact, preserves the medieval Latin usage whereby the common—*il comune* in Italian—is the word for city. (Hardt & Negri, 2009, pp. 249-250)

Hardt and Negri propose a reinterpretation of biopolitics in light of the Foucauldian tradition, reframing it as “the creation of new subjectivities that are presented at once as resistance and de-subjectification”, so that “in contrast to biopower, has the character of an event first of all in the sense that the ‘intransigence of freedom’ disrupts the normative system” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, pp. 58-59, author’s emphasis). For the authors, biopower and biopolitics constitute opposing yet interdependent faces: domination and resistance, reproduction and event, administration and insurrection. Biopolitics thus appears as a difference or residue of biopower’s own operation, and it is in this sense that the metropolis, as the body of the multitude, is characterised by unpredictability and randomness. One may identify here a parallel between this dual process and Lefebvre’s dialectic of urban form, in which the centralising, totalising, and mondialising impulse of the urban, which tends to attract and subsume everything into its own logic, simultaneously carries within itself an opening to difference and alterity. As the philosopher notes:

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19 This is what allows the authors to claim, without further explanation, that, unlike Aristotle, they “shall not restrict the political common to the sphere of the ‘city’” (2019, p. 161).

20 For a more detailed discussion, see Neil Brenner’s analysis in Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization (2013).

21 Here the authors refer to the famous passage in Marx’s Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, where he states that nature is the human being’s inorganic body.

> As a place of encounters, focus of communication and information, the urban becomes what it always was: place of desire, permanent disequilibrium, seat of the dissolution of normalities and constraints, the moment of play and of the unpredictable. This moment includes the implosion-explosion of latent violence under the terrible constraints of a rationality which identifies itself with the absurd. From this situation a critical contradiction is born: a tendency towards destruction of the city, as well as a tendency towards the intensification of the urban and the urban problematic. (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 129, our emphasis)

Dialectically sublated by the urban dimension itself, the common reappears as a consequence of the sharing produced through the coproduction of this artificial common by means of the gathering of differences. For “The great wealth of the metropolis is revealed when the felicitous encounter results in a new production of the common, when, for instance, people communicate their different knowledges, different capacities to form cooperatively something new” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 254). Yet this is not all. Returning to the words of Dardot and Laval, the common emerges as a true principle—from the Greek *arché*, understood as “the source from which all else derives” (2019, p. 404)—which underpins and gives meaning to what is to come. The common can therefore be considered the very political principle of the urban.

4 Final Considerations: Inhabiting the common, or in defence of excess and residue

The approach we have developed here highlights aspects of the commons that enable us to reconsider their very meaning. At the same time, it engages in dialogue with Lefebvre's formulation of the right to the city and the urban. Rather than viewing the commons as a reified essence, we consider it in its instituent dimension—as a normative and collective process that creates new forms of sociability. In Dardot and Laval, it appears as a practical-poietic invention that rearticulates, in a new key, Lefebvre’s dialectic of the *œuvre*: on the one hand, an instituting and creative process engendered by collective actions; on the other, an institution that tends towards stabilisation and inertia. Even though they emphasise imagination, their reading of poiesis remains partly dematerialised, relegating appropriation to a secondary role.

It is precisely at this point that the Lefebvrian perspective comes into its own, reinstating the tension between form and content, subjectivity and objectivity—the latter understood as the very spatial dimension of the common. Hardt and Negri build on this by emphasising the common as an immanent production of the metropolis, and its privileged space of expression. When viewed as a collective and poetic work (*œuvre*), the common reveals itself to be the potential principle of urban life, the “second nature” in Lefebvre’s lexicon. This is manifested in the dialectic between biopolitics and biopower, control and deviation, and appropriation and domination, all of which structure urban life.

This movement resonates with the ideas of David Harvey, who shifts the debate on the commons to the realm of insurgent practices and concrete urban struggles, in which the right to the city is realised as a collective claim and a material transformation of space. In Rebel Cities (2012), Harvey emphasises the political dimension of space production by showing that the right to the city is not just any right, but the “right to change and reinvent the city more after our hearts’ desire” reiterating that it is “collective rather than an individual right, since reinventing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanisation” (Harvey, 2012, p. 4). Building on Lefebvre's work, Harvey stresses that it is the centrality of urban life that gives rise to heterotopic spaces[22]—spaces where different rhythms and rationalities coexist. These heterotopias, marked by tension, arise from the homogenising drive of urban logic and persist through difference, alterity, and conflict.

Similarly, we can talk about the commons, as previously discussed, to understand that “urbanisation is about the perpetual production of an urban commons[23] (or its shadow-form of public spaces and public goods) and its perpetual appropriation and

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[22] As Harvey warns, one should not confuse Lefebvre’s heterotopias—which constitute liminal zones of tension and differentiation—with those that appear in Michel Foucault.

[23] Although the Portuguese translation adopts the expression “bem comum urbano” (urban common good), the original David Harvey’s text in English uses simply *urban commons*. When the author refers explicitly to something material, he employs terms such as *common good* or *commonwealth*. Similar to Dardot and Laval, Harvey also stresses that the common does not designate a specific good or process, but rather the act of commoning – that is, a social practice. This does not preclude, however, the commons from being appropriated, enclosed, or even privatised, which reinforces our argument regarding their practico-material dimension.

destruction by private interests" (Harvey, 2012, p. 80). The geographer emphasises that public spaces and public goods, such as housing, sanitation, education and urban infrastructures, do not necessarily constitute the commons when under state management. This underscores their dimension of struggle and contestation: "while these public spaces and public goods contribute mightily to the qualities of the commons, it takes political action on the part of citizens and the people to appropriate them or to make them so" (Harvey, 2012, p. 73).

This reflection raises a fundamental question that connects several points discussed throughout the text: just as with the right to the city, the commons essentially depend on use value. While public and private goods refer to productive expenditure guided by a quantitative logic, whether by the state or the market, the commons manifest where there is unproductive expenditure grounded in a qualitative dimension, i.e., use value. In the process of commoning, it is collective practice, insofar as it is not subordinated to the market, that confers this value upon the common, through imaginaries and symbolisms that arise from excess and gift-giving. As Hardt and Negri (2009, p. 317) observe, "in the biopolitical context, value overflows any threshold of political and economic control". For this reason, the logic of exchange value, economy and measure that governs the market should not prevail within the realm of the commons. On the contrary, the commons must be founded on:

> A new theory of value that is grounded in exceeding, crossing the threshold. (...) Value is created when resistance becomes overflowing, creative, and boundless, and thus when human activity exceeds and determines a rupture in the balance of power. (Hardt & Negri, 2009, pp. 318-319, our emphasis)

If the well-known capitalist formula uses products (commodities) as instruments for the valorisation of value (exchange value), the common, in contrast, is grounded in (urban) centrality as the site for the creation of use value. Moreover, as Dardot and Laval (2019) argue, the common encompasses a right of use that is neither individual nor private, but collective and self-instituting. Such a right is inseparable from the coproduction of its own normativity—from the creation, by those who participate in it, of the rules of common use. In other words, the common entails a form of self-government, an expression of a multilateral production of space in which differences are negotiated and in which inhabiting is enacted as an active and shared practice of urban life. This is, ultimately, the true meaning of citizenship, as outlined by Henri Lefebvre in *Du contrat de citoyenneté*:

> The important thing would be that around this idea—citizenship, stipulated, contractual—there might occur a renewal of political life: a movement with historical roots—revolution, Marxism, production and productive labour—but which goes beyond ideologies, so that new forces come into play, when they come together, when they exert pressure on the established order. (...) In fact, this requires a paradox: creative discovery. Therefore, neither absolute negativity with its corollaries, namely pessimism, nihilism, despair. Nor positivism, the realism that blocks the horizon. Neither stagnation nor catastrophe. (Lefebvre, 1990, p. 37, our translation[24], emphasis added)

In practical terms, given the voracious commodification of space, where in the contemporary city can the commons be found? In the words of Nancy Fraser, one can argue that, despite the apparent transformation of all spheres of life into commodities, elements that escape market logic nonetheless coexist—fruits of the "semi-proletarianisation" that sustains capitalism—even if they remain "functionally imbricated in capitalism's DNA" (Fraser, 2015, p. 711). This residual character—not in the sense of being accidental or contingent to capitalism, as the author warns, but because it forms the indispensable backdrop for capitalism to sustain itself—is directly connected to the sphere of reproduction, to the detriment of production. This is the domain of everyday life, a central element in Lefebvre's critique.

Therefore, we cannot regard these residues as simple components of a larger system, inescapably subsumed under generalised commodification. On the contrary, it is proposed that this residue carries its own normativity, irreducible to economics, that is, capable of imposing differences on the capitalist system. Recognising the common as residue implies an internal critique of

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[24] From the original in French: "L'important, ce serait qu'autour de cette idée – la citoyenneté, stipulée, contractuelle – s'opère un renouvellement de la vie politique: un mouvement ayant des racines historiques – la révolution, le marxisme, la production et le travail productif – mais qui dépasse les idéologies, de sorte que des forces nouvelles entreraient en action, en se réunissant, en exerçant une pression sur l'institué. (...) Ce qui exige en effet un paradoxe: la découverte créatrice. Donc ni le négatif absolu avec ses corollaires, à savoir le pessimisme, le nihilisme, le désespoir. Ni le positivisme, le réalisme qui bouche l'horizon. Ni stagnation ni catastrophe" (Lefebvre, 1990, p. 37).

capitalism, as Fraser suggests, without romanticising past relations or idealising a distant future. Likewise, as Hardt and Negri (2009, p. 52) reflect via Machiavelli, poverty would be at once excluded and included, not merely a residue of the overwhelming forces of capitalist appropriation, but “a force of resistance that recognises itself as exploited within a regime that still bears the marks of the common”[25].

In the urban context, this perspective invites us to recognise the commons in the breaches and residues of everyday life—spaces of reproduction and ordinary living that escape, albeit partially, market logic. In these interstices, uses and practices emerge that are independent of private property and built on excess and overflow, forming what Bollier (2003, p. 13) calls a “gift economy”, in which sharing and trust emerge as political values. Lefebvre, similar to Hardt and Negri, associates such practices with Éros—an ontological event that disrupts the existing order and inaugurates new forms of coexistence based on otherness. It is in this terrain that collective and cooperative work is inscribed, the foundation of creativity and the co-production of space, sustained by “relationships of camaraderie, new gestures, new modes of coordination and cooperation, and, above all, tacit rules of mutual assistance and collusion” (Dardot & Laval, 2019, p. 333). Such coproduced urban works (*œuvres*)—in the Lefebvrian sense—condense these experiences, harbouring new meanings for social totality and configuring a poetics of the common that, based on the residual and the everyday, heralds possibilities for emancipation and self-government.

David Bollier (2003) illustrates the concept of the common through the experience of the Green Guerrillas group in New York, led by Liz Christy. This group transformed derelict urban areas, abandoned by both the market and the state, into over 800 gardens. Much like the fable of the wasp and the orchid's becoming-love[26], *Éros*—use value, not exchange value—overflows desire, causing the remainder to throb with excess. This concrete example can serve as a metaphor for the emergence of new spatialities that flourish in the urban context through inhabiting as poetic practice of the common, sustained by non-economic practices and by the multilateral and imaginative coproduction of urban space, capable of reconfiguring established institutional structures.

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25 It approaches what De Angelis (2007) identifies as a kind of *outside*—an exterior that occurs despite the market, through other types of social relations and rhythms.

26 As Hardt and Negri (2009) explain, the fable is retold by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze to compare two distinct types of relation: on the one hand, that of wasps and orchids, based on desire and fun, without reproductive intent; and, on the other, that of bees and flowers, founded on productivity and labour.

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URBAN PARKS PRIVATIZATION AND THE NEOLIBERAL PRODUCTION OF SPACE

PRIVATIZAÇÃO DOS PARQUES URBANOS E A PRODUÇÃO NEOLIBERAL DO ESPAÇO

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Soares, I. M. & Oliveira, C. M. (2025). Urban Parks Privatization and the Neoliberal Production of Space. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 141-154 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239539

Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate how urban park privatization discloses the neoliberal logic in the production of public space, revealing conflicts and contradictions between technical rationality, private interests, and social practices. The assessed phenomenon is situated within the debate on the commodification of the city, and it is introduced on two levels: the first one encompasses the general overview of concessions in Brazil, the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and the city of Porto Alegre; the second level deepens the analysis on Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront Concession. Private management of these spaces reduces their use value and imposes commercial practices on everyday urban life, justified by claims of financial and administrative efficiency. In methodological terms, the research adopts a critical-dialectical approach based on Lefebvre's Three-Dimensional Production of Space. The research frames the privatization of urban parks as a field of dialogue, confrontation, and transformative praxis, identifying processes of elitization, commercialization, and segregation of public spaces, while also highlighting resistance movements that claim the right to the city and more democratic models of spatial production. Park concessions reflect neoliberal hegemony and indicate the urgent need for alternatives that value the collective use of public spaces and social participation.

Keywords: Urban parks, Production of space, Neoliberalism, Privatization.

1 Introduction

Urban parks privatization has become an emblematic manifestation of neoliberal logic in the production of public spaces. Federal, state, and municipal governments have adopted concession models that transfer the management and maintenance of natural parks, urban parks, and urban squares to the private sector under the justification of efficiency and financial relief for the public sector. This process has a significant impact on democratic access to these spaces and their social function, besides subjecting them to market logic and limiting their use value. The debate on urban parks privatization must be understood from a broader perspective: neoliberalism as a hegemonic rationality based on local specificities. According to Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2016), neoliberalism is not limited to an economic doctrine, but it emerges as a system of values that structures the State, the market, and individual behaviors. According to David Harvey (2008), neoliberalism is a political project aimed at restoring class power through capitalist restructuring. The neoliberal state practice deepens inequalities and favors economic power concentrations since it is supported by individual freedom values and free markets. Thus, the State is not absent, but it acts in favor of the capital by creating legal and institutional conditions for accumulation. Neil Brenner (2018) adds to this reading by proposing the concept of neoliberal urbanism, according to which urban policies subordinate public spaces to market logic and exclude uses that are not linked to the market.

Neoliberal rationality influences urban planning through managerialism and urban entrepreneurship practices (Harvey, 2006). Strategies to attract investment, boost consumption, and create informational spaces turn cities into commodities (Harvey, 2006). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are the very core of this process since they socialize risks and privatize profits. Park concession contracts are an example of this logic since they turn public spaces into commercial assets. It is necessary to clarify the duality of the privatization concept in the public spaces context. Privatization is approached in the legal-administrative sphere as ‘de-statization’, an instrument intended to increase efficiency, reduce state intervention, and achieve individual freedom (Friedman, 2014 [1962]; Hayek, 2011 [1976]; Stiglitz, 2002). On the other hand, Harvey (2008, 2014) points out that privatization is a tool of accumulation by dispossession, according to which the State organizes the expropriation of common goods in favor of a minority by imposing consumer practices on spaces originally intended for collective use. An approach to the theme of parks can be made by identifying that concessions impose market logic and commercial exploitation on urban spaces that neither by nature nor as a primary objective are intended for profit. The State not only allows the turning of common goods into lucrative assets within this process, but it also produces and organizes expropriation. Therefore, herein “privatization of public spaces” refers to expropriation carried out by the State itself, the dispossession of the common and collective functions of places for the benefit of a hegemonic minority through the imposition of market practices on leisure environments, to the common and collective role of places for the benefit of a hegemonic minority by imposing mercantile practices on leisure environments.

Porto Alegre, the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, replicates this model of public-space privatization following the enactment of Complementary Law No. 12.559/2019, which authorizes the concession of urban parks and squares to private actors. This legal instrument is not isolated; it forms part of a national context that promotes public–private partnerships (PPPs), supported by institutions such as the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity (ICMBio), and the Semeia Institute. The Harmonia Park and Section 1 of the Guaíba River waterfront concession in Porto Alegre exemplify how park-privatization dynamics materialize locally, transforming public leisure areas into spaces subject to new forms of regulation and control. Social movements have emerged as a counterpoint to market-driven modes of spatial production, resisting neoliberal logic and asserting the right to the city and more democratic management of public spaces. Lefebvre (2008 [1968]) formulated the concept of the right to the city as a critique of capitalist and productivist society, advocating the collective appropriation of urban life by the working class. This right implies political participation and full access to the city and everyday life and is grounded in the use-value of urban spaces. Harvey (2014) emphasizes the concept's anti-capitalist orientation, framing it as a demand for control over urbanization processes in the face of capitalist accumulation that renders the city both a stage and a product of economic surplus. In light of the right to the city, groups of Porto Alegre residents and park users have engaged in organized resistance to park-privatization processes, for example, *Coletivo Preserva Redenção*, *Salve o Harmonia movement*, and *Preserva Lami*.

Accordingly, the current article[1] is an attempt to answer the following question: how does the privatization of urban parks reflect and reinforce neoliberal logics in the production of public space? Therefore, the aim of it lies in unveiling neoliberal relations in the production of public space through urban parks privatization. The urban park concessions phenomenon in Porto Alegre City is the empirical object of this study. This phenomenon is presented on two levels: (i) the context and the general overview in which it is embedded; (ii) focus on the only currently ongoing urban park concession contract in the municipality. This concession contract regards the operation, management, maintenance, implementation, renovation, and improvement of Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront. The time frame of this empirical object goes from May 2022 to August 2024. The study's relevance lies in its contribution to the debate on the impact of neoliberal policies on the production of urban spaces, which discloses some challenges and confrontations. At the same time, it points towards potential dialogues aimed at the construction of alternative urban realities. Discussing urban parks privatization implies a critical reflection on both different political conceptions and divergent interests driving the production of urban life, given the increasing commodification of everyday life.

The structure of the article consists of an introduction, four sections, and final considerations. Section two addresses the adopted research methodology; section three identifies the park privatization general overview at the national, state, and local levels; section four analyzes this phenomenon based on Harmonia Park and the Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront concession contract; and section five unveils the neoliberal relations in the urban park privatization context.

2 Methodology

The research is exploratory and employs a critical-dialectical approach. The study adopts Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) theory of the Production of Space as its theoretical-methodological framework, given the need for understanding social, spatial, and economic processes as the very outcome of contradictory and complex relations in the contemporary capitalist context. The approach of a dialectical analysis on how social space is produced through three interdependent and interacting dimensions, a trialectic: conceived space (the technical-legal framework, the space of architects and planners, technical and institutional representations), perceived space (everyday spatial practice), and lived space (the space of transformation or domination, alternative practices, conflicts, and social imagination) (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]; Oliveira, 2018, our emphasis and parentheses). Applying this analytical framework to the issue of park concessions, the research analyzes relations among users' everyday life (perceived space); the normative, technical, and institutional framework of concessions (conceived space) and the actions of social movements that propose non-hegemonic forms of public spaces appropriation and use (lived space). According to Lefebvre (1991 [1974]), these dimensions are not hierarchical, but they mutually produce each other

1 This article is an adapted summary of the Master's Degree thesis by Isabelle Carolina Mangoni Soares, which was advised by Professor Dr. Clarice Misoczky de Oliveira. The thesis was defended in October 2024, at the Postgraduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning, at Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul.

and form a dialectical totality. Therefore, the three-dimensional production of space is applied to the empirical object to disclose neoliberalism's contradictions in the production of space. It is done by exposing the relation among the conceived-perceived-lived dimensions in Porto Alegre City's urban parks context. Data collection, analysis, and systematization techniques were defined to identify each of the space production dimensions and to dialectically set associations among them. The methodological structure is presented in Figure 1.

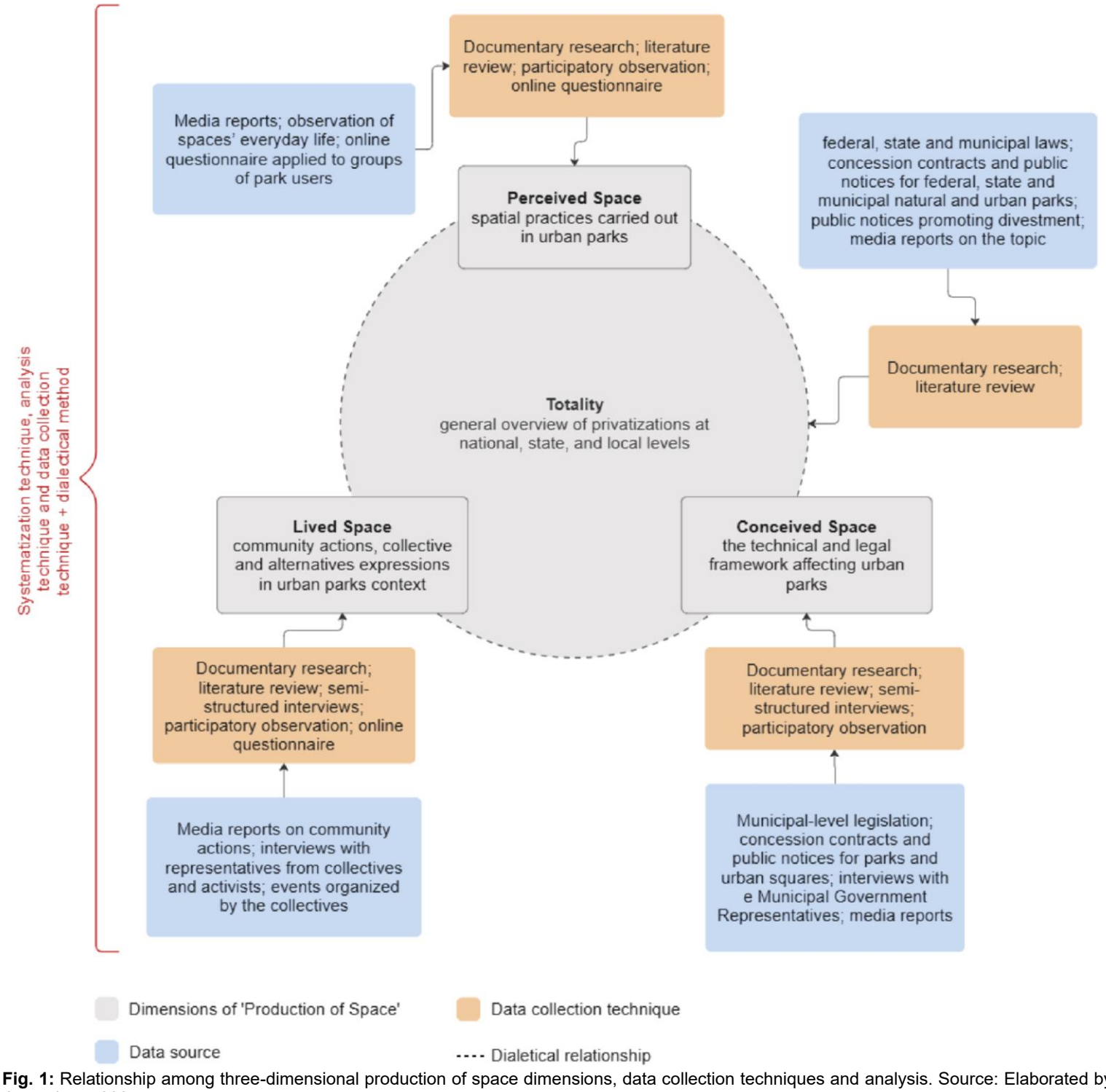

Fig. 1: Relationship among three-dimensional production of space dimensions, data collection techniques and analysis. Source: Elaborated by the authors, 2025.

3 Overview of park privatizations

At the national level, Natural Parks and Conservation Units (CUs) have been prioritized in PPPs. This scenario is substantiated by the argument that they can boost tourism and generate revenue for the GDP. BNDES identified untapped

potential in these fields, and the fiscal crisis faced by many municipalities legitimizes their management and maintenance transfer to the private sector (BNDES, 2023a; ICMBio, 2018). This model has been extended to urban parks since the first concession, back in 1999, at Iguaçu National Park, Paraná State. There were 46 active contracts in December 2023 and they represented approximately 25% of parks considered eligible for concession, mainly those in the Southern and Southeastern regions (Instituto Semeia, 2023a). It is noteworthy that the Brazilian legislation provides four main public-private collaboration arrangements for park management: concessions based on public investment, although limited; self-sustaining contracts without budget resources; partnerships with third-sector organizations based on limited investments; and full private adoption in exchange for advertisement (Instituto Semeia, 2023b). Federal Law No. 11.079/2004, which regulates PPPs, further expanded incentives for these models.

Some public actors stand out in this process. BNDES is the main Federal Government instrument to achieve long-term investments in the economy. This bank has historically supported and financed the privatization of both parks and conservation units. It holds programs, such as BNDES Parks and Forests, with a budget of R$ 500 million to finance investments in park management, deforestation reduction, environmental preservation and tourism promotion (BNDES, 2023b). ICMBio, which is an autonomous agency linked to the Ministry of the Environment, accounts for proposing, implementing, managing and protecting federal CUs. Federal Law No. 11.516/2007 provides for the possibility of granting concessions for protected areas under its responsibility for tourism and environmental education purposes. In 2024, the Federal Government revoked decrees that had excluded nineteen national parks from the National Privatization Program (PND), although eleven of them remain eligible for the Investment Partnerships Program (PPI) (Agência Brasil, 2024).

Semeia Institute stands out among private actors. It is a non-profit organization (NGO) founded in 2011 by Pedro Passos, who is the co-founder of ‘Natura’ Company (Giovanaz, 2021) whose purpose is to coordinate the public and private sectors, conduct research, and advise governments on organizing and structuring park concessions. Semeia has, since then, carried out research and published guidelines, articles and diagnoses on natural and urban parks preservation, on their potential as economic development vector and on public-private management models related to concessions (Instituto Semeia, 2023b). The institute's pioneering theoretical production on concessions and parks’ economic potential is available on its website, which brings together more than 50 publications produced since 2013. Semeia is the main technical park concession process advisor to governments at the federal, state and municipal level, and it supports the development and structuring of concession projects through public-private partnerships (Instituto Semeia, 2023b).

Semeia supported seven federal, forty state and nineteen municipal projects up to 2023. It consolidated itself as the leading consulting and technical cooperation company working with federal, state and municipal governments in the park concessions context (Instituto Semeia, 2023b). It has been cooperating with ICMBio in structuring federal concessions since 2017 to improve management, expand public use services and achieve sustainable social and environmental development. Furthermore, in 2020, this NGO set a technical partnership with BNDES to support the Program to Assist Public Entities in Park Concessions, whose aim is to enable projects for the operation, maintenance, and investment projects in conservation units (Instituto Semeia, 2023b). The Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV) also stands out as important private actor conducting economic feasibility studies for park concessions at different scales. In 2018, FGV *Direito Rio* set a partnership with Semeia Institute to investigate legal urban-parks management models and to develop an analytical methodology to help municipal managers in assessing managerial alternatives (FGV Notícias, 2018). BNDES nominated FGV as an expert economic and financial consultancy in the concessions field and made it responsible for economic modeling reports on park concessions, nationwide (BNDES, 2023b).

Rio Grande do Sul State has stood out for significant progress in public assets privatization at the state level. Since 2019, under the government of Eduardo Leite (PSDB), the state has advanced in the privatization of public services, including energy and sanitation, based on the argument of improving efficiency, attracting private investment and reducing public debt. When it comes to the context of public spaces, the state has sixteen active park concession projects, ten of which are natural parks and six are urban parks. Two of these parks are managed by the federal government; seven are managed by the state government and seven, by the municipal government (Instituto Semeia, 2023a). It is the second state in Brazil recording the largest number of active park concession projects. The concession of Aparados da Serra Park and Serra Geral National Park is an emblematic example of park concessions in the state and in the country. These natural parks are located on the border with Santa Catarina State and were selected to be part of the Public-Private Environmental Partnership Program

(PAPP) as pilot concession projects, back in 2017. A thirty-year concession contract was signed with the company Urbia (Construcap) in September 2021. This same company manages Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo City. Urbia held the responsibility for these parks' security, revitalization, maintenance and management. In exchange, it commercially exploits the area by charging entrance fees, parking fees and providing several tourist services, such as food, souvenir shops and internal transport (Urbia Parques, 2023). There were reports of a decrease in tourist rates in Cambará do Sul City two years after the concession had started. The parks are located in this city, which relies on tourism as its main source of income. Mayor Ivan do Amaral Borges stressed that the estimated increase in the number of visitors from two thousand and fifty to one million individuals did not come true, and that the entrance fee is high relative to the infrastructure offered, which makes the model unsustainable and takes tourists away (Guerra, 2024). This scenario reflects Carlos Vainer's (2009) concept of city as a luxury commodity, according to which the space is designed for a select group of consumers, thereby restricting and economically undermining tourism.

Neoliberal rationality finds fertile ground for its practices in contemporary Porto Alegre City, at the local scale. From 2017 onwards, the city consolidated an active PPPs and privatization policy under the administration of Nelson Marchezan (Porto Alegre para Frente) and, later on, of Sebastião Melo (MDB). The central argument is the alleged high cost and inefficiency of public services, which justifies concessions, the selling of public transport company assets and the repeated attempts to privatize the Municipal Water and Sewage Department (DEMAE). Melo highlighted the goal of turning the city into the capital of partnerships during the event to launch public consultations for the parks (Uhr, 2022). Several legal frameworks and administrative measures were key parts of the effort to set a favorable scenario for consolidating this administrative model in the municipality. It is noteworthy that Porto Alegre Municipal Government (PMPA) has had Semeia Institute support since 2017 to set the necessary legal framework for urban parks concessions. This partnership allowed the development of concession models and the revision of the municipal legislation on the subject (Semeia Institute, 2023a). In 2019, the Complementary Law No. 12.559 was enacted, and it authorized the Municipal Executive Branch to grant the use and provision of services related to urban squares and parks' operation, administration, conservation, maintenance, implementation, renovation, expansion or improvement, to the private sector. It was the main legal instrument allowing these nature-type concessions in the municipality. Similarly, Complementary Law No. 12.583 from 2009, regulated the adoption of urban squares and green areas. It was amended in 2019 and 2021 to allow commercial exploitation of the adopted space; previous versions provided only sponsor advertising as compensation.

Several urban parks in Porto Alegre City are included in some form of concession proposal. These projects differ according to the stage of the bidding process. *Marinha do Brasil* Park and Section 3 Guaíba River Waterfront are part of the same concession package and have their economic modeling and tender documents defined, with an estimated R$105 million in investments (Porto Alegre, 2022). Other spaces, such as *Moinhos de Vento* Park, *Germânia* Park, Chico Mendes Park and Mascarenhas de Moraes Park, are listed as publicly intended concessions (Instituto Semeia, 2023b). Notable is the concession proposal involving *Redenção* Park and the Lami promenade, which was suspended largely due to community mobilization. The first version of the bidding document, which included the construction of an underground parking lot in *Redenção* Park, was the target of criticism and questions regarding the proposal's technical and economic feasibility. The *Coletivo Preserva Redenção*, which comprises residents and park visitors, has organized itself to prevent the advance of initial proposal, leading to the project's suspension (Suptitz, 2023). This episode highlights the emergence of community initiatives aimed at defending the public profile of urban squares and parks in the city, in reaction to PMPA attempts to grant leisure areas to the private sector. In addition to the aforementioned *Preserva Redenção*, movements organized by residents and activists opposed to privatization, such as *Preserva Lami* and *Preserva Parque Marinha do Brasil*, stood both in the suspended project and in the project with defined modeling. The only currently ongoing urban park concession in the municipality is the one regarding Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront. It was signed in 2021 and became a reference for new contracts. The *Salve o Harmonia* Movement emerged when Harmonia Park construction works started. It encompasses approximately seventy entities that organize demonstrations and debates against the park's construction and privatization, besides highlighting its environmental relevance. This public space privatization case will be subjected to in-depth analysis in the following section.

The analysis of the national, state, and municipal contexts has disclosed that the privatization of natural and urban parks, from a neoliberal perspective, turns spaces and leisure into commodities - the exchange value prevails over the use value, in this case. Concessions are legitimized as an efficient and sustainable solution in the face of the alleged technical and

financial incapacity of the public sector. This logic was described by Harvey (2005) as accumulation by dispossession, in which the State creates and sustains legal and financial frameworks (from Law No.11.079/2004 to BNDES credit lines). Therefore, incentives and legislative constructions stem out from the federal level and end up reaching the municipal sphere. They thrive particularly when governments embrace urban entrepreneurship strategies focused on PPPs, and engage the population in pro-tourism and pro-development arguments. In summary, privatization at the national level emerges as multifaceted neoliberal practice legitimized by a technical-legal framework and driven by institutions that promote urban entrepreneurship and leisure spaces' commodification. Rio Grande do Sul State and Porto Alegre City show strong adherence to neoliberal practices when it comes to the management of public spaces since they use concessions as a tool to attract investments and to supposedly improve governmental efficiency. These practices trigger debates about elitization, segregation and the economic sustainability of local tourism and collective spaces.

4 Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront concession

Harmonia Park was launched in 1982; it covered 17 hectares and housed barbecue areas, an events pavilion, a rodeo arena and vegetated areas before its concession. Historically, it hosts the *Farroupilha* Encampment every September. The Encampment is a '*Gaucho*' cultural celebration and the park's main event. Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront Urban Park, which is the first of three sections along Guaíba River banks, was designed by Jaime Lerner Architecture Office and launched in 2018. Its construction was part of a package of measures for the 2014 World Cup, aimed at boosting tourism and infrastructure improvement. It extends for 1.3 km and houses contemplative spaces, a cycling road, sports equipment and commercial areas, besides being a major metropolitan tourist attraction. Figure 2 depicts the location of the parks subject to the analyzed concession.

Fig. 2: Aerial images of Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront. Source: Luciano Antunes de Oliveira, 2025.

In the dimension of conceived space, it is worth highlighting that PMPA (Porto Alegre Municipal Government) argued that these parks were too costly for the public treasure due to high maintenance expenses and low visitation since the beginning of discussions about these public spaces' concession. In January 2019, the 'Expression of Interest Procedure for the Park' was published; it sought proposals for its revitalization, maintenance, operation and management, with emphasis on the 'Gaucho' culture and tourist attractions. The Economic-Financial Modeling report estimated yearly revenue of R$ 19 million

for both parks and operational expenses of R$ 8 million/year (Porto Alegre, 2019c). The concession tender was launched in November 2019 and it counted on one hundred and fifty-three contributions during the public consultation and hearing, mainly from investors, public agencies and civil society. The initial bidding process was held in July 2020 and it did not attract any interested party, which led to a tender revision. The aim was to make it more attractive to the private sector through the following changes: concession area size, type and quantity of events that could be held, reduced investment planned by the concessionaire and transferring public lighting responsibility to the public sector (Sul21, 2020).

In November 2020, GAM3 Parks consortium (formed by 3M Produções e Eventos and Efexis Marketing e Eventos) was the only interested party and it won the bid. Although the contract prohibits charging an entrance fee, it authorizes revenues coming from parking, commerce, equipment rental and from up to ten free events and three paid shows per year (Weber, 2020). GAM3 introduced Orla Park urban design project in July 2022 and it encompasses Harmonia Park and Section 1. It was conceived as ‘Gaucho culture’ theme park with attractions such as a Ferris wheel, restaurants, areas honoring ethnic groups and a Dinosaur Land Park (Sul21, 2022). The project included major infrastructure works and vegetation removal, which triggered criticism from both the population and environmentalists. According to the concessionaire, it was authorized to remove four hundred and thirty-two specimens, but it claimed to have only removed a hundred and two trees. There was controversy about the project not corresponding to the Urban Planning Feasibility Study approved by the Municipal Council for Urban and Environmental Development. These claims were substantiated by allegations of environmental damage and oversight negligence by PMPA. Works at the construction site were temporarily suspended by an injunction, back in July 2023, but the decision was revoked in August of the same year. The urban design project for Harmonia Park did not require an Environmental Impact Study (EIA), an Environmental Impact Report (RIMA) or wildlife impact assessments, being classified by PMPA as having low environmental risk. The federal and municipal legislations only require these studies for projects classified as high environmental risk (Porto Alegre, 1998). The PMPA did not require such reports for Orla Park project.

The environmental relevance of Harmonia Park prior to the works carried out by the concession is highlighted by the perceived space dimension. According to Scherer and other authors (2005), the park comprised wetlands, native restinga forest, and eucalyptus forest and fields, in addition to harboring more than eighty bird species. This biodiversity changed after the vegetation was removed. Furthermore, flooding episodes in the park following heavy rains in September 2023 triggered debates about the drainage works and the natural soil permeability loss due to the installed paving (Sul21b, 2023). The main flood recorded in May 2024 affected both Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront, which forced GAM3 to file a force-majeure request to suspend the contract and transfer to the public authorities the recovery of the flooded areas. It was also found that GAM3 did not contract the mandatory flood insurance policy set in the tender, which forced the municipality to invest R$ 12 million in the recovery of Section 1 (Gehm, 2025b).

In the everyday use of these spaces, significant social and cultural practices for the Porto Alegre’s population are identified both before and after the concession: sports and leisure activities, sunset viewing on the waterfront and cultural celebrations in Harmonia Park. These practices highlight the diverse character of both parks. Food kiosks multiplied in Section 1 after the concession and large paid events took place in Harmonia Park. The Public Prosecutor's Office of Rio Grande do Sul State recommended the elaboration of a noise control plan due to increase in the size and frequency of music events in it. The 2023 Farroupilha Encampment edition witnessed higher parking fees, reduced traditional encampments and wider sponsored spaces, which changed the events’ popular profile (Barreto, 2023). Spatial practices tend to be limited to those with greater purchasing power, and it weakens social exchanges and deny equal access to urban benefits by favoring consumption.

Data collected from questionnaires and interviews have shown that, according to the population's perception of Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront concession, this process is marked by duality between physical improvement recognition and concern with the public space management orientation. Many visitors highlighted improvements in cleanliness, equipment maintenance and security, and these aspects are considered concrete benefits of this concession model. On the other hand, significant criticism regarding spaces’ orientation towards consumption has emerged. The prevailing view is that the parks have been turned into commercial environments, and it has been compromising their public and inclusive character. The growing presence of activities and structures geared towards commerce is seen as factor that may limit access and deter people who cannot afford to consume, which changes the nature of spaces previously intended

for free leisure and social interaction. Dissatisfaction also extends to Harmonia Park urban design project, which is perceived as inadequate to the population's needs. There is resistance to proposals to turn the site into a theme park aimed at commercial entertainment. Another criticism concerns the removal of vegetation for the construction site, since it is seen as action that disrespects the parks' environmental relevance. Despite the improved infrastructure, concern with the loss of the park's democratic profile remains. Park users demand effective community participation in defining uses, greater management transparency and in guaranteeing free activities, so that the concession benefits are fairly shared, without exclusion.

Collective and alternative actions taken by civil society stand out in the realm of lived space, as well as moments of conflict. The Salve o Harmonia Movement was created in 2023 in response to interventions in Harmonia Park construction site. This collective, which defines itself as a movement in defense of the park, its culture and nature, brings together seventy organizations committed to the site's environmental preservation. The group organizes demonstrations, meetings and discussion circles aimed at raising awareness about Harmonia Park's environmental relevance. In July 2023, the collective and other environmental entities protested and demanded the suspension of the construction site due to the vegetation removal (Sul21, 2023a). At the same time, traditionalist groups organized themselves to defend the continuation of interventions, since that years' Farroupilha Encampment would be harmed if the construction site was not complete (Faleiro, 2023). Social pressure made the Public Prosecutor's Office of Rio Grande do Sul State request an audit by the State Court of Auditors (Brasil de Fato, 2023a) and it triggered the construction site suspension on July 30th, which was overturned by TJ-RS on August 4th - made it possible holding traditionalist events in Harmonia Park, in 2023 (Brasil de Fato, 2023b). These tensions disclosed the popular pressure and disputes involving the parks. The *Salve o Harmonia* Movement, which was influenced by *Preserva Redenção* and *Preserva Lami* groups, is the continuation of a community mobilization that succeeded in blocking concession projects in other city parks, and it highlights the strength of popular engagement and the search for more community-based forms of public space management.

5 The three-dimensional production of space

This section adopts Lefebvre's trialectical method to unveil the socio-spatial relations linked to the production of space in Harmonia Park and Section 1 Guaíba River Waterfront concession process. The analysis used contradictory elements found in the description of events since the beginning of the bidding process to the current contract stage, as well as in the population's perceptions of privatization and in resistance actions aimed at the concession.

5.1 Between Perceived Space and Conceived Space

In this interrelation, the technical actions and works of the concession connect to the spatial experience and everyday life of park users. At this point, actions and works that commercially exploit public spaces are recognized, generating income and tourist attractions and drawing service providers and a specific audience. This relationship can be perceived by the concessionaire's priority regarding economic activities in public spaces to boost the local economy and create job positions through commercial points, paid attractions, concerts and events. There was increase in the number of food kiosks in Section 1. Large-scale ticketed events became frequent in Harmonia Park. These changes attract a public with higher purchasing power to consume the products and services offered. In addition, users recognized some positive aspects of the concession, such as improvements in cleanliness, safety and space maintenance.

The justification given by PMPA for the concession is another element substantiating this relation; it claims that the parks were excessively burdensome for the public treasure given their high maintenance costs and the low visitation at Harmonia Park. The transfer to the private sector is seen as more efficient, since it allows the municipal administration to locate resources to other areas. However, there is no transparency regarding the actual savings deriving from these expenses. The concession is an example of the urban entrepreneurship concept, according to which the public sector seeks external sources of investment and financing through PPPs.

However, as Harvey (2006) points out, the result is commonly the public sector assuming the risks, while the private sector concentrates the benefits. This issue is evident in GAM3 Parks' request to suspend the contract after the 2024 floods, shifting recovery costs to the public authorities. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the 2024 floods, GAM3 did not purchase the mandatory flood insurance required by the tender, and it forced the public sector to take responsibility for Section 1 recovery

works, which highlighted the concession's fragility in the face of environmental and climatic risks and the insufficiency of mitigation measures foreseen in the privatization model. These contradictions disclose this administrative model's instability and raise questions about the future viability of PPP models, especially when the object of profit (in this case, the park) is threatened by the climate crisis. The urban design project developed for Harmonia Park is interpreted as another aspect of the perceived-conceived space relation: conceived as theme park based on paid attractions, it turns the space towards market needs and profit and often disregards the existing spatial dynamics and regular users' needs. Interventions carried out by the concessionaire reconfigure the flow of people and reorganize consumption by turning space into a commodity. Exchange value prevails over the use value, and it mediates the access to space through the market and intensifies the separation between public and private spaces.

5.2 Between Conceived Space and Lived Space

This interrelation addresses the relationship between the technical-legal framework and spaces of struggle, oppression and change. Therefore, it is possible to infer that concessions' economic benefits are not equitably distributed, and it exacerbates social inequality among park users. This relationship can be seen from the formulation of the argument in favor of parks' concession to contractual execution, which consolidates a set of managerial and technical mechanisms that limit questioning this choice. BNDES acts as financier and economic facilitator, whereas Semeia Institute provides technical consulting for municipal legislation and tender modeling in order to create a favorable environment for concessions. Support from federal institutions through financing in combination with the work of private organizations in technical consulting has turned concessions into a feasible and desirable strategy for the public sector, for private agents and, to some extent, sector to civil society. Complementary Law No. 12.559/2019 is the main legal instrument enabling the concession of urban parks in Porto Alegre City since it provides a legal framework for this type of contract. PMPA aligns the production of space with private interests by prioritizing a city model oriented towards consumption and profit at the expense of popular demands due to the developed tender guidelines, technical actions and contract oversights. This process reflects neoliberal logic, according to which, the market reality becomes the unquestionable standard and turns public spaces into commodities in the name of economic development. The model imposed by concessions tends to change park users' profile, and it leads to segregation and homogenization where full access to the parks' benefits is limited to those holding purchasing power. Social exchanges are weakened and equal access to urban benefits is denied when consumption is favored. The 2023 Farroupilha Encampment, with an increased corporate-sponsored spaces and reduced traditional encampments, exemplifies this shift in the event's profile and social dynamics. This scenario exacerbates social inequality and limits democratic access to public spaces. Concessions allow the city to be managed like a business: seeking productivity, profit and competitiveness. Thus, the city is treated not only as commodity but as luxury commodity destined for a privileged group of consumers.

5.3 Between Lived Space and Conceived Space

Struggle and resistance movements, spatial practice and concrete space are connected at this point, and it discloses the need for a community-based administrative management model, greater popular participation in tenders and projects, as well as for spaces that guarantee inclusion and the exercise of democracy. This interpellation can be seen in the vegetation removal in Harmonia Park during the works at construction site, which became a driving force behind protests against the urban design project and the concession. Although the concessionaire claimed authorization and tree replacement, environmentalists and the population questioned the project's adequacy, lack of environmental impact studies (EIA/RIMA) and PMPA oversight negligence.

The construction site temporary judicial suspension highlighted the tension between hegemonic domination and population's resistance. On the other hand, the emergence of the Salve o Harmonia Movement, among other park-defense collectives, showed community's resistance and the struggle to preserve the parks' inclusive, environmental and accessible character. These movements claim the right to the city in order to influence urbanization processes and ensure fair and democratic access to public spaces by demanding community-based and social management. The intense rain and flooding in Harmonia Park in 2023, after the drainage works, sparked debates about the reduction of the park's natural permeability and exposed the project's fragilities. Complaints about excessive noise from concerts and events in Harmonia Park after the concession led to recommendations by the Public Prosecutor's Office. Questionnaire answers pointed out that park visitors recognize improvements (maintenance and safety while questioning whether the theme park model brings real benefits to the city.

People are willing for transparency, community inclusion and free activities. Furthermore, in February 2025, measurements taken by 'Instituto Gaúcho de Estudos Ambientais' recorded 61°C on Harmonia Park's concrete pavement, while areas shaded by trees recorded 31°C. This finding proved the formation of heat islands due to the removal of the original vegetation (Gehm, 2025a). These contradictions highlight the instability of this administrative model and raise questions about the future viability of PPP models, especially when the object of profit, in this case, the parks, is threatened by the climate crisis. Figure 3 illustrates the neoliberal relations unveiled and summarizes the three-dimensional production of space in the context of the privatization of urban parks.

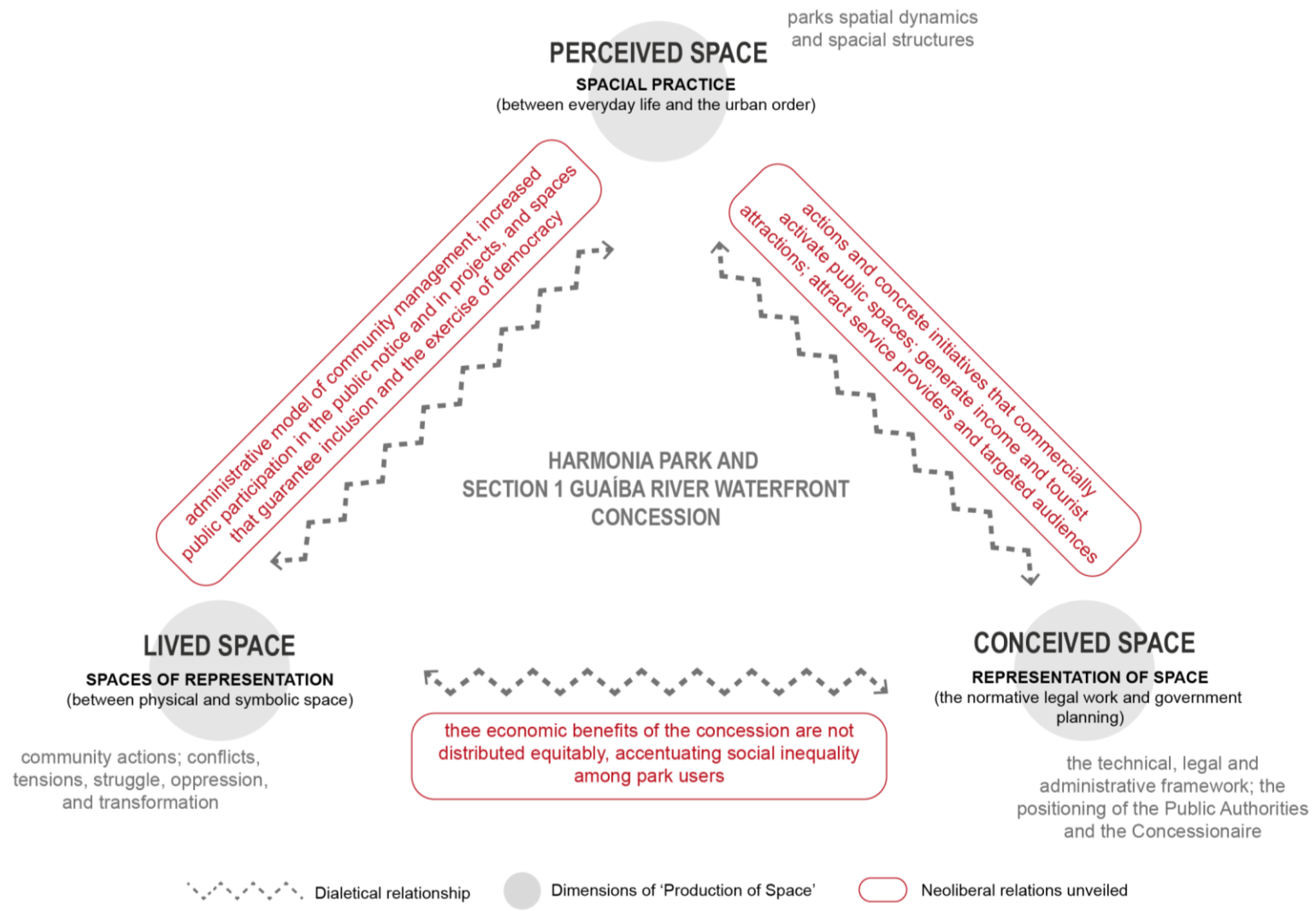

Fig. 3: Summary of the three-dimensional production of space applied to the empirical object. Source: Elaborated by the authors, 2025.

6 Final Considerations

Urban parks privatization exemplifies neoliberal rationality, according to which, concessions are prosperous and sustainable solutions in the face of alleged state limitations. Accordingly, market logic and the exchange value override the social and collective use value of public spaces. This process is supported by legal and technical mechanisms, as well as by public and private actors who promote consumption and progress as guiding norms of public policies. The application of the three-dimensional production of space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]) as theory-method made it possible to articulate technical-institutional, practical and symbolic dimensions to reveal contradictions, conflicts and convergence among different public space production forms. The study highlighted lack of popular participation in concession processes, although the population expressed its concerns with the parks' future. The forms of space domination for capital production are configured in the conceived space, whereas the forces of oppression and the desire for a future different from those established by the State in partnership with the private sector are disclosed in the lived space. The harm to the population envisioned by organized and mobilized civil-society actors is consolidated in the perceived space, and it is still immeasurable throughout the future

yet to come. Therefore, urban parks privatization is structured as complex environmental and socio-spatial reconfiguration that demands resistance and dialogue, along with alternative proposals for the occupation and production of urban spaces.

Acknowledgments

The English version of this article was translated by Deyse Assis de Miranda.

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TOPOLOGIES OF CARE: FROM THE CLEARING TO THE PARK IN PETER SLOTERDIJK

TOPOLOGIAS DO CUIDADO: DA CLAREIRA AO PARQUE EM PETER SLOTERDIJK

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Rodrigues, B. M. (2025). Topologies of Care: From the Clearing to the Park in Peter Sloterdijk. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 155-166
https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.237606

Abstract

This article examines the articulation between biopolitics and zoopolitics in Peter Sloterdijk's philosophy, highlighting the centrality of the concept of anthropotechnics as the key to understanding the genesis of politics and civilization. Based on an ontogenealogy of domestication, the study aims to analyze how paleopolitics, understood as the original matrix of dwelling and co-immunity, allows for a rethinking of politics as the art of cohabitation and care. Methodologically, it develops a theoretical-comparative reading of Sloterdijk's works in dialogue with Heidegger and Luhmann, to reconstruct a genealogy of political space stemming from the spheres of domestication, surveillance, and interfaciality. The results indicate that anthropotechnics offers a post-anthropocentric model of multilateralism, in which care and technique are understood as mediations between the human and the non-human, the symbolic and the material. By investigating the topologies of care in Sloterdijk, the article also proposes a dialogue with the theme of spatial multilateralism, understanding anthropotechnics as a diversified practice of cohabitation and symbolic exchange between human and non-human natures. Furthermore, the reading of paleopolitics as a matrix of co-immunity reveals that every form of dwelling involves a praxis of negotiation among differences—cultural, technical, and environmental—establishing interlocutions and confrontations that configure the different modes of producing the common.

Keywords: Sloterdijk, Anthropotechnics, Paleopolitics, Multilateralism, Co-immunity.

1 Introduction

How can we rethink the foundations of politics and life in common beyond traditional models based on contract and sovereignty? This question, central to contemporary political philosophy, takes on original contours in the work of German thinker Peter Sloterdijk. His philosophical project, notable for reclaiming spatiality and technology as constitutive dimensions of the human, shifts the analysis of the political from the realms of law and discourse to the topologies of care and the architectures of coexistence. The central objective of this article is to analyze the articulation between the paradigm of zoopolitics and the concept of paleopolitics in Sloterdijk's thought, demonstrating how it redefines the genesis of the political. For the philosopher, zoopolitics should not be confused with Foucauldian biopolitics. While the latter deals with the administration of the life of the human species (*bios*), zoopolitics refers to a more originary operation: the government and domestication of human animal life (*zoē*), the process by which the human is formed, selected, and cultivated.

This exploration does not occur in a neutral field but is traversed by fundamental tensions that shape the debate surrounding Sloterdijk's work and to which this article seeks to respond. Three axes of tension are particularly central: first, the opposition between classical humanism—criticized by Sloterdijk as a literary and domesticating doctrine—and his post-humanism or beyond-the-human, which recognizes the animal and technical foundations of our existence without relinquishing an ethics of care. Second, the sometimes conflictual relationship between Foucauldian biopolitics (management of the species) and Sloterdijkian zoopolitics (domestication of animality), which raises the question of which one operates as the matrix of the other. Third, the ambivalence of domestication as a process that, on one hand, is a condition of possibility for civilization, security, and culture (a form of care), and on the other, can engender mechanisms of control, selection, and loss of vitality (a form of subjection).

The hermeneutic dimension guides the reading of Sloterdijk's primary sources, seeking to understand the internal architecture of his conceptual system—particularly the concepts of paleopolitics and anthropotechnics—from his central works. It is an interpretation that seeks to reconstruct the coherence and internal logic of Sloterdijkian thought. Complementarily, the genealogical procedure traces the genesis of these categories throughout the development of the author's work, understanding them not as abstract definitions but as conceptual tools that emerge from a specific diagnosis of contemporaneity and respond to precise philosophical problems. Finally, this work also has the merit of presenting, in the Portuguese language, an author whose reception in Brazil, especially in the field of Architecture and Urbanism, is still at an early stage, despite his immense relevance. Concepts such as spheres, anthropotechnics, and the human park provide powerful lenses for analyzing the built space as an active agent in the domestication of life, the modulation of social relations, and the creation of psychic and political climates.

2 From Biopolitics to Zoopolitics

If biopolitics, in Michel Foucault's famous formulation, is concerned with the administration of the life of the human species (*bios*) at the population level, Peter Sloterdijk proposes an ontogenetic step back to a more originary gesture: zoopolitics. This refers to the government and domestication of man's animal life (*zoē*), the founding process by which the human is formed, selected, and cultivated from its basal animality. While biopolitics manages the already constituted product—the population—zoopolitics investigates the very factory that produces it. The concept that articulates this factory of the human is that of anthropotechnics, defined by Sloterdijk as "(…) the continuum of advanced civilizations, the three-thousand-year empire of mental exercises, self-trainings, self-elevations and self-lowerings – in short, the universe of metaphysically coded vertical tension – in an unprecedented synopsis" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 34). Mastery of these techniques, as Sloterdijk warns, confers a power of command (2009, p. 19), a power that is consolidated precisely through the mediation "(…) in which participation through reading the canon reveals a common love of inspiring messages" (Sloterdijk, 2009, p. 13).

In this updated reading, zoopolitics can be understood as the governance of this continuous process of domestication, which involves the relationship between domesticators and domesticated and is expressed in a series of symbolic and psycho-immunological practices whose origin predates even written language, harking back to the first cosmological representations recorded pictorially in caves. In short, the concept of zoopolitics can be understood as an analytical category oriented by an anthropological question: humans cease to be considered mere creatures and begin to be seen as creators (Castro-Gómez, 2012, p. 69). According to the lessons of Hernán Alejandro Cortéz Ramírez (2013, p. 79), zoopolitics is understood as an agency over the brute life of men and the animal nature from which man abdicates and becomes a bastard. Both zoopolitics and biopolitics are immunological techniques for the improvement of the world, or, it could also be said, techniques for dwelling according to a typology, vital context, and rationality of the world. In his conception for *Rules for the Human Zoo: a response to the Letter on Humanism*, Sloterdijk seems to understand *bios*, and thus biopolitics, as that rationality responsible for administering the human park.

> To treat humanity as a biological species and to consider humans as mere members of this species, is this not the regulatory ideal of those policies that have been grouped under the name of "biopolitics"? Politics would no longer have to settle conflicts, administer territories, or govern men; it would deal with living beings, whose reproduction would need to be managed, whose life would need to be preserved or not, and among whom balances would also need to be defined. For, to rationally manage the cohabitation between living species, the political government of men would have to make an exclusive place for an ecological administration. Is this not the dream, or the chimera, of a politics finally reduced to the essential: ecology – the management of balances between the lives of the living? But, even in a dream, this politics would prove powerless, hindered by its own principles: for what criteria would this pure ecology have at its disposal if it could not rely on the priority of preserving humanity (or rather, the "human species") – which would be an anthropocentric infringement of naturalistic egalitarianism?[1] (Wolff, 2010, p. 326, our translation).

Here, the French philosopher Francis Wolff refers to the problematic of administration in Sloterdijk; in explanatory terms, how to 'rationally'—and also normatively—manage the cohabitation of living species through the naturalistic egalitarianism observed in the 'human park' (*Menschenpark*)? Wolff's critique of Sloterdijk (2009) is grounded in a possible animalism advocated by the latter. In other words, a primacy of zoopolitics, to the detriment of biopolitics. It is only in a later essay that

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1 Original in French: »Traiter l'humanité comme une espèce biologique et considérer les humains comme de simples membres de cette espèce, n'est-ce pas l'idéal régulateur de ces politiques que l'on a pu regrouper sous le nom de «biopolitiques»? La politique n'aurait plus à régler des conflits, à administrer des territoires, à gouverner des hommes, elle aurait affaire à des vivants, dont il faudrait, selon les cas, gérer la reproduction, préserver ou non la vie, et entre lesquels il faudrait bien aussi définir les équilibres. Car, pour gérer rationnellement la cohabitation entre les espèces vivantes, le gouvernement politique des hommes devra faire une place exclusive à une administration écologique. N'est-ce pas le rêve, ou la chimère, d'une politique enfin réduite à l'essentiel, l'écologie – la gestion des équilibres entre les vies des vivants? Mais, même en rêve, cette politique se montrerait impuissante, empêchée par ses propres principes : car de quels critères cette écologie pure disposerait-elle si elle ne pouvait pas s'appuyer sur la priorité de la préservation de l'humanité (ou plutôt de l'« espèce humaine ») – ce qui serait une entorse antropocentrista à l'égalitarisme naturalize?»

Sloterdijk will resolve this problem with animalism and reconcile biopolitics with zoopolitics. As the English translation points out already in the title, *Strangers to Nature: Animal Lives and Human Ethics*, Sloterdijk's thought cannot be framed within ethology, since his concern with ethics still starts from the human. In this sense, Sloterdijk (2012) presents a genealogy for the ontological coevality among species. According to Sloterdijk, the narrative of Noah and the construction of the ark represent this coevality, given that the responsibility attributed to Noah to protect non-human species (the animals) possesses the same measure as the protection of man.

Unlike the right to name—and to dominate—the animals granted to Adam, in Noah's case, the duty of care is an attributed one. By virtue of the coming flood, Noah is the one who brings about the first institution of biopolitics. Noah protects nature from nature itself. Non-human species are now under the shelter of human protection and share with men a dependence on covering (*Hülle*). However, regarding the theme of the dignity of human and non-human life forms, it is safe to say that, since the *Rules*, and differently from Wolff's (2010) critique, Sloterdijk is not surrendering to animalism with the aim of recognizing in the biological attribute the foundation of dignity. What Sloterdijk seems to propose is that humanity should cease to be understood as a virtual moral community, based on ideas of equality and reciprocity, and turn instead to the material and practical aspects of cohabitation as co-immunity. By turning to proximity, he seems to unfold a multifocal perspective on human behavior. It is a matter of the fact that peace is only possible in an atmosphere whose climate is favorable to the imitation of behaviors that contain bestializing instincts.

> If there is one virtue of human beings which deserves to be spoken about in a philosophical way, it is above all this: that people are not forced into political theme parks but, rather, put themselves there. Humans are self-fencing, self-shepherding creatures. Wherever they live, they create parks around themselves. In city parks, national parks, provincial or state parks, eco-parks – everywhere people must create for themselves rules according to which their comportment is to be governed (Sloterdijk, 2009, p. 25).

Considering the human as a container of animality means becoming sensitive to the individual *pathos* of every living being and to how this *sui generis* dimension of life is reflected in the inhabited space. As the citation illustrates, people are not simply kept in political theme parks whose topology of dwelling should be disregarded or reduced to a position (*Lage*). Here, Wolff's critique, by focusing on the animalist aspect of Sloterdijk's topology, overlooks that, for the German author, it is utopian to configure any community based on reciprocity. A holistic and universal human community does not exist, even in its virtuality. To be in the world is to inhabit an orbit of personal care and to share this domestic relationship of care not only through the event but also through ruptures and dissonances (Sloterdijk, 2017, p. 259). It is necessary to clarify how Wolff's critique is grounded in a Cartesian understanding of spatiality. For Wolff, spatiality is a product of extension and, by deduction, it is possible to think of a human community that inhabits the entire Earth. On animality, Francis Wolff teaches:

> But to consider a "human" as worthy of respect is not to recognize in them a specific biological attribute (belonging to "my species," any more than possessing a certain skin color) nor even an intellectual one (intelligence); it is to hold them as a member of a virtual moral community, humanity. Humanist universalism is founded on the idea of equality and reciprocity: I must treat every human as they should be able to treat me; every other is an "other" to me because I can be that "other" for them, and so on. It is on this idea of reciprocity that most of our moral concepts are founded, and first and foremost the virtue of justice. With every human, I must be able to form a community precisely because it is reciprocal, if only because we can speak to each other. What reciprocity can be expected from a crocodile or a mosquito? What moral or political community can one serenely envisage forming with them? What moral community can be formed with beings I consider only as "moral patients"? To recognize the humanity of a being is to know that it would be possible to have just relations with them and to build a society, or to have moral relations because we are part of the same virtual community[2] (Wolff, 2010, p. 332, our translation).

[2] Original in French: »Mais considérer un «homme» comme digne de respect, ce n'est pas reconnaître en lui tel attribut biologique (l'appartenance à «mon espèce», pas plus que la possession de telle couleur de peau) ni même intellectuel (l'intelligence), c'est le tenir pour membre d'une

However, for Sloterdijk, it is essential to understand that it is not possible to inhabit the world, but rather a place in the world where the extended thing (*res extensa*) and the thinking thing (*res cogitans*) merge in the definition of one's own space, be it the house or the villa. Every dwelling must be understood as a civilizational concretization of a macrosphere: a greenhouse where the tensions of rival groups and individuals who deviate from the common rules of conduct are isolated through a specific architecture. The public sphere is a general immune structure, built in focal fields. Here, the discussion surpasses animal bioethics and enters the question of terrestrial migration within the scope of paleopolitics. It is a matter of bringing to light the stress provoked by difference and of how borders represent saturation limits for this stress, whose origin lies in the tribalism of the first hunter-gatherer communities in the Paleolithic. In this sense, it is necessary to investigate how the topology of spheres composes and reflects values for the public sphere through the architecture of cohabitation spaces throughout the process of hominization. On Sloterdijk's anthropotechnology, Fabián Ludueña Romandini comments:

> From this perspective, all anthropotechnology rests on a constitutive politicization of the animal life that is to be domesticated and cultivated in the process of civilization. We will call, for reasons that will become clear in the first part of this study, this originary operation on animal life zoopolitics, despite—or in a conflictual relationship with—its ecstasy towards hominization. Thus, all anthropotechnology implies a zoopolitical substratum that lies at its center. In his *Regeln für den Menschenpark. Ein Antwortschreiben zu Heideggers 'Brief über den Humanismus'*, Peter Sloterdijk has made a similar use of the term, placing at the center of his analysis the anthropotechnics that underlie the Heideggerian project of questioning classical humanism. Thus, by applying a magnifying glass to the *Lichtung*, the Heideggerian clearing in which the human emerges, Sloterdijk has sought to show that within it takes place a process of educational and eugenic domestication dedicated to the creation of *homo sapiens* as a civilizational subject[3]. (Romandini, 2010, pp. 11-12, our translation)

From the perspective proposed by Romandini, the anthropotechnics outlined by Sloterdijk rests on an originary zoopolitics, that is, on a constitutive politicization of animal life that precedes and sustains the process of hominization. The techniques that act upon life are simultaneously natural and artificial, and architecture, in this context, reveals itself as one of the most visible forms of this vital rationalization: a field in which biological life is continually administered, ordered, and elevated through its technical spatialization. Thus, by articulating the concept of zoopolitics with the philosophy of space, one can understand architecture as a privileged instance of this politics of life. It translates onto the material plane what, in Sloterdijk, appears as the anthropotechnical dynamic of domestication and cultivation: the construction of habitable spheres in which the human is formed, protected, and elevated. Based on Sloterdijk, Carla Cordua levels a critique of Heidegger's philosophy of space:

> Heidegger's clearing is a forest metaphor, which does not evoke the realm of citizen discussions: the marketplace. And since he did not advance to the city and its center, to the square, the agora,

communauté morale virtuelle, l'humanité. L'universalisme humaniste est fondé sur l'idée d'égalité et de réciprocité : je dois traiter tout homme comme il devrait pouvoir me traiter; tout autre est pour moi un autre parce que je peux être pour lui cet autre, et ainsi de suite. C'est sur cette idée de réciprocité que sont fondés la plupart de nos concepts moraux, et d'abord la vertu de justice. Avec tout homme, je dois pouvoir faire communauté juste parce que réciproque, ne serait-ce que parce que nous pouvons nous parler. Quelle réciprocité attendre du crocodile ou du moustique? Quelle communauté morale ou politique peut-on envisager tranquillement de former avec eux? Quelle communauté morale former avec des êtres que je considère seulement comme des «patients moraux»? Reconnaître l'humanité d'un être, c'est savoir qu'il serait possible d'avoir avec lui des relations justes et de faire société, ou d'avoir des relations morales parce que nous faisons partie d'une même communauté virtuelle"».

3 Original in Spanish: "Desde esta perspectiva, toda antropotecnología descansa sobre una politización constitutiva de la vida animal que se quiere domesticar y cultivar en el proceso de civilización. Llamaremos, por razones que quedarán claras en la primera parte de este estudio, zoopolítica a dicha operación originaria sobre la vida animal a pesar de -o en conflictiva relación con- su éxtasis hacia la hominización. Asi, toda antropotecnologia implica un sustrato zoopolítico que yace en su centro. En sus Regeln für Menschenpark. Ein Antwortschreiben zu Heideggers 'Brief über den Humanismus' Peter Sloterdijk ha realizado una utilización similar del término colocando en el centro de su análisis las antropotecnias que subyacen en el proyecto heideggeriano de cuestionamiento del humanismo clásico. Asi, aplicando una lente de aumento sobre la Lichtung, el claro heideggeriano en el que surge lo humano, Sloterdijk ha querido mostrar que en ella tiene lugar un proceso de domesticación educativo y eugenésico dedicado a la creación del homo sapiens como sujeto civilizatorio".

> or the forum, that which one approaches by transcending the city became even more foreign to him: the political space of the state (…) (Cordua, 2008, p. 56, our translation[4]).

That is to say, according to Sloterdijk's response, the city is only possible by virtue of the security provided by a political sovereignty, and consequently, by the vigilance of a guardian whose vital typology ensures a unity for diversity. A politics of domestication, as will be seen next, can be perceived in paleopolitics. Paleopolitics must be understood as an onto-anthropological management of human dwelling and cohabitation with domestic animals. The Heideggerian clearing, reinterpreted by Sloterdijk as the place of the emergence of the human, finds in architecture its concrete prolongation—a built clearing where the governance of *zoē* by *bíos* is realized through the configuration of the environment. In other words, architecture not only shelters life but governs and educates it, constituting itself as one of the fundamental forms of anthropotechnics and as a spatial manifestation of modern zoopolitics.

3 Classical Politics and the Immune System

To understand the politics of domestication and its implications for the first co-immunitary formations, it is necessary to resort to the comprehension of the hominization process. Although one cannot speak of political governance in the strict sense when dealing with the Paleolithic (Harari, 2014), it is worth remembering, as Sloterdijk (2009, p. 20) conceptualizes in his first essay on spherology, that it is within the social rafts, the hordes, and the herds in exodus crossing into the Neolithic that spaces of intimization arise. One could say that the very right to property is a modality of social experience consequent to an evolutionary process, which was possibly structured from an originary appropriation during the transition to the Neolithic, “(…) that man is a creature that could become a being in the world is rooted in the characteristics of his species that reveal themselves in the basic ideas of premature-born-ness, neoteny, and the chronic animalian immaturity of man”.

The transition from nomadic groups to a common existence on the same land implies identification with a single place, a maternal affectivity directed towards the earth, from which an agro-metaphysics springs forth, and all useful plants and all "domestic animals, the domestic spirits, the gods of the fields and the paths" acquire spirit (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 423). Before the city, still in the Paleolithic period, "(…) there was the small settlement, the sanctuary, and the village; before the village, the camp, the hideout, the cave, the mound of stones" (Mumford, 1961, p. 5). Here, it is possible to perceive how the interior of subjectivity is incorporated into the exteriority of politics. It is an integration in the vital field where the clearing appears: with the hearth and the control of fire, it becomes possible to illuminate the caves, protect oneself from the cold and climatic variations, and, of course, enable better preparation and cooking of food.

> For during the majority of the evolutionary process, almost everything individual humans thought and felt was so transparent that for the others around them, those experiences were like their own. The notion of private ideas had no grounding in emotional experience or the social concept of space: no cells had been made for individuals yet, either in the imagination or the physical architectures of societies. In small groups, under the law of reciprocity, the actions of one are the actions of the other; hence the thoughts of the one are generally also the thoughts of the other. This even applies to archaic "shame cultures," where individuals would like to make their inner selves invisible because they suffer from the excessive exposure of their affects to the empathy of the others. From a paleo-psychological perspective, hidden thoughts are perfectly absurd (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 264).

As Sloterdijk points out regarding the origin of the term, “(…) 'immunity', which many believe comes from biology or medicine. In reality, immunity is originally a juridical-moral concept that has its origin in Roman law. In the strict sense, it means the

[4] Original in Spanish: “El claro de Heidegger es una metáfora florestal, que no evoca el ámbito de las discisiones ciudadanas: el mercado. Y como no avanzó hasta la ciudada y su centro, hasta la plaza, el ágora o el foro, le resultó aún más ajeno aquello a que se allega trascendiendo la ciudad: el espacio político del estado (…)”.

non-imputability of state officials during their time in office"[5] (Sloterdijk, 2021, p. 10, our translation). The function of immunity (*immunitas*) is to ensure that governance is not shaken by private dispute and that political rivalry is not escalated by the legal system. Sloterdijk extends the immune system "(…) to all cultural devices in which the way people protect themselves against the risk of suffering harm and violations becomes visible. Thus, the construction of houses and apartments, for example, implies the construction of spatialized immune systems"[6] (Sloterdijk, 2021, p. 11, our translation). In his approach to immunity, Sloterdijk sets aside anthropocentrism and understands immunity as a phenomenon relative to any and all forms of life in their relationship with the environment (*Umwelt*). It is under these conditions that spherology shows its debt to Niklas Luhmann and his contribution to an immunological theory of cohabitation.

While Luhmann's systems theory tends to neglect the spatial dimension as a relevant factor for communication (Stichweh, 1998, p. 343), Sloterdijk advances in an opposite direction. His spatial analytics demonstrate precisely how the organization of space—what we call society—conditions and shapes communicative processes (Borch, 2015, p. 151)[7]. From this perspective, inhabiting a sphere implies a double exposure: to the stress of containing internal forces and to the need for protection against external invasions. The immune system, thus, mobilizes all of life's resources in a process of "self-organizing unities, preserving and reproducing themselves" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 8). Although the human being occupies a singular place in the house of language (Cordua, 2008), Sloterdijk refuses any anthropocentric primacy over other forms of life. Human specificity resides, rather, in its capacity to project onto the clearing—the threshold of the sphere—the impressions of the world, using them as a basis for decision-making. In this way, man constitutes himself as the architect of his sphere by actively modifying the topography, thereby creating a simulated experience of proximity with the exterior.

> In reaching this insight, psychology is initially assured the agreement of cultural anthropology: only through secession from their old nature have humans become an ontological fringe group that disconcerts itself. They cannot be adequately explained by what is natural, or rather old-natural, about them-despite the abundance of attempts to portray cultures as emerging continuously from natural processes. In the midst of outer nature and above their inner nature, humans lead the lives of islanders, at first constantly confusing their symbolic actions, their acclimatizations, their pamperings and their breakings-away from instinct-guided patterns with what is self-evident, and in this sense with the natural of old. Upon closer inspection, however, they live initially only in constructs that have grown from within themselves like second natures-in their languages, their systems of ritual and meaning, and in their constitutive deleria, which are admittedly propped up somewhere on the earth's surface. (The political is the product of group delusion and territory) (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 84).

Man, in his course of terrestrial migration, now migrates between protected spaces where what is called civilization will reside. In the light of spherology, grand politics, which will be addressed in the next chapter, is considered dementia insofar as it confuses any distinction between interior and exterior and lapses into a generalized and paranoid surveillance even over human interiority. This confusion implies an alienation regarding the regional application of the responsibility intrinsic to the architecture of interiors: "(…) the political sphere, unlike the intimate, cannot be a space of mere biune intimacies" (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 134). In the morphology of the Paleolithic, Sloterdijk understands the incorporation of the exterior by man and, in this regard, the taking of things for himself within the vital clearing. As Rodrigo Petronio points out (2013, p. 61, our translation), "interior and exterior resolve themselves into spheres. Not in a harmonious manner, because this outside-inside

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5 Original in Spanish: "(…) 'inmunidad', del que muchos creen que proviene de la biología o la medicina. En realidad, la inmunidad es originalmente un concepto jurídico-moral que tiene su origen en el derecho romano. En sentido estricto significa la no imputabilidad de los funcionarios del Estado durante el tiempo que estén en su cargo".

6 Original in Spanish: "(…) a todos los dispositivos culturales en los que se hace visible el modo en que las personas se protegen frente al riesgo de sufrir daños y vulneraciones. Así, la construcción de casas y departamentos, por ejemplo, supone la construcción de sistemas inmunitarios espacializados".

7 It follows that the construction of dwellings in a diversity of forms and scales—whether subjectivities, households, or institutions—constitutes evidence of how language is immanent to a spatiality that becomes particularized in a relational manner. In other words, communication presupposes an acoustics of resonance, such that it is impossible to think without sound.

and interior-exterior relationship is dyadic, not monist", it is a constant resonance between interior and exterior and, one could also say, systemic, considering that it deals with a "fragile dyadic structure of life that unfolds through the transfer from spheres to spheres", the place where the principles of immunity emerge.

Another Brazilian commentator, Juliano Pessanha, comments that "(…) the mutual listening of the dyad is equivalent to an acoustic umbilical cord. The initial bipolar sphere is acoustic and has no objective character. The same must be said of the breathed air: it is a medial magnitude that has no objective quality". This perspective corroborates Sloterdijk's analysis of the vital clearing as a space of medial resonance prior to the subject-object distinction. The medial magnitude of air and sound, as described by Pessanha, perfectly illustrates the concept of primordial spherical immunity, where protection is not provided by a physical barrier against a hostile exterior, but by the constitution of a shared and permeable atmosphere. At this dyadic stage, immunization does not occur through rejection, but through the creation of a resonant and continuous medium—a true acoustic and respiratory immune system—that precedes and founds the possibility of any more complex architecture of interiors.

> Where for generations, the fields need to be cultivated year after year, where stores make projects possible and dead ancestors measure out their grounds of return, two things form: a new spatial type, home, and a new thought type, land law – *nomos* (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 270).

Although law does not possess systemic hierarchy over other forms of knowledge, there is, in the operation of the legal form, since archaic law, a political function necessary for the immunization of the first peoples. Classical politics, for Sloterdijk, therefore, does not originate in Athens or in the city-states of Ancient Greece, but in the bosom of the Paleolithic, where rules are a direct expression of the community's customs and of the relations between groups for the sake of survival. Archaic law seems to him a consequence of a good conscience, insofar as, unlike grand politics—which seems to be the object of Sloterdijk's critique—it does not fit the character of territorial domination, as it deals with a reduced sphere of care.

4 Face and the Politics of Domestication

From the topology of spheres, it is possible to extract an animist and collaborationist onto-anthropology. One can even attribute Sloterdijk's concern with solidarity and cooperation, as well as the communitarian implications in the order of a zoopolitics, to his earlier writings. Being-in-spheres is the fundamental condition for human beings (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 45). Spheres (*Sphären*) can be conceived from the systemic pragmatism of self-organization and "(…) is meant to draw attention to the fact that the circle holding humanity is neither purely made nor purely found, instead rounding itself spontaneously on the threshold between construction and self-realization" (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 79). Regarding this anthropological constant, the project of spheres places the history of the development of architectures and the guarding of dwellings for human habitation in a central place for observations on culture and society.

Prior to spherology, in his work *Out of the World* (*Weltfremdheit*), Sloterdijk records one of the earliest accounts on the structuring condition of solidarity in dwelling, and here defends cohabitation as a co-immunity permeated by a vigil (*Wache*). Thus, the domestication of man is ambiguous, insofar as the "(…) world exists only for creatures that do not have to be ready to flee at every second" (Sloterdijk, 2024, p. 187). The common vigil guarantees man a distance from the environment. With this distance, Sloterdijk develops how *Homo sapiens* can benefit from patronage in reflective thought (theory) and culture. In general, man becomes more sensitive in his sentience, with a creative appeal for himself. But it is only so because there is an attentive community to protect man and watch over the isolation of others. Therefore, theoretical thought arises through a "primitive communism of attention" (Sloterdijk, 2024, p. 188). In primitive collectivism, through a mutual effort in the construction and maintenance of an architecture of comfort and security, the anthropological difference of *sapiens* compared to other life forms was constituted.

> After the collapse of a purely biological programming of orientation, due to its extreme neoteny, the instinctual framework of *Homo sapiens* no longer guides him from within and loses the firm connection between brain and environment, losses that demand compensation. This compensation is provided by symbolic systems of orientation, which replace instincts with authorities—a theme developed in the mid-twentieth century by Arnold Gehlen. Symbolic ordering systems relieve all young humans from the insoluble problem (at least on the individual level) of having to recreate the

> experiences and discoveries of their ancestors all over again on their own (Sloterdijk, 2016, p. 49, our translation[8]).

The city is the result of an art of shepherding that begins with the mother; such vigilance consists, as we can add from spherological terminology, in climatic techniques (*Klimatechnik*) for dwelling within a comfortable and sufficiently protected sphere. In this space urbanized by techniques of breathing (*Atmotechnik*), specific rules are constituted without the exclusive pressure of the natural laws of the environment, according to the metaphor of the human park. Domestication, in this context, means neither entering a house of reason nor a house of civilization, but rather the gradual transformation of the nest's security measures into architectural protections and sociotechnological privileges. In this way, the concept of domestication is ambivalent: on one hand, it has a negative dimension and refers to the relationship between domesticators and domesticated; and on the other hand, it has the positive dimension of taming inherent to coexistence and sociality.

In this sense, culture is the incubator of the *conditio humana*, and the architecture of the city, whether in the square or the market, promotes what was until then impossible: the gathering of people without any affiliation or kinship. From here, Sloterdijk's critique of Luhmann's concept of system can be better understood. Social life is only possible in a space with a habitable configuration for the collectivity, and also for the eventual isolation of the person from society within this habitable space. With the foundation of the city and later, with the idea of the right to property, intimacy begins to resonate in the architecture of dwellings. Each house is a bubble carrying its own atmosphere, a climate whose self-referentiality cannot be derived from the simple difference between system and environment. By virtue of subjectivity being inserted into the city, socialization with difference is only feasible to the extent that man possesses an immunity towards the rest. The difference between reason (or culture) and nature echoes this process of the artificialization of human life forms.

> The Platonic master finds the reason for his mastery only in the expertise he has in the odd and peculiar art of breeding. Here we see the reemergence of the expert-king, whose justification is the insight about how, without doing damage to their free will, human beings can best sort themselves out and make connections. Royal anthropotechnology, in short, demands of the statesman that he understand how to bring together free but suggestible people in order to bring out the characteristics that are most advantageous to the whole, so that under his direction the human zoo can achieve the optimum homeostasis. This comes about when the two relative *optima* of human character – warlike courage and philosophical – humanistic contemplation – are woven together in the tapestry of the species (…) the statesman has to exclude the inappropriate natures before he begins to weave the chosen ones into the fabric of the state. (Sloterdijk, 2009, p. 26).

Sloterdijk addresses here the political implications of anthropotechnics. It is in these terms that the domestication of man cannot refer, in the history of anthropogenesis, solely to the biological sense of eugenics, but rather, to that "the art of being well born" (2020, p. 143) which was cited earlier — this being the art of creating communities with peaceful and harmonious cultures. To master the regal art of anthropotechnics, the ruler must control the tension between bubbles with their own entropies, from ensuring natality to protecting small or large families, as in the case of the archaic horde. The domestication of man ultimately generates the production of the human face. Under the name protraction, a term taken from Deleuze and Guattari (1980), one understands a progressive faciogenetic process, and, inspired by Levinas (2000), it imprints the clearing of Being onto the face.

Through the opening of the face, the thrust and pull upon the poles of physiognomy—a phenomenon even more important than manual dexterity—it is possible to think of "the history of being as a somatic event" (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 164). With the opening of the face, taming is finally achieved. Man becomes an animal open and servile to his neighbor. Interfaciality and

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8 Original in German: “Nach dem Abbau der rein biologischen Orientierungsprogramme infloge seiner extremen Neotenie müssen die Verluste kompensiert werden, die homo sapiens infolge der jetz fehlenden Innenlenkung duch Instinksysteme und die verlorene feste Umweltkoppluung der Gehirne erlitten hat. Die Kompensation geschieht mit Hilfe von Systemen der symbolischen Führung, die Instinkte durch Autoritäten erzetzen – ein Motiv, das um die Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts in den Schriften Arnold Gehlens entfaltet wurde. Die symbolischen Ordenunfssysteme entlasten jedes einzelne Menschenjunge von der voon ihm allein unmöglich zu lösenden Aufgabe, die Erfahrungen und Erfindungen seiner Vorfahren allein aus sich selber noch einmal zu erzeuge”.

the capacity to resonate emotions in the face emerge. The mutual gaze upon the face becomes a thermometer of affective temperatures (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 141). Not only by instinct but also by reflection, it is now possible to have an idea of what is happening in another interiority and cavity. The interactions between these cavities become increasingly luxuriant. It is not enough for man to build tools of the same use; there is now a need for dwellings for common habitation and for the coexistence of dwellings under an ordered regime of habitation.

> Interfaciality, it should be clarified, is not only the zone of a natural-social history of affability. When modern art still shows faces, it simultaneously bears witness to a permanent interfacial catastrophe. From very early times, the history of encounters with the stranger was also a visual school of terror. Bacon accounts for this from a secular sacrality that iconically represents the body as flesh, as the mutilated human that returns to animality, that encloses and confronts itself, overflowing the stereotypical discourses of masculinity and the cultural construction of genders, which, obsessed with its proximity to death and its resemblance to a corpse, ends up dissolving, disappearing, or becoming a monster (Rocca, 2008, p. 194, our translation[9]).

From a behavioral standpoint, interfaciality is only possible because man can anticipate expectations through an interfacial greenhouse and establish bonds of trust through a serene face. It is through an emotional thickness projected onto the field of microclimates and spherical enclosures that "horde and family members are affectively transparent for one another to a high degree; their participative patterns are synchronized in bipolar and multipolar fashion *a priori*" (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 169). In the innermost circle of these enclosures dwells the mother's care for the child. This is also the nucleus of social participation referred to as vigilance; it is the "emotionally rhythmicize" that gives life to the group and where "(…) one almost universally finds an especially protected and charged field with a highly refined character akin to the nest and the incubator: the mother-child space" (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 169). The mother's care for the child and the excess of Eros transform the production of man (hominization) into the production of a work of art.

Starting from paleopolitics to launch the thesis of cohabitation as co-immunity in Sloterdijk is justified due to the attention the German philosopher gives to ethnology and the approach of small-scale social communitarianism. It is no coincidence that Sloterdijk (2010, p. 184) cites the maxim of Thomas Aquinas, “man is an animal more familial than political” (*Homo est animal magis familiale quam politicum*). Or, in other words, the art of politics, that is, political anthropology, is only fruitful and consequential when it directs its attention to the pre-political forms of life of men and to the small constitutions of basic relations (Sloterdijk, 2010, p. 185). In short, Sloterdijk draws attention to how tribalism is an originary and constant phenomenon in every human grouping and civilizational process. Tribalism is present not only in communities prior to the city but also resonates in those movements of factionalism and civil instability (*stasis*) of the political regime, described in Plato's *The Republic*. Subsequently, this analytics of space, both poetic and political, will turn its approach to the constitution of this great form of politics, as well as to the dangers and alienations derived from it.

5 Conclusion

The path taken in this article, from the Heideggerian clearing to the Sloterdijkian human park, has allowed us to defend a central thesis: the genesis of the political is zoopolitical, and not merely biopolitical. In Sloterdijk, politics is not born in the contract or the polis, but in the practices of domestication, care, and immunization that made human cohabitation possible since paleopolitics. This is not a mere shift in historical origin, but a conceptual revolution that displaces the axis of political philosophy. By articulating zoopolitics and paleopolitics as matrices of co-immunity, this article sought to demonstrate that domestication cannot be reduced to a control device, but must be understood primarily as a praxis of care and a condition of

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[9] Original in Spanish: “Interfacialidad, cabe precisar, no es sólo la zona de una historia natural-social de la afabilidad. Cuando el arte moderno muestra rostros todavía, levanta acta a la vez de una permanente catástrofe interfacial. Desde tiempos muy tempranos la historia de los encuentros con el extraño fue también una escuela visual del terror. Bacon, da cuenta de ello desde una sacralidad secular que representa icónicamente el cuerpo como carne, como lo humano mutilado que regresa a la animalidad, que se encierra y enfrenta a sí mismo desbordando los estereotipados discursos de la masculinidad y la construcción cultural de los géneros, que, obsesionado por su proximidad a la muerte y su semejanza al cadáver llega a disolverse, a desaparecer o a devenir monstruo”.

possibility for culture. The art of shepherding that begins with the mother and extends to urbanism is the fundamental technique by which human animality is guided towards forms of shared existence.

The most radical theoretical consequence of this approach is the dissolution of the rigid boundary between nature and culture, showing that the human is a product of its own technique—an anthropodicy in act. The specific contribution of this reading lies in having shown that anthropotechnics is, above all, a spatial technology. Architecture and urbanism thus reveal themselves as the material zoopolitics *par excellence*. They are not the backdrop for political life, but its operative medium. This understanding allows us to rethink contemporary challenges in a radical way: the housing crisis is not just social or economic, but an anthropotechnical crisis—a failure in the production of viable immunological spheres. Education can be reinterpreted beyond the transmission of knowledge, appearing as a formative technology that, in the contemporary human park, disputes the criteria for good spiritual birth and the modes of life to be cultivated. Digital technologies emerge as the new anthropotechnics *par excellence*, reconfiguring interfaciality and creating new spheres of resonance and surveillance.

In this way, the Sloterdijkian proposal consolidates itself less as a closed philosophical system and more as a critical instrument aimed at denaturalizing forms of life that present themselves as self-evident. His thought calls upon us to collectively and responsibly assume the always unfinished character of the human self-domestication project. The central challenge that emerges from this for contemporary political theory consists of formulating ethical codes adequate to the 21st-century anthropotechnics—normative frameworks that, distancing themselves from any humanist idealism, are capable of regulating the power of shaping that we exert over our own animal nature and over the spaces we cohabit. In this register, politics redefines itself as the art of managing the inhabited co-immunity, a practice that reveals itself as simultaneously technical and ethical, spatial and spiritual.

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THE DIS-RE-INHABITING IN THE SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER IN MACEIÓ-AL

O DES-RE-HABITAR NO DESASTRE SOCIOAMBIENTAL EM MACEIÓ-AL

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Barbosa, W. N.; Oliveira, T. F. F.; Oliveira, R. V. S. (2025). The Dis-Re-Inhabiting in the Socio-environmental Disaster in Maceió-AL. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Manuela Miranda Vasconcelos Viana. 167-185 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239649

Abstract

This article presents a multilateral perspective on the conflicts between natural and built forces in a region currently experiencing what is considered the world's largest ongoing socio-environmental disaster, in the northeastern Brazilian city of Maceió, in the state of Alagoas, Brazil. The event resulted in the total or partial collapse of five neighborhoods in the city — Pinheiro, Mutange, Farol, Bebedouro, and Bom Parto — due to excessive rock salt extraction by the company Braskem. In seeking to understand the consequences of the disaster in terms of spatial (dis)occupation, the methodological approach adopted here is empirical, based on data collection (observation of post-disaster dynamics and photographic records) and a comparison between images, in order to identify landscape transformations caused by the forced displacement of residents from the affected areas. In this way, the article discusses the confrontations and insurgencies related to the disaster in the city, resulting in the recognition of persistent presences and traces of another way of inhabiting — whether through the vegetation that has grown, the writings on the walls left by ex-residents, the silence of the abandoned area, or the sound of demolition machines — highlighting the significance of the temporal and symbolic layers of this region in ruins. In this sense, we understand the disaster as a continuous process of territorial metamorphosis, in which presences and absences coexist. As a result, temporal contrasts are accentuated, and the relationships between space, time, and ways of life indicate the relevance of revising the concept of urban living. It is not only a matter of management but, above all, of sharing and coexisting in a more integrated way, through dialogue between beings (human and non-human) in different temporalities and within the same space, thus contributing to the construction of alternative spatialities.

Keywords: Dis-re-inhabiting, Socio-environmental Disaster, Braskem, Maceió.

1 Introduction: a foreign perspective

How can we structure a reflection on the subsidence of five neighborhoods in Maceió, Alagoas, from the perspective of someone who does not live in the region? Based on Italo Calvino (1974, p. 125), we understand that it is possible to reflect a more carefully on how space is apprehended when the author explains that “for those who pass it without entering, the city is one thing; it is another for those who are trapped by it and never leave. There is the city where you arrive for the first time, and there is another city which you leave never to return”. There are countless ways this can be done, but perhaps, from the point of view of the non-resident, it is useful to begin by examining the term that defines the event as the largest ongoing socio-environmental disaster in urban areas worldwide. Looking for a more remote reference, we find Raphael Bluteau (1789, p. 391, our translation), who defines the word disaster as something that acts around “unhappiness” or “misfortune”. Although the 18th-century lexicographer restricts his definition to these two terms, this synthesis reveals layers of meaning that we can recognize in the case of Maceió. The event had both social and environmental characteristics (CPI da Braskem, 2024), triggering certain dynamics that, from the foreign perspective of those who do not live in the city, prompt us to imagine the events in three stages: inhabiting, dis-inhabiting, and other forms of occupation and appropriation that gradually recompose and redefine the affected spaces. This reconfiguration arises from the re-inhabiting of these spaces, integrating a set of overlapping and interwoven temporalities, a process of dis-re-inhabiting, which will be discussed in more detail later in the text.

Other concepts permeate attempts to define what led to the event, since, according to the mining company responsible for the subsidence, it is a “geological phenomenon” (Nunes, 2022, n.p., our translation). It is important to consider the various studies cited in the final report of the Braskem CPI (2024), which explain that events of this kind can occur naturally or as a result of human action. For example, just as a river (natural) can be contaminated by mining (human action), the irregular exploitation of rock salt mines in Maceió since the 1970s (Seixas, 2023) led to the collapse of the soil in five neighborhoods of the capital of Alagoas, causing a displacement from the affected area.Therefore, we can infer that this event in the city is more closely related to human activity than to a natural occurrence.

Many academic studies[1] across a wide range of disciplines have sought to understand not only the causes of this ongoing tragedy, but also its impacts on the affected region, on people's lives, and on their relationships with each other and with the place. These studies uncover complex layers, outlining, defining, and discussing the various issues that surround and permeate the socio-environmental crime. Thus, unlike the research by Júlia Bulhões (2022) or Carlos Lopes (2022), for example, whose authors had personal connections with the affected neighborhoods and residents, the perspectives analyzed here are developed from the standpoint of the current disaster, after the evacuation of the sinking area, considering the pathways that point toward an uncertain future.

Therefore, the approach adopted here is that of a foreigner to the disaster area. The present work weaves other perspectives that develop, initially, through external contact with the area studied — by reading newspaper articles, wandering through Google Street View, and collecting and studying images. Subsequently, through an empirical and personal engagement with the space, photography becomes a fundamental tool for creating a dialogue between this foreign perspective and the perception of various layers of that sinking territory — from the striking presence of vegetation amid the ruins to the absence of people in the affected neighborhoods. In this context, it is necessary to review the concept of inhabiting as developed by Martin Heidegger (2008) and Igor Guatelli (2012), who also contribute to philosophical studies of architecture. In addition, Fernando Atique's (2019) reflections support the construction of a perception of the relationship between architecture and memory. The lived experience on-site is further deepened by the corpographic studies of Paola Jacques (2008), which allow us to capture *in loco* the sensations aroused by the wandering body in space—such as fear, silence, empathy, and even loneliness. Italo Calvino's (2003) narrative in *Invisible Cities* connects to reflections on other possibilities of human experience in the city, memory, and the diversity of places[2]. Finally, discussions with members of the Laboratory for the Interpretation of Inhabited Nuclei (PPGAU-UFAL) were fundamental for understanding both the contextualization of the case and its effects on the urban fabric.

Maceió is promoted and recognized both within and outside Brazil for its exuberant beaches. However, based on the experience of the authors of this article, outside this geographical area, little is heard about the devastating challenge that the city has been facing since 2018, with the largest nationally reported incident occurring only in December 2023[3], when Braskem's mine 18 collapsed (CPI da Braskem, 2024). Although this is not the first time in the last decade that socio-environmental disasters have been caused by mining in Brazil — as seen in the cases of Mariana and Brumadinho in Minas Gerais (southeast Brazil) — Maceió differs in that the soil continues to collapse, and it is still impossible to measure the long-term impacts.

1 As examples, we mention here works linked to the Federal University of Alagoas: theses by Marina Medeiros (2022) and Poliana Oliveira (2023), dissertation by Patrícia Vieira (2022), and final course projects by Paulo dos Santos (2023) and Vitória Silva (2025).

2 Given the methodology presented and the convergence between the bibliographic study and the empirical experience of on-site recognition of the disaster location, some references from the authors mentioned, along with others essential to the research narrative, will be highlighted in footnotes throughout the text as a way of prioritizing the authors' debate around the discussions presented in this work.

3 As the time of the writing (November 2025).

Fig. 1: Building located in the Farol neighborhood in Maceió, Alagoas. Source: Tamires Cassela, 2024.

In contrast, Figure 1 suggests a reoccupation of spaces by other configurations of life. Vegetation, in particular, emerges as one of the forms of resistance[4] to the vacancy of neighborhoods, taking over buildings, streets, electrical wiring (now deactivated), and various traces left by humans who once inhabited that location. Although we no longer find urban movements there, such as vehicles and people circulating on the streets and sidewalks, observing this re-inhabiting by plants, which reclaim the space that was once theirs, reminds us of Ailton Krenak's (2022) teachings on how wildlife can be. This leads us to ask: are there permanencies in a place uninhabited by people? How can "foreigners" contribute to understanding this current transformation? Bluteau (1789, p. 567, our translation) defines a foreigner as "one who was born in a strange land, not naturalized in the one where he resides." Although none of the authors who wrote these words resided in the affected neighborhoods, we have some connection to them, so this "outside perspective" leads us to feel empathy in the face of the misfortune and unhappiness that have plagued the capital of Alagoas in recent years. From this perspective, through empirical approaches, the aim was not to seek or expect to encounter an image of the place; after all, these were not neighborhoods we had directly experienced — that is, we do not carry memories in which they appear, nor do we recognize them. Kevin Lynch (1960) makes us reflect on this through his analysis of the perception of inhabitants of North American cities, where the effects of physical objects (roads, boundaries, neighborhoods, nodal points, and landmarks) influence both individual and collective memory. The symbolism of these elements — in their qualities (shape, color, or arrangement) — allows for the creation of well-structured mental images, and when they are constantly altered, they can

[4] Anai Britos (2022, p. 3-4, our translation) writes about a warning against "vegetal blindness" and proposes that we remember that "before this region was transformed into a concrete jungle, it was a forest". She reflects on how these plants occupy space without much effort and how "spontaneous vegetation is truly surprising" that even though they are not cultivated, they "subsist at any cost".

illustrate “practical and emotional strains”[5] (Lynch, 1960, p. 86). It can be observed that these elements are dissolved in the subsidence of neighborhoods in Maceió, as the public image is now different — that of disaster — and the individual image is significantly affected by the absence of people, vehicles, sounds, and all the movements that a city, even on a micro scale, commonly reverberates.

In this way, the empirical encounter with the unknown and a possible openness to diverse experiences shape this writing in its methodological process, characterized as records of a foreign[6] perspective on the disaster. It is, therefore, a study of space through perceptions foreign to the territory, which are first established through virtual research tools and later supported by direct contact with the space. Dialogues, clashes, and confrontations unfold between the productions and appropriations of urban practices, the spatial interrelationships of divergent interests at different scales (local, regional, national, and global), and how cosmogonies and worldviews impact the processes of organizing urban life.

2 Sunken routes

According to an article published on the Agência Brasil website (Rodrigues, 2023), part of the ground in Maceió subsided by approximately two meters between the start of the first tremors in 2018 and December 2023, leading to the rapid removal of the population in the affected area to other parts of the city. This lowering of the ground surface transformed the streets, which became empty of people and ceased to be part of the city's dynamics, distorting the public image previously described by Lynch (1960). All routes were interrupted, including buses, light rail vehicles, and cars, which were redirected from that area. The emptying resulted in the inaccessibility of the buildings closed by Braskem, which leads us to reflect on the transformations of the place. All the openings that allowed exchange between interior and exterior spaces were closed, leading the observer to wander around outside. When we evaluate these points, additional spatial layers become blurred, beyond the dichotomy between public and private, or interior and exterior. If we consider the hoardings and walls erected, as well as the access openings closed to prevent people from entering the buildings in the affected areas, according to Bruno Zevi's criticism (1957, p. 28), we would be talking about non-architectures, considering that “no work lacking interior space can be considered architecture.” However, just as “exterior and interior do not mean external and internal places” (Guatelli, 2012, p. 110, our translation), the distance between what is or is not considered architecture, just as between the inhabited and the uninhabited, allows us to reflect on the fragility of these concepts by looking at the space that permeates each duality. Instead of creating a polarity, it may be interesting to note how these spaces intersect when observed through gaps (see Figure 2), revealing, for example, that although there are no people occupying the interior spaces of the buildings in the affected area, we are still talking about architecture and now, as this territory belongs to Braskem[7], we are also talking about a private space. This brings us closer to Lynch's (1960, p. 1-2) thinking when he explains that:

> At every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear (...). Nothing is experienced in itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences. (...) The moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities, are as important as the stationary physical parts.

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[5] As exemplified by the author through the case of Los Angeles city.

[6] In this way, from a foreign perspective, we recognize that the perceptions of space are expanded beyond the disaster, recognizing in elements, such as vegetation, an attempt of the space to re-exist, reinhabiting the memories left by the forcibly displaced population.

[7] Although the initial term used for compensation of families affected by Braskem's mining activities is “indemnification”, the Public Prosecutor's Office itself recognizes the transfer of the occupied areas to the company, as demonstrated in the second paragraph of clause 58 of the Agreement to Extinguish the Socio-Environmental Public Civil Action (Case No. 0806577-74. 2019.4.05.8000), which states: “Braskem undertakes not to build, for commercial or residential purposes, in the areas that were originally private **and transferred to it** as a result of the implementation of the Financial Compensation Program (...)” (Brazil, 2020, emphasis added, our translation).

Fig. 2: Observe through gaps. Source: Wanderson Barbosa, 2024.

When comparing Figure 3 — consisting of photomontages of maps generated with Google Maps in 2024 (top image) and in 2013 (bottom image) — we can see the emergence of a territorial emptying in part of the coastline at Laguna Mundaú (corresponding to the Mutange neighborhood), where the buildings have been completely demolished and cleared. In fact, the boundary with Pinheiro, an adjacent neighborhood, no longer exists in physical terms (roads, landmarks, etc.), but only on the city's administrative map. Figure 3 shows us, in ruins, a section of the area affected by Braskem's mining activities and also allows us to access a pre-disaster urban fabric of Maceió. For the embodied recognition of the space, we use Paola Jacques' (2008) wandering practice, which is defined by the author as a method contrary to the traditional instrument of urban experience. She considers the free experience, in which the “wanderer does not see the city only from above, in a map-like representation, but experiences it from within, without necessarily producing any representation of this experience beyond, of course, their corporographies that are already incorporated, inscribed in their own body” (Jacques, 2008, n.p., our translation). Like those experienced in the Pinheiro neighborhood, the paths resemble a post-apocalyptic scenario, a ghost town, with an atmosphere of abandonment and transformation. When traversing these same spaces in previous years through Google Street View[8], it is noticeable, beyond the presence of people, the former existence of spatial nodal points that were references for the urban population, such as markets, workshops, bakeries, and restaurants. Today, it has become almost impossible to identify the type of some buildings among the ruins, and the built landmarks are beginning to shift to a

[8] Probably the most accessible tool, in the absence of people, for foreigners to get in touch with part of the city by looking at different eras. Considering that “photographs open up views of the world to the observer” (Flusser, 2009, p. 37, our translation), we use this intermediation in an attempt to bring the observer and the observed object closer together from other moments, considering how the space is and what it was.

tree, a cactus, graffiti on the walls, and even unexpected sensory markers, such as the sound of backhoes. As Adele Belitardo describes,

> Between cracks and silence, part of Maceió has been transformed into a kind of ghost town, indelibly and painfully marked by the disaster caused by Braskem. From the first tremors to the most recent events, once vibrant neighborhoods have been transformed into desolate and demolished landscapes (Belitardo, 2023, n.p., our translation).

Fig. 3: Partial map of neighborhoods sinking in 2024 and 2013, respectively. Source: Google Maps, adapted by the authors, 2024.

During visits to the collapsed area, several words come to mind, some arising amidst a profusion of feelings and others written by the residents themselves on the walls of their homes, such as: mourning, death, loss, help, emptiness, silence. The latter is interpreted not only as the absence of sounds, because they do exist, but also by the apparent uncertainty of the paths to be taken in the future. The following photomontage (Figure 4) shows three moments of the same view and exemplifies the transformation of the space. Among the records collected *in loco*, as well as in the images taken from Google Street View, it is possible to perceive a metamorphosis of the landscape, which resulted from the exodus of the population over seven years, with the first image from 2024, the second from 2022, and the third from 2019. The initial contact with the images of buildings displaying their roofs removed, cracks in the streets, and gray concrete increasingly giving way to green vegetation, in a way, directs the imagination to try to identify an image of the abandoned space. Thus, that city, once intended for people, is being transformed by other ways of inhabiting. As Emanuele Coccia (2020) works with the concept of metamorphosis applied to a living body, such as plants and animals, throughout this investigation, we realize that the philosopher's conceptions also extend to the built, or demolished, environment, in this symbiosis between being and non-being, that is, between the built space and the different forms of life that can emerge from it.

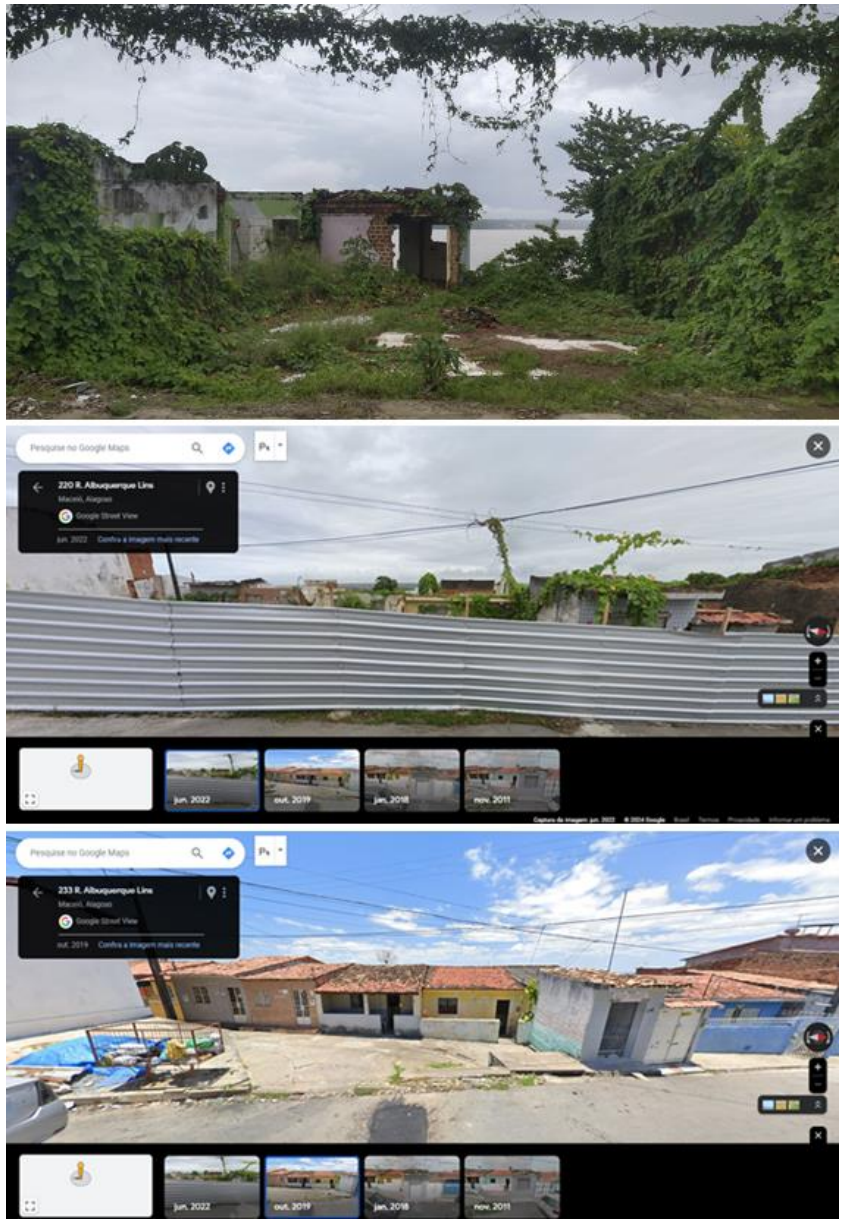

Fig. 4: A section of the Farol neighborhood in 2024, just above the same view in 2022, and finally, a view from 2019. Source: Google Street View, adapted by the authors, 2024.

Looking at the socio-environmental disaster in Maceió from a foreign perspective is also like witnessing the passage of time. It is a view not shaped by lived relationships and memories of what were once the neighborhoods of Pinheiro, Farol, Bom Parto, Mutange, and Bebedouro. Another testimony emerges from the relationship with the subsiding location, exploring the layers of the event through the senses (initially sight, hearing, and imagination), contrasted with the activity in loco, which adds other emotional layers to the process. This feeling can be reinforced by Calvino (2003), who presents the idea that differences disappear when we travel, because “each city takes to resembling all cities, places exchange their form, order, distances, a shapeless dust cloud invades the continents” (Calvino, 1974, p. 137). And then, in the dialogues described by the author, the traveler Marco Polo says that “that the more one was lost in unfamiliar quarters of distant cities. The more one understood the other cities he had crossed to arrive there” (Calvino, 1974, p. 28). This encounter with the unknown neighborhoods of Maceió demonstrates what we have already recognized in other cities — whether when we notice vegetation growing in urban spaces, when we pass through deserted alleys, or even when we see graffiti and posters on the city walls, for example — as if every place carried echoes of many others.

3 Dis-re-inhabiting

Fernando Atique (2019, p.165) reminds us that “(...) architecture shapes the city because, although it is formal and functional discourse, it is also image, repository of representations, a trigger of memories, and material support for urban references”. Incorporating dis-re-inhabiting into the subsiding neighborhoods of Maceió brings us closer to the perception that the place has not entirely vanished. For this reason, we understand that the evacuation of people from the neighborhoods affected by Braskem's mining activities aligns with the idea of dis-inhabiting. However, before thinking about the uninhabited space, it is interesting to reveal what characterizes the inhabited space. In this sense, Heidegger (2008, p. 128, our translation) demonstrates, based on a semantic and etymological study of the word “inhabit”, that it is related to the word “build”, establishing three ways of perception:

> 1. *Bauen*, to build is truly to inhabit;
>
> 2. *Wohnen*, to inhabit is the way mortals are and exist on earth;
>
> 3. In the sense of inhabiting, building unfolds in two meanings: building, understood as cultivation and growth, and building in the sense of erecting structures.
>
> Thinking carefully about these three moments, we will find a clue, and thus be able to observe that, as long as we do not think that all building is, in itself, a form of dwelling, we will not be able to question sufficiently, much less decide appropriately, what building is in its essence. We do not inhabit because we build. On the contrary. We build and come to build as we inhabit, that is, as we are like those who inhabit (...).

The construction of the place was cultivated by people who made it their home — whether through architectural and urban construction, experiences, recollections, or memories. Even if, when looking at it “from the outside” this perception seems distant, it is possible to imagine that other lives existed there. This sense of being-in-the-world is destabilized as human dis-inhabiting is forced and the emptying transforms what we know as city, neighborhood, street, residences, schools, balconies, among other constructions. Daily life, interpersonal exchanges, the habit of inhabiting, everything we normally find in a city, now seems to conform to a large sculptural setting, not static, but seemingly habitable (see Figure 5). Guatelli explains that architecture is unlikely to be purely contemplative and admired only as an object, even in the face of sculptures that create a momentary habitable environment, such as the works of Richard Serra. For the author, “the inexorable murality of architecture will always create an outside and an inside to be occupied, inhabited, and appropriated” (Guatelli, 2012, pp. 16-17, our translation). Walking through the neighborhoods, we encounter other ways of inhabiting them (Figure 6). The way that architecture exists is not the same as its conception, or at least not what we are used to. We notice vegetation spreading fluidly over buildings, wires, and other artifacts; animals, such as birds and reptiles reclaiming their living space there (or simply becoming visible). A spatial condition is then revealed, not intended for humans to linger or live in[9], but rather a presence represented by other elements and other forms of life.

[9] After all, we inhabit in other ways, and dwellings do not always embody the idea of inhabiting (Heidegger, 2008).

Fig. 5: Encounter with other ways of living in sinking neighborhoods in Maceió, Alagoas. Source: Tamyres Oliveira e Wanderson Barbosa, 2024.

Even in this scenario, there is controlled[10] access to the area, inhibiting other ways of living, even free contemplation. It seems that, after the spatial emptying by humans, we are faced with a private and, at the same time, unsafe space. Gray days and silent streets evoke deserted alleys, sometimes with no way out, due to hoardings and traffic restrictions, like some places we usually avoid in a city. The architectural types are made up of buildings with windowless openings sealed with unfinished bricks, with gaps left by removed elements — openings that allow a glimpse of a destroyed interior full of traces. Some have only walls, without roofs or slabs, and are disfigured from their uses. Despite this destabilization, the space does not lose its function. The expressions written[11] on the walls and hoardings, signs directing to escape routes, the noises of backhoes echoing through the empty streets, or even through the debris and ruins, are traces of a possible inhabiting perceived by the gaze of those who have neither passed nor lived there.

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10 For example, when walking through the streets of the Farol neighborhood, it is common to encounter guards inspecting the area and warning about the risks.

11 Reflecting on the idea of presence in architecture, on how we inhabit space, Guatelli (2012, p. 19, our translation) recounts that, in an interview published in the Italian magazine Domus, "(...) Derrida says that 'writing is a place to live', in addition to defending 'an architecture where desire can live. (...) For him, when we write, we are inhabiting, because both the act of writing and that of inhabiting require time for reflection and the activation of inert support in the case of writing, the blank sheet, and in the case of architecture, space. (...) If writing is inhabiting, inhabiting is making inscriptions in space, how these inscriptions can be or occur opens up and enriches an inquiring perspective".

Fig. 6: View of other forms of life in the sinking neighborhoods of Maceió, Alagoas. Source: Tamyres Fontenele, 2024.

The view from above, looking down on the old Mutange neighborhood, is a mass of accumulated rubble, arranged like a series of identical graves. Perhaps it is a coherent perception to imagine a large cemetery there; after all, homes, schools, markets, bakeries, smells, colors, and sounds have died. But what remains in these places where not even the boundaries of streets and blocks can be identified? Where we do not know what is public or private? What is this kind of inhabiting? Guatelli (2012) proposes a reflection on how we, as architects and urban planners, are accustomed to seeking the definition of spaces and their programmatic contents, but this restricts and conditions the uses and modes of appropriation, leading us to repeat models and routines. So, are we faced with a space open to multiple meanings? The brutal modification of the image of the place conflicts with the space-use relationship, opening up to the space-time relationship. After all, the predetermination of the use of space is no longer part of the place and now connects to an openness to other meanings and representations, without omitting a past that once shaped another space. Even though it is an old neighborhood that has disappeared in material terms, it seems to already harbor another function. It is the metamorphosis of a territory, a reinvention, a re-inhabitation.

Fig. 7: Vegetation proliferating among abandoned buildings; Graffiti on a wall of a residence in the Pinheiro neighborhood, Maceió; Expressions and temporalities of the affected neighborhoods. Source: Wanderson Barbosa, 2024.

“Your gaze scans the streets as if they were written pages: the city says everything you must think, makes you repeat her discourse, and while you believe you are visiting Tamara you are only recording the names with which she defines herself and all her parts” (Calvino, 1974, p. 14). We are not facing one of Calvino’s invisible cities (2003), but we have here a city that contains a little bit of all of them. The phrases “I’m going to graffiti the whole city just so she can see how much she is missed” or “the happiness of this family was collapsed by Braskem” tell us about loss and nostalgia, manifestos that record the presence of people who have been removed from the place (see Figures 7 to 9). So we ask ourselves: is there any form of permanence within the rubble?

Fig. 8: Expression manifested by the population living in the affected neighborhoods; Traces and memories of human occupation in the subsiding neighborhoods. Source: Wanderson Barbosa, 2024.

Inhabiting leaves traces, and these traces, in turn, are subject to various temporalities related to both time and space. In this web, Bluteau (1789, pp. 449-450, our translation) characterizes time as the “measure of the duration of things”, while temporality evokes “something that lasts within a limited, non-eternal, transitory time”. Thus, through the expressions of the place, we perceive that there was a time for living, growing, caring, relating, a time of trembling, insecurity, evasion, impermanence, and revolt. As visitors, we wandered through the streets of these neighborhoods in decline and saw other temporalities of this tenuous space between inhabiting and dis-inhabiting: among some elements, we highlight the time of traces, of silence, the sound of the tractor, and the time of re-inhabiting. The most visible traces are manifested in the architecture itself, partially demolished, boarded up, occupied. With each step taken through the remaining streets, it is possible to perceive a diversity of traces, whether through graffiti on the walls of buildings or in the plants that residents had to leave behind. Between one material trace and another, it is still possible to perceive more intrinsic ones, such as the relationship between house and landscape, framed by a window, now occupied by emptiness.

Fig. 9: Symbiosis between vegetation and ruins in the Farol neighborhood, Maceió, Alagoas; Proliferating amid concrete. Source: Wanderson Barbosa, 2024.

While human silence permeates the streets, questions take over the imagination: how large is the affected area? There is a polygon outlined by civil defense as the impact area, but the entire city has been affected by the consequences of mining, emptying certain neighborhoods and overpopulating others. Where did the displaced people go? The same silence that occasionally permeates the streets of Pinheiro, Farol, Bebedouro, Mutange, and Bom Parto seems to have settled over these questions, which, at least in the affected neighborhoods, is only broken by the sounds of tractors. What will remain to tell the story of this past? During empirical encounters with the affected region, the noise of the machines echoed like a soundtrack in the neighborhoods (Figure 10). We heard the silence of emptiness in the face of fear, while walking through the deserted streets, and even when we encountered the noise of demolition. In those ruins, we interpreted that people buried much more than building — they buried their socio-spatial relationships, their memories, and part of their existence. The sound of the tractor reminds us of the ephemerality of permanence, relationships, and life itself.

Fig. 10: Demolition of buildings in the Mutange neighborhood. Fonte: Tuanne Monteiro, 2022.

Thus, re-inhabiting emerges among the ruins from the manifestation of non-human forms of life. These other forms, especially vegetation, re-inhabit the space that was once theirs, building a symbiosis with the remains of the ruins. Similarly, various animals occupy both the disconnected electrical wires and the damp areas of the buildings, which, without roofs, create a favorable environment for their permanence. Observing these spaces from the outside and self-characterizing our view as an “other” perspective is to confirm the existence of an initial one, that belongs to the people who inhabited and still inhabit the affected areas. It is within these plural temporalities that we trace our relationships with the place, from perspectives originating in contact with the socio-environmental disaster. A conscious view that there were other times before the population left and that others will emerge from the rubble, either through the re-inhabiting of these other lives that have increasingly taken over the spaces, or through the silence of a still uncertain future. Opening up possibilities to see another way of inhabiting is to think about how architecture (construction) follows a latent logic and does not reveal other events or meanings. If this intransitive space[12], due to its indefinition, does not have a pre-established design, it allows for the most diverse forms of appropriation and what we can learn from them. What remains in this dwelling is the permanence of a

[12] Igor Guatelli (2019, p. 107) suggests that this intransitivity does not have a reproducible model.

sparing[13] of what was, of a time not so distant from what is today, and the uncertainty of the near future in terms of what will become of it, among the possibilities we can envision: new multifamily buildings and paved streets. There is everything that the expressions in the writings convey. There is also, even in the rubble, the permanence of disaster, of acts of emptying, of a space in transformation.

Thus, the movement of dis-re-inhabiting the subsiding space of Maceió presents itself as a palimpsest of time and space — provoking the rewriting of a temporality (time of disaster) in a spatial section (affected neighborhoods) — through the disaster caused by Braskem. From the combination of the processes of dis-inhabiting and re-inhabiting that occur in coexisting layers of time, we can see a trajectory with no temporal linearity, since people were dis-inhabiting the areas while vegetation was gradually re-inhabiting them. In this sense, the concept emerges from the very resilience of the space, showing us subtle signs of resistance, seeking other ways to re-exist, like a weed that, even without cultivation, proliferates amid apparent chaos.

4 Final considerations: does permanence exist?

Fig. 11: A gap overlooking the old Mutange neighborhood in Maceió, Alagoas. Source: Wanderson Barbosa (2024).

If it exists, can permanence be reinvented? Perhaps it is the idea of a territory[14] in process, where the detachment from material existence or even the ruin of neighborhoods lead to chaos, even to new dynamics and relationships — exemplified here by the writings that appear along the way; after all, it is these expressions that give dimension to dwelling (Heidegger,

[13] It is understood from Heidegger's (2008, p. 129) ideas that the meaning of the word is intimately connected to the idea of a dwelling that remains within us. “Real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we "free" it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we reflect that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth”.

[14] This idea of territory is based on the thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987, pp. 311), when they reflect on the search for order amid chaos, when writings are a refuge, just like that “little song” that seems to take us to an intimate place.

2008) there. It seems that the essential is not in form or matter, but in spaces and dimensions that we cannot reach or access as foreigners, but that become visible when we read that “saudade hurts” or “a family used to live here”. Figure 11 frames a landscape of disparities. The flowered tile conflicts with the view through the gap onto the fragments of what once was there. The calm of the Mundaú lagoon contrasts with the pile of debris located on its shore, while the silence of the green area is set in opposition to the noise of the backhoes. The five neighborhoods affected by Braskem's mining present varied scenarios, as well as different identities, but it is possible to identify a common feature: contrast, which, although defined as that which “opposes” (Bluteau, 1789, p. 324, our translation), opens up space for what is accentuated between temporalities, between inhabiting and dis-inhabiting, between the silence and the sound of the tractor. The marks of the place coexist in presences and absences, conforming to spatial tensions and articulations, and everything is situated in the present; after all, “(...) the city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the Bags (...)” (Calvino, 1974, p. 10-11).

The foreign perspective on the disaster evokes Edgar Morin's (2020) discourse, which sounded like a consolation to us in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic: the understanding that technical, scientific, and economic[15] progress does not necessarily mean human evolution, and that crises can be seen as opportunities to confront attitudes and ideas, and to recognize differences regarding the act of building and artificially occupying the natural space that has been left to us. Thus, we feel motivated to envision another challenging perspective that concerns not only urban management in terms of interventionist and preservationist proposals that consider pre-existing conditions and traumatic memories, but, above all, the conception of the very idea of inhabiting, as a central challenge addressed in this article, encompassing the development of integrated and participatory policies, as well as the implementation of urban projects that reflect the diversity of interests, cosmogonies, and worldviews involved in multilateral disputes over the urban space.

In this way, just as the future of the subsiding region of Maceió remains uncertain, the final considerations of this work do not culminate in a definitive conclusion. Just as we consider dis-re-inhabiting to be a dynamic process, we understand the reflection proposed here to be the main outcome of this discussion, creating a historical record in itself. The foreign perspective — that of someone outside the space and time observed — made it possible, throughout the investigation, tby means of immersions in the affected area, to capture images that convey this same perspective through subtle, or not so subtle, elements that redesign the space. We thus have the confluence between dis-inhabiting and re-inhabiting, creating a text-image narrative. Whether through the concepts of Heidegger (2008) and Guatelli (2012) on inhabiting, Atique (2019) on evanescent architecture, the definitions of Bluteau (1789), or the passages through Calvino's invisible cities (2009), we realize that the movement of dis-re-inhabiting does not end; on the contrary, it perpetuates itself through an ongoing metamorphosis.

In this sense, despite all the shocks and negative impacts, we believe that the circumstantial dynamics triggered by the disaster, which we summarize here as dis-re-inhabiting, open up significant opportunities for us to pay attention to what Krenak (2025) conceptualized as “reflorescence”. In other words, we would be faced with a socio-spatial appropriation that understands this type of devastated urban structure as the very ruin of nature, and that advocates the coexistence of artifice and the environment in a more integrated way. Especially because it was the latter that was first pierced, mistreated, and made to collapse...

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[15] In this context, we can also mention mechanized urbanism, which is still considered an advance.

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URBAN SOILS AND ORGANIC FARMING: CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

SOLOS URBANOS E AGRICULTURA ORGÂNICA: CONSERVAÇÃO E RESILIÊNCIA

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Assis, L. L. R. A. (2025). Urban Soils and Organic Farming: Conservation and Resilience. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 189-198
https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.238727

Abstract

The article proposes an epistemological shift in the understanding of soil beyond its physical and agronomic roles, positioning it as a living interface that connects productive practices, symbolic regimes, and diverse worldviews amid the current ecological crisis. The research was conducted in Conselheiro Lafaiete, Minas Gerais, in southeastern Brazil, comparing the chemical attributes of soils under three different management regimes: agroecological organic agriculture, urban soil, and eucalyptus monoculture. It included the determination of pH in water, organic matter, remaining phosphorus, macronutrients, and micronutrients extracted by Mehlich-1, and exchangeable cations (Ca^{2+}, Mg^{2+}, Al^{3+}) by KCl 1 mol L^{-1}. The analyses revealed that organic agriculture promotes biologically active and resilient soils, while urban and monoculture soils show degradation and biogeochemical impoverishment, expressing extractive and fragmented territorial models. Through the lens of Intermedia Ecocriticism, soil is understood as an ecological medium and material archive of civilizational choices, reflecting tensions between science, poetics, and territorial politics. By broadening the view of soil as a symbolic and political agent, the study contributes to debates on environmental justice, food sovereignty, and the urgent need to reconceptualize the relationship between humans and territories, especially in contemporary urban and rural dynamics.

Keywords: Urban Areas, Soil Quality, Agroecological Systems, Sustainability.

1 Introduction

The socio-environmental transformations driven by climate change have intensified disputes at multiple scales — from local to global — over how territories, natural resources, and urban and rural livelihoods should be managed. Brazil's selection as the host of COP30 (30th United Nations Climate Change Conference) highlights not only the geopolitical centrality of the Amazon but also the urgency of reframing debates on sustainable soil management as a structuring axis of climate mitigation and adaptation policies (Rodrigues & Simonetti, 2024). In this context, distinct rationalities come into conflict: on one hand, ecological practices associated with organic agriculture and agroecological systems; on the other, the productivist logic of forest monocultures and unplanned urban expansion. Organic agriculture, grounded in traditional knowledge and management techniques that emphasize natural fertilization, the absence of pesticides, and soil conservation, has become consolidated as a counter-hegemonic practice. It increases soil organic matter (SOM), enhances biological activity, and promotes soil fertility, challenging conventional production models (Loss et al., 2015). In turn, urban soils — often neglected in territorial planning — reveal symptoms of physical and chemical degradation resulting from processes of impermeabilization, compaction, and contamination, reflecting the materialization of exclusionary policies and anthropogenic pressures in highly disputed landscapes (Batista et al., 2018).

These contrasting forms of soil appropriation and management are not merely ecological or technical; they express different worldviews, rationalities, and struggles over meaning. By making visible the qualities and limitations of these soils — in their urban and rural contexts — symbolic and media disputes also emerge regarding what is understood as sustainability, progress, nature, and territory. In this way, soil transcends its status as a mere physical substrate, becoming a political, cultural, and communicational arena where narratives of domination, resistance, and socio-environmental transformation intersect. From this perspective, it becomes a central category for interpreting climate injustices (Mancilla & Baard, 2024; Spiegel, 2021), as it expresses, in its materiality and in its unequal uses, the consequences of exclusionary development models and the struggles for recognition and redistribution within the territory. Thus, soil constitutes a stage of confrontation between hegemonic rationalities and emancipatory practices, articulating ecological, social, and epistemic dimensions in the pursuit of climate justice and more equitable socio-ecological transitions.

According to Osnar Aragão and authors (2023), land use has a marked effect on the microbiological attributes employed as indicators, exhibiting higher values in clayey soils and forest environments. Low plant diversity, restricted nutrient cycling, and soil acidification driven by root exudates compromise chemical attributes over time, especially when management practices do not include strategies to replenish and conserve fertility (Ferreira, 2021). When comparing soils under different uses—organic agriculture, urban areas, and forest monocultures—it becomes possible not only to understand the physical and chemical effects of human management, but also to decipher the narratives that sustain (or silence) such interventions.

Organic agriculture, grounded in conservationist practices and the intensive use of organic matter, tends to restore natural soil fertility and promote greater ecological resilience. Urban soils, on the other hand—often impermeable, contaminated, or compacted—reveal the effects of exclusionary and disorderly land-use logics. In eucalyptus monocultures, acidification and the depletion of exchangeable bases emerge as direct consequences of the extractivist rationality that underpins these production systems (Ferreira, 2021; Batista et al., 2018; Loss et al., 2015).

These conditions of degradation, especially in urban contexts and homogeneous forest systems, reveal fractures that extend beyond agronomic constraints. They are inscribed as material traces of development models that subordinate ecological complexity to metrics of economic efficiency. In this sense, Intermedial Ecocriticism becomes a fundamental interpretive lens: by exploring the links between territorial management, regimes of representation, and ways of perceiving the environmental crisis, it exposes how specific impacts are systematically naturalized or rendered invisible (Klanovicz & Ramos, 2023). The low availability of micronutrients or the progressive acidification of soils should not be read merely as technical data. Instead, they are traces of a historical process of ecological and epistemological simplification—a legacy of modern narratives that glorify productivity and technical control over nature. Ecocriticism, as outlined by Greg Garrard (2006), destabilizes such narratives by demonstrating how the relationship between nature and culture is mediated by symbolic structures that normalize degradation as a “cost of progress.” Intermediality, in Claus Clüver’s (2023) terms, broadens this critique by examining how these realities are translated across languages and media—from cartography to poetry, from scientific photography to protest art—revealing how soil is discursively shaped, narrated, or silenced.

The soil, in this context, becomes an epistemic territory, a site of confrontation between rationalities, between extractivist epistemologies and regenerative knowledge systems. From this perspective, agroecology and traditional knowledge are not merely alternative techniques, but insurgent languages that articulate matter and culture, proposing a different way of inhabiting the land and reimagining fertility: no longer as a resource to be exploited, but as a living nexus between social justice, ecological health, and territorial imagination. In this sense, this article proposes an epistemological inflection: to conceive soil not solely as a physical substrate or an object of agronomic intervention, but as a living interface between productive practices and regimes of signification, between science and poetics, between technical maps and the sensitive territories of the ecological crisis. In a time marked by the acceleration of socioenvironmental collapses and the fragmentation of discourses on sustainability, it becomes urgent to recognize soil as a symbolic and political agent, a material archive of civilizational choices, a mirror of the modes of life that structure (and destabilize) the commons.

2 Model of Investigation

The research adopts a quantitative, qualitative, and transdisciplinary approach, grounded in Intermedial Ecocriticism (Garrard, 2006; Clüver, 2023) and in Agroecology as a situated epistemology (Souza Ferreira & Cardoso, 2024). The study is based on the premise that the chemical and physical attributes of soils are not merely biophysical indicators, but also material markers of historical regimes of use, knowledge, and power. Thus, soil is understood as an epistemic and political territory that simultaneously expresses ecological and narrative processes.

The present study was conducted in the municipality of Conselheiro Lafaiete, located in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, within the facilities of the UNA higher education institution. The objective of the research was to comparatively assess the chemical attributes of soils subjected to three distinct systems of use and management, all located within the same climatic region and under similar topographic conditions, thereby minimizing external environmental interferences. All sampling sites were selected within a single climatic region and exhibited comparable topographic characteristics, ensuring environmental homogeneity and reducing external interferences that could compromise the interpretation of the results. This strategy allowed us to isolate the effects of soil management and use on its chemical attributes, reducing biases arising from climatic, geomorphological, or edaphic variability.

2.1 Sample Area

The sampled areas corresponded to: (1) Organic agricultural system — Mgbio (20°39'47"S, 43°47'09"W), characterized by agroecological practices such as the use of organic composts, absence of pesticides, and preservation of vegetative cover; (2) Urban soil (20°39'07"S, 43°47'23"W), collected from a public square flowerbed, with no history of agricultural management or regular fertilization, representing a condition of anthropized soil subjected to intense compaction and anthropogenic

disturbance; (3) Eucalyptus monoculture area (20°38'14"S, 43°47'20"W), consisting of a homogeneous plantation of species of the genus Eucalyptus, with litterfall present but under conventional management and lacking corrective fertilization. All samples were obtained under humid mesothermal tropical climate conditions (Cwa, according to Köppen, 1936), with well-defined seasonal distribution and an average annual precipitation of approximately 1,300 mm, ensuring environmental homogeneity and greater reliability of comparative data.

2.2 Chemical Analyses

Chemical analyses of the soils were performed in accordance with standardized, widely accepted methodologies for tropical soils, as described by Embrapa (2017), Tedesco, Gianello, Bissani, Bohnen, and Volkweiss (1995), and other classical authors in the technical–scientific literature on soil fertility. Laboratory procedures strictly followed the recommended protocols for soils with different textural classes—sandy, medium-textured, and clayey—ensuring representativeness and comparability of the results. Remaining phosphorus (P-rem) was analyzed by incubating 2.5 g of soil with 25 mL of a standard phosphorus solution containing 60 mg L^{-1} of P, prepared in 0.01 mol L^{-1} calcium chloride ($CaCl_2$). The suspension was shaken for 1 hour on a horizontal shaker and subsequently filtered. The concentration of remaining P in the extract was determined by spectrophotometry using the molybdo-vanadate colorimetric method, as described by Victor Alvarez and coauthors. (2000). Available boron in the soil was quantified through hot-water extraction. A 10 g soil subsample was combined with 20 mL of distilled water. The mixture was heated on a hot plate for 5 minutes, then filtered. Boron content in the extract was determined colorimetrically using the azomethine-H reagent, following the protocol described by Embrapa (2017).

Additionally, available sulfur ($S–SO_4^{2-}$) was extracted using a monocalcium phosphate solution containing 500 mg L^{-1} of P_2O_5, prepared in 0.01 mol L^{-1} acetic acid, at a soil-to-extractant ratio of 1:2.5 (m/v). After shaking the suspension for 30 minutes and filtering, the sulfur content in the extract was determined by turbidimetry, following the methodology proposed by Tedesco et al. (1995) and adopted by Embrapa (2017). Soil organic matter (O.M.) was determined by wet oxidation using the modified Walkley–Black method. For this procedure, 1 g of soil was treated with 10 mL of 4N potassium dichromate solution ($Na_2Cr_2O_7$) and 20 mL of concentrated sulfuric acid (10N) in a closed system for thermal digestion. After cooling, the excess unreduced dichromate was titrated with 0.5N ferrous ammonium sulfate (FAS) solution, using ferroin as a redox indicator. The oxidizable organic carbon (C) was converted to O.M. content using the correction factor 1.724, as initially proposed by Walkley & Black (1934).

2.3 Determination of soil pH in water

Soil pH (H_2O) was determined from a soil-to-water suspension at a 1:2.5 (m/v) ratio, according to the methodology established by Embrapa (2017). For this analysis, 10 g of air-dried and sieved soil was mixed with 25 mL of distilled water in a glass beaker. The suspension was manually stirred for approximately 1 minute and allowed to rest for 30 minutes at room temperature. pH measurements were performed using a digital pH meter, previously calibrated with standard buffer solutions at pH 4.0 and 7.0, to ensure accurate readings.

2.4 Extraction and quantification of nutrients

The extraction of phosphorus (P), sodium (Na), potassium (K), iron (Fe), zinc (Zn), manganese (Mn), and copper (Cu) was performed using the double-acid extractant known as Mehlich-1 solution, composed of 0.05 mol L^{-1} HCl and 0.0125 mol L^{-1} H_2SO_4, at a soil-to-extractant ratio of 1:10 (m/v). For each sample, 5 g of air-dried and sieved soil was transferred to Falcon-type plastic tubes containing 50 mL of the extractant solution. Samples were shaken on a horizontal shaker at 200 rpm for five minutes, following the original protocol by Mehlich (1953). After shaking, the suspensions were filtered through qualitative filter paper, and the resulting extracts were analyzed for nutrient concentrations. Macronutrients P, Na, and K were quantified by flame photometry, whereas the micronutrients Fe, Zn, Mn, and Cu were analyzed by flame atomic absorption spectrophotometry, in accordance with methodological recommendations provided by Embrapa (2017).

2.5 Calculation of Soil Fertility Attributes and Organic Matter Content

The exchangeable calcium (Ca^{2+}), magnesium (Mg^{2+}), and aluminum (Al^{3+}) contents were determined by extraction with 1 mol L^{-1} potassium chloride (KCl) at a soil-to-extractant ratio of 1:10 (m/v). For this procedure, 10 g of air-dried and sieved soil was added to 100 mL of KCl in plastic flasks, and the suspension was shaken on a horizontal shaker for 10 minutes. After filtration through qualitative filter paper, the extracts were analyzed: Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+} were quantified by flame atomic absorption spectrophotometry, whereas Al^{3+} was determined by titration with 0.025 mol L^{-1} sodium hydroxide (NaOH), using bromothymol blue as the indicator (EMBRAPA, 2017). The soil potential acidity, represented by the sum of non-exchangeable hydrogen and aluminum ions ($H^{+} + Al^{3+}$), was estimated using the SMP buffer solution (Shoemaker, McLean & Pratt, 1961). The method consisted of mixing 5 g of soil with 5 mL of the buffer solution at a 1:1 (m/v) ratio, followed by continuous shaking for one hour on a horizontal shaker. After the suspension was allowed to rest, the pH was measured using a calibrated digital pH meter. The value obtained was inserted into a specific calibration curve for the soil type, enabling the indirect estimation of $H^{+} + Al^{3+}$ content, as described by Tedesco et al. (1995).
Based on the concentrations obtained for exchangeable cations and potential acidity, the following chemical fertility indicators were calculated using formulas consolidated by Embrapa (2017):

Sum of exchangeable bases (SB): SB = Ca2+ + Mg2+ + K+ + Na+

Effective cation exchange capacity (t): t = SB + Al3+

Cation exchange capacity at pH 7.0 (T): T = SB + (H+ + Al3+)

Base saturation index (V%): V = (SB / T) × 100

Aluminum saturation index (m%): m = (Al3+ / t) × 100

3 Results and discussion

The analysis of the chemical attributes of soils under different land-use systems reveals not only measurable agronomic contrasts, but also micro-ecological expressions of broader disputes over the meanings of territory and sustainability. The empirical data indicate that the soil managed under an organic production system has a substantially higher pH (7.54), no potential acidity ($H^{+} + Al^{3+}$), and, consequently, a greater capacity to supply essential nutrients for enzymatic activity and microbial diversity (Figure 1). These attributes are not merely indicators of fertility; they reflect an epistemology of care—an intervention logic that prioritizes regenerative processes and the continuity of subterranean life as the foundation of productivity.

In contrast, the urban (pH 6.1) and eucalyptus monoculture soils (pH 6.4) exhibit higher acidity, with the homogeneous forest soil being particularly marked, with a potential acidity of 2.9 cmolc/dm^3. This value indicates profound chemical imbalances, possibly linked to the presence of recalcitrant organic compounds derived from eucalyptus litterfall (Sartorelli, 2022), which negatively affect soil structure and edaphic ecosystem functioning. Far from being neutral or natural, these edaphic patterns materialize distinct rationalities of land occupation and management. Impoverished and acidified soils in urban areas or in homogeneous forest systems embody territorial policies guided by extractive efficiency that overlook biological complexity and ecosystemic cycles in the name of productivity or urban expansion. These conditions reveal intrinsic climate injustices (Coitinho, 2024), as the impacts on soil fertility and resilience are not equitably distributed. Instead, they reflect and perpetuate socio-environmental vulnerabilities, particularly among populations that depend directly on these ecosystems for subsistence, food security, and territorial well-being. This scenario configures a simultaneous symbolic and material impoverishment, in which fertility erodes alongside traditional knowledge, biodiversity, and ways of life that could sustain an alternative paradigm of society–nature relations (Marques, 2021; Oliveira Brito et al., 2024).

In this sense, the data presented here may also be interpreted through the lens of Ecocriticism. This transdisciplinary environmental approach exposes the entanglements among technical practices, cultural representations, and power relations. The soil thus ceases to be merely a physical-chemical datum. It becomes a discursive territory-an ecological body that expresses the clash between paradigms: technocratic extractivism versus sustainability rooted in diversity, long-term ecological processes, and situated knowledge. The analysis of soils, in this context, becomes a form of critical reading of the world, an archaeology of the crisis unfolding beneath our feet.

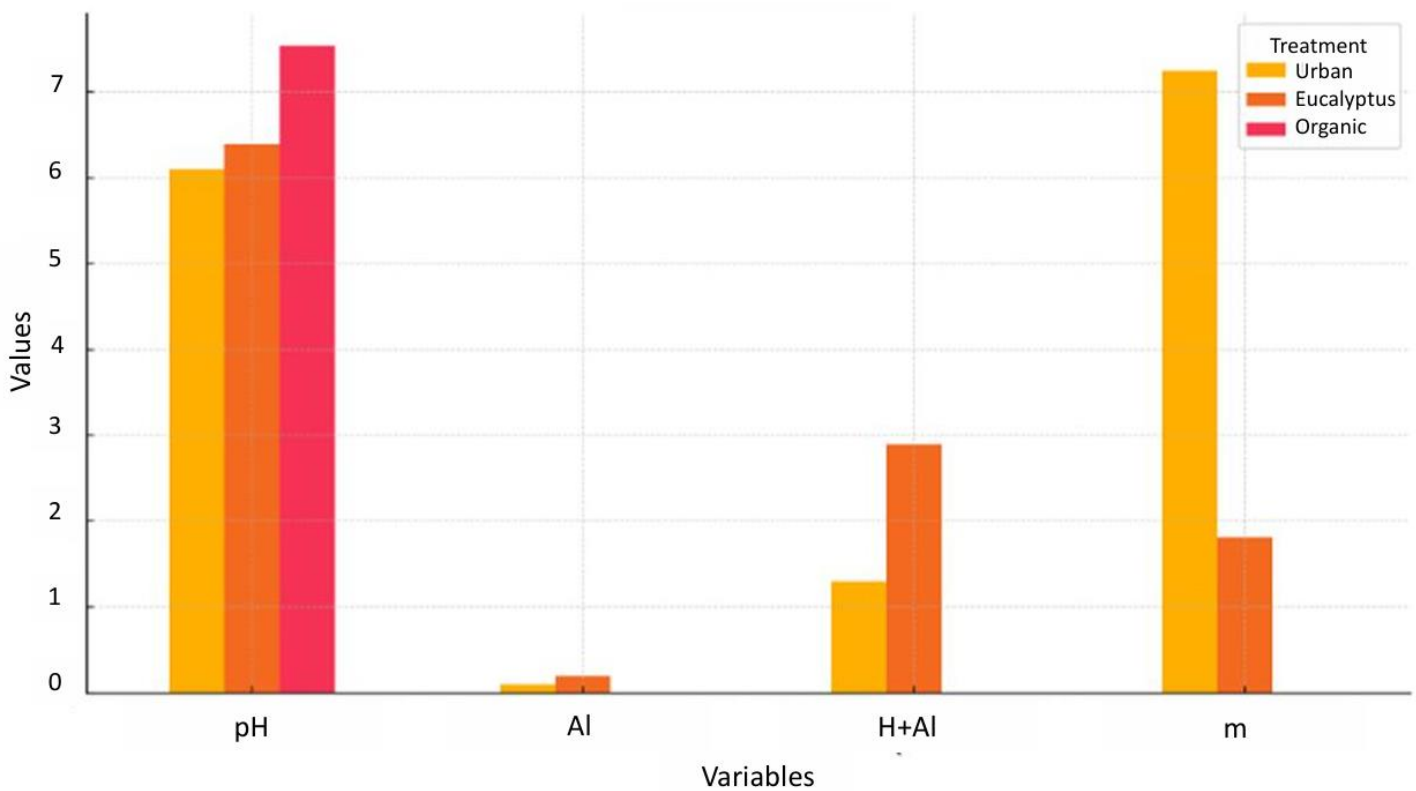

Figure 1: pH values (in water) and potential acidity ($H^+ + Al^{3+}$, extracted with SMP buffer solution) of soils under three different uses: urban area, eucalyptus plantation, and organic system with biological management (Organic). Author, 2025.

Contemporary ecocriticism has expanded its scope by engaging with multiple media and modes of expression, challenging traditional views about nature and the human role amid the environmental crisis (Carson, 2002; Vieira, 2023). By exposing the persistence of colonial logics in land appropriation, this approach enables the interpretation of soil degradation not merely as a technical outcome but as a material manifestation of historical modes of domination. The contrast among the land-use systems examined here effectively illustrates this dynamic.

In Figure 2, potassium (K) availability under the organic management system reached 609.76 mg/dm³, a value far higher than those observed in the other areas. This reflects the systematic application of K-rich organic inputs, such as ash, manure, and biofertilizers (Oliveira Brito et al., 2024). Similarly, available phosphorus (P) reached 165.75 mg/dm³, whereas the urban soil contained only 0.13 mg/dm³. This stark contrast reinforces the role of organic agriculture in restoring soil fertility without the contamination risks associated with mineral fertilizers. The urban soil was the most impoverished, displaying low organic matter content (OM), low sum of exchangeable bases (SB), low base saturation (V%), and the highest aluminum saturation (m% = 7.25%). Taken together, these indicators reveal a chemically degraded soil with limited capacity to sustain vegetation, reflecting intense and unplanned urban land use. The eucalyptus plantation exhibited relatively high values for SB (10.87 cmolc/dm³) and total cation-exchange capacity (T = 13.77 cmolc/dm³), suggesting some nutrient cycling promoted by the litter layer. However, the accumulation of organic matter was lower than in the organic system (3.94% vs. 5.25%), raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of this management model. In areas under continuous monoculture, the absence of crop rotation and unbalanced nutrient replenishment can accelerate acidification and fertility loss.

Regarding micronutrients, only the organically managed soil was assessed. The concentrations of manganese (Mn = 257.24 mg/dm³) and iron (Fe = 65.15 mg/dm³) were high, likely reflecting both local mineralogy and the active decomposition of organic matter. Sulfur (S = 25.23 mg/dm³) and zinc (Zn = 16.29 mg/dm³) also remained within suitable ranges for most crops, reinforcing the effectiveness of the agroecological system in building a fertile, functional, and diverse soil environment. In summary, the data demonstrate that soils managed according to agroecological principles are more fertile, balanced, and resilient. Conversely, urban soils and homogeneous forest plantations embody land-use models centered on extraction—models that not only degrade the soil but also reproduce socio-environmental and epistemic inequalities. The soil thus becomes a living record of the civilizational choices we make—and of the alternatives we choose to cultivate.

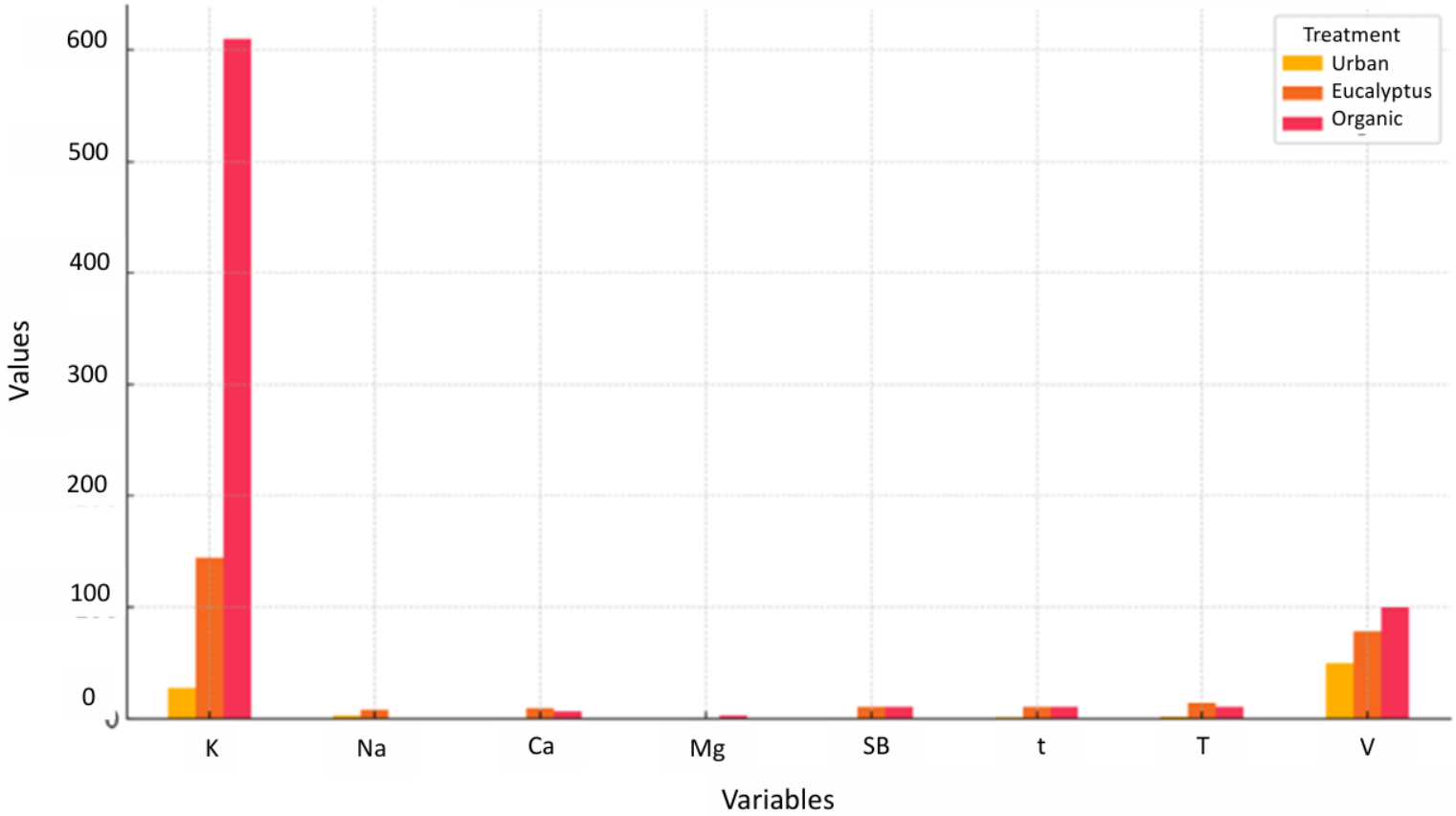

Figure 2: Concentrations of available macronutrients (mg/dm³) – Potassium (K), sodium (Na), magnesium (Mg), sum of bases (SB), effective cation exchange capacity (t), pH 7.0 (T), and base saturation (V), evaluated in soil under different treatments. Author, 2025.

Finally, the base saturation (V%) reached 100% under the organic management system, a classic indicator of a well-nourished soil with minimal exchangeable acidity, reflecting highly efficient fertility management. The comparison among treatments reinforces the potential of organic agriculture as a viable strategy for soil sustainability, aligned with the global goals established by COP30 to combat degradation and climate change. Ecocriticism (Garrard, 2006) and Intermediality (Clüver, 2023), brought together by Bruhn (2020) under the concept of Intermedial Ecocriticism, offer complementary theoretical and analytical approaches by enabling comparative studies between literature and other media, especially when linked to critical education and environmental reading of contemporary multimodal languages. This articulation becomes particularly relevant when considering the discourses emerging from different anthropogenic landscapes and their symbolic reflections. For example, the technical description of an urban soil with an extremely low—virtually absent—organic matter content, indicating the lack of vegetation cover, intense mineralization, and potential physical and chemical degradation (Figure 3), reveals an environment hostile to biological life, with minimal water and nutrient retention (Martins & Nascimento, 2022).

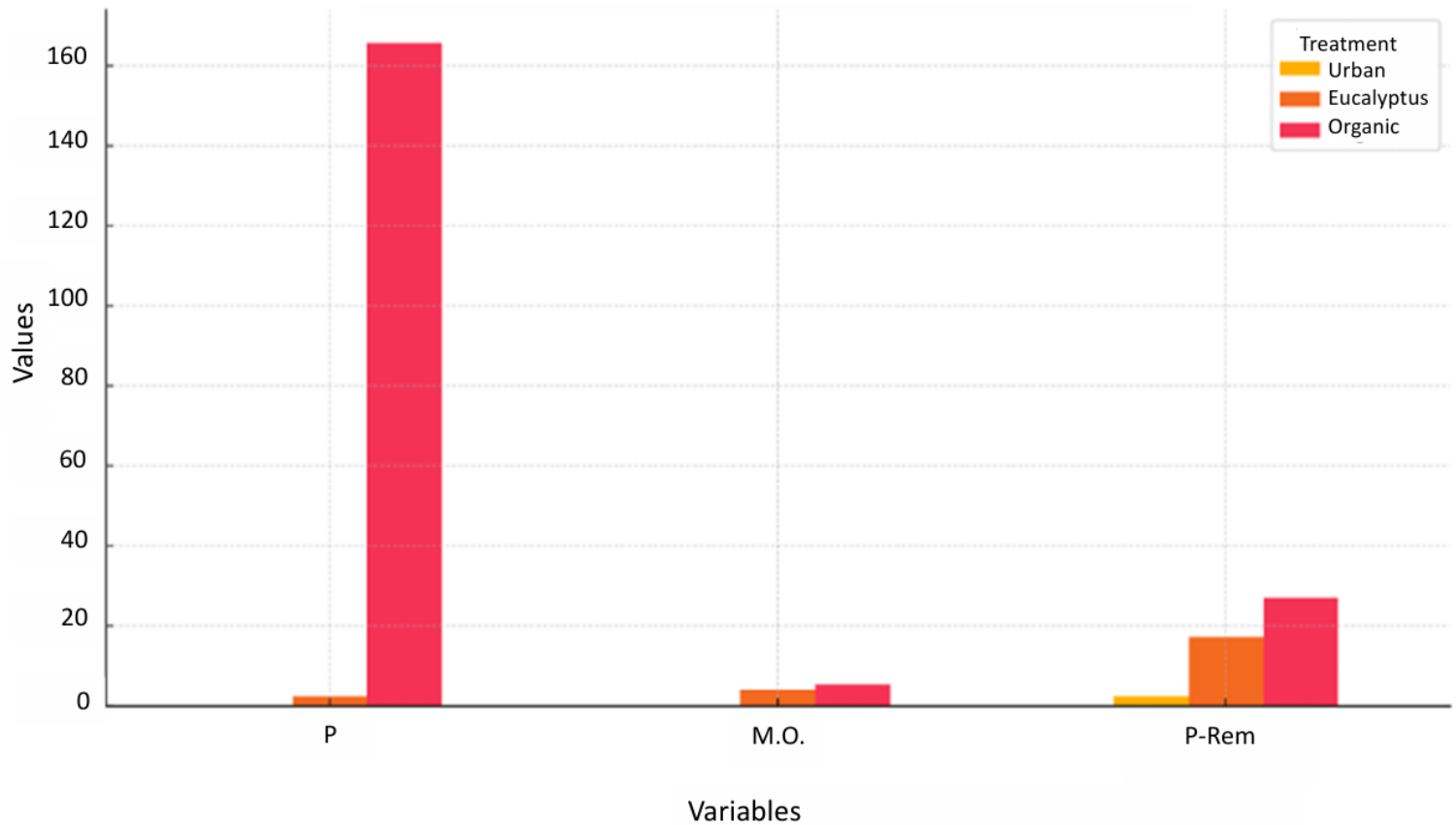

Figure 3: Concentration of phosphorus (P) (mg/dm³), organic matter (M.O.) (dag/kg), and remaining phosphorus (P-rem) (mg/L) in soil under organic farming (Organic). Author, 2025.

The soil under eucalyptus, although part of a monoculture system, exhibits a substantially higher organic matter content due to the accumulation of litter and decomposing roots. When transported into the realm of representation, these physical soil realities may be thematized, distorted, or silenced by different media—whether news reports, documentaries, literary fiction, or even advertising campaigns by forestry companies (Valdetaro, 2012; Fernandes & Barichello, 2022; Andreoli, 2023; Lozano-Ramirez, 2024). Within this context, Intermedial Ecocriticism offers a critical lens through which to understand how degraded or “green” territories—despite their ecological contrasts—can be symbolically equalized or resignified, influencing our perception of sustainability, nature, and progress. Thus, soil analysis is not restricted to agronomy; instead, it becomes key to understanding discursive and ideological disputes over what is framed as a “healthy environment” in contemporary media and educational narratives.

Although eucalyptus produces high biomass, it does not ensure a proportional accumulation of stable soil organic matter (SOM). Acidification driven by root exudates and allelopathic compounds can reduce microbial activity and, consequently, nutrient cycling (Liu et al., 2022). In the organic system, by contrast, the highest SOM content (5.25%) was observed, a direct result of conservation practices such as composting, mulching, absence of burning, and continuous use of bioinputs. Elevated SOM improves soil structure, enhances water retention, and promotes nutrient complexation, which explains the high phosphorus and micronutrient concentrations recorded in that treatment (Silva et al., 2022). Phosphorus (P) availability in urban soils was virtually nil (Figure 3), reflecting the typical nutrient neglect of these environments, where the absence of fertilization and the presence of iron and aluminum oxides lead to strong fixation and surface erosion. The low P-rem value confirms this limitation: even when applied, phosphorus tends to become unavailable to plants. In the eucalyptus soil, available phosphorus is slightly higher, with a P-rem of 17.1 mg L−1 — a positive sign compared with the urban soil, although still limited. This aligns with the conservative pattern of planted forests: superficial recycling without substantial external replacement.

Organic management stands out once again with a marked increase: 165.75 mg dm^{-3} of available phosphorus and a P-rem of 26.98 mg L^{-1}. These values suggest saturation with organic materials rich in phosphorus, such as filter cake, cured manure, or phosphorus-enriched biofertilizers (Oliveira et al., 2025). Beyond agronomic data, these indicators reveal

management models that break with extractive logics, establishing different relationships between soil, productivity, and sustainability. This fertility contrast also has discursive implications. The ways organic agriculture or eucalyptus monocultures are represented across texts, images, and media discourses produce divergent meanings of what is considered “sustainable,” “modern,” or “viable.” It is here that Ecocriticism (Garrard, 2006) and Intermediality (Clüver, 2023) intersect, as proposed by Bruhn (2020), forming Intermedial Ecocriticism: a field that articulates material data and their symbolic and mediatic representations. Reading soils—through their varying levels of fertility, degradation, or resilience—thus becomes a way of reading the world. Agronomic technique, far from neutral, is imbued with values and ideologies, mobilized in narratives that legitimize or question particular land-use models. Intermedial Ecocriticism invites us to interpret these data as part of a broader conflict between the discourse of progress and the possibilities of territorial and cultural regeneration.

From the standpoint of plant nutrient availability, this scenario is highly favorable. However, from an environmental perspective, it raises important concerns: soils with high phosphorus saturation may become potential sources of contamination of water bodies through leaching and runoff. This risk is particularly relevant in sandy soils or areas with steep slopes. The micronutrient analysis across the three treatments reveals significant contrasts in the availability of essential elements for plant metabolism (Figure 4). Detectable concentrations of micronutrients were found only in the system receiving biological and organic inputs, while urban and eucalyptus-managed soils showed negligible or non-detectable levels (NS).

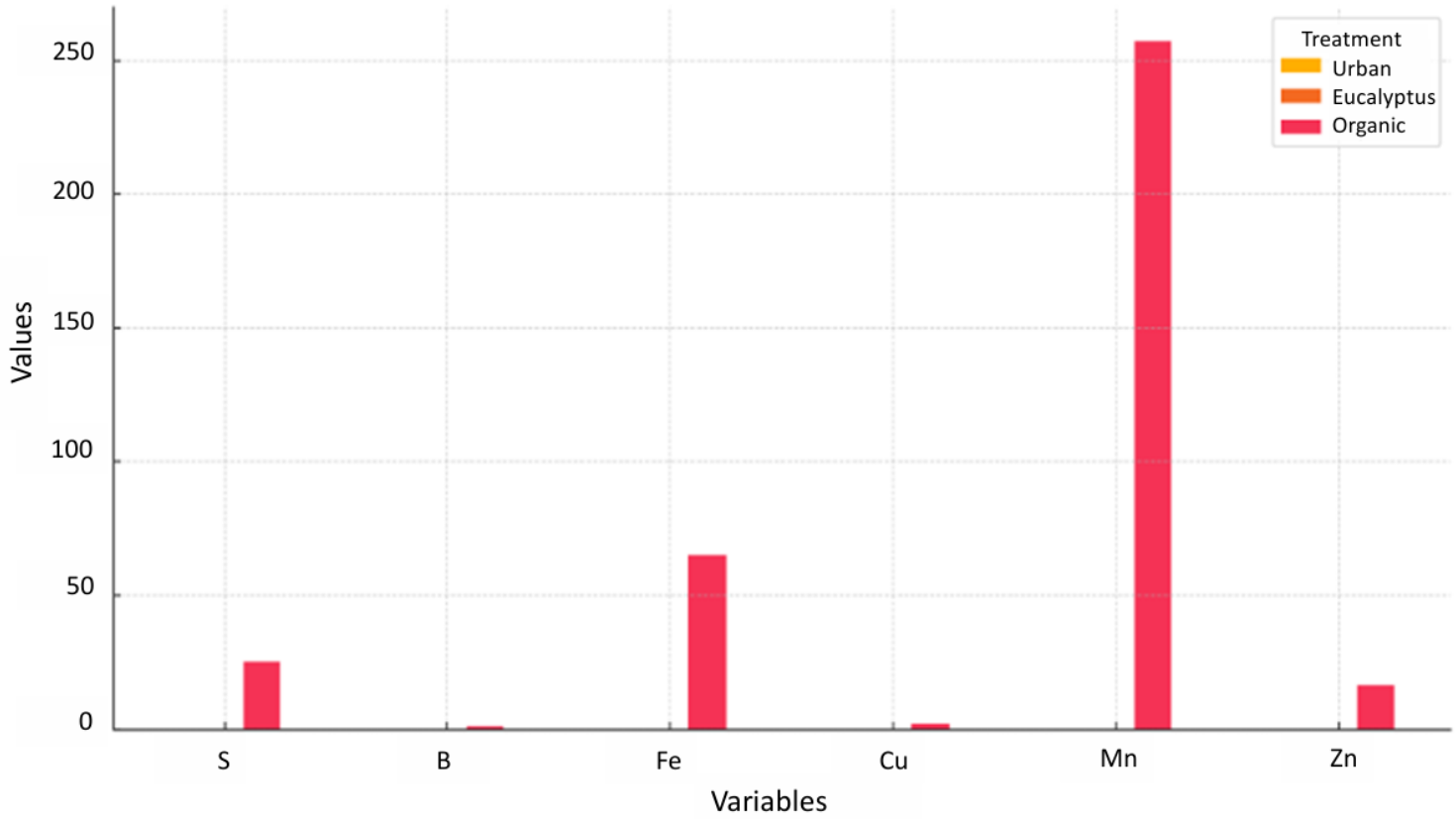

Figure 4: Concentration of available micronutrients (mg/dm³) in soil under organic farming systems, with emphasis on S (sulfur), B (boron), Fe (iron), Cu (copper), Mn (manganese), and Zn (zinc). Author, 2025.

In the organic system, the levels of iron (Fe = 65.15 mg/dm³), manganese (Mn = 257.24 mg/dm³), zinc (Zn = 16.29 mg/dm³), and copper (Cu = 2.19 mg/dm³) were significantly higher than those found in the other treatments. These values not only indicate high micronutrient availability but also reflect the active presence of organic matter, natural complexing agents (humic and fulvic acids), and possibly biofertilizers with chelated micronutrients. The prominence of manganese reinforces this interpretation: its intense mobilization depends directly on microbial activity and soil pH, both of which are modulated by agroecological practices (Razera et al., 2021). The sulfur content (S = 25.23 mg/dm³) and boron (B = 0.95 mg/dm³) were also noteworthy in this management system. Sulfur may originate from the addition of compost, bone meal, or agricultural gypsum. At the same time, the presence of boron—even in small concentrations—is a relevant marker, as it was not detected in the urban or eucalyptus soils. The absence of this essential micronutrient in the other systems reinforces the diagnosis of

functional degradation. It is essential to understand that the micronutrient deficiency in urban soils and eucalyptus monocultures is not merely an agronomic flaw but a direct consequence of political, economic, and cultural choices that erode biological cycles and disrupt soil ecology. The loss of organic matter and microbial biodiversity in these contexts stems from a productivist rationale centered on extraction and homogenization, which erases traditional practices and devalues more complex ecological strategies.

This impoverishment of soils—physical, chemical, and symbolic—is not accidental. It reveals the persistence of a technoscientific paradigm that naturalizes ecosystem depletion and masks the historical conflicts surrounding land use and tenure. Ecocriticism, in this scenario, becomes decisive: by dismantling the idea of technical neutrality, it exposes how hegemonic territorial occupation models—such as disorderly urban expansion and monocultures of exotic species—incorporate and reproduce colonial logics, silencing local knowledge and directly undermining territorial resilience. The low biological cycling and nutrient immobilization in these soils are not just chemical symptoms; they are social and cultural indicators of rupture. The absence of micronutrients also signals the abandonment of symbiotic management practices, such as those proposed by agroecology and traditional agricultural systems. Rebuilding soil fertility, therefore, is not just a technical task: it is an ethical, political, and epistemic demand. In this context, organic matter ceases to be a simple fertility indicator and becomes a symbol of ecological resistance and reconnection with regenerative practices. Valuing it means defending territories, ways of life, and living ecosystems. It means rejecting the logic that separates nature and culture in order to build a new grammar of the soil—one that recognizes its aesthetic power, its historical memory, and its centrality in the struggle for environmental justice.

4 Final considerations

The results of this study go beyond a conventional assessment of soil chemical quality and fertility. They reveal how land use and management express profoundly different ecological, political, and territorial rationalities. Organic agriculture — with its high levels of organic matter, micronutrients, plant-available phosphorus, and balanced pH — demonstrates the transformative potential of agroecological systems to build soils that are biologically active, resilient, and integrated into living ecological processes. In contrast, urban soils and those subjected to eucalyptus monoculture show clear signs of chemical degradation and biogeochemical impoverishment, material symptoms of a territorial model that is extractive, fragmented, and disconnected from the ecological, social, and cultural complexity of the landscapes it reshapes.

From the perspective of debates on the city–countryside divide and critiques of the urban–rural dichotomy, interpreting these territorial processes through the lens of Intermedial Ecocriticism reveals that the findings are not merely data points. They are material and symbolic evidence of the rupture between humans and the land. This separation reflects historical choices embedded in hegemonic discourses of domination and erasure, which shape public policies and reinforce the commodification of both nature and local knowledge systems. In this sense, soil can be understood as a living support that expresses and communicates tensions between different civilizational paradigms — especially in peri-urban zones, where rural and urban dynamics interpenetrate. These are the spaces where territorial disputes over the future of life, urban networks, and socio-environmental practices become visible, challenging the boundaries between what is planned and what is lived, between the technical and the symbolic.

Thus, this work contributes to strengthening a soil science perspective — particularly within urban–rural interfaces — that transcends technical productivity. It positions soil knowledge in service of environmental justice, food sovereignty, and the symbolic reconstruction of a territorial relationship grounded in respect for epistemological diversity and in the promotion of sustainable practices that challenge dominant extractive logics. This is an urgent call to rethink the political, technical, and cultural foundations of peri-urban territorial production and metropolitan expansion, especially in the context of increasingly interwoven urban and rural dynamics that define contemporary cities.

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URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

EDUCAÇÃO URBANÍSTICA E AMBIENTAL COMO CONTRIBUIÇÃO SOCIAL

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Ferraro, L. H.; Pereira, M. C. R. R.; Azevedo, G. A. N. (2025). Urban and Environmental Education as a Social Contribution. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Marcos Vinicius Mocellin Ferraro. 199-213 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239894

Abstract

This article reflects on Urban and Environmental Education as an emerging social practice and political tool. It considers this field's ability to connect technical-scientific knowledge, territory, participation, and social change, especially among children and youth. With origins in Architecture and Urbanism, this educational field examines issues related to cities, society, and the environment. It unites diverse knowledge and social roles. This approach encourages participant transformation by questioning established technical-scientific practices through more horizontal and dialogical actions. The article presents a strategy combining Affective Mapping and Urban and Environmental Education Workshops to listen to and engage students about their urban perceptions. The first uses forms for words or drawings; the second uses wish maps, memory games, and conversation circles. The discussion draws on concepts such as the social purpose of Architecture and Urbanism, educational territories, the Sociology of Childhood, and researchWITH. It aims to inform studies involving younger generations in debates on the built environment. The results show that Urban and Environmental Education—along with the chosen methodology—is vital for developing micro and intersectoral public policies that promote critical, city-focused citizenship.

Keywords: Urban and Environmental Education, Citizen education, Participatory processes, ResearchWITH, Public policies.

1 Introduction: dialogues between Architecture and Urbanism and Education

Urban territories reflect the social phenomena and tensions of society, but they are not well understood because people struggle to interpret and connect everyday facts to short-, medium-, and long-term human actions. Ermínia Maricato (2015) calls this gap "urban illiteracy," which can undermine rights such as the right to the city (Lefebvre, 2011), that is, the possibility for all individuals to actively participate in the processes of urban construction and transformation. Arno Vogel and co-authors (1995) argue that daily reflection on urban phenomena and understanding how society works are necessary. Architecture and Urbanism focus on cities, so professionals in these fields should help promote critical awareness of territories, supporting the idea that the profession has a social-educational function (Ferraro, 2024). However, education about the built environment—as a socio-cultural practice that allows access to knowledge and awareness of the world (Freire, 2013)—is still little addressed in scientific research and in practice in this field of knowledge. This article argues for expanding children's and young people's knowledge of the built environment through Urban and Environmental Education, with schools as key sites for action.

This work is driven by a reflection on other potentialities of Architecture and Urbanism, related to professional and academic performance. The question that intertwines these thoughts is: How have architects and urban planners contributed to society through practices and methodologies that address emerging issues in cities in a horizontal and critical way, to support citizen education, especially for children and young people? This concern is based on the idea that the educational process goes beyond the basic actions of teaching and learning, understanding it as an instrument of social transformation, through a dialectical dynamic of reflection and intervention in the world (Freire, 2013). Thus, discussing the transformation of urban environments requires knowledge and awareness of them, so that all citizens can discuss and intervene in their territories. In this research, the focus on children and young people is based on the understanding that these generational categories are generally invisible in urban discourse. It is therefore necessary to recognize them as subjects of rights and actors who affect and are affected by society, as presupposed by the Sociology of Childhood (Qvortrup, 2010; Sarmento, 2013). This perspective, added to the right to the city, also understands these groups in terms of their right to autonomy in urban spaces (Tonucci, 2005). When we walk through spaces, we get to know them and attribute meanings to them, transforming them into places, which allows us to feel a sense of belonging and, consequently, to take care of and appropriate these territories (Pol, 1996). This idea implies that Architecture and Urbanism should open to other areas of study and social practices, moving towards a transdisciplinary approach (Nicolescu, 2000; Morin, 2007), which is increasingly urgent in contemporary reality. Transdisciplinarity is a way of being between, through, and beyond individual disciplines, and is a possible way of bringing Architecture and Urbanism closer to the field of Education.

Dialogue between disciplinary fields relies on deconstructing scientific knowledge as hegemonic and acknowledging structural inequality in research (Castro, 2008). In Education, this involves rejecting the idea that curricular content is final and that only adults conduct educational processes for "empty" children lacking understanding. In Architecture and Urbanism, it means valuing daily knowledge and that of other groups, instead of prioritizing technical territorial knowledge alone. This helps bridge institutional knowledge with children's and young people's experiences, as these perspectives are seldom considered in discussions about living and shaping cities (Gobbi, 2018). Practicing this horizontality means not just guessing their tastes but fully grasping their social relations in urban spaces. In this holistic space between fields, Architecture and Urbanism propose Urban and Environmental Education for critical discussions of urban concepts and phenomena. This aims to raise awareness and promote the good quality of environments. The practice is complex, transdisciplinary, and consolidated through architects' and urban planners' active training roles (Ferraro, 2025). These professionals offer in-depth technical support on topics unfamiliar to many schoolteachers, especially in early primary school, where one teacher handles all subjects. In addition, the practice is multilateral and dialogical. It challenges the view of Architecture and Urbanism as distant from society, and it ties into Education by promoting citizen education for elementary students.

Urban and Environmental Education addresses issues such as city development, urban infrastructure, the actors responsible for cities, and the relationship between natural and human-made environments. It also examines urban mobility, modes of city living, heritage, urban problems, environmental comfort, and the city as a citizenship space. These topics help younger generations begin to perceive urban space critically and sensitively. Though built environmental education in Brazil is delivered by various educators, the Architecture and Urbanism perspective has gained visibility through the *CAU Educa* Program. This program, led by the Brazilian Council of Architecture and Urbanism (CAU/BR), encourages teaching about urban issues in elementary school (CAU/BR, 2022). It is inspired by Built Environmental Education, a term from the International Union of Architects (Ferraro & Azevedo, 2023). This initiative drives targeted, experimental activities in selected territories, primarily through cultural projects or university initiatives. Through educational practices in the built environment, Architecture and Urbanism open dialogue with other educational areas. The field aims to break the hegemony of technical, generational, and class knowledge in social processes.

2 Transdisciplinary dialogue: children and young people as builders of reflection, action and social transformation

Based on the principle that the right to the city and the right to education are fundamental social rights, the city-education symbiosis reveals different urgencies for these exchanges, especially against the backdrop of multiple crises—environmental, territorial, economic, social and educational—that have intensified with the impacts of the Anthropocene (Lewis & Maslin, 2015). The fact that 56% of the world's population lives in urban contexts (UNDESA, 2019) and that, in Brazil, urban dwellers represent 87% of the population (IBGE, 2022) has intensified phenomena that affect the natural and built environments, as well as individuals' quality of life. For example, excessive soil sealing increases flooding, which is further aggravated by undersized infrastructure. Socio-spatial segregation exposes many families to inadequate housing conditions and contributes to exclusion and the restriction of basic rights—such as health, education and leisure—and opportunities. The occupation of Permanent Protection Areas on slopes and watercourses exposes populations to landslides and floods. Irregular waste disposal poses a health risk to the population and compromises the balance of ecosystems. In other words, urban realities are not reflected in fair and equal access to the environment and essential infrastructure. On the contrary, there are alarming implications, especially given the significant number of children and young people worldwide who are exposed to the problems and tensions of contemporary society (Sarmento, 2018). This generational divide, with its restrictions on access to adequate urban space, is compounded by other layers of vulnerability, such as social class, race and gender. These vulnerable children and young people are affected even more unequally (Loeb & Lima, 2021), demonstrating an imbalance that is intersectional and more complex than age and urban divisions alone.

In this context, it is essential to understand that cities have been shaped, for the most part, by a road-oriented, adult-centric, male, and predominantly white vision. This has led to the invisibility, forgetfulness and neglect of children and young people in urban spaces. Factors such as domestication, institutionalisation, insularization, duality, fragmentation, and restricted mobility autonomy (Sarmento, 2018) significantly limit the rights of these generations. This reality corroborates the understanding that the right to the city is connected to the rights to education and citizenship, both of which are fundamental components of social

learning (Tavares, 2020). Therefore, it is about understanding children and young people in their social and cultural dimensions, as well as in their political dimension, as subjects of rights and duties and participants in public life. These notions have raised questions about the perceptions, uses, and participation of these individuals in the appropriation and construction of cities. In the 1990s, architect Mayumi Lima (1995) already pointed to education as a tool for slowing down the degenerative process in cities, highlighting the rapprochement between the disciplinary fields under discussion. According to the author,

> The search for a new development model has become vital for the survival of the human species and the planet. In this search, education has a fundamental role to play, not only in training the new generations, but above all in building a collective, co-responsible conscience, capable of pursuing the goal of society—not personal profit—but the well-being of the population. Such education cannot continue with fragmented visions; on the contrary, it will have to understand the whole, establish relationships, perceive links, and seek answers to environmental problems within the framework of economic and social exclusions in rural areas and urban peripheries (Lima, 1995, p. 213, our translation).

This vision is becoming increasingly necessary in the contemporary scenario, in which, although there are consolidated legal frameworks in Brazil that have a democratic and citizen-oriented vision—such as the Federal Constitution, the City Statute and the Child and Adolescent Statute—it is well known that many rights are still not achieved by a significant portion of the population. In this context, researchers in Architecture and Urbanism have begun to awaken to and reinforce this discussion, recognizing that the disciplinary field is fundamental to the articulation of knowledge about cities and societies, and assuming its co-responsibility in the matter. For Rodrigo Mindlin Loeb and Ana Gabriela Godinho Lima (2021), the urgency of transforming territories through urban design requires a critical review of the profession, considering the accumulated knowledge of socio-territorial aspects, including in contexts of vulnerability. In this argument, they reinforce the point that it is in these vulnerable territories that many children and young people live, where their fundamental rights are denied. In line with this, Carulla and co-authors (2016) argue that Architecture and Urbanism must stop being a purely technical and financial instrument and become an instrument of education and cultural dissemination. It should be noted that the environment is interwoven with relationships manifested by natural and man-made phenomena. Thus, the importance of bringing Architecture and Urbanism closer to Education transcends a genuine desire to do so and, in contemporary times, is further justified by the climate emergency that affects children and young people in an even more unequal way (UNICEF, 2022; Lima, 2022). These people are precisely those who have contributed the least and will live with the urban problems to which we are most exposed. More than just making them aware of the world we live in, we need to prepare them, in a critical and co-responsible way, to act in the face of the constant transformations required in the current scenario. In other words, it means empowering children and young people to understand and interact with their territories, so they develop skills to identify problems, express needs, and influence decisions that affect their lives.

Understanding urban awareness as a form of political action implies recognizing its articulation with multiple dimensions, ranging from the macro-structural and large-scale, such as public policies, to the subjective actions and practices of everyday life, which operate as micro-politics. These dimensions can be integrated through social participation, anchored in dialogue and active listening, and through other methodologies and spaces that prioritize forms of dialogue attentive to and compatible with children's and young people's cultures. In this political sense, citizenship is not a consequence of simply living in the city, nor the result of one-off actions, but a set of rights and responsibilities in public life (Callai *et al.*, 2014)**,** promoted in an active, critical, and situated way, as part of a continuous process of reflection and action. In this understanding, school institutions become powerful places for learning, both about citizenship (Callai *et al.*, 2014) and the right to the city (Tavares, 2020). Thinking about the articulations among the physical, subjective, and political dimensions of living requires discussing and getting to know cities from everyday territories, as well as recognizing the implications and relationships that specific interventions have for the urban whole. Two main theoretical frameworks have been established as a basis for these understandings. The first is the Sociology of Childhood, which provides an understanding of children and young people as subjects of rights. The second is the idea of researchWITH, which questions the traditional structural inequality in academic research (Castro, 2008).

The Sociology of Childhood has expanded conceptions of children, seeing them as competent social subjects, producers of culture, and holders of knowledge and rights (Sarmento, 2007; Qvortrup, 2010). From this perspective, childhood is understood as a generational and structural category that has agency and visibility. This, in relation to Architecture and Urbanism, means

considering their interests and not excluding them from discussions about the territory, stigmatizing them as incapable or disconnected from socio-territorial aspects. Children live, observe, and perceive cities as they are. Far beyond their desire for places to play, they denounce negative aspects of their territories, such as garbage in the streets, precarious infrastructure, and social issues like homelessness, abandoned animals, and violence in general. Often, more than adults themselves, they observe the singularities of everyday life, such as the sound of birds, the details of sidewalks, and find loopholes and interpreting urban spaces and elements in unpredictable and creative ways. Like adults, children and young people are present in all cities (or should be). These subjects are in different urban spaces: from school institutions to open spaces, and even in stigmatized areas deemed unhealthy, such as landfills (Flandes *et al*., 2019). This reinforces the idea that no issue should be neglected in the critical construction of knowledge about territories or in educational processes about the built environment.

On the other hand, the way of researchWITH (Moraes, 2014) is configured as an action stance that considers the reference point of all the subjects involved and proposes that the researcher be open to other ways of seeing and conducting the investigation. The idea of researching children and young people through WITH implies seeing them as social actors with the potential for knowledge and agency, which not only questions the canonical view of objectivity and scientific neutrality but also problematizes the structural inequalities present in the production of knowledge (Castro, 2008). Therefore, it "constitutes an approach that is also social and generational, that is, it encompasses aspects that touch on economic, political, and emotional issues and, one could say, refer to the repertoire and worldview of the participants" (Ferraro, 2025, p. 155, our translation). By confronting such different realities, knowledge, and experiences in a horizontal way, researchWITH is an empathetic form of scientific posture (Ferraro, 2025)**,** qualifying a choice in how to act and a necessity in the contemporary conditions of being in the world. For Urban and Environmental Education, both the Sociology of Childhood and researchWITH do not presuppose that architects and urban planners only share knowledge with children and young people. On the contrary, they propose that these professionals should be willing to review their thinking and learn from the subjects, children and young people, who also know and perceive territories through other experiences and perspectives, and who can also teach professionals a lot.

3 Affective Mapping and Urban and Environmental Education as a strategy for urban action and reflection

In the context of the *Ambiente-Educação* Research Group (GAE), linked to the Graduate Program in Architecture at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (PROARQ-UFRJ), Urban and Environmental Education has been studied from the interlocution of conceptions and methodologies practiced since 2004. The group establishes a dialogue with disciplines such as Education, Geography, Psychology, and Sociology to relate architecture, the city, and childhood through technical and sensitive knowledge. Throughout its history, the group's concerns have gone beyond the quality of school buildings to include the lived experience of children and young people at the center of the discussion. Reflections have expanded to schoolyards and have evolved into the understanding that it is necessary to recognize the city as an educational territory (Azevedo, 2019). This understanding, which is continuously under construction, considers territory as a space for collective action, constantly transformed and built, socially and technologically, with the potential to influence educational actions and processes (Azevedo *et al*., 2016). In other words, the idea of educational territory identifies the importance of dynamics and experiences in the urban space, including children and young people as citizens with the right to the city, who learn in and produce knowledge within urban environments. In this interpretation, the school assumes a central role in the educational territory, due to its commitment to training, criticism, and connection with the local community.

These understandings are linked to Urban and Environmental Education, which recognizes the importance of critical and conscious education about territories, their particularities and subjectivities. By establishing this educational approach as the central axis of its work, the group seeks to go beyond the traditional practice and perspective of the profession, often seen as elitist and unknown to the general public (Matiello & Azevedo, 2022), and contributes to a more social approach, understood as an educating social function (Ferraro *et al*., 2024; Ferraro, 2025). This has enabled other forms of exercising and reflecting on professional activities. Recently, opportunities for research and collaboration with other sectors of society have prompted more vigorous questions, extending beyond the usual discussions in the area under study. The implementation of two specific activities has shifted our thinking towards a way of acting that is multiple, rhizomatic, and intersectoral. The first is the Affective Mapping of the City of Rio de Janeiro, and the second is the Urban and Environmental Education Workshops.

3.1 Affective Mapping of Rio de Janeiro

The Affective Mapping of the City of Rio de Janeiro is the result of a partnership between GAE and the research groups Sistemas de Espaços Livres–RJ and Projeto e Representação do Ambiente, also linked to PROARQ-UFRJ, carried out in collaboration with the Planning Office of the Municipal Department of Finance and Planning and the Municipal Department of Education, both agencies of the City of Rio de Janeiro (Azevedo et al., 2024). This pioneering work, which has been reported in greater detail in other studies (Fernandez, 2020; Pereira, 2022; Flandes, 2023), was investigated through the perception of the diversity of territories with which the GAE worked. Added to this was the group's expertise in research and methodologies, which promoted a more specific dialogue with children and young people. The Municipal Government, in turn, was interested in including other visions in the city's public policies. This initially led to working with the city's schools to listen to these generations in a broad, structured way. Using a form applied by teachers, students voluntarily answered questions about the diversity and complexity of their territories, based on their perceptions and desires regarding the daily routes between home and school. The answers were analyzed, categorized, and geospatialized by the researchers involved, with the intention of guiding public policies, fostering reflection on the city's spaces and encouraging citizen participation of children and young people. In the first edition of Affective Mapping, held in 2019, 734 schools took part, and 13,376 documents completed by students in grades 1 to 9 were analyzed; in the second edition, in 2022, 760 schools took part (Figure 1), and 98,041 documents from students in grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 were analyzed. The results of this activity (Azevedo et al., 2024), organized by categories such as urban and infrastructure aspects, environmental comfort and health, mobility, accessibility, economic and cultural aspects, climate change, and security and violence, among others, contributed to the construction of the Sustainable Development and Climate Action Plan for the City of Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro Municipal Government, 2021), as well as other municipal public policies[1].

[1] The Municipal Government considers Affective Mapping a continuous activity. The plan is to conduct it every three years, in alignment with the development of the municipality’s strategic plans. The next edition is scheduled for November 2025.

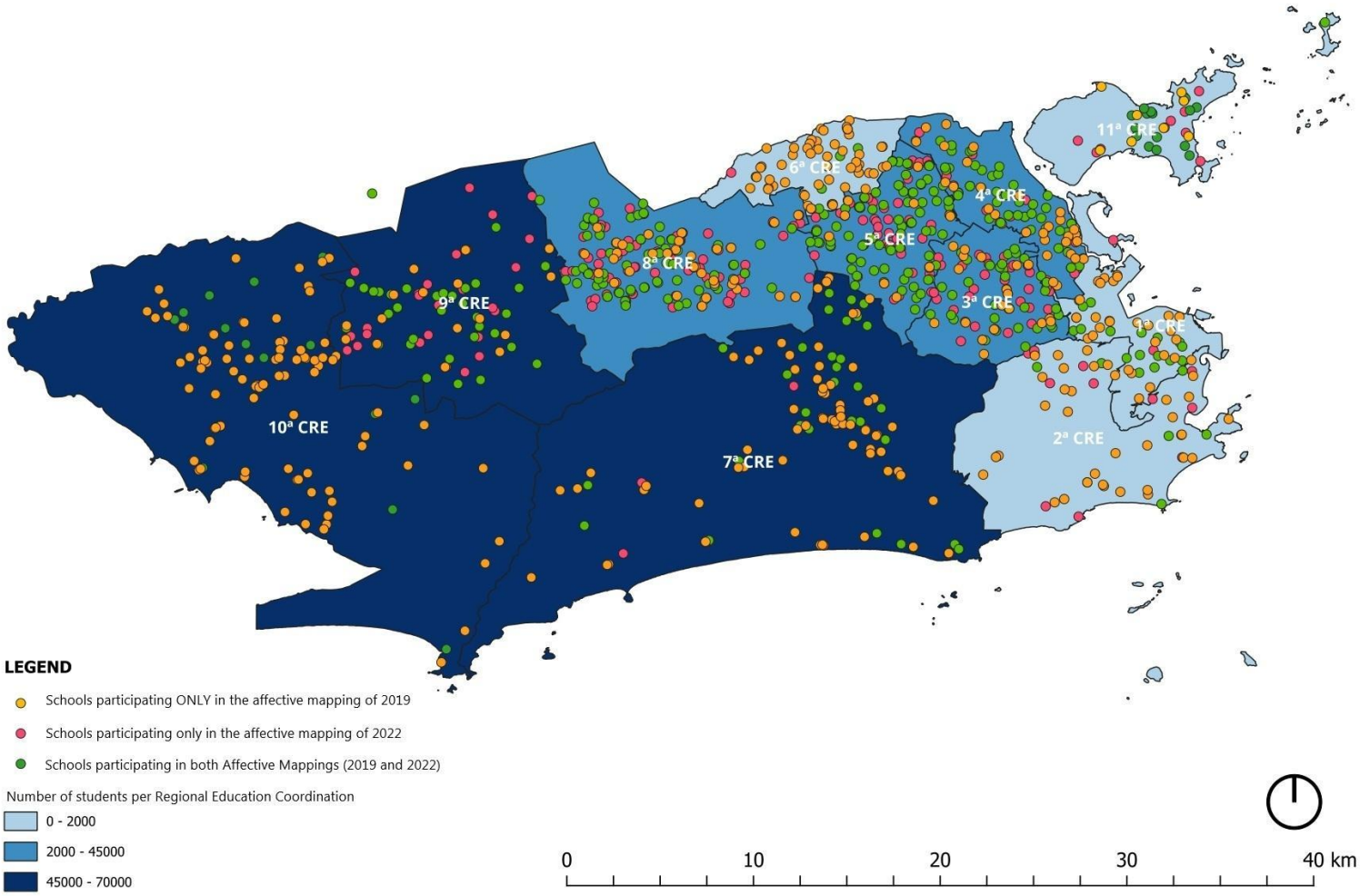


Fig. 1: Map of school participation in Affective Mapping in 2019 and 2022. Source: GAE/SEL-RJ archive, 2025.

The activity proved powerful in supporting public policies through georeferencing social participation, ensuring that children's and young people's perspectives are incorporated into decisions that shape the city, recognizing them as citizens with rights and agents of transformation. This result was made possible by a solid partnership between: the university, which was responsible for devising the activity, choosing the methods, preparing the form, tabulating and analyzing the documentation; the public authorities, represented by managers and technicians at different levels, who made it possible to apply it as a coordinated activity simultaneously in all the schools; and the teachers and students who took part in the work. In this context, the importance of public schools as the central articulating nucleus of this network cannot be overlooked, as they are the only institutional structure capable of encompassing the complexity of the activity at scale, due to their presence in all territories (Pereira, 2022). Also, working through these public institutions reinforces the inclusion of social groups that have historically been excluded from discussions about the city, thus fostering political participation from an early age. However, the initiative still has certain limitations in terms of its scope, especially because the listening process, which is not accompanied on-site by the researchers, results in the quantification of individuals and their perceptions, which, in a way, reduces opportunities for learning exchanges and may position children and young people as mere data producers. This approach runs counter to the assumptions of researchWITH and the Sociology of Childhood, both of which advocate the active participation of these generational groups, recognizing them as co-authors in the processes of building data and knowledge. From this reflection emerged the following question: How can we ensure that this wealth of results is incorporated not only into public policies but also into local actions, in schools and communities, and that the knowledge and training processes of the subjects who completed the forms are articulated?

3.2 Urban and environmental education Workshops

This question prompted new activities, bringing researchers closer to the subjects and fostering greater dialogue and deeper social participation. In this context, as part of an ongoing project that began in 2023, Urban and Environmental Education Workshops were held in municipal schools in Rio de Janeiro that participated in the Affective Mapping (Ferraro *et al*., 2024; Ferraro, 2025). So far, the work has focused on schools in the southwestern part of the city, a region with multiple landscape units that highlight marked contradictions and complexities (Pereira, 2022). These workshops aim to promote discussions focused on citizen education, contributing to the construction of fairer, more sustainable, and more inclusive cities and communities. At the same time, they align with new perspectives on professional practice, grounded in the social educator role. To this end, the workshops integrate playful and participatory activities, based on devices already consolidated in GAE research, correlations with school content proposed by the National Common Curriculum Base—understood as generative themes (Ferraro, 2025)—and themes grounded in urban phenomena. They also consider the school curriculum, the political-pedagogical project, the annual pedagogical plan, teaching materials, and the Sustainable Development Goals. The activities are built on the realities of each institution and are formulated based on the specificities of the class, school, space, schedules, number of students, and the researchers involved. In general, they are organized in sequential stages that address different scales of the territory, starting with the home and moving on to the school, its surroundings, and the neighborhood in which they are located. The aim is to establish the perception of these places within a wider urban context. The workshops are structured in three stages: approach, map and build (Azevedo, 2019), as shown in Figure 2.

APPROACH

Presentation
Main theme: Affective mapping
Objective: To bring students closer to researchers, research, and activities.

Methods:
1. Presentation
2. Affective mapping

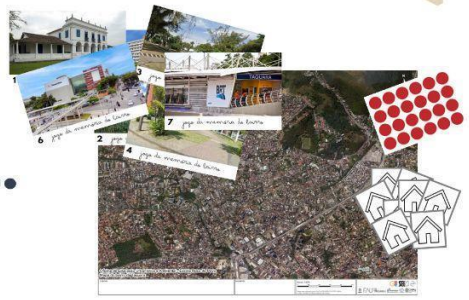
Workshop 1: Scale - Architecture
Main theme: The house and the neighborhood
Objective: To introduce the profession of architecture and urban planning, tools, resources, and scales of work based on a discussion of housing and neighborhoods.

Methods:
1. House memory drawing
2. Neighborhoods wish map
3. Conversation circle

MAPPING

Workshop 2: Scale - Territory
Main theme: The school's neighborhood
Objective: To understand how students recognize the territory through map reading and to discuss urban aspects such as scales, city facilities, and sense of belonging.

Methods:
1. City recognition and significant places
2. Mapete (Azevedo, 2019)
3. Memory games
4. Conversation circle



Workshop 3: Scale - Territory
Main theme: Qualities of the school environment
Objective: To discuss urban situations in the school surroundings, identifying the positive and negative aspects of this context.

Methods:
1. Mapete
2. Assembly
3. Conversation circle

BUILD

Workshop 4: Scale - Territory
Main theme: Solutions for the urban environment
Objective: To discuss solutions for urban problems identified and selected by the students, and to explore the city's actors and their roles.

Methods:
1. Solutions matrix
2. Conversation circle

Architecture and Urbanism Fair
Main theme: Possibilities of Architecture and Urbanism
Objective: To share the workshops results with the school community.

Methods:
1. Thematic stations: quality of life in places, heritage, open spaces, and soundscape.
2. Conversation circle

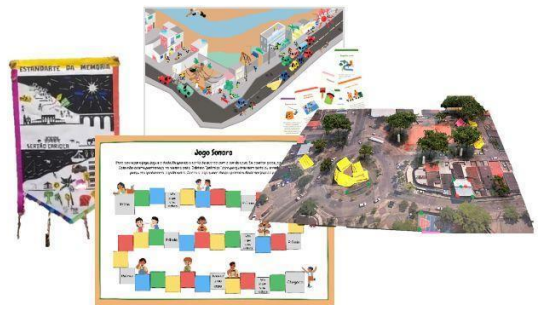


Fig. 2: Workshop moments, generating themes, objectives, and methods. Source: Authors, 2025.

The stages in the approach moment (Figure 3) refer to initial contact with the school's management, coordinators, teachers, and students, with the aim of building trust with everyone involved in the process. This approach, together with the teaching staff, makes it possible to deconstruct the image of architects and urban planners as professionals distant from educational activities, and to open space for collective construction with the school community. With students, these first contacts help “break the ice” and make the researchers' presence feel more natural. The starting point is precisely the Affective Mapping, carried out in previous years by the vast majority of students and known to the teachers. From there, the house is discussed, an imaginary element of the profession, which makes it possible to introduce the work and present the professional field, often unknown to the students. The mapping moment (Figure 4) promotes more technical interactions with the students. The activities include drawing, reading maps, discussing specific topics, conversation circles, as well as devices such as a wish poem, a wish map, a memory game, a theatre of spontaneity, time dominoes, assembly, and a discovery matrix, among others (Azevedo, 2019). In all forms of interaction, the main objective is to value the knowledge and daily experiences of these subjects. From these experiences, dialogues are constructed around different themes related to urban perceptions, such as basic infrastructure, environmental, cultural, and social aspects, the importance of the city, and others. At the build moment (Figure 5)**,** critical reflection activities are proposed to generate solutions to the problems identified by the students. The aim is to encourage students, together with researchers and teachers, to choose the most appropriate tools for carrying out the activities, considering the time available and the materials available. In the experiments carried out, posters, models, videos, theatrical performances, and conversation circles have been produced. Also related to the build moment, the dynamic called the Architecture and Urbanism Fair provides feedback to the school community, displaying the materials produced in the workshops and expanding exchanges with other students and teachers, since the workshops are held with a limited number of classes. This moment strengthens the sense of belonging and co-responsibility by encouraging students to act as multipliers of this citizen education.

Fig. 3: Approach moment. Source: Authors, 2023 and 2024.

Fig. 4: Mapping moment. Source: Authors, 2023 and 2024.

Fig. 5: Build moment. Source: Authors, 2023 and 2024.

3.3 Discussion: the combined strategy as a methodology

Having briefly presented these two activities, we discuss their combination as a powerful strategy for other forms of action in the field of Architecture and Urbanism, especially through Urban and Environmental Education—a dialogical educational process practiced by architects and urban planners and that integrates different actors. Affective Mapping, due to its diagnostic nature and extensive data collection on the elements that comprise the different dimensions of urban planning, can serve as a reference for social and urban infrastructure interventions. The workshops, by contrast, bring the subjects closer together and contribute directly to training, transforming not only the subjects but also others involved, such as architects and teachers. This prompts reflection on how this combination can be made viable as a multilateral public policy that simultaneously meets educational and urban demands. This is especially relevant given the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Government's interest in joining the Educating Cities global initiative, as defined in the municipality's Sustainable Development and Climate Action Plan (2021), which sets knowledge of the territory, participation, and citizen training for children and young people as fundamental principles.

Affective Mapping remains a one-off action, but it constitutes a global strategy for the municipality, guiding public management through socio-spatial hotspots. This is not the only way to collect data, but it complements other types of surveys, most of which are conducted in a technical, quantitative way, often disregarding the more sensitive perceptions of the population. In addition, by including children's perspectives, these data offer a differentiated view, considering that children's and young people's conceptions are not yet as influenced by political processes. Mapping, in the political field, is an activity of a more imposing nature, because although it is not compulsory, its suggestion through partnerships with municipal departments implies an indirect hierarchical process. Added to this, there is little clarification or discussion between the creators of the activities and the executors—teachers and school managers—who apply the questionnaire but are not involved in the results or in additional actions on the subject. The workshops, in turn, are organized based on the interest and availability of researchers and professionals in Architecture and Urbanism to work with these dynamics, through prior selection and invitation to a specific municipal school. Although very enriching, these workshops require intense dedication and face limitations related to the availability and interest of professionals to conduct them (Ferraro, 2025). In this way, the two activities, when combined at the municipal level, can compensate for each other’s gaps, ensuring that guidelines address and build environments more receptive to the experiences of different children and young people.

The experiences indicate points of attention related to political, educational, and urban issues. This allows us to reaffirm, through the eyes of the participating children and young people, that the field of Architecture and Urbanism is eminently political. Both in the responses to the Affective Mapping and in the workshop activities, the participants demonstrated significant knowledge of the relationships and contradictions between the physical territorial aspects and the social aspects surrounding the places they frequent. In one workshop, a group of students chose to discuss the impacts of human actions on the natural environment. Others addressed structural dilemmas in the city, such as inequalities and the promotion of gender equality—the latter motivated by the lack of opportunities to discuss this at school. In another workshop, students discussed urban violence and society's individual and collective responsibilities. They identified education, particularly the presence of schools and cultural institutions, as a solution to violence, and perceived the relationship between territories, social issues, and architecture as extending beyond its spatial dimension. In general, in the experiences with children between the 3rd and 6th grades, in the context of Rio de Janeiro, there are frequent narratives about violence, inequality and poverty, as well as aspects such as lack of infrastructure, pollution, basic sanitation, and traffic.

In this sense, the Urban and Environmental Education Workshops reinforce the idea that the participation of architects and urban planners in schools provides students with more comprehensive and meaningful experiences, by not fragmenting their understanding of the built environment from the lived realities of individuals, and by contributing not only technical knowledge, but also perspectives on life (Ferraro, 2025). It also strengthens their recognition as citizens with rights, as participants in public life, and as agents of territorial transformation. For architects and urban planners, these experiences constitute opportunities for action-reflection, enabling them to discover other ways of understanding the world through attention to participatory, non-hierarchical perspectives that stimulate the profession's social and educational roles. For Architecture and Urbanism students participating in these activities, through research and extension projects, such experiences make it possible to conceive training in a more humanistic and socially engaged way. For teachers, the workshops provide opportunities to exchange knowledge with other professionals, learn new strategies for addressing urban content, and access materials beyond their daily routines. In addition, these actors are essential because they can permanently collaborate in this relationship among education, cities, children, and young people, by incorporating themes and resources into lessons and, like the students, becoming multipliers of the actions and learning produced.

4 Final consideration

This work, the result of a trajectory that unites theory and praxis, action and reflection, highlights a fundamental issue for Architecture and Urbanism: the discipline is not isolated in its knowledge and performance. On the contrary, it can serve as a space for convergence and negotiation among different types of knowledge and approaches to conceiving and producing the city and urban life. As architects-urban planners, when faced with the question of technical-scientific contributions in the contemporary world, we cannot shirk our professional co-responsibilities, which in this case are urban, educational, and political, because they are inseparable. The question of how to articulate differences in a contemporary world permeated with conflicts finds a breath of fresh air and encouragement in these other forms of professional action and unusual partnerships. When professionals take a sensitive approach to engaging in dialogue with different sectors of society about territorial knowledge, they assume the responsibility of balancing necessary yet challenging interlocutions. The discussion focuses on looking at children and young people not just as a group of users of environments, as traditionally treated in the field of study, but as social subjects who have the right to access knowledge and cities on an equal basis with other citizens. With this, we hope to collaborate with research from different areas of knowledge that work with young people on the urban environment, strengthening actions and attitudes aimed at the collective construction of more inclusive and democratic cities.

By unfolding in an unusual and multiple way, this work highlights methodologies that, when combined, can contribute to different fronts of social participation, reaching public policies and educational processes. Affective Mapping, as a global methodology, helps managers categorize and prioritize municipal actions, considering the perceptions of children and young people, who are generally neglected in participatory processes. The Urban and Environmental Education Workshops, as actions by architects and urban planners with a public quite different from the one they are used to allow professionals to give new meaning to their actions in relation to society. Through GAE's practice, the combination of these approaches has become a strategy for refining territorial knowledge, incorporating other important concepts that connect education to architecture and urbanism. In this sense, it represents a turning point for the group. Moreover, beyond recognizing the need for such work, due to its inherent relevance in contemporary cities and societies, Urban and Environmental Education contributes, in an innovative and critical way, to the dialogue on the built environment, from a multi-method, multi-scalar, and transdisciplinary perspective.

The Affective Mapping activity showed that children's perceptions of the city focused primarily on urban aspects, infrastructure, and mobility, and touched on multiple forms of violence present in daily life, including classic, environmental, and urban violence (Azevedo *et al*., 2024). However, these approaches present problems in a more representative and specific way, mainly due to the methods and time available for carrying out the activity. In turn, the Urban and Environmental Education Workshops, held in contexts that reflect multiple socio-territorial inequalities, acquired a character of deepening, discussion, and citizen training. In these activities, students were able to better contextualize their territories, revealing and denouncing social issues, such as multiple forms of violence and economic markers, with the same intensity as physical urban parameters and infrastructure (Ferraro, 2025). These observations portray not only the challenges that mark the city under study, but also those present in most contexts of the Global South. The children's narratives are powerful in revealing more than just a specific place: they also

highlight the historical moment itself and the opportunity to express themselves, marking a new position for these generations and these contexts, which have been little considered in global history.

In this way, the articulation of the activities confirmed the idea of Architecture and Urbanism in its political and social approach. It is important to emphasize that the success of this practice does not lie in mere replication, but in the willingness and ability to articulate, in a situated way, the territorial context, institutional arrangements, and social participation processes. As the experience reported here was developed in a large city, Rio de Janeiro, with significant challenges and particularities, it prompts reflections on the possibilities for adaptation, as well as the difficulties and impacts it may generate in other contexts and scales, such as small and medium-sized cities. Given that actions related to this issue are still scattered and incipient, there is a need for specific investigations across different Brazilian territorialities, taking into account the particularities of each context regarding access, resources, and possibilities for sectoral coordination. In addition, it is important to build an intersectoral network to fully develop initiatives that view children as whole subjects. This means promoting strategies that emerge from local demands and knowledge, in decision-making spaces, public spaces, and schools.

In short, this strategy, which combines specific approaches originating in architecture and grounded dialogue with other social actors, allows us to glimpse another path toward more effective actions that impact societies and cities. The technical and sensitive work of architecture professionals in municipal administrations, which involves new methodologies and engagement with a public often overlooked, is a promising and beneficial alternative in many ways. For public managers, who are often fatigued by traditional methods of data gathering for public policy, Affective Mapping offers a way to regain the legitimacy of social participation in the contemporary context, which has often been discredited. For cities, the results of this survey can lead to targeted, more assertive interventions aligned with each territory and social group. For citizens, especially children and young people, this represents a new understanding of their role as citizens, and, in a way, hope for new ways of doing politics and shaping the city.

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THE EPISTEMIC PLURALITY OF TERRITORY IN THE CRITIQUE OF URBAN-CENTRISM

A PLURALIDADE EPISTÊMICA DO TERRITÓRIO NA CRÍTICA AO URBANOCENTRISMO

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Souza, A. C. E. & Aguiar, C. H. G. (2025). The Epistemic Plurality of Territory in the Critique of Urban-Centrism. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 214-229 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239959

Abstract

The centrality of city and urban as analytical, normative, and design categories has driven the standardization of models and problems in the field of Architecture and Urbanism, and conditioned spatial thinking to hegemonic and productivist logics. But how can we think about spaces and territories beyond the urban-centric bias and the categories that sustain it as an epistemological and design center? Debating Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations, this paper articulates traditional and critical knowledge of the urban environment, aiming to confront the centrality of the city and the urban as hegemonic categories. The methodology is based on bibliographic review, case studies (Potiguara Indigenous Land and Paratibe Quilombo), and dialogue with dissident epistemologies. The results indicate that these territorialities challenge traditional urbanism by affirming practices based on collectivity, ancestry, and spiritual connection to the land. These experiences demonstrate that overcoming urban hegemonies requires multilateral dialogues between epistemologies, through a territorial praxis that articulates technical and community knowledge. It concludes that confrontations and interlocutions between different territorial rationalities constitute not only a methodological approach, but also a political and epistemic condition for pluralizing the field and confronting the power regimes that structure the coloniality of urban knowledge.

Keywords: Urbanocentrism, Dissident Territories, Territorial Praxis, Other-spaces.

1 Introduction

This research challenges the centrality of city and urban, not as just observed facts but as ways of thinking that guide classifications, methods, laws, and spatial design—especially where rigid and binary categories shape understanding of dissident territories. The main idea is that urban-centrism is more than a technical norm; it is a way of thinking that reiterates power hierarchies and defines what counts as valid knowledge, reinforcing the coloniality of territorial knowledge (Farrés, 2023). By prioritizing territories linked to economic growth, modernization, and state structures, Architecture and Urbanism have overlooked or sidelined forms of spatial organization from diverse historical, cultural, and political backgrounds, including those of groups protected by Brazilian Decree No. 8,750/2016, and those of unrecognized, informal, or autonomous communities (Costa & Peluso, 2016; Costa, 2021). Thus, this critique does not simply oppose urban and rural categories but draws attention to mixed, rural-urban, and fluid ways of organizing space, which resist simple definitions.

This scenario prompts the following questions: how do we conceptualize spaces and territories outside urban-centrism? What spatialities, ways of life, and territorial rationalities are rendered invisible by this framework, and how can they promote a more inclusive planning thought? This study aims to critique the dominance of urban-centrism, to find ways to value diverse territorialities grounded in different existential frameworks; to analyze how dissident territorialities shape space and life in ways that challenge urban norms; and to highlight the tensions and conflicts within these territories. It adopts a counter-hegemonic approach, drawing on Latin American thinkers and engaging in direct dialogue with the practices of dissident communities, especially through case studies of the Paratibe Quilombo[1] and the Potiguara Indigenous Territory[2] (IT).

Other spaces, often labeled as informal or peripheral, not only resist urban norms but also create new patterns of territory that shift how we think about planning, design, and cities. These territories support an approach committed to diverse knowledge, spatial justice, and the right to difference. Considering spaces beyond the city is not just theoretical; it is an ethical and democratic stance. This paper engages with *Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations*, by arguing that understanding territory beyond the city requires connecting multiple territorial perspectives. Analysis of

[1] The Quilombo Paratibe, located in the city of João Pessoa, Paraíba, in northeastern Brazil, is one of the case studies in this research, based on fieldwork developed in Caio Aguiar's master's thesis. The investigation adopted a qualitative field research approach, emphasizing immersion and active listening within the community, combining participant observation, interviews, and mapping.

[2] The Potiguara Indigenous Territory, located on the northern coast of Paraíba, in northeastern Brazil, is one of the case studies in this research, based on fieldwork developed for Angela Souza's master's thesis. The investigation adopted a qualitative and ethnographic approach, with an emphasis on prolonged immersion in the community, combining participant observation, open and semi-structured interviews, memory mapping, and audiovisual recording.

dissident territorialities and community experiences demonstrate that the critical renewal of Architecture and Urbanism depends on effective dialogues between technical knowledge and situated praxis, capable of challenging hegemonic categories and expanding the ways of understanding, producing, and inhabiting space. In this sense, the paper highlights that displacing the urban from its central place implies assuming epistemic confrontations and tensions between rationalities as constitutive dimensions of a multilateral practice, in which dissident epistemologies and community practices not only dialogue with the disciplinary field but also contribute to redefining its critical horizons.

1.1 Theoretical-methodological framework

This research uses a situated and counter-hegemonic methodological approach, drawing on Donna Haraway's (1995) concept of situated knowledge, Boaventura de Sousa Santos's (2007) idea of the ecology of knowledge, and knowledge developed by Indigenous and Quilombola peoples. Situated knowledge means that all knowledge is shaped by specific historical, political, and physical contexts, requiring ongoing critique and attention to power relations (Haraway, 1995). The ecology of knowledge promotes valuing diverse understandings beyond science and sees all knowledge as partial, requiring dialogue across perspectives and constant self-critique regarding power (Santos, 2007). This work recognizes no spatial category is universal, neutral or detached from the power relations that constitute it. Adopting this perspective implies recognizing that the dominant analytical models in the field of Architecture and Urbanism are the result of specific historical processes that privilege some rationalities and render invisible other forms of territorial knowledge (Farrés, 2023).

This framework mobilizes several key concepts. Territory (Sturmer & Costa, 2017) links space, belonging, and daily practices, produced by social agents. The city (Lencioni, 2008) is a social construct shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces, hosting hybrid spaces where varied activities coexist. Urban (Lencioni, 2008) describes a historical process related to capitalist forces that has reshaped space and relations since colonization, not confined to industrialization. Urban-centrism highlights the city as a standard, subordinating non-urban actions and knowledge (Farias & Faleiro, 2020). Dissident territories (Oliveira, 2025) arise from horizontal, autonomous relations, like Foucault's heterotopias, showing alternative ways to inhabit space. Other-spaces designate spatial forms operating in co-existence with the hegemonic order but operate in unique logics of connection and community, challenging the normative categories of modern planning (Foucault, 2013).

The methodology is structured around three main procedures. The first consists of a critical literature review, focusing on authors who discuss hegemonic urbanism, the coloniality of knowledge, territorial legislation, and counter-hegemonic dialogues, including Indigenous, Quilombola, and Latin American researchers. The second procedure refers to the fieldwork conducted between 2022 and 2024[3], which involved participant observation in the Potiguara villages and the Quilombo Paratibe landholdings, territorial journeys, semi-structured interviews[4], ethnographic notes, photographic and cartographic records, and the monitoring of collective events, rituals, assemblies, and other activities. The third procedure is situated territorial analysis, which involves reading the territory as a synthesis of materiality and cosmology, interpreting spatial forms based on the narratives and categories of the communities themselves, and describing these territorialities as practices in themselves. In this procedure, a multiscale approach (Silva & Romero, 2011) was adopted to understand the territorial dynamics of the cases at the macro, meso, and micro levels.

By emphasizing the production of knowledge from multiple territorial rationalities and by assuming epistemological conflict as a constitutive element of the analysis, situated methodology makes it possible to highlight how dissident territories operate through multi-scalar praxis that challenge, confront, and reconfigure urban-centered models. Thus, the adopted framework

[3] The activities followed academic ethical standards, submitting to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP), the National Research Ethics Commission (CONEP), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), the Quilombos Academic and Sports Cultural Athletic Association (AACADE), the National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Quilombola Black Communities (CONAQ), and the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI).

[4] The interviews were conducted using scripts adjusted with an analysis of objectives (Manzini, 2004) in three blocks of questions (administrative and legislative policies, territorial issues, and local territorial dynamics), following the macro classification of spatial agents: civilians, public officials, and collective leaders.

contributes to deepening the debate on epistemic multilateralism, counter-hegemonic production of space, and horizontal articulation between technical and territorialized knowledge.

2 Questioning urban-centrism as an analytical, normative, and design model.

In recent decades, criticism of the analytical categories within the disciplinary field of Architecture and Urbanism has intensified, especially in contexts marked by structural inequalities and dissident territorialities. Researchers such as Raquel Rolnik (2007) and Ermínia Maricato (2011) have discussed the centrality of the urban as an epistemic-normative paradigm and how it has operated as a structuring axis of Western spatial thought, directing design practices, public policies, and processes of academic knowledge production. This centrality, as Camila Faria (2008) points out, is not impartial, as it defines binary hierarchies of legitimacy, such as what is modern or backward, urban or rural, visible or invisible—reinforcing a pattern that reduces the complexity of dissident life forms to a universalizing and exclusionary logic.

In the legal and institutional sphere, this logic is expressed in incomplete normative frameworks. Brazilian Decree nº 8,750/2016 recognizes twenty nine traditional peoples and communities; however, it has not been updated to reflect the current context of these peoples and their participation in the city. In other words, other forms of cultural expression remain outside the scope of legal recognition, leading to legally justified territorial invasions and removals, as is the case with Aldeia Maracanã, a multi-ethnic urban settlement located in the former Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro, in southeastern Brazil, which suffers from the constant threat of eviction. This normative insufficiency becomes evident when confronted with realities such as that of the Tiririca dos Crioulos community, a people of dual Quilombola and Indigenous descent who occupy the Pankará territory in Carnaubeira da Penha city, Pernambuco, northeastern Brazil, revealing, as observed in indigenist legislation[5] (Silva, 2008), a tendency towards ruralization and homogenization of complex ways of life, such as Indigenous communities. This limitation leaves significant gaps in the legal treatment of issues involving urban contexts, non-homologated lands, and other forms of territorial organization specific to Indigenous communities. In other words, the Brazilian legal framework on Indigenous territorial rights presents significant gaps by failing to account for the complexity of contemporary forms of occupation, and the vulnerability of unrecognized communities must also be considered.

These gaps are exacerbated by already widely documented structural obstacles: economic and political pressures (Cavalcante, 2016), procedural delays (Azanha, 2005), and the inadequacy of legal frameworks for transnational contexts (Tovar-Restrepo, 2013). These limitations directly impact access to basic public services, such as health and education (Azanha, 2005), and perpetuate land conflicts, ignoring the territory as a living entity, a critique present in the work of both Daniel Serna (2017) and Ailton Krenak (2022).

> Excluded from the regulatory framework and formal financial systems, irregular settlements have multiplied on fragile land or in areas unsuitable for urbanization [...] in addition to constituting vast fringes of peripheral expansion over rural areas, perpetually devoid of the infrastructure, equipment, and services that characterize urbanity. Absent from municipal and public service concessionaire maps and registers and from notary office property records, these settlements have an ambiguous presence in the cities where they are located. [...] the consolidation of these settlements is progressive, perpetually incomplete, and totally dependent on discretionary action by the Public Power [...] The presence of this vast contingent of settlements ambiguously inserted into the city is one of the most powerful gears in the machine of territorial exclusion that blocks the poorest's access to the economic and human development opportunities that cities offer. [...] Finally, the model condemns the city, as a whole, to an unsustainable pattern, from an environmental and economic point of view, since it imposes environmental losses and externalities on the city as a whole that are very difficult to recover (Rolnik, 2007, pp. 7–8, our translation).

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[5] A compilation of Brazilian Indigenist Legislation, published by the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI). It covers regulations concerning Indigenous peoples and their relationship with society and the State.

Raquel Rolnik's (2007) critique of irregular settlements deepens this scenario: territories rendered invisible in state cartography, lacking infrastructure or legal validity, become cogs in the socio-spatial exclusion that structures Brazilian urbanization. By showing that access to well-located areas is systematically restricted by economic, political, and legal barriers, the author highlights how the city is produced and reproduced as a selective space—adding that being within the bounds of legality means relinquishing characteristics so highly valued by these populations. However, beyond the normative and institutional plane, there are territorial manifestations of coloniality that reach diverse scales. In this sense, René Castillo's (2013) analysis of Colombia's borders and non-places reveals how the marginalization of these spaces reinforces urban binaries (center/periphery, order/chaos, safe/violent), inherited from colonialism and perpetuated by the State, which contradicts the analysis of Cristhian Marco, Paulo Santos, and Gabriela Moller (2020) on gentrification. In parallel, Alfredo Lozano (2017) demonstrates how Andean cities had their cosmogonic sacredness erased by colonial urbanization, pointing to the need for their own epistemology that re-signifies heritage as a living practice of resistance.

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Analysing the United States context, Clara Irazábal (2012) problematizes the instrumentalization of New Latin American Urbanism, which, although it intends to value Latin American spatial practices, often reinforces Anglocentric hierarchies. For the author, the proposal of ethno-urbanism emerges as a counterpoint, emphasizing the plurality of insurgent urbanisms that challenge the universalization of urban patterns. This reflection dialogues with studies such as those by Erualdo González and Clara Irazábal (2015), which show how race, class, and migration intersect in urban crises, requiring anti-racist, intersectional, and sensitive planning. Such analyses converge on the idea that the city cannot be universalized as a single reference for spatial ordering. Thus, overcoming spatial hegemonies demands not only the inclusion of marginalized territories but also the deconstruction of the logics that produce them. It is necessary to recognize that the binary classifications not only organize urban space but also shape how different territorialities are legitimized or made invisible. On the other hand, these people's conception of territory offers opportunities to think about the city from a more inclusive and sensitive perspective. As Juan Echeverri (2004), Dominique Gallois (2004), Eckart Boege (2012), Ailton Krenak (2022), and Eliane Potiguara (1989) discuss, the conception of territory directly contradicts the dominant logic that separates the land from the human being and reduces space to an economic resource or an area to be standardized. In these cosmologies, territory is simultaneously body, nature, a space of resistance, and sacred; dimensions that do not fit within the paradigm of the city as a universal measure of progress and citizenship.

For Joelson Ferreira (2025), disconnection from the land and territory throws dissident peoples into a state of uprooting, subjecting them to the alienations imposed by a system that fragments. Urban space, with its logic of distancing and rigidity, becomes a hostile environment for authentic relationships; everything is distant, everything is predetermined, and even in small towns, the accelerated routine prevents time from opening up for dialogue and encounter. This oppressive structure denies the possibility of shared experience, suffocating humanization by eliminating direct contact, the present body, and free play. At the heart of this dispute, as always, is the land: not as private property, but as the foundation of collective life.

The consequences of the invisibility, colonization, and marginalization of these conceptions are diverse. Cases such as that of the Yanomami people, denounced by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert (2015), expose how the imposition of a developmental model centered on urban and extractive values results in environmental degradation, violence, and the rupture of cultural ties. From this perspective, territory ceases to be recognized as a living space and becomes a productive void to be exploited, displacing communities and making them more precarious. Questioning the urban as a measure of all

things implies breaking with such binaries and opening space for situated epistemologies, capable of recognizing and engaging with the diversity of territorialities, including those that remain alive despite the continuous pressure of the coloniality of power and knowledge. On another scale, case studies, such as those carried out by Carmem Lima (2020) with indigenous people of Crateús, demonstrate how mobility and adaptation to urban contexts have become survival strategies for various communities. However, in addition to land conflicts, dissident territories face increasing challenges arising from illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, which intensifies insecurity (Lima, 2020). These external pressures, when added to industrialization and large-scale projects, lead to forced displacements and expropriations, exacerbating the socio-spatial marginalization of these populations (Faria, 2008).

3 Territorial praxis: autonomy, plural territorialities, and situated knowledges

By prioritizing plural territorialities, this section assumes that there is no single valid model for the production of space, but rather multiple arrangements arising from knowledge rooted in the histories and ecosystems in which they develop. Practices such as indigenous peoples' community management of resources, solidarity networks that support agroecological settlements, or even collaborative forms of construction in urban peripheries are examples of situated knowledge that challenge the urban-centric logic and broaden the possibilities for imagining the territory. Field research indicates that these experiences, far from being remnants of the past or expressions of precariousness, constitute complex systems of knowledge and action capable of articulating resistance and innovation. For example, quilombola, indigenous, and housing movement leaders have repeatedly affirmed that their spatial practices are not alternatives to a hegemonic model, but legitimate expressions of distinct, coexisting, and interdependent worlds.

Brazilian organizations such as the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo (APOINME), the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), and the Peoples' Network emerge as central actors in the struggle for legal and political recognition of territorialities that transcend the formal categories of the State. This constant mobilization calls for a critical reassessment of the normative and administrative political order, demanding that the State recognize the plurality of traditional territorialities, regardless of rural, urban, multiethnic, or transnational classifications, as fundamental to the realization of rights. Understanding these territorialities requires an approach that goes beyond simple physical analysis and the common understanding of the formation of master plans, neighborhoods, blocks, and lots; it requires an understanding of territorialities, symbolisms, self-determined orderings, and an understanding that these ways of making space are intuitive, experimental, and historical; consolidated and conceptualized, as much as urban planning. Therefore, this paper presents case studies of the Quilombola Community of Paratibe, located in the southern zone of the municipality of João Pessoa (PB), and the Potiguara Indigenous Land, located on the northern coast of Paraíba, both in northeastern Brazil, as presented below.

3.1 The Quilombola Community of Paratibe

The quilombola community of Paratibe, located in João Pessoa (PB) (Figure 1), constitutes an emblematic example of the symbolic and material dispute for the recognition of its space. Its territorial organization, land use, and community practices express its own logic of spatialization, marked by ancestry, by the symbiotic relationship with the land, and by the collective construction of space, in opposition to the fragmentation imposed by conventional urbanization, thus characterizing it as a quilombo situated within urban perimeters (Aguiar, 2024).

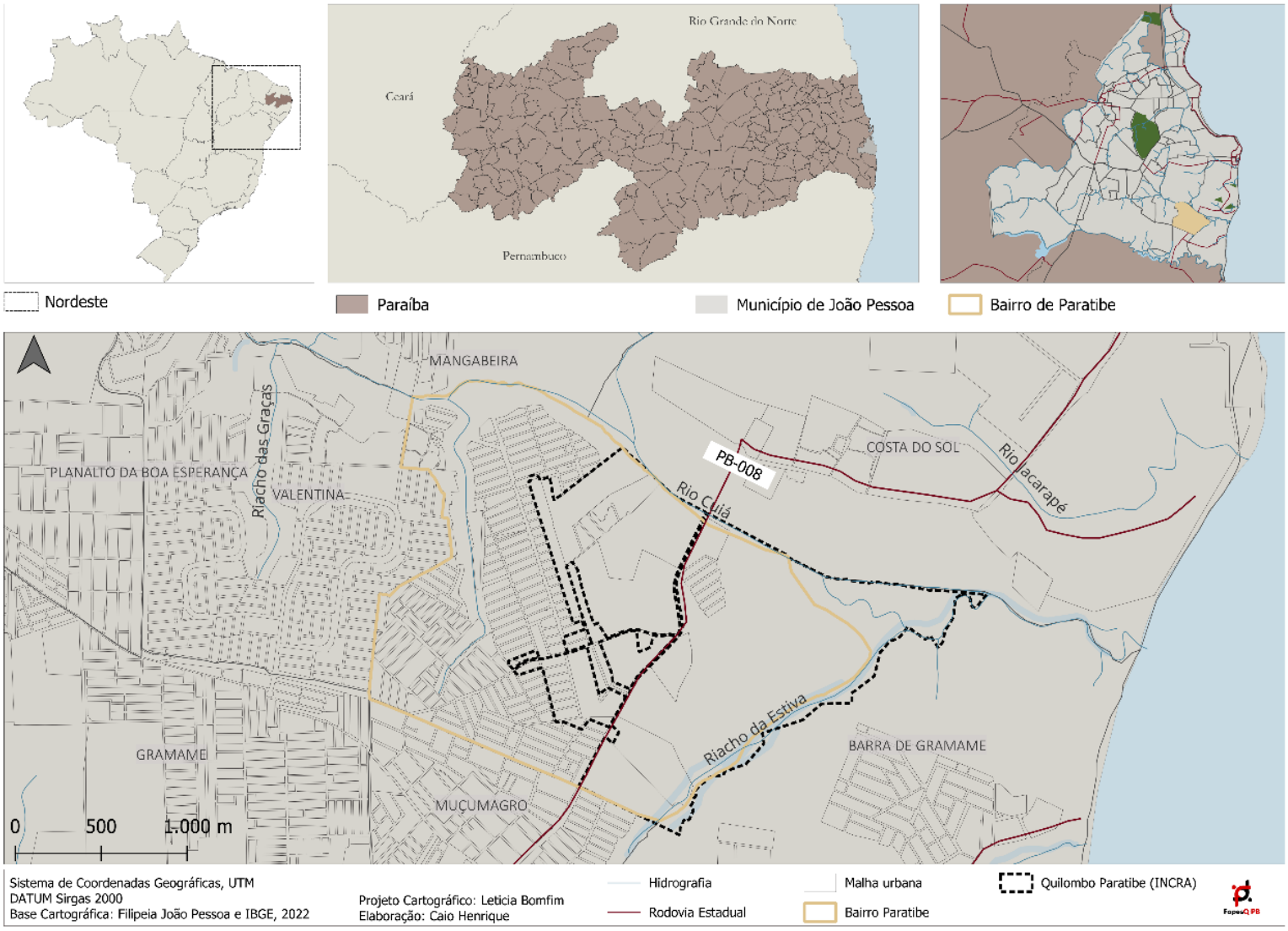

Fig. 1: Location of the Paratibe Quilombola Remnant Community in the southern region of the state of Paraíba. Source: Aguiar, 2024.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the Paratibe Quilombola Remnant Community is located in the middle of the Paratibe neighborhood, between the boundaries of the Valentina de Figueiredo, Mangabeira, and Muçumagro neighborhoods in the city of João Pessoa. According to the Demographic Census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2022), the territory of the Paratibe quilombo comprises approximately 180 families and has 3,761 residents, but only 1,054 identify as quilombola. Thus, it is the sixth-largest quilombo in Brazil. As a result of the process of collective and family territoriality, the Paratibe quilombo is constituted by five parts, called Glebas (Figure 2), since initially, the organization of space occurred through small plots belonging to five well-defined family nuclei. The families had their representatives, who were responsible for the activities on their lands, on a family scale, each structured within its respective gleba. Currently, the quilombo is part of an urban process with glebas separated by real estate developments and roads.

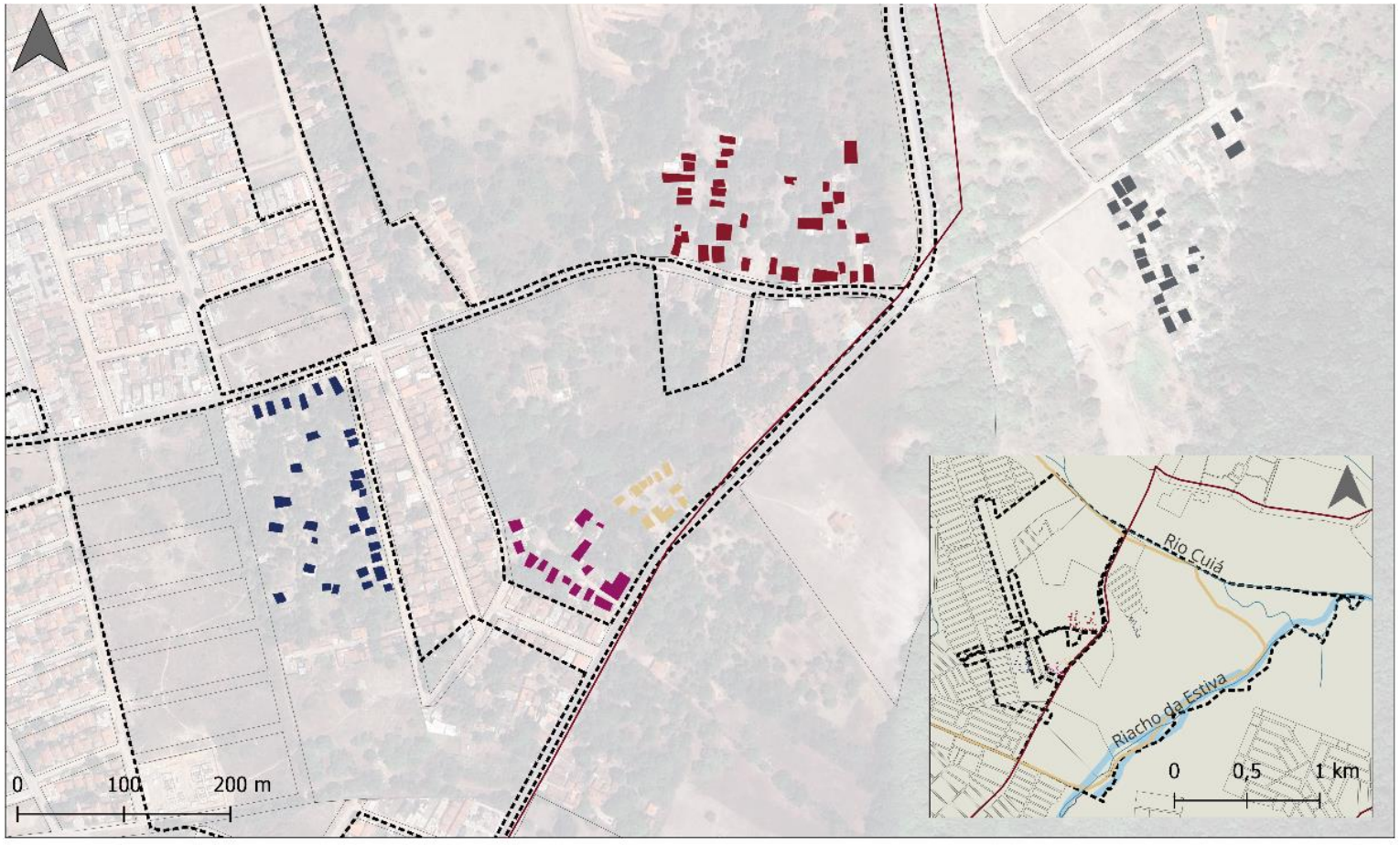

Fig. 2: Glebas of land belonging to the Paratibe Quilombola Remnant Community. Source: Aguiar, 2024.

The glebas are characterized by natural areas, vernacular constructions, and an organic layout consistent with the permeability and porosity of the land-use plan, as shown in Figure 2. Their fragmentation is also a result of a historical process marked by internal dynamics alongside urban expansion in the area. Real estate speculation, which occupies lands previously designated for quilombola families, exemplifies the transformation of community space into a market commodity, disregarding histories of resistance, sustainable use practices, and cultural identities. Furthermore, the Technical Report of Identification and Delimitation (RTID), prepared in 2012 by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), identified 267 hectares of Quilombola territory, although historical records indicate that its original area was significantly larger. Subsequently, the process of notifying landowners and resolving territorial disputes began, but the progress of regularization has been marked by delays and a lack of effective state measures. In this ongoing conflict, there are currently community mobilizations and legal action by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and the Public Defender's Office of Paraíba, with recommendations against new unauthorized land subdivisions and a public hearing to clarify the policies of the Quilombola Brazil Program.

Fig. 3: Photographs of the glebas belonging to the Paratibe Quilombola Remnant Community. Source: Authors, 2024.

The quilombo, as a historical and political category, is not limited to colonial slave resistance, but is configured as a contemporary space for the production of life and identity (Moura, 1987). Like indigenous territories, quilombos represent not only a physical space, but also a place of memory, cosmology, and specific ways of producing and reproducing existence. In Paratibe, this translates into community agricultural practices, traditional festivals, kinship and solidarity networks, and the preservation of vernacular constructive knowledge, which contrasts with the fragmenting logic of urban subdivision imposed by the local real estate market (Aguiar, 2024). In Figure 3, for example, we find a trail through the forest, a dirt floor, wattle-and-daub houses, and quilombola people using trees for recreation. The case of the Quilombo of Paratibe highlights the effects of urban-centrism in the logic of urban development, which concentrates investments, public facilities, and political attention in consolidated centers and areas of high real estate value, relegating communities to a secondary role in the urban fabric. From this perspective, urban quilombos, such as Paratibe, are often seen not as living territories with their own history and culture, but as territorial reserves at the disposal of market-driven urban expansion. This view reduces the community to a space for speculation, whose legitimate transformation occurs only when incorporated into the logic of real estate capital.

The result is a process of planned capitalist inclusion, in which the periphery is incorporated into the formal urban space not to guarantee rights, but to expand the machine of value production of urban land. Both indigenous and quilombola communities face territorial expropriation, the imposition of external construction standards, and the criminalization of traditional practices in the name of so-called urban progress. Progress that is often selective, exclusionary, and destructive to certain ways of life, collective memories, and ecosystems. True progress could only be conceived in a pluralistic way, recognizing and strengthening non-urban ways of life, respecting history and territorial rights, and ensuring that transformations serve life, not just capital. Both share struggles for the right to land, self-determination, and the preservation of their cosmologies, challenging the cultural and spatial homogenization imposed by urban-centrism.

3.2 The Potiguara Indigenous Land

The Potiguara Territory, identified in figure 4, officially divided into three indigenous territories[6]—Potiguara, Potiguara de Monte-Mor, and Jacaré de São Domingos—encompasses thirty-three villages distributed across the municipalities of Rio Tinto, Marcação, and Baía da Traição, bringing together approximately twenty-two thousand indigenous people. It is a space whose material and symbolic configuration results from the overlapping of indigenous territorialities, urban logics, and rural practices, composing a hybrid scenario in permanent negotiation.

[6] The three Indigenous Territories—Potiguara, Jacaré de São Domingos, and Potiguara de Monte-Mor—do not correspond to an internal sociopolitical or geographical division within the Potiguara people, but rather to a normative categorization linked to the demarcation and homologation processes carried out by the Brazilian State. The Potiguara Indigenous Territory was homologated by Brazilian Decree Nº 267, of October 29, 1991; the Jacaré de São Domingos Indigenous Territory by Brazilian Decree of October 1, 1993; and the Potiguara de Monte-Mor Indigenous Territory by Brazilian Ministry of Justice Ordinance Nº. 2,135, of December 14, 2007. In this sense, it is important to consider that these demarcations do not encompass the entirety of the traditional Potiguara territory. Areas like Taepe, recognized as a village since the time of the Indigenous Protection Service (SPI) operation, remain without official recognition, as does the significant territorial presence of this community in the municipal center of Baía da Traição.

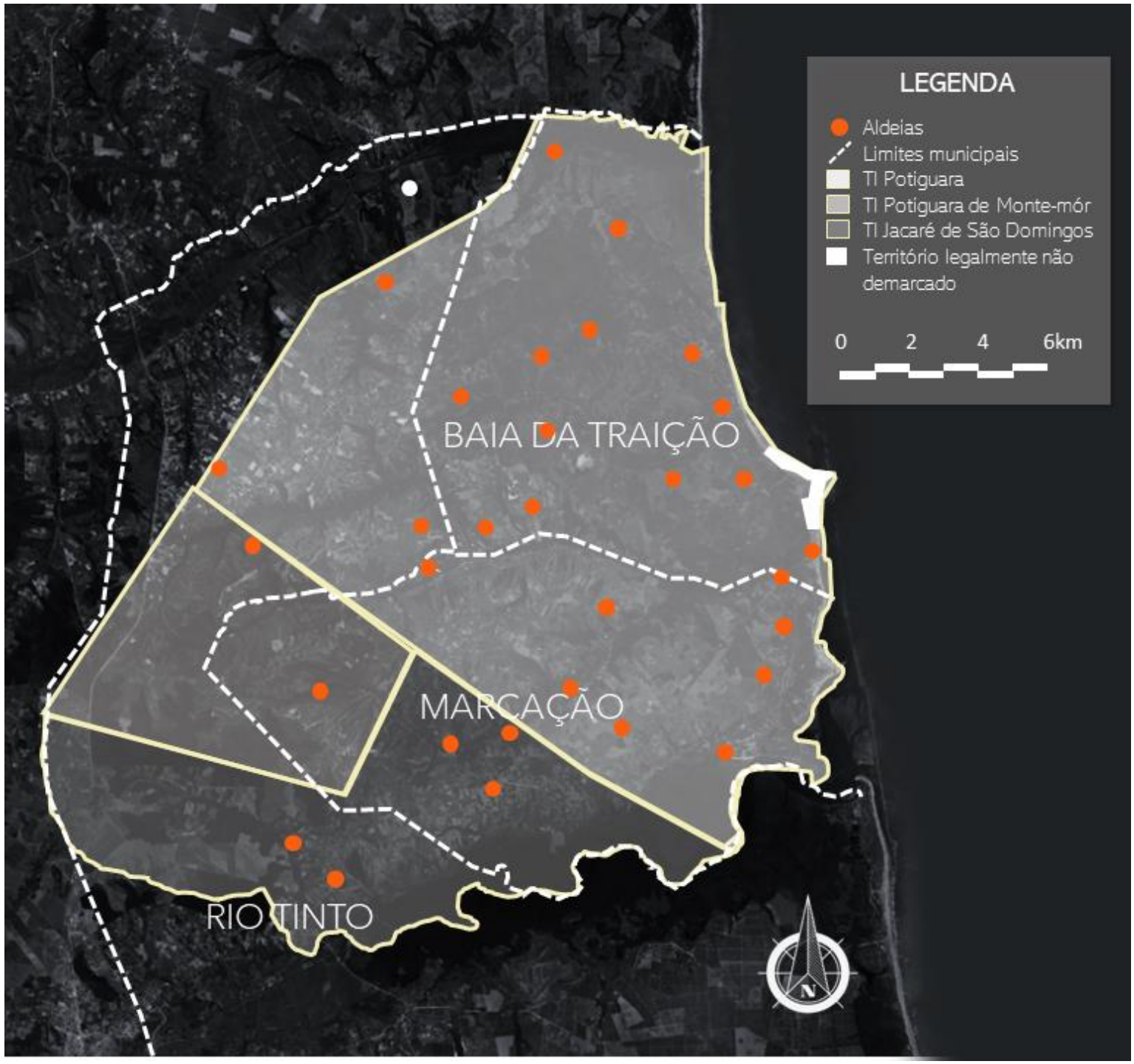

Fig. 4: Location of indigenous territories, municipal boundaries, and Potiguara villages in the North Coast region of the state of Paraíba. Source: Authors, 2025.

The spatial organization of the Potiguara people transcends the physical dimension, articulating cultural, social, and political practices that underpin collective identity. Throughout the territory, constructions (Figure 5) built using systems, symbols, and materials specific to the community manifest the collective dimension, whether through scale, spatial porosity, or attributed uses. The municipalities, as a political-territorial subdivision, interpenetrate with the Potiguara territoriality, blending urban and rural uses. In this sense, these dimensions integrate with the ethnic, environmental, sacred, and political dimensions, manifesting themselves in spatial forms that can be interpreted as rururban, revealing fluid boundaries and a spectrum of configurations. This hybridization is sustained by a logic of occupation that preserves vernacular typologies, organizes the territory around collectivity, and integrates natural attributes into daily life (Souza, 2024).

Fig. 5: Photographs of vernacular constructions in Potiguara villages in the North Coast region of the state of Paraíba. Source: Authors, 2024.

The most isolated villages present organic layouts shaped by a direct relationship with the soil and the landscape, prioritizing pedestrian paths and collective spaces (Figure 6). In these areas, backyards and verandas function as extensions of public space, favoring coexistence and the maintenance of cultural practices. Nature is a structuring element, not only a material resource but also a spiritual and symbolic basis. However, external pressures, such as the expansion of sugarcane monoculture and the advance of urbanization, strain these ways of life. As shown in Figure 6, the territorial organization indicates that the Potiguara village is maintained by a population whose base is the soil and its natural attributes, where ritual events, paths, and daily activities occur. It is on these elements that families situate their occupations, which, in turn, give rise to a spatial layout with a transit character. The occupations and the layout organize and constitute spatial voids, which assume the characteristics of collectivity and permanence. And it is this structure of the built space that defines the typologies and territorial form of each village.

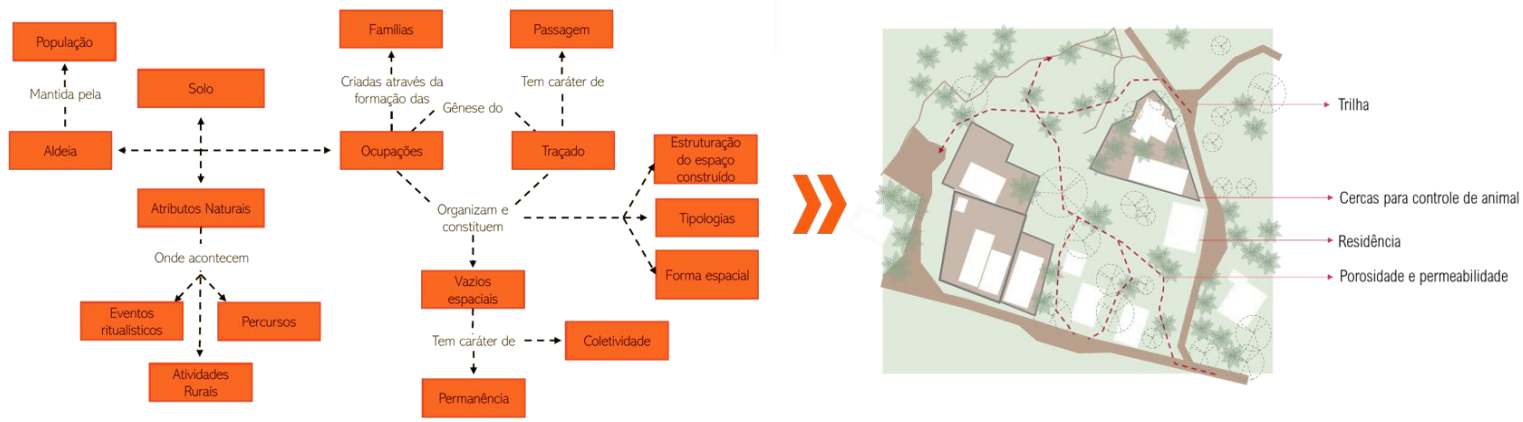

Fig. 6: Diagrams of the Potiguara territorial reproduction process. Source: Souza, 2024.

The cartographic translation of this logic, as represented in the second diagram, makes explicit the overlap between the physical structure and the natural landscape. Main paths connect dwellings, collective areas, and environmental landmarks, while the arrangement of buildings preserves green areas and maintains permeability. This territorial model, far from urban-centered patterns, demonstrates that the Potiguara space is constituted by a relational matrix in which environment, cultural practices, and social organization intertwine. It is an ordering that does not derive from external impositions but from its own logic, which translates the material and immaterial dimensions of the indigenous territory into physical space. In other words, far from being organized by neighborhoods, blocks, and lots defined by prior planning and regulations, the Potiguara Territory is organized without rigid internal delimitations, being an articulation between the villages, with walkways where the occupations are located, without Western collective structures, such as parks and squares, but with a collective dimension that makes each and every space, simultaneously, an extension of the house and the village.

The villages of Acajutibiró, Forte, and Alto do Tambá, located in transition zones between the urban center of Baía da Traição city and the more isolated villages, exhibit higher population density and a limited supply of tourist services, coexisting with informal commercial practices and sporadic public facilities such as schools and health units. The urban center of Baía da Traição, although not demarcated, is part of the Potiguara territory and adopts a spatial logic that prioritizes the layout and concentration of services, subordinating natural attributes and accommodating new dynamics linked to tourism and summer vacations. In this sense, it presents spatial characteristics, such as the formation of city blocks, closer to an urban-centric

configuration, albeit with reservations regarding local constructive expressiveness and the symbolism attributed to it. These internal variations reveal that the Potiguara territory should not be understood through binary and urban classifications, but as an organic complex of interdependent territorialities, traversed by processes of transformation, resistance, and re-signification. The recent appreciation of heritage elements, such as the cannons of the village of Forte and the ruins of the Church of São Miguel Arcanjo, is part of identity affirmation strategies that combine material preservation and the activation of collective memories (Souza, 2024).

4 Opening the way for pluralization in the urban-centric paradigm

The articulation between the theoretical review and case studies (Paratibe quilombo and Potiguara Indigenous Land) reveals that the hegemony of urbanocentrism operates as an epistemic-institutional device that restricts the legitimacy of plural territorialities and guides territorial production and planning practices in a selective, hierarchical manner. The analyses of Rolnik (2007) and Maricato (2011) show that the modern city has become a universal matrix for defining what development, citizenship, and territorial ordering are, producing a disciplinary field that is poorly suited to recognizing non-conforming spatialities. This finding reveals empirical echo in the dynamics observed in the territories studied, in which community forms of use, ancestry, and symbolic bonds clash with normative frameworks incapable of translating them.

In line with this, although instruments such as Decree nº8,750/2016 recognize the diversity of traditional peoples and communities, they maintain structural gaps that result in the legal weakening of occupations, especially urban, multiethnic ones or those located in non-homologated territories. Cases such as the Maracanã and Tiririca dos Crioulos villages are examples. Thus, normative marginalization does not stem solely from the absence of legal instruments, but also from an epistemological matrix that defines which territorialities are recognizable and which remain outside the regime of state visibility.

This unequal production of space, described by Rolnik (2007) and deepened by authors such as Marco, Santos, and Moller (2020), is sustained by urban boundaries that reiterate colonial hierarchies between center and periphery, order and disorder, formality and informality. This structure is equally observable in Paratibe and in the coastal Potiguara villages, where processes of speculation, land conflicts, and pressures from summer tourism shape territorial disputes marked by power asymmetry and institutional incomprehension of indigenous rationalities. In this sense, the analyses of Castillo (2013) and Lozano (2017) contribute to understanding how urbanization operates through historical and symbolic erasures, displacing sacred or community territorialities to positions of subalternity.

By incorporating Indigenous and Quilombola conceptions of territory, such as those of Echeverri (2004), Gallois (2004), Boege (2012), Krenak (2022), and Potiguara (1989), the results reveal that such territorialities not only diverge from the modern paradigm but also challenge it structurally, offering other ontologies of space based on interdependence, reciprocity, and the body-territory relationship. This dimension emerges clearly in field studies, in which ancestral management practices, collective uses, spirituality, and forms of governance demonstrate modes of space production that escape urban taxonomies and conventional technical-institutional categories.

In this scenario, recognizing the hegemony of urbanocentrism entails diagnosing its limits and creating conditions to make other epistemologies and territorial practices visible and legitimate. These openings constitute true spaces of insurgency capable of challenging aspects of Architecture and Urbanism from non-hegemonic perspectives. Such a shift requires a critical review of academic curricula, institutional logics, and normative frameworks, as well as the creation of mechanisms that strengthen design and territorial management practices anchored in local knowledge, community practices, etc. In this sense, participatory methodologies play a central role in ensuring that dissident communities fully exercise their self-determination. The Paratibe quilombo and the Potiguara Indigenous Land demonstrate that these territorialities not only propose alternative modes of spatial organization but also directly confront the epistemic structures of traditional urbanism, resisting the logic of private property, standardized land subdivision, and real estate speculation, facing external pressures without abandoning fundamental values such as collectivity, ancestry, and spiritual connection to the land, which do not find adequate translation in current legal and urban planning instruments, demanding new analytical and normative categories capable of recognizing and protecting dissident territorialities.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that the pluralization of the disciplinary field is not limited to the formal inclusion of new subjects, but requires the critical dismantling of the categories that sustain urban-centrism as a universal matrix of interpretation. The results indicate that the epistemic shift, operated through the valorization of situated epistemologies and dissident territorialities, constitutes not only a methodological necessity but a condition for the formulation of more just, dialogical, and coherent design and territorial management practices that reflect Brazilian socio-spatial diversity.

5 Final considerations

The reflections presented throughout this work demonstrate that understanding and practicing urbanism, when focused exclusively on the parameters of the hegemonic city, reduce the plurality of lifestyles and render invisible territories that do not fit the urban-centered logic. The examination of the relationships between body, territory, and nature, articulated with the experiences and knowledge of indigenous and quilombola peoples, reveals that other spatial epistemologies not only exist but also resist and propose alternative forms of social, economic, and environmental organization. In turn, the analysis of the conflicts, inequalities, and asymmetries that shape contemporary space shows that such realities are not the result of chance but the outcome of historical processes of colonization, exploitation, and concentration of power, which are perpetuated in public policies, planning practices, and hegemonic discourses. This finding requires a critical repositioning of the fields of architecture and urbanism to recognize the legitimacy of territories and territorialities that operate with their own logics and thereby challenge legal normativity and the urban vision of development.

By highlighting that the land, for many people, is body, nature, sacredness, and resistance, it becomes possible to envision more balanced and sustainable paths to coexistence. These paths necessarily involve collective decision-making processes, the strengthening of local autonomies, and the articulation of struggles, so that fragmented resistances become integrated fronts of transformation. Thus, overcoming binaries and hegemonies requires more than including other spaces in the city as it is; it requires rethinking the very measure of the urban, opening space for ways of life that do not fit into its logic, but that can offer vital answers to the environmental, social, and political crisis we are experiencing. In this sense, the challenge is not only technical but also ethical and civilizational: to build futures in which the diversity of territories and knowledge is not tolerated as an exception but recognized as the foundation of collective life. Based on these dialogues and confrontations between urban epistemologies and territorial knowledge, the text reinforces that decolonizing the field of Architecture and Urbanism is not just a critical review but a multilateral practice that demands openness to listening and the collective construction of space.

In this way, the paper contributes to epistemic pluralization in the field of Architecture and Urbanism by proposing a real openness to decolonial dialogues between technical and community knowledge. It recognizes that political and epistemological confrontations are not obstacles, but constitutive dimensions of this territorial praxis, through which other forms of existence and production of space are affirmed. Thus, more than a critique of urban-centrism, this work reaffirms the need to build fields of horizontal dialogue among different ways of knowing and inhabiting, promoting an ethical and collective transformation in how we conceive of territory.

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DATA, GOVERNANCE, AND OPACITY: TOWARD AN INFORMATIONAL RIGHT TO THE CITY

DADOS, GOVERNANÇA E OPACIDADE: POR UM DIREITO INFORMACIONAL À CIDADE

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Borges, M. (2025). Data, Governance and Opacity: Toward an Informational Right to the City. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 230-239
https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.236696

Abstract

This essay proposes a theoretical conceptual reflection on the informational right to the city, understood as a contemporary extension of Henri Lefebvre's thinking on the right to the city. It takes as a starting point the urban transformations mediated by digital infrastructures and geospatial information systems, using BHMaps, the public territorial data platform of the city of Belo Horizonte, in southeastern Brazil, as an example of the tensions between transparency, control, and citizen appropriation of urban information. The analysis is grounded in the author's institutional experience[1] at the Secretariat of Urban Policy (2015-2024), a period marked by the consolidation of GIS platforms and the digital transition of public administration. This experience provides a situated perspective on the relations between transparency, power, and informational curation. The text weaves together contributions from critical urban theory, critical cartography, and studies on digital urbanization, arguing that the informational right to the city involves not only access but also the collective capacity to produce, interpret, and contest the informational space, in dialogue with a praxis oriented toward the democratization of territorial knowledge. By recognizing the confrontations that permeate the production and use of digital platforms, the essay proposes rethinking these infrastructures as digital urban commons, guided by informational justice and collaborative governance.

Keywords: Right to the City, Informational Justice, Digital Inclusion, Urban Governance, Critical Cartography.

1 Introduction

Contemporary urbanization is deeply marked by the presence of digital technologies that, while reorganizing the production and experience of urban space, also introduce new dimensions to governance dynamics. The promise of transparency and informational democratization that accompanies these technologies, however, coexists with renewed forms of centralization, opacity, and exclusion. This essay originates from this paradox: the coexistence between the emancipatory potential of digital platforms and the structural barriers that limit their appropriation by citizens. It proposes discussing the informational right to the city as an unfolding of the right to the city formulated by Lefebvre (1968, 1974), considering the digitalization of urban management and data infrastructures. Lefebvre conceived this right as the possibility of reappropriating urban space by its inhabitants, in opposition to the fragmenting logics of capital. The proposal here is to explore how this right may be conceived today, considering the increasing digital mediation of urban life. As Neil Brenner (2009, 2014) argues, critical urban theory requires constant updating in response to the socio-spatial transformations promoted by neoliberalism and emerging technologies, which includes considering informational infrastructure as a central element in the production of the urban.

Inspired by Shaw and Graham (2017), the concept questions who holds the power to produce, organize, and interpret the information that configures the urban territory. If, for Lefebvre, the right to the city implied participating in the social production of space, the informational right to the city extends this claim to the digital realm: it concerns participating in the social production of urban information, understood as a new constitutive layer of the urban. The reflection developed here is conceptual and critical. BHMaps, the public geoinformation platform of the city of Belo Horizonte, in southeastern Brazil, serves as an illustrative reference for broader processes that characterize the technocratic management of the informational space in Brazilian cities. The essay does not aim to offer empirical results, but rather theoretical elaborations informed by the author's institutional experience and by the literature on digital urbanization, critical cartography, and socio-spatial justice.

This situated position allows the comprehension about how territorial information becomes a field of political dispute, in which public access does not necessarily imply democratic appropriation. The central objective is to propose a conceptual framework for the informational right to the city, exploring its political, epistemological, and urban dimensions. It is argued that public data

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platforms such as BHMaps will operate as instruments of democratization only when they are appropriated as urban informational commons and supported by participatory governance practices.

The thinking about the informational right to the city is embedded in contemporary dynamics of mediation among technique, politics, and urban life, in which different rationalities interweave and confront one another. The digitalization of urban infrastructures reveals both new possibilities for dialogue among knowledges and asymmetries that limit citizen participation in the production of the informational space. Thinking about BHMaps in this context means recognizing both the potential and the impasses of an informational praxis that seeks to translate the urban into data but can also open avenues for dialogue and collective reinvention of ways of knowing and governing the city.

2 Analytical Approach

This text does not follow the format of a case study, but rather that of a theoretical and critical essay that combines conceptual foundations with indirect empirical observations, which are taken as illustrative examples of broader sociotechnical dynamics. The analysis draws on the tradition of critical urban theory (Lefebvre, 1968; Brenner, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2011) and the emerging field of digital urbanization studies (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011; Luque-Ayala, 2020; Batty, 2024; Shaw & Graham, 2017), articulating them with contributions from critical cartography (Wood, 1992; Crampton, 2010), participatory Geographic Information Systems (Elwood, 2006; Wilson, 2017), and contemporary discussions on urban commons (Harvey, 2012; Stavrides, 2016; Tonucci Filho & Cruz, 2023).

From an epistemological perspective, the essay adopts a dialectical standpoint: it understands informational infrastructures as material and symbolic expressions of power relations that produce and conceal inequalities. Rather than observing BHMaps empirically, the text proposes a conceptual reading of it, as a sign of a state technocratic rationality and, simultaneously, as a potential field of informational resistance.

The author writes from a place of practice: technical experience in municipal public administration, with a focus on territorial planning and management. This experience provides a heightened perception of the invisible layers of urban information, those that are not public, that are filtered by political criteria, or that are deemed undesirable to produce. Without revealing restricted institutional data, this standpoint enables a problematization of informational curation as a political and epistemological practice: deciding what to map, omit, and render legible is also an act of governance. The exercise of working within the very state structure being analysed revealed not only contradictions, but also everyday dilemmas about the meaning of producing public information in a context of technocratic rationality.

Accordingly, the analytical approach that guides this essay unfolds in four complementary movements. The first consists of revisiting the theoretical foundations of the right to the city, formulated by Lefebvre and reinterpreted by contemporary authors, to situate the discussion on the production of space in its digital extension. The second seeks to discuss the informational production of urban space, exploring the logics of the so-called “computable city” (Batty, 2024) and how territorial information systems configure new forms of mediation among government, technique, and citizenship. The third movement proposes an interpretation of BHMaps as a paradigmatic reference of public informational infrastructure. Finally, the essay reflects on the possibilities of citizen reappropriation and the construction of urban digital commons, understood as expressions of a politics of sharing and democratization of territorial knowledge. This is therefore a situated reflection, aimed at problematizing the relations between access and appropriation, transparency and power.

3 From the Right to the City to the Informational Right to the City

The concept of the right to the city, formulated by Henri Lefebvre (1968, 1974), remains one of the pillars of critical urban theory. For Lefebvre, urban space is a collective work, the result of social relations that are expressed territorially. The right to the city is the right to appropriation and participation in the production of urban space. It is not only the right to access the existing city, but the right to reinvent it, to participate in its symbolic, social, and material production.

In the contemporary context, this principle acquires new layers of complexity. Today’s city is mediated by digital infrastructures, geographic information systems, data platforms, and algorithms that organize urban life and produce new forms of visibility and

control. These infrastructures, far from neutral, establish new forms of urban governance by defining what becomes visible, measurable, and controllable. Shaw and Graham (2017) expand the Lefebvrian horizon by proposing the informational right to the city, advocating access, coproduction, and contestation of digital infrastructures as dimensions of citizenship. Just as physical space is socially produced and subject to appropriation and contestation, informational space is as well.

Brenner (2014) and Harvey (2012) remind us that the right to the city is not only a right of use but also a right of power and a call to repoliticize urban structures. In the digital context, this implies questioning who governs the flows of information and who benefits from the knowledge produced. The informational right to the city, therefore, involves a critique of the concentration of informational power, just as Lefebvrian theory criticized the concentration of urban power. While Lefebvre denounced technocratic control over space, today it is necessary to question the technocratic control over data. As Luque-Ayala and Marvin (2020) observe, digital infrastructures configure new forms of urban governance based on the capture and control of information.

Drawing from the author's institutional experience, it is possible to observe how the production and curation of urban data reflect tensions between transparency and control. Layers of information are created, filtered, or omitted according to administrative interests, legal constraints, or political strategies. These choices, although technical in appearance, constitute acts of power. Thus, the informational right to the city is understood as the right to participate in these decisions, to coproduce the visible, and to dispute what is recognized as data, opening the informational city to collective imagination and challenging the technical monopoly over urban knowledge.

4 The Informational City and the Digitally Mediated Space

With the advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs), urban space becomes mediated by data, algorithms, and digital platforms. As Kitchin and Dodge (2011) observe, the city becomes a coded space, a territory whose management and perception occur through computational flows. The computable city is therefore a political artifact. Code does not merely describe but produces the urban. This new configuration introduces an informational dimension of urbanization that redefines the relationships among government, technique, and citizenship. The discourse of the smart city promises efficiency, sustainability, and transparency, but it often operates according to a logic of control, centralization, and surveillance (Morozov, 2013). As Mattern (2017) argues, the city's digital infrastructure is also an ideological infrastructure, a form of computational urbanism that naturalizes political decisions under the language of technical neutrality.

In this context, BHMaps constitutes a paradigmatic example of a public geoinformation platform, one in which the promises and contradictions of the digitalization of urban management are condensed. Although conceived as an instrument of transparency and public access, the system materializes state rationalities of informational curation, defining what becomes visible and what remains opaque, what is recognized as legitimate data and what is discarded as noise. These choices, although technical in appearance, constitute what might be called a cartography of informational power.

BHMaps is the official geoinformation platform of the Municipal Government of Belo Horizonte, in southeastern Brazil. It was developed by the Subsecretariat of Management Modernization (SMGO) in collaboration with various municipal agencies. It is a public Geographic Information System (GIS) that centralizes, organizes, and makes available territorial data about the municipality, oriented toward policies of urban planning, territorial management, and administrative transparency. Through an interactive web interface (Figure 1), the platform enables users with diverse profiles, including municipal technicians, researchers, urban planning professionals, and general citizens, to view, cross-reference, and export georeferenced information. The databases are organized into combinable thematic layers, which enable complex spatial analyses. Among the most relevant categories are those related to urban infrastructure, land subdivision, land use and occupation, the environment, topography, and high-resolution orthoimage. The hierarchy among these layers reveals an institutional priority for land regulation and asset management rather than the territory's social, cultural, and affective dimensions. The cartographic interface itself, quantitative and normative, reflects the state logic of visibility and control over space.

From a technical standpoint, BHMaps is supported by a modern spatial data infrastructure comprising corporate geospatial databases, map servers (GeoServer and ArcGIS Server), and interoperability services, and it offers exports in open formats such as Shapefile, KML, GeoJSON, and CSV. The platform is also connected to other municipal systems, such as licensing, technical cadastre, and inspection, forming an integrated informational ecosystem. Municipal administration technicians carry out continuous

data updates through SisCTM (Municipal Territory Sharing System), an internal tool that enables collaborative editing, revision, and validation of spatial information.

This technical-institutional architecture reveals the political dimension of informational infrastructure. Each layer of data is also a layer of decision-making, the result of negotiations, disputes, and priorities that shape how the territory is known and represented. BHMaps exceeds the role of a cartographic tool; it is a device of territorial governance in which producing information produces the urban. Having participated directly in monitoring and producing data for the platform, the author observed that internal disputes over the visibility of specific information layers, such as public assets, urban planning guidelines, or areas of environmental conflict, reveal the boundaries between the public and the institutional. These boundaries are not only technical but also political and epistemological.

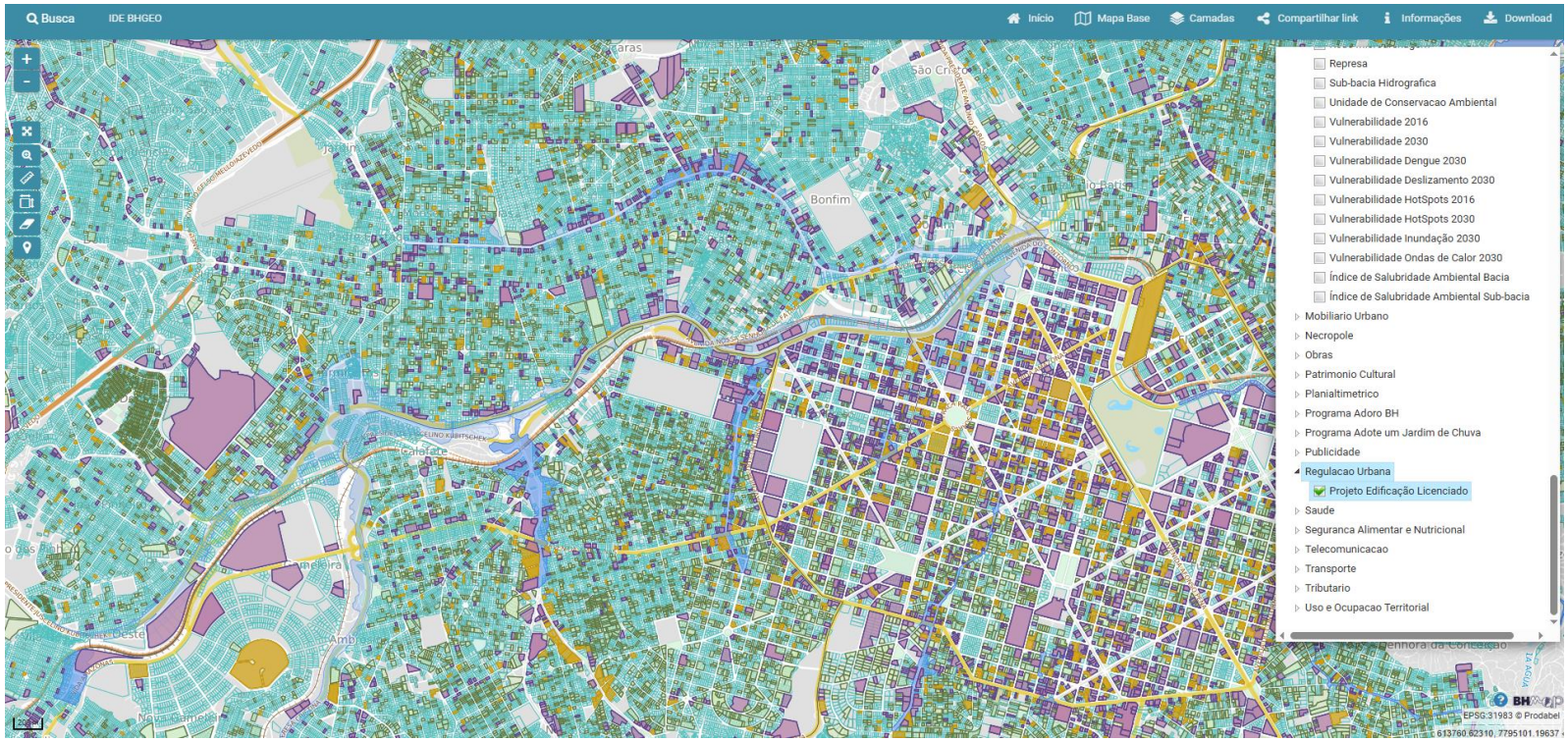

Fig. 1: Interactive map of the city of Belo Horizonte extracted from BHMaps. Source: Prefeitura de Belo Horizonte, n.d. https://bhmap.pbh.gov.br

Critical cartography, as proposed by Wood (1992) and Crampton (2010), teaches that every map is an act of power. To map is to decide what exists. In urban digital platforms, this power extends to the production and circulation of data, the development of interoperability protocols, the definition of spatial ontologies, and the establishment of metadata standards. Technical neutrality, in this context, is a convenient fiction. Each informational layer results from a choice and, therefore, from an exclusion.

To understand more deeply the role of the BHMaps platform in mediating digitally urbanized space, we draw on Tony Benn's five questions of power formulated in a 2001 speech delivered in the United Kingdom Parliament. The questions “What power do you have?”, “Where did you get it from?”, “In whose interests do you exercise it?”, “To whom are you accountable?” and “How can we get rid of you?” were conceived to critically examine public and private authorities, revealing invisible structures of power that shape collective life. In critical urban studies, these questions were reinterpreted by authors such as Shaw and Graham (2017) to analyse the role of digital infrastructures, such as Google Maps, in organizing the city's informational space. Inspired by this gesture, it is possible to transpose these questions to the context of BHMaps, not as an empirical methodology, but as a theoretical and conceptual tool that reveals the political layers of territorial information.

When asking “What power do you have?”, one recognizes the power of BHMaps to organize and render the urban territory of Belo Horizonte legible. The system centralizes spatial data on zoning, public facilities, infrastructure networks, and the environment, defining what is visible, searchable, and calculable in the city. This is both a technical and symbolic power. By

structuring urban space into organized and manipulable layers, the platform produces official narratives of the territory, silencing other possible readings, especially those emerging from peripheral communities or non-institutionalized collectives.

Asking “Where did you get this power from?” involves recognizing that BHMaps derives its authority from institutional legitimation. Linked to the Municipal Government of Belo Horizonte and to open data policies, the system embodies the modern state's rationality, combining administrative transparency with technical control. This public origin grants legitimacy, but it also limits its critical capacity because the criteria for selecting and curating data remain insufficiently transparent and difficult to contest. Information governance, although it decentralizes access, maintains centralized decision-making.

The question “In whose interests do you exercise this power?” directs attention to the asymmetries of use and comprehension of the platform. Although BHMaps is formally open, it is more accessible to users with technical expertise and cartographic literacy, such as planning professionals, researchers, and consultants. The absence of pedagogical interfaces, guided navigation, and basic tutorials restricts its appropriation by the general population, deepening preexisting inequalities. Thus, exclusion does not lie in access to data alone, but in the capacity to interpret and use them critically.

When asking “To whom are you accountable?”, the gaps in public accountability within the platform's governance become evident. BHMaps is formally accountable to the technical structure of the Municipal Government. However, there are no channels for citizen participation to propose new information layers, review content, or assess the public usefulness of the data. Access is unidirectional. Citizens consult information but do not coproduce it. The right to the city as an informational right requires the opposite: the possibility of participating in the production of informational space.

The final question “How can we get rid of you?” invites a critical reflection on how to transform structures of informational power when they become opaque, exclusionary, or limiting. To get rid of, in this context, does not mean eliminating the platform, which represents an institutional advance, but re-signifying it as a digital urban common (Tonucci Filho & Cruz, 2023). This would require democratizing data curation, integrating layers produced by local communities and universities, creating accessible interfaces, and establishing participatory mechanisms of informational governance.

These five dimensions reveal the political and critical potential of BHMaps as an urban cognitive infrastructure. More than a technical repository, it constitutes a field of symbolic and epistemological power in which the informational right to the city remains latent. The absence of explicit disputes does not indicate neutrality, but rather the distance between the platform and the urban subjects it could engage. In this sense, BHMaps is not currently a space of visible conflict, but a device that stabilizes information and hinders its collective appropriation. To politicize its digital infrastructures, therefore, means recognizing this absence of tension as a symptom of informational inequality itself. What is not disputed remains invisible.

5 Digital Inequality and Informational Curation

The promise of transparency that accompanies the expansion of digital platforms often conceals the fact that access to information is structurally unequal. Digital urbanization does not eliminate social asymmetries. On the contrary, it tends to reproduce and amplify preexisting inequalities. Research by the Regional Center for Studies on the Development of the Information Society (CETIC.br), conducted by the Brazilian Network Information Center (NIC.br) and the Internet Steering Committee in Brazil (CGI.br), shows that access to the internet and digital competencies remain profoundly unequal across regions, genders, and social classes in Brazil (Núcleo de Informação e Coordenação do Ponto BR – NIC.br, 2025). Even in urban contexts, the appropriation of public platforms requires technical literacy, adequate equipment, and available time and resources, which are unevenly distributed.

Although BHMaps represents an advance in public access to territorial information in the city of Belo Horizonte, in southeastern Brazil, it also reveals the unequal geography of the informational right to the city. Its appropriation by citizens is conditioned by material and symbolic barriers that limit the reappropriation of urban space by historically marginalized groups. These barriers articulate three interdependent dimensions of inequality: digital infrastructure, technical literacy, and informational visibility.

The use of georeferenced platforms requires stable connectivity, adequate equipment, and familiarity with cartographic languages, conditions that remain unevenly distributed. As a result, BHMaps tends to favor specialized users, such as

technicians, urban planners, and researchers, reinforcing hierarchies between codified knowledge and local knowledge. As Lefebvre (1974) warns, the risk is that urban space becomes a technical abstraction, erasing the multiplicity and conflict that define lived space.

Informational inequality also manifests in the invisibilities produced by data curation. The layers made available reflect institutional priorities focused on formal management of the territory, omitting sensitive aspects of urban life, such as informal housing, cultural practices, and community dynamics. This selection produces what Graham and Dittus (2022) call geo-informational inequality, in which some spaces become hyper-represented while others remain opaque, invisible both to public authorities and to their own inhabitants. The digital city, therefore, reveals itself only partially, filtered by technical and institutional logics that reproduce spatial inequalities through information. This point resonates with Brenner's (2014) critique of the technocratic rationality that prevails in urban policy, which tends to prioritize information compatible with consolidated management models, while leaving aside the territory's social, affective, and conflictive dimensions.

During her work in the Secretariat of Urban Policy, the author experienced situations that exposed the limits between the discourse of transparency and the political control of information. Among them was the attempt to include layers containing guidelines for completed environmental licensing processes in the territorial information system. Although technically grounded and intended to expand territorial planning analysis, the proposal was vetoed by the higher administrative authority under the argument of administrative prudence. The episode revealed that even in institutional structures committed to data openness, zones of silence persist that define what can be made public. This direct experience demonstrated that mapping is also a negotiation of visibilities and that, in institutional cartographies, the invisible is not an absence but the result of choices. This dynamic aligns with Wilson's (2017) argument that geographic information systems, while presenting themselves as technical tools, conceal political decisions that structure the ways territory is visualized and administered. More than a technical impasse, it was a lesson in the diffuse power that permeates informational curation, in which governing also means choosing what will not be shown.

This experience synthesizes a recurring dynamic in the public management of information. The production and maintenance of databases involve complex decisions that are often exclusionary. What becomes public is what is already technically consolidated, legally secure, and politically acceptable, while areas of uncertainty or conflict tend to be erased from the visible field. This practice reflects a structural mechanism of administrative rationality, which privileges informational stability over the complexity of the territory. Informational curation, understood as the set of practices that select, validate, and publish urban data, therefore constitutes an act of power. It defines not only what is shown but what can be known about the city. The informational right to the city, in turn, requires challenging these selection criteria, questioning epistemic hierarchies, and denaturalizing the institutional filters that shape public platforms. As Harvey (2012) emphasizes, contesting the production of urban space requires contesting the technical, discursive, and institutional instruments that make it legible, since these instruments participate in reproducing the logics of accumulation and control that shape the contemporary city.

6 Citizen Reappropriation and Informational Commons

The critical analysis of BHMaps revealed a solid infrastructure for making urban data available, articulated with a municipal policy of transparency and modernization of public management. However, this informational openness alone does not guarantee the democratization of urban space, nor does it ensure the full informational right to the city. As Brenner (2014) argues, urban technologies are incorporated into historically constituted forms of power, and their critical appropriation requires epistemological and institutional ruptures that go beyond administrative technicism. The centralization of curation, the opacity of update criteria, and the absence of participation reveal that BHMaps still operates under a techno-bureaucratic rationality rather than through the collective production of the urban.

The analysis of BHMaps also reveals a significant dimension of technological autonomy within the context of Brazilian public digital infrastructures. Developed by Prodabel, the public technology company of the Municipal Government of Belo Horizonte, in southeastern Brazil, the system operates on SISCTM (Multifunctional Technical Cadastre System), whose architecture and maintenance are carried out internally, without dependence on proprietary software or external platforms. This condition gives BHMaps a unique character of technical and cognitive sovereignty, allowing the public sector to retain local control over data and over the forms of territorial representation. However, even supported by a public and autonomous infrastructure, the system

remains permeated by technocratic rationalities that tend to reproduce hierarchies of knowledge and limit citizen participation. The challenge, therefore, lies in transforming this technological capacity into a collective informational praxis oriented toward the coproduction of knowledge and a technological multilateralism committed to informational justice and the democratization of the urban.

In this way, the platform reproduces what Swyngedouw (2011) describes as post-political urbanization. This regime simulates openness and participation while neutralizing dissent and converting urban space into a managerial panel of apparent consensuses. In BHMaps, there is no room for conflict, discomfort, or the urban other. It is a clean, orthogonal, and functional territory shaped by a governance logic that privileges informational stability over the plurality of experience. Still, fractures exist. It is through critique that these fissures become visible and politically fertile. Recognizing them is the first step in reimagining BHMaps not as a technical management tool but as a digital urban common, an informational space that is shared, open to coproduction, and to citizen contestation. If informational power tends toward concentration, democratizing this power requires its redistribution through collective practices of data production and curation. The idea of informational commons, derived from commons theory developed by authors such as Harvey (2012) and Stavrides (2016), offers this horizon. It frames information as an urban common good whose management should be cooperative, transparent, and inclusive.

Citizen reappropriation of urban information manifests at multiple scales and through multiple practices, ranging from collaborative mapping and affective cartographies to citizen science platforms, community-generated data, and participatory urban observatories. These experiences challenge the state or corporate centralization of information by proposing distributed models of territorial knowledge production and management. Experiences such as the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (2003), the Mapa de Cuidados y Asistencias (Government of the City of Buenos Aires, n.d.), and the Mapa da Desigualdade (Rede Nossa São Paulo, 2023) demonstrate that platforms can be reappropriated as instruments of solidarity and visibility for marginalized groups. In these cases, the act of mapping is also a political act of spatial and informational claim-making, a gesture of collective self-recognition.

In this sense, the concept of the informational right to the city approaches Lefebvre's (1968) notion of the right to difference, the right not to be reduced to the homogeneity of databases, and the right to inscribe other narratives, geographies, and temporalities in the digital urban space. As Wilson (2017) highlights, to think critically about geographic information systems is to interrogate their absences and excesses, recognizing the insurgent potential of counter-mapping practices. When articulated in networks and oriented toward the public good, these practices constitute urban informational commons understood as shared infrastructures for producing knowledge and visibility.

However, the utopia of these commons should not be confused with the idea of open data. It goes further, proposing citizen co-authorship in the production of information, a collective pedagogy of territorial interpretation, and a cooperative governance of public platforms. Thus, the informational right to the city does not propose a new management model but a critical reading of digital infrastructures as arenas of dispute, where the common is not given but continuously produced.

7 The Role of Public Policy in Informational Governance

The advancement of digital infrastructures within Brazilian public administrations has been accompanied by a set of policies and legal frameworks aimed at structuring the regime of data and transparency. The Access to Information Law (Law No. 12,527/2011), the Open Data Policy (Decree No. 8,777/2016), and the Digital Government Strategy (2020–2022) introduced new requirements for openness, interoperability, and transparency and democratic accountability mechanisms.

However, the digital transition of municipal public administration, closely observed by the author, has shown that legal normativity is often constrained by technical infrastructure and organizational culture. The idea of opening data depends on teams, processes, and systems capable of ensuring the quality, updating, and contextualization of information.

These limitations reveal that the democratization of urban information is not merely a technical issue but a political and institutional one. It requires rethinking the very form of system management and recognizing that data curation is also a public policy. Thus, the challenge lies in building flexible transparent institutional structures that maintain and ensure the openness of

data without reproducing technocratic hierarchies. This involves creating mechanisms for continuous participation in defining informational priorities, as well as spaces for mediation and translation between technical knowledge and local knowledge.

8 Final considerations

The present essay sought to outline the informational right to the city as a political and theoretical category that broadens the debate on the right to the city in the digital age. Based on a critical and situated reading, it argued that public data platforms, exemplified here by BHMaps, condense both the emancipatory potential of transparency and the limits imposed by the centralization of informational power. The reflections developed here point to the need to rethink information as political infrastructure rather than merely technical infrastructure. Urban information, in Lefebvre's understanding, is socially produced and must be an object of dispute, negotiation, and collective imagination.

The informational right to the city is not realized solely through access to data, but through the capacity to coproduce, interpret, and reinterpret them. It is an insurgent right, oriented by a critique of knowledge hierarchies and by the desire for a cooperative urban condition. It is thus reaffirmed that the contemporary challenge is not merely to open data, but to open the process of producing urban knowledge, recognizing the political role of maps, databases, and platforms.

This transformation, however, cannot be reduced to managerial adjustments. It requires conflict, negotiation, and institutional experimentation. A digital urban common does not emerge from consensus but from disputes over the legitimacy of producing and sharing territorial knowledge. Its construction depends on creating fissures within the very techno-bureaucratic apparatus that sustains it and on establishing zones of translation between local, scientific, and administrative knowledges. As Lefebvre reminds us, the right to the city is the right to the continual invention of urban life, and today this includes the right to invent the informational space that underpins it. The democratization of digital infrastructures requires recognizing conflict as a productive dimension and understanding information as a field of ongoing negotiation among institutions, communities, and technologies. Transforming platforms such as BHMaps into spaces of collective praxis thus entails creating conditions for dialogue between technical and everyday knowledges to become a driver of political experimentation and democratic reinvention of the urban.

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CHILDHOODS IN THE CITY: TENSIONS, RIGHTS, AND INCLUSION PRACTICES
INFÂNCIAS NA CIDADE: TENSÕES, DIREITOS E PRÁTICAS DE INCLUSÃO

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ARTIGO SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Pedrosa, S. P. O. F. & Pereira, E. R. (2025) Childhoods in the City: Tensions, Rights, and Inclusion Practices. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations.Translated from Portuguese by Virgínia Squizani Rodrigues. 240-252 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239934

Abstract

This theoretical-critical essay reflects on how childhood is recognized in the production of the city and on children's active role in transforming urban spaces. Drawing on Critical Social Psychology and on authors such as Milton Santos and Francesco Tonucci, it is argued that the right to the city must encompass children's participation in the present, rather than rely solely on their imagined futures. Methodologically, the essay is inspired by Walter Benjamin, assembling a theoretical-critical montage to weave together fragments selected through close, critical reading of the literature. The invisibility of children in urban planning is discussed, along with play as a counter-hegemonic practice and strategies to enhance inclusivity for children in cities. Three fronts of action are presented as ways of expanding children's protagonism: tactical urbanism, exemplified by the *Mais Vida nos Morros* program in Recife, in northeast Brazil; participatory budgeting, with attention to initiatives that meaningfully incorporate children into decision-making processes; and university outreach projects that bring academic and community knowledges into dialogue. The study's findings indicate that ensuring children's rights in urban environments necessitates a departure from hegemonic practices that have historically marginalized them. It emphasizes the importance of implementing inclusive public policies and acknowledging children as legitimate agents of social transformation. This essay contributes to the ongoing discourse on praxis, dialogues, and confrontations by elucidating the diverse experiences, knowledge, and agents involved in the production of urban space.

Keywords: Childhood, Right to the City, Urban planning, Play, Territory.

1 Introduction

> *Children thus produce their own small world of things within the greater one.* (Walter Benjamin, 1979, p. 53)

Cities have historically been planned by and for adults. Their rhythms, forms, and logics follow productive rationalities that give little consideration to the modes of existence of subjects who fall outside the hegemonic pattern: children, older adults, people with disabilities, women, and marginalized populations. This exclusion is not merely physical; it reveals structural inequalities in the ways urban spaces are conceived, organized, and experienced. The very notion of the city is complex and encompasses multiple meanings, reflecting the social, technological, economic, and environmental transformations occurring globally. Although the city may be understood as the outcome of human interactions within a given space, it is important to emphasize the risk that such a definition may privilege concrete dimensions, such as building construction or increased automobile traffic, over aspects essential to the human dimension, including equity, social justice, sustainability, health, and citizenship.

Understanding the city requires recognizing that it is not merely a collection of streets or buildings. Its complexity lies in the ongoing tension between geometric rationality and the tangle of human existence, as Sawaia (1995) emphasizes. Accordingly, the distinctiveness of each city stems not just from urban planning, but from the intersection of people's identities and the spaces they inhabit. This encounter materializes places while also shaping narratives, memories, and connections. As Cássio Eduardo Hissa and Maria Luísa Nogueira (2013) note, urban life is forged through bodily experience, spatial movement, and affective action. The city shapes, and is shaped by, the bodies that inhabit it, becoming a territory of existence. Understanding territory as a space where relationships and emotions flow highlights its role as a site of tension and dispute within urban planning. Thus, the city must be viewed as a space of citizenship rooted in specific historical, spatial, social, and political contexts—contexts where rights are negotiated and exercised within the dynamics of social and institutional relations. As Silvia Lane (1984) suggests, to understand individuals within their social networks is to recognize them both as products and as authors of their personal and collective histories.

When discussing the relationship between space and territory in the context of globalization, Santos, Seabra, Carvalho, and Leite (2001) argue that territory should not be approached as a concept in isolation. Its relevance for social analysis emerges only when its use is considered alongside the actors who engage with it. From this perspective, Milton Santos introduces what he terms *used territory* (Santos et al., 2001, p. 26) and emphasizes that it transcends the notion of territory as a physical

form, encompassing objects and actions; constituting a human space that is lived and inhabited (Santos, 1994). These reflections are pertinent to the present study, as they reinforce the understanding that *used territory* is a key category for formulating urban policies committed to social justice and, consequently, for developing strategies and policies that take into account the needs and demands of minority groups historically rendered invisible in urban planning. Among these groups are children, who are generally excluded from decision-making processes and whose modes of appropriating space and affective experiences in urban territories reveal ways of existence that unsettle the patterns by which cities have historically been organized.

Thus, this theoretical–critical essay directs its gaze toward childhood, understanding it as historically silenced in the processes of urban space production and, consequently, seeking to underscore the importance of incorporating children's desires and demands into the construction of more inclusive cities. The essay is structured around an ongoing master's research project in Psychology and is anchored in the central concerns of that study, engaging in dialogue with other areas of knowledge and reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field in which it is embedded. Drawing on a critical reading of the academic literature, it proposes a reflection on the (in)visibility of childhood in the production of the city and on the tensions between children's ways of inhabiting space and established forms of urban organization and planning. Methodologically, the essay is inspired by Walter Benjamin, mobilizing fragments from a critical reading of the literature on childhood and the city to compose a theoretical–critical montage that highlights the tensions and potentialities in this field (Azevedo, 2020).

Francesco Tonucci, an Italian educator, challenges dominant conceptions of urbanization by actively promoting children's participation in public debates on the future of cities, a recurring theme in his work (Tonucci, 2020). In this sense, this theoretical–critical essay recognizes children as rights-bearing subjects[1] and underscores the importance of ensuring both the space and the right to express their views on matters that affect them, thereby strengthening their exercise of citizenship. In the contexts of Argentina and Brazil, several authors have deepened this perspective by reflecting on childhood in the Global South and arguing that attentive listening and recognition of children's experiences are essential for challenging hegemonic models and advancing the construction of epistemological and political alternatives in the field of childhood studies (Castro, 2021). These discussions lead to the debate on children's right to the city, understood both as physical access to the territories they inhabit and as the concrete possibility of participation and expression. As geographer David Harvey (2012) argues, the right to the city is related to human rights and also entails the right to change ourselves through the transformation of the city. Recognizing children as subjects of this right implies understanding their citizenship not as a future promise but as a present reality, with the right to express opinions, play, occupy, transform urban spaces, and to be transformed by them.

In this sense, this theoretical–critical essay aims to reflect on the recognition of childhoods in the city, understanding that their active presence—woven through bonds, discoveries, and shared experiences—challenges hegemonic ways of planning and inhabiting urban space. The essay is organized into three sections. The first, *From invisibility to the recognition of childhoods in city planning*, discusses how cities have been historically shaped by an adult-centric logic that silences children. The second, *Children's right to the city and play as a counter-hegemonic practice*, examines how children's right to the city and to play, as counter-hegemonic practices, can unsettle the productive logics that structure urban space. Finally, the third section, *Insurgent practices for the recognition of childhoods in the city*, explores possible pathways toward more inclusive cities for children, in dialogue with participatory initiatives, university outreach, and public policy. This essay engages with the theme "Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations," situating itself within the struggles and disputes that permeate the production of the city. The excerpt presented seeks to illuminate the tensions between hegemonic approaches and insurgent practices, while also pointing to possible avenues for recognizing childhood as a political and affective agent within urban space.

2 From invisibility to the recognition of childhoods in city planning

[1] We highlight the Statute of Children and Adolescents, referring to Law No. 8,069, of July 13, 1990 (Brasil, 1990), which consolidates the concept of children and adolescents as subjects of rights.

Tonucci (2020) argues that urban planning has historically been structured around an idealized citizen profile: male, adult, worker, and a driver. This model has shaped how cities have been planned and built, prioritizing the needs of this specific profile while neglecting those who do not fit it. As Joice Berth (2023) observes, architecture and urbanism can shift from their organizing and social functions to become segregationist and exclusionary. As a result, cities become fragmented according to a hierarchical logic shaped by race, social class, and gender, and lack spaces that account for minority groups. Although Leslie Kern (2021) focuses primarily on women's urban experiences, she underscores the need to attend to less visible forms of urban life by analyzing the city's social dynamics through aspects such as gender, race, sexuality, and age. Within this broader context of invisibility, childhood emerges as a segment of the population whose characteristics and needs are routinely neglected in urban planning processes. It is important to stress, however, that childhood does not constitute a numerical minority, but rather a social condition frequently rendered invisible and silenced in decisions that shape urban space. Moreover, childhoods are expressed in diverse ways, marked by class, gender, and territory, which produce distinct inequalities in access to and experience of the city.

Jan Gehl (2015) argues that urban planning has, over the years, given little importance to public spaces, pedestrian areas, and the role of urban space as a meeting place for city dwellers. This approach has overlooked the creation of adequate spaces for children in general and has had particularly detrimental effects on children from low-income families. Without access to private spaces such as clubs or gated communities, and in the absence of urban policies that prioritize inclusive and safe environments for children, their experiences in the city become even more restricted. In this way, social inequalities become materialized in urban space. Manuel Sarmento (2018) addresses the invisibility of childhood as a multifaceted phenomenon with historical, social, political, economic, and epistemological roots. According to the author, the city both includes and excludes, simultaneously offering opportunities and imposing constraints that affect children as well. In this sense, Sarmento (2007) identifies initiatives and movements aimed at children's participation as opportunities. As constraints, however, Sarmento (2007) highlights a social construction of the city that can restrict their autonomy, threaten their safety, and induce globalized forms of colonization through consumption. Given this, it becomes relevant to understand that the inequalities and contradictions present in urban life shape, with unequal intensity, the contours of children's experiences and forms of existence.

These contradictory and unequal effects of urban life shape the invisibility or recognition of childhoods in cities. Thus, consistent with several studies (Azevedo et al., 2020; Seixas, Tomás & Giacchetta, 2022; Carmo, 2022; Santos, 2022), this theoretical-critical essay argues that the erasure or recognition of children in the production of cities is a socially constructed process. On the one hand, there are experiences that affirm children as subjects of rights, knowledge, and active presence in urban spaces; on the other, practices and structures prevail that silence their ways of living and delegitimize their participation. In this sense, according to Sarmento (2007), childhood invisibility occurs in two ways: first, children are ignored in their social complexity and are disregarded as concrete political actors; second, their own ways of acting and relating to the world are silenced by the hegemony of adult-centric approaches. In other words, even when acknowledged, childhood may remain subordinated to interpretations and priorities defined by adults.

Gislei Lazzarotto and Maria Livia do Nascimento (2016) problematize the relationships between city, childhood, and visibility, which are shaped by power dynamics that impact or constrain children's ways of inhabiting urban spaces. In this movement, by questioning whether the association between the presence of children on the streets and ideas of violence or neglect is, in fact, as evident as commonly assumed, the authors challenge the socially ascribed meanings of guardianship and risk. Thus, depending on the meanings attributed to children's presence in the streets—such as associating them with abandonment, danger, or inadequacy—one may legitimize their exclusion from public spaces, perpetuating a city that marginalizes and silences childhood. It is emphasized, however, that problematizing these meanings does not imply disregarding the importance of children's safety, but rather critically reflecting on the effects that certain discourses produce in shaping how childhood is perceived in urban space. In this context, the authors note that the relationship between childhood and the city has long remained at the margins of psychological studies (Lazzarotto & Nascimento, 2016). In this way, the field of psychology can contribute either to the invisibility of childhood in the city or to its recognition, and by bringing this tension to light, the authors invite psychology to engage in the construction of new interpretations and interventions.

Thus, considering the place of this essay within the field of Psychology and, in dialogue with authors of Critical Social Psychology such as Silvia Lane (1984) and Mary Jane Spink (2011), the city is understood not as a mere backdrop but as

an active space in the production of subjectivities, in the experience and expression of affects, and in the construction of ways of being and narratives about the self. Being a child in the city constitutes a situated social experience, shaped through relationships with others and through the devices that regulate children's circulation or presence in urban spaces. Spink (2011), in problematizing the conceptual use of terms such as person, individual, and subject, discusses how Psychology has historically contributed to processes of individualization, functioning as a mechanism of behavioural control through the categorization, standardization, and medicalization of ways of existing. She further examines the systematization of observations and records as a tool that simultaneously enabled "the standardization and normalization of childhood" (Spink, 2011, p. 16, our translation). In this sense, such practices may help construct an idealized notion of childhood based on norms that exclude or silence diverse ways of inhabiting space. Conversely, by challenging these rigid norms and conceptions of childhood and by attending to the effects they produce, Psychology can contribute to making visible multiple childhoods, recognizing that each child undergoes singular experiences situated in specific historical, social, cultural, and material contexts, as Lane (1984) emphasizes. This stance, which breaks with hegemonic logics, invites Psychology to move beyond the position of external observer and to assume an ethical–political commitment to transforming the social relations that generate exclusions and inequalities in access to urban spaces.

In this direction, understanding how children relate to urban space requires attention to the affective dimension of everyday experience. As Baruch Spinoza (2009) proposes, the body can be affected in multiple ways, thereby increasing or diminishing its power to act. When this power expands, individuals gain broader possibilities to affect and be affected, thereby opening new ways of relating to the world. Drawing on this framework, Bader Sawaia (2003) identifies *affectivity* as a central ethical–political category in the constitution of the subject and highlights its relevance as a tool for transformation. Affectivity, as discussed by the author, expands subjects' capacity for action, particularly in situations of suffering—whether psychic or ethical–political—when such suffering results from social processes such as exclusion, violence, or the denial of rights. Thus, by advocating for accessible public spaces and urban experiences that foster positive encounters, this essay underscores the importance of expanding children's power to act, recognizing that their active presence in the city is shaped as well by bonds, discoveries, and shared experiences.

3 Children's right to the city and play as a counter-hegemonic practice

The works *One-Way Street* and *A Berlin Chronicle* bring together aphorisms and fragments in which Walter Benjamin (1979) (re)constructs a cartography of the city that exceeds its physical or functional dimensions. By revisiting everyday experiences and childhood memories, he reveals how urban spaces are also shaped by sensibility, imagination, and aesthetic experience. From childhood onward, urban encounters shape how we see, feel, and inhabit the world. This perspective invites reflection on the idea that the presence of children in the city should extend beyond access or circulation to include participation, interaction, and the production of meaning. Recognizing children's presence and participation in the making of the city is likewise to affirm their place in processes of meaning-making and urban memory. As Carolina Fedatto (2018) argues, the city is not merely the setting where history unfolds but a space of living textuality, in which meanings are inscribed, displaced, and reconfigured. In this sense, urban materiality—composed of streets, buildings, squares, parks, and other infrastructures—provides the ground for different ways of narrating the city, a terrain in which memory is anchored, renewed, and transformed. Thus, the material elements of the city are not neutral: they carry stories, disputes over meaning, and traces of everyday experiences that participate in constituting subjects and collectivities.

As David Harvey (2014) argues, the right to the city is not limited to access to urban space but encompasses the collective right to transform it. Reinventing the city, therefore, requires establishing forms of shared power over urbanization processes, breaking with exclusionary logics that concentrate decision-making in the hands of a few actors. This configuration occurs because, as Harvey (2014) emphasizes, the power to determine the direction of a city—its uses, investments, and forms—has historically been held by privileged groups who shape urban space according to their own interests (Harvey, 2014). According to Milton Santos (1993), the dominant logic guiding contemporary urbanization is associated with corporate urbanization, marked by the formation of the corporate city, a model driven by the interests of large companies that configure space according to market demands and profitability. Thus, addressing children's rights and their participation in the city requires recognizing that this debate is traversed by power structures that keep them in a subordinate position.

If the right to the city involves transforming it and producing meaning, change also occurs through everyday practices that challenge the dominant logic. In this context, play emerges as a counter-hegemonic practice: when children play, they interrupt the flow of the adult city, creating a moment of resistance and pause amid the acceleration of urban time and challenging the city's productivist and utilitarian logic. According to Robertha Barros and Gicélia Mendes (2023), through play, children occupy and re-signify public spaces, affirming their citizenship and protagonism while destabilizing the hegemonic logic that has historically rendered them invisible. The authors also emphasize that understanding how children experience and attribute meaning to spaces is fundamental to including them in urban transformation processes. Tonucci (2020) highlights that children relate to the city in sensitive and creative ways, with play being one of their primary modes of expression.

Ana Luiza Smolka (2015) understands play as a creative activity in the elaboration of experiences, social roles, and modes of cultural appropriation. In dialogue with the historical-cultural perspective proposed by Lev Vygotsky (2008), the child creates imaginary situations through play that distance them from immediate reality. In this movement, the child not only reproduces reality but also reinvents it, expressing their uniqueness and developing new ways of being, acting, and relating. The importance of imagination is emphasized here, since it is through imagination that the child transcends the limits of the immediate present and explores other possibilities of existence, relationship, and action. However, Vygotsky (2008) argues that earlier authors diminished the value of imagination in play by attributing only secondary relevance to it, and identifies three main problems in this understanding: the risk of an intellectualist approach that treats play as an abstract symbolic process—similar to an "algebraic calculation" (p. 26, our translation), a logically and mentally organized activity; the reduction of play to a purely cognitive process, disregarding its affective dimension and the child's active role in constructing the experience; and the need to examine what the imaginary situation of play contributes to the child's development.

Ivone Oliveira and Anna Maria Padilha (2015) critique how many educators have drawn on Vygotsky's ideas, treating play as an instrumental tool within early childhood pedagogical practices. From this perspective, play is valued primarily when associated with a clearly defined didactic purpose: "one plays in order to learn because one cannot 'waste time' on activities lacking a supposed pedagogical intentionality" (Oliveira & Padilha, 2015, p. 28, our translation). By restricting play to a means for achieving specific pedagogical ends, however, there is a risk of diminishing its expressive, affective, and inventive potential. Outside the context of formal schooling, play can emerge freely, unconstrained by the logic of productivity. Such free play is characterized by spontaneous ludic actions that unfold across everyday spaces, without subordination to fixed schedules, pedagogical aims, or predetermined cognitive objectives (Alves et al., 2024). In urban environments, play as a counter-hegemonic practice escapes utilitarian frameworks. In this sense, through free play, the child's imaginative activity allows the city to soften the hardened contours shaped by the logics of productivity and haste. Imagination makes it possible for a chalk-marked sidewalk to become the setting for adventures, a tree to become a hiding place, the curb to become a balance beam, and a bench to become a lookout point from which the child perceives the place from another perspective. The city becomes a territory of invention, discovery, and enchantment.

Although children reinvent cities, the transformative power of play does not authorize adapting childhood to hostile environments. On the contrary, it underscores the urgency for adults to ethically and politically commit to creating more inclusive cities. As discussed by Samy Lansky and Maria Cristina Gouvea (2022), the increasing dangerousness of large metropolitan areas, combined with the privatization of public spaces and the road-centred model that prioritizes automobiles over pedestrians, has restricted opportunities for social interaction, leisure, and play. In line with the emptying of the street as a place of encounter, Jane Jacobs (2011) questions the naturalization of the idea that playgrounds and parks are good places for children, while streets are inherently bad or dangerous. Thus, urban spaces designed with and for children should not necessarily be limited to dedicated areas, although such areas may indeed provide safe, high-quality leisure opportunities. Beyond the specific spaces created for childhood, it is important to guarantee children's right to be present in diverse public spaces—streets and squares among them—and to ensure that they have opportunities to participate actively in the everyday construction of different territories, reaffirming these spaces as places for existence and the expression of citizenship. The next section presents studies and movements that challenge hegemonic models and propose ways to foster cities that are more open to childhood.

4 Insurgent practices for the recognition of childhoods in the city

This theoretical-critical essay does not seek to provide an exhaustive historical survey of documents or solutions, but rather to share recent studies, experiences, and interventions that indicate possible paths toward building more inclusive cities for children, particularly in the Brazilian context. These paths are not understood as neutral or universal; they are inscribed in specific social, political, and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, they emerge from an ethical-political commitment to children's right to inhabit, participate in, and transform cities. In this regard, this section discusses three areas of action that, although heterogeneous in form and scope, share a common effort to challenge hegemonic logics of urban planning: tactical urbanism, as a local strategy for the reappropriation of urban space with the potential to amplify children's protagonism; participatory budgeting, as a democratic mechanism that—especially when it incorporates children or organizations representing them—broadens the capacity to listen to childhood experiences; and university extension, as a bridge between knowledge, subjects, and territories, capable of making childhoods visible and reconfiguring boundaries between academia and the city.

The first area of action concerns tactical urbanism, understood as small-scale spatial practices—generally limited to neighbourhoods, streets, or parks—that reconfigure the use of urban space through local initiatives. This is not a unified movement, but rather a category that encompasses emerging urban projects, typically grounded in participatory and practical orientations, in which directly affected actors mobilize to address local challenges (Brenner, 2016). However, as Neil Brenner (2016) cautions, its effectiveness as an alternative to neoliberal urbanism is not automatic; such practices may be neutralized or absorbed by hegemonic logics, even while retaining the potential to promote spatial justice and popular engagement. Thus, although the limitations of tactical urbanism are acknowledged—as noted by several authors (Eboli, 2019; Nogueira & Portinari, 2017; Felizardo, 2024)—including the lack of guarantees of effective participation, the potential reproduction of power relations and symbolic domination, and the risk of reinforcing neoliberal ideals of individual responsibility, this essay seeks to highlight some experiences developed within the Brazilian context.

Thus, despite its ambiguities and limitations, tactical urbanism can be critically reappropriated, especially when articulated with participatory processes and public policies committed to social justice. As an example, we highlight the *Mais Vida nos Morros* program, developed in the city of Recife, in northeast Brazil, a public policy that mobilizes principles of tactical urbanism as a strategy for localized spatial intervention, active listening, and the political participation of children in territories marked by historical inequalities (Prefeitura Recife, 2020). Among the actions promoted by the program, Figure 1 illustrates a community space implemented in the capital of *Pernambuco*. In a recent analysis of the program, Daniella Silva, Ana Clara Nascimento, Poliana Santana, and Sérgio Mello (2024) noted that, by combining low-cost solutions, rapid implementation, and direct community involvement, *Mais Vida nos Morros* constitutes a viable and innovative alternative to the traditional urban planning model. The authors emphasize that the protagonism of children in the decision-making process fostered concrete experiences of citizenship from early childhood, strengthened their sense of belonging to public spaces, and broadened both the understanding and exercise of the right to the city by the children themselves.

Fig. 1: Community Space in Recife, Pernambuco, northeast Brazil. Source: Recife City Hall (2021). https://maisvidanosmorros.recife.pe.gov.br/espacos-de-convivencia/

According to the *Mais Vida nos Morros* program's informational booklet, children are regarded as protagonists of urban transformation and are involved through a range of participatory methodologies. The document describes several activities designed to engage them affectively and subjectively in urban planning, including: playful walks—guided routes led by the children in their own territories, during which they are invited to observe, name, and comment on local spaces; affective mapping, in which they are encouraged to write or draw what they would like to change in the territory using an illustrative map of the area; workshops and discussion circles, where they graphically represent the territory and collectively reflect on possible changes; and hands-on interventions through painting, planting, and building toys. Among the equipment designed for children are “play balconies”, toys adapted to uneven ground, toys made of PVC and broom handles, play paths, and child-sized urban furniture (Prefeitura de Recife, 2020).

In another initiative, Amanda Macêdo and André Almeida (2015) analyzed actions carried out in the neighbourhood of *Vila de Santa Luzia*, on the banks of the *Capibaribe* River (Recife), by the collective *Praias do Capibaribe* through the project *A Cidade Precisa de Praias*. Although not directly aimed at children, the project incorporates them as present and active subjects in the territory. The authors highlight interventions such as the creation of children’s furniture, the construction of a pier that enabled access to the water, bioconstruction workshops, the establishment of a community garden, and play activities, including the building of a water slide and the creation of pools and inflatable toys (Macêdo & Almeida, 2015). These actions contributed to the re-signification of public space as a site of conviviality, care, and play. In addition, several Brazilian municipalities have adopted initiatives such as *Ruas de Brincar* (Prefeitura de Jundiaí, 2019), *Ruas Abertas* (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2016), and *Ruas de Lazer* (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2014), which also fall within broader urban interventions promoting more inclusive public spaces for children. By temporarily closing public roads for collective use, these initiatives strengthen community interaction and the playful occupation of space by children and their families. As discussed

by Marcelo Peroni and Adriana Uemori (2024), the municipality of Jundiaí, in Southeast Brazil, has developed actions aimed at guaranteeing children's right to the city through listening, play, and participation. As part of the municipality's integration into the Latin American Children's Cities Network, Image 2 illustrates the *Ruas de Brincar* program established by Decree 28.075/2019 (Prefeitura de Jundiaí, 2019). The decree stipulates that any resident may request the temporary closure of public streets, provided that 75% of neighbours approve the request. Children and adults living in the vicinity of the street are responsible for defining activities and determining how often the street will be used. Residents recognize these spaces as important for social interaction, free play, and reducing screen time (Peroni & Uemori, 2024).

Fig. 2: *Rua de Brincar* in Jundiaí, São Paulo, southeast Brazil. Source: Jundiaí City Hall (2021). https://jundiai.sp.gov.br/noticias/2020/12/12/cidade-das-criancas-ruas-de-brincar-leva-o-segundo-lugar-em-premio-nacional/

Another area of focus in building more inclusive cities for children concerns participatory public policies, such as Participatory Budgets (PB). As presented by Jon Anderson Cavalcante (2011), the *Orçamento Participativo Criança e Adolescente* (OPCA – Participatory Budget for Children and Adolescents) is an initiative that integrates children and adolescents into the deliberative processes of the public budget, recognizing them as political subjects. According to Leonardo Soares (2012), the Participatory Budget in *Fortaleza*, in northeast Brazil, is organized at two levels: territorially, through the division into administrative regions; and by social segment, including children and adolescents who participate in all cycles of the PB. Although recognized as innovative, the OPCA faced resistance grounded in limiting conceptions of childhood, such as questioning children's moral and cognitive capacities (Soares, 2012; Cavalcante, 2011). Lis Melo, Veriana Colaço, and Jesus Pascual (2011) argue that, for children's participation in decisions concerning the public budget to be effective, specific methodologies and languages must be adopted, including workshops, games, and playful activities. In the context of the OPCA, the presence of children may be understood as an insurgent practice, insofar as it challenges the exclusivity of adults in democratic processes and affirms children's right to political participation in the present, rather than only as a promise for the future.

Finally, the third area of action concerns university extension, understood as a practice that promotes encounters between academic knowledge and knowledge produced in the territories. For example, the *Ciranda de Palavras* project, developed by Luciana Quixadá and Jaileila Menezes (2021), sought to create a space for continuous listening among children and adolescents in contexts of social vulnerability, using storytelling and artistic production as mediating practices. Workshops, exhibitions, and cultural visits were mobilized as ways to strengthen children's expressive capacities and encourage their participation in public life. The authors noted changes in the children's relationship with urban spaces after a visit to the *Dragão do Mar* Center for Art and Culture in *Fortaleza*, in northeast Brazil, when they initially expressed distrust and later recognized themselves as belonging to that place. In addition to this experience, the extension project enabled children to exhibit their works—photographs, drawings, and paintings—in public spaces and to engage in dialogue with passersby, an experience that demonstrated the potential of university extension to establish micropolitics of resistance and to create new meanings for childhood in vulnerable contexts (Quixadá & Menezes, 2021).

Regiane Oliveira (2025) identifies several university extension projects that promote more inclusive cities for children. Among them is the *Cartilha da Cidade*, developed by the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (IAU-USP) in *São Carlos*, in southeast Brazil. This project constitutes a university extension initiative aimed at promoting urban education and civic formation through interactive practices, including the *Agentes Urbanos e Cidade Participativa* game, designed to encourage dialogue and the collective proposal of urban transformations. Developed by Miguel Antonio Buzzar, Ana Maria Beraldo, Analee Sasso, Edimilson Santos Junior, and Mayara Vivian Cruz (2023), the *Cartilha da Cidade* project offers a critical and accessible approach that brings residents closer to the elements that compose and organize urban life. Another project, developed by Lansky (2022), sought to contribute to the formulation of plans and urban interventions centred on childhood, as well as to encourage the use of participatory methodologies for reflecting on and transforming public spaces. Through the integration of teaching, research, and university extension, a space in the neighbourhood *Vila Pindura Saia*, in *Belo Horizonte*, in southeast Brazil, was gradually re-signified, transforming a former motorcycle parking area into a place dedicated to children's play. Named *Nossa Pracinha* by the community itself, the space was later recognized by the municipal government as a leisure area, and an architectural project was carried out by Lansky (2022) and university students based on children's suggestions. By mentioning experiences such as these, this essay seeks to highlight the relevance of extension initiatives that involve children in urban practices, contributing to shifting the university away from its hegemonic position and broadening dialogue with the concrete demands of people and territories.

5 Final considerations

Throughout this theoretical–critical essay, it was argued that childhood remains largely overlooked in urban planning processes, whether due to the lack of effective participation by children themselves or the predominance of a hegemonic logic oriented toward adult interests in productivity and consumption. In this context, play is defended as a counter-hegemonic practice capable of challenging the functionalist use of space and inscribing, within the fabric of the city, temporalities and ways of being that escape the productive logic. The aim here was not to offer definitive solutions but to problematize the absences and invisibilities that shape the relationship between childhood and the city. The practices presented as insurgent in the recognition of childhoods—such as tactical urbanism, participatory budgeting, and university extension programs—illustrate different ways of opening fissures within the hegemonic model of space production. Although distinct in form, scale, and scope, these initiatives share the aim of expanding children's presence and protagonism. In dialogue with the theme *Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations*, the reflections developed reaffirm the need for urban practices and public policies that bring together multiple forms of knowledge and diverse social actors, recognizing children as legitimate producers of knowledge and space. By engaging with modes of inhabiting the city and with experiences of confrontation and invention, the essay aligns with broader debates on contested urban spaces and on the practices that emerge across universities, public policy, and communities, affirming university extension and transdisciplinarity as forms of praxis committed to social transformation and to diverse modes of producing knowledge.

Thus, recognizing and sustaining practices that open fissures within the hegemonic model entails assuming an ethical–political commitment to children's right to inhabit and transform cities. Such a commitment requires rethinking and expanding the meanings of citizenship, democracy, and public space by incorporating children's voices, bodies, and experiences as constitutive elements of urban life. It also demands the creation and preservation of conditions that strengthen children's capacity to act, allowing them to reinvent spaces and imprint their own marks, temporalities, and modes of inhabiting them.

These practices raise questions about who defines urban space, for whom it is made, and which forms of life it privileges. In the context of the Global South, this commitment gains further weight as it is situated in realities marked by structural, social, and cultural inequalities. In this scenario, public policies committed to children's right to the city become essential. Beyond providing infrastructure, they can establish mechanisms for participation and for expanding access to safe, high-quality, and inclusive spaces. In this way, efforts are made to strengthen practices and public policies capable not only of transforming spaces but also of shaping the relationships that are built within them. By recognizing children as legitimate agents in the production of the city, pathways are opened for new forms of coexistence, participation, and belonging to take shape, challenging exclusionary patterns and expanding the possibilities of inhabiting and living in cities.

Acknowledgments

This work was carried out with support from the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* – Brazil (*CAPES*) – Funding Code 001.

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FRAGMENTS OF 19TH-CENTURY RIO: THE MISERICÓRDIA AND ITS THOROUGHFARES

FRAGMENTOS DO RIO NO XIX: A MISERICÓRDIA E SEUS LOGRADOUROS

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Pires, L. B. C. (2025). Fragments of 19th-century Rio: the Misericórdia and its thoroughfares. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 253-263
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Abstract

The Misericórdia neighborhood, located in the former *freguesia* (a historical administrative unit comparable to a parish) of São José in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, underwent profound transformations in its land use and occupation throughout its long trajectory, reflecting the social, political, and economic dynamics that shaped the city. This study focuses on the neighborhood and its streets, particularly during the 1870s, mobilizing a diversified set of sources — such as historical maps, images, news reports, advertisements, and excerpts from literature that address complementary temporalities and contexts — in order to shed light on the everyday life of the area through an approach that articulates both macro and micro spatial scales. In the second half of the nineteenth century, growing investments in urban infrastructure, combined with the exploitation of land as a source of profit, induced the subdivision of existing properties in the city center. The findings reveal a neighborhood characterized by a strong presence of commerce and services, marked by the coexistence of different forms of dwelling. By highlighting everyday practices and the uses of urban architectures, the investigation seeks to position Misericórdia as a strategic site for rethinking the city and its memories, while also demonstrating the potential of articulating primary sources in historiographical revisions aimed at recognizing actors and territories traditionally rendered invisible within Urban Studies.

Keywords: Misericórdia neighborhood, Rio de Janeiro, Nineteenth Century, Urban properties, Spatial scales.

1 Introduction

The Misericórdia neighborhood, situated in the former *freguesia* (a historical administrative unit comparable to a parish) of São José, constitutes a paradigmatic case study for understanding the processes of urbanization, segregation, and land valorization that characterized nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. Its origins date back to a strategic initiative of the Portuguese Crown in the sixteenth century aimed at territorial protection against foreign invaders. Over the centuries, its role within the urban fabric was progressively reshaped in response to emerging needs as well as to successive urban reform projects, which gained momentum from the nineteenth century onward. In the early decades of the twentieth century, shortly before the beginning of its demolition, chroniclers attentive to the city's everyday life, such as João do Rio, the pseudonym of writer João Paulo Barreto (1881–1921), and Luís Edmundo (1880–1961), portrayed the Misericórdia neighborhood as an insalubrious area marked by progressive abandonment and sustained neglect by public authorities. The second half of the nineteenth century was notably defined by an intensification of Rio de Janeiro's urbanization process. According to Maurício de Almeida Abreu (2003, p. 218), the growing commodification of urban land, spurred by the crisis of the slave-based system and by investments in infrastructure, contributed to a reordering of the city, encouraging the occupation of new areas and the conversion of former elite residences into collective dwellings. Within this context, the Misericórdia Street, located in the neighborhood of the same name and originally linked to the city's foundational core, was transformed into a space where properties were increasingly subdivided into rooms and rented to urban workers and students.

Building on this contextual framework, the present article aims to investigate the occupation of the Misericórdia neighborhood during the 1870s, an initial milestone in this broader process, with particular emphasis on urban property uses, especially mixed-use sobrados, a term employed here to designate multi-story buildings that simultaneously accommodated residential and non-residential activities. The commercial and service-related functions were typically concentrated on the ground floors, whereas dwellings occupied the upper stories. The research articulates the existing bibliography on the neighborhood with a corpus of primary sources, such as news items and advertisements published in periodicals of the time, photographs, cartographic material, and literary records, with the aim of reconstructing the everyday uses of this portion of the urban territory. In cases where property numbers are recorded, these sources make it possible to identify their respective thoroughfares, thereby informing the spatialization of the forms of sociability that structured the region. Although the neighborhood frequently appears in studies focused either on its colonial phase or on the moment of its demolition, the intermediary processes that led to its gradual erasure remain relatively understudied. This article seeks precisely to illuminate this interval, marked by the increasing profitability of urban land and by residential densification. To this end, sources from different historical periods are mobilized as a means of expanding the analytical grasp of the phenomenon under investigation. The strategic cross-referencing of these diverse sources allows for the apprehension of history through complementary perspectives. Exploring their interconnections

evokes what German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) conceptualized as “constellations”: non-linear arrangements of dispersed elements that, when brought into association, disclose new meanings regarding the object of study (Benjamin, 1984 [1925]). In the case of the Misericórdia neighborhood and its everyday life as an object of analysis, the goal is to underscore the value of primary sources as allies in constructing interpretive frameworks capable of illuminating the trajectory of this and other erased urban territories, aligning the investigation with contemporary agendas committed to the recovery of marginalized memories.

2 Between the micro and the macro: historiographical approaches and scales of analysis

The fields of History and Historiography[1] are frequently incorporated into other areas of knowledge as a strategy for achieving a multidisciplinary understanding of their respective objects of study. In the specific case of Urban Studies, such an articulation becomes essential for interpreting the connections that take shape in space over time. Recognizing the methodological frameworks available within History, therefore, requires acknowledging both the potentialities and the limitations that each perspective offers to the field. According to Bernard Lepetit (2001a), for much of the twentieth century, long-duration structures occupied a central position in European historiographical approaches, particularly within the French tradition[2]. However, the primacy of the macro-scale in fields of observation entered a clear crisis between the 1970s and 1980s. It was in this context, more precisely in Italy, that the micro-historical[3] approach emerged, drawing on the collection, interpretation, and analysis of sources tied to the specificities of individuals who shaped the everyday life of the city, concurrently with the development of computing technologies and the possibility of new tools for recording, storing, and processing quantitative data (Revel, 1998). Lepetit (2001b) noted that one of the main contributions of micro-analysis was its ability to act as a counterweight to the risks of excessive theoretical schematization in the interpretation of historical contexts. He also emphasized, however, that the conclusions derived from an analysis conducted at a particular scale should not be opposed to broader scales of observation, but rather complement them, so that historical inquiry may be continuously renewed on new foundations (Lepetit, 2001b).

Supported by this perspective, Naylor Vilas Boas (2019) underscored the potential of microanalysis to articulate Demographic History with Social History. By assembling diverse sources capable of elucidating aspects of everyday life, he proposed moving beyond strictly quantitative readings of historical series, directing attention instead to the social relations embedded within them. In this sense, he defined *micronarratives* as records that, although seemingly devoid of broad historical relevance, focus on reduced temporal scales and reveal fragments of the lived experiences of individuals and groups. These micronarratives may be constructed through the association of multiple sources, each contributing to illuminating different aspects of cities, their populations, and the historical contexts in which they are embedded. Although discrepancies in dating across sources present challenges, the author argued that such obstacles are not insurmountable. Concerning the different temporalities within the field of Urban Studies, the geographer Milton Santos (1926–2001) identified the city center as a privileged object of analysis precisely because it incorporates forms inherited over time, what he termed *rugosities* (in the original, *rugosidades*). This condition results from the accumulation of *techniques* (or *técnicas*) inscribed in the territory, linking “man” and labor and acting as a connective element between time and space, thereby allowing multiple historical phases to coexist in the present (Santos, 2002 [1996], 2008 [1959]). The Misericórdia district exemplifies this phenomenon by traversing distinct political and economic phases in the history of Rio de Janeiro. A micro-analytical approach centered on the district is thus articulated with broader scales, allowing for an understanding of how temporalities coexist and project themselves dialectically across different levels of observation.

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1 Regarding the distinction between history and historiography, Marina Waisman notes that historiography concerns, in broad terms, the study of the writing of history itself. In her words, “historical science is not the mere reproduction of what happened (…) and historiography enables a dual reading of the subject matter and of the ideology of the historical moment in which it was studied” (Waisman, 2013, pp. 3–4, our translation).

2 As for long-duration structures, Jacques Revel (1998, p. 17) explained that they refer to temporalities defined by historiography on the basis of identified historical ruptures, aimed at examining social phenomena through the selection of a sufficiently extended timespan so that transformations of a global scope may become observable.

3 According to Lepetit (2001b, p. 191), debates concerning the field of micro-history were first articulated by the group of Italian historians associated with the journal Quaderni Storici and the Microstorie series. Among the most relevant authors and works of that period are Carlo Ginzburg and his 1976 book The Cheese and the Worms, as well as Giovanni Levi, author of Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist, published in 1985.

Moreover, this perspective highlights how techniques manifest in the interaction between major urban ruptures and everyday responses.

A potential methodological key for working with micronarratives lies in the proposals developed from Walter Benjamin's theory regarding historiographical postures. As defined by Michael Löwy (2002), Benjamin's theoretical framework was grounded in a critique of a philosophy of progress and of any positive, linear, or qualitative conception of temporality. Benjamin simultaneously acknowledged the continuity of certain essential themes while emphasizing that curves and ruptures emerge when history is examined "against the grain," that is, from the perspective of agents who were rendered invisible in hegemonic historiographical constructions (Benjamin, 2000 [1940]; Löwy, 2002). A Benjaminian concept directly relevant to the study of cities is that of the constellation, which Rita Velloso (2018) mobilized to avoid treating urban connections in linear or evolutionary terms. According to the author, Benjamin appropriated the image of the relationship between stars and their grouping into constellations as a way of illustrating concepts that, when interconnected, materialize ideas and generate a configuration of relations in which there is no single center but rather a set of interdependent meanings. Drawing on Benjamin's reflections, thinking in extremes, that is, analogous to the points that correspond to the stars, necessarily produces voids and discontinuities that serve as analytical potentialities. When addressing the urban realm, it is essential to consider the study of a city's morphology, its physical ordering, and material unfoldings in association with what resists planning and exceeds the urban design, such as conflicts, claims, and demands for space (Velloso, 2018).

Velloso (2018) therefore proposed approaching the city through the presentation of historical images drawn from diverse sources, among documentary, iconographic, and even the materiality of buildings, which, when associated, form a literary montage of heterogeneous phenomena, that is, a constellation. A practical example defended by Walter Benjamin is the device of mosaic construction, in which the images produced emerge from the juxtaposition of isolated elements. What is noteworthy in mosaics is that the smaller the apparent relation between the fragments and the resulting image, the greater their value of presentation. In his words, they are "shards of ideas, torn from their original context, and which must be reborn in a new relational universe, contributing to the formation of a new whole[4]" (Benjamin, 1984 [1925], p. 23). As Paola Berenstein Jacques (2018) further noted, in historiographical or urban montage, unlikely associations generate shocks through the different times and spaces embedded in the citations. In this regard, the author discussed the device of montage as a process — which includes dismantling and reassembling — as one of the fundamental responses to the problem of constructing historicity (Jacques, 2018). An illustrative example is the *Mnemosyne Atlas* by Aby Warburg, the art historian who sought to create a space of thought regarding the history of art, though never limiting himself to that field in its strictest sense. The *Atlas* consisted of a series of large, movable panels containing highly heterogeneous fragments and images, such as photographs of artworks, details of paintings, maps, drawings and diagrams, newspaper clippings, and magazine excerpts. Warburg's central concern was to articulate a form of "methodological testament" and to search for a kind of residual "life" persisting through the memory of later epochs. The practice of such montages thus promises to harness the remnants of history through the reassembly of fragments of time and of diverse narratives and narrators (Jacques, 2018, p. 210).

3 Misericórdia in perspective: a journey through Its multiple temporalities

The area corresponding to the Misericórdia neighborhood was part of the former freguesia of São José, whose initial delimitations date back to the 18th century. As explained by Francisco Agenor Noronha Santos (1965), before the creation of the Neutral Municipality in 1834, Rio de Janeiro was territorially organized by its freguesias, whose boundaries coincided with those of the ecclesiastical parishes. Even after this first transition and later to the Federal District in 1892, the ecclesiastical divisions continued to operate as administrative units, evidencing the overlap between the religious and civil spheres (Santos, 1965). The freguesia of São José was instituted by royal charter in 1753, following the dismemberment of the freguesia of Candelária. Its boundaries extended from the vicinity of the Carioca fountain towards Gávea and stretched to Jacarepaguá neighborhoods, also encompassing areas such as the Laranjeiras, the Cosme Velho and the Botafogo neighborhood as well. Subsequently, in 1834, part of its territory was dismembered to form the freguesia of Glória (Santos, 1965). The Misericórdia region, specifically, occupied lands originating from old land grants and navy lands conceded in the 16th century by Mem de Sá (Santos, 1965).

[4] The Origin of German Tragic Drama (originally *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*); the transcription provided here is based on the Portuguese edition consulted.

Important edifices marked the space, such as the Fort of Santiago (1603), the Ordnance House (1762), and the War Arsenal (1764). The fort, initially aimed at defense against invasions, later came to be used as a prison and torture site for enslaved people, giving rise to the nickname Calabouço Point. These constructions, currently integrated into the National Historical Museum (in Portuguese, Museu Histórico Nacional – MHN), are located at the Marechal Âncora square, between the Praça XV square and Santos Dumont Airport (Museu Histórico Nacional, n.d.).

While walking through the rear grounds of the MHN, one can still find the Misericórdia Slope, the only remaining physical vestige of the former street of the same name and of the Castelo Hill, both erased from the urban fabric in the early decades of the twentieth century. Adjacent to the slope and at the base of the hill lay the Misericórdia Square, which Jacques Sillos (2015) identifies as the city's first public open space resembling a square (praça), and the site where the Misericórdia Confraternity was originally established. The settlement of the Confraternity in this location led to the construction of a church, a hospital, an orphanage, and a cemetery. The building of the Church of Misericórdia, today known as Nossa Senhora de Bonsucesso, and of the Misericórdia Hospital dates to the late sixteenth century (Sillos, 2015). The main façade of the hospital faced the former Santa Luzia shore, which disappeared after 1905 due to the landfilling works carried out during the administration of Pereira Passos (1902-1906) (Brasiliana Fotográfica, n.d.). The Confraternity of Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia spread throughout the Portuguese Empire with support from the Crown, assuming charitable and colonizing functions. Its activities in Rio de Janeiro are believed to have begun with José de Anchieta in 1582 (Gandelman, 2001). The Jesuit College, located beside the slope, housed the city's first School of Medicine in 1808, operating in conjunction with the Royal Military Hospital. The Confraternity strengthened its charitable and educational presence in the territory through institutions such as the Foundling House (Casa dos Expostos) and the Shelter for Orphaned Girls (Recolhimento das Órfãs), which, although physically relocated over time, remained under the Confraternity's authority[5]. These establishments functioned as mechanisms of social disciplining and the reproduction of gender roles, as they sheltered boys and girls in situations of vulnerability (Santos, 1965; Gandelman, 2001). Within this context, the Foundling Wheel (Roda dos Expostos or Roda dos Enjeitados) operated as a device installed on the exterior walls of such institutions, enabling the anonymous surrender of newborns to the Santa Casa (Arantes, 2010; Marcílio, 2016).

In the nineteenth century, the *Santa Casa* underwent a process of restructuring in response to the diseases that afflicted the city. Beginning in the 1830s, a movement toward the specialization and fragmentation of spaces emerged, accompanied by structural and administrative reforms. Within this context, sanitary improvements were implemented, such as the introduction of piped water into its departments and the construction of a new cemetery outside the hospital grounds. The Foundling House became the target of measures aimed at increasing control and improving sanitary conditions, including the separation of healthy and sick children, the replacement of clothing and utensils, and the use of artificial breastfeeding. It ceased to operate adjacent to the hospital in 1811, relocating to a nearby building and, in the twentieth century, to the neighborhood of Flamengo. The Shelter for Orphaned Girls, in turn, underwent reforms such as the expansion of internal space and the reduction of contact with public alleys. In 1842, the institution left the hospital and began circulating through different buildings in the city (Gandelman, 2001). Misericórdia Street, connected to the square and the slope and extending to Primeiro de Março Street, functioned as a circulation axis and access route to the Confraternity's services. Moreover, at the beginning of the street, near Paço Square, the Town Hall and Jail (Casa de Câmara e Cadeia) operated from 1630 onward. Over the centuries, the building housed institutions such as the first public bank called Caixa Econômica and, in 1823, the first Constituent Assembly. It later became known as the seat of the Chamber of Deputies, before being demolished in 1922 (Brasil, 1965). In the surrounding area, the Church of São José was established in 1842, whose Confraternity was governed by blood purity criteria and formed part of the ritual path taken by the condemned on their way to prison[6] (Santos, 1965). The short stories of Machado de Assis (1839-1908), such as *Sem Olhos* (1876), *Uma por Outra* (1897), *A Mulher Pálida* (1881), and *O Anjo Rafael* (1869), mentioned shared lodgings and rented

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[5] The *Santa Casa* possessed a significant revenue stream derived from urban properties exempt from taxes such as the décima predial (urban tithe), as well as from contributions originating from lotteries, legacies, allocations from Public Revenue, prizes, fees paid by affluent patients, and funeral services. Beyond the architectural complex of the Misericórdia, the Confraternity also administered the hospitals of Irajá, Nossa Senhora da Saúde, and Nosso Senhor do Socorro, in São Cristóvão neighborhood (Santos, 1965, pp. 137–138).

[6] Machado de Assis captured the religiosity in these urban journeys through characters such as the "brother of souls", in his work Esau and Jacob (1904).

rooms on Misericórdia Street, suggesting the presence of young people arriving from other provinces to study in the capital. Years later, records from the Police Precinct[7] located in the area confirmed this collective residential pattern. One example was the report of a resident in 1916 concerning the theft of a dog by his roommate. The complaint, in this case, was corroborated by two witnesses, who also lived on the same floor and in the immediate vicinity. This seemingly ordinary episode reveals central aspects of everyday life on the street: shared rooms, informal social bonds, and the coexistence of workers. It also indicates that, by the early twentieth century, the logic of collective dwelling, already present in nineteenth-century chronicles, persisted in the area.

The Misericórdia neighborhood, whose boundaries vary according to the sources, encompassed not only the square, slope, and street of the same name, but also several additional thoroughfares, including streets, squares, and alleys. Gerson Brasil (1965) explained the origins of the names of the neighborhood's principal alleys. Cotovelo Alley, for instance, is thought to have been opened as early as the sixteenth century as an access route to the sea, receiving its name "elbow" due to its angular configuration. Batalha Alley allegedly derived from an oratory once located there, dedicated to the devotion of Our Lady of the Battle. In the case of Moura Alley, at the rear of the square of the same name, the Moura Regiment, brought from Portugal in 1777, was first housed in temporary huts and later in a barracks, which accounts for the alley's name. Música Alley, in turn, was frequented by drummers and musicians who taught in a house that had previously housed the administration of the salt monopoly. Boa Morte Alley was likely associated with the proximity of gallows, whereas Guindaste Alley referred to the inclined plane and lifting device employed by the Jesuits to transport goods from the port to the top of Castelo Hill. As for Ferreiros Alley, the author did not indicate the origin of its name, but he noted that, at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was inhabited by a significant Chinese population, whose presence is also documented in chronicles about the city. Indeed, when referring to the same alley, the chronicler Luís Edmundo (1938) described how its properties were used by the Sino-Brazilian community, particularly in connection with the consumption of opium in collective houses composed of multiple dark and unsanitary rooms known as *fumeries*. He also identified, regarding the material fabric of the Misericórdia Neighborhood, features such as peeling plaster, exposed masonry, roofs covered with fungus, and widespread moisture infiltration. These material signs of decay coexisted with everyday practices that evidenced the continuity of residential occupation, such as clothing hung on improvised clotheslines, as well as a variety of services offered within the houses and along the streets (Edmundo, 1938). The photographs taken by Augusto César Malta de Campos (1864–1957) throughout the 1920s illustrate the neighborhood's materiality by documenting the building typologies found on Misericórdia Street and its transverse alleys, including one-story houses and two-story sobrados[8] (townhouses). In the case of the sobrados, the images reveal a pattern of mixed use that combined residential and commercial functions: shops on the ground floor and dwellings on the upper floors.

4 The exposed urban properties of Misericórdia: land, architecture, and the city in 19th-century Rio

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Rio de Janeiro underwent a continuous process of urban reconfiguration, in which the Misericórdia neighborhood participated with its own singularities. Within this context, the city possessed a network of commercial streets, as revealed by the *Mappa architectural da cidade do Rio de Janeiro: parte commercial* (1874)[9], which delineates the entire Fidalga Alley and the Misericórdia Street up to numbers 13 and 36, located on opposite sides of the street. The document suggests the importance of the area by numbering properties and mapping their street frontage; however, because it does not cover the entire street, it requires cross-referencing with other sources to clarify its patterns of occupation. João do Rio compares, in *A alma encantadora das ruas* (1908), Misericórdia Street with Ouvidor Street, highlighting their structural and social differences. While Ouvidor Street represented a space of ostentation and cultural effervescence, the Misericórdia was described as a place marked by decay (Rio, 1995 [1908]). The early twentieth century, contemporary to João

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[7] Document retrieved from reports of the 5th Police Station of Rio de Janeiro related to the Misericórdia neighborhood, Morro do Castelo and its surroundings in the year 1916. It is a collection composed of 388 microfilms, currently under the custody of the Casa de Rui Barbosa Foundation, which offers a glimpse into daily life in the region (Rui Barbosa, [S] SSP-RJ 001850, 1916).

[8] Photographs available in Loredano, C. (2022). Misericórdia: rua, largo e ladeira, no Rio de Janeiro [Série "Avenidas e ruas do Brasil"]. Brasiliana Fotográfica. Biblioteca Nacional / Instituto Moreira Salles. https://brasilianafotografica.bn.gov.br/?tag=rua-da-misericordia.

[9] Fragoso, J. da R. (1874). Mappa architectural da cidade do Rio de Janeiro: parte commercial. Biblioteca Digital Luso-Brasileira (BDLB). https://bdlb.bn.gov.br/acervo/handle/20.500.12156.3/16411.

do Rio's work, was marked by the consolidation of urban reforms envisioned in preceding decades. These interventions were grounded in a technical debate strengthened since the mid-nineteenth century, which associated collective housing with the spread of endemic diseases. The second half of the nineteenth century was a moment of intense political and social transformation in Brazil — from the transition from Empire to Republic, and from institutionalized slavery to free labor — while Rio's downtown was being reshaped according to modernization ideals.

The development of transportation systems, the opening of new thoroughfares, and the expansion of urban sanitation reshaped the logics of occupation and circulation in the city, placing pressure on central areas such as the Misericórdia neighborhood while simultaneously expanding access to peripheral zones (Abreu, 2003). The emergence of the horse-drawn streetcar and the steam train was crucial for the city's physical growth after 1870, since these new means of transportation enabled the extension of affluent areas toward the southern zone of the city, while the suburbs were progressively occupied by less privileged classes. Residences located in the central parishes increasingly housed urban workers, many of them engaged in temporary occupations that compelled them to remain in the city center in search of economic viability. These properties were often converted into *cortiços*, tenement-like dwellings characterized by precarious living conditions and high population density (Abreu, 2003; 2022 [1987]). At the time, Rio attracted international capital that, in search of new avenues for accumulation, invested in public services through state concessions (Abreu, 2022 [1987]). Regarding access to Misericórdia Street by streetcar, Alfredo do Valle Cabral (2023 [1884]) noted that the lines serving the area were those departing from Onze de Junho Square and from Lapa Square and Riachuelo Street. His text, produced as a guide for travelers visiting Rio in the 1870s, also lists commercial establishments on Misericórdia Street, such as a wine shop located at number 10, an organ of the Tribuna serving Portuguese interests at number 79, and the Chamber of Deputies at number 1 (Cabral, 2023 [1884]). This period of urban transformation stimulated the production of cartographic documents capable of mapping these changes. One example is the Plan of the City of Rio de Janeiro: Brazil[10], prepared by Edward Gotto and published in 1871, based on a survey conducted in 1866. The work consists of a book divided into sections of the city, detailing the sewage network according to the engineer's proposed project. This detailed-scale map includes lot boundaries and building numbers, encompassing the Misericórdia area.

In parallel with the modernizing atmosphere, the city remained fundamentally grounded in slavery. Raquel Rolnik (1997) argues that the presence of enslaved domestic workers, those tied to urban services and commonly known as *de ganho*, enabled the coexistence between the ownership of people and the progressive monetization of land. According to the census conducted in 1872, the Parish of São José housed approximately thirty-eight thousand inhabitants, of whom nearly half lived under conditions of enslavement. The total population was classified as white, Black, *pardo* (mixed-race), and *caboclo* (Indigenous or their descendants). Men worked primarily in construction, carpentry, and the production of clothing and footwear, while women were employed as seamstresses, street vendors, laundresses, and domestic servants (Brasil, 1874). Using the Digital Hemeroteca platform[11], it was possible to locate advertisements as well as short news notices by searching for references to the streets of the Misericórdia neighborhood in newspapers from the 1870s. Among the identified advertisements, offers related to the purchase, sale, and rental of enslaved people, ranging from children to adults, appear frequently, alongside references to Black and *pardo* individuals employed as laborers, especially in domestic service and in trades connected to the production of goods for commerce. A gendered division of labor is also evident: for women, tasks commonly mentioned include cooking, cleaning, and sewing; for men, occupations such as baker and cook are listed.

With regard to building typologies and modes of habitation, Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987) identified significant transformations in the uses of *sobrados* (two or three-story townhouses). Initially the residences of affluent families, these structures gradually came to accommodate collective forms of housing such as *cortiços* (tenement houses), brothels, boarding houses, hotels, and shelters; or, in the case of larger *sobrados*, they were substantially altered to house public offices, foreign legations, consulates, clubs, newspapers, Masonic lodges, theaters, and warehouses, among other functions. In the specific context of Rio de Janeiro, the author explicitly mentioned Misericórdia Street, alongside other streets such as São José, Ajuda, and Guarda Velha, as emblematic examples of this process. These areas were increasingly regarded as "a scourge" and "a constant danger to public

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10 Gotto, E. (1871). Plan of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil [Plano de esgotamento e edificações em escala dos lotes]. Biblioteca Digital Luso-Brasileira (BDLB). https://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart326448/cart326448.html.

11 Biblioteca Nacional. (n.d.). Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira. https://bndigital.bn.gov.br/hemeroteca-digital/.

health," where "the transmission of more or less serious diseases was its natural consequence" (Freyre, 2013 [1936], p. 28). Between 1822 and 1850, the legal framework governing landownership entered a transitional phase. As Raquel Rolnik (1997, p. 23) notes, the acquisition of land through registered purchase fostered the growing monetization of property relations. This process was consolidated with the enactment of Law No. 601 of September 18, 1850, the so-called *Lei de Terras* (Land Law), which, as observed by Murillo Marx (1999), established a new system of property rights by shifting control of land from the Crown to private individuals. Within this context, Luiz César de Queiroz Ribeiro (1996) identified three principal agents in the capitalization of urban land: the property owner, the capitalist, and the user. The uses assigned to urban areas derive from the interaction among these three actors. As the author adds, there is a direct relationship between the level of public investment in a given territory and its land valuation, with urban land prices resulting from disputes over the economic use of the city (Ribeiro, 1996). In central urban areas, when the property owner and the capitalist coincide but the user is distinct, the focus centers on real-estate income, driving the reconversion of uses, leasing, construction, or subdivision of land with the aim of maximizing profit (Ribeiro, 1996). In such cases, the so-called "rentier capital" operates according to a mercantile logic applied to the housing market, resulting in the proliferation of *cortiços*, including *casas de cômodos* and *estalagens*. Lilian Vaz (1994) defines *estalagens* as rows of small, single-story houses built side-by-side, with reduced dimensions and minimal compartmentalization. *Casas-de-alugar-cômodos* consisted of buildings internally subdivided into multiple rented rooms. Both models made use of limited unbuilt spaces in the old central *freguesias* (parishes), occupying backyards and vacant lots, as well as adapting existing houses. In this system, property owners leased their buildings to third parties who invested modest sums in construction or adaptation and obtained substantial profits through high rents. For the year 1869 in Rio de Janeiro, Freyre identified the existence of 642 *sobrados* of this nature, totaling 9,671 rooms occupied by 21,929 people, 13,555 men and 8,374 women; 16,852 adults and 5,077 minors (Freyre, 2013 [1936], p. 188).

News items and classified advertisements centered on the Misericórdia neighborhood that address its inhabitants' modes of dwelling refer to addresses of "rooms for rent," as well as the leasing of entire floors or individual units, such as parlors, alcoves, and attics—indicating the subdivision of a single property for individual or multifamily housing. Advertisements for boarding houses are also present, in addition to a hotel. The articulation between small-scale retail and the operation of collective housing was common. In this context, long-standing small businesses that resisted relocating to other areas in the face of pressures for new uses of buildings represent the persistence of earlier economic forms predating modern capitalism (Ribeiro, 1996). With regard to the most common forms of commerce, various entries published in periodicals of the time indicate the presence of small establishments dedicated to the sale of predominantly domestic products in the Misericórdia neighborhood. Among the examples identified are bookstores, general stores, seed and snuff shops, coal houses, and secos e molhados (grocery shops), as well as establishments specializing in the sale of specific food items such as potatoes, and goods such as clothing, textiles, crystal, and porcelain, both domestic and imported. Services provided by professionals such as dental surgeons, physicians, and typographers are also recorded. As for the uses of the buildings, reports frequently mention the presence of taverns, dance halls, drinking establishments, and so-called public houses, which functioned as spaces of social interaction and, often, as settings for conflicts, fights, and other disputes, including those involving foreigners. The mention of multiple addresses suggests a concentration of such establishments along Misericórdia Street. Notably, foreigners, especially Americans, Spaniards, and Englishmen, appear frequently in these accounts, often associated with episodes of conflict that were subsequently registered at the local police station. The survey conducted through the Hemeroteca Digital, rather than providing immediate answers, prompts new questions. Reading the sources extends beyond what they explicitly reveal; it requires attentiveness to the gaps and silences that permeate the records. Who owned these properties? What was the relationship between enslaved individuals and these spaces? What was the profile of property owners, and under what conditions were leases negotiated? In the specific case of the Confraternity of Misericórdia, in what ways did it exercise its authority over the neighborhood's properties? The material presented here illustrates an effort to demonstrate pathways for answering these questions as new connections emerge.

5 Final considerations

The everyday modes of appropriating buildings and streets described in the chronicles offer a pathway for understanding the territory at a micro-scale, revealing the neighborhood's role within broader urban dynamics through the commercial functions carried out there. Moreover, the continuous flows of students, workers, and other transient populations appear to have been a persistent feature of occupation until the onset of the area's demolition, reinforcing the hypothesis that its process of devaluation resulted less from abandonment than from the gradual transformation of its urban functions. Broadly speaking, for centuries, the

Misericórdia area consolidated its role in the city through its network of welfare services, from its initial occupation by the Jesuits to its later incorporation into formal medical education. In this context, the care of the sick emerged as a constant. At the same time, the Confraternity's activities were consistently guided by the dissemination of moral and religious values, sustaining disciplinary practices that spanned different political regimes and historical moments. Through the area's assistential structures, the square, the slope, and the street came to be affirmed as spaces of access and circulation for the subjects attended by this system. However, as the institutions connected to the Santa Casa were gradually relocated to other parts of the city, this function may have dissipated, contributing to the weakening of the original area's political-religious centrality precisely at the moment when new conceptions, those that would later guide large-scale urban reforms, were taking shape. The mobilization of sources drawn from different scales enhances the analytical potential of urban investigation by enabling the construction of relations not immediately apparent between times, spaces, and subjects. In the horizon of Benjaminian constellations, such sources, arranged in a non-linear fashion, are articulated through critical proximities. Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas offers, in this sense, the assemblage of images and keywords as a cognitive device, in which the value of connections emerges precisely from the tensions and intervals between elements. By integrating cartographic data, visual records, and narratives from distinct contexts within a single interpretive field, the analysis begins to operate through the composition of multiple frames, in which urban history is revealed as it becomes recomposed through new mosaics. In this regard, the work seeks to broaden the repertoire of possible readings of urban processes, aligning itself with contemporary debates that aim to recognize silenced memories, confront asymmetries, and articulate multiple perspectives in understanding the transformations that shape urban life.

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FRANCIS ALŸS' *GREEN LINE*: IMPERIALISM AND THE LIMITS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

A LINHA VERDE DE FRANCIS ALŸS: IMPERIALISMO E OS LIMITES DO SUL GLOBAL

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Taraciuk, Y. (2025). Francis Alÿs' Green Line: Imperialism and the Limits of the Global South. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 264-275
https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239018

Abstract

This article discusses the concepts of imperialist states, colonies, and semi-colonies as developed by Vladimir Lenin, as well as those of strategy and tactics as presented by Michel de Certeau, and considers the limitations and relevance of these ideas for analyzing contemporary power relations. The study adopts a critical and interpretative approach, articulating theoretical texts, the artistic performance The Green Line by the artist Francis Alÿs, and the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This approach fulfills the objective of this article, which is to clarify the concepts introduced and to problematize the notions of the Global North and Global South, considered here as insufficient for fully understanding the dynamics of domination and resistance within a capitalist/imperialist context. Aligned with the theme of this edition of V!RUS journal, “Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations”, the tensioning of the notions of strategy, tactics, and imperialism, in the fields of art and history, seeks to highlight the relevance of these concepts for analyzing the multi-dimensional functioning of these power relations while exposing the colonial and imperialist character that continues to support them.

Keywords: Imperialism, Strategy, Tactics, Global South, Francis Alÿs.

1 Introduction

A yellow-orange landscape dominates the view. A profusion of lines moves upon it, starting from somewhere and leading to uncertain destinations. Amidst this tangle, one line stands out. Drawn with a thicker stroke, this line irregularly cuts across the orange paper, as if following a logic unknown to the beholder. At first glance, one might think that the line's pattern reflects something that the paper – a map – does not reveal, that is, the territory that cannot be translated into lines. However, on the ground, the logic of the line appears even more arbitrary than on the map, encompassing the absurdity of strategies that attempt to delimit a distinct space in a ground teeming with life and history. The Belgian artist Francis Alÿs[1] portrayed this absurdity by using fifty-eight liters of paint and walking twenty-four kilometers to recreate the Green Line, originally drawn by Israeli military commander Moshe Dayan over five decades ago during the 1949 Israeli-Arab armistice. This line was intended to demarcate the border between Israel and Palestine (Alÿs & Devaux, 2004). Yet, it can also be interpreted as a de facto creation, since Israel has never respected this border and has frequently invaded Palestinian territory (Said, 2012). While Israel does not officially recognize the line, it perpetuates its existence as a tool of control, manifested through walls, guard posts, and checkpoints that are irrelevant to Israelis but omnipresent in the daily lives of Palestinians.

This duality of a line that is simultaneously present and absent is reflected in the double title of Alÿs’s performance: *Sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic*, also known as *The Green Line*. The unfolding implications of this title and of the question Alÿs puts forward – how art might remain politically relevant without slipping into activism – are beyond the purview of this article[2]. In this text, we intend to reflect on how an act may simultaneously oscillate between the gesture of tracing a line and the action of circumscribing a particular space of knowledge-power, and how the two poles of this act mutually presuppose yet exclude one another. From this viewpoint, the demarcation of a *proper* space from which an exteriority is administered – whether a territory or a mode of being and knowing – both coexists with and relies upon its opposite: a practice that engages with what is imposed upon it, thereby occupying the position of the Other (Certeau, 1984). Conceptually, the first act can be named a *strategy* and the second a *tactic* (Certeau, 2014). These concepts, articulated with Vladimir Lenin’s (2008) understanding of imperialism and Edward Said’s (2011) subsequent expansion, constitute the basis of the discussion developed in this article, which sets out to meditate on the limits and current relevance of these ideas for analyzing contemporary dynamics of domination and resistance.

[1] Francis Alÿs (1959) is a Belgian-born artist based in Mexico. His interdisciplinary work frequently addresses urban and geopolitical conflict, establishing dialogues between disparate parts of the world through their parallels and contrasts.

[2] For a detailed analysis, see Fisher (2011), "Aesthetics and the Political: An Essay on Francis Alÿs's The Green Line".

To develop this discussion, the research employed a qualitative and interpretive approach, guided by the critical analysis of theoretical texts and the artistic performance in question. The methodology was grounded in a dialogue between post-structuralist and Marxist contributions, articulated with an examination of the work of Alÿs, which served as a conceptual trigger. The analysis examines the performance's core concepts and situates them within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This methodological procedure was inspired by Foucauldian conceptions of critique as a practice of thought, as an exercise that dispenses with models and proceeds through the problematization of discourses, understanding them as constitutive practices of reality that enable and delimit the ways of knowing and speaking about things (Foucault, 2005, 2017). This articulation of theory, art, and empirical case provides a basis for evaluating contemporary theoretical frameworks, focusing on the problematization of models that reduce complex historical and social relations to mere binary oppositions, which fail to offer substantial contributions to the debates in which they are situated.

The apparent opposition between the terms *strategy* and *tactic*, as well as the geopolitical divisions developed during the twentieth century, especially the idea of the Global North-South, are thus challenged by this article. By contrasting this framework with the chosen definition of imperialism and refining the notions of strategy and tactic to show that they are not merely binary, the study asserts the relevance of Michel de Certeau (1984) and Lenin (2011) as conceptual tools for understanding imperialism and other modes of power relations. This discussion advocates for a critical stance that promotes theoretical perspectives capable of addressing the structural nature of domination in imperialist capitalism. In line with these goals, the article engages with the themes of the current issue of V!RUS journal – Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations – by highlighting the fragilities of the Global North-South concept and questioning binary frameworks. Ultimately, it proposes ways to appropriate knowledge formulated in imperialist countries for the analysis of colonial and semi-colonial realities. In this sense, using an artistic performance as a focal point enables a reflection that underscores art's potential as a means of knowledge production and dialogue between knowledge dispersed across time and space.

It is also necessary to state that this study does not directly address the most recent events of the conflict in Gaza and the West Bank. Since October 7, 2023, Israel's severe military campaign in Palestine, launched in response to Hamas attacks, constitutes what can only be described as a genocide: resulting in over 60,000 Palestinian deaths – the majority children, women, and the elderly – and tens of thousands more injured and displaced. The decision to exclude a detailed discussion of this theme was made both for reasons of textual coherence – that is, to focus on the discussion of the proposed themes – and to acknowledge that such an event deserves more than superficial treatment. It is worth noting that this choice does not eliminate the fact that this text was written in a context of uncertainty about the future of Palestine and Palestinians, and it was with this in mind that one of the arguments made here is for theories and concepts that could better explain the colonial character of the violence perpetrated by capitalist powers against other nations. Although insignificant in the face of the events cited, this argument is an attempt to make a political gesture that seeks, through critical reflection, the means to think about our present and envision other possible futures.

2 The line: strategy

Before the ink, there is the can – punctured, planted in the earth. The sound of metal scraping sand mixes with footsteps on stone and asphalt, and amidst these noises, the silent ink flows, weaving its slender thread. An observer of this mere millimeter-wide strand would never imagine that The Green Line – which defined the borders between Israel and the Gaza Strip and West Bank until the 1967 Six-Day War – as depicted in Figure 1, was originally a pen stroke on a 1:20,000 scale map and that, in reality, delineated an unclassified territory approximately sixty meters wide and hundreds of kilometers in length (Alÿs & Devaux, 2004). But this ambiguous status of the territory was short-lived. When the map was translated onto the land, it was not the Palestinians who had the right to have their interpretation considered, after all, they were considered inhabitants of the East (Orient), that mythical place invented by Europe and ruled by *savagery* and *ignorance* (Said, 2007, 2012). In this land, understood as unoccupied, European and Zionist imperialism devised its strategies for appropriating a foreign territory under the pretext of transforming it according to the principles of Western civilization.

Fig. 1: Gaza Strip, West Bank and Israel pre-1967 borders. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/two-state-solution. Accessed: 20/10/2025.

In this context, the term *"*strategy*"* refers to an action that "postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats" (Certeau, 1984, p. 36). This *proper* place, as we will refer to it, is the result of circumscribing a locus of power – simultaneously theoretical and physical – where these forces are distributed and combined; it is a space from which a will is distinguished and administered and that delimits which objects are to be known and how they are to be known, stipulating organizational models and the limits of action. Strategies coordinate military, political, and scientific forces under the privilege of a spatial logic that renders every element a unit to be organized into a coherent whole. Beyond merely rendering uncertainties into legible spaces, strategies produce a specific form of knowledge oriented toward their self-preservation as forms of power. Their operation relies not on moral premises – though practitioners remain influenced by them – but on a calculus of force relations aimed at stabilizing their own environment (Certeau, 1984). Consequently, characterizing Israeli statecraft and European imperialism as strategic operations in Palestine means they postulate a theoretical-physical power – a social, political, economical and military control position; producing legitimizing discourses, and defining territorial demarcation – all serving colonial domination's expansion and consolidation in the region.

To put this operation into practice, Israel fragments Palestinian territory, expands its territorial area through illegal settlements financed by the government and inhabited by supporters of the Zionist project, uses advanced technology to monopolize control over air and land, employs scorched-earth methods to devastate urban infrastructure, as well as produces judicial, economic, and political destabilization measures to undermine Palestinian rights and their means of subsistence (Mbembe,

2018; Sacco, 2021). Furthermore, Zionism itself functions as a strategy for demarcating a so-called legitimate identity that claims ownership of the land over Palestinian Arabs, who are deemed uncivilized. It is important to note that Zionism should not be misconstrued as an element of an (unreal) homogeneous Jewish identity; it is a political movement that, even though it arose during an era of rampant antisemitism, also coincided with the height of imperialism and the proliferation of Orientalist discourses. Within this context, Zionism aligned with a colonial project – first European, then American – framed as a civilizing endeavor. This project aimed, on one hand, to bring ideals of freedom, knowledge, and progress to a region perceived as despotic and dominated by the supposed ignorance of natives, and on the other hand, to expand European/American political and economic influence and dominance in the region (Said, 2012)[3].

Given this context, it is necessary to unpack the meaning of the expression *colonial and imperialist interests*. Despite their common usage, these concepts are often used in broad, generic terms – such as definitions of imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" and colonialism as "the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (Said, 1994, p. 8). While not inaccurate, such definitions fall short of explaining the specific mechanisms of imperialism. Thus, it is possible to lend more precision to this concept through five traits that, while remaining brief due to the insufficiency of such characterizations, deepen the understanding of the process of formation and functioning of imperialism. They are as follows:

> 1) The concentration of production and capital developed to such a high stage that it created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life. 2) The merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital," of a "financial oligarchy". 3) The export of capital, which has become extremely important, as distinguished from the export of commodities. 4) The formation of international capitalist monopolies which share the world among themselves. 5) The territorial division of the whole world among the greatest capitalist powers is completed. (Lenin, 2011, p. 89, our translation).

Imperialism refers to the highest stage of capitalism, that is, its monopolist stage – its contemporary phase. Its emergence stems from the general dynamics of capitalism, where free competition gives rise to monopolies that partition the world both territorially and through international associations that centralize capital. At this stage, financial capital fully merges with industrial capital and is exported globally under the facade of *free trade* (Lenin, 2011). It is crucial to note that these traits do not preclude imperialism from also constituting a political philosophy aimed at conquest and self-legitimation through cultural and epistemological domination. When considering the territorial division by capitalist powers, we must think of it not only in geographical terms but also discursively – as a way of understanding the land, defining its ownership, and how it should be worked and exploited (Said, 1994). Capital, from its earliest conceptualizations (Marx, 1993)[4], encompasses not merely an economic dimension of social life but a set of relations that also determines forms of subjectivation and world narration. It is in this sense that imperialism must be understood. Consequently, we can observe how strategies function as a form of power that is simultaneously deployed by capitalist powers in their colonies and definitive of imperialism's very operation. Colonial occupation configures itself as a strategic gesture that establishes new spatial orders, defining borders, regimes of property and production, socio-political arrangements, subject classifications, and cultural imaginaries (Mbembe, 2018).

However, imperialist relations do not always possess such apparent traits, which might create the impression that the perspective presented here cannot explain contemporary power configurations. The problem with this notion is that it remains merely an impression, as imperial control has always assumed varied forms, as in the case of nations that retain relative political, economic, and social autonomy, but which, due to a set of dependency relations of different kinds, become

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[3] Pointing out connections between certain Zionist ideas and European imperialism – connections that were explicit in certain texts by Theodor Herzl (1960, p. 80), the founder of modern Zionism – does not imply that Zionism is part of a global domination project orchestrated by hidden elites, a premise rooted in the Nazi conspiracy theory of the *International Jew*. On the contrary, this affirmation demonstrates how these ideas arose in a specific, influential historical context and how they were instrumentally deployed in support of European colonial political projects. Crucially, any criticism of the State of Israel must not lapse into antisemitism.

[4] "Production thus produces not only the object but also the manner of consumption, not only objectively but also subjectively. Production thus creates the consumer." (Marx, 1993, p. 92).

subordinated to imperialist states. These countries, representing an intermediate form of colonial subordination, as in the case of Brazil, can be termed as *semi-colonies* (Lenin, 2011), underscoring the theory's latent relevance. Based on these ideas, the use of the concepts of *imperialist states*, *semi-colonies*, and *colonies* in the context of highest capitalism is justified for three reasons: 1) it allows for a greater degree of analytical precision, as the categorization stems from empirical premises; 2) it offers interpretive flexibility, since a state's position may vary according to the specific relationship analyzed (though within limits defined by the five traits mentioned above); and 3) it explicitly characterizes the regime of domination of contemporary capitalist/imperialist relations.

Underlying these reasons is a critique of other geopolitical categorizations that have circulated, and sometimes still circulate, in academic and political spheres, and which seek to divide the world into homogenizing blocks. In the genealogy of these forms of categorization, it is possible to highlight the already mentioned Orientalism (Said, 2007), which bifurcated the world into West and East; the idea of First, Second, and Third Worlds (Sauvy, 1986), which lost traction after the Soviet Union's dissolution – which constituted the so-called Second World –, but whose core was preserved in the still-prevalent framework of Developed, Emerging, and Underdeveloped countries, a classification generally based on criteria like GDP per capita and the Human Development Index (HDI). Besides these three, it is necessary to cite the distinction between Global North and South, conceived in 1980 with the report *North-South: A Program for Survival*, also known as the Brandt Report, in reference to former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, who led the study at the request of the World Bank. In summary, the countries of the North were classified as industrialized and those of the South as developing. While acknowledging this was a simplistic division, the report presented a map that remains unaltered regarding this conception, placing Australia and New Zealand as countries of the North and China in the South. Regarding the document's content, its objective was to map a series of social problems present in the countries of the South and propose solutions. Although concerned with addressing the basic needs of these countries, the report reproduces a posture of moral, political, and economic superiority of the countries of the North. Consequently, its proposed solutions fail to address the structural character of the political-economic system that confines so-called Southern countries to a position of dependency on the North (Brandt, 1980).

Despite its history, the North-South division has gained supporters in recent decades, especially among postcolonial and decolonial thought. To cite just one reference that has had a major impact on the popularization of this concept, we can mention the book *Epistemologies of the South: justice against epistemicide*, more specifically the text by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016) entitled *Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges*. In it, Santos presents a North and South division identical to the Brandt Report's, highlighting that the South refers to a set of countries subjected to European colonialism – and acknowledging that within the countries of the North certain classes and groups were also subject to a similar domination – but with the addition of the idea that colonial domination also constitutes itself as a form of epistemological domination (Santos, 2016). However, as previously highlighted, from Lenin (2011), also encompassing authors such as Frantz Fanon (1968) and Said (2007), imperialism and colonialism have been understood as forms of epistemological domination that imposed knowledge-power regimes and modes of subjectivation, which erased native epistemes and produced self-perpetuating structures of domination reliant on consent as much as on coercion.

Even assuming that this apparent theoretical update offered by the Global North-South concept has the merit of highlighting colonialism's epistemological violence – where “apparent” refers to the fact that these ideas were already implicit, if not explicit, in earlier authors – it suffers from a significant flaw. It disregards the presence and importance of other factors that constitute and drive this violence, such as the logic of capital. Furthermore, this concept insists on a gesture (well-intentioned, but intentions don’t matter in this case) of dividing the world with an imaginary line, creating two blocs that do little to explain the reality beyond maps. Just as Alÿs's gesture traced invisible curves that cut through deserts and cities, geopolitical dividing lines have also drawn maps with borders that, unlike the silent ink, speak of the powers that shape the world under specific conditions and with determined objectives. But these lines are laid upon uneven ground, where the ink shifts and simplistic divisions are blurred. Under the soles of shoes treading the sand, the imperialist strategies' “proper” space is called into question. In the marks left by these footsteps, one sees the movement of tension that both opposes and constitutes strategies. This is the movement of tactics.

3 The walk: tactic

As the walk progresses, the ink traces its strange route amid the urban landscape, transforming the living room and backyard of the same house into two different countries. Silence contrasts with footsteps, and the ambiguity of a seemingly simple act – walking with a can dripping ink – becomes apparent. Within this ambiguity, meanings slide. The line may simplify, caricaturing the region's intricate socio-historical reality as an absurd foundation for colonial power, or it may propose an alternative notion of boundaries, where the fluid transience of ink replaces solid walls, or it may do both simultaneously (Figure 2). It might also do neither, since the unpredictability of the steps and the ink resists fixed meanings. Through this uncertainty, the act of walking continues. It both reaffirms and disturbs the spatial order that regulates circulation, introducing variations and dislocations that blur the graphic trace with the motion of human bodies.

Fig. 2: Scene from *The Green Line* (2004), by Francis Alÿs. Available at: https://francisalys.com/the-green-line/. Accessed: 20/10/2025.

Inside the spaces defined by foreign calculations, interstices appear as voids awaiting fulfillment, blind spots demanding illumination, errors requiring correction. Yet the very process of correcting these errors – often executed by means of strategies – generates new fissures, fracturing the stability of the proper environment. This other calculation, which operates without a proper place and through fragmentary action that plays with the imposed terrain, can be called a *tactic*. Without a base to capitalize on its gains, secure its autonomy, establish distances, draw borders, or expand, the tactic must seize opportunities through acts that function by the singularity of a strike. It must move within the adversary's field of vision as if every moment were new in the face of strategic reconfigurations. While strategies assert a “victory of space over time” (Certeau, 1984, p. xix), tactics represent the cunning use of time. It mobilizes “the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc.” (Certeau, 1984, p. 38).

Despite the strategies Israel employs to dominate Palestine, in reality its people and the concept of an independent state persist under conditions of profound physical and symbolic ruin. Although Palestine today may exist only as the memory of a popular will (Said, 2012), the persistence of this idea demonstrates how every colonial project produces diverse forms of resistance. Imperial invasion is not merely the encounter of a dominant foreign force with an inert native population, but a collision between two forces of unequal power. The enduring Palestinian presence across social, cultural, political, and economic spheres thus functions as a tactical response to Israeli strategies aimed at controlling the territory and rewriting its history. From this perspective, referring to the land as “Palestine” is itself a form of resistance – a recognition of the systematically ignored and erased Other and an assertion of the boundaries that strategic power try but cannot overcome (Said, 1994, 2012).

The transgressions that venture into the uncertainties beyond proper spaces, the counter-conducts that refuse a certain way of life, or simply the revolt that rises against everything attempting to silence it – all these are forms assumed by the tactical gesture (Foucault, 2009, 2014, 2023). Urban guerrilla warfare, unauthorized building, the sabotage of electronic equipment, tax evasion, the creation of hidden routes, the smuggling of goods and information, the protest marches… – none of these actions has the force to disable an armored bulldozer, much less to overthrow an imperialist regime. Yet, they serve to allow Palestinians to gain some time for their lives in the brief days under a makeshift roof to call their own, in the walks to a friend’s house, and in finding a spare garment or a toy. These are small moments of peace in a space governed by war. (Sacco, 2021; Weizman, 2012). Considering the contextual nature of tactics, it is possible to say that in the Palestinian case, the practice of *sumud*, roughly translated as “steadfastness”, articulates a set of diverse practices of resistance – such as refusing to answer questions during interrogation, surviving multiple military offensives and arrests, crossing checkpoints every day, building a microeconomy, etc. – and reinterprets them as elements of a common subjectivity in the face of colonial violence (Meari, 2014).

It is in the displacement of these examples that an interstitial space between strategies and tactics is revealed, bringing to light questions such as: what is the line that delimits the practice of *sumud* as a tactical resistance rather than a strategy that defines a proper Palestinian identity in opposition to an Other? In the clash of imperialist powers and native cultures, what are the limits between the proper space and the exterior? Furthermore, how do these concepts of imperialism, colonialism, strategy, and tactic operate in cases where the positions of the agents are not, apparently, as clearly defined as in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This detour through the idea of the tactic now compels us to interrogate the very stability of such conceptual lines. If Alÿs's *Green Line* both connects and divides different spatiotemporal dimensions, maybe the path of our inquiry similarly leads us toward that which distorts these limits.

4 The borders: strategy ⇄ tactic

An elderly man and a boy walk side by side in central Jerusalem when their path is intersected by a man leaving a trail of green ink. Dressed in the traditional attire of Orthodox Jews, the man and the boy stare in disbelief at the line and the man walking away. While the boy, perhaps more curious, glances back and notices the camera, it is the elder who actively chooses to step over this absurdity and ignore the division (Figure 3). The man with the ink can continues his walk until he crosses an Israeli checkpoint, which he passes through without difficulty, thus concluding the performance of *The Green Line*. However, Alÿs's work does not end with the video. It extends temporally, linking back to its 1995 precursor – *The Leak* – realized in São Paulo, in southeastern Brazil, re-enacted in Jerusalem, and into the future, where commentary from historians, anthropologists, architects, journalists, and activists reveals the strengths and limitations of his performance (Alÿs & Devaux, 2004). It is within this tension – one that articulates different historical and social contexts as well as interpretations – that the work exceeds the specific boundaries of the Palestinian question, linking it to a reality that cannot be contained within definitions centered on simple and stable dichotomies, such as those presented here in the concepts of *strategy* and *tactic*, or even of imperialist countries and colonies/semi-colonies.

Fig. 3: Scene from *The Green Line* (2004), by Francis Alÿs. Available at: https://francisalys.com/the-green-line/. Accessed: 20/10/2025.

Reducing these concepts to mere dichotomies ignores their broader theoretical contribution and their implications as operational terms. It is crucial to emphasize that both Certeau (1984), with his conception of strategies and tactics, and Lenin (2011), with his definition of imperialism, stress the formal nature of these concepts and the ways in which theories tend to simplify reality. In reality, outside of clear-cut cases like the Israel-Palestine conflict, the constituent elements of these concepts are often difficult to pinpoint, as their boundaries become ambiguous in daily practice. Furthermore, these ideas seek to describe power relations that are not structured in fixed instances of dominant and dominated, but in webs of dynamic interdependence, where forces of control and resistance are distributed in their various possible forms. Overall, these concepts endure as their original authors intended: operational, sometimes preliminary, categories for grasping realities that cannot be explained without some degree of simplification. This is precisely what demonstrates their flexibility and ongoing relevance.

A rewriting of these concepts – not to negate or reinvent them, but to reaffirm what was already presupposed by them – lies in the very dynamic that constitutes them. In defining a proper place, knowledge, and subject, strategy does so from an Other that guarantees the value of this identity. This means that both terms – strategy and tactic – not only exchange positions depending on the context but can also exhibit reversals and exchanges within the same situation. This reversibility explains how tactics can also employ strategies to differentiate elements in their internal dynamics, such as in cases that escape a certain notion of Palestinian identity, or in other social contexts, like countercultural or political resistance movements that reproduce, directly or covertly, prejudices of the same order they critique (Taraciuk, 2025)[5]. Such apparent contradictions do not negate the resistant quality of tactics, just as the malleability and reversibility of strategies do not undo their distinct nature. On the contrary, this indicates that these concepts possess a conceptual dynamism that allows the analysis of social relations beyond simple binaries. If a term implies its opposite, if life-saving technologies also forge the atomic bomb, if the

[5] It is also worth noting that these concepts are not intended to imply a prior moral judgment of the act being analyzed. Just as not every strategy concerns a reprehensible act of control, as they are necessary operations on different occasions, certain resistance tactics may very well constitute terrible crimes.

resister becomes the oppressor, it becomes clear that no position is fixed and all boundaries of the proper are transient. Instead of strategies *and* tactics, what we have are *strategies ⇄ tactics*[6], where the additive conjunction is replaced by two arrows representing the dynamic character of this relation.

This rewriting allows us to analyze power relations from a perspective that highlights the blurring of clear boundaries between interior and exterior. It is at this point that the theme of imperialism returns to this discussion, for this emphasis on indeterminacy shows how these concepts interact with one another and how they still speak precisely about the present. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, one can observe how Israel operates simultaneously as an imperialist state over Palestine and as a colony in relation to the United States[7]. Depending on the focus of an analysis that uses the proposed terms, Israel can be categorized as an imperialist state, defined by the five presented traits, colonizing Palestine through strategic domination; however, in another perspective, Israel can be viewed as a non-autonomous state occupying the position of a colony that acts as an extension of U.S. imperial interests in the region. Despite this dynamism, the definitions of imperialist countries, semi-colonies, and colonies do not possess the same degree of mobility as strategy and tactic, because imperialist relations are grounded in concrete elements that define the agents' positions within this nexus. Even if, in a correlation of forces between two so-called semi-colonies or colonies, one holds an advantage, this does not imply that one of them will become an imperialist state. Nonetheless, the traits that define imperialism contribute to an understanding of this correlation of forces in its specificities, without resorting to a simplistic definition of a cohesive bloc of subordinate countries under an equally cohesive hegemonic order.

This reflection establishes that what often passes for theoretical advance resembles a euphemism, softening the harsh realities that the world discloses. Replacing terms like *colony*, *semi-colony*, and *imperialist states* with *Global South* and *Global North* often obscures the enduring imperialist character of relations between states, cultures, and peoples today, and fails to account for the structural logic of domination in highest capitalism. This text therefore questions how these relations of domination are signified – that is, how they are read, who reads them, where they are read, and the potential outcomes of these readings. At the core of this critique is the understanding that replacing concepts that directly express the colonial character of imperialist domination with others that dilute it into seemingly neutral terms (e.g., “colonies” and “semi-colonies” for “Global South countries”) does not represent a move toward or away from a supposed *truth* about these power dynamics. Rather, it indicates how this domination is, and is no longer, perceived today[8]. In response to these issues, a proposal emerges to recuperate supposedly outdated concepts in an attempt to preserve the analytical rigor necessary for this type of inquiry – a rigor capable of describing the operation of these dynamics in all their complexity.

This text advocates for dialogues that could expand theoretical horizons and foster a critical stance toward conceptions that often repackage what was presupposed by previous concepts under the false sign of *novelty*. Instead of revising and updating existing ideas, what these *new* elaborations produce are self-contained theoretical niches that dialogue neither with the history in which they are inscribed nor with the present to which they relate. The multiplication of perspectives is positive and should be encouraged, so long as we remain aware of its ties to a productivist logic now foundational to knowledge production – a system that prizes quantity and supposed novelty over rigor. To invoke a metaphor, we can say that this logic creates a desert of isolated conceptual monuments, where the sheer vastness immobilizes critical thought. In such a landscape, one can only navigate by grabbing the newest idea as if picking a product off a shelf. Faced with this aridity, critique, understood as the practice of rereading the past and diagnosing the present, must serve as sturdy footwear that enables us to traverse these sands, where parsimony, rigor, and careful attention reveal themselves as the most adequate instruments for the analysis of reality.

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6 Originally, the expression *strategy ↔ tactics* symbol had been proposed (Taraciuk, 2025), but considering that the symbol (↔) may suggest a false equivalence between the terms, the symbol (⇄) was chosen to indicate reversibility.

7 Between October 2023 and September 2024 alone, the US allocated more than $17 billion to Israel (Bilmes et al., 2024), not including military presence through private companies such as Palantir – two factors cited by Lenin (2011) when defining imperialism.

8 It should be acknowledged that the notion of the Global South can serve as an affirmative label for building a collective identity among colonized and semi-colonized nations in political activist contexts. However, this does not grant it the necessary analytical rigor to serve as a category for understanding contemporary power relations.

To conclude, this article fulfills its central aim by proposing a tactical, and therefore also strategic, gesture: the appropriation of knowledge produced in imperialist countries. This act of appropriation involves a reading that traverses the distances and winding paths of a history shaped by resistance, revealing that certain concepts and theories born within empires are *ours* – the inhabitants of the colonized and semi-colonized people. Although written by hands that never touched the soil of the colonies, these ideas speak of them even when they are unaware of it, leaving *us* with the task of breaking down these borders and reclaiming these thoughts. Every theory, concept, and author who, despite their limitations and problems, critically reflected on the different modes of domination exercised by imperialist powers and conceived forms of insubordination against these forces, belongs to *us*. It is in the strategic ⇄ tactical movement of a tradition that closes itself within its borders as part of a specific culture, and in the inevitable movements of appropriation and transformation that distort and rupture those very borders, that *our* own tradition is built, a tradition that moves beyond its "proper" being and thought.

5 Conclusions

This article proposed a recovery of the concepts of *imperialist states, colonies, and semi-colonies* – from a Leninist perspective – and of *strategy* and *tactic* – as conceptualized by Certeau – to analyze various forms of power relations, from the everyday to the global level, within contemporary highest capitalism. Through an examination of the performance 'Sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic' (2004), also known as *The Green Line*, by artist Francis Alÿs, the text defined these concepts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, demonstrating how this case exemplifies imperialism and how it engenders simultaneously strategic and tactical operations. The article sought to demonstrate the insufficiency of the Global North-South conception for understanding these forms of power and the complexities they carry, as they now function through the dissolution of clear external/internal boundaries. By pushing these concepts beyond a simple dichotomy, the article revealed that they not only prefigured the theoretical updates suggested by the North-South conception, but also offer the capacity to: 1) address domination and resistance experiences across multiple dimensions (political, economic, social, cultural, epistemological, etc.); 2) analyze singular facts without losing sight of their broader structural context of this experiences; and 3) explicitly name the imperialist and colonial logic governing international relations, even for ostensibly independent nations such as Brazil.

In conclusion, these factors answer the objectives outlined at the beginning of this text: to expose the fragilities of the Global North-South concept, to question binaries, and to propose ways of appropriating knowledge produced in imperialist countries to analyze colonial and semi-colonial realities. Far from representing a conclusion, these answers indicate precisely the meaning of the key term that provides the thematic title of this issue of V!RUS journal: they are proposals for *dialogue*. This commitment to dialogue underpins the text's concluding defense of the recovery of supposedly *older* theoretical perspectives over *newer* ones, presenting it as a gesture that places the critical analysis of the history of our thought, particularly in its now distant and foreign corners, ahead of supposed novelty. It is through a sensitive and attentive reading of the past, akin to an archaeologist's careful work with historical records, whose objective is not to reinvent the old under the sign of the new, that we will be able to comprehend what made us what we are today and imagine what we may come to be.

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RACIONAIS MC'S: THE CONSTITUTION OF NEGRO DRAMA AS SUBJECT OF RESISTANCE
RACIONAIS MC'S: A CONSTITUIÇÃO DO NEGRO DRAMA COMO SUJEITO DE RESISTÊNCIA

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Prado, C. (2025). Racionais MC's: Racionais MC's: The Constitution of Negro Drama as Subject of Resistance. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations.. 276-286 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.237836

Abstract

This essay aims to analyze, from an ethical-political perspective and drawing on contemporary theoretical tools, the musical production of the rap group Racionais MC's, which provides the conditions for reflecting on a praxis of resistance, on certain interlocutions with the Black movement in Brazil, and on the confrontations that become necessary in light of such reflection. Methodologically, the essay is divided into three sections corresponding to successive periods of the group's production, with the aim of showing (1) how the rappers initially take strong class-based positions, intensified in their critique of racial and social inequality, while simultaneously maintaining misogynistic stances during this early moment of their production; (2) how this first moment finds continuity in a second period also marked by social critique, incorporating what I call an "ostentatious-becoming" in the group's production, during which we see the class critique diminish; and finally, (3) how this ostentatious becoming becomes even more evident in the third moment of their production, also characterized by a certain social critique and by the abandonment of their earlier misogynistic positions. This trajectory results in the idea that the subject of resistance possesses simultaneously subjugated and subjectifying aspects, expressing a subjectivity constituted both by external mechanisms of power and by the subject's own ethical work of the self upon the self.

Keywords: Racionais MC's, Race, Women, Class, Subjectivity

1 Introduction

I remain alive, I follow the mystique

Twenty-seven years defying the statistics

Mano Brown

Racial discourse has a long history in Western culture, creating divisions between human groups and reinforcing inequalities that, through this same means, appear as "effects" of a racist foundation naturalized by modern scientific knowledge. The invention of "race," in this sense, served the enslavement of entire peoples, the segregation of populations, and, even today, the maintenance of political privileges in various parts of the world where colonization played its whitening role. Even in Brazil, where the majority of the population is Black, this population remains a minority — as do women — in relation to positions of power within institutions, companies, and the various social structures that define the country's political landscape. Given the historical character of Black identity, with its sometimes demobilizing ramifications (e.g., the invention of "*parditude*"), we have as a starting point for a political claim precisely this racial category that still operates with great force in contemporary struggles against inequality. A large part of identity movements already recognizes, however, the situational and strategic aspect of these categories, abandoning essentialisms that historically served — and still serve — to produce for hierarchies within these movements, having their strength weakened in the face of the norm defined by white and European culture. My goal in this text, which is similar to that intended by the artists who will be the subject of my study, is, as Mano Brown says, to "add a more political idea to a more danceable rhythm" (Vicente, 2022), elucidating the subversion strategies of the Black movement that lead us to an ethical-political reflection — based on a Foucauldian theoretical framework, among others — on the condition of the Black and peripheral subject as a result of a process of *subjection* [assujettissement (in French)], but also of *subjectivation* [subjectivation (in French)], understood as processes of production of subjectivity from (1) external mechanisms of power and (2) the ethical work of the self on the self exercised by the subject itself (Foucault, 1975, pp. 30-31; 2004, p. 187)[1].

Hip hop culture emerged in the 1970s among Black and Latino people in the suburbs of New York, being introduced to Brazil from the 1980s onwards when — among others — the group Racionais MC's emerged, one of the greatest representatives

[1] All translations from Portuguese and French into English will be made by me, except when remarked.

of the culture in the country to this day. Unlike the characteristic productions of MPB (Brazilian Popular Music), in which we also find numerous references to Black culture, Racionais MC's emerged as a new front in the fight against racism and social inequality, producing music aimed less at the Brazilian middle class (the traditional audience of MPB) and more at marginalized Black and low-income urban communities. Their bold language conveys a much harsher critique of the living conditions imposed on these groups. The emergence of Racionais MC's in 1988 occurred precisely from the union between artists from the south zone (Mano Brown and Ice Blue) and the north zone (KL Jay and Edi Rock) of the city of São Paulo, who were already working with hip hop culture. It is noteworthy that the group emerged shortly after the end of the dictatorship, in the same year that the Brazilian Federal Constitution was promulgated, which allowed its members greater freedom of speech consistent with the courage required to denounce, in their music, the misery of the peripheries and the persistent police violence committed against young Black and poor people, whose destinies were frequently marked by drugs, crime, life in prison, and death resulting from these same conditions.

For a more detailed analysis of the musical production of Racionais MC's, I will divide their discography into three moments, each characterized by certain problems and important discontinuities that I will try to explain throughout this article.

2 "These intimidating lyrics"

The first period, between 1988 and 1994, reveals a production marked by the strong affirmation of a Black subject of resistance, one who becomes aware of their own socio-historical situation and incites others to do the same. This is evident in the group's first EP, entitled *Holocausto Urbano* (1990). In this EP, Black people are portrayed as society's "indigent" — "living like discarded rats [...] victims of an ungrateful inheritance" — yet still retaining the possibility of change through coherent, conscious action. The lack of coherence, in this case, would consist in not recognizing the objectives of a system that is the true cause of growing marginalization, whose solution for many who suffer from it is to steal and become more deeply involved in the world of crime, corroborating in a way the same system that reserves prison for those who do not succeed through this path. Furthermore, the rappers make a point of highlighting the racial identity imposed on marginalized Black people, offering a critique of the class homogenization carried out by certain intellectuals: "Sociologists prefer to be impartial / And say our dilemma is financial / But if we analyze it more closely, you discover / That Black and poor white people look alike / But they are not the same." This critique emphasizes the vulnerable position of the Black subject who, even when compared to white people in their class position, effectively suffers from police violence and the stigma of criminal records more acutely than the white individual — a condition evidenced by the song *Um homem na estrada*, from the album *Raio-X do Brasil* (1993).

This feeling of distance from the white population, even from the less privileged classes, produces in them a doubt about the very possibility of identifying with the artistic production of the group. In fact, the privileged subject in the songs is not the white subject, but often the "little black boy" who *looks* at the club he cannot enter, who *looks* at the court and field he doesn't have access to, who watches people consuming ice cream, going to the movies, and swimming in the hot tub, remaining only with his longing gaze from the outside. It is from this systematic exclusion that, represented in rap lyrics, arises an indignation of the marginalized black person, whose awareness of his position allows him at least to see a way out — and an entrance — through self-education and "an articulate mind" against racism. It is about confronting this racism, from the rappers' perspective, in the most radical and intransigent way, which is why "Racionais MCs declare war / Against those who want to see black people in the shit," as Edi Rock says in the track *Negro Limitado*, from the EP *Escolha seu Caminho* (1992). Maria Rita Kehl demonstrates this political concern linked to the impossibility of identification when she asks, feeling directly attacked by the group's songs:

> How can we listen to these intimidating, accusatory, often authoritarian lyrics, set to a rhythm reminiscent of a forced labor camp or the march of prisoners around the courtyard, with the boys dancing with their heads down, faces almost hidden by the hood of their sweatshirts and sunglasses, hunched over, as if they still had the chains of slavery on their feet? How does the identification that breaks through the barrier of segregation and crosses an abyss of differences come about, and makes wealthy teenagers listen and (why not?) understand what Racionais MC's are denouncing, and a middle-class adult woman like me receive the violent slap of rap not as an insult, but as a

> shared outburst, not as a provocation *pour épater* [to crush, to deprive of the use of the paw (C.P.)], but as a denunciation that immediately commits me to them? (Kehl, 2000, p. 148, our translation).

A second element that still characterizes this first moment of Racionais MC's musical production, now on the opposite side of the criticism they made, consists of an effective blaming — by a *Rational Jury* (cf. *Raio-X do Brasil*) — of the "alienated" black person who remains indifferent to their own condition of subjugation. In the same track where a war is declared against racists, the rappers clearly assume an arrogant posture (which will later be admitted by Mano Brown, as we shall see) towards those who have not yet become aware of their historical and class situation, remaining limited by "lack of posture" and without "sufficient IQ," referring to the root of their problems. The title of the EP where this track is found suggests, in a similar vein, the possibility of free choice for those who listen to the rap lyrics, even when these lyrics paradoxically denounce, in other songs, the systematic nature of the marginalization imposed on black people: "Culture, education, books, school / Too much crocodile behavior, whores and drugs / The second option is the quickest and easiest way / Death travels the same road, it's inevitable / […] To be aware or to drown in your own indifference / Choose your path (one less virus) / To be a true black person, pure and educated / Or to be just another limited black person". The discomfort generated by such lyrics, affecting both the white population and the majority of Black people, is grounded in an ideological perspective, according to which some individuals enjoy a reality of privileges inherited from the time of slavery, and this which is simply ignored, and even despised, by those whose socio-historical condition could supposedly be reversed through courage sustained by their own conscience.

Thirdly, this initial phase of Racionais MC's production is also marked by a firm class stance and an explicit critique of the capitalist system. The bourgeoisie is recognized as a "noble class" that enriches itself at the expense of the poverty of Black people, whom it despises and hates, and for whom it even promotes anti-drug campaigns, speaking of their destructive power, while hypocritically profiting "from the alcohol sold in the favela." It is this same privileged class that the rappers denounce as the cause and observer of the routine urban holocaust, a class whose members "do nothing, only get in the way," exhausting the workers to whom they offer minimum wages, while accumulating the vast majority of the wealth produced by these same workers, mostly Black. Throughout these songs, class opposition is consistently presented, highlighting the sordid objectives of the bourgeoisie in the destruction and exhaustion of the working class, without failing to emphasize the historical character of this exploitation that has persisted for "more than four hundred years." It is also noted that discrimination occurs constantly, but is mitigated — a very important element for our analysis — by the consumption of Black people, which feeds back into their own work, creating the image of a seemingly more egalitarian country: "This is the Brazil they want to exist / Developed and beautiful, but without Black people in the spotlight / They show you a country that doesn't exist / They hide our roots / Millions of Black people watch / Funny that they need us / Our money, they never discriminate" — as they say in the song *Voz Ativa (Escolha seu Caminho)*. Finally, they also highlight the competitiveness that characterizes the capitalist system in conjunction with the precariousness that affects those who are unsuccessful within this same system: "In the law of the jungle, consuming is necessary / Buy more, buy more / Surpass your opponent / Your status depends on someone's tragedy / That's what savage capitalism is all about" — from the song *Mano na Porta do Bar (Raio-X do Brasil)*.

One last but no less important consideration regarding this period concerns the group's strongly misogynistic positions presented in several lyrics, which highlights the lack of intersection between the issues of race and class, on the one hand, and gender issues, on the other. In some ways, these issues seem to intersect in the rappers' vision, insofar as misogynistic statements closely accompany their criticisms of racism and class exploitation, giving the impression that they constitute a single critique, as we see in the song *Júri Racional (Raio-X do Brasil)*, sung by Edi Rock and Ice Blue: "The sluts you praised your whole life / Are having fun today and laughing in your face / Those cows took advantage, used the little you had / Until the last drop / However, there is no other. And now? / You were despised, thrown away! / You don't need them / If there are such beautiful black women, and you can have the best / Why stay with the worst / Bourgeois bitches?" . We realize that the criticism of women, disguised under a supposed natural interest they have in money, ends up demeaning them in every verse, exalting the black man who, being a victim of other ills that already plague him socially, does not allow himself to be deceived by a type of individual who wishes to exploit him even more. The sexist contours of this criticism reveal, in a way, a kind of generalized paranoia against any possible threat to the economic condition of the black man, whose precariousness reinforces the social stigmas of the woman as "gold digger," which suggests that the problem ultimately lies in the lack of intersection of political problems — ignored, at this moment, by Racionais MC's. This misogynistic position, despite the

"gains" it may have produced among the group's male listeners (i.e., the corroboration of attitudes that already existed among a black and poor population under the influence of Western Christian culture), leads to a completely unfounded critique of the feminist movement, considered to be the majority view in Mano Brown's voice:

> Derived from a feminist society / That considers and says that we are all sexist / Doesn't want to be considered a sex symbol / Fights to gain power, to prove its morality / In a relationship in which it does not admit to being subjugated, betrayed / Demands equal rights, right bro? / And on the other side of the coin, how is it? / Believe me, for her, money is the most important thing / Her vulgar ways, her ideas are repugnant / She's a cretin who shows herself naked as an object / She's a useless woman who makes money having sex. (*Mulheres vulgares*, from the album *Holocausto Urbano*).

3 I was the meat, now I am the razorblade itself

With the release of the album *Sobrevivendo no Inferno* (1997), considered a kind of "theology of survival" due to its strong spiritual content and its positively marginal character (Oliveira, 2018, p. 32), we see several important shifts in the ethical-political stance of Racionais MC's, although a harsh social critique remains central. Each word spoken in the verses, as Mano Brown says, has the value of a "shot" and, in this sense, serves as an instrument of struggle against the oppression of the black and marginalized population. This strategy of struggle, associating political and religious elements, attributes the decadence of "a type A black person" transformed into a "little black person" to the temptations of the devil who contaminates the character of the black subject — through means such as "radio, newspaper, magazine and billboard" — until he steals his very soul, buying it with dirty money through the world of crime. It is no coincidence that this album opens with the prayer of Saint George, explicitly associated with Ogum, to protect the rappers in their endeavor, thus revealing a syncretism of high and significant cultural value in the group's musical production. This whole set of spiritual elements is associated, in continuity with previous albums, with a strong social critique that takes into account the history of Brazil and the police violence that affects Black people, as exemplified in the description of the Carandiru Massacre (which occurred on October 2, 1992, killing 111 people) through the song "Diário de um Detento," written jointly by Mano Brown and former prisoner Jocenir, a survivor of the massacre (Jocenir, 2001, pp. 99–102). This song denounces the total neglect of the public authorities towards the prison population, subjected to conditions — generally hidden from the public eye https://meet.google.com/eit-hjmv-hwd of extreme precariousness and violence, while the governor is referenced by name ("Fleury and his gang") as authorizing a coldly executed massacre, while at the same time enjoying "caviar and champagne" with his allies. Shifting a theoretical instrument from another place to analyze this album, we could easily argue that it is also a matter of a "political spirituality" put into practice by the rappers (Foucault, 1994b, p. 694).

Before moving on to the points of major discontinuity in the group's production, I highlight several elements of social criticism also present in another album from this same period (1997–2006), which I classify as the "second moment" of Racionais MC's. In 2002, we have the release of *Nada Como Um Dia Após o Outro Dia*, which includes very famous tracks such as "Vida Loka Pt. 1," "Negro Drama," "Eu Sou 157," "Jesus Chorou," and "Da Ponte pra Cá." This album inevitably revisits themes such as racism, police violence, crime, and Brazilian history, this time referencing "the scientific, space, and medical achievements" that opens the 21st century, offering hope for a better future for marginalized populations suffering from these problems, described in poignant lyrics. The daily life of a Black person from the periphery is characterized as a constant "survival test," acknowledging the difficulty this individual faces in becoming an entrepreneur or even studying, as it is first necessary to work in occupations that guarantee a minimally dignified life in the least arduous way possible: "Being a criminal here is much more practical / Quick, sadistic, or simply a tactical scheme / Is it instinct or conscience / To live between the dream and the shit of survival?" In this context, crime assumes a central place, again being referred to a religious domain that, in a way, justifies the acts committed by the criminal, as we hear in the song "Vida Loka Pt. 2," in which Dimas https://meet.google.com/eit-hjmv-hwd the man crucified next to Jesus and forgiven by him for recognizing him as God (Bible, 2002, Luke 23:39–43) https://meet.google.com/eit-hjmv-hwd is considered the "first vida loka in history." However, those who see Racionais MC's work as an apology for criminality are mistaken, as it is not exactly about exalting the figure of the bandit, but about placing oneself alongside him (without fully identifying with him) to explain a strategy for social survival (Oliveira, 2018, p. 35), as was already clear in "Diário de um Detento," where Mano Brown explicitly states that "The life of a bandit has no future." This absence of apology for crime is also evident in the 2002 album itself, in which the thief is generally portrayed with a tragic ending, despite his actions denoting a challenge to the system that oppresses him:

> The little black guy was coming, what was he laughing at? / *The nightmare of the system is not afraid of death* / He bent his knee and fell like a man / At the roundabout, embracing the loot / I told you, damn it! Didn't I tell you?! It wasn't going to work! / Who's going to tell his mother when we get there? / A child to raise, imagine the news / Lamentable, let's go, there's going to be a lot of police. ("Eu Sou 157"; our translation, our emphasis)

Unlike the first phase of Racionais MC's musical production, in which the Black and marginalized individual was treated as "alienated" and "limited" insofar as he did not act according to a certain historical and class consciousness, this second phase is characterized by a much greater empathy towards the same individual, especially those who descend into a life of crime and drug use, given their conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability and the ease of alleviating such suffering through narcotics. When Ice Blue suggests to his friend Mano Brown that he distance himself from the addicted individuals he sees "[...] on the edge of the asphalt / Inhaling death, exhaling life upwards," Brown responds from a strikingly humble position: "Look, nobody is better than anyone else / Look, look, and they are our brothers too." This position is not, as in the case of criminality, an exaltation of the addicted individual, but rather corresponds to a greater understanding of the social and even spiritual conditions through which he arrived at that place, associating his actions with the devil's happiness: "But who am I to speak of those who snort or smoke? / I don't care, I never gave you a damn thing / You smoke whatever comes your way, you clog your nose / You drink everything you see, you make the devil happy" (Capítulo 4, Versículo 3). Similarly, those who are captured by the penal system are understood as products of a powerful "chemistry" in which certain socially and politically invested elements are mixed among different life relationships and personal affections: "Each inmate, a mother, a belief / Each crime, a sentence / Each sentence, a motive, a story / Of tears, blood, lives and glories / Abandonment, misery, hatred, suffering / Contempt, disillusionment, the action of time / Mix this chemistry well / Ready: here is a new inmate" (Diário de um Detento). It is no longer a matter of morally blaming the individuals who abandon themselves to the world of drugs and crime, but of understanding their reality by pointing out the greater causes — historical, social, political, etc. — of their conduct, which is refractory to transformation.

Mano Brown identifies this shift in perspective primarily beginning with his 2002 album onwards, where the periphery is no longer portrayed "so much as oppressed and deceived," since "there, the periphery is making mistakes or getting things right, it's giving its opinion and moving forward." The arrogant perspective of a "submissive, ignorant, alienated periphery" is therefore challenged by Brown[2] in favor of a more generous perspective that takes into account not only the subjugation of the peripheral individual, but especially his subjectifying aspects. This is evidenced by the song "Negro Drama," which portrays the black and peripheral subject who lives "between success and the mud," with a great sense of pressure falling upon him in his search for better living conditions, carrying with him the trauma "so as not to be just another fucked-up black man." The *negro drama*, conditioned by an imposed culture, is directed at an interlocutor whom he knows to be white or not from the periphery, to whom he formulates harsh questions that emphasize the common complicity of the white population with the violence — often police violence — exercised against black people: "You must be thinking what you have to do with this / From the beginning, for gold and silver / Look who dies, then see who kills / The uniform that practices evil receives the merit / Seeing me poor, imprisoned, dead is already cultural". In contrast to this oppression linked to structural racism that falls upon him, the Black drama represented in the voice of Edi Rock presents himself as an "example of victory, journeys, and glories," transforming himself from "flesh" into "razor blade," while at the same time not losing sight of his peripheral origins, whose misery can be alleviated by money, but with which it is by no means possible — nor desirable — to uproot from within himself the favela from which he comes (Zeni, 2004, pp. 226-227). Therefore, the subject of resistance constituted by the *negro drama*, in his daily adversities and battles against the "plantation owner" who still persists in those who aim to oppress and even destroy him, is not merely a subject subjugated by the powers that permeate society, but also a subjectifying being who actively constitutes himself through a way of life that affirms his own position and is subversive in relation to it.

In this context of Racionais MC's production, we are interested in highlighting a certain continuity in class critiques that explicitly mention, at least in passing, capitalism as the cause of a situation that leads to the world of crime ("A Vida é

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[2] Cf. VICENTE, Juliana (Director). (2022). *Racionais MC's: Das ruas de São Paulo pro mundo* [Documentary]. Preta Portê Filmes.

Desafio," in *Nada Como Um Dia Após o Outro Dia*). In the 1997 album, the term "capitalism" does not appear, making this causal relationship less explicit; however, we find considerations that invariably focus on class inequality, insofar as they denounce the condition of the worker whose time is almost entirely occupied by work, needing to work overtime to feed himself and his family — this overtime functioning as "handouts from the boss, asshole, millionaire." Without this exhausting work regime, one can easily ask: "If slavery ends for you / Who will you live off, what will you live off?" ("Periferia é Periferia") — which certainly denotes the class exploitation characteristic of a capitalist society. On the other hand, both albums present what I would call a "becoming-ostentatious" of the rap produced by Racionais MC's from this point onward, although ostentation is firmly rejected in some verses, for example: "Poverty is the devil, I hate ostentation / You can laugh, laugh, but don't disbelieve me" (in "Vida Loka Pt. 2", from *Nada Como Um Dia...*). The ostentatious character of the rap is more evident not only in other verses of the same song, where the rapper exalts a life situation where he can enjoy certain luxury items, such as an "elite, 18-karat gold collar" or a Breitling watch, but also in several other songs where he states that it is not a "matter of luxury," but of "abundance," the possibility of consuming all the items in a store — the counter, the mirror, the stock, the model — and living in a "world like Citizen Kane" (Da Ponte pra Cá). In this second phase of Racionais MC's production, we have, in this sense, a somewhat paradoxical arrangement of the class positions upheld in each lyric, which, in the third phase, as I intent to show later, become aligned with an increasingly ostentatious way of life and less concerned with the economic issues that influence the exploitation of the black population, despite their still timid social ascension in the contemporary world.

Finally, we observe that this second phase still retains several misogynistic positions, following those already present in the first phase of the group's musical production, in addition to adding homophobic and transphobic positions. In his 1997 album, Mano Brown portrays a person who, apparently a trans woman, prostitutes herself to earn a living in a manner no less notable than a man seeking to get rich through crime: "In exchange for money and a nice car / There are guys who twerk and even wear lipstick" (Capítulo 4, Versículo 3), verses that reveal a transphobic stance from the rapper disguised under a class critique, as if the person in question valued money over a "more honorable" life, because it was "not sold" to capital, or something similar. In the 2002 album, in turn, besides Edi Rock presenting "love between man, son and woman" as a "universal truth" (A Vida é Desafio), revealing an explicitly homophobic stance, we also have one of the most misogynistic tracks produced by Racionais MC's, entitled "Estilo Cachorro," in which Mano Brown begins his part saying: "Say what you want, what it is, it is / Worm or good blood, it doesn't matter to the woman / It doesn't matter where he comes from, or what for / If what she really wants is a feeling of power." Throughout the song, the woman is portrayed as interested in money and power, assuming a submissive and dissimulating position in relation to the man. Ice Blue follows the same macho tone, describing an "agenda" he has of names and times of the week in which he meets certain women, each supposedly interested in his material possessions and his money:

> Monday, Patricia; Tuesday, Marcela / Wednesday, Raissa; Thursday, Daniela / Friday, Elisângela; Saturday, Rosângela / And Sunday? / It's a matinee, 4 PM, the name is Ângela / I have an address book with dozens of phone numbers / A list of characteristics and names / What's the source, partner? / Ah, that's no secret / I ride a motorcycle, you know, I have money / The girls all get excited when I arrive / I cause panic, I order Champagne on ice / That silver bucket, on the table / Sets the mood for the night, a box of surprises / I sit there watching, filming / Just wickedness here and there, parading / They do everything to get your attention / Stop, throw it in your face, with pretension / Tight pants, bell bottoms / Low-cut blouse, perfumed and smiling.

4 Racionais MC's in the 21st century: new survival strategies

The third phase in Racionais MC's production, which I place between 2013 and 2023 (among solo albums and albums by the group itself)[3], marks a stance strongly concerned with the contemporary world, especially in Brazil, along with its social, political, and aesthetic transformations. After *Nada Como Um Dia Após o Outro Dia* (2002), we waited 12 years for the release of the album *Cores & Valores* (2014), which received very diverse reviews, but still represents a the current reality.

[3] We can list the following productions from this period: *Contra Nós Ninguém Será* (2013) [Edi Rock's solo album], *Cores & Valores* (2014) [Group album], *Boggie Naipe* (2016) [Mano Brown's solo album], and *Racionais 3 Décadas* (2023) [Live compilation].

The most critical point of the album, without a doubt, concerns the black subject in his socioeconomic ascension within the capitalist system, while also reflecting on the persistent inequality between classes, but introducing an ostentatious content evident in several lyrics and in the comments of specialized researchers[4]. In the track titled “Eu Compro” (I Buy), we perceive this tension between, on the one hand, the progressive increase in the purchasing power of the black person from the periphery who enters social spaces that were previously inaccessible and, on the other hand, the exacerbated desire to acquire luxury items with a certain meritocratic tone in the verses: “Financing your dream and believing in yourself / You know your limit, where do you want to get to? / Having a helicopter on the yacht, achieve your status / Without trauma, street smarts is living.” The same song revisits elements from previous albums, repeating the line “Na mão de favelado é mó guela,” from Vida Loka Pt. 2 (*Nada Como Um Dia…*) and reformulating the critique of “Fim de Semana no Parque” (*Sobrevivendo no Inferno*) with verses that explicitly show the inaccessibility of marginalized Black individuals in consecrated spaces of consumption: “Look at that shopping mall, how cool / With some kids in front begging for money” (reversing what was “Look at that club, how cool […] / Look at the little Black guy watching everything from the outside”) .

Considering the overall movement of Racionais MC’s musical production, we observe a considerable shift in positions concerning class criticism. While in *Escolha seu Caminho* (1992) such criticism focused directly on the utterly superfluous nature of consuming expensive items compared to “an articulate mind” (Negro Limitado), in the 2014 album the perspective of adapting to the “laws of the street” prevails, seemingly forcing the individual to be successful in the business world, becoming wealthy enough to acquire any item previously exclusive to the more affluent classes: “Nobody gets hurt, I want cash, money / Nothing personal, the issue is financial / Difficult to understand if the streets have their own laws / These aren’t my lines, I invented, I adapted” (Somos o Que Somos). In these lyrics, the rappers denounce the racism hidden behind the discomfort of the privileged class when they see a Black individual appropriating their exclusive consumerism, because “Even if you can pay / Be sure they will be suspicious / Because racism has been disguised for many centuries / It doesn't accept your status, nor your color” (Eu Compro). This denunciation refers to the colonial legacy that attempts to distinguish as much as possible the social position of the white individual in relation to the Black individual, a legacy that tries to ignore the appropriation of symbols that characterize the wealthier social strata by those who, through a historical struggle, do not allow themselves to remain in a position of submission. In this way, the colonial heir “looks at the Other dressed like him and does not recognize himself,” as in a “disconcerting game of mirrors in the encounter of classes in Brazilian society” (Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco, 2014, n.p.).

Returning to Deleuzian concepts of “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization,” we can say that the insertion of the Black subject into privileged spaces of power, especially those defined by a certain economic condition, certainly represents an expansion of the margins of action for the Black population in general, henceforth accepted in such spaces — through capital, it bears emphasizing — despite the discomfort experienced by the bourgeois class. This is a deterritorialization that, at the same time, liberates the Black subject from the strategies of domination produced by an economic matrix of power, taking into account a long historical process of resistance, but also expands this same matrix through a process of reterritorialization via new control strategies. These latter strategies, as we saw above, are exemplified in the adoption of ostentatious behaviors in relation to luxury goods produced by companies that exploit the labor often performed by the Black salaried population, when they do not use slave labor from different populations around the world. Ice Blue currently holds the position of vice-president of GR6, the largest funk producer in Brazil, in clear alignment with the ostentatious funk productions that reach billions of views on platforms like YouTube, in addition to stating that the black movement needs to “play the game” as a strategy for breaking paradigms: “Funk has made people from the periphery millionaires, making kids dream of things that, in my childhood, I didn’t have the right to dream of. It didn’t exist,” says the rapper in an interview with *Folha de São Paulo* (Bergamo, 2024). It is interesting to observe that the political struggle, thus unfolded on different fronts, interconnects racial and class issues in a two-way street, whereby the resistance driven on one side reverberates in reterritorializing counter-strategies on the other.

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4 For a thorough analysis of this album, I recommend reading Alex de Cassio da Silva’s monograph, entitled *Cores & Valores: Racionais MC’s, ascensão da classe C e ocaso do arranjo político da Nova República*, defended as a graduation thesis in 2021 at the Department of Letters of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul.

A similar problem occurs in the change of position of Racionais MC's in relation to women, gays and trans people, in favor of whom there emerge in this third moment respectful statements and even admiration for the female gender. These new stances stand out in tracks like "Eu Te Disse" and "Eu Te Proponho," from the album *Cores & Valores*, in which the relationship between man and woman is no longer marked by betrayal (as in "Estilo Cachorro"), but by trust and the rapper's passionate amazement with a single woman, including explicit homage to artists known for their romantic lyrics, such as Roberto Carlos, Gilberto Gil, Cazuza, and Marina Lima: "Baby, I propose to you / My secret garden, the house of my dreams / Matrix of my place, where you could swim [...] I ask for discretion for more than a thousand reasons / Not for nothing, a little possessive, forgive me" ("Eu Te Proponho"; Da Silva, 2021, p. 73). This ethical-political shift regarding women in Racionais MC's rap can be attributed, at least in part, to the migration of the peripheral audience to funk, where women appear more as protagonists, highlighted by their beauty and sensuality (which does not exclude a certain sexism), instead of simply being despised due to a supposed self-serving dissimulation (Pereira, 2014, n.p.). In Mano Brown's solo album, titled *Boogie Naipe* (2016), we see a reflection of these shifts in tracks like "Mulher Elétrica," where the woman is associated with wealth invoked through certain luxury brands (Dolce & Gabbana, Louis Vuitton, etc.) and with the hypnotism of those who feel attracted to her, remaining not entirely accessible on the rapper's "agenda." In some interviews, Brown praises artists such as Pabblo Vittar, Anitta, Ludmilla, and Linn da Quebrada, acknowledging that "every struggle is valid," especially when it comes to introducing them to the artistic world, and that the hip hop universe itself — long dominated by men — has become more feminine, more occupied by women, who drive most of the changes in the different musical branches (Balsemão, 2018; Assef, 2017).

5 Final considerations

The trajectory of Racionais MC's musical production described here, instead of representing an "evolution" of ethical-political positions or any linearity, represents a set of intertwined problems involving the historical situation of subjects marked by their color, their peripheral condition, their prejudices, and their experiences. It is not for me to formulate a moral judgment that frames each production by attributing a specific value to it, as if it were not possible to recognize in all of them a political force that is, in a way, necessary to its own time, concomitant with other ways of seeing the world that stem from other perspectives. This does not mean that I should exempt myself from a political position regarding racism, misogyny, and class problems, among others that invariably constitute our *ethos*, our situated way of dealing with things, and which we consider preferable to others. My work as an intellectual involves the critical task of scrutinizing the underlying mechanisms, that which remains barely evident, the interpretative gaps that give rise to the events of our daily lives, the places where silence prevails, and the possibilities of thinking beyond what is immediately observable. I know very well, however, that this work is not carried out in isolation, being conditioned on all sides by my relationships and my culture in general, the very culture that I make the object of my endless critique. Were it not for the existence of Racionais MC's, whose lyrics certainly inspire thousands of other young Black people like me, at different times from the 1980s to the present day, there would be no text, no such problems as presented here, no work of thought. It is not up to me to play the role of moral judge, but rather — as Michel Foucault (1994a, p. 725) would say — that of a "cartographer" of the strategies that traverse the political field, valuing less the writing itself than its potential to self-destruct like a "Molotov cocktail".

The trajectory of Racionais MC's is of great interest to us insofar as it constitutes in itself a remarkable strategy of resistance. Their songs allow for a profound reflection on the condition of the Black subject in urban peripheries, on the effective possibility of realizing their dreams, and on the impediments to such realization, frequently constituted by what seems most evident to them in the social body in which they live. In this text, I have tried to describe the movement of a group that starts from strongly critical positions against social inequality, that which falls especially on Black people, but that also maintains for a good part of its trajectory somewhat narrow opinions on the feminist struggle that would contribute intersectionally to its subsequent success; I have tried to show how these positions gradually transform and assume places, privileging new fronts of struggle and abandoning others. It is evident that it is up to us not only to criticize the final contours of this trajectory, in which capitalist exploitation ceases to be relevant because the possibility of the periphery becoming rich is conceived, as if many Black dramas could not yet see only "a star, thus, far away, somewhat obscured"; it is up to us, first and foremost, to understand this attitude and sincerely ask ourselves: how can an entire segment of the population, subjugated within a capitalist culture, achieve social mobility without using those instruments that seem to be among the most pertinent in the very exercise of power that characterizes that same culture? If historical materialism is right in saying that the material conditions of existence are essential for the political and ideological relations of a society, these not being exactly *determined*,

but strongly *conditioned* by those, how can we ignore the total absence of Black people in privileged material positions in this same society that we still consider marked by inequality? In other words: while the proletarian revolution does not occur, due to the various factors that prevent its execution, how can we fail to see a true survival strategy — more or less unconscious, if you will — being practiced by a huge number of individuals who see no other way out of their precarious condition than through enrichment at the expense of exploiting the labor of others?

I believe we should be empathetic to the survival strategies of those who suffer most within an unjust society, not to justify them, but to redirect our feelings of indignation. As a famous historical materialist said, the capitalist must first and foremost be considered a *function* that fulfills its role within a much larger system, representing embodied capital — this capital that compels him to be a person of despicable behavior, but still a *person* very far from being capital itself[5]. We know that political struggle should not only occur on the economic front, that our lives are not reduced to economic exchanges, in short, that we are not economic reductionists. Contemporary struggles deal with different agendas and positions of combat, and should not be hierarchized as if there were a "weakest link" to which greater attention should be given, neglecting other equally pertinent problems. The "resolution" of a problem like racism will not come from a single strategy, through a single path of any kind, but through a careful analysis of the political field in which we find ourselves and the continuous transformation of ways of thinking that take into account the difficulties faced by Black people in surviving. In this sense, concluding this still brief reflection, I dedicate this Molotov-like text to Racionais MC's and the enormous creative power they have developed and promoted throughout their career, the fruits of which we reap and savor with different tastes. I also wish the young Black people from the periphery the most enduring and unwavering determination in the struggle; I place my hopes in them, and I send my greetings to all!

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[5] "*Après moi, le déluge*! [After me, the deluge!] is the motto of every capitalist and every capitalist nation. […] [But] this does not depend on the good or bad will of the individual capitalist. Free competition imposes on the individual capitalist, as eternal and inexorable laws, the immanent laws of capitalist production" (Marx, 2013, p. 342).

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FEMALE GUARANI MBYA VERNACULAR TECHNOLOGY AND BIODIVERSE CULTURAL HERITAGE

TECNOLOGIA VERNACULAR DAS MULHERES GUARANI MBYA E PATRIMÔNIO CULTURAL BIODIVERSO

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Carvalho, A. L. R. & Guimaraens, D. T. P. (2025). Female Guarani Mbya Vernacular Technology and Biodiverse Cultural Heritage. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 287-301 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239974

Abstract

This article discusses the vernacular technology of Guarani Mbya women's architectural thought as a form of biodiverse cultural heritage and as a practice of resistance in the face of architectural coloniality. It aims to foreground the concept of *corpo-território* [body-territory], in which nature, gender, and culture form an integrated system. To this end, the study departs from the examination of bamboo weavings used in artisanal practices and regarded as sacred, given their association with the myth of female creation. It analyzes how the imposition of hegemonic architectural models, particularly during the Jesuit reductions, erased ancestral construction knowledge and delegitimized non-Western modes of dwelling and cosmologies. The methodology is grounded in participatory processes conducted in Guarani villages, involving workshops and actions that integrate architecture, ethnobotany, anthropology, and gender studies, fostering horizontal exchange between oral and academic knowledge. The results demonstrate that bamboo weaving is not merely a material artifact, but a device of living memory and a political practice of cultural preservation. The research aligns with the theme of this edition of V!RUS journal by transforming historical conflicts into concrete, dialogical actions and practices. The work addresses the ecology of knowledges by articulating intercultural and insurgent dialogues, strengthening often invisibilized cultural heritage, and pointing to pathways for territorially rooted building practices in the face of epistemic domination.

Keywords: Vernacular technology, Biodiverse cultural heritage, Guarani Mbya women, Architectural coloniality.

1 Introduction

I saw no spectacle more uplifting than belonging to the ground.
To me, these small beings had the privilege of hearing the
Earth's springs (Barros, 2003, n.p., our translation).

There is a wisdom woven between nature and the hands of Guarani women – a knowledge that is not found in architectural manuals, but in transformative practice. This article analyzes part of the doctoral research titled *PELA GRETA: tecnologia vernacular e patrimônio cultural biodiverso dos guarani mbya* [PELA GRETA: Vernacular Technology and Biodiverse Cultural Heritage of the Guarani Mbya], investigating the intrinsic relationships among nature, gender, and culture. Here, nature is approached as a feminine element, acknowledging the various forms of violence and extractivism (Gago, 2020) that traverse these *corpos-territórios* [bodies-territories]. Architecture and Urbanism are fields deeply marked by power hierarchies, coloniality, and patriarchy, which have historically rendered non-hegemonic knowledge invisible, especially that of women and Indigenous peoples. We therefore seek to weave together two apparently distinct, yet intrinsically connected, lines of inquiry: research into the wisdom of Guarani weaving in the arts and architecture, and the notion of *corpo-território* [body-territory] as a foundation for feminist architectures. Through this weaving, the essay offers a practical response to the question of how to conceive technical–scientific contributions for a multilateral world. Drawing on an ecology of knowledges, we demonstrate that the articulation of historical differences and conflicts, represented by the tension between Guarani vernacular knowledge and hegemonic architectural models, can generate a transformative praxis when grounded in horizontal inter-epistemic dialogue.

The fragmentation of knowledge between nature and science after the nineteenth century, and between nature and culture from the twentieth century onward, has played a significant role in the erasure of constructive cultures, especially Indigenous ones, and in the consequent formation of national identity and heritage as we know it today. For a long time, nature was seen only as a resource to be exploited (Carvalho, 2019), while culture, much of which originated on another continent, was treated as a privilege of the minority. Understanding that space is constituted, in addition to many other things, by its cultural legacy and identity, here we focus on the remains, leftovers, and cultural erasures produced by the formation of our society. The interest in non-hegemonic epistemologies is a long-standing interest in this academic trajectory, finding theoretical grounding in the poetics of Manoel de Barros, whose concept of unlearning constitutes an epistemological gesture of decolonization of knowledge.

To recognize oneself as a Brazilian architect from the Global South, and to think of the built environment as formative of our society, entails many contradictions. If the space we inhabit and the way we live are central to our social formation, how do we address the fact that our references of identity come from another continent and from cultures other than our own? It's even

more conflicting when we think about the notion of heritage, which should represent the preservation and right to memory of a people, but which was actually built on exclusionary processes and the historical erasure of ancestral knowledge. Talking about representation consequently resonates with identity. Identity is deeply linked to power relations, which define who is included and who is excluded in this construction process. In relation to the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge, we will use the term “ethnogenocide”, coined by Guarani Indigenous Geni Nunez Longhini, who classifies the erasure of “one's own identity” (Longhini, 2022, p. 56, our translation) as the erasure of their lives, their culture, their ways of life, their language, and their customs. Milton Santos (2016), a Brazilian geographer, corroborates Geni's argument by saying that it is in the place that these life practices are preserved. For him, the history of creation is closely linked to the history of production. The author also criticizes the merely technical and functionalist view of space without considering a general approach to the human and cultural dimensions. Kathrin Woodward reinforces this by saying that “the construction of identity is both symbolic and social” (Woodward, 2014, p. 11, our translation) and that this construction is sustained by systems of representation.

Néstor Canclini supports the argument about the construction of national identity by criticizing the fact that cultural heritage functions as a resource for the production of inequalities, where “art is worth more than handicrafts, scientific medicine than popular medicine, written culture than oral culture” (Canclini, 1994, p. 98, our translation). Canclini reiterates that the ideal model of a nation is created by the material and symbolic reality of the discourses of those who create them, which ends up generating fragmentations in cultural representation. For Santos (2016), it is in the place that practices, knowledge, languages, and ways of life are preserved; and it is these cultural practices that act as the symbolic power of our references to identity and architecture. From this perspective, questioning the aesthetic and cultural model created on the basis of Western rationality and reframing our gaze from the colonizer to the colonized helps us to understand fragmentation as a social product. The binarisms resulting from this fragmentation play a significant role in the historical erasure and production of identity and culture in our society, “as Fanon (1968, as cited in Longhini, 2022, p. 55, our translation) reminds us, it is the compass of the colonial world that divides everything into compartments: mind and body, nature and culture, material and immaterial, physical and symbolic, and so on.”. Geni Nunez Longhini's work has greatly contributed to this research's reframing of the colonized view of architecture, recognizing the role of academia and professional practice in decolonization.

Initially, as research coming from a white researcher and architect, the focus was on technique, representation, cultural heritage, and everything that was material and visible. After studying the work of Geni Nunez Longhini and dialoguing with Johnny Andrés Calderon Mendez[1], it was possible to understand that this approach reproduced colonial structures of epistemological erasure. Based on this reflection, we oriented this investigation towards the epistemologies of Guarani women, who are mainly responsible for maintaining cultural precepts as the basis for decolonization in architecture. Guarani women lead the transmission of knowledge and play a central role in the fight against coloniality. For Indigenous women, nature is not a resource to be exploited, but a living territory, a sacred body and a space of ancestral knowledge that connects them to the earth (Gago, 2020), a body as an extension of nature. This quality of integrated care is perhaps the path to liberation to combat sexist domination (hooks, 2019), which, like racism and classism, operates in the logic of world domination of body-territories. A way of thinking that does not seek to fragment, but to collectivize processes, “is also our epistemology, essentially interdisciplinary, without hierarchy between the production of thought as something of the ‘mind’ versus the thought of the ‘body’ that is made in handicrafts, without disqualification of traditional knowledge that is not built in the academy” (Longhini, 2022, p. 94, author's quotation marks, our translation).

The practices of bamboo weaving are a living expression in the representation of the body-territory, in which it is possible to understand that for the Guarani, “the way of life is made on the land” (Longhini, 2022, p. 91, our translation), expressed by the *ñande reko*. This concept, which expresses “our way of being” (Melià et al., 1976, our translation) in the Guarani cosmovision, is manifested mainly in their way of dealing with the land, and it is in the culture of bamboo woven arts that *ñande reko* materializes. In view of this reflection, this article addresses the challenge of producing technical-scientific knowledge in

[1] In an interview via videocall, Johnny Andrés Calderón Mendez (UNAM) shared relevant aspects of his research into *arquitectura propia* and the knowledge of the *mayoras*, the indigenous elders. Mendez's thesis shows that the excessive emphasis on the technical dimension constitutes a mechanism for silencing the female contribution to architecture, as it privileges the object to the detriment of the subject. The author argues that this phenomenon is often repeated in academia, where researchers from different ethnic backgrounds tend to value technical aspects, neglecting the social origins of architectural knowledge – which, in his view, emerges from the needs of the *mayoras* to create spaces of shelter for the care of children and the community.

multicultural contexts, demonstrating that a significant contribution emerges from recognizing historically erased epistemologies. The study of Guarani Mbya vernacular technology shows how the ecology of knowledge makes it possible to transform historical conflicts into concrete alternatives for architectural production. The participatory methodology developed using Guarani weaving exemplifies the articulation between critical reflection and transformative action, offering a model of intercultural dialogue that responds to the challenges of technical and cultural domination.

For a better approach to the process proposed in this research, the ecology of knowledge was adopted as the methodological foundation, articulating academic and traditional knowledge through a participatory and interdisciplinary approach. The research is developed along three complementary axes, with participatory action research in Guarani Mbya villages being the guiding thread of the work. The fieldwork was carried out in the Guyraitapu villages, in Paraty, Rio de Janeiro, and in the Yaká Porã village, in Ubatuba, São Paulo, involving everything from grouped training workshops to activate the Guarani imaginary to participatory architectural projects. An integrated interdisciplinary approach was used, bringing together different but intersecting fields of knowledge: the analysis of construction and spatial techniques, based on architecture and urbanism; ethnobotany, in the study of bamboo species (*takuara*) and their traditional management; anthropology, in the understanding of the Guarani cosmovision and the concept of *ñande reko*; and gender studies, in the analysis of the role of women as guardians of Guarani architectural and craft knowledge. Finally, a historical-critical analysis was carried out based on iconographic studies of Indigenous architectural representations, documentary analysis of historical processes of erasure, with a focus on Jesuit reductions, and a bibliographical review of decolonial and Indigenous authors. The approach made it possible to transpose the historical conflict of erasure into a transformative praxis, where the horizontal dialogue between academic and traditional knowledge generated both architectural innovation and cultural strengthening.

2 Weaving knowledge through hands

> Our knowledge didn't come from studying books. It was from touching, hearing, and other senses. Was it primordial knowledge? Our words came together out of love, not syntax (Barros, n.p., 2003, our translation).

The Guarani people have their own cosmology, which involves narratives about the creation of the world and their own presence on earth. Oral translations are always told by the elders, who are considered to be the wisest, and passed down from generation to generation. The weaving of Guarani crafts is one of the family's main sources of income and a traditional vernacular practice for representing their culture. Sandra Benites, in an interview for the article titled "*É importante respeitar o Ijá das coisas"* ["It is important to respect the Ijá of things"], explains that it is through the result of what is done with the hands that Guarani art is expressed, it is the "*tembi apó*, *tembi* is something you bring, and *apó* is to do" (Barreto et al., 2022, p. 41, our translation). For the Guarani, art or, as Geni Nunez Longhini (2022) calls it, *artesanias* (without translation) is part of everyday life and has a spiritual meaning. Crafts are done as a family activity, mainly by women, accompanied by their mothers, daughters and sisters. The weaving of the baskets, known in Guarani as *ajaka*, and their graphics are inspired by mythical figures and the myth of the origin of the creation of women. For the Guarani peoples, woman is considered to be the body in the shape of a basket (Fazanaro, 2020) and was conceived by *Nhanderu* from bamboo, which in Guarani is called *takuara*.

Berta Ribeiro (1980), a Brazilian anthropologist, in her thesis *A civilização da palha – o trançado dos indios do Brasil* [The civilization of straw – the weaving of the Indigenous peoples of Brazil], demonstrates the use of weaving techniques in various aspects of Indigenous daily life and even calls them basket-makers-architects, when talking about dwellings that refer to baskets, as shown in Figure 1. Along these same lines, Gottfried Semper, a German architect and theorist, said that architecture "must choose and apply its materials according to the laws and conditions of nature, its great teacher" (Semper, 1851, as cited in Cantalice, 2015, p. 102, our translation) and argued that architectural practice originates from textile practice, specifically the interweaving of plant fibers. It is in the act of transforming the natural environment into art that the Guarani learn about time and respect for the finiteness of things (Longhini, 2022), because "nature teaches us to braid, weave, model and use different materials. It is from nature that we learn to respect everything before we enjoy it" (Silva, 2015, as cited in Longhini, 2022, p. 97,our translation). In this way, understanding that the body-nature is totally linked to the body-human and that Guarani weaving crafts break down the barriers between mind and body, in which weaving "is thinking with your hands, untangling the threads of thought" (Longhini, 2022, p. 101, our translation) by integrating body and spirit.

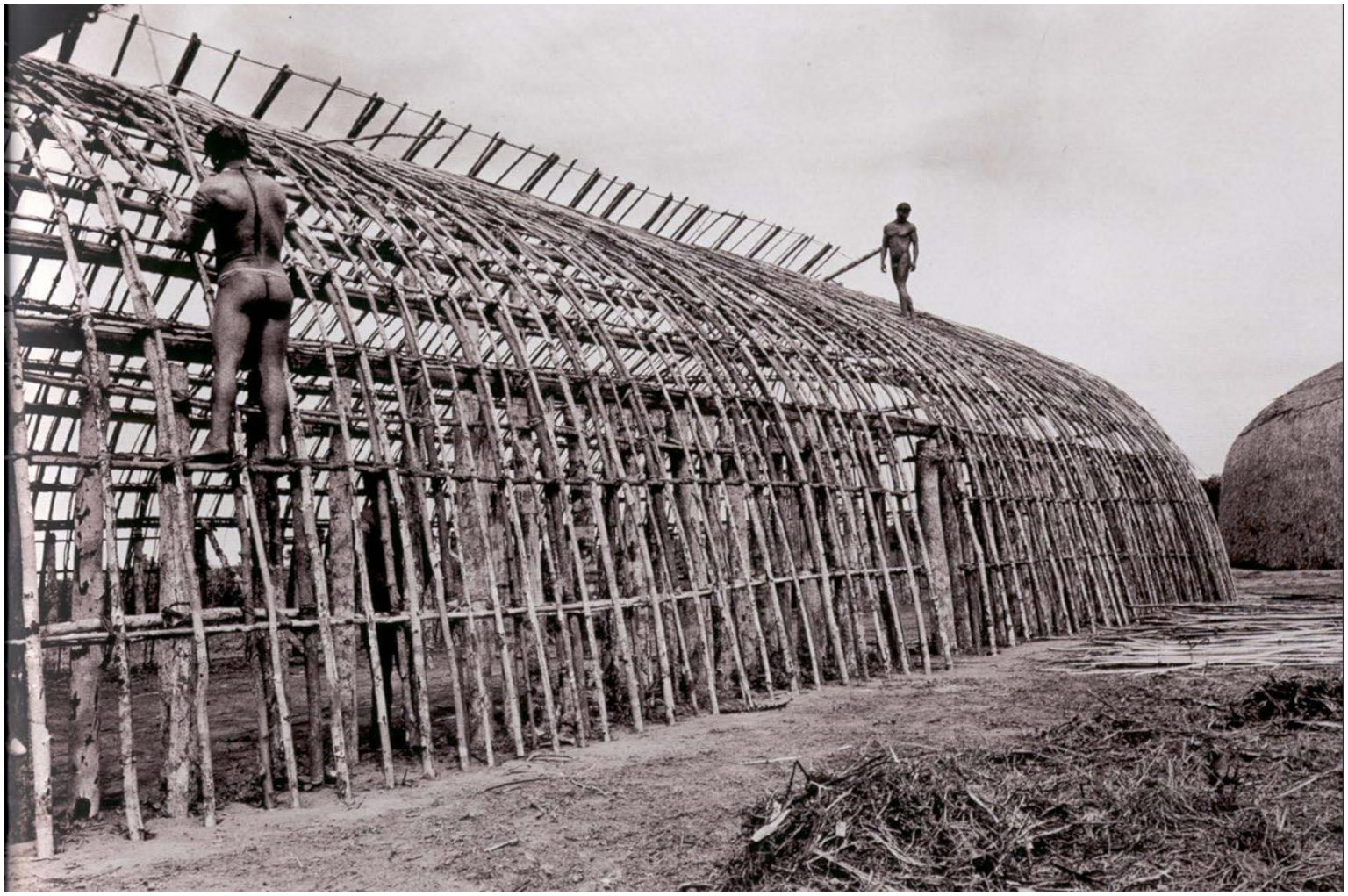

Fig. 1: Kamayurá Indigenous people assembling the structure of the house, like an overturned basket. Source: Milton Guran, 2018.
https://etnolinguistica.wdfiles.com/local--files/biblio%3Aguran-2008-casa/Guran%26Fausto_2008_ACasaXinguana.pdf

Guarani weavings, produced mainly by women, are therefore more than just craft techniques: they are expressions of a cosmovision that intertwines the body, territory and spirituality. The taquara bamboo, the central material in this practice, is not a mere resource, but a sacred element, part of a living territory and reciprocally part of caring for the land. Weaving constitutes an integrated knowledge system that resists the fragmented logic of national heritage and fosters care practices, almost all of which are carried out by women, as can be seen in Figure 2. Reaffirming this technique as an architectural representation seeks to lift the veil of invisibility surrounding women in relation to academic and architectural knowledge, placing them as political subjects who weave resistance through ancestral knowledges and collective organization (Campiño & Díaz, 2023). Zaida Martinez (2024) proposes revising the way we look at domestic and housing activities, which are considered inferior within architecture, to reverse architectural de-serarchization in the quest to break down gender and class divisions. In her text *Women, Bodies and Cities*, she reinforces the importance of care practices, present in everyday architectures, in the same sense that bell hooks (2019) advocates when she suggests a radical reassessment of the home as a space of struggle and solidarity. In this sense, the home and everyday spaces are considered a space for the oral transmission of culture and ways of life, something so present in the Guarani perspective and so powerful in the anti-colonial struggle and the preservation of nature. A home that is not just a physical and material shelter, but one built by the “webs of the word” (Longhini, 2022, p. 101, our translation) that recognizes the preservation of all beings as important as our own.

Fig. 2: Isadora Vilialva, Avá Guarani Indigenous woman from the village of Ocoy/Jacutinga weaving with natural fibers. Source: Cimi collection, 1980. https://portal.unila.edu.br/editora/livros/imagem-e-memoria-dos-ava-guarani-paranaenses

Colonization imposed a patriarchal and christian model that subordinated Indigenous women, relegating them to domestic spaces and erasing their political and spiritual protagonism. Recognizing the importance of everyday practices and care means recognizing the importance of the word, of orality. The oral transmission of knowledge (myths, traditional medicine, agriculture) is led by women, reinforcing their role as weavers of thought, something far removed from what we see in the academic world and especially in the architectural world, which is dominated by men, both in terms of design and material. More than talking about materiality, it's about understanding what lies behind it, placing Indigenous women as subjects of knowledge and not as objects when referring only to technique. Recognizing and valuing the weaving of the thought of one's *arquitectura própria* [own architecture] (Mendez, 2025) as the construction of a “singular and collective identity” (Longhini, 2022, p. 95, our translation), which is how the Guarani present themselves to the world. Johnny Andrés Calderón Mendez's research starts from a dialogue with the Colombian *mayoras*, revealing that the wise female builders master ancestral techniques of braiding, weaving, sewing, and interlacing, and that these practices form the epistemological basis of the shelter's architectural thinking. This technical knowledge, rooted in the Indigenous cosmovision, gave rise to what is known as *Arquitectura Própria* [Own Architecture], a concept analogous to *Educacion Própria* [Own Education], both coined by the Colombian Indigenous peoples to designate vernacular knowledge systems that affirm their epistemic autonomy. This foundation corroborates our investigation, demonstrating how the vernacular technologies of Guarani weaving transcend the artisanal dimension to become essential constructive systems for understanding our architectural thinking.

2.1 Reduced Architecture, Silenced Bodies

> Some stories are so true that sometimes it seems as if they were invented (Barros, 2003, n. p., our translation).

In the context of constructive traditions, the erasure occurred in different ways, such as in the case of the Jesuit Reductions, whose aim was to impose civilization on the Indigenous peoples, who were considered savages. Although missionary or Jesuit-Guarani architecture reflected a fusion of techniques, spaces, and aesthetics, what predominated was the symbolic influence of the colonizer. This became evident when some constructions, over time, were replaced and began to incorporate architectural structures that were seen as sophisticated, with typically European technical and stylistic characteristics, with the arrival of architects from the old continent, who took it upon themselves to design what would be the representation of our architectural identity. The development of Jesuit-Guarani architecture took place in three distinct phases, as shown by Joaquin Trillo (2023) in his article *La casa grande guaraní: historias de movilidad y resistencia entre la selva paranaense y las yungas salto-jujeñas*

[The Great Guaraní House: Stories of Mobility and Resistance between the Paraná Rainforest and the Yungas Mountains of Salto-Jujuy] and by Luis Antônio Custódio in his articles *Ordenamentos Urbanos nas Missões Jesuíticas dos Guarani* [Urban planning in the Jesuit Guarani Missions], parts 1 and 2. The first phase was marked by the use of wood and plant fibres in the construction of elongated dwellings with side openings, known as *Oga Jekutú*, or houses grounded in the earth, as can be seen in Figure 3, characterized by the absence of internal divisions and based on the knowledge of the Guarani.

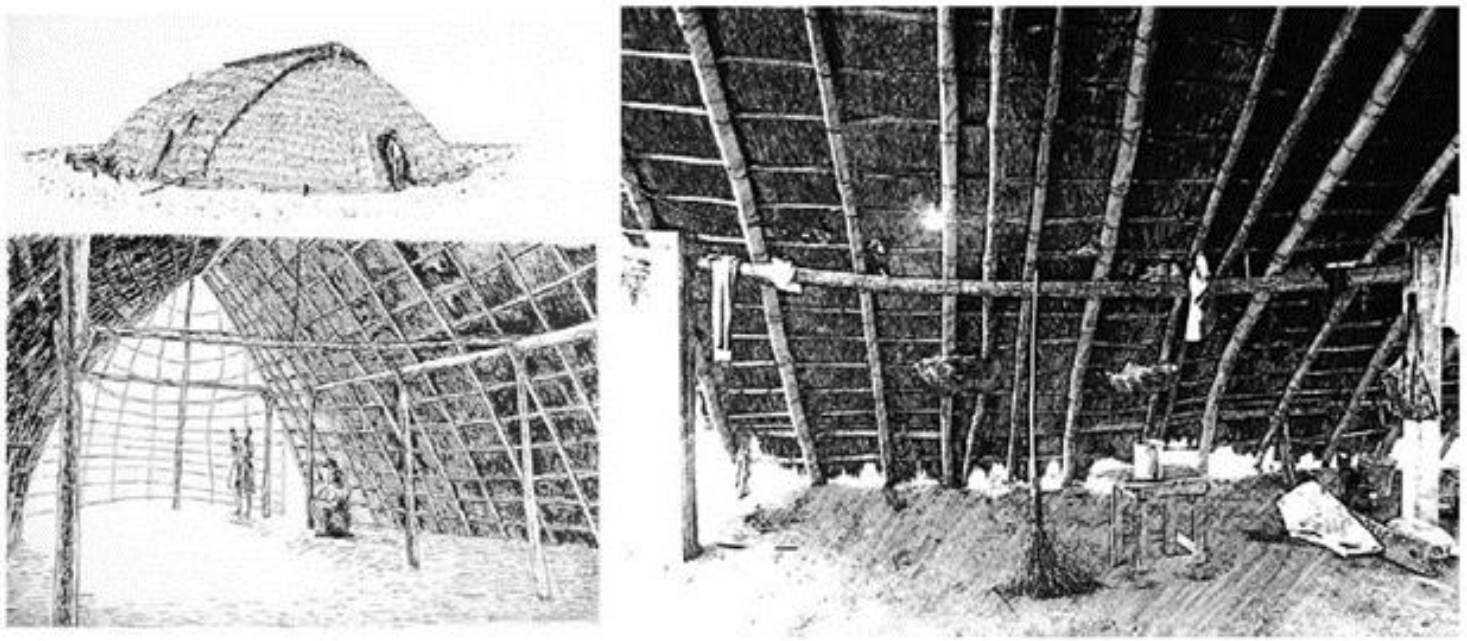

Fig. 3: Sketch of the exterior and interior of *Oga Jekutu*. Source: Joaquin Trillo, 2023.
https://www.academia.edu/102184527/La_Casa_Grande_guaran%C3%AD_historias_de_movilidad_y_resistencia_entre_la_selva_Paranaense_y_las_Yungas_salto_juje%C3%B1as

In the second phase, although the materials used still followed the logic of the resources available in the territory and used by the Guarani, the aesthetics of the buildings began to reflect the order imposed by the Spanish Crown, where Guarani architecture was gradually replaced by stone masonry, adobe, and self-supporting structures, showing the growing colonial influence. It is significant to note that, at the same time as this period of material and symbolic transition, the missionaries involved in founding the Church of Chiquitos in Bolivia, represented by a schematic cut in Figure 4, recorded in their accounts the lack of building materials considered essential by the European architectural imposition. As Sandra Negro's (2000) study shows, the lack of quality stone and clay was a significant material obstacle to the implementation of the Spanish colony's architectural models. This contradiction highlights the profound mismatch between imported construction technologies and available materials and techniques, reinforcing the thesis that architectural coloniality (Delgado, 2016) operated by gradually disqualifying local knowledge, techniques, and materials.

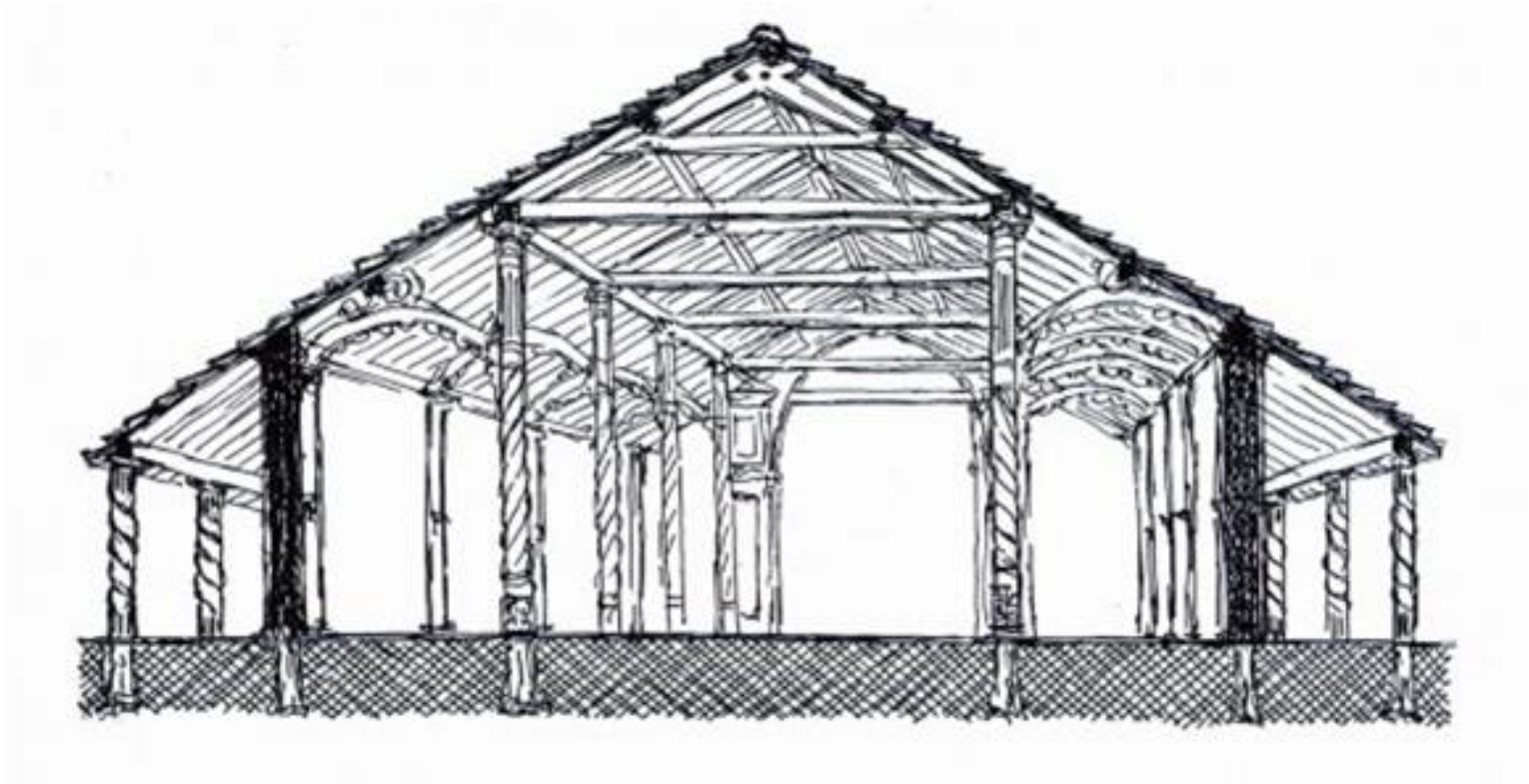

Fig. 4: Schematic section of the Church of San Miguel in Chiquitos, Bolivia. Source: Kuhne.
https://vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/17.201/6430

The third phase of the missionary process was characterized by the direct introduction of European architects, whose hegemonic project aimed to fully transpose baroque stylistic and symbolic models to the colonized territory. This mission was a paradox: while the formal design was foreign, the execution was carried out using Indigenous labor. As Ione Pereira (2014) shows in her study titled *Em tudo semelhante, em nada parecido: Uma análise comparativa dos planos urbanos das missões jesuíticas de Mojos Chiquitos, Guarani e Maynas* [In every way similar, in every way alike: a comparative analysis of the urban plans of the Jesuit missions of Mojos Chiquitos, Guarani and Maynas], the reductions brought about a double transformation in the Guarani architectural and urban repertoires. The material and aesthetic replacement was combined with a symbolic re-signification of the spaces, implanting an architecture of power that materialized European patriarchal and monogamous values. Figure 5, showing the façade of the Church of São Miguel das Missões, exemplifies this process, in which missionary architecture, designed by European religious, “acted as an instrument of symbolic control” (Trillo, 2023, p. 5, our translation). This control was exercised through the coercive reconfiguration of construction techniques, living habits, and the spatial experience itself, imposing a Western ideal of dwelling that denied vernacular practices and cosmologies. Architectural materiality thus became an active agent of a colonial project that sought to redefine identities and bodies through built space.

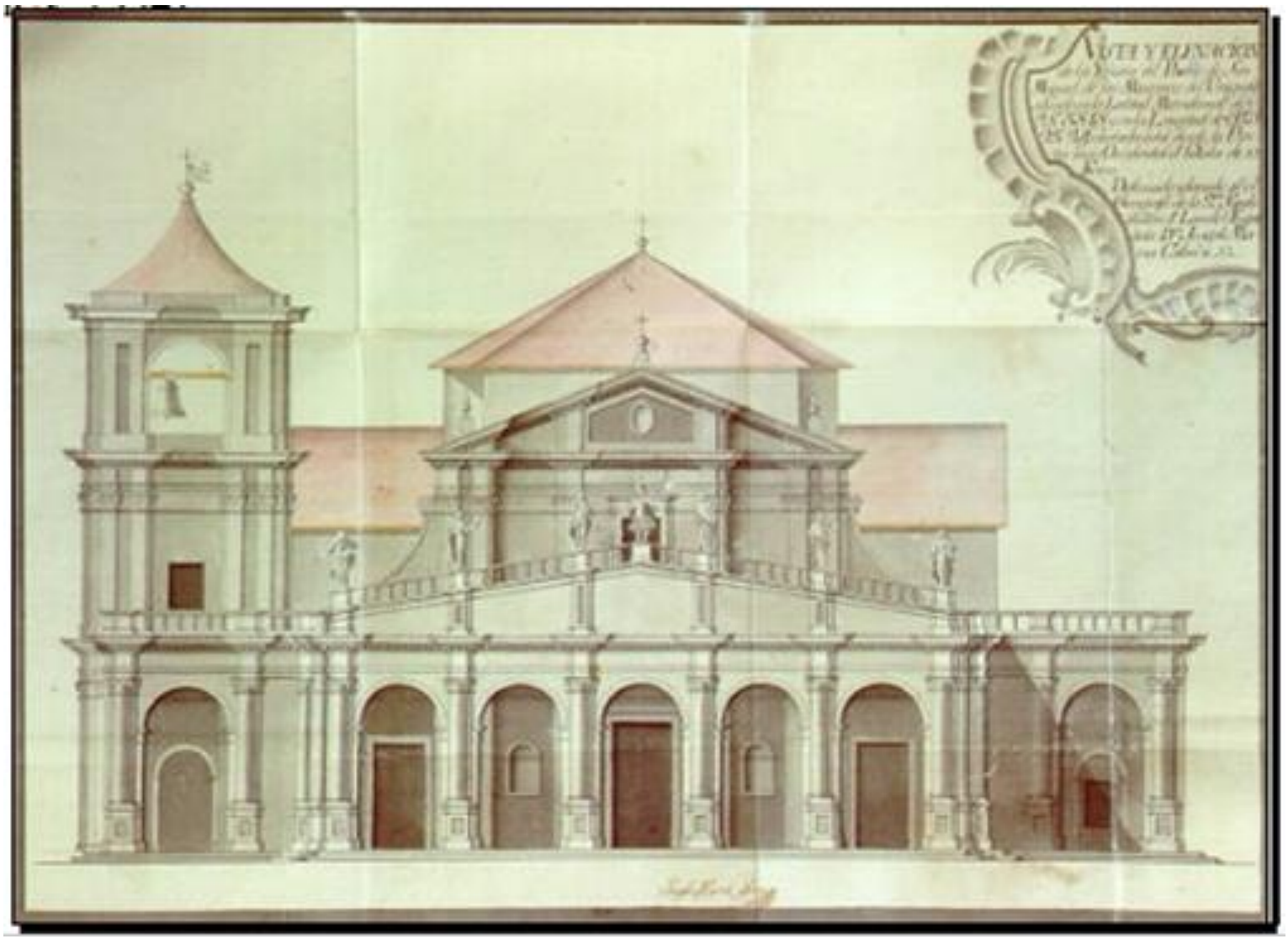

Fig. 5: Elevation of the façade of the Church of São Miguel, in Rio Grande do Sul. Source: unknown, 1756.
https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:S_miguel_arcanjo_-_1756.jpg

The cultural erasure of Indigenous technologies and women's knowledge for architectural thinking not only contributes to the death of important techniques for building our history, but also contributes to not belonging. This culture of erasure defines what Yasser Farrés Delgado (2016) calls architectural coloniality, and which Verônica Gago (2020) reinforces by linking domestication and colonization. It is no coincidence that, in the Jesuit reductions, it was precisely Indigenous building knowledge that was most persecuted: they replaced their vernacular techniques with techniques imported from another continent, mainly using materials like stone in monumental (Martinez, 2024) and religious architecture.

2.2 Interweaving Architecture-Nature

> I just didn't want to mean it. Because meaning limits the imagination. And with little imagination, I couldn't be part of a tree (Barros, 2003, n.p., our translation)

Although this whole process of space formation is exclusionary and has chosen some places over others, Indigenous cosmologies demonstrate the potential for appropriating space through the relationships established in everyday life. David Harvey (2012) directs us to the relationships established through culture, especially that produced by the commons, as glimpses into the construction of alternative ways of life. Unlike capitalist rationality, which segments space and commodifies resources, native peoples operate within a logic of reciprocity and belonging, where technology is not seen as a tool for domination, but as

an extension of the relationship between human beings and nature. In the case of the Guarani, space is both a physical and a symbolic territory, where their cosmologies and collective practices are expressed. After all,

> The “body” of the Guarani does not end in itself; the body is made up of webs of interconnection with other beings, so that ecocide is, once again, also part of epistemicide, of ethnogenocide (Longhini, 2022, p. 96, author's quotation marks, our translation).

They construct their knowledge in a way that is distinct from Western and colonizing knowledge. For them, all the elements of nature and the knowledge of their ancestors are like books, from which they acquire the wisdom to live in community. For these peoples, the natural environment is the “basis of their way of life and, for many, nature is sacred” (Miranda, 2021, p. 25, our translation), which means that any threat to the environment has an impact on the spiritual and psychological dimensions, according to Amerindian perspectivism (De Castro, 2014).

Ailton Krenak challenges the idea that the future needs to be built on the basis of Western progress, in a process disconnected from the past. For him, the future and ancestry are powerful tools for imagining other possible worlds and are totally interconnected. Traditional knowledge is fundamental for us to survive ecological and social crises, so it is not possible to think of a future without considering what has already been erased (Krenak, 2022). Krenak states that the framework of current Brazilian history is a continuous process of colonization, disregarding Indigenous contributions to the social, political, and environmental fields. For the author, the struggle to reclaim territories is not just a question of physical and economic space, but of cultural reconstruction. In this context, the Guarani women's knowledge of weaving emerges as a practice of cultural resistance against globalizing and colonizing processes. It is understood that, in the Guarani cosmovision, the plant species cultivated for their art and architecture are the result of an intrinsic relationship between biology and culture (Emperaire, 2005), in which materiality expresses ways of life and their interactions with the environment. This concept echoes Manuela Carneiro da Cunha's assertion that “the primary meaning of the word culture, historically, is that of the cultivation of the land” (Cunha, 2005, p. 17, our translation), a notion that dialogues directly with the discussion in this paper, as it underpins the concept of a biodiverse cultural heritage.

3 Results and discussion: dressing the Third World Aesthetic

> It rained on the word I was standing on. I saw nature as someone who wears it (Barros, 2003, n.p., our translation).

When we consider care, be it for the land, orality, people or beliefs, as an essential element in maintaining living heritage, this involves not only the preservation of construction techniques and symbologies, but also the work of care as a political and, consequently, cultural act. Such care work involves the vernacular knowledge of bamboo weaving as a representation of the identity and culture of Guarani women. The knowledge of bamboo weaving, in the arts and architecture, is an extension of the body-territory. This is evident in Figure 6, where weaving forms the external partitions of a traditional dwelling, whose plant fiber roof also bears witness to the intrinsic relationship between local culture and botany. It is precisely from this understanding of weaving as a sensitive pedagogy and political gesture that the research moves from theory to praxis. The challenge of activating this knowledge in dialogue with contemporary architecture finds its answer in the territory itself, through the consolidation of a participatory methodology that, built in collaboration with the Guarani Mbya women, translates this know-how into new spatial materialities that affirm its relevance in today's architectural scene.

Fig. 6: Family in front of a woven Guarani house in the village of Ocoy/Jacutinga. Source: CIMI Collection, 1982.
https://portal.unila.edu.br/editora/livros/imagem-e-memoria-dos-ava-guarani-paranaenses

In the practice of architecture[2] within Guarani Mbya villages, it was possible to establish an action-research methodology based on group training activities, with an emphasis on the participation of women and children. In the search for an effectively collective architectural production, participatory architectural design processes were developed, the results of which are shown in the virtual model represented in Figure 7. The outcome of the architectural project was achieved through the implementation of awareness-raising actions concerning the relevance of the Guarani imaginary, the taquara bamboo, and the know-how associated with weaving techniques, which were transposed into the architectural sphere as elements bearing cultural significance. This transposition materialized in symbolic components integrated into the architectural project and the built environment. In this way, the research not only generated territorially grounded architectural products, but also fostered a dialogue of knowledges, reinforcing community autonomy and the preservation of their material and immaterial culture through the technical wisdom of Guarani women.

[2] The author carried out the work as a scholarship holder linked to the Observatory of Healthy and Sustainable Territories of Bocaina (OTSS), a partnership between FIOCRUZ and the local social movement, the Forum of Traditional Communities (FCT).

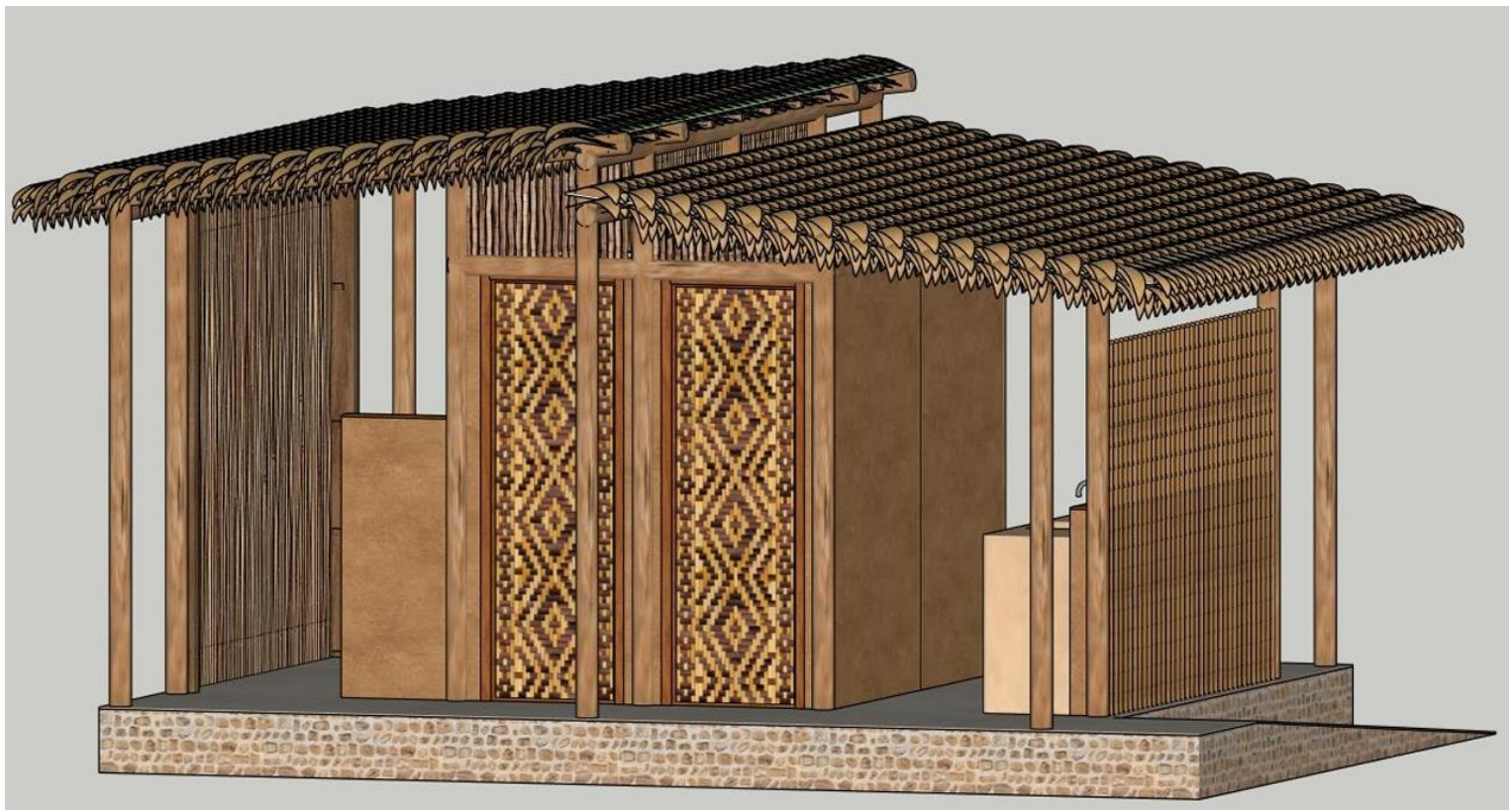

Fig. 7: Architectural project for a collective bathroom in the Yaka Porã village in Ubatuba, based on the participatory process and awareness-raising workshops. Source: Author, 2024.

This methodological approach consolidates an intrinsically interdisciplinary character, integrating architecture, ethnobotany, with its specific studies on bamboo species, anthropology and gender studies. The central objective transcends the conventional bibliographic review and is articulated through iconographic studies that attest to the value of the image in applied research in architecture and action research that materializes systematized knowledge in design praxis. By focusing on the wisdom of women and children, field research is fundamental to accessing and understanding the Guarani cosmovision, an epistemology that is constituted simultaneously through orality and visuality. In this way, the methodology not only investigates but also shapes itself as a mirror of the object of study itself: a system of interwoven knowledge, analogous to the weaving that inspires it. We understand that collaboration with vernacular knowledge guides the translation of traditional knowledge into contemporary architectural solutions that respect and strengthen community autonomy.

The research and workshops conducted sought to understand how the Guarani imaginary and weaving practices challenge the Western notion of architecture as monument, proposing instead an architecture of everyday life, composed of repeated and collective gestures. The woven bamboo frames project illustrates this transposition of artisanal practices into architecture not merely as technique, but as a practice of cultural resistance, and is intended to continue in further workshops, primarily led by women. The pursuit of funding to continue the activities in the Guarani villages with the weaving project and the study of the bamboos used in the weaving sews together the bodies that constitute the Guarani way of being, within “webs of interconnection with other beings” (Longhini, 2022, p. 96, our translation), without enclosing itself. In this way, architecture ceases to be a finished, individualized product and becomes instead a continuous process of learning and sharing.

These actions are proof that other architectures are possible, not just of stone, concrete and steel, but of bamboo and plant fibers. Not patriarchal and exclusionary, but embedded in the fabrics of community life. Not imposed upon the territory, but in dialogue with it. Not dividing and compartmentalizing, but uniting “the nature of space: technique and time, reason and emotion”, regarding the book by geographer Milton Santos (2016, our translation), because, as Elizete Antunes would say, “without this knowledge, which involves the head and the heart, it is impossible to understand the Guarani Indians” (Antunes, 2015 as cited in Longhini, 2022, p. 100, our translation). Valuing Guarani culture begins with the knowledge of women and elders, with the

thread that weaves relationships between hands, plants, and stories that insist on not being erased. It is in the quest to establish diverse relationships with art and architecture, in experimental actions, and in the search for collective freedom and social responsibility (Bardi, 2019) that this research attempts to enter. A quest to break with imposed Western borders and value a culture and aesthetic based on the third world, like a manifesto alluding to the artist Artur Barrio.

4 Final considerations

> We discover that the size of things has to be measured by the intimacy we have with them. It has to be like love (Barros, 2003, n.p., our translation).

Closely aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which advocate sustainable construction and housing solutions, the vernacular technologies of the Guarani women make use of sustainable materials adapted to local specificities and ensure bioclimatic comfort, as well as respecting nature and promoting gender equality. Just as Berta Ribeiro (1980) points out that the straw civilization represents a sophisticated technological and cultural system that is often underestimated by Western views, which tend to value only cultures based on metals or stone, we reinforce the richness of Guarani women's technology and their deep connection with nature. Beyond the environmental aspects, this research shows how the ecology of knowledge is a response to power disputes in the field of knowledge. The participatory methodology developed demonstrates that technical-scientific production in multicultural societies must be built through dialogues that articulate differences and conflicts, transforming historical hierarchies into horizontal collaborations. In this way, Guarani bamboo weaving transcends its materiality to become a paradigm for how to conceive epistemic contributions that do not reproduce the dominations they seek to overcome.

The awareness-raising and bamboo weaving workshops for architecture aim to help enhance the creative process and the collective imagination of the Guarani, especially among women and children, the main agents in maintaining Guarani culture, as stated by Ivanildes Kerexu in Projeto Ajaka: Tramas do Olhar Guarani (2025). The aim was not to focus solely on weaving or bamboo techniques, but to recognize Indigenous women as a transformative force, linking ancestry, gender, and territory (Mafla Mejía, 2023). Undoubtedly, women have historically been the guardians of memory and culture. Bamboo was chosen as the most suitable material for this study, given the belief surrounding the creation of women and the fact that *takua týva*, in Guarani, are endemic to South America – or *Abya Ayala*, as the Indigenous society calls it. What was domestic knowledge became art, architecture, and representation. Promoting the conscious use of natural resources not only ensures the maintenance of local ecosystems but also strengthens practices for adapting to climate change. The global and environmental crisis is also a cultural crisis (Carvalho, 2019), and the solution to this crisis lies in culture itself or in its recovery. Guarani weaving, after all, is not merely about technique, it's about the body-territory woven in motion.

Stitching together intertwining themes, this research promotes dialogues between Guarani Mbya vernacular knowledge and the architectural-academic field from a decolonial perspective. By investigating bamboo weaving as a sacred technique and an expression of the body-territory, this study values a biodiverse cultural heritage that, although made invisible by historical silencing processes, remains a living practice and is essential to Guarani collective identity. Valuing orality and visuality as a means of preserving and transmitting knowledge reinforces transculturality (Guimaraens, 2024) by including Indigenous cosmologies. Weaving, more than a material artifact, functions as a form of political resistance and as a symbolic archive that preserves stories, cultures, and modes of dwelling. In summary, the processes and crafts produced during the actions demonstrate that the technical-scientific contribution to a multilateral world requires converting historical conflict into creative collaboration. The research makes this premise a reality by validating the ecology of knowledges not as a theoretical abstraction, but as an operative methodology: the translation of the vernacular knowledge of weaving into contemporary spatial solutions reveals that architectural innovation emerges precisely from horizontal dialogue with historically silenced epistemologies. In this way, this research constitutes a concrete response to the theme “Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions and Confrontations”, demonstrating a model in which critical reflection and transformative action merge, strengthening community autonomy and materializing the production of culturally rooted and socially just knowledge.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Guarani communities that hosted this research: Aldeia Itaxi Mirim (Paraty-RJ), Aldeia Guyraitapu (Paraty-RJ), Aldeia Guarani do Bracuí (Angra dos Reis-RJ), and Aldeia Yaka Porã (Ubatuba-SP). My special thanks go to the Guarani women whose knowledge was fundamental to this work: Márcia, Ivanildes, Marciana, Marina, Ilda and Nina, and to all the children. I would also like to thank Gabriel and his father, Jorge, from Guyraitapu Village, for their partnership and for sharing essential reflections. The research received institutional support from Fiocruz, through the Bocaina Observatory of Healthy and Sustainable Territories, which enabled me to spend two years working as an architect and researcher in the villages. I would like to thank the Fluminense Federal University for the opportunity to carry out this research and CAPES for the financial support (funding code 001). I would like to thank my advisor, Dinah Guimaraens, for the knowledge she generously shared and for opening up new paths. To my co-supervisor, Juliana Córtez Barbosa (UNESP), for accompanying me since before the work became formal research, including her work in the bamboo frame workshops, and for the trust she placed in my work.

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DANCING BODIES, AXÉ ARCHITECTURES: WASHING RITUALS IN PENEDO-AL

CORPOS DANÇANTES, ARQUITETURAS DO AXÉ: RITUAIS DE LAVAGEM EM PENEDO-AL

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Vasconcelos, M. H. N. & Silva, M. A. (2025). Dancing Bodies, Axé Architectures: Washing Rituals in Penedo-AL. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Eloísa Souza de Almeida. 302-315 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239950

Abstract

This article aims to think of the city as a ritualized body, based on the immersive experience in the *lavagem* of the stairway of the Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos *Pretos* Church and of the Beco da *Preguiça* in the city of Penedo, in the state of Alagoas. It sought to understand how the gestures and ancestral knowledge involved in the *lavagem* act in the reconfiguration of the urban landscape, understood here as living matter made of *axé*, memories, and presences. Festivities such as the *lavagem* celebrate ancestry and produce other ways of seeing and analyzing cities, updating bonds, territorialities, and modes of inhabiting. For the development of the research, a sensitive methodology was adopted, in which the body in crossing becomes an instrument of reading and later of writing and image-making, resulting in a performative cartography. The article challenges hegemonic notions of time, memory, and heritage, proposing to present an architecture made of gesture, *gira*, and listening. By incorporating epistemologies of crossroads and circularity, a city is outlined that insists on existing as festivity, gesture, and reenchantment, leading to a rethinking of traditional urban planning practice.

Keywords: *Axé* architecture, Researcher-body, Afro-Brazilian religiousness, Lavagem, Penedo.

1 Introduction: Ritualized body-landscape: introducing the *lavagem* festival

When we consider cities not merely as boundaries or agglomerations of concrete composed of geometric lines that delineate architectures, streets, alleys, and passageways, but rather as a palimpsest of less evident layers—such as those brought forth by corporealities and subjective perspectives—we open up alternative ways of observing and producing them. Gestures, for instance, as extensions of bodies, reconfigure everyday landscapes. Within the folds of the city, there are traces that cannot be contained within verticalized maps. These are inscriptions that emerge from the rotating drum, the dancing body, the scent of lavender flowing through stairways and alleys. It is in this sense that the reflections presented here take shape, motivated by the study of a multicultural practice associated with the washing of the stairways of the Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário, located in the city of Penedo, in the state of Alagoas, Brazil. Known for its significant architectural and urban heritage, the city is also a reference point when considering practices related to everyday life and the common good. In this context, the article aims to understand how the gestures and ancestral forms of knowledge involved in the washing ritual in Penedo contribute to the formulation of alternative ways of reading cities.

Gestures are inserted in landscapes made of affections, histories, and presences. They are created from perspectives, contexts, and bodies. Methodologically speaking, the research was carried out as a situated creation, as a poetic translation of these landscapes. It took upon itself the task of thinking Penedo from ancestral knowledge, aware of the historiographic silencing imposed upon them for centuries. This knowledge expresses itself in bodies, in performed landscapes, and especially in celebration. The *lavagem* festival reveals a field of friction between colonial architectural rationalities and Afro-Brazilian epistemologies that persist as ways of producing the city. The streets become spaces of encounter between different regimes of knowledge. The *lavagem* operates as an insurgent praxis that confronts hegemonic modes of inhabiting, establishing interlocutions between worlds that are often kept apart. This perspective highlights that Afro-diasporic ritual practices are not reduced to the symbolic field but constitute concrete processes of territorialization and urban reconfiguration. By bringing these references closer to the lived experience of the *lavagem*, this work argues that ritualistic gestures reinstall, in the urban landscape, other temporalities memories that survive erasure and that bring new possibilities for reading the city.

Penedo is located at the mouth of the São Francisco River. Its history welcomes human presence following the river long before written records. In addition to fishing and navigability, especially in the estuarine region, the overflowing of the waters created areas favorable to multiple crops. For all these reasons, it became part of the earliest urban occupations promoted by Europeans, precisely because it is situated near this large watercourse which they accessed at the beginning of the 16th century. Penedo, or Penedo do São Francisco, as it was also called, became a village in 1636, in the context of Dutch presence in Northeastern Brazil, marking the southernmost portion of what was then the Captaincy of Pernambuco (Muniz, 2019). In times of decolonial readings, other histories have emerged about this city, whether concerning the presence of ancestral peoples or the studies of the memories of African nations. This work situates itself in this direction, revisiting practices that persisted into contemporary

times and that take place in the streets of Penedo, highlighting the encounters and mismatches among different and long-lasting cultural marks. Seeking to ground the narrative in the present and in corporeality, the article is anchored in a long-lived experience with the city. A manifestation that developed from Afro-Brazilian religions was chosen, embodied in the *lavagem* of the stairway of the Rosário Church and the Beco da Preguiça, placing us within the conviviality of its participants and in the very walking of the *cortejo*.

Afro-Brazilian festivities such as this one, deeply crossed by waters, inscribe other ways of occupying, naming, and constructing the landscape. The ritual of the *lavagem* restructures and updates ancestral knowledge for those who allow themselves to experience it. For architects and urban planners, it presents itself as a challenge toward understanding the so-called colonial city, also tensioning the rational-modernist logic of urban production, still so present in the regulations that govern cities, as well as in the formation of the professionals who work in them. We may speak of an axé architecture, that is, a way of producing space that is built from the vital energy that sustains the *terreiros* and their rites, overflowing beyond their physical limits and reconfiguring the city. This architecture is constructed through the movement of the body, through the breath of the word, and through the presence of the ancestors who inhabit the now. Different from the modern logic that separates the sacred from the profane and segments the urban into fixed functions, axé architecture operates through fusion, through the crossroads where visible and invisible meet. Liquid, restless, it is *gira*, it is body, it is memory, and the construction of a territory forged in dispute, but which, through the initiative of local *terreiros*, could be inserted into the current roster of festive activities of the city. The traces of the *lavagem*, left in the city and on bodies, are also overflowings: overflowings of memories, of listening, of bodies in festivity, and of ancestral paths. A route that opened itself in the current of encounters and that now allows itself to be carried by the waters that cross the territory, the body, and time.

The washing procession begins in the upper part of the city, at the *Ilê Axé Sessú Omim Odé* Akuaran *terreiro*. There, still during the morning, the gathering takes shape and serves to prepare, spiritually and physically, the materials necessary for the celebration. Throughout the year, the people of the house meticulously create these elements: clay jars and flowers are ordered, and the *Orixás* clothing is sewn by the *baianas* and other members of the *terreiro*. When the time for the washing arrives, the participants move to the official concentration point, the *Praça do Senhor dos Pobres*, where the procession is organized. The *baianas* lead the way, followed immediately by the ruling *Orixás* of the year incorporated into the Penedo ritual. Next, the chorus is formed with the other *Orixás* traditionally present in the washing festivities, such as *Iemanjá, Oxalá*, and *Oxum*. The procession advances along the city's main avenue to the sound of sung *pontos* while drumbeats intersect glances and stories, crossing the faith of the devotees and the joy of the revelers who await the evening's attractions, as the celebration occurs close to Carnaval. The first pause takes place at the *Beco da Preguiça*. In this small space, the *baianas* consecrate, sweep, and wash the location before proceeding toward the *Rosário* Church, where the ritual finds its final moment at the foot of the stairway. The closing occurs with the distribution of roses and the spraying of scented water (*água de cheiro*) over the people who accompany the ritual. (Figure 1)

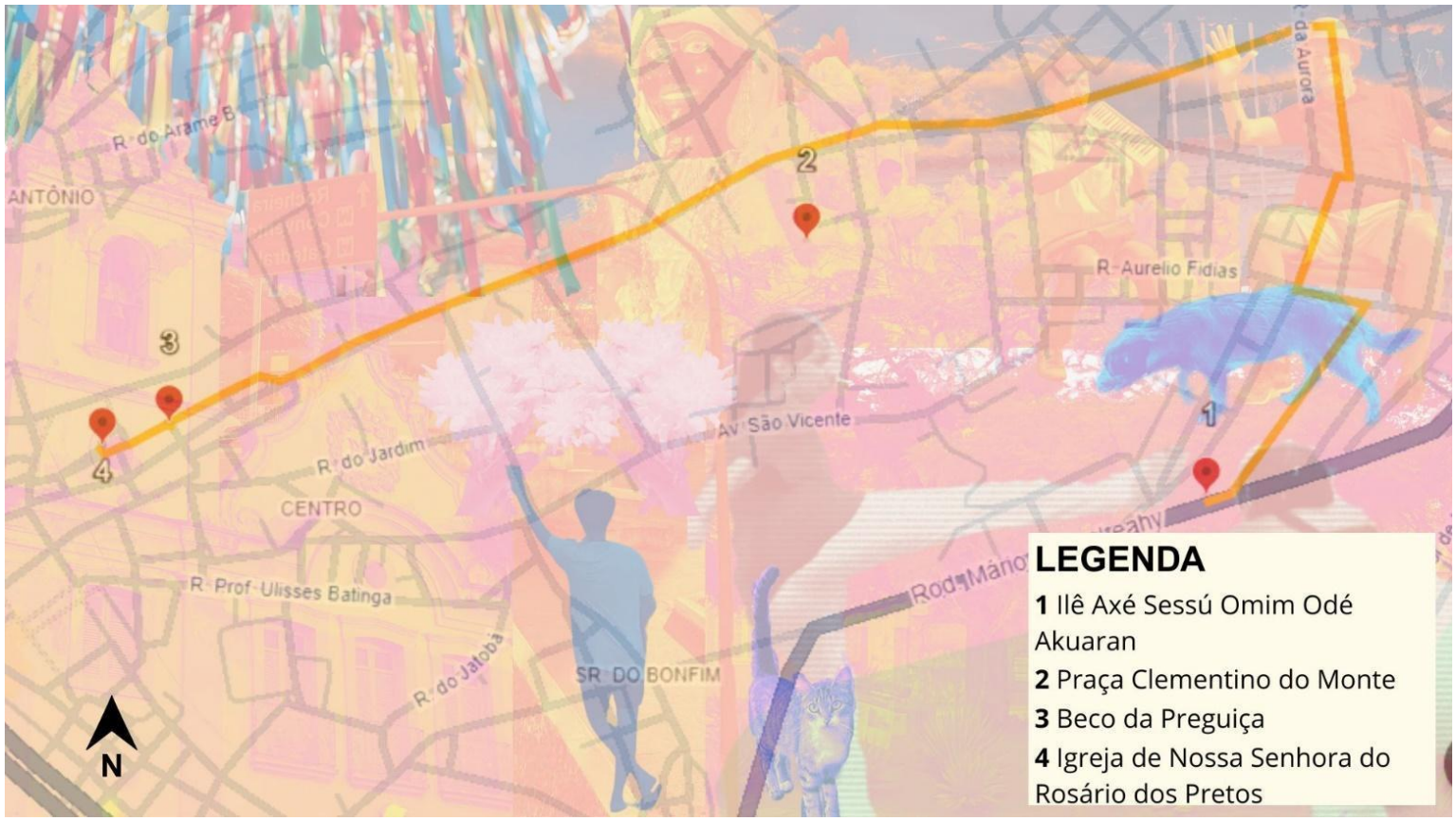

Fig. 1: Map of the city of Penedo. Source: Created by the author based on Google Earth, 2025.

2 The city inside out and the search for a sensitive methodology

When we draw, from a bird's eye view, the paths of the festival, as observed in Figure 1, we have a rigid view of the landscape. But, seeking to make it more welcoming and, in a certain way, deconstructing it, we made the imaginary line that shows the route dipping into the waters, making the map blurred. Here, blurring is also a methodological gesture: to blur means to break with the hegemony of the Cartesian gaze, adding to the vertical view an approach that privileges the point of view of the bodies that walk. In a certain sense, these paths would enter white architectures of stone and lime through the silhouettes of people and domestic animals, connecting to what is usually disconnected in the city, that is, the peripheral alley and the protected heritage. They would thus pass through worlds and inheritances that may be considered European in origin, but also through Black places and even through liquid and aerial pieces of world inhabited by fish and birds, by lands and geological formations of long duration that eventually gave name to the city: Penedo. It is about showing the reverse sides and revisiting those considered the "right" sides. The ritual route produces unforeseen interlocutions among these worlds, subverting symbolic and institutional boundaries.

In this research, a sensitive methodology was adopted, understanding that bodies that write may also make themselves performative. During the festival, we sought to follow how ancestral knowledge, incorporated into ritual practices such as the *lavagem*, reconfigures urban space, establishing other ways of thinking and living in the city. By tensioning colonialist notions of urban and architectural organization, the body was used as a methodological instrument, and we departed from the assumption of the landscape as a living territory. As described previously, this article proposes thinking of an axé architecture, where the body is understood as a crossing, conducted by multiple knowledge, and as the ground where ancestralities and memories are inscribed. The territory, in turn, pulses, sings, and dances in *gira*. It is from the feet that this work was made, whether writing barefoot or walking, feeling the texture of the stones, or wetting oneself in the waters of the ritual, allowing oneself to be steeped in the aromas and the pulsation of the drums. The research here was not conducted at the edge of the festival but inside it, as someone who dances and is moved, as someone who sings and is affected. The bodies that write traversed the *cortejos* and placed themselves as bodies in crossing. For this reason, one speaks of a sensitive methodology. Writing takes performance as method, affection as data, and gesture as thought. It is not about describing the city from the outside but about living it as an

organism in constant negotiation between presences and memories, between facts and hauntings. The body becomes a lens, a surface of inscription, a place of active listening: listening that passes through the feet, through the skin, through the vibration of the drum, through the collective singing that re-enchants the space.

To this end, immersion was carried out in three editions of the *lavagem* (2023, 2024, and 2025), allowing for a procedural approximation that transformed as the editions of the festival themselves also changed. During the *lavagens*, photographic records, observations, walks accompanying the procession, and conversations with members of the *terreiro* were conducted. Over three years, the insertion of the body into the festival took on distinct configurations, following both the construction of the researchers' perspective and the opening of dialogue with the community itself. The procession's route lasts, on average, two hours. It is an open event that gathers women, men, and children, with hundreds of people present. Systematic observations point to a striking presence of women, especially the *baianas* who lead the *lavagem*. Another relevant aspect concerns the historical-political dynamic of the *lavagem*: each edition changes, adjusting to the institutional context and the negotiations carried out between the *terreiro* and the city hall. Inserted into the context of a tourist city, the celebration is now included in its schedule of events. The expansion or reconfiguration of the festival depends on conversations and formal authorizations, evidencing a negotiated urban practice that occupies and reinvents the public space as it finds support and feasibility within municipal management.

Another point to highlight in the methodology is the images. Dealing with this non-verbal and non-written narrative, which is powerful for translating and dictating content, has been a constant in the production of knowledge in various academic settings. If, today, images engender overflows and excesses on digital networks, this does not diminish their importance; on the contrary, it makes this form of communication demand increasing attention and scrutiny in its production[1]. Collages proved to be important resources for opening paths and guiding routes, supported by the idea that the city is not exhausted in a linear current, in which vision fulfills only a literal role. It is made of layers, detours, and passages. In particular, the artistic gaze can distort, blur, reinvent, or leave what is seen unchanged. The aim was to make it possible to record the act of seeing and retracing the same path countless times until, suddenly, the landscape hinted at something previously hidden in a constant repetition. Everything unfolds according to the perception of the observing body: unique, partial, and guided by what matters to it at that moment. Without bowing to the idea of the image as representation, the collages then become this singular gaze that expands the ideas navigating in the author's practice and mind, offering the viewer a brief glimpse of a suspended time at the exact moment the scene was captured (Figure 2).

[1] It is worth remembering the practices of the Graduate Program in Dynamics of the Inhabited Space (PPGAU/FAU/UFAL), which seeks to investigate not only the dynamics of space production but also the space that acquires meaning when inhabited. The activities of the Landscape Studies Research Group are highlighted, which emphasizes knowledge derived from aesthetic, communicative, and artistic experiences, aligned with bodily experiences. Access: https://fau.ufal.br/grupopesquisa/estudosdapaisagem/.

Fig. 2: Immersive wanderings in the city of Penedo (collage). Source: Authors, 2024.

Returning to the technique of walking, the methodology was anchored not only in an uncommitted wandering, in *flânerie*, but also as a practice of expanded attention, of openness to what emerges while walking (Debord, 1967). The walking was not random but in *cortejo*, regulated, curious immersed in a small crowd when considering the modest scale of the city of Penedo, which does not reach sixty thousand inhabitants. In this sense, it was added to other experiences that have been carried out in courses and in master's and doctoral work within the context of the Postgraduate Program at FAU/UFAL:

> The themes and activities involve experiments, with the common axis being the demand to invent and constitute new methodologies in which the self and the collective, the body and subjectivity are contemplated. It seeks to establish threads of thought that helps us to understand inhabited worlds with greater dynamics and wills, observing those situated "on the margins" and, precisely for that reason,

> possessing greater energy for change, reactive and active in the game of spatial appropriations. Working with space and its dynamics involves the body and its gestures. Thus, we address these multiple spaces, constructed or not, dwellings of humans or other beings, going beyond the Anthropocene, following the process of constructing and hierarchizing living beings starting from ourselves (Silva, 2023, pp. 8–9, our translation).

Walking was also listening: listening to what the ground says, to what bodies say, to what the city says when it spins. It is in this kind of attentive anti-*dérive* that the body becomes method, an instrument of reading and of inscription in the territory. It learns from the festival and is transformed by it, carried by traces and unspoken knowledge, nonlinear memories, and embodied spiritualities. The corporeal practices of Afro-religious ritualities awaken ancestral knowledge that reveals itself in gesture, in dance, and in the repetition of the ritual. The body becomes cartography, mediating between worlds, a space of passage, and a territory of knowledge. Luiz Rufino (1987) teaches, with his Pedagogy of the Crossroads, that the knowledge that comes from this geometric encounter between streets is knowledge of risk, of openness, of mixture. The crossroads is an epistemological field where different times, bodies, and worlds touch. These are not knowledge that appease those who insist on seeing through colonial optics, for these pedagogies overflow into places where knowledge crosses the feeling, touched by other sources of spirituality. For this reason, the *cortejo* also offers itself as a ritual. Its rhythm is crossed by scents, songs, and steps. Here, writing is festivity and prayer, sound and silence. It is an attempt to listen with the ears of the feet and to write with hands that still carry traces of perfume and vapors.

3 Traces of a dancing city

In Penedo, the paths traversed during the *Festa das Águas* became movements rhythmically set by the sounds of the *atabaque*. In this ritual, where participants go back and forth wearing long white dresses of ancient lineages, the city dances. There are accounts suggesting that the *lavagem* ceremony in Penedo itself is recent (Torquato Junior, 2018), having begun around 2005 through the initiative of *babalaô* Fernando Oiá Belegum, or Pai Fernando, who sought to translate the ancient tributes dedicated to *Mãe Branca do Rosário*, the patron saint of Penedo, linking them to the presence of Afro-Brazilians[2]. As occurs in countless cities in Brazil, especially the older ones, the devotion to Nossa Senhora do Rosário is strongly linked to the processes of slavery, when the *Irmandades dos Homens Pretos e Pardos* were constituted as spaces for the religious, socio-political, and cultural organization of the Black population[3]. In these brotherhoods, the imposed Catholic religiosity intertwined with knowledge and rites of African origin, giving rise to hybrid practices that, even today, find in the washing of the staircases a gesture of memory, resistance, and celebration. According to Atílio Avancini (2021), the *lavagem* as a ritual practice is inscribed in the living genealogy of Afro-Brazilian popular festivals, preserving the marks of faith expressions that, during the forced traversal of the diaspora, wove alliances between Catholicism and the sacred knowledge brought and recreated by African peoples. According to the author,

> The washing ritual (*lavagem*) corresponds to certain religious practices, such as the Catholic tradition of the internal cleaning of the church—an Iberian medieval custom—initially performed by enslaved labor. In Bahian lands, the Lavagem do Bonfim is the people's heritage for rendition in thanksgiving to two deities: Nosso Senhor do Bonfim and Oxalá. This interculturality is inserted into the relationships in the Latin American context, the result of the amalgam between Christianity and African religions (Avancini, 2021, p. 3, our translation)

The festival circulates through the streets of the historic city of Penedo. It revolves in a procession, led by chants, drumming, and bodies adorned in white, in homage to the waters that sustain life and the orixás that govern them: *Oxum*, lady of fertility, gold, and the calm river; *Iemanjá*, mother of all seas; and *Oxalá*, creator father, lord of peace and dawn. In the Penedo procession, there is also the gesture of bringing the *orixás* that govern the new cycle into the procession, as if consulting the

[2] Regarding the construction of this church, see *Crônica do Penedo: 1872–1873* (Caroatá, 2024, pp. 38–40).

[3] Regarding the Brotherhood of Black and Brown Men, see Alves' dissertation, 2018.

winds to know where to walk. This movement can be observed in Figure 3, in the collages that bring together fragments of the route and highlight the presence of the entities and the baianas (women in traditional Bahian dress).

Fig. 3: Collages of records made during washing. Source: Authors, 2025.

The importance of this *lavagem* ritual lies in the fact that it is not limited to the old practices of preservation, as this is already evident given that it is a recent festivity. It is built in the present, strengthened by the gesture that re-actualizes lived experience and inscribes the presence of so-called peripheral subjects in the landscape. It is a dance of permanence that grounds bodies in the present. By abandoning the limits of the sacred space and expanding into the city, knowledge inscribes it as an extension of the body. Penedo is no longer an object to be mapped from above, traced in straight lines that we subtly attempt to subvert in Figure 1, superimposing bodies and colorful fringes onto the cartographic lines. It becomes *Ayê* (earth), where one treads with the whole body. This transition is fundamental, because the gaze that comes from above tends towards verticality, towards the hierarchy of knowledge, as architects and urban planners generally do. In turn, the gaze that springs from the margin's bends, listens allows itself to be affected. It is a circular gaze that revolves, like in the *xirê* (dance). Like all religions, Afro-Brazilian religions such as *Candomblé* and *Umbanda* cultivate an intimate relationship between the sacred and the social. By treating religion as a collective construction rooted in community practices, it illuminates the perspective that it is not symbols that create cohesion, but the shared feelings emerging from ritual experience, feelings that reinforce bonds and reaffirm the group's identity.

Similarly, Afro-Brazilian religions have become moving bodies. They have spread throughout different regions of the country, crossed territories, and danced with diverse cultures. Until the 1930s, according to Reginaldo Prandi (1999), many of these religious expressions were considered ethnic, preserving cultural, historical, and symbolic heritages of enslaved Africans and their descendants, nuanced in various practices. This dispersion resulted in varied ritual forms, in dense and mixed consortia, although taking on certain local specificities: *Candomblé* in Bahia, *Xangô* in Pernambuco and Alagoas, *Tambor de Mina* in Maranhão and Pará, *Batuque* in Rio Grande do Sul, and *Macumba* in Rio de Janeiro. Likewise, the worldviews of numerous indigenous peoples were intertwined, to a greater or lesser extent, with elements of Afro-Brazilian religions or were influenced by them. In this sense, *catimbó* – a religion of spirits – stands out, a name given to the masters and caboclos who manifest themselves in trance to advise, prescribe, and heal. These Afro-Amerindian relationships reveal unique features, which depend on the place where they are performed, and involve a vast toponymic procession, bringing shared vocabulary such as *jurema, toré, pajelança, babaçuê, encantaria*, or cura (Prandi, 1999). Such manifestations not only show the richness of ancestral knowledge but also circulate religious landscapes, mobilized by the experiences and living cultural dialogues of their practitioners.

Antônio Bispo dos Santos's assertion that "we are beginning, middle, and beginning" (Santos, 2023, p. 102, our translation). In Penedo, between the waters that flow down the alleys and the lace skirts that rise to wash the steps of the Rosário church, a unique way of circulating knowledge resonates. The landscape becomes a performed territory of the sacred, where the washing proceeds in its own way, shaped by the culture that traverses it. The presence of Afro-Brazilian religious manifestations in dialogue with the strategies of occupying urban spaces reveals the complexity of this religious sign in the riverside city. The washings operate as rites of passage between worlds, updating links between ancestry, body, and territory and, in doing so, reinscribing living memories. Amidst the traces that spread on the wet ground, calming and greeting, a path opens for the beginning of the procession.

This water thrown into the street, which greets the orishas, calms the earth, and opens the paths, carries the vital force, the *axé*, as the *Yoruba* call it, the *tumi* among the *Akan*, and the *nguzo* among the *Kongo*. A force that does not oppose the world but composes it (Lopes & Simas, 2020). It is in this force that everything pulsates, grows, and transforms. There is no separation between nature and humans, between body and territory, or between knowing and feeling. Knowledge in the *terreiros* does not follow a straight line but through movement. One learns in the body, in the *gira*, in prayer in repetition. According to Tássio Ferreira,

> In the Talenu-Atmosphere Path, I will problematize the idea that the teachings of the *Terreiro* follow five distinct paths that circulate among themselves. These paths help me understand a teaching system that occurs: integrally (not allowing partitioning); circularly (feeding back on itself); corporeally (and reverberating within it); ancestrally (considering immaterial values); and mystically (considering lived experience). These paths are fundamental to teaching, among which, often, it is not known exactly which one we are following, because they revolve on their own and within the philosophical framework that supports this thinking. These revolutions can be understood as learning operators – the way in which knowledge is presented in the *terreiro*. I can understand this process through at least 3 operators: ritual (repetition), chance, and the sacred (Ferreira, 2021, p. 46, our translation).

The everyday wisdom taught in the *terreiros* conveys that knowledge is dynamic, rather than linear. Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2023) stated that life is a continuity of knowledge, a flow transmitted from generation to generation. This inheritance occurs through incorporation, where knowledge is installed in the bodies of the daughters and sons of the saints, restarting the whirlwind of life with each gesture, song, and listening, instead of a mere accumulation of information. To paraphrase him, “we are peoples of trajectories, not peoples of theory. We are of circularity: beginning, middle, and beginning. Our lives have no end. The grandmother generation is the beginning, the mother generation is the middle, and the granddaughter generation is the beginning again” (Santos, 2023, p. 102, our translation). In the *terreiro*, one learns through the senses. It is the smell of the smoke cleansing that ignites memory, the gesture that marks, the song that teaches. Knowledge is made in the body and through experience; it dances. This way of learning resonates with the understanding of memory proposed by Tim Ingold (2015), when he states that it is through the activity of remembering that memories are forged. Memory, then, is a constant creation that emerges from the sensory experiences of the body in the world. Along the same path, Emanuele Coccia (2020) speaks of a perspective linked to studies of the Anthropocene. For him, “we do not need to rotate the globe to feel the world, to see it, to experience it in all its infinitude. All we have to do is explore the material and spiritual memory of our body. Each one of us is the history of the Earth, a version of it, a possible conclusion” (Coccia, 2020, p. 31, our translation).

It is through this path that *Iroko*, orisha of time and ancestry, makes itself present as a sacred tree, deep root, and trunk. It was through this path, according to some mythological narratives, that the orishas of creation arrived in *Ayê*, the earth. *Iroko* reminds us that we are not masters of time, we are traversed by it. The vulture, its messenger, embodies finitude. The roots of *Iroko*, eternity. Time of ancestry and time of the future coexist, like two sides of the same drum that resonates in the body and in the world (Simas & Rufino, 2020). Ancient religions of African origin do not observe time in a straight line, nor do they measure it. For Ferreira (2021), in the Bantu tradition, *Kitembo* guides us with the patience of the world's turns and with the knowledge that there are truths that only time reveals. Time that is yesterday, today, and tomorrow, in constant flux, without rigid separation, without haste for an answer; A time that revolves, that waits, that listens. This wisdom, however, clashes with the machinery of modern times. In Western logic, time has been captured, reduced to productivity, accelerated to the limit, and timed to the last second. Time doesn't revolve; it runs. It doesn't sing; it whistles. It doesn't teach; it commands. Byung-Chul Han (2019) observes that we live under the dictatorship of hyperactivity and continuous acceleration. The time of now stretches like a prison, an endless and sterile present that exhausts itself. The future shortens, the pause becomes intolerable, and even anger, as he says, we have unlearned, because it requires time to mature. There is no more time for waiting, nor for silence, nor for pausing. As he states,

> If late-modern achievement society has reduced us all to bare life, then it is not just people at the margins or in a state of exception that is, the excluding but all of us, without exception, who are homines sacri. That said, this bare life has the particularity of not being absolutely expendable [tötbar]; rather, it cannot be killed absolutely [absolut untötbar (ist)]. It is undead, so to speak. Here the word sacer does not

> mean “accursed” but “holy.” Now bare, sheer life itself is holy, and so it must be preserved at any cost (Han, 2015, p. 19)

However, in the circles of *xirê*, in the litanies of the *Jurema Sagrada*, in the rhythms that echo in the body, other times are reborn. The *gira* returns to us the ritual silence and the song that opens the way. It asks for a time that cannot be measured but lived. Each drumbeat is a teaching, each movement a crossing between worlds. The time of axé is a time of presence, not for producing, but for remaining. In this intersection of temporalities, it is necessary to listen to the knowledge that resists. Knowledge that spins, unlike that which marches, ignites the possibility of re-enchanting time, not as a scarce resource, but as a dwelling place. To inhabit time and not to run within it. Like *Iroko*, a tree that grows slowly and establishes the passage of the *orixás*. Like *Kitembo*, which whispers to us that the truth comes, but only for those who know how to wait. The festival is a hinge between times, between visible and invisible worlds. The researcher's body, insinuating itself into the circle, transforms into a festive body, a ritual body, and writes from the very traces traversed by the procession. The body feels through the emotions evoked by the goosebumps on the skin, by the blurred vision of restrained tears, and it feels, with its ears, the sounds of the drums that add to the frenetic beating of the heart. In an instant, everything happens at once, as in a scene. It was in these waters laden with meaning that gained voice, body, and memory, that the first unraveling of the research was sung: to undo in order to redo (Figure 4).

Fig. 4: Images captured of hands guiding the waters. Source: Authors, 2025.

4 Architectures of the Sacred: Towards an architecture of *axé*

The functional logic of the modern city, regulated by norms, flows, and segmentations, distances urban space from other forms of existence and relationship. This urbanism operates through divisions between the rational and the symbolic, body and space, seeking to contain the sacred in isolated enclosures: churches, cemeteries, temples, and spaces authorized for worship. Within the Foucauldian concept, this is a logic of compartmentalization, where the body and desire are watched, controlled, and domesticated (Foucault, 2013). However, there are practices that destabilize this rationality. The danced paths in the washing ritual propose other ways of perceiving, inhabiting, and producing the city. The body is gesture and territory, it is memory, ground, and crossing. During the festival, the subjects who occupy and move through urban spaces update meanings for the landscape, activating memories and bodily perceptions that do not fit into the logic of modern reason. Lewis Mumford already warned that the city cannot be thought of without myth. In its origin, every space carries a cosmology, a way of relating to time and the sacred. As described,

> Mid the uneasy wanderings of paleolithic man, the dead were the first to have a permanent dwelling: a cavern, a mound marked by a cairn, a collective barrow. These were landmarks to which the living probably returned at intervals, to commune with or placate the ancestral spirits. Though food gathering and hunting do not encourage the permanent occupation of a single site, the dead at least claim that privilege. (Mumford, 1961, p. 7)

The city of the dead precedes and finds the city of the living. It is its inaugural nucleus. In Penedo, the cleansing ritual re-actualizes this cosmology. The landscape becomes alive, and the body becomes a link with the ancestral. Coccia (2020, p. 70, our translation) reminds us that “metamorphosis allows a life to connect several incompatible worlds.” The dancing city is a metamorphosis, a synthesis of times, gestures, and presences. It is not merely a matter of delimiting the territory by coordinates or technical maps. Space here is constructed through gestures, memories, and the vibration of presences. The territory is born

from the *axé* that runs through the veins of the city. As the people of the *terreiro* teach us, territory is not measured in meters, but in knowledge that revolves, intertwines, and circulates. In this logic, the festival emerges as architecture in motion, a way of reinscribing meanings and memories in the territory through the body. *Axé* manifests itself as a vital force that organizes spaces based on ancestral, spiritual, and community relationships, reconfiguring alleys, slopes, and stairways as places of passage and transformation. It is an architecture of the invisible, built less by the materiality of concrete and more by the vibration of presences, songs, waters, and rhythmic steps that wash and consecrate the ground (Figure 5).

The water festival constitutes these architectures of *axé*: supported not by columns, but by pillars of memory, faith, and resistance. They are forms traversed by other temporalities, which become crossroads where worlds touch. Spaces ritually activated by Afro-diasporic knowledge, in dispute with the colonial city and its projects of silencing. The path of the washing, which starts from the city's margins and slows down in the historical center, amidst the steps of the Rosário church, is equally a ritual of territorial reconfiguration. By washing the steps, the feminine hands of the Bahian women reaffirm their place in the urban space. The street becomes a sacred space. The alley, a crossroads. The gesture of throwing water, a political and spiritual act. The tensions between sacredness and spectacle, tradition and invention, make the festival a field of forces in dispute. Here, the concept of the architecture of *axé* intensifies: it is an architecture that emerges from the body and surpasses it, establishing affective and ancestral spatialities. This stance, simultaneously poetic and theoretical, contributes to broadening the repertoire of urbanism by including forms of spatial production based on vital energy, memory, and ritual. In short,

> *Axé* is a polysemic dimension that permeates the cosmological, epistemic, and philosophical framework of *Candomblé*. Broadly speaking, *Axé* can be translated as: vital energy. *Axé* is constituted from the interactive, interdependent, and intersecting movement of the contraction between two coexisting places: *Orun* – the limitless metaphysical world, the spiritual and ancestral universe, and *Ayê* – the physical world with limits, the natural and human universe (Faislon, 2020, p. 19, our translation).

Fig. 5: Images captured during the ritual. Source: Authors, 2025.

In seeking to understand how the subjectivity of bodies, traversed by the forces of water, by listening, and by ancestral spiritualities, reconfigures the perception and production of the urban landscape during the *lavagem* of the Rosário staircases and the *Beco da Preguiça* alley in Penedo, one observes an activation of memories, territorialities, and ways of inhabiting space. “Everybody is the gateway to an infinity of other worlds” (Coccia, 2020, p. 151, our translation). The traces of the *lavagem* left in the city and on the body are also an outflow: an outflow of memories, of listening, of celebration, and of ancestral paths. A journey that opened in the current of encounters and that now lets itself be carried away by the waters that cross the territory, the body, and time.

The relationship between the street and the individuals who occupy these spaces reveals socio-spatial dynamics that are constantly being formed and re-formed. These relationships, however, are not always harmonious. Often, space is the stage for

tensions, like a "cold war" between perfumed water and crowded bodies. Ingold (2015) describes how, just as culture springs from the earth and branches out in multiple directions, history also arises from the soil of nature, but in this case, it is conceived as a process of colonization. Urban spaces, therefore, are not neutral. They are shaped by the interactions between social agents, their desires, memories, and struggles. Understanding these spaces requires recognizing who the individuals who constitute them are, with their bodies, histories, and affections. According to Grada Kilomba (2008), perceiving the other requires an objectivity that incorporates the materiality and subjectivity of the body. Meanings are constructed in the dialogue between the self and the other, between the familiar and the unknown.

> Listening, in this sense, is the act of granting permission to the speaker. Someone can speak (only) when their voice is heard (...) provoked by experiences that call into question our preconceptions about ourselves and force us to see ourselves through the eyes of "others," helping us to recognize the discrepancy between other people's perception of us and our own perception of ourselves: "Who am I? How do 'others' perceive me? And what do I represent to them?" (Kilomba, 2008, pp. 42–43, our translation).

It is not a matter of erasing existing data, but of reconfiguring them based on historically marginalized knowledge, recognizing in them legitimate and powerful voices. As Nei Lopes and Luiz Antônio Simas (2020, p. 7) say: “We are part of the Whole, without knowing it. Humility is necessary. We will not know it; all that remains is to compose, illuminate, and allow ourselves to be illuminated.” The pulsating world cannot be known through detachment, but through surrender. To this thought can be added the reflections of Ana Clara Torres Ribeiro, who contributed so much to the study of cities by proposing theories and cartographies of action. The sociologist problematized the dominant reading of spaces, which is anchored in the visible and the immediate, ignoring the complexity of the lived territory. The territory used, according to her, “highlights life, relationships (...), banal space, the space that belongs to everyone and to all practices, including solidarities and communicative action” (Ribeiro, 2012, p. 69). At certain moments, the city opens as a space for exchange and expression. It is when the city allows itself to become festive. Outside these occasions, urban norms and logics prevail that restrict, silence, exclude. And the question remains: why can certain gestures and certain bodies exist fully only when authorized by the calendar? When the city dances, it tensions this logic. In these moments, it opens as a crossroads of presences. A fertile womb of multiple memories.

5 Final Considerations

In seeking to understand how the subjectivity of bodies, traversed by the forces of water, by listening, and by ancestral Afro-Brazilian spiritualities, reconfigures the perception and production of the urban landscape during the festival, one perceives the activation of other memories, territorialities, and ways of inhabiting space. The *lavagem* is not just an event, but a celebration that reinvents the urban environment, that re-enchants it. With each step, with each song sung by the Bahian women, the landscape is reborn, alive, sensitive, and insurgent. In line with the theme "Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations", it is perceived that the washing acts as a field where one can observe different postures regarding cities that meet, are in tension, but also dialogue. The city recognized by heritage laws is there, as is the city of living syncretism. One observes the Penedo of work and the city of celebration. They are cities that do not separate but add up and potentiate each other. Perhaps learning about the field of urbanism is still far from this mix, and heritage practices remain hostage to official bureaucratic regulations. From the perspective of this *lavagem*, worlds touch, negotiate, and mutually reconfigure each other. The city is thus made through dispute but also through symbolic and material interconnections between diverse forms of existence: between what is intended to be fixed as heritage and what insists on moving as ritual; between the state logic of regulation and the ancestral logic of continuity; between normative urban planning practices and embodied epistemologies that resist historical erasure.

If *axé* is the vital force that circulates between worlds, bodies, and times, then washing the city is to reactivate this energy in the urban space. The landscape, therefore, becomes not only a field of symbolic and spiritual dispute, but also joy and blessing. The alley and the stairway cease to be simple thoroughfares, becoming territories where the city bows before the ancestral force that insists on remaining and manifesting itself. By adopting a sensitive methodology and performative cartography, the study reinforces the importance of recognizing the body as an instrument of research and urban analysis. The researcher-body, by inserting itself into the procession, perceives dimensions of space that do not appear on technical maps and participates in a

city that is made in movement, in sensorially, and in affection. Finally, thinking about the city through the body, through the ephemeral, and through celebration is to perform new worlds. The flowing water carries time, cleanses, inscribes, summons the echoes of the diaspora and urban quilombos. The washing, in this sense, is a political gesture. Therefore, this article does not end here but encourages further research to spill over the edges of the text. The festival is the reinvention of living collectively. This contribution presents itself as yet another voice among many that believe in the urgency of speaking about these ancestral roots that permeate us, not as distant memories, but as a living presence that resists, revolves, and transforms.

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THE PORTRAIT BEYOND THE EUROPEAN CANON: REINVENTIONS IN LATIN-CARIBBEAN ART
O RETRATO ALÉM DO CÂNONE EUROPEU: REINVENÇÕES NA ARTE LATINO-CARIBENHA

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Freitas, J. P. (2025). The Portrait Beyond the European Canon: Reinventions in Latin-Caribbean Art. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 316-325 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239968

Abstract

In contemporary Latin American and Caribbean art, portraiture and self-portraiture become spaces of confrontation between identity and alterity, where artists rewrite visual histories and dispute regimes of representation inherited from colonialism. This article examines the strategies of Ana Mendieta, Firelei Báez, Leasho Johnson, Éder Oliveira, and Chiachio & Giannone, articulating visual description and critical interpretation through decolonial approaches. By observing how these works negotiate memory, body, and territory, the study highlights modes of producing subjectivities that activate interlocutions among different cosmologies, histories, and visualities. In dialogue with the theme *Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations*, it is argued that the analyzed practices establish sites of symbolic dispute in which cultural differences are articulated through tensions, frictions, and aesthetic reinventions. The methodology combines formal and contextual analysis, emphasizing how these productions subvert the Eurocentric paradigm of portraiture and propose visualities that confront structures of power, expanding the field of inquiry into identity and representation in contemporary art. The results indicate that these self-representational practices constitute critical devices capable of challenging Eurocentric representational codes and proposing new visual models for imagining identities and histories in the Latin American and Caribbean context.

Key-words: Multilaterality, Decolonial poetics, Self-portraiture, Alterity, Latin American art.

1 Introduction

Portraiture and self-portraiture are not limited to reproducing the face or the body; they constitute processes of self-analysis and self-invention, in which the image becomes a space of identity construction and poetic enunciation. From this perspective, the genre exceeds its descriptive function and asserts itself as a territory of aesthetic and political experimentation, capable of negotiating memory, body, and belonging. In the Latin American and Caribbean context, marked by colonial legacies and diasporic experience, this practice acquires historical and cultural density, operating as a strategy of resistance and reconfiguration of visual narratives of the self and the other. In this sense, the study directly engages with the theme *Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations* by examining how practices of portraiture and self-portraiture constitute zones of friction and circulation between Eurocentric visual repertoires and situated cosmologies, producing symbolic negotiations between conflicting regimes of seeing.

This investigation begins with the question: What poetic strategies have been mobilized by Latin American and Caribbean artists to construct portraiture and self-portraiture through a decolonial lens? To explore this question, the study analyzes works by Ana Mendieta, Firelei Báez, Leasho Johnson, Éder Oliveira, and Chiachio & Giannone, articulating contextualized visual description and critical interpretation grounded in references that examine three key concepts: identity, alterity, and decoloniality. The research adopts a qualitative approach, of historical-social nature and analytical–interpretive character, understanding how these images operate as devices of symbolic dispute. The corpus was defined according to thematic relevance and diversity of geographic origin, including works presented in exhibitions, institutional collections, and specialized publications[1].

Identity is understood as a social, historical, and cultural construction that defines individual and collective belongings, always subject to negotiation and transformation (Hall, 2006). This conception diverges from fixed or essentialist notions, viewing identity as an ongoing process. Alterity, in turn, refers to the construction of the other — the one perceived as different (Said, 2007; Todorov, 2019). This relation can open space for recognition and dialogue, but it may also sustain exclusionary practices. In colonial and postcolonial contexts, identity and alterity become intertwined: the definition of who we are is often constructed in contrast to who we are not. Finally, decoloniality is understood as a critical perspective aimed at destabilizing hierarchies and

[1] In accordance with copyright guidelines and the journal's submission policies, the images of the works analyzed were not reproduced in the body of the text. To ensure comprehension of the analysis, the option was to use ekphrasis (detailed description) and to provide, in footnotes, the official links for consulting the collections of the holding institutions or the artists.

narratives inherited from colonialism (Mignolo, 2007, 2012; Walsh, 2019). It seeks to promote plural ways of seeing, narrating, and representing, valuing knowledge and practices historically marginalized.

These three notions are not treated in isolation in the study: they intersect and guide the analysis of the artworks, enabling the comprehension of how portraiture and self-portraiture function as territories of symbolic dispute and the invention of new forms of visibility. Methodologically, the investigation articulates three complementary procedures: 1) the formal analysis, considering composition, pose, framing, and materiality; 2) the contextual interpretation, connecting historical, cultural, and political elements; and 3) the critical reading oriented by the analytical categories of identity/alterity, agency of the portrayed subject, and relationships between body, memory, and territory. This approach integrates poetic sensitivity and analytical rigor, linking aesthetics and politics in contemporary production.

2 Visual Arts and Decoloniality

Thinking about art through a decolonial lens requires adopting a different analytical perspective. It is necessary to move away from the rigid framing of Eurocentric canons and methodologies to perceive what has been systematically excluded from the frame. This implies recognizing that art history and visual studies always operated as selective filters, defining what deserves to be seen, narrated, and preserved. Within this shift of understanding, the image is no longer perceived as a direct representation of reality but rather as an active artifact capable of consolidating or destabilizing regimes of power, as noted by Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011). From this perspective, the visual field becomes a privileged site for analyzing epistemic conflicts and disputes over representation. This approach reinforces that visual tensions are never neutral but are permeated by historical structures of domination.

These tensions are rooted in the coloniality of power — a global structure that, even after the formal end of colonialism, continues to organize racial, cultural, and epistemic hierarchies. Aníbal Quijano (2007b) demonstrates that this logic also operates through the colonization of the imagination, imposing patterns of knowledge and language that transform the European matrix into a universal paradigm. In the Latin American and Caribbean context, breaking with these patterns requires not only producing new images but redefining the very criteria of artistic legitimacy. In the visual arts, this demands investigating who decides what counts as art, who is authorized to narrate it, and which parameters sustain such validation. Walter Mignolo (2012) emphasizes that a decolonial aesthetics deliberately shifts the gaze away from the Eurocentric matrix and values creative forms rooted in histories and sensibilities silenced by colonial modernity. In this sense, the creative act assumes a critical function, challenging naturalized aesthetic and political structures.

Quijano expands this understanding by showing that power and knowledge hierarchies also shape the ways artistic production is classified and disseminated. This observation resonates with Stuart Hall (2006), who argues that representation is always a field of identity dispute. Every image is permeated by specific historical and cultural positions. Analyzing Latin American and Caribbean art, therefore, requires more than acknowledging its themes; it involves exposing the interpretive systems that condition its reception in the global circuit, revealing which narratives are valued and which remain invisible. This debate converges with the concept of abyssal thinking formulated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009), which denounces the radical lines separating knowledge recognized as legitimate from that declared nonexistent. In the arts, this manifests both in the exclusion of non-European traditions and in the selective appropriation of cultural repertoires reinterpreted through hegemonic lenses.

By proposing an ecology of knowledge, Santos advocates for the coexistence of scientific and non-scientific forms, artistic and community-based, erudite and popular. From this theoretical articulation, the decolonial gesture can be understood as a double movement: denouncing mechanisms of exclusion and aesthetic hierarchization and, while simultaneously, creating regimes of visibility in which epistemological diversity becomes a creative force. This perspective also questions the very modern structure of artistic genres. Consolidated in Europe between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, this structure hierarchized visual modalities, placing history painting at the top and relegating portraiture to secondary roles. Even modernism, in its attempts to break with these hierarchies, preserved aspects of this logic (Dória, 2008). A decolonial approach, therefore, shifts the focus away from normative genres toward practices emerging from specific sociocultural contexts.

In contemporary production in Latin America and the Caribbean, revisiting portraiture and self-portraiture through decolonial lenses expands the interpretive horizon. Portraiture ceases to be a mere individual record and becomes a space of political enunciation, identity negotiation, and confrontation with colonial visualities. By transforming body and face into territories of creation, artists from this region develop strategies that destabilize boundaries between the self and the other, between individual and collective memory, between visibility and erasure. They establish new forms of presence in the global art scene, contributing directly to the multilateral dialogues proposed by this edition of the journal.

3 The Genre of Portraiture in the Eurocentric Academic System

In the European academic system, consolidated between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, pictorial genres were hierarchized according to aesthetic and social values. History painting occupied the highest position, followed by genre painting and landscape; portraiture and still life occupied lower positions. The nobility of the subject matter was associated with artistic prestige, which is why large-scale religious, mythological, or historical narratives were more highly valued than representations of individuals or everyday objects (West, 2004). Within this arrangement, portraiture was conceived as a secondary practice, even when it was widely disseminated. Although socially relevant, it maintained a subordinate position: it served private or institutional demands, such as preserving family memories, asserting status, and consolidating public images. Unlike history painting, it was viewed as a genre incapable of offering the moral elevation expected of the spectator, thereby reinforcing its marginalization (West, 2004).

Self-portraiture and artists' portraits have a long trajectory and acquire new meanings during the Renaissance, when creators begin to claim an intellectual status akin to that of philosophers or poets. Self-representation becomes a strategy for professional and social legitimation, incorporating visual attributes that communicate erudition and distinction. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as academies strengthened, representations that emphasized discipline and rationality predominated; later, Romanticism introduced an emphasis on subjectivity and creative individuality (Freitas, 2013). This tradition shaped the modern practice of portraiture in Brazil and Latin America. The genre was imported from European academic circles and, in the nineteenth century, consolidated as an instrument of social affirmation and the construction of a national image. Even with the rise of photography, painted portraiture maintained symbolic prestige and continued to operate as an identity discourse. Artists used it to convey cultural and political narratives, relocating it into arenas of symbolic dispute (Freitas, 2015).

In the Brazilian case, Sergio Miceli (1996) proposes understanding portraiture as a negotiated image. It results from both the artist's aesthetic competence and the sitter's strategies of social affirmation. It is not merely an individual representation but the plastic translation of signs of social position, political aspirations, cultural affiliations, and modes of distinction. Between artist and sitter, a game of reciprocal legitimization is established: the artist reinforces his or her authority in the field, while the sitter consolidates his or her public image and position within networks of power. Peter Burke (2004) emphasizes that portraiture should also be understood as historical evidence—though not naively—since it arises from choices, framing, and visual conventions that reflect the values and power structures of the context in which it was produced. John Berger (1999) adds that every image is the product of a way of seeing, both on the part of the artist who creates it and on the part of the spectator who interprets it. In academic portraiture, this way of seeing is embedded in assumptions about beauty, status, and taste that are frequently naturalized.

This historical framework serves as a counterpoint for thinking about the genre as produced by Latin American and Caribbean artists under other logics—less committed to inherited hierarchies and more open to ways of seeing, representing, and narrating that affirm plural identities and marginalized experiences. To guide a comparative reading, a chart was developed comparing traditional, Eurocentric understandings of portraiture with decolonial perspectives (Chart 1). It is not proposed as a normative model but as an initial tool for approaching the images, enabling the identification of continuities, inversions, or shifts in relation to the historical paradigm and recognizing poetic strategies that articulate identity and alterity in Latin American and Caribbean production.

AXIS OF ANALYSIS	TRADITIONAL EUROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE	DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE
SOCIAL FUNCTION	Legitimation of status, power, and prestige; official and institutional record	Cultural resistance, community affirmation, denunciation of injustices
CENTER OF REPRESENTATION	Emphasis on physiognomy as proof of individual identity	Body-territory; collective, multiple, and mutable identities
AESTHETICS AND TECHNIQUE	Oil on canvas, classical sculpture, established techniques	Hybrid media, popular arts, textile supports, performance, and installation
RELATION TO TIME	Fixed, timeless, idealized identity	Processual, mutable identity situated in time and space
VISUAL HIERARCHIES	Valorization of "high art" and erudite arts	Valorization of historically marginalized languages and "minor" arts
VISUAL NARRATIVE	Centered composition, formal pose, balance and symmetry	Fragmented compositions, plural narratives, ornamental excess as strategy
POSITION OF THE SPECTATOR	Contemplative gaze, passive and distant	Implicated gaze, dialogue with the work, active participation
POLITICAL DIMENSION	Apparent neutrality, reinforcement of social hierarchies	Confrontation with hegemonies, countervisuality, re-existence
MEDIATION WITH THE OTHER	Unilateral relationship artist–sitter–public	Collaborative processes, co-authorship, intercultural dialogue
RELATION TO ART HISTORY	Continuity with and reverence for the canons	Critical appropriation, subversion, and rewriting of tradition

Chart 1: Comparison between the traditional Eurocentric understanding of portraiture and a decolonial approach. Source: Author, 2025.

4 Other Pathways into Portraiture

Facing portraiture through other pathways requires recognizing the weight of the narratives that have shaped it. Art history, as formalized in the West, was built upon a theoretical corpus that not only described but hierarchized ways of seeing. Figures such as Winckelmann, Lessing, Baumgarten, Wölfflin, and Panofsky helped consolidate a system that ordered genres and defined aesthetic standards which, under the guise of universality, translate European cultural preferences and exclude other sensibilities (Wagner, 2024). Confronting this normative legacy is the first step toward creating space for plural visual epistemologies in which portraiture can operate outside inherited hierarchies.

Within this framework, portraiture is not merely an artistic form but a document of power relations. While it preserves physiognomies, it also selects, frames, and performs status, alliances, and social identities. Reading these images as historical evidence entails understanding the intentions of those who produced them and the structures that sustained them (Burke, 2004). Every gaze is mediated by conventions, economic interests, and imaginaries of power — which, in portraiture, manifest in determining which bodies are deemed worthy of being fixed and under which visual codes such fixation occurs (Berger, 1999). Thus, analysis shifts from formal contemplation to a critique of the regime of visibility that organizes seeing and being seen.

Decolonial critique proposes intervening in this very visual matrix. For Mignolo, decolonial aesthetics is not a style but a political and epistemological option that seeks to liberate aisthesis — sensing — from the normative constraints of modern aesthetics. This gesture demands acknowledging the colonial heritage, a historical and sensorial mark of subalternization, and acting upon the coloniality of seeing, which regulates not only what we see but how we see (Mignolo, 2017). In this direction, Madina Tlostanova proposes the decolonial anti-sublime — a refusal of the Kantian sublime and the ideal of universal beauty — replacing them with a transmodern sensibility rooted in local histories and open to difference, in which reason and emotion meet again outside colonial grids (Tlostanova, 2011).

This shift in perspective is anchored in Quijano's (2007a) diagnosis of the coloniality of power and knowledge: visual regimes integrate a global structure that defines who and how can be seen. Joaquín Barriendos expands this reflection by coining the concept of coloniality of seeing, which reveals how racialized visual archives and practices persist even within contemporary languages (Barriendos, 2019). The gaze, therefore, is also a field of political and sensorial dispute, in which critique deconstructs and re-existence proposes. Aníbal Albán Achinte describes practices that invent new ways of narrating and visualizing the world from their own cosmoperceptions, not subordinated to colonial narratives (Achinte, 2009b). Franciele Clara Peloso and co-authors (2023) analyze contemporary Indigenous production, showing how artists break with exotization and construct images emerging from the dialogue between memory and the present, between community and individual. Sandra Benites and colleagues (2020) examine the body-territory as a relational space in which graphic forms, gestures, and materials are not ornaments but extensions of cosmologies and networks of belonging.

Frantz Fanon reminds us that the colonial gaze is also a form of symbolic violence, capable of producing alienation and ontological impossibility in the represented subject (Fanon, 2008). Against this gaze, portraiture — and especially self-portraiture — affirms existence and agency, becoming a gesture of resistance that converts representation into presence. Thinking about portraiture from another perspective, therefore, means displacing it from its traditional function of fixing and legitimizing hierarchies to enable it to operate as a space for reinventing ways of seeing and sensing. In this process, portraiture ceases to be mere document and becomes a political, aesthetic, and sensorial territory of dispute and creation.

The comparative chart (Chart 1) serves as a methodological synthesis of these differences between the Eurocentric paradigm and the decolonial approach. More than listing contrasts, it serves as an observational guide for identifying shifts, subversions, and reconfigurations of the genre, connecting theory and analysis. Its elaboration stems from a critical reading of different conceptions of portraiture throughout the history of art and visual culture. On the Eurocentric side, portraiture was considered a register of status and distinction, grounded in aesthetic and social conventions discussed in the Western tradition. In contrast, the decolonial perspective was constructed from references that question hierarchies and visual narratives inherited from colonialism, shifting the center of representation toward marginalized bodies and memories — as introduced earlier.

The definition of analytical criteria followed two steps: 1) mapping recurrent axes in the literature on portraiture, including social function, center of representation, technical choices, relation to time, visual hierarchies, narrative, viewer position, and political dimension; and 2) contrasting the characteristics associated with each axis in both perspectives, highlighting contrasts and intersections. This methodology seeks not only to mark differences but to identify hybrid zones and emerging categories that

transgress rigid boundaries between models. Chart 1 is not a fixed or normative model: it functions as a flexible guide for approaching images, allowing the identification, in each work, of strategies of continuity, subversion, or reinvention of the genre. In doing so, it translates theoretical concepts into analytical practice and integrates theory, method, and critique within a single interpretive gesture.

5 Other Portraits

In this section, self-portraits and self-referential works by Latin American and Caribbean artists are examined in order to understand how these productions challenge the Eurocentric tradition of the portrait genre and propose alternative matrices of visuality. The selected works are analyzed through a dialogue between theoretical references — related to critiques of the coloniality of seeing and decolonial aesthetics — and the formal and contextual observations that emerge from close reading of the images. This trajectory adopts a comparative approach, seeking to highlight, in each analysis, how poetic strategies, visual choices, and political positions operate in the construction of alternative regimes of visibility. Based on the conceptual framework developed in previous sections, the study now applies these references to the interpretation of the works, considering both formal elements and contextual aspects. This transition from theory to analysis maintains a reciprocal relationship: it verifies how concepts illuminate the works' readings and observes how the images themselves challenge, expand, or complicate these references.

From this perspective, the work of Ana Mendieta offers a powerful example of confrontation with the Eurocentric tradition. In the early 1970s, the artist developed performative works that questioned gender conventions, most notably Untitled (Facial Hair Transplants)[2] (1972). Analysis of the photographic documentation reveals the force of the gesture: in this work, Mendieta transplants facial hair from another artist onto her own face in a meticulous collage process captured in close-up, creating a liminal image of a female body marked by attributes traditionally associated with masculinity. The record highlights the tension between the artist's smooth skin and the coarse texture of the fake beard. The action functions as a denaturalization of the gaze (Berger, 1999), exposing how visual readings of gender are anchored in cultural codes. By inserting a masculine sign onto her own face, the artist breaks the binary logic and dismantles the Western expectation of femininity, mobilizing essentialist dichotomies only to render them ambiguous (Blocker, 1999).

This refusal of fixity is deepened in the Silueta series[3] (1973-1980). Critical analysis of interventions such as Untitled (Silueta Series) reveals a visceral fusion between body and nature: in these works, the artist impresses the silhouette of her body directly onto the landscape — whether in mud or sand — filling the void with organic materials. Presence alternates with absence, establishing a dialogue among body, territory, and ancestry that resonates with Walter Mignolo's (2012) decolonial cosmoperception and with Achinte's (2009a) notion of re-existence. Within Eurocentric logic, portraiture tends to fix hierarchical identities; in contrast, Mendieta constructs a mutable, insurgent "self." It is an operation of decolonizing the gaze that displaces the spectator, confronting them with the artificiality of the categories used to interpret the body. Thus, both the facial transplants and the silhouettes function as inflection points that destabilize the aesthetic and epistemological structures of representation.

In the work of Firelei Báez, portraiture assumes a different mode of confrontation, balancing the genre's tradition with the invention of alternative visual regimes in which the female figure is surrounded by symbols of Afro-Caribbean cosmologies. Given the ground (the fact that it surprised me doesn't mean that I would abandon it), exhibited in the show Afro-Atlantic Histories[4] (2022), the central figure occupies the canvas with imposing presence. The description of the pictorial gesture reveals the artist's strategy: the face — except for the eyes that meet the viewer — is covered by a marbled purple-and-yellow pattern, creating a kind of cartographic skin in motion. The red headwrap and the white sculptural frame act as markers that connect ancestry and critical reappropriation. By refusing the face as the central site of identification, Báez subverts the Eurocentric

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[2] Visual reference and contextual information available on the webpage of the exhibition Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985, organized by the Hammer Museum (UCLA): https://hammer.ucla.edu/radical-women/art/art/untitled-facial-hair-transplants.

[3] Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Silueta Series, Mexico)*, 1976. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Collection (New York). Visual documentation of this work, representative of the series, can be consulted in the institution's digital collection: https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/5216.

[4] Firelei Báez, *Given the ground (the fact that it surprised me, doesn't mean that I would abandon it)*, 2017. Acrylic and oil on canvas. Work included in the exhibition *Afro-Atlantic Histories*. Visual reference and exhibition context available on the official webpage of the National Gallery of Art (Washington): https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2022/afro-atlantic-histories.html.

physiognomic logic (Berger, 1999; Mirzoeff, 2011) and sustains a tension between presence and absence, dialoguing with identity as process (Hall, 2006) and with critiques of the coloniality of seeing (Quijano, 2000).

Báez's gesture situates itself at the intersection of cultural resistance and countervisuality, dismantling the illusory transparency of the portrait by redistributing the sensible (Rancière, 2005). The sculptural presence of the frame breaks bidimensionality and envelops the viewer, forcing them to recognize that all acts of seeing are perspectival. The work thus presents itself as an expanded and symbolic self-portrait in which the figure embodies a collective body shaped by Afro-Atlantic histories. Jamaican artist Leasho Johnson, in turn, moves between painting and urban intervention to challenge conventions of gender and sexuality, dialoguing with dancehall aesthetics. A significant example appears in the work *6:30*[5] (2014), in which the artist uses the lambe-lambe technique to insert caricatured figures directly onto the walls of Kingston Parish Church. The image appropriates the dance step of the same name, in which the female body bends forward, projecting the hips, confronting religious morality with performative hypersexuality.

Johnson's intervention activates the coloniality of seeing by revealing bodies subjected to surveillance and by refusing the paradigm of the idealized portrait in favor of bodily performance and gesture as the core of identity. By connecting the historical figure of the higglers to contemporary imaginaries through a pop aesthetic (Saunders, 2018), the artist reinforces the logic of re-existence, appropriating popular languages to reposition Black bodies. Similarly, Éder Oliveira investigates racialization in the Amazon, appropriating photographs from police pages to challenge the stigmatization of bodies. This is evident in the work Refraction[6] (2018). In this large-scale canvas, the face of an Amazonian man — whose features recall police portraits — is flooded with a vibrant red monochrome. The red serves as a critical filter of memory and urgency, while the work's monumentality demands an unavoidable experience, displacing the viewer from passive consumer to implicated witness.

Oliveira's Red Pages series enters the comparative matrix as a "counter-archive," rewriting visual narratives of stigmatized individuals and converting images of exclusion into devices of agency. In parallel, Chiachio & Giannone's Familia series transports portraiture into the realm of artisanal embroidery. In Family in Six Colors #2[7] (2018), the compositions simulate photographic poses enveloped in an exuberant chromatic tangle in which the couple and their animals dissolve and re-form among colored threads, celebrating a vibrant queer domesticity. This choice challenges art-historical hierarchies that relegated textiles to the decorative, repositioning portraiture as an affective space and evoking Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) mestiza identity. The work denaturalizes conventions (Berger, 1999), exchanging the ostentation of status for intimacy and proposing an "aesthetic decolonial option" (Mignolo, 2012) in which portraiture becomes a woven fabric of relationships that escape normative kinship structures.

In sum, the analyzed works reveal that, despite differences in medium and context, Mendieta, Báez, Johnson, Oliveira, and Chiachio & Giannone converge in rejecting hierarchical models of representation. Each artist repositions portraiture as a field of symbolic dispute: Mendieta through the liminal body-territory; Báez through the partial denial of the face and cultural hybridity; Johnson by transforming the street into a stage of re-existence; Oliveira by operating a counter-archive of dignity; and Chiachio & Giannone by expanding portraiture into textile affection. In dialogue with the comparative chart (Chart 1), one observes the intersection of categories such as cultural resistance, countervisuality, and mestiza identity. This diversity confirms that, from a decolonial perspective, portraiture is a field of experimentation where memory and politics intertwine, producing identities and alterities that open pathways to new ways of existing and narrates.

5 Conclusion

The analysis of the artworks demonstrates that, in the Latin American and Caribbean context, portraiture and self-portraiture constitute privileged spaces for historical rewriting and cultural affirmation, operating simultaneously in aesthetic, political, and

[5] Leasho Johnson, *6:30*, 2014. Urban intervention (paper and wheatpaste/lambe-lambe). Kingston, Jamaica. Documentary records of this work and others from the "Pim-Pim" series can be consulted in the artist's official portfolio: https://www.leashojohnson.com.

[6] Éder Oliveira, *Refração*, 2018. Oil on canvas. Visual documentation of this work and others from the "Páginas Vermelhas" series is available in the artist's official portfolio: https://www.ederoliveira.net/obras.

[7] Chiachio & Giannone, *Family in Six Colors #2 (Familia a seis colores #2)*, 2018. Hand embroidery with cotton and rayon threads on fabric. Documentation of this work and other pieces from the series can be consulted on the artists' official website: http://chiachiogiannone.com.

affective dimensions. By articulating theoretical concepts with formal and contextual readings, this study sought to broaden the understanding of decolonial poetics, situating self-portraiture as a strategic practice of resistance and creation. More than depicting an isolated self, the works examined here unsettle boundaries between the individual and the collective, the local and the transnational, calling upon the viewer to reconsider their modes of seeing. In this sense, and in alignment with the theme of this issue, it becomes evident that these practices establish arenas of symbolic negotiation in which different cosmoperceptions and visual repertoires enter into confrontation. By revealing how these artists operate between conflicting visual regimes, the study reinforces the potential of portraiture as a multilateral space of dispute, reimagination, and the production of subjectivities in postcolonial contexts.

As a field of research, the possibility remains open to deepen investigations into other intersections between self-representation, geographic displacements, and visual hybridisms, as well as to explore how these practices engage with emerging media, digital technologies, and transnational networks of image circulation. This openness does not seek to conclude the debate but rather to suggest that, from a decolonial perspective, portraiture remains a fertile terrain for thinking identities in motion and for imagining other possible visual histories.

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THE REPASSOS EXHIBITION AND THE MODERN INTEREST IN THE POPULAR

A EXPOSIÇÃO REPASSOS E O MODERNO INTERESSE PELO POPULAR

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ARTIGO SUBMETIDO EM 10 DE AGOSTO DE 2025

Lazzarin, A. L. R. & Martins, C. A. F. (2025). The Repassos Exhibition and the Modern Interest in the PopulaR. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 326-349 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239951

Abstract

The exhibition *Repassos – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* was the culmination of a body of work marked by an accumulation of content and dialogues that confronted diverse theoretical-methodological, technical, and technological positions, presenting a stark reality of poverty that continued to reverberate across the following decades. The project presented at MASP shaped an investigation into the modes of making craftsmanship associated with a practice rooted in the region's seventeenth-century colonial processes and which endured, up to the latter half of the twentieth century, as an expression of cultural resistance. Drawing on authors such as Lina Bo Bardi and her understanding of phenomena like pre-craftsmanship, this study aims to examine the exhibition as an opportunity for understanding Brazilian underdevelopment and as an alternative to both capitalist logic and hegemonic forms of modernity. The methodology articulated historical research and documentary analysis, combining ethnography with a technical study of making. The results indicate that, through the cooperative work between the artist and the weavers, a decisive opportunity was created for the preservation of knowledge and for interpretations relevant to contemporary theoretical debates, offering perspectives for the production of forms of knowledge committed to revising the structural hierarchies of Brazilian culture.

Keywords: Hand Weaving, Triângulo Mineiro, Exhibition, Popular, Modern Movement.

1 Introduction

For decades, practices, records, and investigations surrounding hand weaving in the Triângulo Mineiro[1] region have been developed. Such a delimitation raises relevant questions: what are its origins? What are its characteristics? Does the practice still persist? Although the factors that contributed to the consolidation of this traditional knowledge exceed the scope of the present study, it is possible to state that the exhibition *Repassos – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro*, held from September 9 to 28, 1975 at the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP), as shown in Figure 1, constituted the first cultural product to offer a regionalized interpretation of weaving practices whose reverberations, in various forms, have persisted over the last fifty years. The exhibition can be understood as a landmark of resistance, insofar making visible a know-how historically marginalized by the hegemonic narratives of modernity, an understanding constructed from a critical reflection on the historical, symbolic, technical, and material significance of the exhibition. Given the nature of the object, which involves technical, social, and symbolic practices, a methodology was adopted that combines historical research, documentary analysis, and ethnographic observation. This approach made it possible to understand hand weaving not only as a material practice, but as a field of meanings and relationships marked by modes of transmission, gestures, and collective memories. The analysis of the exhibition's documentation, combined with the study of the practices and trajectories of those involved, allowed the unfolding of this work to be recognized.

The analysis proposed here begins with a descriptive and interpretative composition of the exhibition's own title, taken as a key for reading the content presented. Along this path, the reader is introduced to the concept of *repasso*, the work of the artist Edmar de Almeida, and his interlocution with the region's weavers—elements considered indispensable to the present investigation. Before moving to the proposed composition, it is important to offer a brief contextualization through a concise historical overview of hand weaving in the region under study. In Minas Gerais, throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods, an essentially female artisanal textile technology developed, marked by technical knowledge passed across generations and initially focused on domestic subsistence, in which women wove "for general use" — that is, for strictly utilitarian purposes — as well as for the making of trousseaus[2]. According to Cláudia Renata Duarte (2011), from the second half of the eighteenth century onward, manual textile production began to exceed the limits of household utilization, acquiring commercial weight in different localities of the then Captaincy of Minas Gerais. Such expansion provoked reactions from the

[1] Officially, the region is defined as the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba. It comprises the west part of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

[2] Today it is still possible to find handcrafted wooden chests/boxes where pieces woven on handlooms were stored and given to young women when they got married.

Portuguese metropolis, which regarded with concern the autonomous growth of this economic practice. As a result, restrictive measures were decreed by the Portuguese Crown to limit local manufacture and prevent the weakening of the colony's economic dependence on the metropole. Some forms of production, however, were exempted from the prohibition, as documented at the time: "*dos ditos Teares, e Manufacturas, em que se técem, ou manufacturam Fazendas grossas de Algodão, que servem para o uso, e vestuario dos Negros, para enfadar, e empacotar Fazendas, e para outros Ministérios similhantes*" (Duarte, 2011, pp. 1805–1806). Such restrictions reveal not only political control over the means of local production, but also the limits imposed on the technical and economic autonomy of the population, especially regarding women's work in textile production. Despite such control, looms and artifacts survived in the countryside, preserving traditional forms introduced into Brazilian daily life through Portuguese immigration — especially through the adoption of the treadle loom[3] — and merging with other practices in techniques of weaving, dyeing, and even patterning, influenced by Indigenous and African references[4]. Because they were portable and easily dismantled, looms accompanied processes of territorial occupation from the sixteenth century onward, disseminating thanks to knowledge transmitted within communities and to their artisanal reproduction by local carpenters and blacksmiths.

When considering textile production in Minas Gerais, one must also account for the establishment of the first textile industries beginning in 1868, which reached the Triângulo Mineiro in 1920. Although their presence in the region was brief, the impact on traditional forms of production was significant, especially through the introduction of new logics of consumption, labor organization, and productive relations (Duarte, 2011). This process contributed to the weakening of artisanal weaving by shifting the productive axis toward an industrial framework. In addition, agricultural expansion and the intense urbanization experienced in the region from the 1950s onward generated profound structural changes: many looms were abandoned, tools became obsolete, and access to raw materials, historically linked to rural life, were compromised (Duarte, 2011). Within this context, one of the main threats to the continuity of this practice, historically rooted in rural dynamics.

Lina Bo Bardi understood craftsmanship as "the expression of a time and a society," carried out by "a worker who possesses even a modest capital that allows him to work the raw material and sell the finished product, with material profit and spiritual satisfaction, the object being both designed and executed by the worker himself" (L. B. Bardi, 2009a, p. 107, our translation). This conception emphasizes the creative autonomy of the craftsperson, in contrast to the fragmentation characteristic of industrial labor. In the Triângulo Mineiro, textile knowledge was predominantly transmitted among women in rural environments through family bonds and community networks. Yet there are also significant records of the continuity and reinvention of these practices in urban contexts. In such cases, there are notable strategies of adaptation employed by these women who, facing socioeconomic transformations, reformulated their methods of craft to accommodate the new spaces, rhythms, and conditions of urban life, while still preserving fundamental aspects of traditional knowledge. In this sense, hand weaving in the Triângulo Mineiro may be understood as a practice of resistance, fostering a fertile environment for an alternative modernity – or even a transmodernity[5] –, that rejects consumption as the ultimate purpose of creation.

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[3] A type of hand loom where the warp opening is controlled by pedals connected to a heddle system.

[4] Other types of looms can be mentioned here, such as the table loom and the waist loom. This article is the result of ongoing PhD research developed by the author Ariel Luís Romani Lazzarin under the guidance of Professor Carlos Alberto Ferreira Martins, at the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (IAU-USP), where a more in-depth discussion of this subject will be presented.

[5] The concept developed by Enrique Dussel can offer further development for the discussion in its transposition to the present time, as a continuation of the events investigated here. For the author, transmodernity surpasses modernity built from the knowledge that it itself disregarded. To Eurocentrism, transmodernity proposes an openness to multiple traditions and epistemologies, projecting a truly plural and multicultural historical horizon (Dussel, 2003).

Fig. 1: Poster for the Repassos Exhibition – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro (1975). Source: Edmar de Almeida's personal archive, 1975.

2 Fundamental Elements of the Work

Understanding the *repassos* requires not only attention to the technique itself, but also to the historical context of resistance, control, and adaptation within which weaving practices have survived. The *repassos* constitute the method through which knowledge of this technique is produced and preserved, relying on graphic records, codes, and verbal transmission. Drawn in notebooks, notes in the margins of pages, hand-made sketches, and schematic diagrams, as shown in Figure 2, they form an informal archive that serves as a repository of the weavers' technical memory and is indispensable to the processes of warping and weaving. These records not only guide the setup and organization of the loom but also document patterns, rhythms, and combinations of colors and textures specific to a particular artisan or community. According to Almeida (Revista Veja, 1975, pp. 106–108, our translation)[6], "the '*repassos*' (signs inscribed in a sort of rudimentary score used to indicate the order and position of threads of different colors, resulting in a given design) were jotted down on wrapping paper, roughly executed, and also passed from mother to daughter." In other words, their mode of transmission surpasses the technical aspect, representing a form of cultural knowledge that connects memory, tradition, and practice, highlighting the central role of the weavers in preserving the textile heritage of the Triângulo Mineiro.

Technically, the *repasso* corresponds to the stage in which the warp threads are passed through the heddles and the reed of the loom, determining the interlacement and, consequently, the final design of the textile. However, more than just an operational step that requires knowledge, precision, and time in handling a large number of threads, the *repasso* represents a gesture laden with accumulated knowledge, visual calculation, and embodied experience, transmitted across generations through observation, practice, and communal exchange among women. A study initiated by the National Pró-Memória Foundation in the late 1970s identified more than 200 *repassos* in the Triângulo Mineiro, bearing names such as *Doce de Leite, Bagageiro de Dama, Pé de Gato, Cândida Maria da Paixão, Bico de Rosa, Borboleta*, among others. In contexts where access to formal instruction was limited, the *repasso* functioned as a social technology that articulated memory, improvisation, and method. Thus, to understand the *repasso* is also to understand the modes through which artisanal knowledge is coded and reinvented within contexts of continuous social transformation. It reveals the strength of this practice as a language of its own, deeply rooted in a collective process of creation. In this sense, the *repassos* are at the basis of the resistance against processes that attempt to render this knowledge invisible.

[6] Statement attributed to Edmar de Almeida in an article published by Veja magazine.

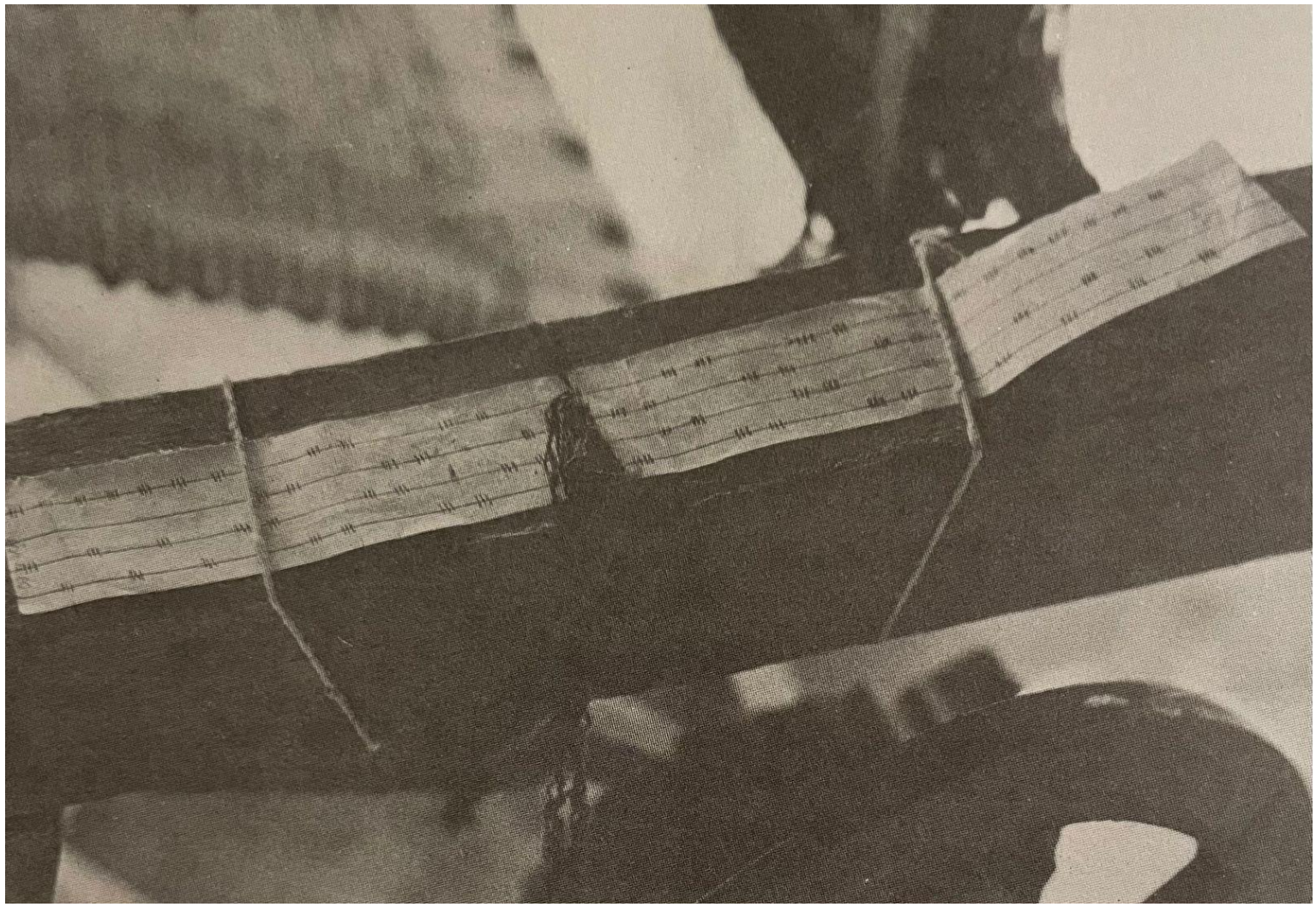

Fig. 2: Repasso code fixed on a loom. Source: Maureau et al., 1984, p. 57.

The region is decisive for this process, particularly in the consolidation of techniques for cultivating cotton, extracting kapok or animal wool, dyeing the threads, and establishing collective work. After presenting the *repassos*, it is important to document the set of artifacts used in the production of fabrics in hand weaving, based on the study published by the National Pró-Memória Foundation in 1984[7], as previously cited. In preparing the threads, depending on the type of raw material, a cotton gin is used to remove the seeds, and the string to remove smaller impurities. The following process, carding, requires two cards, tools essential for untangling the fibers and performing an additional stage of cleaning. Next, the resulting mass is transformed into thread with the use of the spinning wheel, and the product is stored on a spool attached to the wheel. Dyeing requires a preliminary step of gathering the threads into skeins, ensuring uniform coloration; for this, another piece of equipment is needed, the swift (*dobadeira*) or a similar tool, the *sarilho*. The dyeing process employs stainless-steel or wooden rods, a barrel, pestle, stove, containers, copper and iron kettles, cloths, and sieves, in addition to water and soap. Furthermore, before weaving, warping constitutes the final operation performed on the threads, preparing them to receive the weft; for this, the *casal* — a piece of equipment used to “match” the warp threads wound onto bobbins, preparing them for the loom — and the sword are used. For weaving itself, the primary equipment is the loom, which may be vertical, horizontal, or inclined, and the development of the textile depends on the desired weave, with or without the use of *repassos*.

[7] Research project developed by the National Center for Cultural Reference since 1976.

Back to the Exhibition, the artist Edmar José de Almeida, from the city of Araxá, Minas Gerais, born in 1944, began his artistic training as a child in the city of Uberaba, located in the same state, where he took classes with Elizabeth Van der Winckel[8], who introduced him to works by Henri Matisse and Georges Rouault. In 1960, he moved to São Paulo, where he studied with Wega Nery Gomes Pinto[9] and, two years later, enrolled in the Program in Brazilian Arts and Letters at the University of Brasília, where he was a student of the artists Maciej Babinski and Athos Bulcão. He returned to São Paulo in 1966, when he studied drawing and painting with Yolanda Mohalyi[10] and weaving techniques with Agnes Schumaker. During these years, his textile work became increasingly visible to critics, as recorded by Vilém Flusser in his article *Tapeçarias*, written in 1970 and published in the Literary Supplement of the Estado de São Paulo. The author began his text by questioning whether the cave is humankind's primitive habitat, and whether human beings are, in fact, creatures who dwell, or whether it was the need to hunt that compelled them to venture outward and build their own spaces, thus leading to the contemplation of Edmar's textile art. For Flusser, tapestry would relate to the culture of the tent just as architecture would relate to the culture of the house, and this possible co-existence or interdependence between tapestry and architecture would be grounded, in his view, in a historical retrospective that goes from Egypt to the then-recent art biennials. Just as Gothic tapestries announced "the storm of the Renaissance" (Flusser, 1970a, n.p., our translation), the author asks what contemporary tapestry might be announcing. For him,

> rugs are the result of a weaving that seeks to deny and cause its own weft to disappear. (…) And today it is rugs that are the predestined vehicle for preserving and disseminating the tendencies that the Symbolists and Fantastic Art set in motion in the previous generation. Indeed, thanks to the rug, such tendencies may continue to challenge those other contemporary ones that can be summarized under the title "structuralist" (Flusser, 1970a, n.p., our translation).

Based on the author's reflections, it becomes evident that, for him, tapestry was not limited to its decorative function, but acted as an instrument of cultural and aesthetic transmission, in which the technique of an "invisible warp" reinforced its symbolic role in questioning contemporary artistic tendencies. In another article written in the same year, entitled *Tapêtes*, Flusser (1970b) continued his interpretation of Edmar's work as an anti-structural tendency. By conducting a syntactic and semantic analysis of one of the artist's pieces, he understood the woven butterfly as a figure that challenges the structuralist world surrounding it, precisely because it is embodied within a rug. Flusser used the work to explain "Edmar's engagement with rugs, an engagement whose roots are probably unconscious to him, yet revealed through disciplined analysis" (Flusser, 1970b, n.p., our translation). For Flusser, the path Edmar chose was difficult, for in his search for an alternative to anti-semantic tendencies, the artist risked falling into the danger of kitsch-ification (Flusser, 1970b).

> Edmar clings to the tradition of tapestry because within it he discovers a channel perfectly suited to transmitting a symbolic message opposed to the syntactic messages that inundate us. By being a traditional weaver, Edmar may become a disturbing, and in this sense, highly informative, artist (Flusser, 1970b, n.p., our translation).

The philosopher offered an incisive interpretation of what the artist was investigating in his work as an act of resistance, an interpretation later supported by the impact and success of the 1975 exhibition, which would validate Edmar's artistic and social choices. By studying Edmar's works, Flusser reinforced his critique of technique, modern rationality, and the notion of linear progress, providing the foundations for a reflection on alternative modernities grounded in the valorization of the symbolic and the sensitive to overcome the dichotomy between tradition and modernity.

After a period of study in Europe, facilitated by Dom Evaristo Arns[11], and due to the political repression in the 1970s, Edmar's safe haven became his family home in Uberlândia and the Santo Antônio Farm, located in the rural area of the same region.

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8 Born in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and Technical Sciences in Rotterdam.

9 Born in Corumbá, MS, Brazil. Artist, writer, and teacher, her work has been exhibited in dozens of exhibitions in Brazil and abroad.

10 Born in Cluj Napoca, Romania. Studied drawing and painting at the Budapest Academy of Fine Arts. In Brazil, she was a member of Grupo 7.

11 According to a statement published by the Uberlândia Virtual Museum on September 8, 2016.

His training, combined with his interest in the popular means of production of his homeland and his close relationship with the cerrado landscape, reshaped his connection to place, leading him to research and study the techniques involved in weaving, as well as the artifacts and *repassos* identified in the region. During his time in Uberlândia, during persecution from the military dictatorship, he took the opportunity to carry out activities with local weavers and produced the piece *Crucifixo* — shown in Figure 3 — in 1973, as a tribute to Dom Pedro Casaldáliga[12]. This work was presented to Lina Bo Bardi through mutual friends and became[13] the initial link between the architect and the artist.

Edmar was not the only one intrigued by these common methods of production in the region; he was often accompanied by his friend Flávio Império who, according to Marcelina Gorni (2004), also held a deep interest in Brazilian artisanal production. According to the author, the architect's work revealed "his interest and curiosity about the subsistence manufactures that persisted despite the advances of industrial progress" (Gorni, 2004, p. 49). Together with Edmar, Flávio produced three Super-8 video works — *Colhe, corda, fia, tece; As tecedeiras de Uberlândia – MG*; and *Tecidos artesanais de Edmar de Almeida* — which were also exhibited in 1975. These works convey images of landscapes, popular spinning and weaving techniques, and religious manifestations expressed through folk art, all captured during their journeys throughout the Triângulo Mineiro region. For Flávio, "the act of doing, or quite literally 'getting one's hands dirty,' will always represent a distinctive form of knowledge, one that confers a unique repertoire upon the one who performs and practices it" (Gorni, 2004, p. 50). Closely aligned with Edmar's perspective, the architect understood this technology as transcending mere technical execution, instead constituting a form of knowledge deeply rooted in both body and region. By recording this production, he not only documented cultural heritage and the work of an artist, but also recognized the transformative aspect of manual work, which articulates memory, technique, and creativity.

3 The people at the museum once again

The *Crucifixo* was the connection between Edmar and Lina, a work that at that moment represented the convergences between the interests of the Minas Gerais artist and the Italian-Brazilian architect. She had found in the northeast region of Brazil, the *Nordeste*, the content for new critical formulations concerning popular art, Brazilian pre-craft production, and industrial art that should be situated within the museum, where, in her view, there should also be a school of industrial art. In this sense, "(art in the sense of craft, beyond art itself) that would allow contact between technicians, designers, and executors" (L. B. Bardi, 2009a, p. 109, our translation). Her proposal pointed toward the need for collective awareness of the characteristics of an abrupt, imported industrialization and its serious consequences, such as the distancing from the country's rich cultural reality. One of her calls was for artists to acknowledge the fact that there was no craftsmanship in the country, in the sense that the term itself was historically constituted and tied to craft guilds, but rather a form of domestic pre-craft production that might have been identified in time to influence the choices made by industry, for greater coherence with its people (L. B. Bardi, 1994). Part of her research resulted in the *Nordeste* Exhibition, held in the city of Salvador in 1963, where, according to the architect herself, what was presented was:

> a poetics of human things that are not gratuitous, not created by mere fantasy. (…) Forms of artisanal and industrial design. (…) technical production tied to the reality of materials and not to folkloric-choreographic formal abstraction. (…) a necessary path for finding, within technical humanism, a poetics (L. B. Bardi, 2009b, pp. 117–118, our translation).

In other words, this exhibition was significant not only for advancing propositions and discussions concerning the exhibition space, but also for marking a turning point in the valorization of popular production as both a component and creator of the present, breaking with the folklorizing logic and the hierarchy that subordinated the popular to the erudite. For Lina, in fact, repudiating folklore was necessary, as its capacity to exterminate cultural roots had to be confronted with an opposing and rational investigative platform in order to understand the meaning of Popular Art for this country (L. B. Bardi, 2009b). The

[12] Dom Pedro Casaldáliga was born in Balsareny, Barcelona, lived in Brazil from 1968 onwards, and was in São Felix do Araguaia, Mato Grosso, during the dictatorship.

[13] The play was presented to Lina Bo Bardi by her friends Flávio Império and Alan Meyer, in São Paulo.

Nordeste Exhibition, which the architect also referred to as *Civilização Nordeste*[14], it caused such a stir that its installation in Rome was suspended, generating wide international repercussions and leading architect Bruno Zevi to write the article *L'arte dei poveri fa paura ai generali*[15] (Zevi, 1965), denouncing the silencing and presenting Lina's trajectory and project in Brazil. This recognition of artifacts as living expressions of creativity, technique, and identity, engaging in dialogue with contemporary art and design, gained national scale with "The Hand of the Brazilian People" in 1969. This other exhibition, the first temporary exhibition at the newly inaugurated MASP building, continued the same political gesture, discussing another vision of Brazilian modernity. With the participation of Pietro Maria Bardi, Glauber Rocha, and Martim Gonçalves, the exhibition presented approximately one thousand objects from all over Brazil, from a country unknown to a large part of the Brazilian population. Once again, the people's production entered the museum, this time in the most important museum in the country, fulfilling the crucial role of valuing popular cultural production, inventive, creative, and utilitarian, constructing a Brazilian cultural identity, questioning dominant discourses of modernity, and bringing the people into the museum as a way of legitimizing marginal knowledge and practices[16].

Not by coincidence, the productive bond between Edmar and Lina, later transformed into a friendship, endured. The works mentioned above appear as samples of the architect's earlier projects in the field of exhibition design and, when placed alongside what Edmar was investigating at that time, make evident the convergence of their interests. In the early years of the decade following the *Nordeste* and *A Mão do Povo Brasileiro* exhibitions, Lina began a series of trips to the inland region of Minas Gerais to visit her friend at Sítio Santo Antônio, to learn about the work he was developing with local weavers, to explore the Cerrado biome, and to formulate what would become their first joint project. The exhibition *Repassos – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* was conceived as an act of cultural resistance and was understood as such from its inception. In a letter dated July 28, 1975, Pietro Maria Bardi informed Edmar that he had received and understood the project proposal, emphasized the importance of the future exhibition, and expressed his support, as well as that of Lina and the Museum, for the initiative, which he described as a "(one day) archaeological document" (P. M. Bardi, 1975, n.p., our translation). Faced with the collective responsibility toward History, he affirmed that the artist's work posed questions concerning the survival of humankind in the face of an arrogant technological progress (P. M. Bardi, 1975, n.p.).

[14] Lina begins the text about the *Nordeste* exhibition by saying that the exhibition could have been called *Civilização Nordeste* (Northeast Civilization), as it dealt with practical aspects of human life. In fact, in *Tempos de Grossura: o design no* impasse (Times of Roughness: Design at an Impasse), the text is presented with the title *Civilização Nordeste*.

[15] Translated from the original Italian: "The art of the poor frightens the generals".

[16] A new staging of the Exhibition took place at MASP in 2016, following the concept, but with adaptations.

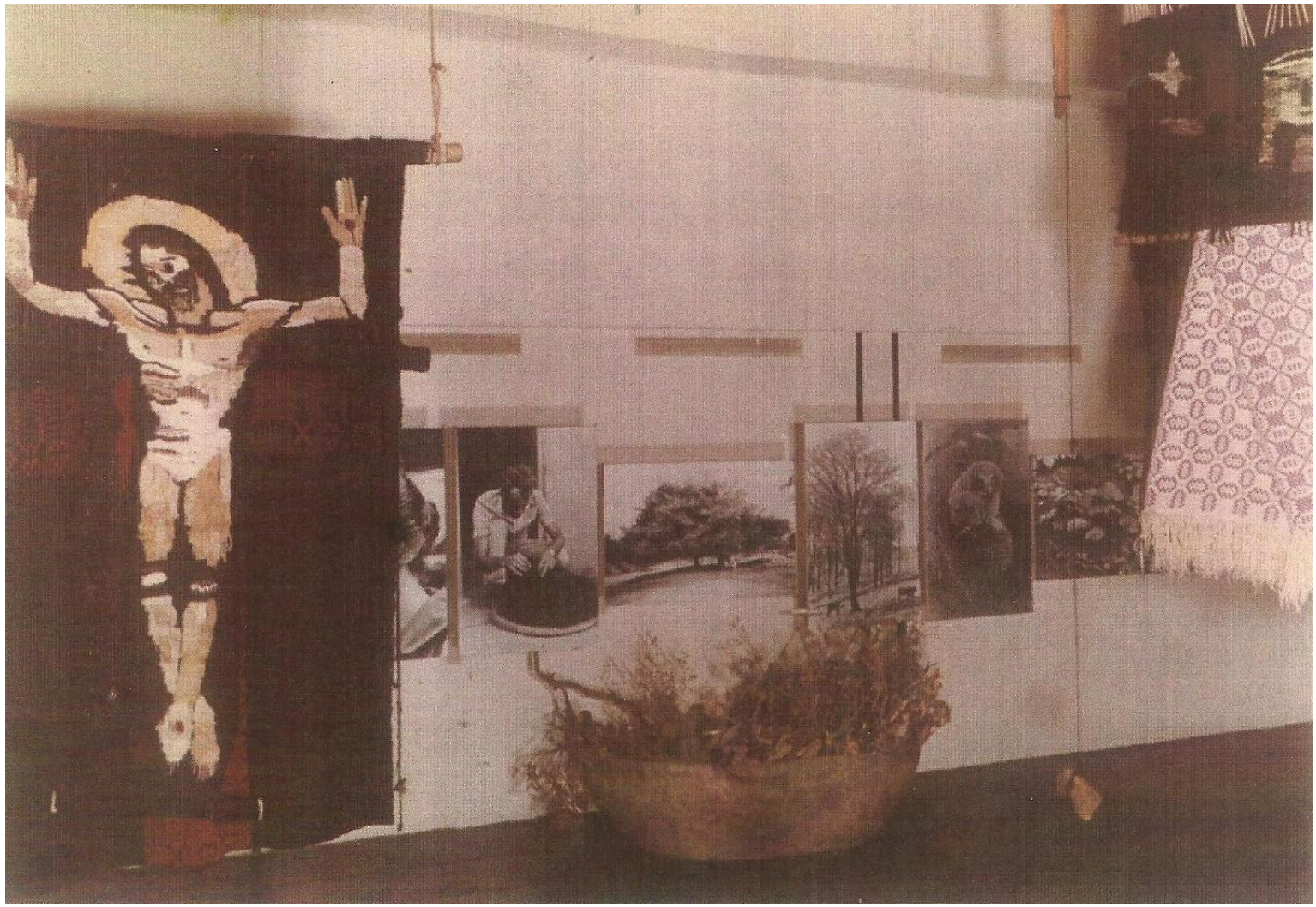

Fig. 3: *Crucifixo* as part of the *Repassos Exhibition – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* (1975). Source: Personal Collection of Edmar de Almeida, 1975.

Fig. 4: Installation of the *Repassos Exhibition – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* (1975). Photographer: Luiz Sodaki Ossaka. Source: MASP Collection, 1975.

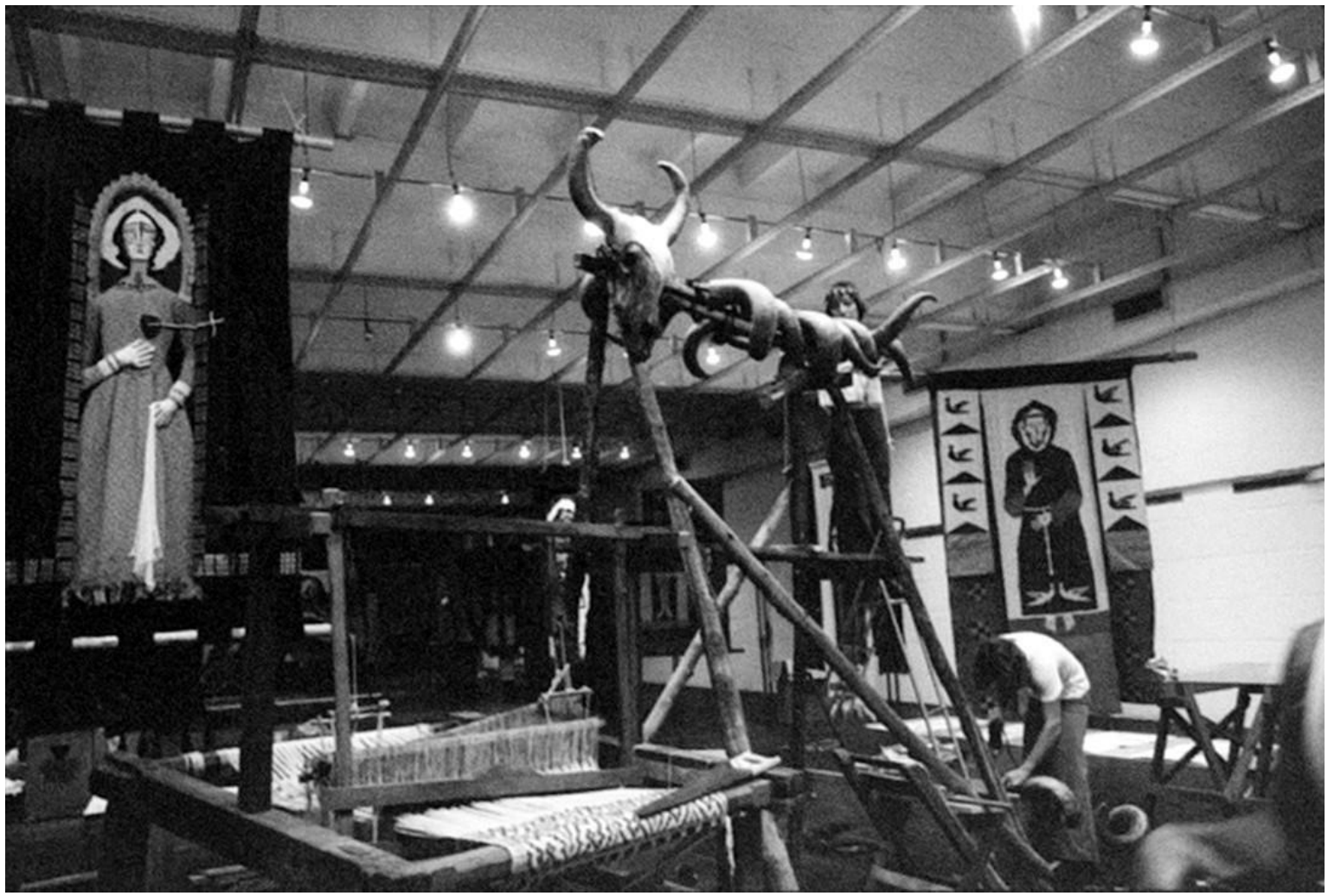

Fig. 5: Installation of the *Repassos Exhibition – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* (1975). Photographer: Luiz Sodaki Ossaka. Source: MASP Collection, 1975.

Fig. 6: Installation of the *Repassos Exhibition – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* (1975). Photographer: Luiz Sodaki Ossaka. Source: MASP Collection.

Luiz Sodaki Ossaka, Flávio Império, Alan Meyer, and Maria Cecília Cerrotti worked alongside them. In addition to the *Crucifixo*, tapestries were produced based on Edmar's designs and with the work of weavers from Martinésia (a district of Uberlândia), Abadia dos Dourados, and Araguari. The pieces[17] were exhibited in the museum's main hall along with videos, photographs, plants from Cerrado biome, artifacts, work tools, and research on dyes. Based on the exhibition's ethnographic nature, an expansive environment was created, as shown in Figures 3 to 7, which presented the process through which those works were produced in Minas Gerais. Resistance was explicit, as a continuation of what had been initiated with the 1963 exhibition and as an expression of the anguish experienced during the years of dictatorship, in which the tapestries, such as the one dedicated to Friar, spoke on behalf of the people as both an affirmation of identity and a denunciation of a difficult historical moment. For Pietro[18], the work presented itself as an "essentially Brazilian" masterpiece (P. M. Bardi, 1975, p. 106, our translation). *Deposição*, for example, a piece weighing approximately 200 kilograms, measuring five by four

[17] According to the exhibition booklet, the works on display were: 01 – *Cordeiro* (Lamb), 02 – *Divino* (Holy Spirit), 03 – *Antônio Conselheiro*, 04 – *Nossa Senhora Menina* (Child Virgin Mary), 05 – *Anjo 1* (Angel 1), 06 – *São Francisco de Assis* (Saint Francis of Assisi), 07 – *Crucifixo* (Crucifix), 08 – *Nossa Senhora e o Menino* (Virgin Mary and the Child), 09 – *Estrela* (Star), 10 – *Espírito Santo* (Holy Spirit), 11 – *Menino Jesus* (Infant Jesus), 12 – *Nossa Senhora* (Virgin Mary), 13 – *São José* (Saint Joseph), 14 – *Nossa Senhora do Vale* (Our Lady of the Valley), 15 – *Santa Teresa de Ávila* (Saint Teresa of Ávila), 16 – *Cristo da Loucura* (Christ of Madness), 17 – *Arcanjo* (Archangel), 18 – *Nossa Senhora das Dores* (Our Lady of Sorrows), 19 – *Descida da Cruz* (Descent from the Cross), 20 – *Rei Gaspar* (King Gaspar), 21 – *Rei Belchior* (King Melchior), 22 – *Rei Baltazar* (King Balthazar), 23 – *Cristo na Cruz* (Christ on the Cross), 24 – *Anja* (Female Angel), 25 – *Cristo Ressurgido* (Risen Christ), and 26 – *Paramento Festa Pentecostes* (Pentecost Feast Vestment, for liturgical use).

[18] Statement attributed to Pietro Maria Bardi in an article published by Veja magazine.

meters, and woven with horsehair, was among the works displayed, as shown in Figure 8, and was entirely related to the moment of persecution and torture. As an example of the work developed, as described below, each piece utilized a set of knowledge and synthesized the collective work that persisted in that daily life in the rural environment.

According to MASP's archival records, the piece *Nossa Senhora das Dores* was conceived with reference to the Spanish tradition — *La Amargura, La Soledad, La del Valle, La Macarena*[19]*.* The materials used for its creation would involve the use of dyed twine, industrialized wool, silk thread, silver thread, raw cotton, raw wool, horsehair, crystal stones, and tin. The fabrics would be produced on a four-pedal loom using *repassos* (background – *bagageiro* and *bagageiro de dados* [a traditional patterned ground weave and its checked variation]; clothing – *rosinha* and *quadro* [a small floral-patterned weave and a modular framed motif]; cape – *lua miúda* [a small crescent-shaped motif]; border – detail in *lua miúda* [small crescent-shaped motif]) and the face would be woven on a two-pedal loom, in addition to cutting and sewing. The assembly required sheet-metal framing and soldering, as well as bamboo and eucalyptus. Its production would demand the work of four weavers, two assemblers[20] (a seamstress and an assistant), one crochet maker[21], a sheet-metal artisan, an embroiderer, a weaver (face), a carpenter, and an assistant. Archival documents also record another piece, *Irmã Pobreza*, which would rely on the work of two spinners, one loom operator, one weaver, two finishers[22], one carpenter, and would use exposed warp threads — a technique more closely associated with weaving itself. Its theme would refer to Saint Francis of Assisi and was described as

> an "allegory" of the elderly women of the Brazilian inland region, of their hard life, their work, their struggle. She is an old woman, typical of the inland region, with her cotton dress and calloused hands. They possess nothing, which is why her hands are open and empty: in their continual giving, they keep nothing for themselves, not even the minimum necessary. She wears an apron because they work from childhood until old age. They only stop to die. The face was based on the thousands of faces of these elderly women of the Minas Gerais inland region — from my grandmother and my mother to the oldest of the weavers, Dona Maria, wife of José Isídio. Her daughter Nêga, a 38-year-old weaver, executed the design, keeping in mind the figure of her mother, Dona Maria, the most dedicated and the one with the most creativity and capacity for work among all those who wove as part of this group work (*Exposição Repassos – Edmar e as Tecedeiras do Triângulo Mineiro*, 1975, s.p., our translation).

[19] Theme of *Nossa Senhora das Dores* (Our Lady of Sorrows). Of Spanish tradition, more particularly from Seville, where she is called *La Amargura, La Soledad, La del Valle, and La Macarena.* Andalusians distinguish three stages of the Sorrows — La Amargura, on the verge of weeping but shedding no tears. She is pure silence. Hence her being called *Silenciosa* (Quiet) and *La Soledad*. *La del Valle* bears her face in tears, while *La Macarena* weeps and smiles at the same time. In her, extreme sorrow and joy coexist without contradiction. In Brazil, she is the most widespread and well-known representation of Mary, from the period of colonization to the present day, where she is used in the Procession of the Encounter on the *5ª feira da Semana Santa* (Holy Week's Thursday). In processions she usually wears a purple mantle and a blue dress. Throughout the year, when placed on an altar, the mantle is deep blue and the dress is white or light blue. She holds in her hands a delicate handkerchief and a sword piercing her heart. Her crown forms a circle of stars. Most of the images are life-size replicas of distaff. Protector of Juazeiro, the Mother of Father Cícero. In Mexico she is confused with Guadalupe; still in Spain, *La Soledad* is the protector of contemplative and cenobitic orders. The Virgin of Silence par excellence (Exhibition Archive, n.d., n.p.).

[20] Assembly workers.

[21] Crochet maker.

[22] Finishers.

Fig. 7: *Repassos Exhibition – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* (1975). Author: Luiz Sodaki Ossaka. Source: MASP Collection, 1975.

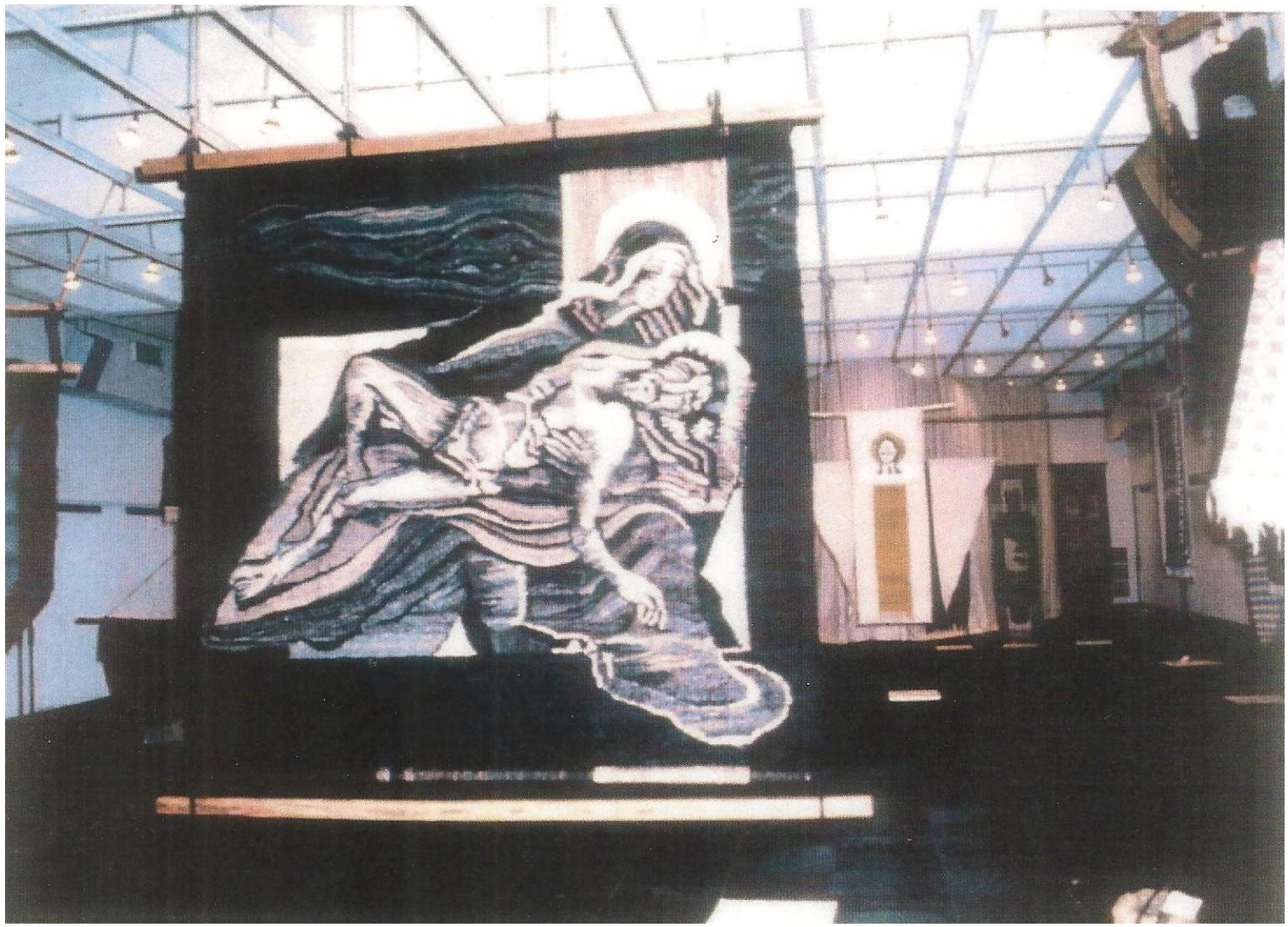

Fig. 8: Deposition forming part of the *Repassos Exhibition – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* (1975). Source: Edmar de Almeida's Personal Archive, 1975.

The details presented above reveal the lengthy and collective nature of the production process, as well as its anthropological dimension. It was an exhibition that left a mark on the cultural scene for everything it presented, for bringing the rural world onto Paulista Avenue and for the impact of elements such as the distribution of manure to those present at the opening, the sound of the horn calling people into the museum, and the religious themes of the pieces. In a way, this exhibition distances Edmar from the risk of slipping into kitsch, as framed by Flusser (1970b), once the work is interpreted through Lina's perspective that what is truly popular can never be kitsch, since for her the concept does not belong to Popular Art but to the bourgeoisie, and is irreversible. According to her,

> the true meaning of kitsch is fear, fear of death, the refusal to face death by housewives who pile up, against a ghost they do not wish to face, the deluge of small family tendernesses, the hypocrisy of little lace trimmings and Easter bunnies, embroidered curtains and ornaments, and mementos of every kind (L. B. Bardi, 1994, p. 31, our translation).

The exhibition presented a country that many preferred not to see; it denounced inequality and poverty, acknowledging the nation's condition while simultaneously offering an alternative, not by glorifying misery, but through the knowledge and resilience of a people who endured scarcity. It is impossible not to return to Lina's critical perspective when interpreting Edmar's work with the weavers, because, like Vilém Flusser, she recognized its unsettling nature when she stated that this was not an exhibition of religious art; for her, "in difficult periods in a country's history, when structures collapse, mysticism is the last resort that pulls man out of passivity" (L. B. Bardi, 1975, n.p., our translation). Lina was responsible for writing the

exhibition's introductory text, in which the excerpt cited above is followed by the full transcription below, given its incisive and synthetic power as a reading of Edmar's artistic choices, which draw upon a regional repertoire to communicate.

> Thus – the misery up to the point of madness of Mariazinha the weaver, Waldir the blacksmith, and Arlindo the fixer of ox carts, inhabitants of Martinésia in the Triângulo Mineiro. The desire "to make," to place creativity at the service of someone, the search for a path toward a more dignified human condition, find in mysticism a temporary solution. This is the only meaning of this exhibition, which lies far from any religious "poetics," from tapestry as the "art" of personalistic artistic exhibitionism. The spinning, weaving, and dyeing techniques, the materials connected to nature rather than their substitutes, indicate only the possibility of a civilization seeking solutions other than those of "consumption." It is not an exhibition against the achievements of Western civilization, against industrialization or 'comfort'. It is not an exhibition that presents art as consolation for misery, as a sedative for the consciences of those who do not "need" it. Edmar merely recorded things, events, possibilities, in the Cerrado region of the Triângulo Mineiro. A small contribution to the great collective awakening that transcends national borders to join the international debate exposing the perversity of a system that once believed in 'industrial design' as a purifying force and knows it cannot return to the apologetics of Ruskin and Morris. An artistic search at the anthropological level, a self-criticism at the collective level. The fact that the work is "figurative" or "religious" changes nothing in this presentation, a harsh testimony of hands that weave, interlace, cut, and dye. A statement without sentimentality and false populism. A counter-craft fully aware of all possible transformations, marked by human effort (L. B. Bardi, 1975, n.p., our translation).

With significant public impact, the exhibition drew attention, for example, from Vladimir Herzog, who, while working at TV Cultura, began producing a program about it; however, the project was interrupted by the journalist's tragic death in October 1975. According to the exhibition's records, for Pietro, "the exhibition of Edmar's tapestries was the demonstration that in Brazil one can work in this art with seriousness and originality" (P. M. Bardi, n.d., n.p., our translation)[23]. The press[24] reported on the exhibition and on the screening of the film made by Flávio about Edmar's work and the weavers, always highlighting the originality of the production, with a discourse that could not have been more inviting or stimulating, given the inevitable popular tone proposed by the exhibition. For example, an unidentified newspaper clipping, along with the MASP exhibition archive, records the artist himself asserting that it was a work that rejected both traditional tapestry and conventional handicraft. O Estado de São Paulo newspaper, in a text by Telmo Martino (1975), reported that the show represented a new type of culture, that of the serialized booklet, as well as Edmar's desire to preserve his freedom. Days later, the same newspaper published a text by Jacob Klintowitz, in which the author recognized the importance, audacity, and vitality of a production marginalized by the cultural elite and, drawing connections to *A Mão do Povo Brasileiro* and other initiatives, emphasized the importance of paying close attention to works that deviated from what was typically offered by the art world and that presented a profound social reality (Klintowitz, 1975).

Clearly, the press dedicated itself to disseminating information as the exhibition gained resonance[25]. On September 24 of the same year, Veja magazine published an article about the exhibition, opening with Pietro's statement that it had been the most important exhibition of the year, in which he emphasized the fundamental role of the work in the construction of Brazilian art and its exceptional status within it (P. M. Bardi, 1975). The magazine highlighted the didactic nature of the exhibition and Edmar's persistence; he recounted the beginnings of his weaving practice and pointed out the presence of weaving even in situations of extreme poverty. The text also clarified the range of knowledge involved in the production of these works, noting the roles of spinners, dyers, and weavers. The exhibition's impact demonstrates how the work extended beyond the exhibition circuit, generating critical and journalistic interest and positioning weaving within the cultural debates of the period. The various reactions – from specialized critics to the mainstream press – indicate that the exhibition not only attracted attention

[23] Typewritten text signed by P.M.B.

[24] Edition of September 8, 1975, of the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo.

[25] An excerpt from Jacob Klintowitz's text was used for a new promotion of the exhibition on September 19, 1975.

but also broadened the understanding of the aesthetic and social significance of this practice within the Brazilian artistic context.

4 Sociocultural Developments

The year 1976 began with the repercussion of the award received by Edmar from the Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte (APCA) for the exhibition held the previous year. On January 18, Folha de São Paulo newspaper announced the winners of the important prize, highlighting the monumental exhibition *Repassos – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* and, in the same edition, published the text *Tapestries: The Art of the Twentieth Century*. The article contributed to the recognition of the exhibition by situating the work within a national context of tapestry development. In addition to justifying the title, it presented a retrospective of productions by artists in the country, especially in the previous year, bringing together a significant number of exhibitions in Brazil and abroad, as well as artists and awards associated with Brazilian tapestry. The high level of the exhibition was highlighted, and Edmar was positioned among the leading figures, his work acknowledged as original and distinct from everything produced by the artists mentioned at the time, such as Regina Graz, Norberto Nicola, Genaro de Carvalho, Jacques Douchez, Burle Marx, among others. The text also provided a brief historical overview of the technique, describing it as one of humanity's oldest manufacturing activities and highlighting its continued presence and capacity for adaptation across centuries and different continents.

Among those who visited the exhibition was Xavier Maureau, a Frenchman who expressed great admiration for the work and realized that the exhibition could guide further research. Based on his interest, dedication, and ability to mobilize institutions, the Centro Nacional de Referência Cultural (CNRC), under the direction of Aloísio Magalhães and through the Fundação Nacional Pró-Memória, undertook in 1976 one of its most significant initiatives: a research project on weaving in the Triângulo Mineiro[26], aligned with the institution's objective of "establishing a reference framework for Brazilian cultural dynamics so as to foster the adoption of socioeconomically viable development models suited to our reality" (Maureau, 1984, p. 5, our translation). The project mapped and identified craftswomen in the region, many of whom had been distanced from their activities. This survey, combined with the recent repercussion of the exhibition at MASP, brought Edmar in as a consultant for a process aimed at reconnecting artisans in weaving practices, improving quality of life and income, and training young people and adults in the craft. Approximately 200 *repassos* were identified and catalogued, and techniques, artifacts, products, and working environments were documented, as shown in Figure 9. As a contribution back to society, a documentary and a printed publication entitled *Tecelagem Manual no Triângulo Mineiro: uma abordagem tecnológica* (Manual Weaving in the Triângulo Mineiro: a technological approach, our translation) were produced. The publication presents the records of years of research and continues to serve as a reference material for weavers, based on the graphic records that, at the time, was codified by the Computing Center of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), as shown in Figure 10.

[26] The study of this project is part of an ongoing PhD research and, due to the extensive scope of the material, which exceeds the objectives of this article, it will be presented in detail at a later stage.

Fig. 9: Environment. Source: Maureau, Fonseca, & Altafin, 1984.

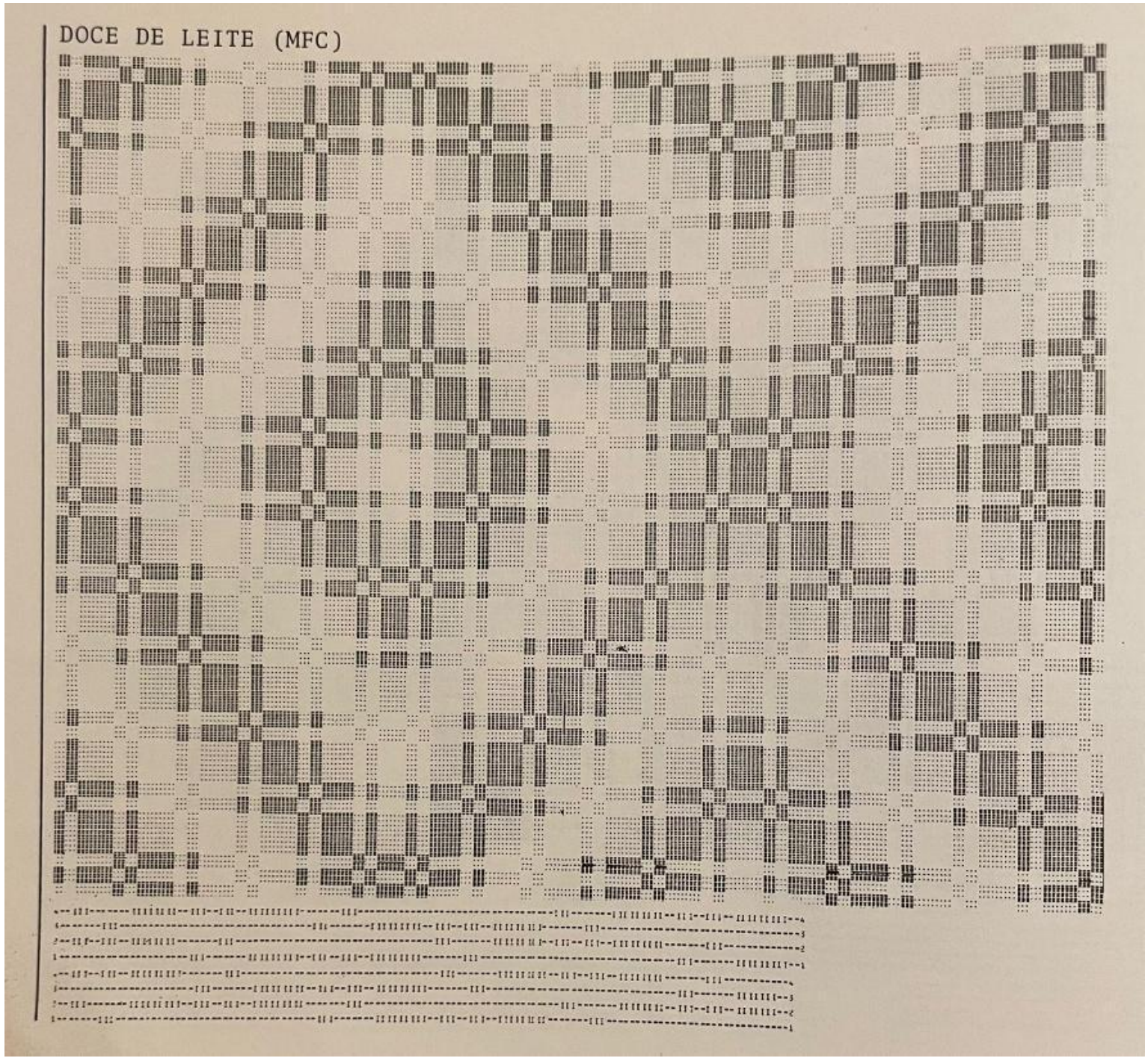

Fig. 10: Repasso Doce de Leite encoded. Source: Maureau, Fonseca & Altafin, 1984.

The project stimulated debates and, consequently, the creation of the Spinning and Weaving Center, designed by Márcia Cristina de Freitas, Maria Eliza Guerra and Roberto Andrade and inaugurated in 1992 in Uberlândia, which remains active to this day as a social and cultural project. In a certain way, this narrative invites us to revisit the Bauhaus experience in Germany, where one of the alternatives proposed by Walter Gropius, for example, was the cooperation between artist and artisan. It is also noteworthy that the weaving workshops at the school resisted gender prejudice and survived from the beginning to the end of the school (Weltge, 1993 apud Gradim, 2015). Like the other workshops of the school, the Weaving Workshop combined educational activity with commercial productivity, working on demand and participating in exhibitions and fairs, through which participants obtained additional income. The lack of materials and labor hindered the regularity of production in the textile workshop, which faced challenges similar to those of the ceramics workshop, despite collaborations and the production of iconic Bauhaus pieces. Documentation and record of production were meticulous; the most significant

works were photographed, and many pieces were acquired by the school itself (Droste, 2011 apud Gradim, 2015). Following a similar approach, the Spinning and Weaving Center supported significant research and educational initiatives, integrating design into the lives of adults who found the opportunity to reconnect with forgotten practices and exercise their craft under adequate working conditions, as well as young people who were able to experience weaving as technical and professional training outside of school hours.

Lina's work in the Triângulo Mineiro continued with the design and construction of the Church of the Holy Spirit of the Cerrado (*Igreja Divino Espírito Santo do Cerrado*), completed in 1982, where the architect found "conditions to formulate a new proposal for the Brazilian condition of underdevelopment. Even without a direct relationship to the reality of the northeast and its limitations, she saw in the Cerrado of Minas Gerais the possibility of continuing her research" (Lazzarin, 2015, p. 147, our translation)[27]. The project was carried out voluntarily at the invitation of Edmar, Friar Egídio Parisi[28], and Dona Aurora, Edmar's mother, for the community of the Jaraguá neighborhood in Uberlândia. The architect's experience with textile production played an important role in the development of the project, which embeds in its conception, materiality, and construction process an alternative to what Flávio Império, for example, described as "an industrialization that had not been consolidated and could not meet the needs of the vast majority of the population at that moment" (Gorni, 2004, p. 48, our translation). Edmar continued producing in various ways and engaging local weavers in the region to create works integrated into architecture. As a result of the ongoing collaboration with Lina, such as the acoustic panels for SESC Pompéia, his work was included as an integral part of projects such as Praça das Artes in São Paulo (shown in Figure 11), the Oscar Niemeyer Museum in Curitiba, the Museu do Pão in Ilópolis, the Museum of the Pantanal Man in Corumbá, the Engenho Central Theater in Piracicaba[29], and the Auditorium of Block 3Q at the Santa Mônica Campus of the Federal University of Uberlândia[30], in addition to tapestries for the interior of the *Igreja Divino Espírito Santo do Cerrado* in Uberlândia and other works currently in development.

In addition to the developments mentioned above, it is important to highlight Lina's contemporary critical formulations, expressed in her writings, which clearly reflected her experience in the Triângulo Mineiro. Her definitions of craft, as something nonexistent in Brazil, her concept of pre-craft, which, for the reasons explained in her studies of the Brazilian Northeast, may encompass the handweaving of the Triângulo Mineiro, and finally, the notion of counter-craft, which appears in the introductory text of the exhibition under study, constitute significant contributions resulting from her experience in the interior of Brazil. For example, according to her, we should not label as craft the work of lacemakers in Ceará or ceramists in Pernambuco merely because they are organized into groups, since the work produced by these individuals would tend to disappear once better and necessary economic conditions were achieved in rural areas. Their production was intimately tied to the social structures of those communities (L. B. Bardi, 1994), and therefore distinct from what she understood as craft. In other words, her concept may be applied to the work of the weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro, allowing us to understand the project that developed in the aftermath of the exhibition, mainly due to Edmar's work. Her perspective was that, by identifying this genuinely popular production, one could contribute to preserving original creative possibilities which, as the deep structure of the popular, would be preserved in the face of the inevitable transformations caused by modern materials and means of production (L. B. Bardi, 1994).

Just like Lina, Aloísio Magalhães also discussed the concept of craft and understood that it did not, in fact, exist in Brazil. For him, even if craft was absent, there existed in the country "a certain inventiveness or availability for making, which he calls pre-design" (Anastassakis, 2011, p. 293, our translation). The author engaged in dialogue with Lina, asserting that her idea was perhaps "closer to reality and its dynamics than that of pre-craft. The latter would imply an evolution toward craft,

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27 Ariel Luís Romani Lazzarin is the author of the Master's thesis entitled The Divino Espírito Santo do Cerrado Church and its alternatives to Brazilian architecture, defended in 2015 and developed under the supervision of Professor Renato Luiz Sobral Anelli within the PPGAU at IAU-USP.

28 Friar Egídio Parisi (1909 – 1981) was born in Montesano, Salerno, Italy. He was ordained a priest in 1932 and arrived in Brazil as Provincial Delegate of the Franciscan Foundation.

29 Works developed from architectural projects by the Brasil Arquitetura office.

30 Architectural project by Maria Eliza Guerra.

which does not seem to be the case" (Magalhães, 1977 apud Anastassakis, 2011, p. 293). Aligned with Lina's perspective, and observing the products of Brazilian pre-design, Aloísio identified, according to Anastassakis (2011), both the potential of popular culture and the imminent risks of losing its authenticity when confronted with external, disruptive factors. Notably, from 1973 onward, Lina became increasingly connected to the Triângulo Mineiro, a process that culminated in the 1975 exhibition which subsequently led to the extensive documentation of weaving in the region carried out by the CNRC under Aloísio's direction. The exhibition's forceful critical stance, as well as the interest in transmitting knowledge through the research conducted by the Center, did not oppose industrialization. Rather, these contributions are fundamental to theoretical developments that discuss modernity, such as the notion of transmodernity proposed by Dussel (2003), which, instead of denying modernity, seeks to overcoming it through dialogue with subalternized knowledge systems. Since the 1960s, Lina had already held a position concerning conditions of poverty and warned of the urgent need for collective consciousness in the face of the country's transformations, a call made explicit in the exhibition under study. For her, if the craft traditions of old guilds had ceased to be a "living part of a social structure" because the social conditions that sustained them no longer existed, and if they survived only as a "legacy of the trade" (L. B. Bardi, 1994, p. 17), then in the interior of Minas Gerais, where similar social or even environmental exhaustion could be observed, such pre-craft should become the object of study regarding the meaning of both its work and its product.

Figura 11: Panels designed by Edmar de Almeida for the Praça das Artes – Architectural Project by Brasil Arquitetura (Francisco Fanucci, Marcelo Ferraz, Fábio Oyamada, Luciana Dornellas, Marcos Cartum, Cícero Ferraz Cruz, Fabiana Fernandes Paiva, Anselmo Turazzi, Carol Silva Moreira, Anne Dieterich, Beatriz Marques, Felipe Zene, Fred Meyer, Gabriel Grinspum, Gabriel Mendonça, Victor Gurgel, Pedro Del Guerra, Thomas Kelley, Vinícius Spira, André Carvalho, Julio Tarragó, and Laura Ferraz). Source: Nelson Kon, n.d. https://brasilarquitetura.com/project/praca-das-artes

5 Final considerations

The geographical delimitation that had already defined the Triângulo Mineiro since the 1850s, together with the initial mapping carried out by Edmar de Almeida and later investigated by the CNRC, was fundamental in establishing and

recognizing this practice that survived the social and economic pressures of the country's history. In the 1970s, the popular, tradition, and modernity became central themes, with Lina Bo Bardi's discussions on pre-craft and Aloísio Magalhães's reflections on pre-design constituting contemporary debates that offered possibilities for addressing Brazilian underdevelopment, debates clearly illustrated in the exhibition under study. In *Tempos de Grossura: o Design no Impasse*, for example, published only in the 1990s based on the architect's earlier writings, one finds the record of a coherent trajectory in the construction of an idea of the country. Although not included among the works presented in that volume, the exhibition *Repassos – Edmar and the Weavers of the Triângulo Mineiro* played a significant role within this context and in the valorization of local knowledge and traditional practices. It cannot be seen merely as an ethnographic record or curatorial selection, but rather as an act of political and cultural affirmation.

Certainly, the women weavers are the main force behind this case of resistance, yet their history is interwoven with the research and projects developed by artists and architects who, from the 1970s onward, and with the increasing circulation of ideas and people throughout this region of the country, put into practice the theoretical foundations of that period. For Lina, for example, the experience proved fundamental to the development of her written reflections on craft and pre-craft. The relationship established among artists, weavers, and institutions revealed the critical power of manual craft, capable of challenging hierarchies and repositioning traditional practices within broader debates on culture and modernity in Brazil. Beyond the theoretical understanding of concepts under discussion at the time, the exhibition challenged the boundaries between art, erudition, popular culture, center and periphery, and can be understood as a cultural product that anticipated discussions now articulated around southern epistemologies and the study of other modernities, in line with the thematic orientation of the journal to which this work contributes. Given the breadth and complexity of the subject, which cannot be exhausted in a single article, numerous possibilities for further investigation and dialogue remain open, both through other scholarly works and within the scope of the ongoing doctoral research to which the present text belongs.

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DIGITAL CHALLENGES IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING: VIDEO GAMES AND PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS

DESAFIOS DIGITAIS EM ARQUITETURA E URBANISMO: VIDEOGAMES E A PRÁXIS PEDAGÓGICA

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Rangel, T. S., & Marques, A. C. (2025). Digital Challenges in Architecture and Urbanism: Video Games and Pedagogical Praxis. V!RUS, (30). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 350-367 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239964

Abstract

This paper presents a transdisciplinary methodology applied to the teaching of Architecture and Urbanism, which uses video games as a didactic tool to promote the incorporation of sensory and interpretative aspects of space, enhancing conceptual design instances. The research was developed within an experimental course in the Architecture and Urbanism program at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and proposes a new pedagogical praxis to build sensitive and ethical knowledge. The methodology articulates design practices with the interactive dynamics of digital games, anchored in the concept of Ambiances, and seeks to foster dialogues among different modes of knowledge production. The research objectives include describing the didactic experience, detailing the methodological procedures, and presenting the main results. The following results stand out: the affective reconnection of students with design practice; the development of a sensitive perspective on the subjective elements of places; the reaffirmation of architecture as a field of mediation of meanings; and the restructuring of ethical and moral thinking. By proposing a critical, multilateral approach, the paper contributes to the debate on praxis, dialogue, and confrontation in higher education, fostering social and academic transformation in architecture.

Keyword: Pedagogy, Architecture and Urban Planning, Video games, Ambiances.

1 Introduction

The research presented stems from a doctoral thesis developed within the *Advanced Studio* course at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (FAU/UFRJ), Brazil. It is organized into two axes: the pedagogical, which investigates the relationship of students with the video game medium and its application in teaching-learning processes; and the conceptual, centered on the intersection of subjective themes in Architecture and Urbanism, with emphasis on the concept of Ambiances, extensively studied by the Laboratory of Architecture, Subjectivity and Culture (LASC/FAU-UFRJ), to which the research is linked. It is part of the debate on university and praxis in the teaching of Architecture and Urbanism, with special attention to transdisciplinarity and alternative modes of knowledge production. Aligned with the theme of the issue, *Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations*, it proposes a critical methodology that confronts academic productivism and values sensitive, ethical, and subjective experiences. By incorporating video games as a pedagogical medium, the course challenges disciplinary boundaries, activates interlocutions between body, space, and digital language, and promotes vocational shifts that reveal the transformative potential of teaching practice.

The aim was to develop a sensitive perspective on places and lived reality, especially in teaching mediated by the dynamics that video games can elicit. Considering that this perspective is built throughout academic training, the use of video games as spaces of dialogical interaction, and not merely as simulators, favors the subjective and cultural recognition of space. Subjectively interpreting architectural and urban spaces from their human dynamics is a critical action that requires sensitive tools. Video games prove to be learning environments capable of promoting hybrid interpretations of built space, expanding the ways of thinking and practicing Architecture and Urbanism. This methodology sought to explore the potential of video games to address complex content in an accelerated society, which includes post-pandemic relations, intense consumption of digital media, and the growing presence of artificial intelligence. To validate the instruments, a course was designed at FAU/UFRJ that could test practices and generate sensitive design responses, grounded in the recognition of Ambiances. According to Cristiane Duarte and co-authors,

> In this approach, ambiance could be defined as a ‘package’ that encompasses not only the experienced space but the entire set of sensory data and its material and immaterial aspects. When listing some definitions of the word ambiance, Augoyard states that one of the most common is the ‘material and moral atmosphere that surrounds a place and a person’ (2004, p. 18). In another text, the author defines ambiance as ‘a plural of juxtaposed and cacophonic fragments capable of inducing a certain mood from non-visible dimensions of constructed space’ (Augoyard, 2008, p. 33). However, Jean-François Augoyard himself emphasizes that the definition of ambiance is difficult to explain, but very easy to understand. (Duarte et al., 2023, p. 10, our translation)

Still according to the authors,

> In this sense, studying Ambiances also means weaving a commitment to experiencing them, since one cannot empirically analyze what lies outside the act of the body and the phenomenon. Ambiance, therefore, is less a concept and more an access to the world, as we have verified (Duarte et al., 2023, p. 26, our translation)

Although not a complex concept, Ambiances demand a particular sensitivity and some guidance. They can be understood as a patchwork quilt in microcosm, where each patch represents a sense, a perception, a tangible or intangible element of space, a particle of individual or collective culture. Although distinct, these elements are inseparable. Ambiances are the spatial set composed both by the physical support, the place, and by its immaterial, moral, sensory, atmospheric, and dynamic particularities. Faced with so many possible events, video games emerge as a medium in which we do not have a physical body but inhabit an avatar made of pixels and data with which we identify. We will not address here the capacity of video games to produce sensitive experiences, since, as art and immersive media, video games create plural subjective relations. Instead, we will address their virtuality as an expression of the possible, of the world in latency, as proposed by Pierre Lévy (1998). Video games present a place between worlds, partial, and are a suitable medium for the events we suggest. If Ambiances are an access to the world, each medium acts as a mediator of this experience. Our primary channel of relation with the world is the body, which functions as a filter between the internal and the external, as proposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 146): “The body is our general medium for having a world.” However, the intense digitalization of architectural production seems to displace this corporeality, distancing the senses from spatial practice. This phenomenon, noted by Marshall McLuhan, reveals a shift in how the media reconfigure our sensoriality. According to this author, “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1994, p. 7), that is, each technology transforms our perception and interaction with the world. The challenge of engaging students in physical and bodily practices is evident. Studies with paper, sketches, models, light, and urban paths give way to their digital versions, which operate under distinct codes and abstractions, as Vilém Flusser (2017) proposes, transforming the creative gesture and marking the transition from traditional gestures to those mediated by technical apparatuses.

In parallel, with about 3.42 billion players worldwide (Newzoo, 2024) and 82.8% of the Brazilian population consuming digital games (GoGamers, 2025), video games are a dominant medium in the 21st century. Highly engaging, they influence various human activities and are widely disseminated among young adults, the predominant audience in undergraduate Architecture and Urbanism programs. Computing has transformed production and learning processes, solving old problems and generating new ones. It seems evident that current students perceive learning and its media differently from professors and previous generations. Enumerating the causes of increasing pedagogical complexity would be impossible: late capitalism, generational transformations, cultural wars, and technological revolutions. Recently, Artificial Intelligence inaugurated a new technological revolution, transforming pedagogical structures and raising technical and ethical questions. They also opened new “design worlds” (Mitchell, 1990), often incompatible with the time required for teaching practice to keep pace with their mastery. In this scenario, traditional audiovisual media lose prominence in educational mediation, while interactive media, such as video games, gain strength.

This paper presents the methodology applied in the course, detailing its structure and procedures, and discussing the main results. The research is organized into four parts: introduction, methodology, results, and discussion, accompanying the thematic blocks of the course and their pedagogical implications. By proposing a sensitive and critical approach, the paper contributes to transdisciplinary and insurgent educational practices in higher education.

2 Methodology

The course Methodologies and Graphic Languages of Video Games for Design Conception and Representation, held at FAU/UFRJ in the first semester of 2025, proposed the use of video games as a tool for articulating theory and practice, allowing students to experience, even virtually, spatial dynamics oriented toward the development of subjective qualities of places. Issues such as otherness, affection, body, memory, identity, and, as an integrating concept, Ambiances were addressed. As part of the advanced cycle of FAU/UFRJ, the course functioned as an exploratory action of innovative themes and methodologies, contributing to final graduation projects and consolidating previous investigations. It fulfilled the three practices foreseen in the pedagogical Project, theoretical, design, and experimental, being a course in architectural and urban design with extensive

theoretical foundation on ambiances and video games. Its objectives included: using video games to reflect on sensory and interpretative aspects of space in the design process; familiarizing students with the concept of ambiances and sensory analysis of place using interpretative strategies of digital language; and debating the impact of new technologies on professional training. Conceived as a progressive path in scale and complexity, from the house to the metropolis, the course stimulated active listening, sensitive design imagination, and reflection.

The course was structured in stages, beginning with an in-depth theoretical review to define its framework, objectives, and expected results. The pedagogical project of the university, the structuring cycles, and syllabi of design courses were analyzed, as well as syllabi from other areas that incorporated video games. Based on this, the syllabus, objectives, calendar, didactic procedures, evaluation system, bibliography, and the games to be used were elaborated. It was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee through Plataforma Brasil, in accordance with Law No. 14.874/2024 (Brazil, 2024), which regulates research involving human subjects in Brazil. Subsequently, it was approved by FAU/UFRJ and integrated into the advanced studios of the faculty. The course was offered, with participants being informed about the research before enrollment. They received Free and Informed Consent Forms, all duly signed. The course was structured into four sequential blocks, each guided by a structuring game and articulated with activities such as seminars, lectures, design practices, and discussions, stimulating a sensory-perceptual approach to space. The seven games used were selected from a group of sixty-two titles with mechanics related to Architecture and Urban Planning. They were organized by theme, tested, and chosen based on their pedagogical potential. The introductory games selected were Minami Lane (2024), The Block (2022), and Mini Motorways (2019). The structuring games chosen were The Sims 4 (2014), Tiny Glade (2024), Manor Lords (2024), and Cities: Skylines (2015).

In the classroom, students were organized into trios and participated in thirty meetings of four hours each (a total of 120 hours), adequate time for investigation, interaction, exploration, and production. At the end of the term, students prepared a report and answered a questionnaire, forming the empirical basis of the course. Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were adopted, increasing the scope of the process. The following presents the blocks and the final report, analyzed together with the questionnaire.

Block 1 - Introduction and Experiences in Subjectivities (8 classes):

- Objective: Work on the scale of the individual and introduce subjective concepts such as ambiance, atmosphere, and spatial empathy, among others;
    - Structuring game: The Sims 4 (2014). Selected for being a life simulator that allows the construction of indoor and outdoor environments with symbolic and narrative richness. It offers accessible spatial composition tools that express personal desires, encouraging design experimentation without excessive technical rigidity and with strong sensory and emotional appeal.
- Experience provided: The groups were able to test spatial configurations that responded to clients' affections and desires, using design as an empathetic language;
- Key exercise: The groups created houses for their clients (other groups) based on responses to sensitive questions derived from the "wish poem", which were taught and applied among them in class;
- Emphasis: Design as listening; creation of affective spaces that respond to the invisible desires of the user.

In Block 1, we worked with the scale of the house. The Sims 4 (2014), widely recognized and used by students, proved significant due to its personal and historical relationship with many of them, including as a stimulus for choosing the Architecture and Urbanism program. The conceptual basis of this block focused on the debate on Ambiances and other subjective themes related to Architecture and Urbanism. The first exercise used the "wish poem", a method of investigation that "(...) enables the identification of desires regarding the built environment (...)" (Sobral et al., 2015, our translation). In it, each group assumed the role of client for the next group, applying the poem as a tool to investigate the colleagues' aspirations. Based on this listening, a design analysis was carried out aimed at revealing intersections and hidden narratives in the identified desires. From these analyses, the groups developed housing proposals that addressed not only functional and metric aspects but also favored

subjective and meaningful relationships in space. The goal was to create conditions for the development of positive ambiances, promoting sensitive and affective experiences within the projects. The students' relationship with the chosen game added an extra layer of affection or even nostalgia to the exercise, creating a multiple emotional connection between proposal, process, and tool.

Block 2 - Immediate Surroundings and Urban Narratives (6 classes):

- Objective: Transition from the house to the immediate surroundings; reflect on urban ambiance and the subjective design of collective space;
    - Introductory game: Minami Lane (2024). Established an initial contact with affective urbanism, in reduced scale and playful aesthetics.
    - Structuring game: Tiny Glade (2024). Selected to benefit design through flow, aesthetics, and intuition. Semi-structured project dynamics were explored through poetic approaches.
- Experience provided: The groups experienced urbanism as narrative, creating villages that responded more to sensitive perception than to predefined norms; they learned to value emptiness, relationships, slow time, spontaneous paths, and intuition;
- Key exercise: Development of small villages, with attention to the relationships among concepts, structures, constructions, flows, sensitive landscapes, and relations with nature;
- Emphasis: Urbanism as narrative and the aesthetic freedom of feeling as a design tool.

Block 2 presents the first leap in scale and complexity, from the house to the immediate surroundings. The groups briefly played Minami Lane (2024), a game in which the player develops a street and deals with the desires and demands of NPCs (Non-Playable Characters). These demands are varied and provide feedback on design and spatial management choices, serving to introduce the theme of immediate surroundings to the groups. In the structuring game Tiny Glade (2024), the groups had to develop a village. The game functions as a digital sandbox oriented toward the simulation and study of architectural and urban concepts with broad creative freedom. Villages were developed focusing on urban design and the creation of projects that fostered subjective relationships in the city. The game has a particular and expressive aesthetic, focused on the relationship with nature and with controls that are little structured and highly intuitive. This helped students use imagination and creativity to explore notions of urbanism in a kind of miniature laboratory. To guide the design process, a basic urban morphological structure was used, adopting an oriented design model with reflections on geography, green and blue structures, access, road system, blocks, and lots. In parallel, studies on urban models and typologies were carried out, exploring how to develop their elements using the game.

Block 3 - Design Practices and Emerging Complexities (8 classes):

- Objective: Work on medium-scale territories, introducing elements of resource management and social and moral dynamics;
    - Introductory game: The Block (2022). Served as an initial provocation about connected urbanism based on pre-existing structures.
    - Structuring game: Manor Lords (2024). Selected for proposing the city as a dynamic and interdependent organism. It explores the tension between design intention and systemic response, investigating how NPCs react to spatial interventions. It added resource management mechanics and their complexities.
- Experience provided: The groups experienced urban design as an interdependent system, dealing with design premises through resource management and testing the limits between design freedom and emerging rules, while learning about social impact, informality, and urban ecosystems;

- Key exercise: Creation of complex settlements based on resource management and analysis of the impacts of design decisions on simulated social relations;

- Emphasis: Negotiation between technique and desire; simulation as critical reflection on urbanism.

Block 3 marks an important turning point: from free imagination to facing urban complexity. Initially, the groups played The Block (2022), a puzzle game that uses pieces of the city as building blocks. It introduced the idea of a city that must deal with pre-existing conditions. The structuring game Manor Lords (2024) is a medieval city-building simulator with real-time strategy mechanics. A broader and more structured village was developed, facing the challenge of resource management and its direct impact on urban development. Scarcity, abundance, and location of these resources were decisive in the design strategies adopted by each group. Another decisive factor was the particular trajectories of the characters, who created desire paths often incompatible with the established urban planning, similar to what Michel de Certeau (1984) describes. This behavior brought greater complexity to the project, offering richer feedback on the consequences of spatial decisions made.

Block 4 - Critical Reading and Advanced Complexities (8 classes)

- Objective: Work on the metropolitan scale with contextualized and responsible urban planning;
    - Introductory game: Mini Motorways (2019). Introduced concepts of road flow in a synthetic and gamified way.
    - Structuring game: Cities: Skylines (2015). Selected for being an advanced city simulator, bringing various elements used in teaching and developing real urban projects. It served as a platform to test complex urban planning decisions in scenarios parallel to reality.

- Experience provided: Students exercised contextualized decisions in the city, considering morphological, ecological, and social limits; they confronted the consequences of their choices in a scenario that simulates reality and rethought much of their prior knowledge;

- Key exercise: The groups reimagined the city of Rio de Janeiro, revisiting several regions to develop new urban proposals;

- Emphasis: Critical and historical analysis of the city; morphological, road, and programmatic analyses; design decisions with simulated repercussions and critical evaluation of results.

Block 4 marked the final leap in scale and complexity. We began with *Mini Motorways* (2019), a puzzle game of road networks that playfully addresses the relationship between mobility and territorial organization, a central issue in large cities. Next, we used *Cities: Skylines* (2015), a simulator of urbanism and territorial management whose complexity offers valuable insights even at the professional level. Given the experimental nature of the course and the active participation of students, we collectively chose Rio de Janeiro as the basis for the exercise, promoting an approximation with the object of study. Each group selected a specific area to conduct a historical-critical reading and propose new possibilities for the territory. The proposals required design structuring that considered the city's geography, morphological elements, and essential architectural programs for urban consolidation. The reimagined urban scenarios resulted from an expanded understanding of the city, with investigations and digressions based on the game's mechanics and consequences evaluated in real time. This block synthesized the laboratory character of the course and its scope as applied research in Architecture and Urbanism.

At the end of the course, students presented a report in the format of a logbook, gathering thoughts, images, sketches, and descriptions of the pedagogical journey. This submission included: critical analyses of the process, content, games, experiences, and learning; personal reflections on the concepts explored and their application in the real world; considerations about video games as formative devices; and observations about affections as elements of design. The final report consisted of an open exercise in which students exposed the path developed throughout the term. The only guideline was to write during the classes, as in a diary, including notes, aphorisms, questions, and internal and external perceptions of the process. This enabled the collection of qualitative data, with spontaneous accounts, relevant thoughts, and critiques of the research, as well as the role of video games in this context. This material was analyzed together with a questionnaire of thirteen questions applied at the end

of the course, focused on quantitative data that supported the qualitative analyses. Both form the basis of the results, presented below.

3 Results

The analysis of classroom experiences, student work, the final report, and the questionnaire revealed recurring themes that highlight the pedagogical potential of video games in Architecture and Urbanism. The spontaneous accounts, full of sensitivity, demonstrate that video games went beyond the field of entertainment, consolidating themselves as tools for reflection, design construction, and affective reconnection with the act of designing. Given the scope and diversity of the data collected, we present a synthesis of the main results of the course. The data were processed through a qualitative-quantitative approach, combining a sensitive reading of the entire experience with the numerical data from the questionnaire. The students' statements were grouped into emerging thematic categories, based on discursive patterns and reported experiences, seeking to understand how video games activated sensitive and creative dimensions in the design process, influencing students' perception of space, Architecture and Urbanism, and their professional training.

The analysis of the data obtained was conducted in three stages, articulated with the pedagogical objectives, the research questions, and the validation of video games as sensitive design instruments. In the first stage, referring to the blocks, we cross-referenced the pedagogical objectives of each block with the results of the projects, the final report, and the questionnaire, identifying, through statements, discursive patterns and reported behaviors, how these results manifested in students' perceptions. The second stage focused on the final report, relating the data to the general objectives of the course. Excerpts from students' reflections were integrated, emerging themes were categorized, and the subjective, ethical, and sensitive learnings revealed throughout the process were synthesized. In the third stage, we analyzed the questionnaire applied at the end of the course, combining the quantitative treatment of closed responses with the qualitative treatment of the single open question. The data were cross-referenced with the results of the previous stages, broadening the understanding of the knowledge revealed by this instrument.

To facilitate reading, the results are presented in an integrated way, with the data from the final report and the questionnaire incorporated into the discussion of each thematic block.

3.1 Video Games and Initial Perceptions

The first block promoted the recognition of the expressive potential of video games as a meaningful experience in Architecture and Urbanism. Although many students were already familiar with the game, it was the first time they used it as a guided experience with a pedagogical purpose. The observed results were very promising: the activity generated high engagement, aroused curiosity and interest among students, and provoked an immediate emotional impact, with reports including expressions such as "immersive," "different," and "it moved me". There was also a strong sense of novelty and breaking of expectations, since many did not imagine that video games could be so reflective, especially in relation to professional practice. Cross-referencing the data revealed that the game functioned as a gateway to the design world of video games, or to what Vilém Flusser (2011, p. 2, our translation) would define as the "universe of the game", acting simultaneously as a playful space and as a catalyst for issues related to identity and decision-making. The exercise of the "wish poem" was well understood and successfully applied within the dynamics and mechanics of the game. This was a demonstration of the effectiveness of the process, which, by its audiovisual and interactive nature, allowed layers of expression that other media would hardly reach. The analysis of the data reveals that the pedagogical objectives — recognition of narrative and symbolic structures in games, genuine emotional responses, and the first signs of vocational reconnection — were fully achieved.

Although not initially foreseen, vocational reconnection was recurrent in the analyses, showing that students felt exhausted by repetitive teaching methods throughout their undergraduate studies. As they themselves expressed, they saw themselves in a condition of animal laborans (Arendt, 1998), interrupted by the condition of *homo ludens* (Huizinga, 1955), which the course elicited. The students' reflections in the final reports reinforce this conclusion. Block 1 awakened a subjective interest that created fertile ground for the subsequent blocks to deepen this process. An almost immediate adherence to the game as a design tool was observed, evidenced by student statements presented below and by their projects, shown in figures 1 and 2:

— “Playing The Sims helped me visualize how people would inhabit that project, through the simulation of life that the game offers.”

— “On the other hand, communication is part of the game, the interaction with virtual objects, places, and nowadays we are moving toward a world of connected players, where each one in their homes can enter the same world as their friend.”

— “The use of the game brought precisely this playful character that facilitates both for those who design and for those who commission the project, allowing ideas to be tested, visualized, and even inhabited intuitively. Thus, the listening process gained another dimension. It was not only about meeting requests, but about uncovering meanings, creating scenarios of affection, and enabling everyone to feel, explore, and experience spaces even before they actually existed.”

Fig. 1: Project perspective developed within the game The Sims 4 for the Block 1 submission. Source: Group 7, 2025.

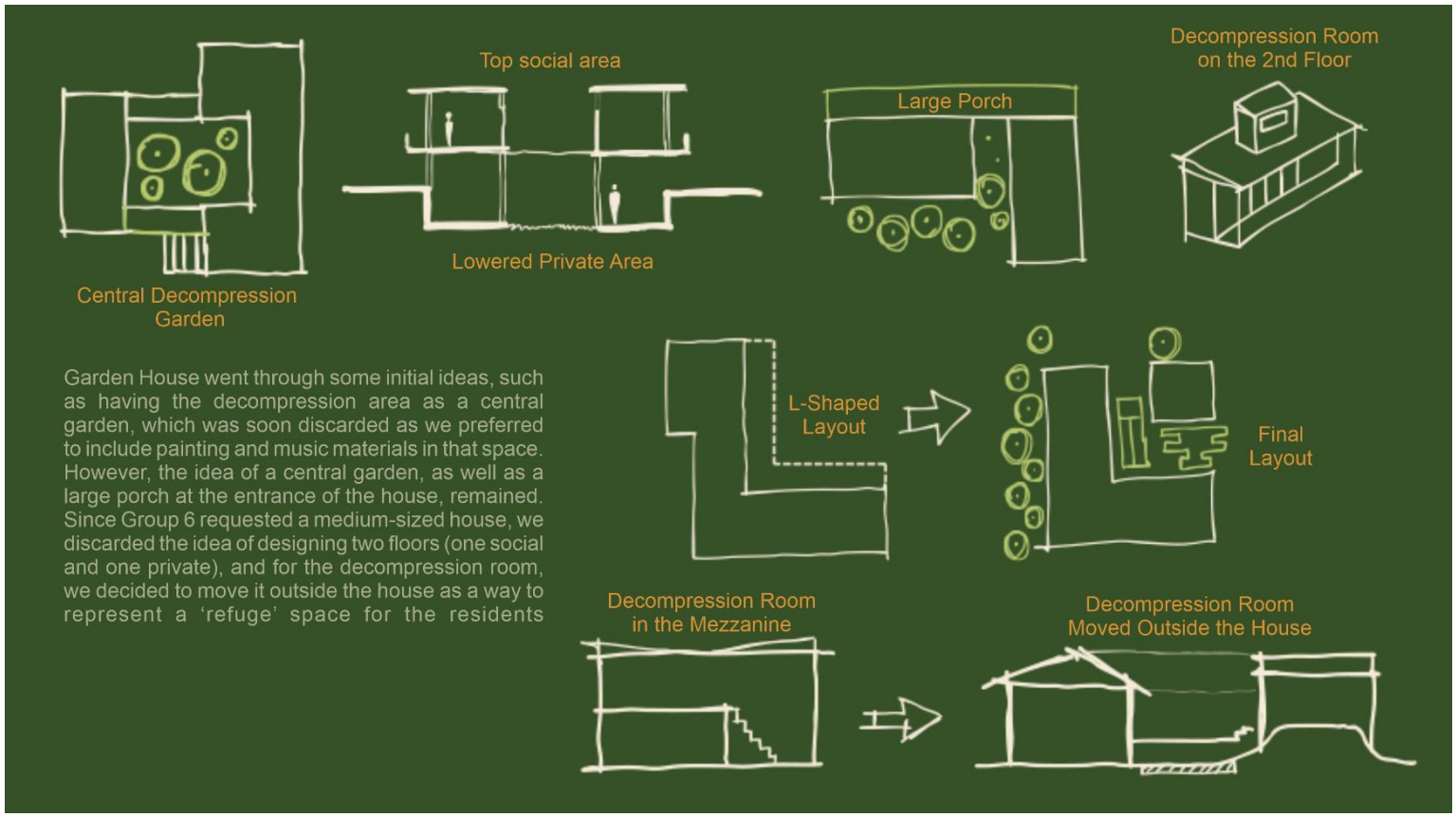

Fig. 2: Studies by Group 7 based on the poem of desires created with Group 6 for the Block 1 submission. Source: Group 7, 2025.

3.2 Narratives and linguistic reflection

The second block invited students to perceive the language of video games as a form of discourse, with narratives that can be constructed, deconstructed, and reinterpreted. The exercises, lectures, and texts worked on understanding the symbolic, aesthetic, and ideological elements present in games, and the idea of a playable author, that is, the possibility of intervening in the construction of stories through urban design. Throughout the experience, students demonstrated greater critical awareness of the language of games, connections between the ludic universe and reality, and the exploration of an aesthetics of feeling and of making feel.

The experience was marked by a poetic and free atmosphere, with strong emotional involvement, produced through a spontaneous and intuitive design practice. Data analysis revealed that the proposed games functioned as instruments of narrative metacognition: the learners not only played, but reflected on the very act of playing. The ludic experience awakened critical and empathetic postures, showing that the pedagogical objective was fully achieved. The explanations present in the final reports indicate that Block 2 consolidated a critical and discursive posture among students, strengthening their gaze as readers and conscious creators of narratives. This process opened space for deeper and more liberating engagement, as evidenced by some statements recorded in the reports and figures 3 and 4:

> — "Although it is a playful game, with a delicate medieval aesthetic, it turned out to be an interesting tool to experiment with urbanistic principles in practice, such as the definition of blocks, lots, streets, and even the relationship between volumes and the surrounding context."

> — "These games simulate ways of living and propose new ways of acting and feeling. Moreover, the visuals of the games are not just for looking; they involve, guide, and are part of the action. The player's gaze is guided, but it also creates meanings. All this shows that playing has become part of modern life."

— “And the most interesting thing is that the result of all this was not only aesthetic, but also had a narrative load: my village gained an identity, with a certain spatial rhythm, and I began to imagine who would live there, what everyday life in that place would be like.”

— “At the end of the practice, I realized that more than designing in the traditional sense, we were exercising a sensitive and creative gaze, as well as improvisation with what is at hand, which, come to think of it, is a huge part of what it means to do architecture in real life.”

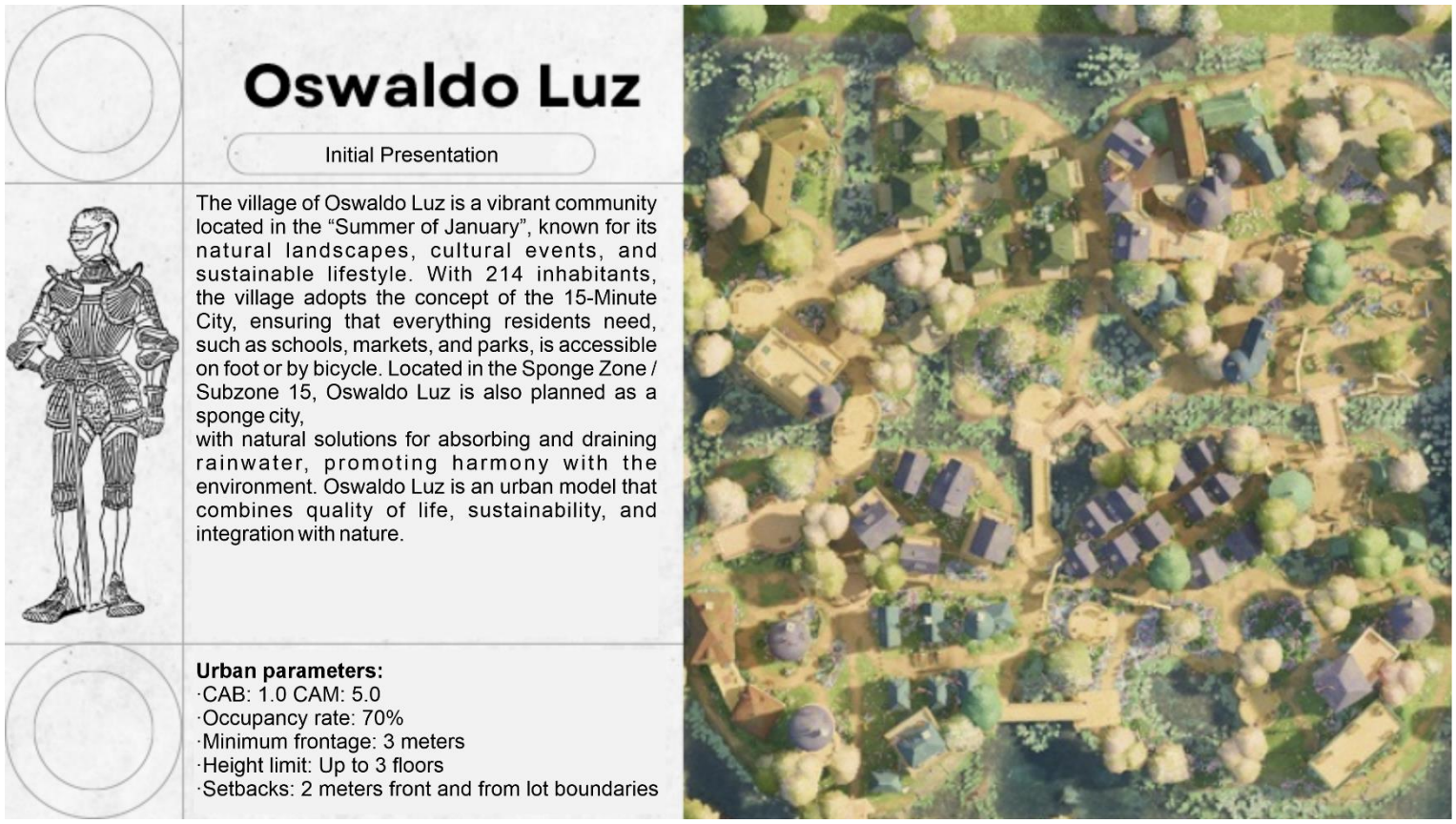

Fig. 3: Initial presentation slide of the village developed in the game Tiny Glade for the Block 2 submission. Source: Group 6, 2025.

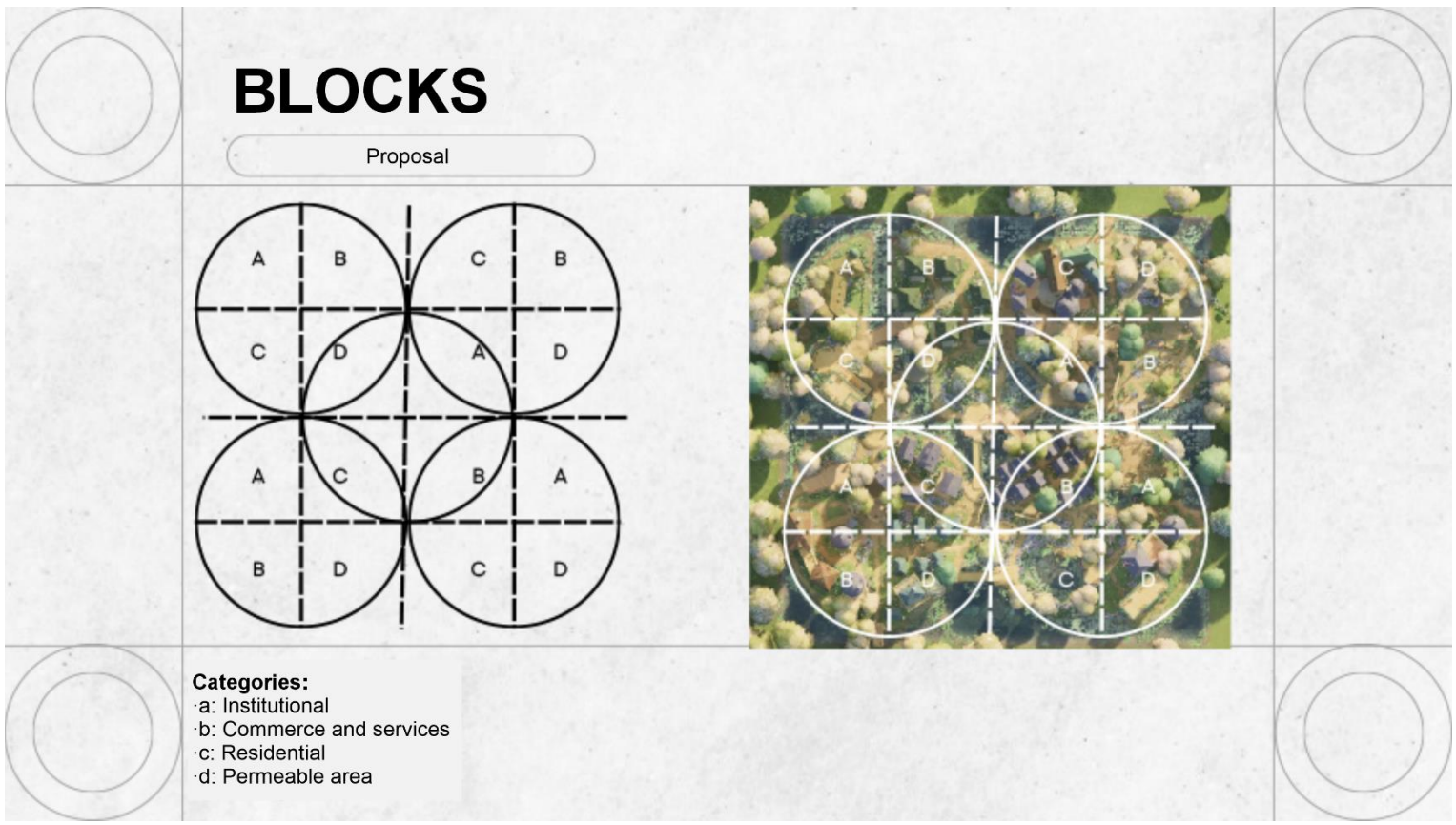

Fig. 4: Slide of the spatial compositional structure of the village developed in the game Tiny Glade for the Block 2 submission. Source: Group 6, 2025.

3.3 Morality, Choices, and Consequences

The third block encouraged students to reflect on moral dilemmas, difficult choices, and their consequences within an interactive narrative logic. The proposal provoked ethical shifts, positions, and debates around sensitive themes, generating unease and internal conflicts in the face of the design decisions required by the game. Expressions such as “I didn’t know what to do,” “painful choice,” and “I felt responsible” frequently appeared in the reports, indicating deeper emotional and mental involvement, with more time devoted to reflecting on their own design actions. Data analysis revealed that the games and proposed discussions placed students in situations of ethical and moral judgment, fulfilling the role of destabilizing certainties and provoking questions. Significant learning emerged regarding informal uses of space, desire paths, and social imbalances generated by design decisions. The pedagogical objective of the block was achieved with high reflective density, evidenced by the recognition of the complexity of human choices, emotional projection onto the characters, and the activation of personal moral values and principles, often accompanied by internal struggles.

The students’ reflections in the final report indicate that Block 3 had a direct impact on the social, ethical, and affective formation of participants, revealing that the game went beyond entertainment and consolidated itself as an instrument of self-knowledge and moral development. Some of the statements in the report and the projects, exemplified in figures 5 and 6, demonstrate this:

> — “In the end, the class felt less like a game simulation and more like an open urbanism laboratory. The difference is that, instead of working with models or plans, we were dealing with living simulations, where virtual people felt cold, hunger, and even fled in fear of attacks if we planned poorly.”

> — “It was a very remarkable class. Besides being fun, it brought a sense of responsibility about space, something we don’t always manage to capture only in theory. It is very powerful to see how a game can help us reflect on space, society, and the human relations that are created (and undone) depending on how we organize the territory.”

— “Throughout the activities, the game ceased to be just a means of entertainment and began to function as a real tool of design experimentation. It became clearer how space influences people’s lives, even if they are digital characters, and how urbanism involves both technical and sensitive decisions.”

— “Realizing that people create desire paths where they want to circulate, even when you don’t design them, was very real and valuable. The game brought reflections on the city not being defined only by design, but also depending on people’s behavior. The possibility of appropriating spaces, reappropriating, etc. Not always what we design is what will be used.”

— “I was left with the feeling that any choice would be wrong… But this made me think about the weight that decisions also have outside the game.”

— “I had to decide between protecting someone or being fair to everyone. It was harder than I thought it would be.”

Fig. 5: Perspective of the city developed within the game Manor Lords for the Block 3 submission. Source: Group 7, 2025.

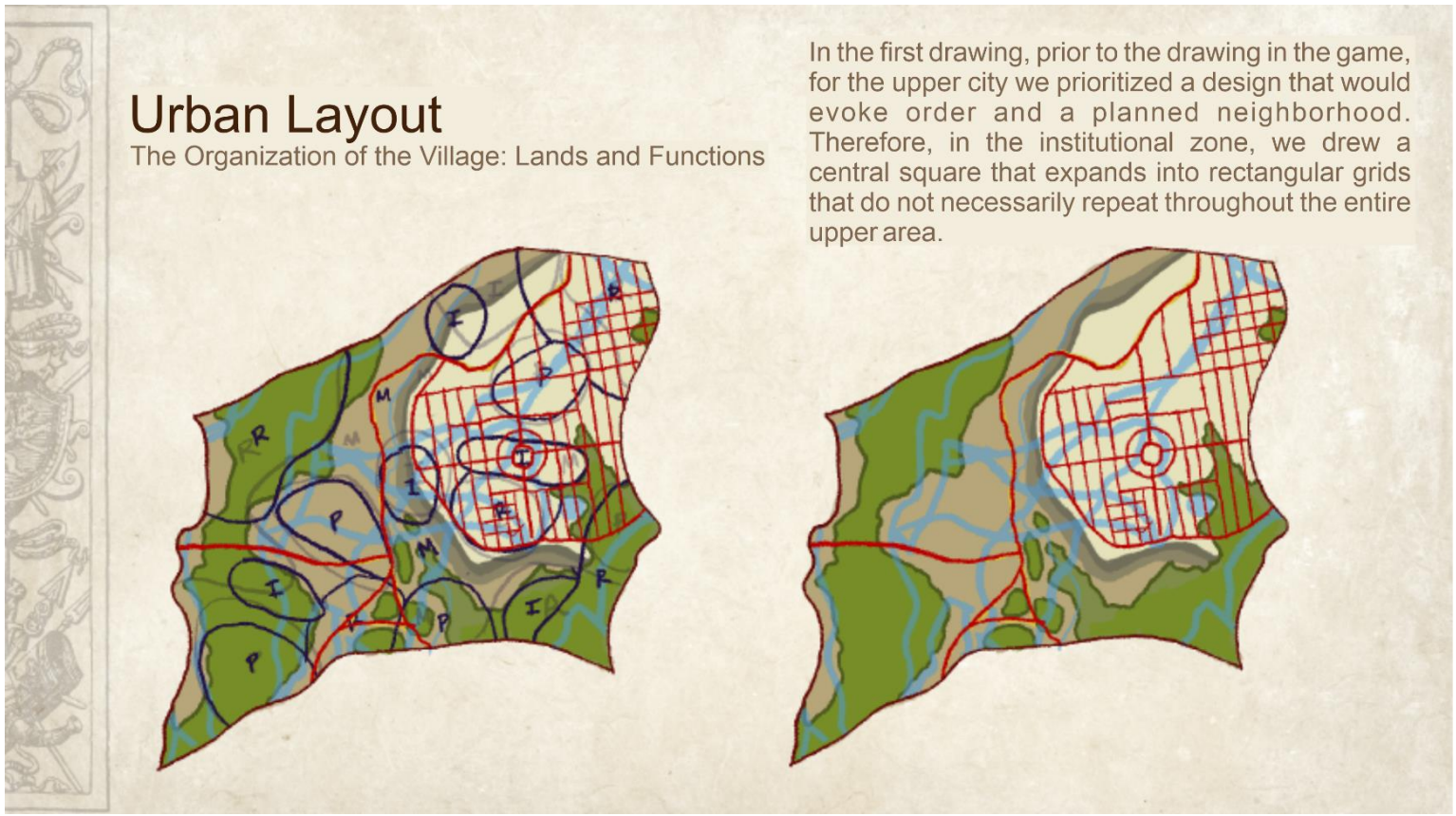

Fig. 6: Urban planning studies of the city developed in the game Manor Lords for the Block 3 submission. Source: Group 7, 2025.

3.4 Morality, Choices, and Consequences

The fourth and final block promoted the creation of authorial narratives, starting from complex themes and subjective experiences. The activities worked with imaginative projection as an exercise in self-knowledge and expression, encouraging the exploration of personal ideas and emotions. In addition, they reinforced the notion that video games possess their own design world, a fertile territory for critical reflection and the construction of alternatives. The students' accounts revealed a strong sense of authorship accompanied by professional posture, the use of game mechanics as real tools of creation, and the revision of technical knowledge through real-time simulation. Data analysis revealed the fourth block as a synthesis of the previous ones, concluding the transition of students from players to conscious creators within video games. This movement activated processes of affective reconnection with vocational, social, and existential themes. The students began to identify discursive architectures in the games, to question underlying ideologies, especially regarding the capitalist model of producing cities, and to recognize the limits imposed by programming and design, both in games and in the real world.

This perception was accompanied by the deconstruction of the idea of total freedom also in the real world, since Architecture and Urban Planning projects are limited by various parameters, including legislation, budget, and technique. This was an interesting event in establishing parallels between games and the real world. The analyses further revealed that there was a legitimate exercise of ethical and political imagination. The students' productions proposed alternative worlds as a way of critically thinking about the real world, deeply fulfilling the pedagogical objective of the block. The projects developed reflected a sense of reality and responsibility, with greater awareness of the implications of urban design. The reflections present in the final report indicate that Block 4 was a moment of symbolic revelation. The students expressed their subjectivities, pains, and dreams through the language of games, which ceased to be merely a tool and began to function as a mirror, shelter, and projection. The statements below, together with figure 7, illustrate this:

> — "This stage of the classes was challenging, but also very productive. It taught us to deal with consequences, adapt strategies, and understand the city as a complex and interconnected system."

— “It was challenging to design at this scale and still have to think about the real-time consequences for the ‘inhabitants’ of the game. It is different from when we design something at FAU and only imagine that it will work. This made us reflect a lot on how critical we end up being with some urban projects, since many times when the architect imagines a project, not everything turns out as planned.”

— “I created a social problem in my game.”

— “In this game, unlike the others, I managed to have 100% control over the city, so when something went wrong, it was entirely the fault of my decisions, which ended up generating almost immediate lessons.”

Fig. 7: Study of the city of Rio de Janeiro developed from its original rivers in the game Cities: Skylines for the Block 4 submission. Source: Group 7, 2025.

3.5 Autonomy, Restlessness, and Reflection

When analyzed in isolation, the final report reveals that the students understood the activities as a process that went beyond traditional teaching, promoting ethical, affective, and discursive transformations. More than consolidating knowledge, it encouraged students to leave the course without definitive answers, but enriched with new questions about themselves, the world, and their vocations. The joint analysis of reports and questionnaires shows that, as the blocks progressed, the accounts gained density, intimacy, and symbolism, while the students ceased to be curious players and transformed into conscious authors, capable of creating and reflecting critically, as seen in Block 4. Throughout the statements in the reports, clear signs of vocational reconnection, ethical maturity, greater openness to others, and narrative sensitivity emerged.

Let us look at some phrases contained in the reports that reinforce this impact:

— “At first I thought it was just a game, but I ended up playing my own story there.”

— “I invented a character that doesn’t exist, but who thinks like me. And by creating him, I understood a lot about myself.”

— “One day I left class wanting to talk to my parents about things I never had the courage to.”

— “The character I invented became a way of understanding myself better.”

These fragments show that the experience was transformative, going beyond pedagogical objectives and mobilizing existential, affective, and social meanings.

4 Discuss

Video games have increasingly advanced in pedagogical methods across various fields, including prominent initiatives such as Minecraft Education[1]. The foundations of their use in teaching have been consolidated, even appearing in the Brazilian National Common Curricular Base as part of students' Digital Culture training, from early childhood education through high school. In higher education, each program establishes in its Pedagogical Project of the Course the relevance of certain media or activities, although there is some degree of freedom, used by professors who wish to work with video games based on their own research, as occurred with the course described in this paper. Their use in Architecture and Urbanism, however, is still timid and unprecedented when associated with the theme of Ambiances and other subjective topics. In his concept of homo ludens, Johan Huizinga (1955) describes play as an essential part of culture. For him, we are playful individuals by nature, and play is a space of freedom, experimentation, and creation. We can say that these are essential characteristics of architectural and urban design education. By relating these ideas to the practice carried out in the course, we perceive that the simulated environments functioned as spaces of design thinking, where students could develop a playful and sensitive gaze on space, stimulating responsiveness, improvisation, intuition, critique, and reflection. As research that studies precisely this universe, it was possible to produce valuable and unprecedented knowledge through the applied methodology. The results of the course demonstrated effectively that video games, when strategically integrated, not only engaged students but also enabled the development of a sensitive gaze through the hybrid experiences provided by this medium.

The methodological set, which included theoretical, practical, and experimental bases, rigorously fulfilled the defined pedagogical objectives, while also proving surprisingly fertile in producing beneficial, unanticipated results, with a significant gain in the empirical foundations of the research. The course was initially conceived to test the capacity of video games to help students build sensitive tools to subjectively interpret architectural and urban spaces and their complexities, promoting hybrid interpretations of built space and expanding ways of thinking and practicing Architecture and Urbanism. Despite its well-defined scope, the course ended up becoming a catalyst for profound personal experiences. The incorporation of games as a pedagogical tool expanded the critical, affective, and empathetic dimension of the design process, activating intense reflections on space and its social implications, while provoking subjective displacements and vocational reconnections among participants. The selected games allowed students to incorporate different perspectives and user needs, addressing issues such as social and spatial inequality, appropriation, desire, politics, morality, ethics, affection, and other themes that, according to them, were absent from traditional design practice. By recognizing the creative use of urban spaces through the everyday practices of inhabitants, students expanded design listening and mediation of meanings, directly dialoguing with a sensitive practice of urban design. In addition, personal and collective narratives emerged that evidenced a revision of their own values and beliefs.

Exposure to critical authors and the problematization of naturalized practices allowed students to identify tensions between their conceptions and new theoretical references, enabling each student to recognize themselves as a historical subject, traversed by multiple dimensions. It is worth noting that the unanticipated results of the course objectives—at least not fully anticipated—emerged as a consequence of an approach that values listening, problematization, and the welcoming of singular experiences. The course, therefore, fulfilled a dual role: it intellectually trained and subjectively transformed. This process of ethical revision was not imposed but collectively constructed, through dialogue and active listening. Although not a theoretical reference of the course itself, it is worth mentioning that this event connects strongly with the central elements in the pedagogy of care and listening advocated by bell hooks (1994), added, of course, to Paulo Freire's (1967) conception of education as a liberating practice. It is important to recognize, however, that the proposal also has limits. Different games have different design worlds, and not all offer the same degree of pedagogical possibilities, at least not for the themes addressed. There are also severe challenges regarding digital infrastructure, which is scarcely accessible in the Brazilian educational context. In fact, it would be quite challenging to secure the budget to purchase licenses for seven games for each of the twenty-three students enrolled in the course without university support. Furthermore, due to the limitations of the available infrastructure, students needed to have

[1] To learn more about Minecraft education access: https://education.minecraft.net/pt-pt/challenges/amazing-architecture.

their own computers, which created a socioeconomic limitation in the reach of the course. These demands could have been addressed with greater university support, which would have required time we did not have, given the experimental nature of the course. In addition, there is the time required for activity maturation and faculty training to deal with playful tools. Despite all these limitations, the scientific gains obtained are invaluable in the debate on new teaching-learning processes.

Closing this paper, we can summarize the main contributions that the course produced. They manifested in five central points. First, we can mention the latent affective reconnection with design practice. Constant reports indicate that the pedagogical practices used reactivated students' playful bond with the design field, awakening memories and creative pleasure previously overshadowed by academic routine. Next, the use of games as tools for simulation and spatial experimentation allowed safe rehearsal of occupations and everyday dynamics, revealing how design choices effectively shape lived experience. Continuing, we can note that learning about Ambiances transformed previously abstract concepts into solid experiences, as students began to recognize their elements as true meaning-makers in designed spaces. In addition, the course strengthened design listening, encouraging the creation of narratives by incorporating desires, conflicts, and appropriations that emerged in simulations, reaffirming architecture as a field of mediation of meanings and possibilities. Finally, the games generated situations of simulated urban conflicts and tensions, exposing conditions of spatial inequality and expanding the debate on urbanism, society, and ethics in the built environment. These results demonstrate that training goes beyond technical mastery and embraces subjective, sensory, and ethical dimensions, signaling the urgency of a pedagogy anchored in imagination, affection, and sensitive listening for the teaching of Architecture and Urbanism.

5 Final Considerations

The experience reported in this paper highlights the potential of video games as sensitive, critical, and transformative pedagogical instruments in the teaching of Architecture and Urbanism. Throughout the course, students' attitudes toward design showed a significant change, marked by greater emotional involvement, openness to listening, ethical awareness, and the capacity for narrative reflection. Digital games, traditionally associated with entertainment, proved to be fertile environments for design experimentation, meaning construction, and vocational reconnection. The methodological proposal, grounded in the concept of Ambiances, enabled students to access the subjective dimensions of space, often neglected by traditional approaches. The structure in thematic blocks, with increasing complexity and scale, favored a gradual immersion in urban, ethical, and symbolic issues, organically articulating theory and practice. The choice of games, carefully selected for their mechanics, aesthetics, and dynamics, was decisive for the success of the proposal, as it enabled the simulation of real situations, the creation of authorial narratives, and the exercise of design decisions with observable consequences, even in a virtual environment.

The data collected through reports, assignments, and questionnaires revealed that students not only understood the proposed content but also re-signified it based on their own experiences. Spontaneous statements demonstrated that the course went beyond the limits of technical teaching, promoting existential and ethical shifts. Many students reported rediscovering the desire to design, new insights about themselves, and concerns that transcend the academic field. This formative dimension, which mobilizes affections and subjectivities, is one of the proposal's main merits. In addition, the course fostered a critical stance toward the ideologies present in games and, by extension, in real cities. By perceiving the limits and constraints of simulated systems, students also began to question concrete urban systems, understanding that designing is always a political act, situated and laden with social implications. This critical awareness is fundamental for the training of architects and urban planners committed to transforming the world, capable of recognizing that every design decision involves negotiations between technique, desire, and responsibility.

Finally, the experience reinforces the importance of pedagogical methodologies that dialogue with contemporary languages and recognize students as active subjects in the construction of knowledge. Incorporating video games into teaching does not merely mean updating tools; it means rethinking teaching and learning, valuing listening, imagination, experimentation, and sensitivity as legitimate dimensions of design practice. In an increasingly challenging educational scenario, marked by technological transformations, crises of meaning, and epistemological disputes, proposals such as this point to possible paths for a more human, critical, and affective praxis. By activating processes of vocational reconnection, stimulating ethical reflection, and promoting the creation of alternative worlds, video games consolidate themselves as powerful formative devices, capable of

expanding the design and subjective repertoire of future professionals. In this sense, the course presented here aligns directly with the theme of this edition of the V!RUS journal by proposing a pedagogical praxis built through dialogues between disciplinary and media knowledge and by confronting traditional teaching models while valuing sensitive, ethical, and symbolic experiences as a fundamental part of training in Architecture and Urbanism.

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FROM COLONIAL GAZE TO DIGITAL VISUALITY: LANDSCAPE, POWER AND COLLAPSE

DO OLHAR COLONIAL À VISUALIDADE DIGITAL: PAISAGEM, PODER E COLAPSO

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Cunha, J. S. (2025). From Colonial Gaze to Digital Visuality: Landscape, Power, and Collapse. *V!RUS, (30)*. Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Gabriel Carvalho. 368-380 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239933

Abstract

This article investigates Landscape as a historical construction of power, in which cultural conventions are consolidated as natural expressions of the world. It aims to understand how the shift from the colonial gaze to digital forms of visuality both prolongs inherited hierarchies and opens pathways to other critical and poetic practices. The research is grounded in the hypothesis that modernity and colonialism remain interconnected in the technical and symbolic structures that shape contemporary perception. Methodologically, it combines theoretical analysis with interpretive readings of works that bring together art, technology, and ecology, privileging those that challenge the link between representation and control. The approach is interdisciplinary, integrating perspectives from philosophy, geography, anthropology, and visual arts, with emphasis on contributions from value-critique and decolonial thought. The results indicate that the digital gaze does not break with the colonial past but reconfigures it through algorithmic devices that regulate visibility and the production of meaning. In this context, art is understood as a practice of translation and confrontation between different forms of knowledge, capable of establishing dialogues between distinct cosmologies and techniques and of proposing other forms of relation among image, territory, and life. Such a perspective supports a praxis that unites reflection, sensibility, and social transformation.

Keywords: Landscape, Digital visuality, Colonialism, Art, Collapse of Modernization.

1 Introduction

This article examines Landscape[1] as a political and ideological construct, understanding it as a historical form of cultural mediation that transforms artificial constructions into naturalized realities. The investigation is situated within the theme “Multilateral Dialogues: praxis, interlocutions, and confrontations” by engaging with the *Collapse of Modernization*, the *Capitalocene*, and the *Plantationocene* through an understanding of Landscape as a space of encounter among heterogeneous theoretical, political, and cultural perspectives, traversed by historical continuities and by different forms of producing the gaze. The aim is to examine how the transition from the colonial gaze to digital visualities both maintains hierarchies and opens up possibilities for aesthetic resistance. In this context, Landscape is treated as a symbolic and material articulation in which different regimes of visibility and control overlap, ranging from classical colonialism to data colonialism. The study brings together critical contributions from different disciplinary fields and geographies, articulating theoretical reflection and aesthetic practice as transformative action. The reading of the works is proposed as a critical exercise centered on the articulation among cosmologies, technologies, and ways of life, building horizontal relations between different forms of knowledge and proposing multispecies experiences and plural cosmotechnics. By considering art as an active medium of interlocution and translation between worlds, the article affirms the importance of a praxis capable of integrating differences and producing shared meanings in multicultural and interdependent societies.

This inquiry involves theoretical investigation, historical analysis of the continuities between the colonial gaze and digital visuality, and the critical reading of works that question the relationships among nature, technology, and representation. It aims to understand their intervention in the structures of visibility and power that shape the contemporary landscape. Art is approached as a space of interlocution between cosmologies, epistemes, and technologies, where the artistic gesture operates as a critical and multilateral practice. By proposing a dialogue among forms of knowledge situated in different geographies and histories, the text argues for the need of a praxis that brings together reflection and action, theory and sensibility. Within this framework, Landscape is conceptualized as an instance of mediation and translation between worlds, a site where diverse forms of knowledge converge and new possibilities for coexistence and social transformation are forged. The methodology is grounded in a theoretical-critical framework and interpretative reading. The corpus comprises works selected for their articulation of technology and nature, alongside key theoretical texts on Landscape, coloniality, and

[1] Landscape is written with a capital ‘L’ when referring to the theoretical and abstract concept. In contrast, lowercase landscape designates concrete manifestations, specific contexts, or material examples. This distinction reinforces the difference between the analytical category and its empirical materializations, without compromising the unity of the discussion.

visuality. The analysis employs a combined comparative and conceptual reading, aimed at understanding the symbolic, political, and epistemological dimensions of the works and examining how they produce meaning and interrogate regimes of visuality. The selection criteria prioritized works that reveal continuities between analog and digital visual regimes. The results indicate an algorithmic reconfiguration of colonial visuality and the emergence of artistic practices that foster multilateral dialogues among cosmologies, techniques, and modes of care.

What is commonly called Landscape has never been a neutral representation of nature but an ideological construct that bears the traces of human intervention, conflict, and power. Although multiple definitions distinguish it from space and territory, this article adopts the framework of geographers Pedro S. Urquijo Torres and Narciso Barrera Bassols (2022), who conceive of it as a spatio-temporal unit resulting from the continuous interaction between nature and culture. More than a physical expanse, Landscape brings together natural and human elements in a relationship that is simultaneously stable and mutable. It differs from the ecosystem or geosystem, which are focused on explaining biophysical dynamics, and from territory, which is associated with social and political forms of spatial appropriation. Landscape expresses the reciprocal presence of culture and nature, giving form to an integrative vision that transcends the separation between the natural and the social. The New Geography approach prioritizes a monistic and holistic perspective, recognizing Landscape as both an intellectual and material product of the collectivities that inhabit, produce, and reinterpret it, thereby integrating aesthetic, utilitarian, identity-related, and scientific dimensions in environmental analysis (Urquijo Torres & Barrera Bassols, 2022).

The analysis proceeds from the understanding that modernity cannot be dissociated from coloniality, understood as the structural continuity of the hierarchies of power, knowledge, and being that underpin the modern project. As sociologist Christian León (2019, p. 61, our translation) summarizes, “modernity emerges as marked by coloniality.”. Informed by the work of authors in the Modernity/Coloniality Group, such as Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, León demonstrates that this matrix organizes difference as a principle of epistemic and social ordering, naturalizing global hierarchies and inequalities. The colonial gaze corresponds to a regime of visuality — the notion of the *coloniality of seeing* — through which alterity is converted into an object of knowledge, classification, and control. To decolonize implies an epistemic disengagement that, as proposed by the decolonial turn, seeks to overcome the Eurocentric centrality of ways of seeing and knowing, making space for other forms of enunciation and visual practice. These three notions: coloniality, colonial gaze, and decolonization, constitute, in this article, a methodological framework for understanding the continuities and reconfigurations of the power logics that shape the history of visualities and the modern landscape, leading to what León (2019, p. 67) terms “telecolonialidade visual” [visual telecoloniality].

The proposed reading draws on the critique of Robert Kurz (1992), a philosopher within the Marxist *Wertkritik* (value-critique) tradition, who diagnoses the collapse of modernization as a structural crisis of the modern social form. More than the downfall of a political or economic system, this collapse reveals that market and State, capitalism and real socialism, share a common historical basis: the labor-based society and the commodity-producing system. From this perspective, understanding Landscape and its regimes of visuality implies recognizing that the forms of domination and representation inherited from colonialism are reconfigured within the technical and symbolic mediations of a modernity in crisis. The transition from the colonial gaze to digital visuality represents not merely a paradigm shift, but an integration into the broader process of exhaustion of the categories of modernity, value, labor, and technique, whose fetishistic autonomization leads to the dissolution of their own world (Kurz, 1992).

2 Landscape as a Political Construct and the Mediation of the Image

Far from being a natural given, Landscape, both conceptually and materially, is a product of the gaze and a symbolic space in which power manifests, conceals, and legitimizes itself. In contemporary culture, the transition from the physical landscape to its digital representation does not dilute this complexity; on the contrary, it intensifies it, transforming it into a fluid surface with multiple narratives. What was once mediated by painting or cartography is now reshaped by new visual technologies. This understanding is fundamental to Brazilian history, where the colonial vision of Paradise became a founding myth, legitimizing state formation and consolidating the hegemonic classes. This same logic of domination resurfaces in the digital era as an expression of the crisis of modernization and its structural exhaustion. Within this context, digital visuality configures itself as a sphere in which Landscape, power, and multiplicity intersect, and where art reveals itself as an essential language for understanding and intervening in the world, proposing other forms of relationship with the environment.

As art historian William John Thomas Mitchell (2002) argues, Landscape should be conceived not as a passive, neutral object to be observed, but as an active cultural medium that participates in the construction of subjectivities and social relations. It participates in the production of meaning and helps to legitimize certain worldviews as natural, concealing their historical and ideological character. By positioning the observer within a specific way of seeing and relating to space, Landscape functions as a device of symbolic power that organizes the experience of the visible (Mitchell, 2002). In dialogue with these propositions, geographer Denis Cosgrove (1984) situates the emergence of Landscape in the Renaissance context, alongside linear perspective, the rationalization of space, and the consolidation of private property. For him, Landscape should be understood as a cultural form that organizes the visible world and assigns meaning to it, expressing historical modes of seeing and relating to space. Cosgrove's (1984) analysis, like Mitchell's (2002), understands Landscape as a cultural construction linked to power relations. Both associate its emergence with the consolidation of private property and with the formation of a visual culture that transformed space into an object of contemplation and domination.

Mitchell (2002) exposes Landscape as part of the process that converts territory into commodity and the gaze into a form of power, while Cosgrove (1984) highlights that this way of seeing the world emerged alongside capitalist logic and the imperial imagination, establishing a visual language that transforms territory into image and the *other* into scenery. For both authors, Landscape is understood as an ideological artifact that, by representing the world as harmony and beauty, conceals the social and economic relations that sustain it. In the context of the colonization of the Americas, Landscape was an instrument associated with European imperialism, through which the representation of tropical territory was simultaneously the inscription of an absence and the projection of a civilizing destiny, a mechanism for erasing racialized bodies that portrayed the territory as an abundant yet empty nature, an ideal stage to justify occupation as a civilizing mission and not as extermination. Perspective, the picture, and the map share the same epistemological premise: converting the world into image, space into order, and vision into possession. In this sense, Landscape constitutes the matrix of the modern gaze, grounded in the separation between subject and nature, observer and observed.

3 The Tropical and the Myth of Paradise

In discussing the tropical landscape, geographer Felix Driver and geographer and visual culture researcher Luciana Martins (2005) observe that the tropics were widely represented in texts, maps, panoramas, paintings, and photographs, constituting a vast visual repertoire through which tropical difference was imagined and typified. For the authors, the mapping and description of these spaces were at the core of Enlightenment thought, as they involved measuring, translating, and ordering the world so that it might be known and appropriated. In this process, tropicality was conceived as a counterpoint to temperate nature, sometimes exalted as sublime and exuberant, sometimes degraded as a place of degeneration, serving distinct scientific, aesthetic, and colonial projects. Driver and Martins (2005) stress that such representations did not result solely from a European projection onto the *other* but involved exchanges and displacements in which the experience of travel and the encounter with the tropics also transformed the European gaze itself. Thus, the tropical landscape can be understood as a visual and sensory construction shaped by experiences and translations in the formation of modern geographical knowledge. As art historian Ana Maria Belluzzo reminds us, the image of the tropics was formed by representational systems that united art and science, composing a "segunda natureza" [second nature] (Belluzzo, 1994b, p. 11). The European traveler's vision, structured by optics and perspective, transformed the tropical landscape into a product of a visual order that sought to classify and domesticate diversity. This articulation between art and knowledge, reinforced by practices of drawing and cataloguing, generated a systematizing gaze that converted living nature into a readable and controllable image (Belluzzo, 1994b).

As Cosgrove (1984) points out, Landscape is inseparable from the material and symbolic conditions of its production and simultaneously reflects the social and economic organization of territories. The transition to European capitalism, which reorganized space on all scales and altered the relationship between society and the environment, also shaped the concept of Landscape, for it is embedded within a tradition that links the observation, representation, and possession of space: to see land as Landscape is to see it as property and as image. The elevated viewpoint of the observer, instituted by painting, cartography, and photography, corresponds to the symbolic position of the landowner who visually dominates the scene. Landscape is, therefore, the ideological expression of the commodification of space and the image of a process that converts land into capital and the gaze into an instrument of control. In the case of the tropical landscape, Cosgrove (2005) emphasizes that the direct experience of travelers and the symbolic construction of the tropics have always been intertwined. Since the

first sea voyages, the perception of the world situated between Cancer and Capricorn was shaped by a long Western tradition of images and ideas, which conditioned the way tropical peoples and places were seen and narrated. This relationship between imagination and experience, in which the observation of nature merges with the projection of cultural desires and values, remains active in current expressions of tropicality, visible in tourism, advertising, and visual culture, which continue to associate the tropics with exuberance, pleasure, and difference (Cosgrove, 2005).

The symbolic construction of the Brazilian landscape as a natural paradise, instituted through European colonization, not only represented the territory but also organized ways of seeing, inhabiting, and dominating space, becoming a technology of power that structured a colonial visuality still present today. As historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda observes, already in the earliest accounts of sixteenth-century chroniclers the tropical territory was described as a magical garden that captivated Europeans through its “ever-green vegetation, the colorfulness, variety, and strangeness of the fauna, the benevolence of the climate, and the simplicity and innocence of its peoples” (2000, p. 17, our translation), thus configuring an Edenic representation of Brazil as an earthly paradise. This visuality, an Edenic fantasy constructed through the idealization of the tropic, not only masked the violences of conquest but functioned as a founding narrative of national identity, erasing Indigenous bodies and cultures under the promise of abundance and harmony. The colonial discourse produced a nature to be dominated and converted into a civilized landscape, concealing the traces of violence and appropriation. For philosopher Marilena Chauí (2000), this imaginary is part of the Brazilian founding myth, in which the country is idealized as a gift of nature, free of conflict, a naturalized image that, paradoxically, underpins an authoritarian and hierarchical project. Brazil is thus conceived as a land without evil, destined for the fulfillment of a harmonious collective destiny, erasing the historical and social foundations that structured its formation (Chauí, 2000).

Belluzzo (1994a) notes that this Edenic vision is not an isolated invention but part of a long-standing European visual repertoire that, since the sixteenth century, alternates between idealization and estrangement of the tropic. The persistence of this visuality, founded on the desire for totality and order, reveals how Brazil continued to be thought of as image rather than as lived reality (Belluzzo, 1994c). This idealization, by producing the Brazilian tropical landscape as a passive and harmonious setting, acts as an instrument for concealing historical violence while simultaneously consolidating an image susceptible to appropriation and commodification. The exotization of the tropical, as highlighted by Driver and Martins (2005), was a process of symbolic fabrication that crossed borders and consolidated a visual language that transformed the tropics into a sign of difference and alterity. “The conceptual apparatus of tropicality itself!1as a geography” (Driver & Martins, 2005, p. 16), built through representations that unified, under a single aesthetic and moral logic, diverse territories marked by distinct climates, peoples, and histories. The tropical, thus, ceased to designate merely a geographic region to become an aesthetic and ideological category, in which the Western gaze produced its own alterity, establishing racial, moral, and cultural hierarchies under the appearance of natural diversity. This hybrid and controlled visuality, at once scientific and poetic, materialized the tropics as a modern myth, simultaneously commodity and emblem, whose persistence still structures the contemporary Brazilian imaginary.

4 A machine for naturalizing value

Beyond colonial legitimization, the promise of abundance inscribed in the idealized tropical landscape was also fundamental for the consolidation of capitalist modernity in Brazil. This promise, however, reveals itself as unfeasible before the internal contradictions of the very system that sustains it. As historian and environmental theorist Jason Moore (2016) argues, capitalism should not be understood merely as an economy, but as a historical mode of organizing nature and human life in the service of capital expansion. Coining the term *Capitalocene*, Moore (2016) proposes that the contemporary environmental crisis does not derive from humanity in the abstract, but from the specific way in which capital mobilizes labor and energy, human and extra-human, to maintain its logic of infinite accumulation. In this perspective, Landscape, as a visible and symbolic form of the capitalist organization of the world, condenses the ideologies and materialities that constitute it, converting itself into an aesthetic expression of its contradictions: an apparently natural surface that hides the relations of exploitation that sustain it. Thus, the tropical landscape reveals itself as inseparable from the violence that constitutes it and reproduces itself in the logic of global capitalism. As observes Moore (2016, p. 89-92), this reproduction is based on the appropriation of what he calls *cheap natures*: land, labor, energy, and bodies converted into low-cost resources.

The tropical landscape invented by the colonial gaze integrates itself into the very dynamics of accumulation, deepening inequalities by selectively incorporating lives and territories into hegemonic flows, while it maintains large portions of humanity and nature on the margins of valorization or under forms of subordinate integration. By promising inexhaustible fertility, it becomes the aesthetic expression of this fiction of abundance that covers up the real exhaustion of the material bases of life. Robert Kurz (1992) deepens this reflection by demonstrating that modernization based on capital is not only unstable but self-destructive. By converting labor and nature into abstractions subjected to the tautological logic of valorization, it establishes a *second social nature*, whose necessity imposes itself as natural law, although it has a historical and fetishist origin. This inversion between life and value reveals that modern progress is founded on a structure of exhaustion and that, the more the society of abstract labor expands, the closer it comes to its economic and ecological limits, corroding the very bases that sustain it. Following this logic, it is noted that the tropical landscape, idealized as static and fertile, is, in truth, subjected to a regime of constant transformation, exploited physically and symbolically until its own image collapses together with the crisis of the social forms that sustain it. In this way, Landscape, as materiality and concept, occupies the center of the contradictions of a system whose expansion depends on its own depletion (Kurz, 1992).

Beyond addressing the effects of imperialism and colonialism on humanity as a whole, it is crucial to consider that, alongside the expansion of capitalism, genocides and processes of racialization of individuals considered obstacles occurred. The coloniality of power, as formulated by sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2005), institutes the racial codification of the world by founding modernity on the distinction between conquerors and conquered, defining the former as fully human and relegating the latter to the condition of nature. This codification not only organized the global division of labor but also structured a visuality: racialized bodies were objectified and associated with the landscape, transformed into decorative or passive elements of the scene. Similarly, the artist and philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva (2022) proposes that the figure of *Homo Modernus*, a rational, white subject self-defined as universal, was constituted by the violent separation between reason and body, Europe and the rest of the world, originating a racial imaginary that naturalizes global hierarchies. This *grammar of separation*, as the author emphasizes, simultaneously legitimizes the subordination of racialized peoples and ecosystems. The idea of *Nature* — remember, established as a synonym for Landscape — in this perspective, is inseparable from racialization, since it designates everything that can be appropriated, exploited, and devalued.

The consolidation of capitalist modernity, therefore, depended not only on the economic expropriation and racial codification of the world but also on the imposition of a mode of inhabiting that transformed the Earth into productive infrastructure. In complement to Moore's (2016) *Capitalocene*, the term *Plantationcene*, formulated by biologist and feminist philosopher Donna Haraway (2016) and developed by environmentalist Malcom Ferdinand (2022) and anthropologist Anna Tsing (2019), allows us to understand the historical continuity between colonialism and the contemporary ecological crisis. Haraway (2016) describes the *Plantationcene* as the intertwining between capitalism, colonialism, and ecological destruction, proposing it as a useful concept to highlight the passage from historical formations based on ecological refugia and diversity to a regime of extermination and homogenization, a result of the expansion of plantations, introduced by Europeans in the dominated territories, and of exploitative practices that reduced the Earth and bodies to the condition of resources. Ferdinand (2022) denominates *colonial inhabiting* the form of relation with the world structured in the privatization of land, in the violent displacement of peoples, and in the implementation of plantations as the hegemonic model of exploitation. The landscape resulting from this process is a technical space of domination, homogenized and regulated by the logic of the control of life.

By characterizing plantations as the starting point of a global ecological model, Ferdinand (2022) shows that modernity instituted a veritable engineering of exploitation, a *colonial ecology* that dissolved the bonds between beings and territories, replacing them with a spatial organization geared toward continuous extraction. Tsing (2019) also uses the term *Plantationcene* to describe plantations as model landscapes of modernity, conceived to eliminate diversity and make the world scalable, that is, compatible with the unlimited reproduction of capital. Such formations, notes the author, constitute the reverse of life, as they configure simplified ecosystems that interrupt relationships among species and replace multiplicity with monocultures of power and value. The philosopher Bruno Latour (2020), reflecting on the climate crisis, argues that part of its worsening stems from the modern conception of nature as inert matter, an inheritance of a naturalism that ignores the mediations and transformations that compose the materiality of the world, paving the way for contemporary denialism.

It is clear, therefore, that the persistent image of an idealized landscape as a direct mirror of nature has had, and still has, a significant role in how people, individually or collectively, including nations and governments, position themselves and act in

relation to the world. In the Brazilian case, the philosopher Alyne Costa (2020) observes that the articulation between social and environmental causes, powerful at the end of the 1970s, was progressively weakened by a developmentalist imaginary that prioritized the primary sector of the economy even at the cost of environmental devastation, culminating in more destructive policies during the Bolsonaro government (2019–2022). As the philosopher shows, even in left-wing governments, the developmentalist model remains dominant, frequently at odds with socio-environmental demands. This pattern persists, as evidenced by the enactment of the so-called *Devastation Bill* (PL 2.159/2021), which weakens environmental licensing rules and was approved by Congress in July 2025 (Folha de São Paulo, 2025). Added to this is the recent authorization by the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama) for oil drilling at the mouth of the Amazon River, granted to Petrobras in October 2025, a decision that reignited criticism from scientists, environmentalists, and indigenous peoples regarding the risks to biodiversity and the advancement of a developmental model that maintains the exploitation of natural resources as a state priority (Ibama, 2025). All of this reaffirms, as Costa (2020) observes, the difficulty of escaping the economic logic that subordinates the protection of territories of life to immediate growth interests.

5 Visualities from the Map to the Algorithm

The ways of seeing Landscape instituted by the *Capitalocene* and the *Plantationocene* articulate themselves historically in a single visual machinery that art theorist Joaquín Barriendos (2019) denominates the *coloniality of seeing*. He describes it as a scopic regime that, since the fifteenth century, links power, knowledge, and racialization. Imperial cartography and Eurocentric ethnography transformed the American territory into an ontological beyond, defining alterity as a space of exploitation and legitimizing colonial domination. Both cartography and the pictorial representations associated with the Eurocentric gaze contributed to naturalizing colonial hierarchies and aestheticizing difference, instituting a separation between humanity and non-humanity, civilization and barbarism (Barriendos, 2019). As Cosgrove (2008) observes, the foundation of modern geography is rooted in visualization practices that unite map and landscape as instruments for projecting the world. The map not only represents territory, but constructs it as a measurable and abstract image, establishing a visual order based on distance, scale, and perspective. This graphic projection converts the Earth into a continuous and calculable surface, subjecting it to the rational and planned gaze of the modern observer.

Since its modern origins, Landscape represents the fusion between gaze and territorial order, naturalizing the domination of the world through its symbolic ordering. The projective geometry that structures both the map and painting transforms spatial experience into a form of power that measures and dominates through vision (Cosgrove, 2008). In this way, contemporary digital visuality updates this logic through algorithms and platforms that reproduce mechanisms of classification and exclusion, translating bodies and territories into data and perpetuating the consumption of alterity as a visual and economic resource (Barriendos, 2019). Thus, map, painting, and digital image compose a single genealogy of the coloniality of seeing, in which the production of Landscape remains linked to historical dispositifs of power and representation. The passage from the colonial gaze to digital visuality does not occur through rupture, but through continuities mediated by different vision technologies.

Art theorist Jonathan Crary (1990) states that to observe is not merely to see, but to conform to a set of practices, norms, and conventions historically inscribed in the body and in perception. From the nineteenth century onward, vision comes to be shaped by technical assemblages that transform the observer into a subject functional to capitalist modernity. Optical devices such as the *camera obscura* and the stereoscope exemplify this shift, by producing a disciplined and fragmented vision, the basis of spectacular consumption and the industrial reorganization of the modern visual body, updating epistemic and racial hierarchies that sustain modernity.

By the late twentieth century, with the proliferation of digital technologies, visuality becomes cybernetic and abstract, dissociating itself from the human observer: images come to be composed of numerical data and shaped by technical-institutional, military, scientific, and media demands, and no longer by the optical relation with the empirical world (Crary, 1990). In this continuity, the internet consolidates a global apparatus that dilutes social and temporal mediations, producing a perception that is continuously captured and modulated (Crary, 2022). In the passage to digital culture, Landscape does not disappear, but reorganizes itself as an informational system. The artist and researcher Maria Amélia Bulhões (2011) shows that the digital Landscape inherits the organizing and projective character of earlier visual forms, but translates it into

data flows and connected spatialities, in which the gaze is mediated by platforms and interfaces. The new forms of image replace the single point of view with multiple modes of observation, displacing the user's gaze into informational circuits that envelop and control it (Bulhões, 2011).

Artist and researcher Giselle Beiguelman (2021) calls *dadosfera* the visual ecosystem in which images cease to represent reality and begin to act as data, circulating in technical chains of surveillance, control, and value extraction. In this environment, contemporary visual power acts no longer through the image as an object, but through its circulation and algorithmic modulation, establishing in daily life regimes of visibility and invisibility that escape human perception (Beiguelman, 2021). Sociologist João Francisco Cassino (2021), starting from the thought of Aníbal Quijano, explains that the digital visual reorganization inscribes itself in an asymmetric geopolitical context, in which digital technologies reinforce the historical division between colonizers and colonized, maintaining peripheral territories in a condition of economic and informational dependency. The coloniality of power persists as *data colonialism*, in which the continuous capture of information transforms bodies and territories into informational resources and sustains capitalist accumulation based on racial exploitation, excluding portions of the population from the category of the human and relegating the non-white to the condition of disposable (Cassino, 2021).

In this context, the digital landscape extends the cartographic and pictorial logic, converting the world into continuous vision, in which the gaze is amplified and controlled by the devices that sustain it. Dissolved as a stable and contemplative form, it reappears as an informational flow structured by sensors, cameras, satellites, and algorithms that modulate the visible and produce strategic invisibilities (Beiguelman, 2021). In this regime of visuality, images cease to represent and begin to act as vectors of surveillance and prediction, becoming instruments for tracking and behavior modulation. In the Brazilian context, where the colonial gaze had already racialized bodies and territories as passive components of Landscape, this technical configuration of vision reproduces and amplifies the symbolic violences of the past, updating digitally the mechanisms of exclusion and control that sustained the colonial formation. The control that began with the map, consolidated itself in modern vision technologies and today manifests itself in the digital as an expanded continuity of these logics, reaffirming the principles that made Landscape a medium for the naturalization of capitalism.

6 Other perspectives

Barriendos (2019) points out that *decolonizing the gaze* requires the creation of a transmodern visual pact, capable of promoting dialogue among diverse visual epistemologies and questioning the universalisms of modernity. This implies liberating the gaze from the hierarchies that structured Western rationality and opening space for *counter-visual* forms of perception and representation. It is a matter of critically reinscribing images and categories of the colonial past, converting them into new possibilities of seeing. By recognizing that the desires for accumulation and consumption of alterity continue to guide contemporary visual capitalism, the author proposes that to decolonize the gaze means to overcome this symbolic economy and establish new sensitive and inter-epistemic conditions of coexistence. Such a gesture implies recognizing that visual coloniality remains active in the politics of the digital and in the image economies that shape the present. The decolonial proposition discussed by Barriendos (2019) allows us to rethink the separations that structured modernity, such as the oppositions between nature and culture, subject and object, human and non-human; divisions that sustained the Eurocentric gaze and the idea of a world that could be classified, exploited, and administered.

This gaze forms the basis of a historical period marked by a way of organizing life and the planet according to the logic of monoculture, forced labor, and the elimination of refuge spaces that maintained diversity. The philosopher and environmentalist Ailton Krenak shows that such separations result from a modern abstraction that has transformed rivers, forests, and mountains into resources. This vision impoverishes the notion of belonging to the world and the meaning of existence. Reversing this division requires recognizing that “tudo é natureza” [everything is nature] and that the Landscape is part of a collective body (Krenak, 2019, p. 16-17). Inhabiting, in this context, becomes an act of confluence, a practice of listening and sharing with the multiple worlds that coexist on Earth. This perspective reinscribes the Landscape as an expression of life and proposes an ethics of enchantment, in which seeing is participating in the relationships that sustain the planet.

Ferdinand (2022) likewise identifies as part of the problem the separation between decolonial critique, aimed at the violence imposed on enslaved and dominated peoples, and environmental critique, centered on the devastation of ecosystems; a

cleavage that conceals the fact that the exploitation of land and bodies sustains a single colonial project of inhabiting the world. As an alternative, the author proposes a *decolonial ecology* that restores to environmental struggles their historical and political character. Instead of treating the ecological crisis as a natural or technical phenomenon, Ferdinand (2022) makes it explicit as an expression of the very colonial structure of the modern world, which produces a crisis that is simultaneously ecological, racial, and civilizational. Tsing (2019), in turn, proposes that we think through the ruins, from which emerge other modes of existence that lead to the formation of landscapes of slow disturbance, multispecies ecologies capable of persisting, improvising, and creating new forms of life in the interstices of devastation.

Haraway's (2016) proposal to *stay with the trouble* reinforces the need to inhabit a damaged world without seeking purification or a return to a lost nature. Confronting current crises means taking responsibility for the entanglements that constitute us, cultivating practices of *making-with* and performing gestures of care and reciprocity among species, technologies, and places. This perspective rejects nostalgia and the technocratic fantasy of escape, proposing instead an ethics of persistence, in which thought is anchored in everyday practices of *sympoiesis* and bets on alliances capable of sustaining life amid ruin (Haraway, 2016). In this same direction, the philosopher Yuk Hui (2020) proposes the concept of *cosmotechnics*, understood as the articulation between technique, morality, and cosmology. For the author, there is no universal technology but rather a multiplicity of cosmotechnics rooted in specific cosmologies. This plurality underpins his defense of *technodiversity*, a politics that resists the homogenization imposed by unilateral globalization. Hui (2020) argues that it is necessary to rearticulate technology to make possible other technodiverse futures.

These practices, local and plural, approach Latour's (2020) proposal of *landing*, an act of re-encountering the Terrestrial not as a resource, but as a partner in coexistence. This shift opposes the idea of abstract globalization and proposes rebuilding alliances from the concrete territories of life. Thus, ecological and decolonial critique must also be a critique of vision, rethinking the relationships between body, technique, and territory in order to establish practices of *seeing-wit*h: ways of seeing capable of reconstituting alliances between humans and non-humans and of restoring to the image its power of coexistence, and not of capture.

7 Other possible worlds

If Landscape is not a mere natural backdrop but a historical, cultural, and ideological construct, an active medium that configures ways of seeing and existing (Mitchell, 2002), in the digital contemporaneity, as observes Bulhões (2011), this medium expands, becomes hybrid and interactive, crossing boundaries between the physical, symbolic, and virtual and opening space for sensitive forms of inhabiting and questioning the world. However, what enables this transformation is not technology itself, but its use reoriented by a decolonial thought, which abandons the hegemonic logics of seeing and proposes plural ways of perceiving and creating the world. Thus, Landscape ceases to be a static image or an administrable resource and constitutes itself as a living process of recomposition and coexistence (Bulhões, 2011).

In recent decades, several exhibitions and artistic practices have been exploring concepts of Landscape as a means of articulation between technology, ecology, and ancestry. *Casa Comum* (2020) proposed the planet as a shared home, bringing together Amazonian artists in multimedia narratives (Revista Philos, 2024). *Movimentos Miméticos* (2025) resorted to mimicry as a metaphor for coexistence among species and systems (Dasartes, 2025a). These exhibitions reveal a curatorial tendency that articulates identities, memories, and possible futures. *Adiar o fim do mundo* (2025), curated by Paulo Herkenhoff and Ailton Krenak, reaffirms art as a space of re-enchantment and care, uniting creation and Indigenous thought in a collective exercise of imagination that seeks to postpone the end of the world and reinvent the present (Dasartes, 2025b).

Fig. 1: Botannica Tirannica; Venenosas, Nocivas e Suspeitas; Beleza Corrosiva. Source: Beiguelman, 2025. Images provided by the artist. Access authorized on 11/10/2025.

The exhibition *Naturezas Desviantes* (2025), by Giselle Beiguelman, held at the *Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul* (*MARGS*), in southern Brazil, proposes a critical reading of the ways in which the colonial imaginary structured the relationships between technology, nature, and power. The exhibition brings together the works *Botannica Tirannica*, *Venenosas, Nocivas e Suspeitas* e *Beleza Corrosiva* (Figure 1). Occupying the museum's art galleries with live plants and species created by artificial intelligence, the collection invites a review of the categories of nature and humanity. By occupying the museum under reconstruction after the 2024 flood, Beiguelman reaffirms art as an act of resistance, regeneration, and hope, which, by revealing the deviant natures hidden in culture, proposes to imagine new forms of coexistence (*Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul*, 2025).

In *Botannica Tirannica* (Figure 2). Beiguelman challenges the colonizing gaze of modern botany by highlighting that the naming of species was also a process of symbolic domination. Starting with a seedling of *Tradescantia zebrina*, known as *the wandering Jew*, the artist creates the *Garden of Resilience*, in which plants considered invasive are reimagined as metaphors for resistance and coexistence (Museu Judaico de São Paulo, 2022). The work is not organized around an object to be contemplated, but articulates ideas and processes that reveal art as an instrument of knowledge and action in the world. By exposing the power structures that have naturalized vision and knowledge, Beiguelman proposes a decolonial perspective, inviting us to rethink the very act of seeing and its political implications.

Fig. 2: Botannica Tirannica. Source: Beiguelman, 2022. Image provided by the artist. Access authorized on 11/10/2025.

8 Final considerations

Recognizing Landscape as a political technology allows us to understand that the ways of seeing and representing the world remain linked to the logic of abstraction that sustains value, as points out Kurz (1992). Thus, the decolonial gaze is not merely an aesthetic refusal of colonialism, but an attempt to break with the very structure of equivalence and quantification that shaped capitalist modernity. Even when inserted into institutional and market circuits, the exhibitions and works analyzed reveal spaces of possibility in which other modes of perception and existence become visible. These practices do not cancel the contradictions of the system, but establish intervals capable of reconfiguring its rationality. Thus, contemporary art affirms itself as a field of praxis and interlocution, a place in which theory and sensibility articulate themselves to conceive a multilateral techno-scientific contribution, oriented not by accumulation, but by the construction of habitable and plural worlds.

The analysis of colonial and digital visualities, articulated with contemporary artistic practices that reconfigure the landscape as a means of encounter between different forms of knowledge, reinforces the relevance of considering current challenges from the perspective of multilateral dialogues. These aesthetic experiences demonstrate that creation can establish spaces for dialogue between traditions, technologies, and modes of care, enabling the emergence of plural ways of imagining and inhabiting the planet. By bringing reflection and action closer together, the article reaffirms art as a place of praxis, sensitivity, and critical thinking, capable of opening paths for the collective construction of sustainable and just futures. In this context, encounters between differences become a source of learning and transformative power, guiding the production of knowledge committed to multicultural societies and the continuity of common life.

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YESTERDAY, YOUR FUTURE – THE CITY WHERE I AM TODAY

ONTEM, O SEU FUTURO – A CIDADE EM QUE HOJE ME ENCONTRO

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Proêza, S. S. (2025). Yesterday, Your Future: The City Where I Am Today. *V!RUS, (30).* Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 381-398
https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239976

Abstract

In this photo essay, I retrace the steps of the 1995 documentary *Retiro: two sides of the same neighborhood*[1], created by students from a school in Villa 31, one of Argentina's most emblematic informal settlements. Shirley, one of the neighborhood's longtime residents, co-authored the documentary, which exposes the contrast between Villa 31 and its surrounding neighborhoods, capturing the edges and tensions where these two cities meet. Thirty years later, I record these same boundaries. My aim is to revisit the territory and engage in dialogue with the documentary, highlighting the settlement's ongoing tensions and resilience amid attempts at erasure. My methodology uses walking and photography as embodied research practices, bridging time and creating dialogue between the present and the 1995 archive. Confronting images from the past and the present reveal layered meanings, showing how struggle has shaped the city and how the past still inhabits the present. This work connects to "Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations" by uniting tensions and diverse voices. It exposes disputes over how the city is produced and inhabited, and bridges perspectives and timescales, affirming the margins as active spaces of creation.

Keywords: Dispute, Photography, Documentary, Urban Margin, Villa 31

1 Introduction

The black-and-white documentary *Retiro: dos caras de un mismo barrio* (Rebecchi, 1995) commences with a chalk-drawn map of Latin America on a classroom blackboard. A voice-over situates the narrative both spatially and politically: "I am part of Latin America. For some, eternally plundered. My country is Argentina, and I live in the Federal Capital. As much as it might bother many, Retiro is my neighborhood[2]. More precisely, Villa 31 in Retiro" (Rebecchi, 1995, 00:01:26, our translation[3]). This introductory passage demarcates not only a geographical setting, but also a political and affective stance characterized by a marginal position (hooks, 2019) that contests the hegemonic city[4] through the affirmation of a space of dispute.

Directed by seventeen-year-old Shirley Bustinza and her peers in 1995, the documentary[5] was conceived from an interdisciplinary project with students from a school in Villa 31, a key urban margin in Buenos Aires. The documentary's creators were, and still are, residents committed to their community, which then faced serious threats of eviction – attempts to erase Villa 31 recur in its history. Shirley is one of my doctoral research interlocutors for *Viajar-mundos na Villa 31: as migrações latino-americanas femininas nas dobras do corpo e da cidade* (*Traveling worlds in Villa 31: Latin American female migrations in the folds of the body and the city*), now in its final phase at the Federal University of Bahia (Brazil). The research is constructed in dialogue with migrant women who live in Villa 31, whose narratives and trajectories (Kofes, 2001), allow us to glimpse the intersections between experiences of migration by women in situation of vulnerability (Kowarick, 2002) in Latin

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1 From the original in Spanish: Retiro: dos caras de un mismo barrio.

2 Retiro is the district where Villa 31 was originally established. At the time the documentary was made, Villa 31 had not yet been officially recognized as a neighborhood, as it is today, and many records still referred to it as part of Retiro – a name also used by some residents, especially older ones.

3 From the original in Spanish: "Soy parte de Latinoamérica. Para algunos, eternamente saqueada. Mi país es la Argentina y vivo en la Capital Federal. Por más que eso moleste a muchos, mi barrio es Retiro. Más precisamente, la Villa 31 de Retiro".

4 I am referring here to the hegemonic city, to those territories that concentrate political, economic, symbolic, and institutional power. These are socially valued spaces, recognized as legitimate and desirable, where the norms, aesthetics, and urban practices considered "official" or "appropriate" are defined. They are the areas that receive the bulk of public and private investment, concentrate infrastructure and services, and also constitute the sites from which discourses that stigmatize or marginalize other parts of the city are produced.

5 The documentary Retiro: dos caras de un mismo barrio was made by students from Escuela de Educación Media Nº 06 – Padre Carlos Mugica who, at the time, were studying Argentine Social Studies (Estudios Sociales Argentinos). In the order in which they appear in the video credits, they are: Shirley Bustinza, Martín Cardoso, Víctor Castillo, Nicolás Echave, Daniel Molloja, Elsa Oño, Patricia Pedernera, Claudia Zalazar, and David Zenteno. The film was directed by Professor Néstor Rubén Rebecchi, in collaboration with Jorge Bachur. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyMgRqz7ExU. All of the text presented here is based on the content of this documentary.

America and the processes of city-making (Agier, 2015) on the urban margins. The dwelling is an important device in this process, an anchor to the other-place, the new territory in which women rebuild their lives and weave their belongings.

Shirley migrated from Bolivia to Villa 31 when she still was a child, at the age of seven, and witnessed the territory's transformation following significant displacement, seeing numerous families seeking housing. The area subsequently developed into an established neighborhood, experiencing substantial urbanization. Her experience embodies these changes, actively shaping the place. From our initial discussions, she has demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the evolution and conflicts Villa 31 has experienced. At our most recent meeting in late 2024, she remarked on her unexpected rediscovery of a work of significant aesthetic and political import – the documentary she had helped to produce decades earlier. The visual archive documents the neighborhood's daily life with clarity and sensitivity, providing an invaluable account of the historical period and local struggles and serving as a guiding thread for this essay.

This work fits the theme "Multilateral dialogues: praxis, interlocutions, and confrontations" by addressing tensions at the urban margins. It uncovers disputes over ideas of the city and connects different spaces and times, establishing the margins as spaces of creation and resistance. This is more than a theoretical framework – it is a methodological, aesthetic, and political stance to link images, bodies, and memories of the territory. In this context, audiovisual media and photography help express the conflicts of urban life – a means to see and narrate the city from within, by those who live and shape it.

2 The territory of dispute: Villa 31

Villa 31 is one of the oldest and most disputed urban margins[6] in Argentina, and it is very present in the city's imagination in various ways. The territory is traversed daily by political parties, students, NGOs, tourists, and other social actors. According to Maria C. Cravino (2010), it is one of the most emblematic cases of public policies marked by contradictions, omissions, and violations of rights by the government. Its location (Figure 1) is a very decisive variable in its history, since its occupation began on residual land located between large transportation infrastructure facilities – such as the city's railways and port – in the central part of Buenos Aires, near high-value neighborhoods such as Retiro, Puerto Madero, Barrio Norte, and Recoleta. Proximity to major transportation at all scales places Villa 31 in a key metropolitan connection zone, with important train and subway stations, many bus lines, and next to the intercity and international bus terminal. These features make the area attractive to the real estate market, media, and state.

6 In dialogue with Rosa (2018), the concept of urban margins is revisited through the works of Agier (2017), Das and Poole (2004), and Feltran (2008), which provide a solid theoretical foundation for grasping the complex dynamics that shape urban peripheries. These and other references contribute to building a richer and more multifaceted analysis of peripheral urban contexts. Rather than reducing these spaces to territories of mere exclusion or lack, we aim to move beyond traditional dichotomous frameworks – such as inside/outside, legal/illegal, formal/informal – that often constrain a broader understanding of the diversity and complexity embedded in these areas.

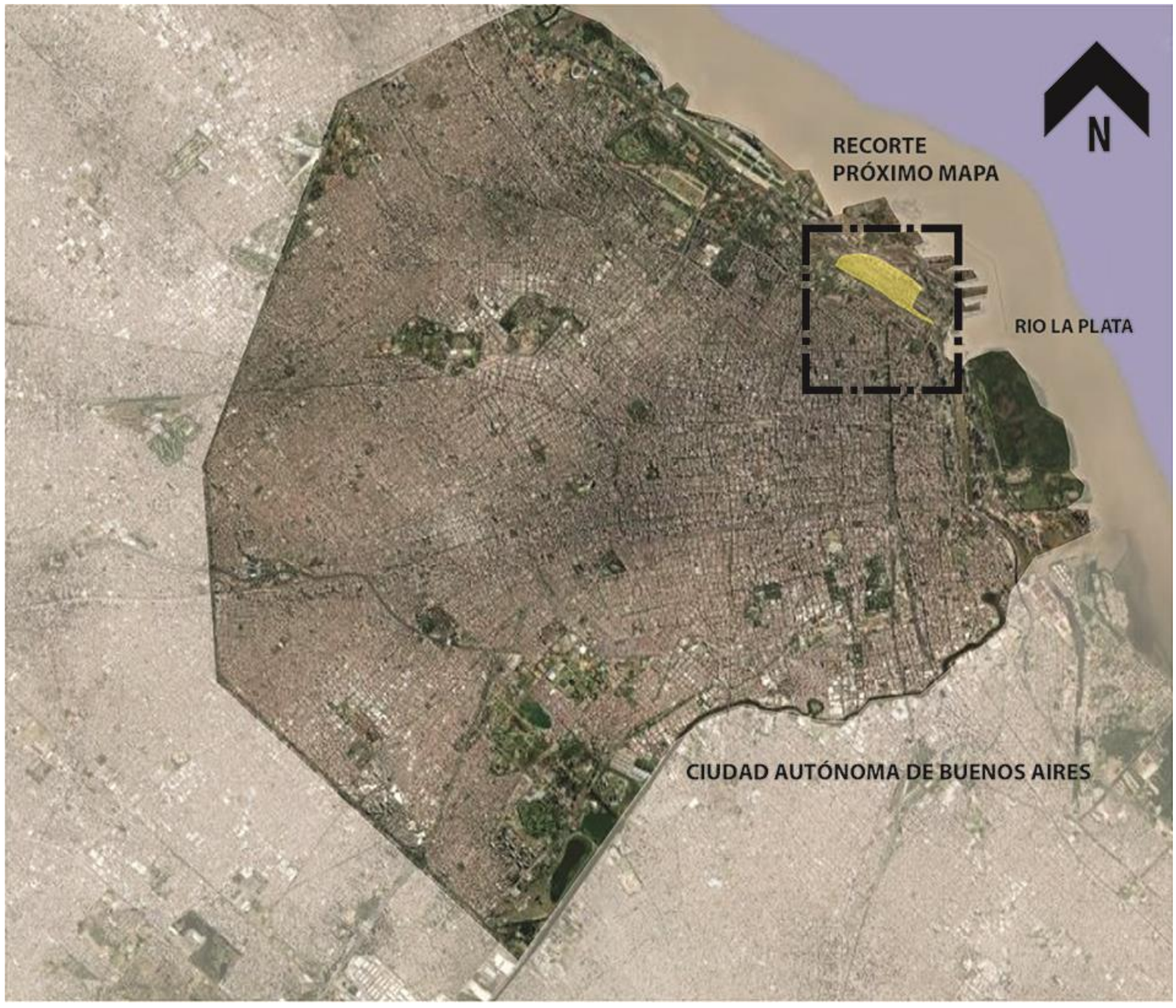

Fig. 1: Location of Villa 31 in relation to the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Source: Author's own elaboration based on Google Maps, 2025.

The foundations of Villa 31 were laid with the formation of a territory of urban anchorages (Agier, 2017) based on transatlantic displacement. Its origins date back to European migration, with the arrival of immigrant workers, mainly Italians and Poles, in the 1930s. Many of these immigrants worked in the port as day laborers and used unoccupied wagons in the region as accommodation. At the beginning of the industrialization process in large cities, migration shifted. Internal migration from South American countries and from the poorest provinces of Argentina increased, while the flow of Europeans began to decline. Currently, most of the population comes from intracontinental migration, mainly from the northern regions of the country and from Paraguay, Bolivia, and Peru.

Throughout their history, the residents of Villa 31 have faced successive attempts at forced eviction. They have collectively resisted projects aimed at erasing their presence, memories, and ways of life. During the dictatorship, the neighborhood was practically removed, but it re-emerged with greater strength in the following decades, taking on new contours. In contrast to the various offensives and attempts at erasure, residents built a powerful trajectory of popular organization, struggle for rights, and daily reinvention of urban space. Thus, the territory occupies a prominent place in the struggle for the right to the city (Lefebvre, 2001) in Argentina. It has consolidated as a diverse neighborhood deeply rooted in Buenos Aires' urban dynamics.

Separated from the rest of the city by train lines and large urban facilities, the residents of Villa 31 share with the adjacent neighborhoods of Retiro and Recoleta not only well-defined physical boundaries but also deeply rooted social, cultural, aesthetic, and symbolic barriers (Figure 2). The contrast is striking. The landscape, urban fabric, and aesthetics reveal two cities that coexist in permanent tension, a contrast that the documentary powerfully denounces.

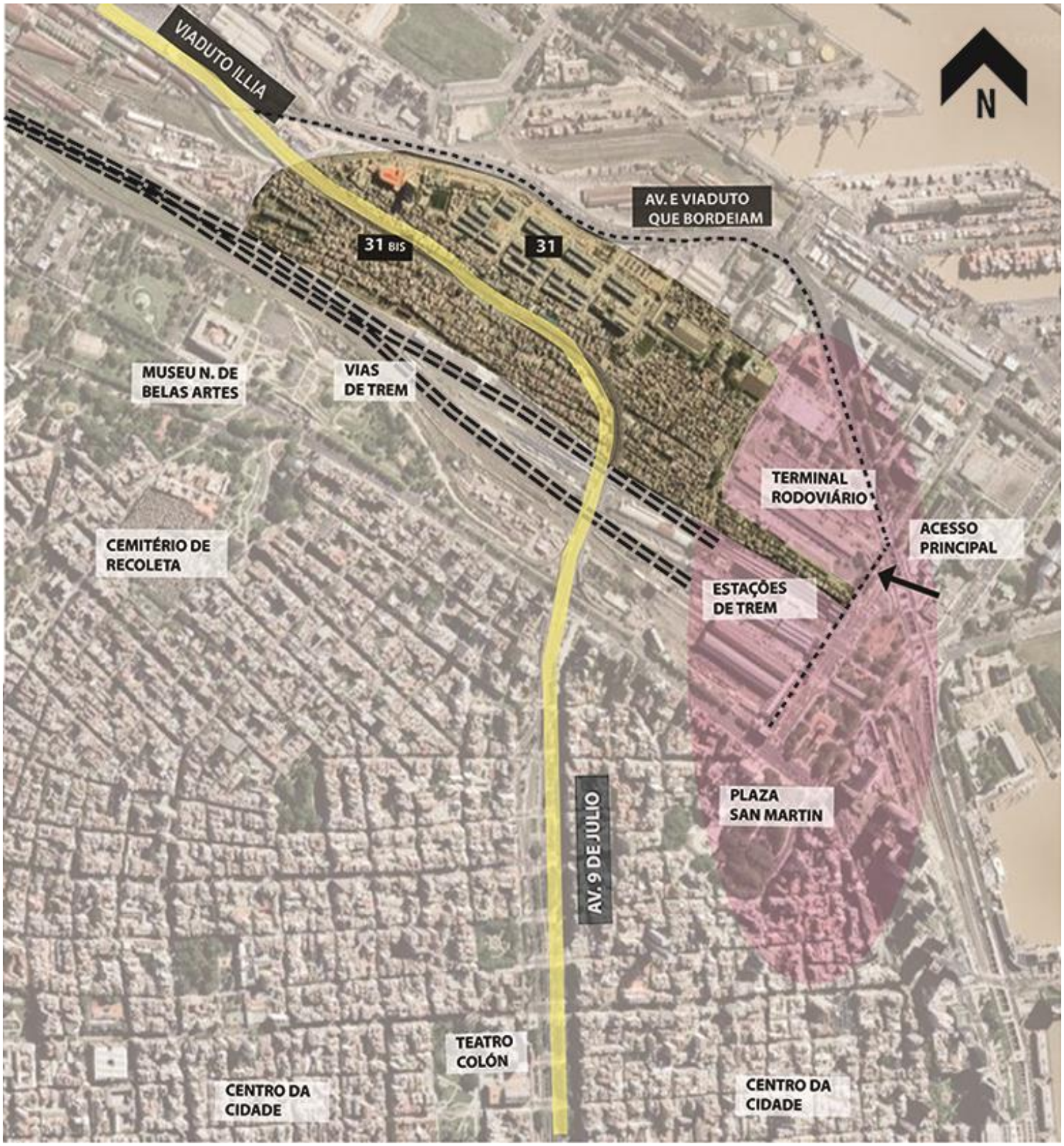

Fig. 2: Location of Villa 31 in relation to its immediate surroundings. The area of friction and contrast addressed in the documentary is shown in pink. Source: Author's own elaboration based on Google Maps, 2025.

3 The documentary: two sides of the same neighborhood

The documentary by Bustinza and her colleagues is a poetic yet precise rebuttal to a proposed state-led eviction of their community. Beyond opposing eviction, the video highlights the residents' experiences of indifference and stigmatization, details repeated interventions by public authorities, exposes persistent efforts to erase the neighborhood, outlines the absence of urban rights for locals, and underscores the stark inequality between Villa 31 and its surroundings. The work stands as a powerful gesture of affirmation from the margins, demonstrating ways the creation of one's own embodied narratives becomes a tool for confrontation. To this end, through images, script, and linguistic choices, the film exposes the processes of erasure and projects other possibilities of existence for the territory, recognizing its history, its conflicted present, and its possible futures. As bell hooks (2019, p. 309, our translation) reminds us: “Language is also a place of struggle”. In this case, the audiovisual language, constructed collaboratively, simultaneously records and expresses the conflicts and potentialities present in that situated configuration.

After the opening scene, the video then depicts a sequence of images of the Retiro neighborhood, marked by the presence of large companies, multinational headquarters, and European-inspired monuments. The setting stands in sharp contrast with the landscape of Villa 31, accentuating the urban, historical, and symbolic asymmetries that traverse the territory, reinforcing the tension between neighboring but deeply unequal spaces. The narration accompanying the images is intense: “I work and study. I am not a thief or a drug dealer. That I know; I am poor. For those who think they are not poor, and have nothing to do with me, I want to say that we have something in common: your father is my boss” (Rebecchi, 1995, 00:02:01, our translation[7]). These words directly challenge those who are considered the rulers, highlighting the connections between worlds that, at first glance, seem distant and disconnected. As hooks (2019, p. 310) reminds us: “Often, when a radical voice speaks of domination, we are speaking to those who hold power. The presence of the dominators changes the nature and direction of our words”.

It is worth noting here that Villa 31 is a territory marked by multiple migrations, both internal and transnational. People from different Latin American countries (mainly Paraguay, Bolivia, and Peru), as well as from Argentine provinces, especially the north of the country, build the neighborhood every day. This construction takes place both at a material level – in self-built houses, renovations, street vending, public spaces, and local commerce – and at a cultural and symbolic level, manifesting itself in the diversity of languages spoken, in festivals, in cuisine, and in the religious practices that permeate local daily life. It is as if the Retiro neighborhood, like much of the hegemonic city, represented an Argentina with European references. Villa 31, on the other hand, would be a fold (Deleuze, 1991) of the continent, a Latin America within Latin America itself. And not only that: it would be a racialized and poor Latin America. And although they coexist side by side, both sides are intensely and painfully opposed. There is a passage in the documentary that expresses this ambivalence well: “The Retiro that hides itself, that denies itself. The Retiro that excludes itself. This is my neighborhood. We are so close, but they consider us so far away” (Rebecchi, 1995, 00:04:50, our translation[8]). While the narrator recounts how he feels about the city as a whole, the images in parallel show the physical proximity and, at the same time, the profound difference between the two worlds that coexist side by side.

Following a historical prologue detailing the formation and ongoing resistance of Villa 31, the film shifts its focus to one of the neighborhood's most symbolic spaces of care: the Bichito de Luz Institution, where childhood takes center stage, children play, educators talk, and an affectionate, community-oriented routine prevails. This institution marked the childhoods of many residents, including some of the filmmakers. In the words of the narrator:

> For us, this is the famous Bichito de Luz Daycare Center, closed during the military regime. It has also known struggles and resurgences. Many of us passed through there and began socializing to

[7] From the original in Spanish: “Trabajo y estudio. No soy chorro, ni traficante. Eso sé, soy pobre. A vos que no lo sos y que pensás que conmigo no tenés nada que ver, te quería decir que tenemos algo en común. Tu viejo es mi patrón”.

[8] From the original in Spanish: “El Retiro que se oculta, que se niega. El Retiro al que se excluye. Este es mi barrio. Estamos tan cerca, los consideran tan lejos”.

> insert ourselves into a society that, for the most part, rejected us. But bichito, like us, does not give up. (Rebecchi, 1995, 00:14:54, our translation[9]).

The documentary then takes us to the neighborhood school, another fundamental space for forming bonds, acquiring knowledge, and feeling a sense of belonging. The choice to show educational institutions is not accidental, as they highlight the vitality of the territory, the importance of care networks, and how Villa 31 self-organizes to guarantee the life and future of its inhabitants, despite the constant uncertainties imposed by public policies. By highlighting these places of learning, the documentary inscribes childhood as an essential part of collective memory and education as a field of symbolic and political dispute. In this sequence of the video, the narrator introduces a fundamental verb: “And, in our school, as in other schools, we also celebrate Student Day. As you can see, we are not so different” (Rebecchi, 1995, 00:29:15, our translation[10]). The verb “celebrate” is highlighted as a gesture that breaks with the stereotypes of deprivation and violence that are often associated with marginalized communities. In this way, the celebration is presented as a daily practice that reaffirms community ties and demonstrates that they are not so different from students in other parts of the city.

In addition to recording and commenting on everyday life in the neighborhood, the decision to focus on the daycare center and school carries a strong symbolic meaning, pointing to the future and revealing that residents not only occupy that space but also project its continuity, imagining new possible trajectories. Produced amid the uncertainties of a new attempt to eradicate Villa 31, the documentary gains even more strength and urgency from this perspective. As Ana Clara T. Ribeiro (2010, p. 32, our translation) points out: “The embodied subject would therefore take the theater of life into their own hands, opposing its dematerialization into repetitive roles, reiterative images, and models of the city (and urbanity) that exclude them”. Thus, the spaces of the daycare center and the school emerge as fissures that transcend the present enclosed in the discourse of eradication. They are places where people go beyond resistance – they play, meet, learn, and have fun, inventing futures, affirming life and their territory, and opening up gaps for other possibilities for the city.

The documentary is this powerful because it speaks from the margins, affirming them as “places of openness and radical possibilities” (hooks, 2019, p. 323, our translation). The affirmation of the present, which projects the future, goes far beyond mere struggle for survival. It is what Freire (1992) calls “*esperançar*” (to hope), an active hope that does not passively await change, but builds it in the here and now, as a vital force capable of creating possible worlds (and cities), even in the face of forced displacement. In this sense, it is worth quoting Michel Agier in full:

> In these places that seem to be “outside” but are exactly on the border, gestures of adjustment, entanglement, bricolage, or assembly hold the heterogeneous whole together and invent cities in the material, social, and cultural spheres, anchoring them in the disorder of the present and in the unstable balance between impositions and resources, rejections and desires, margins and centralities. (Agier, 2017, p. 425, author’s quotation marks, our translation).

I return, then, to the beginning of Shirley's documentary and the precise choice of the first images: the camera is positioned exactly on the border of Villa 31, where everyone crosses paths – long-time residents, newcomers, migrants, children and grandchildren of migrants, and also those considered outsiders to the neighborhood, those who are just passing through. The choice of framing and narrative falls on the edge – a space where the two sides of the city meet, and differences coexist. By showing this point of contact, the film reveals a territory marked as much by conflict as by coexistence, separation, and flow. The edge thus emerges as a place of dispute and possible encounters, where daily life continues in motion, with its subtle intersections, tensions, and reconfigurations.

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9 From the original in Spanish: “Para nosotros, esta es la famosa guardería Bichito de Luz, cerrada durante el proceso militar. También conoce de luchas y resurgimientos. Por allí pasamos muchos de nosotros y comenzamos a socializarnos para insertarnos en una sociedad que mayoritariamente nos rechazó. Pero bichito, como nosotros, no baja los brazos”.

10 From the original in Spanish: “Y en nuestra escuela, como en otras escuelas, también festejamos el Día del Estudiante. Como verán, no somos tan distintos”.

4 Photography as a dialogue between past and future

The methodological path of this essay uses walking and photography as devices for encountering different temporalities. The documentary guides my steps through the city, leading me to Shirley and her friends, orienting my body and my gaze toward the city of today from the city of yesterday. By revisiting the images produced thirty years ago and returning to the same spaces, the research takes on an embodied and situated position (Haraway, 1995) as a methodological and political practice, and, in this gesture, produces new images. In this sense, photography becomes a mode of dialogue and translation, making different bodies, memories, and times coexist. Translating, here, does not mean replacing one time with another, but rather weaving bridges between different experiences of space, producing a common language between the past and the present, between Shirley's city and the city that is taking shape today. Translation is understood, following the perspective of Maria Lugones (2021), as an affective and insurgent practice, and is therefore a movement that does not seek equivalences, but rather the creation of links between different worlds. In addition, the images, traversed by multiple layers of presence, constitute a practice of affirmation of the city of Shirley and, at the same time, a potential history, in the sense proposed by Ariella Azoulay (2023, p. 70, our translation): “a way of being with others, living and dead, across time; against the separation between past and present, between colonized people and their worlds and possessions, between history and politics”.

Thus, the images that make up this essay record and affirm the edges of Villa 31 as a place of dispute, a territory where two cities touch, confront, and sometimes coexist. But beyond that, they constitute a temporal and political dialogue: the edges, captured in 1995 by Shirley and her colleagues' lenses, reveal the conflicts and contradictions of a city that sought to erase the neighborhood, straining the present of that time and demanding other possibilities for the future. The edges captured today show a territory that has remained and, at the same time, has been transformed. In this journey, I do not seek to reproduce exactly the same angles and frames, but to rediscover the architectural and urban references – now crossed by layers of time – that led them to look, pause, record, and reflect at that moment. In both moments, yesterday and today, the edges continue to expose the persistent conflict between two juxtaposed cities. And the encounter with images, distant in time but superimposed in space, invites reflection on the permanence and changes that mark the territory, highlighting multiple layers inscribed, renewed, and resisted within it. Therefore, I do not seek to compare what was and what is, but rather to explore the possibility of coexistence between different times and urban experiences, based on the image of the present, which in turn opens up possibilities for the future.

5 The edges of 31 three decades later

Thirty years later, I return to the edges recorded in 1995, guided by the traces and marks left in the video images, walking the streets and avenues that Shirley and her colleagues walked. Upon leaving the subway, my first impulse is to walk through the city of hotels, corporate headquarters, and banks, among glass buildings that reflect the sky and monuments that stand as symbols of power. The mirrored facades reflect a polished, cold, and sober image of the city (Figure 3). In front of certain points, squares, street corners, buildings, I imagine them there, 30 years ago, occupying that same space, so close to home and yet facing an abyss, in the contrast between the daily life they live and the landscape that unfolds before them. I imagine them young and displaced in front of this abyss, but hopeful, with a spark of disobedience that manifests itself in the documentary.

Fig. 3: Buildings in the Retiro neighborhood. Source: Author, 2025.

Most of the businesses and hotels they recorded are still there (Figures 4, 5, and 6), although now surrounded by taller, more translucent buildings that alter the scale and light of the place. The monuments also remain: the monumental tower, inaugurated in 1916 (Figure 7), remains the same; the equestrian statue in San Martín Square (Figure 8) still occupies a prominent place. At first, I confuse myself with the horse, looking away at another sculpture (Figure 9), until, by chance, I find the exact one from the video again, and for a moment, it is as if the times overlap. At another moment, I am surprised to find a reference from the video that remains quite similar. It is a building, now for sale, that used to function as a restaurant with the sign “Assador Criollo” (Figure 10), which stands out from the aesthetics of that place, as if it had been forgotten there.

Fig. 4: Sheraton Hotel and recent buildings. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 5: Buildings in the Retiro neighborhood, with companies. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 6: Samsung company and cranes. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 7: Monumental tower, inaugurated in 1916. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 8: Equestrian statue monument to San Martin (1862) with Kavak in the background. Source: Author, 2025.

Then I head to the entrance of Villa 31, passing by the sidewalk and the bus terminal, which appears prominently in the video (Figures 11 and 12), accompanied by the narrator's words: “My neighborhood has common places, spaces where people mix and, when they mix, they are not differentiated, although they are also not connected. Where most people think there is nothing to share” (Rebecchi, 1995, 00:03:01, our translation[11]). The terminal is one of the neighborhood's access points. I sit there and observe this space of mixing, this transition zone where flows intersect without fully meeting, until my steps finally take me inside Villa 31.

[11] From the original in Spanish: “Mi barrio presenta lugares comunes, espacios donde los hombres se mezclan y al mezclarse no se diferencian, aunque tampoco se contactan. Donde la mayoría piensa que nada hay que compartir”.

Fig. 9: Equestrian statue and mirrored buildings in Retiro. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 10: Asador Criollo. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 11: View from the Buenos Aires Bus Terminal. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 12: View from the Buenos Aires Bus Terminal. Villa 31 in the foreground, Sheraton hotel in the background. Source: Author, 2025.

The encounter with Villa 31 (Figures 13, 14, 15, and 16) reveals a new scenario: the residents have won the right to remain, the neighborhood is undergoing an intense process of urbanization, and the border between the two cities is changing, with the state now investing in the area and seeking to dissolve the existing divisions, as the official discourse has evolved from eradication to integration. The houses are much more consolidated than in the video. And the Ministry of Education stands as a landmark of this new stage, alongside paved streets, service networks, and renovated facades. However, beneath the surface of these improvements, tensions persist that cannot be erased. The local population continues to have a sociocultural profile that is distinct from its immediate surroundings, separated from the dominant urban imagination and in constant tension with the city project that is being consolidated.

Fig. 13: Villa 31 soccer field. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 14: Recurring type of building in Villa 31. Source: Author, 2025.

Fig. 15: Profile view of Villa 31. Source: Author, 2025.

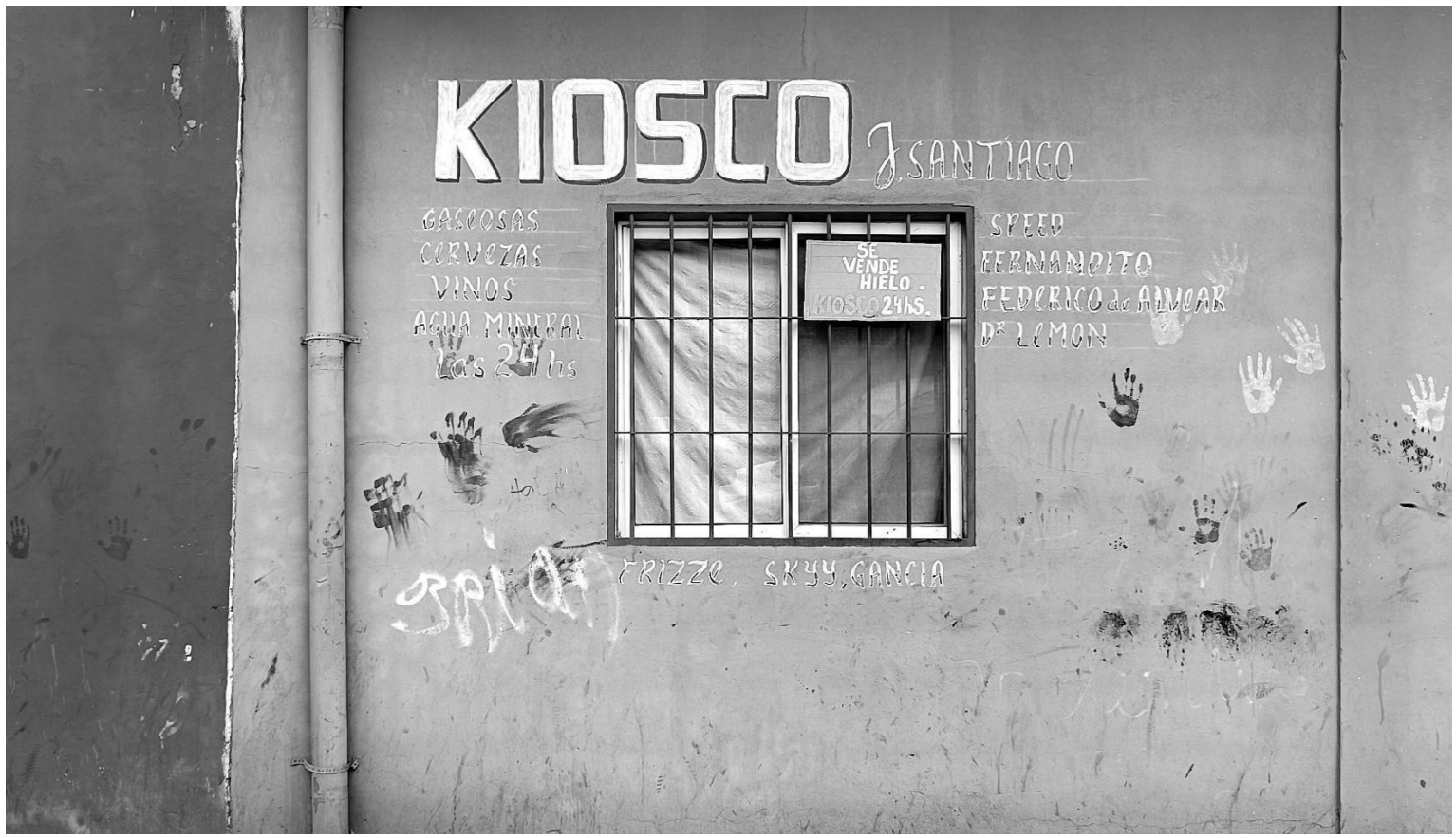

Fig. 16: Commercial sign in Villa 31, completely out of place in Retiro. Several signs like this appear in the documentary. Source: Author, 2025.

6 Final thoughts

I have walked these streets of the essay several times over the last few years, following their transformations in the landscape and recognizing everyday gestures along the way. However, looking at the city through the documentary's filter revealed surprises that could not be accessed any other way. To this end, Shirley's images functioned as a kind of time lens, allowing me to perceive details, movements, and traces that were previously invisible to the familiar gaze. The shift in perspective – between what I already knew and what the documentary made me see – also transformed the experience of walking, converting it into a practice of listening and rediscovering the territory and, in a way, inhabiting the encounter. Therefore, based on the images that follow, I propose an invitation to look at the city from the dialogues and confrontations that insist and resist between the lines.

The documentary also served as a powerful lens, allowing me to view the city from a counter-hegemonic, radical position – a gaze that emerges from the margins and is sustained by them. Revisiting Shirley's journeys thus became a political and affective gesture of reinscription, not to measure distances, but to recognize the continuities, fissures, and frictions that make up the territory and the city. Villa 31 did not disappear as feared in the documentary. On the contrary, bonds continue to be woven, houses continue to be built, and narrative disputes continue to be fought. The city that today prides itself on urbanizing this territory is the same one that, in the past, tried to erase it. It is precisely in this interval, in this historical contradiction, that the strength of the margins reaffirms its space of memory, resistance, and radical possibility. The aesthetics and landscape of the neighborhood remain in intense contrast to the surroundings, but now appear denser and more vertical, asserting their presence in the urban landscape.

Shirley also continues to live in the same place, now with her husband and children, and her presence embodies the outcome of a dispute: she stayed when so many wanted her to leave and resisted the forced displacement and the promises of a better city that, in practice, would exclude her. As Ribeiro (2010, p. 32, our translation) adds: “by challenging controls on the urban experience and the bureaucratization of existence, she achieves the right to define her way of appearing and happening”. Shirley stayed and happened – and with her also remained a way of living, occupying, and building the city from

the margins. She continued imagining futures that are, in turn, cities in the present, germinating cities of the yet-to-come. It is in this in-between time that I now place myself: at the meeting point between what was a conflict, what is now a city, and what is still on its way.

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PROJETO
PROJECT

BETWEEN IMAGES AND COMMUNICABLE OBJECTS: EXHIBITION SPACE AS CULTURAL MEDIATION IN PERIPHERAL AREAS

ENTRE IMAGENS E OBJETOS COMUNICÁVEIS: ESPAÇO EXPOSITIVO COMO MEDIAÇÃO CULTURAL EM ZONAS PERIFÉRICAS

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Costa, A. E. & Cidade, D. M. (2025). Between Images and Communicable Objects: Exhibition Space as Cultural Mediation. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. Translated from Portuguese by Eduardo Fröner dos Santos. 399-414 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239922

Abstract

Drawing on the experience of *doing-WITH* solidarity kitchens, this essay offers reflections on the right to culture in peripheral communities through the participatory construction of two exhibitions. It describes an articulation among research, teaching, and outreach that united university actors and the communities of two solidarity kitchens: one in a peripheral area of Porto Alegre, southern Brazil, and another in an urban occupation in the city's historic center. We present the exhibition design process as a dialogue among different bodies of knowledge that challenges dominant cultural processes. The goal is to share the experience and interpret the meanings emerging from the challenges encountered while developing the activities. This process was marked by recognizing the communities' political role and the intent to convert the exhibition space into a mechanism of cultural mediation and social transformation. The methodology was based on a participatory and collaborative process, supported by methodological tools that fostered interaction among different agents from conception to execution of the exhibitions' proposals. In the process of composing this essay, we encounter successes, contradictions, and gaps, expanding perceptions that are fundamental to improving knowledge production and communication, as well as to supporting the kitchens in maintaining their own legitimate ways of producing culture.

Keywords: Right to culture, Exhibition, Participatory process, Solidarity kitchen, Peripheral communities.

1 Introduction

We received from a friend photographs taken at the exhibition on the solidarity kitchen in Vila Barracão. One image, in particular, struck us. A three-year-old child (Figure 1), a Vila's resident, holds one of the photos hanging from the mobile and examines it closely. The photo she holds depicts one of her "aunties," a central figure in the exhibition. Thus, the exhibition does not concern the erudite world. It speaks to the Vila's own culture—which, like that of many impoverished and marginalized communities, has endured historical erasure. For that child, this may have been her first experience of a cultural event. She and the adults accompanying her might otherwise have had few such opportunities. The setting is not a gallery; it is the Vila's solidarity kitchen. Like many others, this kitchen teaches forms of resistance—past and present—against governmental abandonment. The photograph thus blends the child's present, past, and future, positioning the exhibition as a suspension of imposed political and cultural dynamics.

Fig. 1: Exhibition at the Vila Barracão Kitchen. Source: João Henrique Ramos (2024).

We use the aesthetic and poetic force of this image as a starting point to create this essay on the right to culture, particularly in peripheral communities. According to Marie-José Mondzain (2015), photography serves as an image that comprehends possibilities of configuration in the present, but which, without reproducing the past, allows for the reinvention of what originated it. In this regard, the image challenges something concrete by serving as a critique of the past and the present— something about past generations that endures in the present. The photograph sheds light on the present as well as on a past marked by the erasure of memories and the culture of socially marginalized minorities. The exhibition faces the challenge of mediating this communication. Here, we define mediation as the construction of dialogical processes among subjects from distinct domains. Such a definition reveals both shared understandings and conflicts. This process addresses the multilateral difficulties in communication and action required to overcome (or soften) the power relations that inevitably permeate all spheres of life and knowledge production.

This exhibition experience derives from university outreach, teaching, and research actions by Margem – Urban Narratives Laboratory, affiliated with the Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Margem – PROPUR–UFRGS), in southern Brazil. The first exhibition took place in one of Porto Alegre's solidarity kitchens in 2024. The collective subject of Margem is broad and is here represented by those who dare to find gaps in the rigid academic productivism to reflect on our actions. We represent members of the outreach project Spaces of Social and Community

Convergence (ECSC), the research project Inventorying and Inventing Cities (IIC), and the undergraduate course Architectural Design 2 (P2), along with numerous internal and external collaborators from UFRGS, as well as the members of the kitchens with whom we worked. The kitchen was created during the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, a southern Brazilian state. The ECSC outreach project was launched during the same period. The role of this kitchen—as well as many other community spaces—was recognized as crucial before, during, and after the climate emergency. These spaces were responsible for strengthening neighborhood ties to carry out solidarity actions and organize political struggles, particularly to ensure residents in peripheral areas directly or indirectly affected by the disaster the right to reconstruct their lives (Caron et al., 2024).

In support of these spaces, we began *acting-WITH*[1] seven kitchens linked to social movements. These kitchens are not merely welfare spaces for meal provisioning; they are also recognized as spaces of education, culture, and political formation (Caron et al., 2024). This work involved the production of cartographic and narrative mappings, as well as technical assistance actions for the socio-spatial qualification of the precarious structures of the kitchens. Through the narrative mappings, we sought to understand the culture of their territories by evoking the power of memory. In summary, these mappings consisted of observing and listening to the daily practices in the kitchens, either in everyday situations or in collective dynamics, such as conversation circles guided by the question: "How did you come to be here?" Amid frequent laughter, most of the participating women recounted individual and, especially, collective experiences. These recollections included joyful episodes, traumas, and absences. These narratives are also stories of tactics (De Certeau, 1998)—the subtle maneuvers used to navigate historically imposed difficulties and oppressions. Excerpts from these narratives are reflected on the *Sonário das Cozinhas-Território* [Soundscape of Kitchen-Territories] (2024) platform. The collective reflections following these accounts sought to connect the present and past, identifying insights for confronting future challenges. In its present temporality, the narrative mapping moves beyond a nostalgic search for the past; instead, it actively synthesizes the past, present, and future within an educational and emancipatory framework (De Certeau, 1998; Mizoguchi, 2015).

The project proposed creating exhibitions with these communities to communicate and mediate the findings of the narrative mappings. They aimed to strengthen identities, challenge prejudices, and promote engagement for more diverse and inclusive cities. Consistent with the participatory and collaborative practices that guide the project's other actions, these exhibitions were designed as dynamic projects, subject to numerous changes. They were intended to position the communities not merely as spectators, but as active content producers and curators.

Among the seven kitchens with which we worked, exhibitions on the cultural life of their territories were developed in two of them: the kitchen of Vila Barracão, linked to the Popular Youth Uprising (LPJ) in the Vilas da Grande Cruzeiro, a peripheral region in the southern zone of Porto Alegre; and the kitchen of the Rexistência-POA Occupation, linked to the National Movement for the Struggle for Housing (MNLM in Portuguese) in a formerly vacant building in the historic center of the city. In the first case, the present-day territory currently endures a violent scenario stemming from disputes between drug trafficking groups and the police. Governmental negligence aggravates this setup, evidenced by the lack of employment, education, and leisure opportunities. This scenario, however, does not differ from the historical occupation processes of the Vila, which involved many of the kitchen's women cooks. They recount the struggles and survival strategies against multiple forms of oppression, with the kitchen among them.

The kitchen is one of the most important places in the Vila; from it, the territory's very identity emerges, sharing its name. It functions as a hub for knowledge exchange, celebrations, and expressions of solidarity. However, this history remains invisible and even erased (Costa, 2024). There is little bibliographic material about the Vila, and the Grande Cruzeiro—the larger region encompassing the Vila—is notably absent from municipal administrative maps (Figure 2). According to the community's leader Fátima Andreola:

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[1] The term acting-WITH, as well as doing-WITH (from the original atuarCOM and fazerCOM, respectively), which will be employed later in this work, refers to the term researching-WITH (from the original pesquisarCOM), which is supported by three main methodological principles, as argued by Marcia Moraes (2014, p. 132): a) the other whom we engage with is regarded as an agentive and expert subject, not as a passive object or target of our actions; b) misunderstandings are relevant clues that can signal new and interesting worldviews; c) researching and intervening are inseparable, so that research, more than representing the world, is an action of producing it—that is, researching is performing certain worlds, delineating boundaries, moving, expanding, and problematizing them.

> (…) the rent became too high, and I had to build a house right in the middle of the street. (…) In 1993, (…) we decided to occupy this place—back then it was all brush, just brush. (…). Then the police came and chased everyone away. Later, people began to unite more, and we planned to occupy it again on a Friday night because there's no police on Saturdays and Sundays. (…) So, yes, we fought tooth and nail for everything. (Costa, 2024, p. 21, our translation)

Fig. 2: Kitchen of Vila Barracão and its women. Source: João Henrique Ramos (2024).

In the second case, the Rexistência-POA kitchen operates in a reality marked by uncertainties about eviction, precarious physical conditions, and challenges in mobilizing residents for collective projects. These issues and the strategies to resolve them stem from the MNLM's long history of organizing occupations. During conversation circles and a collaborative mapping of city center occupations—a study led by P2 and the MNLM leadership—activists, members of other kitchens in the movement[2], and residents demonstrated that an occupation involves more than just housing. They showed that cultural spaces are essential for organizing and educating residents, as well as for fostering the public's understanding and support. The project considers the collective kitchen a fundamental part of this cultural program. Beyond preparing meals, the kitchen serves as a locus for knowledge exchange, income generation, celebration, and politics. The testimony of one resident, echoing accounts from women in other Brazilian occupations, captures this reality in "I came here thinking I would just be another resident, but they soon put me to work in the kitchen, and I have been there ever since. (…) All of this is learning we will take into the future, for life" (Costa & Cidade, 2025, p. 59, our translation).

In both communities, despite experiencing oppression, abandonment, and erasure, creative forms of existing, surviving, and self-expression arise—forms that constitute culture. It is a culture systematically silenced by dominant powers, yet one that exploits cracks in what is imposed, thereby constituting a counter-hegemonic culture (Chauí, 2006). To make these expressions emerge or *rise* (Didi-Huberman, 2017), and to support their preservation and the spaces in which they are produced, is an urgent

[2] In addition to Rexistência-POA, through the subproject Cozinha Nossa funded by the Fundo Casa Socioambiental, we simultaneously worked in two other MNLM kitchens: Cozinha ArtMãe, in Vila Bom Jesus, and the Cozinha da Cooperativa 20 de Novembro, in the Farrapos district. For further information, see Caron et al. (2025).

task for the democratization of culture. Given our ethical and political responsibility as members of a public university, we asked the following questions within the project: How can we communicate this culture to residents and society, engaging with the complexities of a multifaceted world? How can we influence spectators so that the image within the exhibition prompts both emotion and action?

This essay aims to reflect on the meanings and challenges of the processes that sought to establish the exhibitions as mechanisms of cultural mediation and social transformation. In developing this work, our perceptions expanded concerning the effective construction of an aesthetic-ethical-political discourse, as well as regarding the contradictions and gaps it entails. The process of overcoming knowledge-power relations in the intersection of multiple domains, alongside the work required within existing constraints, demands continuous scholarly deepening. By reflecting on these actions, however, we hope to improve our (still rigid) ways of producing and communicating knowledge, and to find ways to support the kitchens in maintaining their own legitimate modes of producing culture.

2 How to Communicate the Culture of the Kitchens?

The work on the exhibitions was developed collaboratively by the IIC research team and students from the undergraduate course Architectural Design 2 (P2). The exhibitions proposed in P2 constitute a set of actions aimed at socio-spatial activation of the territories in which the course operates, thus expanding the field of architectural practice beyond the (re)production of spatial drawings[3]. Consistent with the approximation among Architecture, Art, and Anthropology discussed by Tim Ingold (2022), the course seeks to construct projects as community processes, operating not only on the structure of physical space but also among social, formal, and cultural domains. Given the still-criticized and not yet overcome lack of dialogue with fields that explicitly master exhibition communication, we turned to theoretical readings. Confronted with this challenge, we asked two critical questions: How can we avoid reducing the exhibition to merely arranging content in a spatial performance, as architects often do? How can we mediate an aesthetic-ethical-political discourse to the visiting public without reducing the action to a passive communication of ideas?

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Exhibitions unfailingly sustain an aesthetic–ethical–political discourse articulated through curatorial choices; they are not the mere transmission of neutral information (Moraes & Silva, 2021). Communicating this discourse to visitors does not happen automatically or mechanically: it requires committed mediation. From a humanistic and emancipatory (and therefore political) perspective, this mediation is an educational action. It seeks to promote recognition, reflection, and re-signification in the visitor, thereby opening possibilities for transforming the realities of their lives (Scifoni, 2022; Moraes & Silva, 2021). Between images and communicable objects, the spectator politically interprets their own community. By sharing what they see, the spectator offers others the possibility of a sensitive and reflective existence. In this perspective, visitors are not mere spectators or receivers, but philosophical spectators (Mondzain, 2015)—subjects capable of thinking, communicating, and creating with autonomy. They must therefore interact with the exhibition and engage in dialogue with mediators and other visitors, driven by the principle that one learns with the Other. Their active participation is thus required (Scifoni, 2022).

Given this framework, exhibitions must create opportunities and conditions that favor active visitor participation. Among the opportunities are cultural and educational dialogic actions promoted before, during, and after events. These actions form a process of exchange and collective knowledge construction; one that remains open to experimentation, creation, and transformation (Moraes & Silva, 2021). As for the conditions, these involve the creation of spatial ambiances and interfaces that mobilize visitors' sensory and cognitive dimensions, thus supporting their appropriation of the exhibition’s discourse (Cerdera, 2021). From its very conception, the displayed content should not emerge exclusively from the (often authoritative) actions of curators, nor should it be presented as ready-made, closed information. Before the exhibition, visitors may select or create content; during the event, they may create new content, thereby shaping the form and meaning of what is exhibited. In any case,

[3] The undergraduate course P2 is part of the fourth semester of the Architecture and Urbanism program at UFRGS and, with a total of 100 hours of extension work, aims to develop participatory and collaborative projects focused on vulnerable communities. Among its projects, several collaborative exhibitions were carried out between 2023 and 2024 (Costa, 2025; Costa & Cavalcante, 2023; Costa & Constantinou, 2023).

the exhibited material is not objectified, which opens gaps for subjective and autonomous meaning-making. Consequently, the content questions rather than answers; it relates data rather than isolating them (Cerdera, 2021; Machado, 2015; Desvallées & Mairesse, 2013).

The spaces and artifacts supporting this content seek to involve and mobilize visitors' bodies and senses, thus creating fields of mutual affectation capable of triggering sensations or reflections (Cerdera, 2021; Machado, 2015). Far from tedious exhibitions with predetermined routes between showcases and panels, these exhibitions create stimulating atmospheres through open paths and stations. The routes are often free or exploratory, encouraging autonomous and diverse interpretations. Along these paths, spaces for gathering are established, enabling encounters and socialization. Stations may be immersive, endowed with scenographic or theatrical qualities. Artifacts may be interactive, allowing handling beyond mechanical gestures to encourage exchange and critical reflection (Costa, 2025; Amorim & Nóbrega, 2022; Cerdera, 2021; Machado, 2015). We concluded that these exhibition opportunities and conditions, to varying degrees, could guide our communication of the kitchens' cultural life.

2.2. Approaches

As part of the P2 program, daily experiences and collective dynamics in the territories fostered dialogues and the emergence of memories, sensitizing and mutually affecting both students and residents. These encounters resulted in the exhibition proposals, among other cultural activities and spatial interventions aimed at socio-spatial activation of the territories. These proposals were spatialized in provisional design studies, which were subject to successive adjustments when discussed with the communities. Regarding the exhibition design, its themes, spatialities, artifacts, and parallel activities were either validated or rejected, thereby prompting the construction of provisional consensuses and enabling knowledge exchange that initiated a collective curatorial process. This dialogical process took place both in the territories and the university. Bringing these community members into the university has been a project strategy to make the public space accessible to all and to legitimize the importance of community knowledge within the academic world. The graphic languages explored in these events sought simplification. The choice of graphic languages remains a significant challenge, given the deep-rooted tradition of architectural drawing as the primary means of communication for architects. Still, we sought to overcome the communicational barriers these drawings impose, as well as the hierarchy of professional knowledge-power relations they imply (Ingold, 2022; Kapp et al., 2008).

Once a provisional proposal was agreed upon, the detailing of the exhibitions initiated a dialogue, albeit embryonic, between different disciplinary and training levels. It involved groups of P2 students, outreach and undergraduate research fellows from Design and Architecture, and graduate students in Urban Planning and Architecture. This group curated an archive composed of community memories, findings from the IIC research, and photographic essays by collaborators. The exhibition design itself was drafted in architectural terms, contemplating spatial arrangements and exhibition artifacts. During the installation, the project was once again transformed by the financial, material, and human contingencies of its execution. The setup was interwoven, directly or indirectly, with workshops and collective work efforts (*mutirões*) that occurred simultaneously with the spatial qualification interventions (Figure 3). This collective handcrafted execution also served as a mediating action, bringing participants together around a shared project in which one learns with the Other. It was also an exercise of experimental learning. It empowered communities to recognize their capacity to carry out their ideas and future autonomous actions, while enabling students to understand professional commitments linked to construction processes that transcend mere drawing of spaces (Ingold, 2022; Sennett, 2009; Kapp et al., 2008).

Fig. 3: Collective work on the Vegetable Garden and Graffiti at Vila Barracão, and Mosaic Workshop at the Rexistência-POA Occupation. Source: Authors (2024 and 2025).

Finally, the exhibitions took place in the kitchens' own territories. To broaden the audience and engage both internal and external visitors, the exhibitions opened on Saturdays and on dates coinciding with local celebrations, such as the Christmas festival at Barracão and the first anniversary celebration of the Rexistência-POA Occupation[4]. The entire process (before, during, and after the events) was widely disseminated via WhatsApp groups and social networks of the communities and UFRGS, and it also circulated in the media[5]. In this communicational effort, the objective was not simply to publicize the project, but to make these territories more visible and to value their cultures. Under the seal of a public university, such communication expands opportunities for reception, recognition, and dissemination, cultivating a network of sympathizers and supporters of the territories themselves. In this sense, the project aimed to shape public opinion and did not limit its audience to exhibition visitors.

3 The Communication–Mediation: Barracão

The kitchen of Vila Barracão sits in a corner of a neighborhood square and is housed in a precarious shed (*barracão*) that is tied to the origin of the territory (Figure 4). Its community and the LPJ initially contacted the P2 course seeking to activate their external spaces, which suffered from vandalism and the dumping of trash. We hypothesized that a lack of communal sense of belonging was contributing to the problem. This insight led us to propose actions geared toward recovering the history of that place and affirming the community's right to both think about and act upon the space. Symbolically opening the kitchen to the broader society, two classes from the neighboring public school (Escola Almirante Álvaro Alberto da Motta e Silva) were invited to participate in the project. Following collective activities at the school and in the kitchen, small spatial interventions were proposed (vegetable garden, graffiti, and a stage–bleacher). These were coupled with integration workshops combining the kitchen's knowledge and the school's interests (breadmaking, clothing customization, and woodworking), as well as the exhibition in question (Costa, 2024).

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[4] The events took place on December 17, 2024, and June 14, 2025, respectively.

[5] For more information, see: https://www.instagram.com/p2arq.ufrgs?utm_source=qr&igsh=dmZoZTN1ZWFxajV3; https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2025/06/16/ocupacao-rexistencia-poa-celebra-um-ano-e-avanca-na-luta-por-moradia-no-centro-de-porto-alegre/; and https://www.ufrgs.br/site/noticias/projeto-de-extensao-da-arquitetura-aproxima-estudantes-e-integrantes-da-ocupacao-rexistencia/.

Fig. 4: Kitchen of Vila Barracão before the intervention. Porto Alegre, southern Brazil. Source: Authors (2024).

Four themes were explored in this exhibition: *Territories* and *Perceptions*, aimed at fostering a sense of belonging, and *Struggles* and *Characters*, seeking to reveal legacies to younger generations. Without relying on a central theme or linear logic, each theme was treated independently. The expectation was that each had the potential to interrelate past, present, and future, and to activate visitors' free interpretation and reflection. Words, sayings, and narratives from the community, as well as photographs and notes from the schoolchildren, were displayed in a fragmented manner. A possible construction of connections could emerge from the aesthetic or discursive appeal of these contents. How could visitors remain indifferent to a photo of the beautiful Grande Cruzeiro landscape placed beside another showing exposed garbage? How could one ignore the affection built in the kitchen, expressed through the narratives of its women cooks? How could one remain unaffected by the experiences of violence in the square, made explicit by the striking note written by a child:"The good thing about a square is that we gather with family and friends. But the bad thing is that there are many cases of death and many cases of drugs too. This is a terrible thing for children!" (Costa, 2024, p. 48, our translation)? Exhibiting content produced by the community itself also encouraged residents to see themselves as part of the event and the Vila's culture—that is, it fostered a sense of belonging.

3.1 Communicable Objects and Aesthetic

Aesthetically, and with minimal resources, the goal was to create an atmosphere directly linked to the cultural universe of the Vila. In relation to the sewing activities developed by the women cooks, six hand-sewn textile panels (*panos*) were dedicated to the themes *Territories*, *Struggles*, and *Perceptions*. Hanging mobiles made from food containers (*marmitas*) explored the universe of the kitchen, supporting the theme *Characters* by displaying photos and brief narratives honoring the *Mulheres de*

Luta (Women of Struggle), the name of the group formed by the cooks. Both types of artifacts, which constitute communicable objects, were also designed to allow easy assembly, disassembly, and storage. These were necessary conditions given the kitchen's dynamics and limited physical space. Their compositions also sought to operate in three dimensions and create different perspectives. In some cases, the stitching gained thickness, forming entangled lines or extending beyond the panels to attach to other artifacts. Layering of information and the use of transparencies were also explored, encouraging visitors to manipulate certain elements, potentially generating distinct or layered readings.

3.2 Spatial Arrangement

The spatial design of the exhibition artifacts leveraged the kitchen's precarious front veranda's characteristics. The panels and mobiles were hung, respectively, between the columns and the wooden roof structure. This distribution created small environments within the veranda's broad space, aiming to evoke a welcoming atmosphere (Figure 5). Between these settings, however, the paths were intentionally left free, encouraging autonomous interpretations. Small gathering areas with improvised chairs and benches were established to foster encounters and exchanges among visitors. This design achieved its intended effect, as was observed on the day of the event. Men, women, and children, many of whom had participated in earlier project activities, stood together in conversation circles, moved through the exhibition, and perhaps felt surprised to see themselves, their friends, neighbors, or family members represented and celebrated.

Fig. 5: Exhibition set-up at the Barracão Kitchen, with textile panels and hanging mobiles. Porto Alegre, southern Brazil. Source: Authors (2024).

The project maintained the spatial freedom proposed in the original design during later installations, requested both before and after the official event. Such was the case in the lobby of the UFRGS School of Architecture, where the exhibition opened the second edition of the Kitchen-Territory Meeting, and again in the kitchen itself, where it was freely appropriated during the Christmas[6] celebration.

[6] The events took place on December 16 and 18, 2024, respectively.

4 The Communication–Mediation: Rexistência-POA

When approaching the P2 course, the MNLM requested a feasibility study for the residential reuse of the occupied building. Developing this study collaboratively was seen as a way to mobilize and engage both residents and activists. The ten-story public building had remained unused for years after serving as the headquarters for the Cia de Arte (Art Company), an emblematic reference in Porto Alegre's self-organized artistic production. The MNLM occupied the building twice; the second (and current) occupation was undertaken to shelter people affected by the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil. Amid negotiations to secure the right to use the building, the movement developed a general occupation plan that included both housing and cultural uses, including the kitchen (Figure 6). The P2 feasibility study would serve as a detailed elaboration of this plan (Costa & Cidade, 2025).

Fig. 6: Kitchen of the Rexistência-POA Occupation before the intervention. Porto Alegre, southern Brazil. Source: João Henrique Ramos (2025).

The study involved metric and pathological surveys, alongside collective everyday experiences and listening practices. This methodological choice led not only to long-term feasibility studies but also to short-term actions aimed at improving the building's precarious living conditions. Given the limited resources and the constraints of an academic semester, the team proposed: the installation of strings of portable lamps; the creation of mosaics and DIY furniture in the kitchen to improve sanitation and storage/production capacity; and cultural activities designed to break the occupation's isolation and provide external visitors with opportunities to recognize its identities and overcome prejudices. A significant open-house event was subsequently planned and organized, featuring artistic and cultural activities, a thrift market, small fairs to generate income, and the exhibition itself. The event program was collectively developed by a group of P2 students, residents, and various collaborators affiliated with UFRGS and the MNLM.

This same group, together with members of the IIC research project, also developed the exhibition. Again, seeking to weave past, present, and future, five themes were proposed. From the past, the themes *Cartography of the Occupations* and *Cia de Arte* emerged; from the present, the themes *Dwelling in the Center* and *Expanded Dwelling*; and projecting the future, the theme *Processes and Project*. The strategies used to explore each theme are described below.

4.1 Spatial Arrangement

These themes were distributed across two large open-plan areas: the basement, where the kitchen is located, and the first floor, which houses the former theater of Cia de Arte. In the basement, the longest wall served as the support for the themes *Cartography of the Occupations* and *Processes and Project*, despite initial concerns regarding the large mirror installed along it. Seeking to maintain free circulation in the vast hall and foster interaction among visitors, the space devoted to *Dwelling in the Center*, as well as the stations for the thrift market, the fair, and the performance stage, were positioned along the periphery. A designed promenade led from the ground floor to the theater. The stairwell was partially enclosed with fabric panels to create a sense of surprise and spatial compression during the transition between levels. This compression continued at the theater's entrance, where screens and fabrics narrowed a passage between the bleachers and the wall. Traversing this tunnel-like passage was further dramatized by the near absence of light. Only the stage, dimly lit from below, offered a focal point.

There stood the stations for the themes *Cia de Arte* and *Expanded Dwelling*. The darkness was both a response to the original lighting system (which had not been restored) and an intentional choice to create an atmosphere of estrangement. Within this *chiaroscuro* setup, visitors were sensitized to the reading and interpretation of the exhibition content, while their eyes gradually adjusted before returning through the same dark tunnel (Figure 7).

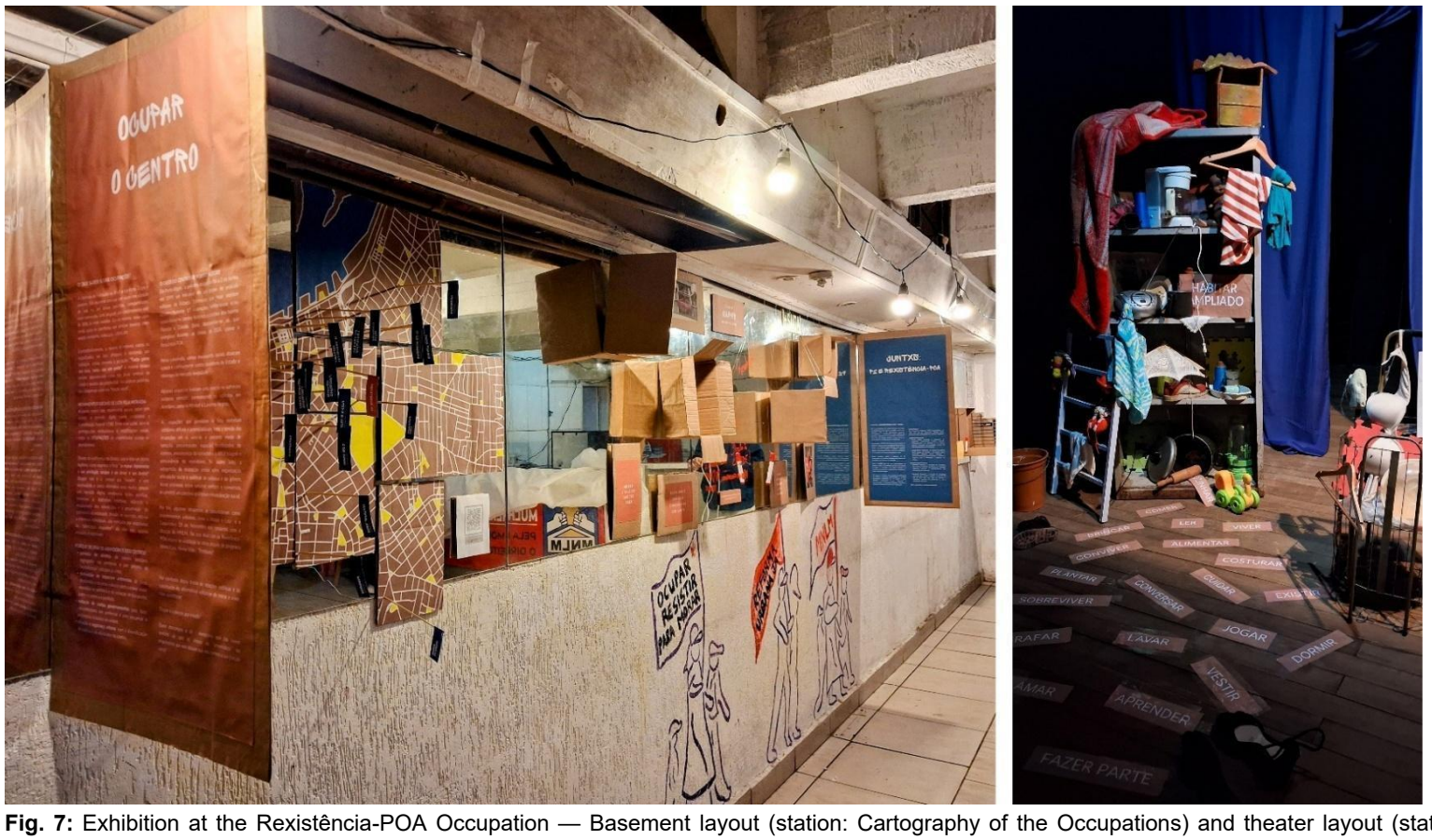

Fig. 7: Exhibition at the Rexistência-POA Occupation — Basement layout (station: Cartography of the Occupations) and theater layout (station: Expanded Dwelling). Porto Alegre, southern Brazil. Source: Authors (2025).

4.2. Communicable Objects and Aesthetic

To launch a dialogue with the large mirror in the basement hall, we embraced it as a compositional element. Even at the risk of dispersing focus from the content, the intention was for visitors to become part of the exhibition by seeing themselves reflected

in that place. This operation led to fragmenting all visual artifacts, ensuring the mirror remained visible. At the same time, this fragmentation enabled the production of small-format images. Although this process demanded laborious installation, it significantly reduced printing costs—an essential consideration given the minimal resources available.

On one segment of the mirror-wall surface, the theme *Cartography of the Occupations* was explored through three communicable objects designed to make visible and prompt reflection on the historical struggles for the right to the city. The “Map of the Occupations”, divided into quadrants and adorned with suspended flags, marked the various occupations in the historic center of Porto Alegre, many of which were unknown to the general public. A QR code directed visitors to the complete digital cartography, allowing deeper engagement if desired. Hanging boxes suspended by nylon threads displayed images and phrases related to each occupation. Without imposing a single reading, they invited multiple interpretations. Amidst these boxes, the mirror ceased to be a mere structural surface and became an artifact in itself, accompanied by the prompt: “Write on the mirror a phrase or word about the occupations: let your presence reflect!”

Also on the mirror's surface, the section *Processes and Project* displayed records of the participatory process involved in the feasibility study for reusing the building, along with a physical model. These elements illustrated practices that could inspire other initiatives for the right to housing (Figure 8). Outside the mirror-wall area, photographs taken by occupation residents during a preliminary photo walk were projected onto the fabric panel installed to enclose the staircase. This place formed the station *Dwelling in the Center*, which sought to reflect on the multiplicity of perspectives and meanings that the urban center can support.

Fig. 8: Exhibition at the Rexistência-POA Occupation — Stations ‘Processes and Project’ and ‘Cartography of the Occupations’. Porto Alegre, southern Brazil. Source: Authors (2025).

Due to resource scarcity, the strategy adopted for the remaining stations was to reuse objects already present in the occupation or obtained through loans or donations. The *Cia de Arte* station utilized pieces left behind by the artistic group when they vacated the building. These remnants evoked the building’s legacy of cultural resistance. The *Expanded Dwelling* station showcased a collection of personal everyday objects belonging to residents arranged inside a habitat-cabinet. This installation served as a refuge for accumulated items derived from basic needs, uses, and improvisations through which residents shaped a home in the face of the constant fear of eviction. More than expressing the demand for housing, the station spoke to the need for building

spaces of welcome and affection. These everyday objects, naturally communicable, allowed for multiple interpretations and carried different meanings for residents and visitors alike.

5 Final Considerations

In the weaving of this essay, we had the opportunity to systematize our practices and, simultaneously, to reflect on successes, mistakes, gaps, and meanings—especially regarding the construction of a horizontal dialogue and social transformation. From designing to sharing and mediating the exhibition with a broader audience, the encounter of diverse actors revealed that creating exhibitions about peripheral or marginalized cultures remains a challenge. This perception is especially relevant, since the intent is not to reduce the action to mere transmission of neutral information or to a cultural spectacle, but rather to provoke all participants (community members, university students, and visitors) to engage as mediators and philosophical spectators (Mondzain, 2015). The challenge, therefore, is to convert exhibitions into mechanisms that, through dialogical and participatory actions, can promote the sharing of experiences, the production of knowledge, and reflections on the worlds we inhabit, along with opportunities for transforming them.

The articulation among outreach, research, and teaching proved to be a crucial strategy for fostering greater community interaction and participation in the processes of creation and reflection. It was through this articulation, in a *doing-WITH*dynamics (Moraes, 2014), that the exhibition actions extended over time, enabling pre-event dialogues, reflections, and the construction of collective knowledge and a shared project. The appropriation of this knowledge, combined with academic research, enabled the P2 course to develop sensitive exhibition themes and content, as well as ambiances and artifacts rooted in local aesthetic and technical repertoires. Thus, residents and their knowledge played a central part in its execution, functioning as more than mere spectators or receivers.

Held in territories lacking essential public services and often targeted by prejudice, these exhibitions expanded residents' access to culture and strengthened their identities. For external groups, such as the university's, they offered opportunities to understand and reflect on realities made invisible. Interactions among these publics, observed in the events and testimonies, revealed the need for proximity to foster recognition of difference and the overcoming of prejudice, thereby legitimizing the construction of a diverse city. The dissemination of the project's process and results on social networks and media outlets also broadened the public, serving as a mediator between worlds. The exhibitions thus aimed at a future promise of social transformation.

Recognizing these potentialities, however, we still face challenges that remain as questions for future actions: Did we truly sustain an aesthetic–ethical–political discourse in the exhibitions? In attempting to establish relations between past and present, did we provide clues for confronting future challenges? Did we allow sufficient openness to foster deeper resident involvement in the curatorial processes? Were the ambiances powerful enough, and the artifacts sufficiently interactive? Could post-event activities have better assessed outcomes and strengthened the project's educational objectives? Given these questions, it is essential to consider that our creative and inventive capacities were mobilized through doing-WITH (Moraes, 2014) among students and non-specialists, under limited timeframes and with extremely scarce human, material, and financial resources—conditions that speak to the realm of what is possible. In this sense, the results still express an aesthetic–ethical–political stance consonant with what peripheral and marginalized territories teach us: the conversion of scarcity into abundance.

It is also through scarcity and abundance that the opening photograph of this study (Figure 1) speaks to us. Returning to it, we consider the distinction between *visuality* (the overload of images that bombard us daily) and *image* (a pause in time, an opening for poetry and critique). From this photograph, we understand that, despite deprivation, the child found cracks through which to reinvent her future. Her community found ways to express legitimate forms of being and living in the peripheries and to prepare to resist the erasure imposed by hegemonic powers. Meanwhile, we also found gaps in which to reinvent ourselves within the academic world, so often deprived of meaningful purpose.

Acknowledgments

We thank the communities of the solidarity kitchens of Vila Barracão and the Rexistência-POA Occupation for their teachings shared over unforgettable coffees and meals; and the students of P2 and the scholarship fellows for their willingness to engage in the exercise of learning–teaching together.

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PROJETO
PROJECT

TEACHING AND EXTENSION: HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PEQUIS NEIGHBORHOOD

ENSINO E EXTENSÃO: MELHORIAS HABITACIONAIS NO BAIRRO PEQUIS

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ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 10, 2025

Lima; R. B. F.; Leite, N. G.; Saramago, R. C. P.; Villa, S. B. (2025). Teaching and Outreach: Housing Improvements in the Pequis Neighborhood. *V!RUS*, (*30*). Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations. 415-434 https://doi.org/10.11606/2175-974x.virus.v30.239945

Abstract

This article presents an university extension experience developed in the Architecture and Urbanism program at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), in the course Curricular Extension Activities – Integrated Project Workshop V (ACE – API V). The activity was carried out with fifth-semester students and consisted of preparing diagnoses and housing improvements in eleven homes in the Pequis neighborhood, a housing complex in Level 1 of the Minha Casa, Minha Vida (PMCMV) program, located in the city of Uberlândia, in the state of Minas Gerais (MG), Brazil. The objective of the activity was to propose design alternatives based on contact with the families' ways of living, identifying structural weaknesses and highlighting the importance of ATHIS as technical support for renovations and adaptations. The method involved technical visits, on-site records, qualitative observations, and the development of architectural proposals. The paper dialogues with the theme Housing and ways of living from the edition Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations, valuing the exchange between academic knowledge and the social practices of families, highlighting the encounter between the real demands of the territory and professional training. The results indicate that the activity favored the production of proposals accessible to residents, broadened students' critical perception of the social role of the architect, and strengthened a closer relationship with the community, generating impacts on the relationship between families and their homes.

Keywords: Technical assistance in social housing, Social Housing, Ways of living, Architectural design, University extension.

1 Introduction

This article aims to demonstrate the first university extension experience developed in the course Curricular Extension Activities - Integrated Project Workshop V (ACE - API V), part of the Architecture and Urbanism program at the Faculty of Architecture, Urbanism, and Design (FAUeD) of the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), located in the city of Uberlândia, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The action was structured by two professors who have been working with this course for several years and coordinate activities for the [MORA] group – Housing Research[1]. It also counted on the collaboration of a substitute professor and two doctoral students[2], members of [MORA]. The research group, formed in 2009, constitutes a physical and digital space for discussions about housing, establishing relationships between the academic environment and professional practice, developing projects and actions to effectively contribute to improvements in housing issues. [MORA] is composed of professors, undergraduate students — especially scientific initiation scholarship students —, and students from the Postgraduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism (PPGAU/UFU), at both master's and doctoral levels. The ACE - API V course, taught to fifth-semester students, sought to propose housing improvements for residents of the Residencial Pequis housing complex in Uberlândia, Minas Gerais, members of Level 1 of the Minha Casa, Minha Vida Program, through technical assistance in social housing (ATHIS). It is a course integrated with the university extension program and, therefore, aims to forge connections with communities outside the university, such as residents of housing complexes in peripheral regions or other forms of vulnerable housing.

The theoretical basis and methodologies proposed in the course are based on studies on resilience in Social Housing (HIS) and ATHIS, developed by the group [MORA] within the larger research project called Casa Resiliente[3], which aims to identify and

[1] Research group that promotes several discussions on housing, formed in June 2009 by Prof. Dr. Simone Villa, from the Faculty of Architecture, Urbanism, and Design (FAUeD) at the Federal University of Uberlândia. Research group website: https://morahabitacao.com.

[2] The course coordinators are Professors Simone Barbosa Villa and Rita de Cássia Pereira Saramago, with Professor Rodrigo Camargo Moretti as substitute, and doctoral students Nádia Gonçalves Leite and Rossana Batista Ferreira Lima.

[3] Design strategies for promoting resilience in social housing based on post-occupancy evaluation methods, funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq – Research Productivity Grant, No. 311624/2021-9). https://www.casaresiliente.com It is also part of the [RES_TEC] Resilience in the built environment and social technology through digital APO and ATHIS instruments project, funded by CNPq – Research Productivity Grant (No. 306977/2025-7).

provide design strategies for renovations and interventions in single-family, single-story horizontal social housing units located in bioclimatic zone 4. The activities developed are configured as a space for dialogue, in which different perspectives on housing meet, clash, and complement each other. In this sense, extensionist praxis is understood as a process of mutual learning, even though not without its contradictions, based on the exchange between different agents (students, teachers, and the community). This articulation supports the methodological approach adopted and guides reflections on the formative role of extension activities when confronted with the social production of housing.

To contextualize the case study, the paper begins with an analysis of the Brazilian housing scenario, highlighting the main challenges it has faced since the second half of the 20th century, especially the housing crisis that motivated the establishment of public policies, such as the Minha Casa, Minha Vida (PMCMV) program. The qualitative housing deficit is then discussed, highlighting the limitations of standardized housing models and their impact on the residents' quality of life. Furthermore, the importance of university extension and its integration into the teaching of Architecture and Urbanism is addressed, highlighting the role of the ACE - API V course as an university extension activity and formative experience. This segment details the methodology adopted in the course, which combines theoretical content, practical activities, and direct experience with the community of the Pequis neighborhood, in the municipality of Uberlândia. The articulation between teaching, research, and extension is highlighted as a fundamental element for the training of professionals committed to the right to decent housing. Finally, the case study — the Pequis neighborhood — is presented, analyzing urban characteristics, housing typologies delivered by the PMCMV, construction systems employed, and the dynamics of use and spatial appropriation observed among residents. The structural and spatial limitations of the housing units are discussed, as well as the spontaneous interventions made by families to adapt their homes to their daily needs. This analysis is complemented by a description of the extension activities carried out by students in the course, highlighting the limitations of the process alongside the contribution of technical assistance in social housing to improving living conditions and strengthening ties between the university and the community.

This article seeks to contribute to discussions on the role of university extension in the critical training of architects and urban planners, especially in the field of social housing. The course proposal is aligned with the concept that university extension should be understood as a dialogical process, in which academic and popular knowledge are articulated to produce situated knowledge committed to social justice (FORPROEX, 2012). In this sense, the insertion of students in real contexts and direct experience with actual housing demands allows not only the application of technical subjects, but also the construction of an ethical and political stance in the face of the socio-spatial inequalities that mark Brazilian cities. By integrating the principles of ATHIS into undergraduate teaching practices, the course promotes training that is more sensitive to the complexities of popular housing and the cultural, economic, and environmental specificities of the territories. It is believed that the results of this work, still in the process of maturing, will provide support for the future consolidation of pedagogical practices that integrate teaching, research, and extension, contributing to the strengthening of public housing policies and the fulfillment of the right to decent housing guaranteed in the Federal Constitution of 1988 and reinforced by Law No. 11,888/2008 (Brazil, 2008). Furthermore, the article aims to demonstrate the relevance of the articulation between research/teaching and extension for undergraduate practices, based on the solid foundations structured by the work developed in the Casa Resiliente and [RES_TEC] projects.

2 The Minha Casa Minha Vida Program and the challenges of housing quality

The housing problem in Brazil has intensified since the second half of the 20th century, especially with urbanization and rapid population growth in cities in developing countries. With the end of the military dictatorship and the advent of democracy, mobilizations intensified, proposing urban reform and public policies aimed at the lower classes. According to Ermínia Maricato (2015), these movements later resulted in institutional advances, such as the Federal Constitution of 1988, the City Statute, created under Federal Law 10.257/2001 (Brazil, 2001), and the creation of the Ministry of Cities in 2003. In this context, the first experiences of technical assistance for housing improvement and expanded access to essential city services also emerged. Despite these advances, until the early 2000s, the Brazilian housing scenario remained alarming, amid periodic economic crises. With the aim of generating jobs and reducing the housing deficit, the federal government then instituted the Minha Casa Minha Vida (MCMV) Program in 2009. In 2020, the MCMV was replaced by the Casa Verde e Amarela Program, and in 2023, it was resumed under its original name. This program has played an important role in large-scale housing production, serving families with varying incomes, divided into three levels (levels 1, 2, and 3). More recently, in April 2025, level 4 was announced, providing for the expansion of housing policy to serve middle-class families.

It can be said that the MCMV has contributed significantly, in quantitative terms, to addressing Brazil's housing deficit, but it has not reduced it from a qualitative perspective, contributing to its worsening. According to data from the João Pinheiro Foundation, even in the face of government initiatives, Brazil's housing deficit has grown from approximately 5.9 million households in 2019 to more than 6.2 million in 2022, corresponding to about 8.3% of occupied dwellings in the country (Tamietti, 2024a). Data from 2022 also show that, of the total number of durable urban households in Brazil (excluding rural, improvised, rustic, and room households), 26,510,673 (41.2%) have at least some type of inadequacy (Tamietti, 2024b). The housing units provided by the program in level 1, which represent the case study of the course, have a standard floor plan containing a living room, two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, and a laundry area. This architectural program is adopted in both houses and apartments and applies to various contexts and realities in Brazil. As Simone Villa, Karen Bortoli, and Paula Vasconcellos (2023) analyze, the standardized models of social housing delivered are often not aligned with the specific social, economic, cultural, climatic, and environmental conditions of each region, demonstrating a lack of concern for the individuality and characteristics of each location, as well as the diverse and variable configuration of family units. Another point that demonstrates the inefficiency of the model is the size of the housing unit, which does not accommodate the minimum functions and areas for privacy and coexistence. The small size of the housing unit is one of the reasons for user dissatisfaction (Monteiro & Miron, 2018). Comparatively, in the European context, the minimum area per person in housing is 15 square meters, while in Brazil, it is less than 10 square meters, as is the case in the models offered by the PMCMV (Simões & Leder, 2022).

Regarding the construction systems most commonly used in Social Housing, there is a growing trend towards adopting more agile and scalable methods, such as self-supporting walls made of concrete cast on site and reusable formwork, which reduce both construction costs and execution time. In the PMCMV in Uberlândia, about 63% of level 1 housing units use this type of system (Alves, 2020), as is the case in the Pequis neighborhood. The rigidity of this method, combined with the lack of a design that allows for expansion of the residential unit, limits the capacity for adaptation and, in most cases, results in solutions that create even more problems, whether structural, environmental, or aesthetic. On the other hand, according to Maria Eliza Otoni (2025), even though self-supporting masonry systems limit the flexibility of housing units, this type of solution can be a feasible option when included in projects that consider the broader aspects of living, such as the possibility of progressive expansion, adaptation to local climatic conditions, and respect for the sociocultural dynamics of the territories where they are located.

Other studies reveal that the environmental quality of housing, in terms of thermal comfort, is a determining factor in the health of users and that the housing offered by the PMCMV has failed to take these issues into account. According to Karen Bortoli et al. (2024), for example, the design process and renovations carried out disregard climatic conditions and, as a result, the units become thermally inadequate. This inadequacy favors inefficient interactions with external agents, such as solar radiation and winds, contributing to increased energy consumption and the emergence of health problems. In addition, the resources invested in housing improvements also create economic difficulties for future changes that could make up for the problems initially generated, further accentuating the vulnerability of the units and their residents (Oliveira et al., 2023). On the other hand, access to adequate housing has become part of important global agreements such as the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the first case, commitments are established such as the creation of housing policies, the provision of adequate, safe, affordable, and physically accessible housing, and equitable and affordable access to basic sustainable physical and social infrastructure for all (UN-Habitat, 2019). The issue of housing is also present in several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, such as SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, but mainly SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (UN, 2024).

In Brazil, in order to comply with international commitments and minimize housing problems, Law No. 11,888/2008 (Brazil, 2008) was enacted, establishing Technical Assistance for Social Housing (ATHIS). This legislation aims to guarantee families with an income of up to three minimum wages the right to free public technical assistance for the design, monitoring, and execution of construction, renovation, expansion, or land regularization works for their homes. ATHIS involves interdisciplinary action, integrating professionals from Architecture and Urbanism, Engineering, Law, Social Work,

Geography, Biology, Geology, and related areas, and must be ensured by the State through public policies (CAU, 2018). This action can be carried out on several fronts: public authorities, civil society organizations (CSOs), private offices, or university spaces—such as research centers, extension laboratories, and model offices. It should be noted that academic spaces have

played a fundamental role in building a culture of social commitment in Architecture and Urbanism education, promoting dialogue between technical and popular knowledge and stimulating design solutions based on the actual demands of the territories. With the implementation of new guidelines for university extension, as will be presented below, some undergraduate courses have begun to incorporate extension practices, seeking to promote greater integration between the university and the community. This is the case of the API V course, recently reformulated as a Curricular Extension Activity (ACE), which, in the first semester of 2025, worked directly with residents of the Pequis neighborhood, offering technical assistance aimed at improving housing conditions and reinforcing the link between academic training and the right to decent housing.

3 Integrated Project Workshop V (API V) Course

It is essential to emphasize the importance of public universities and, especially, university extension activities in debates and practices related to technical assistance for social housing. Extension goes beyond the transfer of academic knowledge, constituting a process of mutual exchange, "interdisciplinary, educational, cultural, scientific, and political, promoting transformative interaction between the University and other sectors of society" (FORPROEX, 2012). In the Architecture and Urbanism program at UFU, there are various extension initiatives, promoted by laboratories such as the Architecture, Urbanism, and Design Projects Laboratory (LAPEX) and research groups such as [MORA] – Housing Research, both from FAUeD, which develop extension activities related to ATHIS. Also noteworthy is the work of the BURITI Model Architecture and Urbanism Office, whose practice is guided by direct involvement in community demands. The understanding that the participatory process[4] is a fundamental part of the project is evidenced by other experiences of offices linked to universities, such as Trama (UFPB), Mosaico (FAU Mackenzie), Casas (UnB), and Célula (UFES). More recently, through Resolution No. 7, of December 18, 2018 (Brazil, 2018), of the Ministry of Education (MEC), guidelines were established for extension in Brazilian Higher Education. In its Article 4, this resolution determines that extension activities must comprise at least 10% of the total curriculum hours of undergraduate programs, promoting the appreciation and encouragement of extension practices (Hermsdorf et al., 2023).

As a result, extension activities, some of which were already present in the Architecture and Urbanism undergraduate program at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), became mandatory and gained new scope, being renamed Curricular Extension Activities (ACE), according to Resolution No. 39/2022 (Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, 2022), of the Undergraduate Council (CONGRAD). With regard to the integration of a Project Studio into Curricular Extension Activities, the role of the API V course is understood as an important component of the relationship with communities outside UFU, notably with residents of suburbs, irregular occupations, and other forms of vulnerable housing. This understanding is based on the principle that a Project Studio is, essentially, a space for critical reflection on the city and society, and that its result is the design that materializes an idea. At the same time, presenting these reflections to society broadens the scope of the debate, promoting dialogue between the university and the external community. Therefore, API V is intended for design work focused on social housing and preparing students to participate in extension activities, actions, and programs.

To this end, the course coordinates extension activities with local communities and studies housing issues in the local and real context: unmet demands, social and environmental impacts, analysis of forms of social housing: single-family and multi-family types of urban social housing and building clusters. In addition, it analyzes the relationship between public, semi-public, and private spaces and social, environmental, and technical constraints: community structure, density and habitability, building systems, structural pre-dimensioning, and flows. Accessibility and environmental quality are also essential themes, as well as the specification and representation of construction technologies and systems. These quality attributes are based, notably, on scientific research carried out by the [MORA] group, which indicates applicable design parameters (Villa et al., 2025). Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) is incorporated as a critical and design tool, enabling dialogue between built experience and future proposals through applied experience based on Ono, Ornstein, Villa, and França (2018) and Villa, Saramago, and Garcia (2015).

The entire process culminates in the preparation of preliminary housing designs, accompanied by graphic representations, technical studies, and critical reports. The course is offered in the fifth semester of the Architecture and Urbanism program at

[4] Nevertheless, it is important to consider that, due to the traditional training process in our field and the hegemonic model of professional practice, we often reproduce hierarchical relationships in our actions, even when involved in participatory methods. Regarding these contradictions, we recommend the collection organized by Silke Kapp and Ana Paula Baltazar (2021).

the Federal University of Uberlândia. The experience reported was structured in two complementary stages, initially proposing the development of an extension activity focused on investigating housing issues in the context of the Pequis neighborhood (PMCMV – Level 1). This stage, which will be addressed in the article, began with lectures on the residential area and the context in which it is located in the municipality of Uberlândia, in addition to the presentation of methods and instruments for diagnosis and co-production. Subsequently, a guided tour of the neighborhood and selected residences was conducted, alongside the professors and interns of the course. The second stage, still in progress, is dedicated to the development of an architectural design for a housing complex, articulating the technical, social, and spatial knowledge mobilized throughout the process. The projects developed will be presented to public managers and companies interested in enabling new housing models that are more consistent with the real demands of residents.

3.1 ACE Methodology in API V

The ACE methodology for this course was structured to integrate theoretical and practical content with extension experiences in the field, applying a qualitative approach. It was based on the experiences of the Resilient House research, with its results present in the reference texts made available to students, in the content of theoretical classes, in the knowledge of doctoral students interning in the course, and in the use of the digital tool [Reforma na Palma da Mão][5] to assist in design solutions and proposals — an artifact also produced through the larger research. The Resilient House research has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP/UFU), ensuring the integrity of the participants. The ACE methodology was organized in three stages. In the first methodological stage, students participated in lectures that addressed urban and housing aspects of the Pequis neighborhood, in addition to the presentation of methodological techniques for participatory diagnostics and co-productions. In addition, a classroom activity was carried out with physical models of the residential floor plan, allowing students to explore the spatiality of the units, reflecting on construction limitations and possibilities for adaptation. Next, the teachers identified families interested in participating in the extension activity and made preliminary contacts to present the objectives of the action, clarify doubts, and verify their availability to receive students in their homes. After this contact, the location of the houses was presented to the students using a map also prepared by the teachers.

Still at this methodological stage, the forty-five students were divided into eleven groups of four or five students each, allowing for the distribution of residences among them, with each group responsible for one family. This stage consisted of preparing the students for getting in contact with the community, both in theoretical-critical and practical terms. In the second stage, the students, divided into groups and accompanied by teachers, made technical visits to the previously authorized homes, with the aim of applying a model questionnaire, prepared by the teachers, to evaluate aspects of housing. The students also conducted interviews with residents and recorded, through photographs and sketches, the main construction problems, house extensions made, renovations, and spontaneous strategies for appropriating spaces. This stage fostered the organization of more accurate diagnoses of the reality of the neighborhood, the model offered by the PMCMV, and the demands and desires of the residents. To conclude this stage, the analyses and reflections developed by the students up to that point were presented to the teachers and other groups. This collective exhibition, therefore, provided an opportunity to share experiences, align expectations, and structure the process of developing proposals for housing improvements. The third stage consisted of advising each group on the development of their proposals, which were ultimately presented and discussed with residents. This was followed by a new round of discussion on the results achieved, limitations, and potential of the experience, which will be reported later on this paper. The images below (Figures 1, 2, and 3) exemplify and illustrate the activities carried out throughout this extension activity.

[5] A platform that provides tips, guidance, and practical solutions for housing renovations, especially social housing, developed by the MORA – Housing Research group.https://reformacasa.facom.ufu.br.

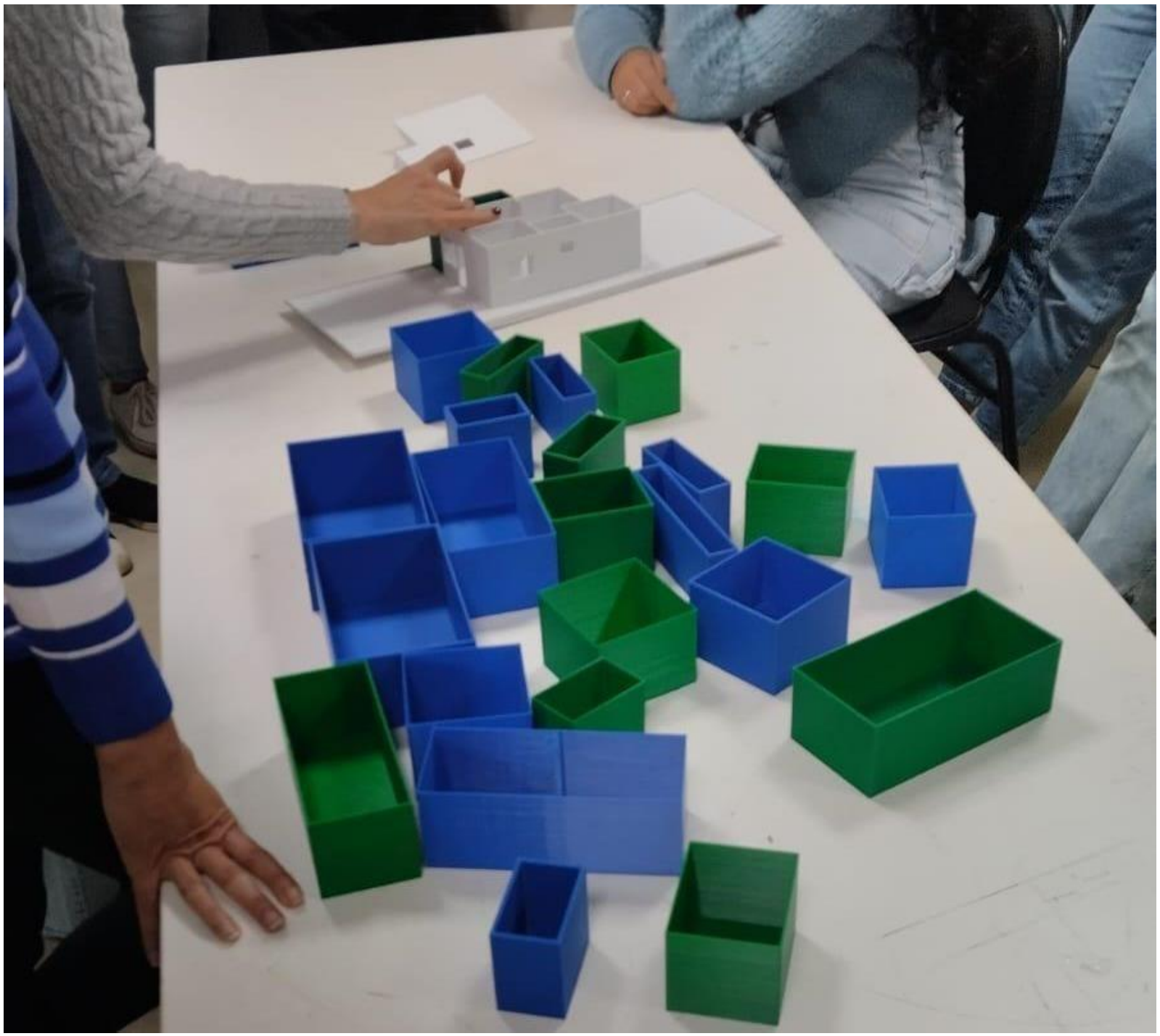

Fig. 1: Activity with the (white) model of the house in the Pequis neighborhood; the colored blocks (green and blue) are possible extensions made by the residents. Source: Authors, 2025.

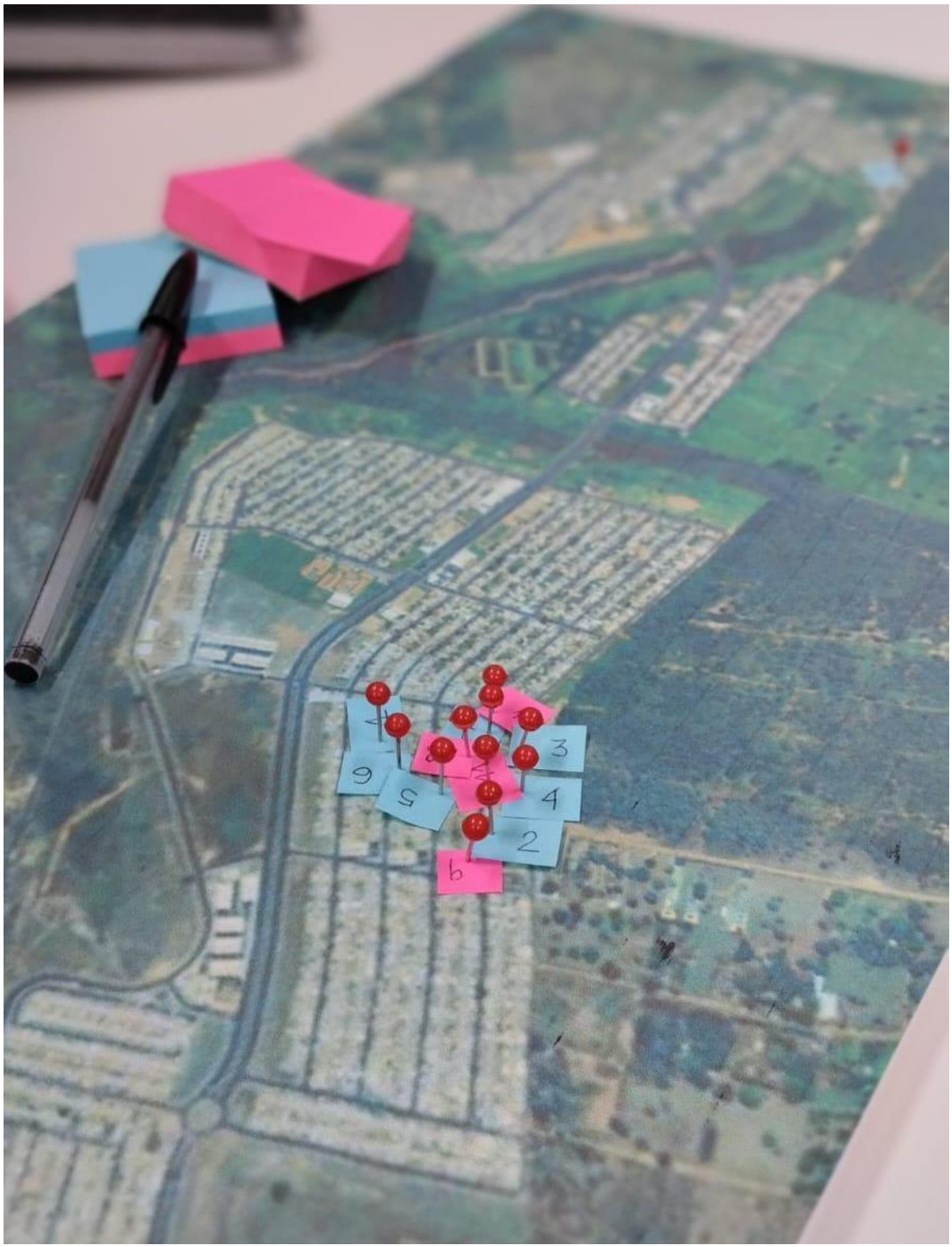

Fig. 2: Creation of a map of the Pequis neighborhood showing the location of the residences. Source: Authors, 2025.

Fig. 3: Guided tour with students to the Pequis neighborhood and residences. Source: Authors, 2025.

3.2 Case study: Pequis neighborhood

Located in the state of Minas Gerais, the municipality of Uberlândia, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2024), has a territorial area of 4,115,206 square kilometers, equivalent to a total area of approximately 270 hectares, an estimated population of 754,954 thousand people, and a population density of 173.31 inhabitants by square kilometers. The city is the second largest in the state, preceded only by the state capital Belo Horizonte. The Pequis neighborhood, the focus of the study, is located in the western sector of the municipality and, as explained, was established through the Minha Casa Minha Vida Program (PMCMV), consisting of nine plots, as shown in Figure 4. The residential complex was delivered between 2016 and 2017 and consists of single-family, single-story units on lots of approximately 200 square meters, as shown in Figure 5.

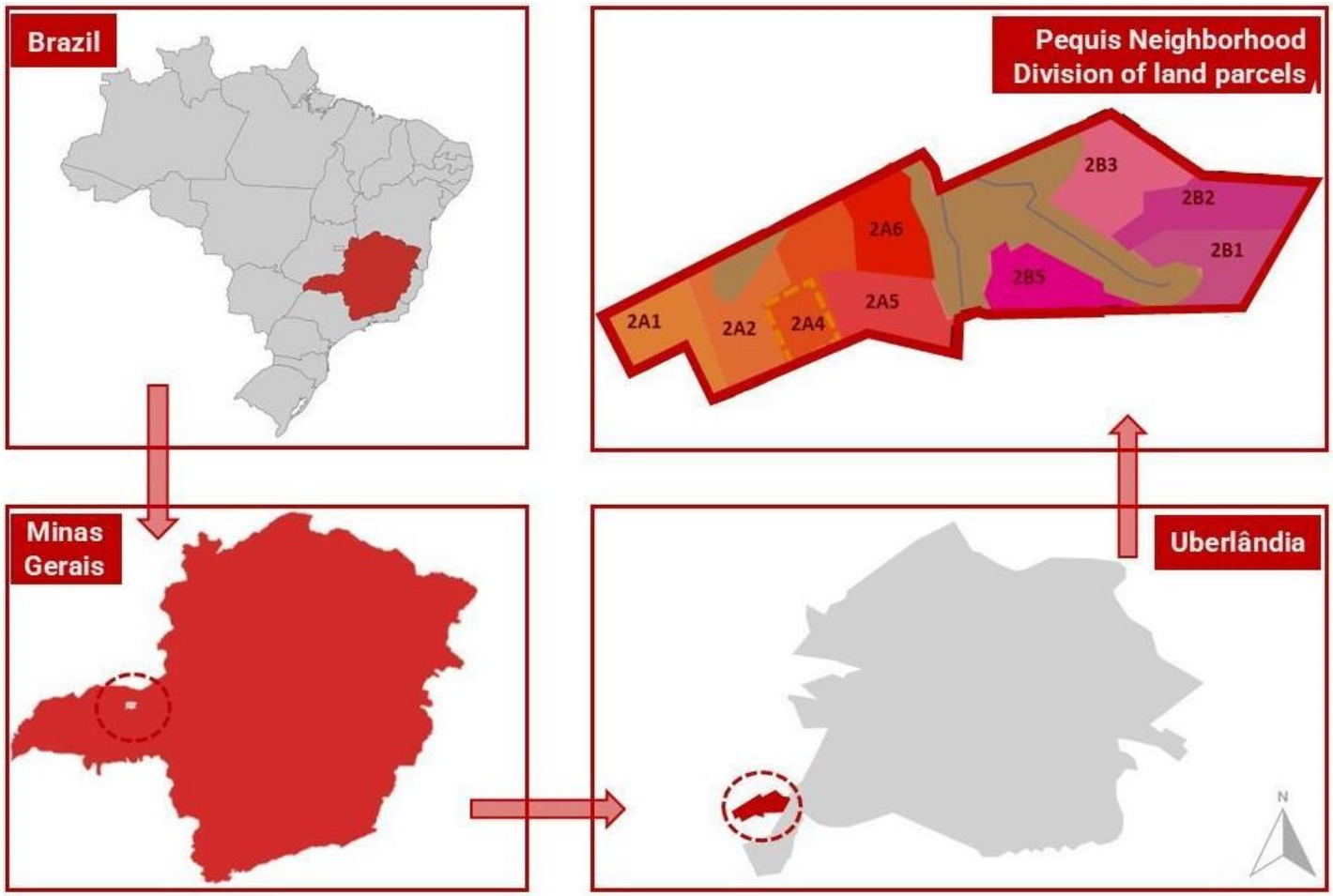

Fig. 4: Location of the Pequis neighborhood and division by plots. Source: Authors, 2025.

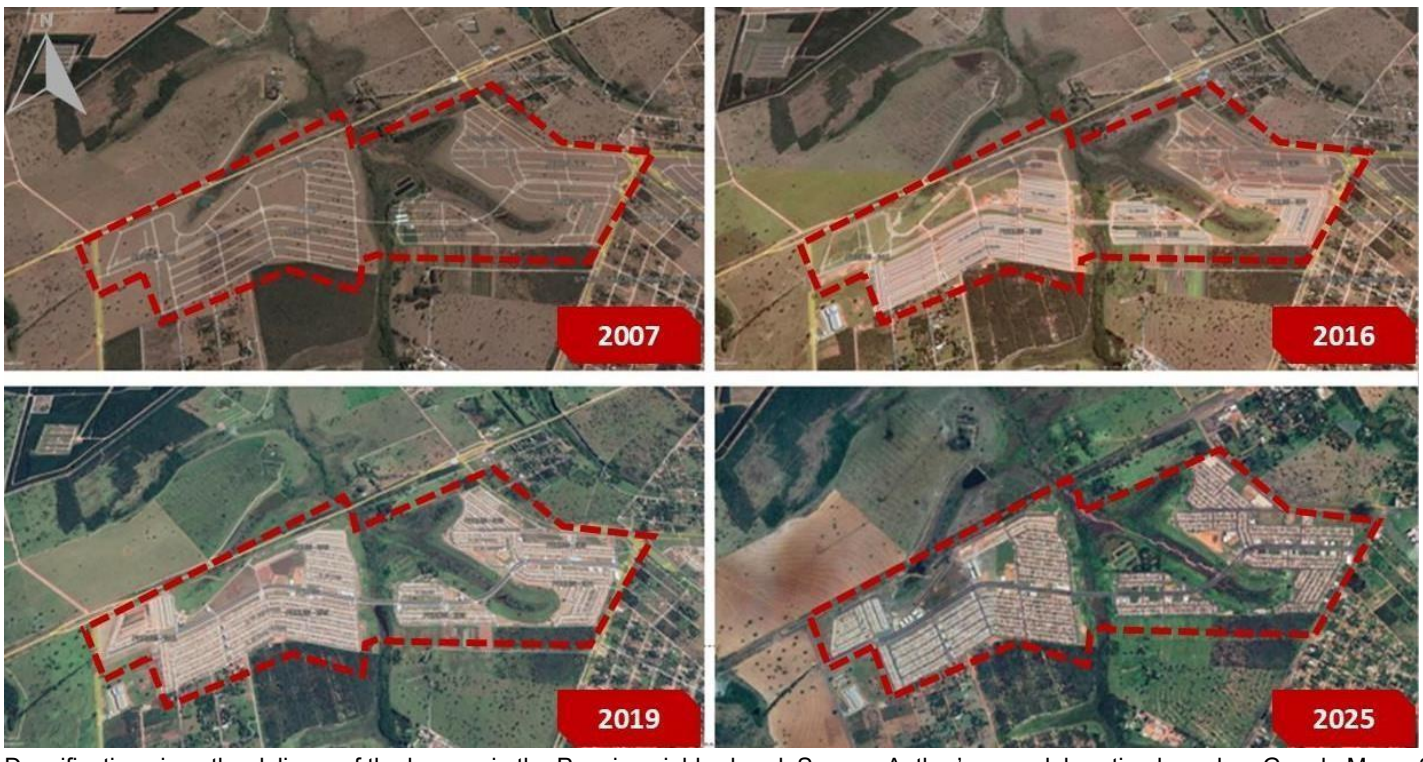

Fig. 5: Densification since the delivery of the houses in the Pequis neighborhood. Source: Author's own elaboration based on Google Maps, 2025.

The houses have between 42.35 square meters and 46.75 square meters of built area, with a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, one bathroom, and an outdoor service area. As shown in Figure 6, it was possible to identify two types of floor plans and at least two types of layouts on the lot: one with the house aligned with the lot boundary, forming a wider side corridor, and another with the house centered on the lot, with two narrower corridors. As can be seen on the maps, the Pequis neighborhood is located in a peripheral region, which historically has been characterized by the implementation of housing complexes aimed at the low-income population, reinforcing processes of socio-spatial segregation and hindering access to facilities and services. As Raquel Rolnik (2019) has already observed, developments aimed at Level 1 of the MCMV are scattered throughout the peripheries, far from privileged territories, so that the program has not interfered with the places traditionally occupied by the poorest classes in cities. In addition to that, Maricato (2012) reinforces that this occupation constitutes urban sprawl, significantly compromising mobility. According to Villa et al. (2017) and as verified in loco, access to the housing complex by private vehicle can take up to forty minutes. This increases public transportation costs and difficulties in effectively accessing the city.

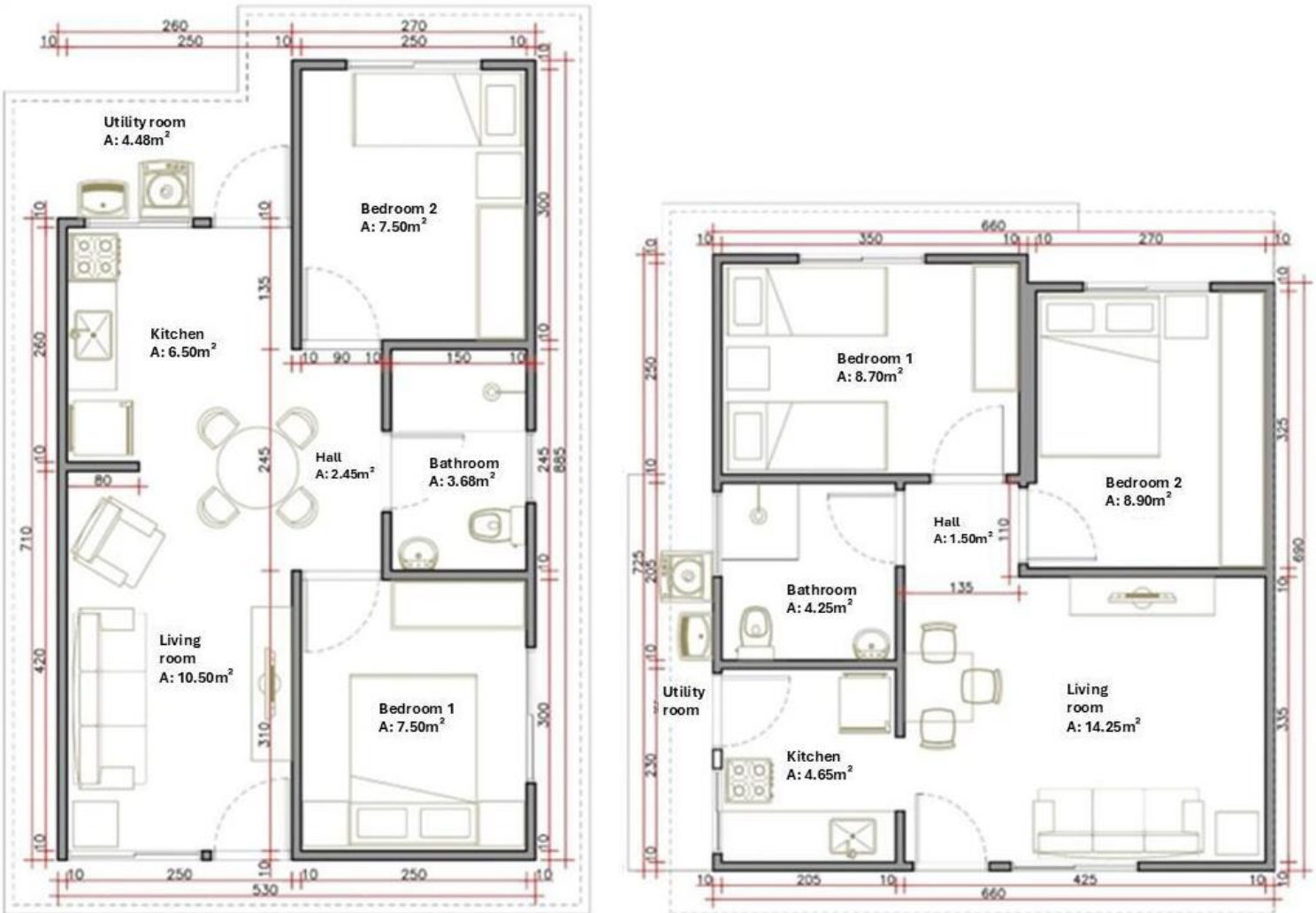

Fig. 6: Types of floor plans found in the Pequis neighborhood, studied in the course. Source: Authors (2025).

The Pequis neighborhood, in its entirety, covers an area of 1,998,424.37 square meters and has 3,942 lots. Approximately 3,200 housing units were built, marked by a strong typological rigidity, that is, there is no formal variation between the houses, reflecting the logic adopted on a large scale by the PMCMV. As a result, family dynamics, residents' needs, and possibilities for adaptation over time are disregarded, resulting in units that are inflexible and lack spatial diversity. The dwellings follow the same construction pattern: self-supporting concrete walls molded on site with an average thickness of 10 centimeters.

This construction system, based on repetition using modular forms, was adopted with the aim of optimizing production cycles, allowing multiple units to be completed in a short time. The openings are composed of blindex-type glass in aluminum frames, without sun shading. Concrete tiles are used on the roofs and PVC ceilings are used inside. This construction model, although

relatively efficient in terms of cost and execution time, results in certain limitations in terms of the adaptability and customization of the dwellings and the specific needs of the families. Faced with the limitations imposed by the standardized construction model, many residents resort to self-managed renovations and expansions to adapt their homes to the daily demands of use, reflecting an attempt to adapt spaces to family dynamics not contemplated in the original unit, to the growth of the household, and to specific needs for work, care, and socializing. However, the lack of specialized technical assistance in this process can compromise and has compromised structural, health, and safety aspects of the dwellings, as we will describe below.

4 Results and discussion

The final mapping of the residences in the housing complex that participated in the ACE – API V course activities, indicated by numbered markers, can be seen in Figure 7. Due to the development of previous work by the [MORA] group in the neighborhood, there was a greater concentration of studies in plot 2A4. Even so, the eleven houses mapped reflect the diversity of housing situations and realities in the neighborhood: typological variations were observed between the units and their locations, which favored the students' analysis through these contrasts in the same housing complex produced by the PMCMV. It should be noted that, throughout the process of developing the activities, some groups faced difficulties related to communication with residents, availability for interviews, or withdrawals from participation. These situations required flexibility on the part of the students and the need to redefine strategies, such as replacing the residences initially planned. Given this, it was necessary to redirect three groups to new studies, which resulted in minor changes to the initial choices made by the teachers. Despite these changes, the sample of homes analyzed remained representative and allowed for a meaningful study of local housing demands and conditions, covering different areas of the residential complex, which proved to be a richer process, as described above.

Fig. 7: Marking of the residences studied. Source: Author's own elaboration based on Google Maps (2025).

The extension exercise was structured in three components in order to better guide the students' diagnostic and proposal process: (1) The house as it is, a stage focused on the observation and diagnosis of the physical, social, and urban reality of the object of study, through lectures and field research; (2) The house as I would like it to be, a phase dedicated to listening to the desires, needs, and symbolic dimensions associated with housing, focusing on the perspective of the residents themselves; and (3) The house as it could be improved, a stage for the elaboration of design proposals, considering feasible interventions for renovation, requalification, and housing improvement. After the necessary surveys for stages 1 and 2, as described above, the students gave a collective presentation, in which they shared their analyses and reflections with teachers and classmates. The purpose of this presentation was to promote the exchange of experiences between groups, reflect on the methodological

processes adopted, and guide the referrals for the third and final stage. Subsequently, in the third stage, the proposals were officially delivered to the teachers on July 22, 2025, in digital format. Additionally, they were also presented to residents between July 22 and 27, 2025, according to the availability of each participating family. This delivery took place in person, through meetings organized with residents, with the aim of explaining and discussing the proposals developed based on the housing diagnosis carried out in the field. The projects included suggestions for architectural improvements and adaptations aimed at upgrading the spaces, respecting the individual needs of each residence and the structural conditions observed, with the presentation of schematic drawings and electronic models. To this end, softwares such as Sketchup, Revit, Archicad, and Rhinoceros were used, in addition to physical models, sketches, and diagrams, facilitating the understanding of the proposals (Figure 8). This moment represented the return of academic work to the community, as shown in Figure 9, and an opportunity for dialogue between students and residents, reinforcing the social commitment of design practice and the role of the university in extending and strengthening ties with the territory.

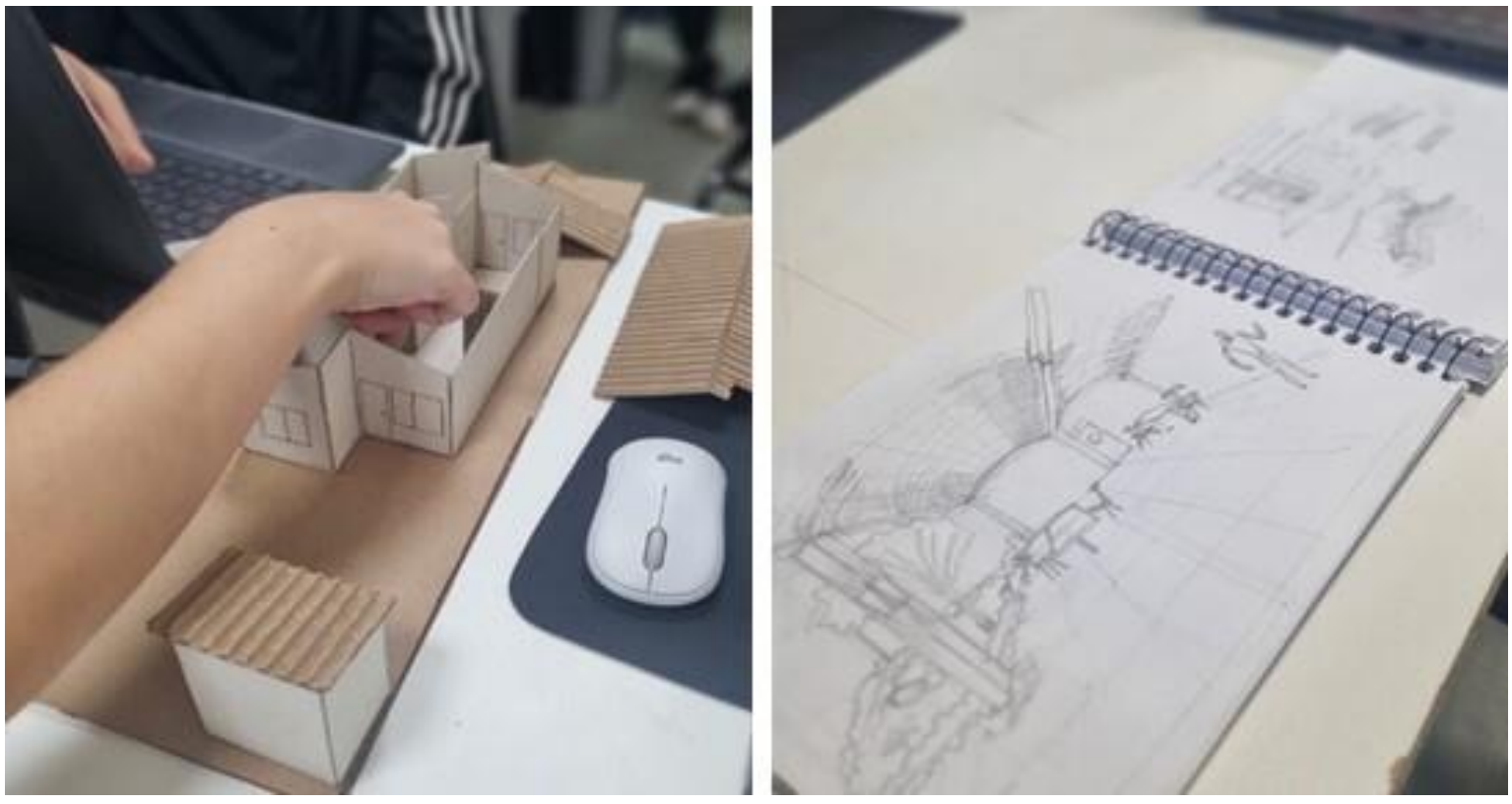

Fig. 8: Students making a physical model and project notebook. Source: Authors (2025).

Fig. 9: Delivery of the project to residents. Source: Authors, 2025.

The methodology applied in this exercise allowed for the construction of a participatory process that was sensitive to the specificities of each residence analyzed and provided students with direct contact with the community. The students realized the need to develop new skills, focusing on the development of a proposal that was accessible both economically and in terms of the residents' understanding of the design solutions. In this sense, the design results took on a more playful character, with the use of colors and explanatory diagrams, complemented by texts that facilitated understanding by the participants, containing descriptions, captions, and detailed specifications (Figures 10 and 11). The eleven participating families had a wide variety of family structures and different home configurations, due to the extensions and modifications already made. In terms of economic profile, even though all the homes analyzed were in level 1, there was a wide variation in family income, which required the students to have a greater understanding of what would be proposed.

One of the solutions found by the students was to organize the proposals into stages of execution, developing sets of solutions, from the simplest to the most complex, from the most affordable modifications to the most expensive alterations. The simplest solutions included: layout changes to mitigate circulation problems and reduce the size of the units; repainting certain rooms to reduce mold and mildew; proposing specific replacements of opaque tiles with translucent ones to solve lighting problems, especially in the case of roof extensions made by the residents themselves; reorganizing open areas and suggesting landscaping to mitigate problems such as dirt or dust and lack of permeability within the walls. Solutions involving new extensions to meet family demands, the installation of custom-made furniture, or more complex renovations, identified as “long-term solutions,” as they require more substantial investments and the necessary technical support. Table 1 summarizes the main problems identified and the solutions presented.

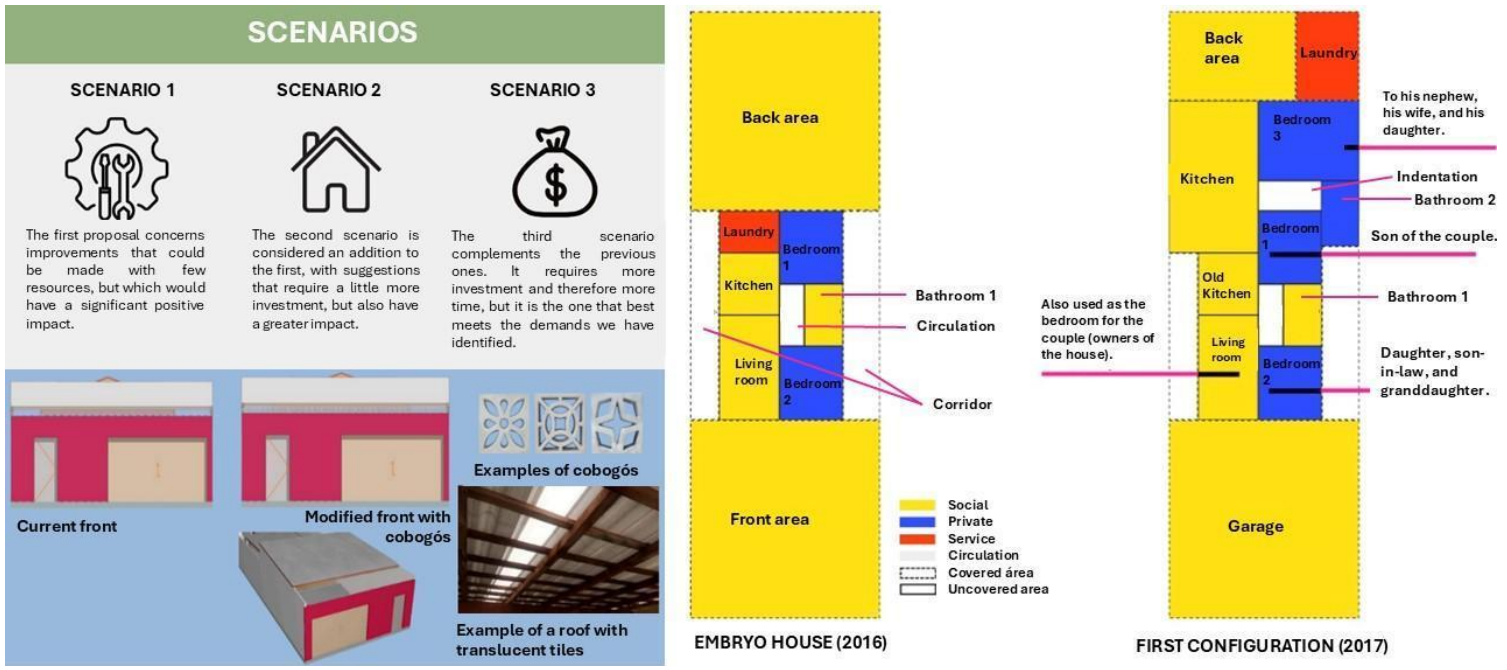

Fig. 10: Material delivered to residents. Source: Authors, 2025.

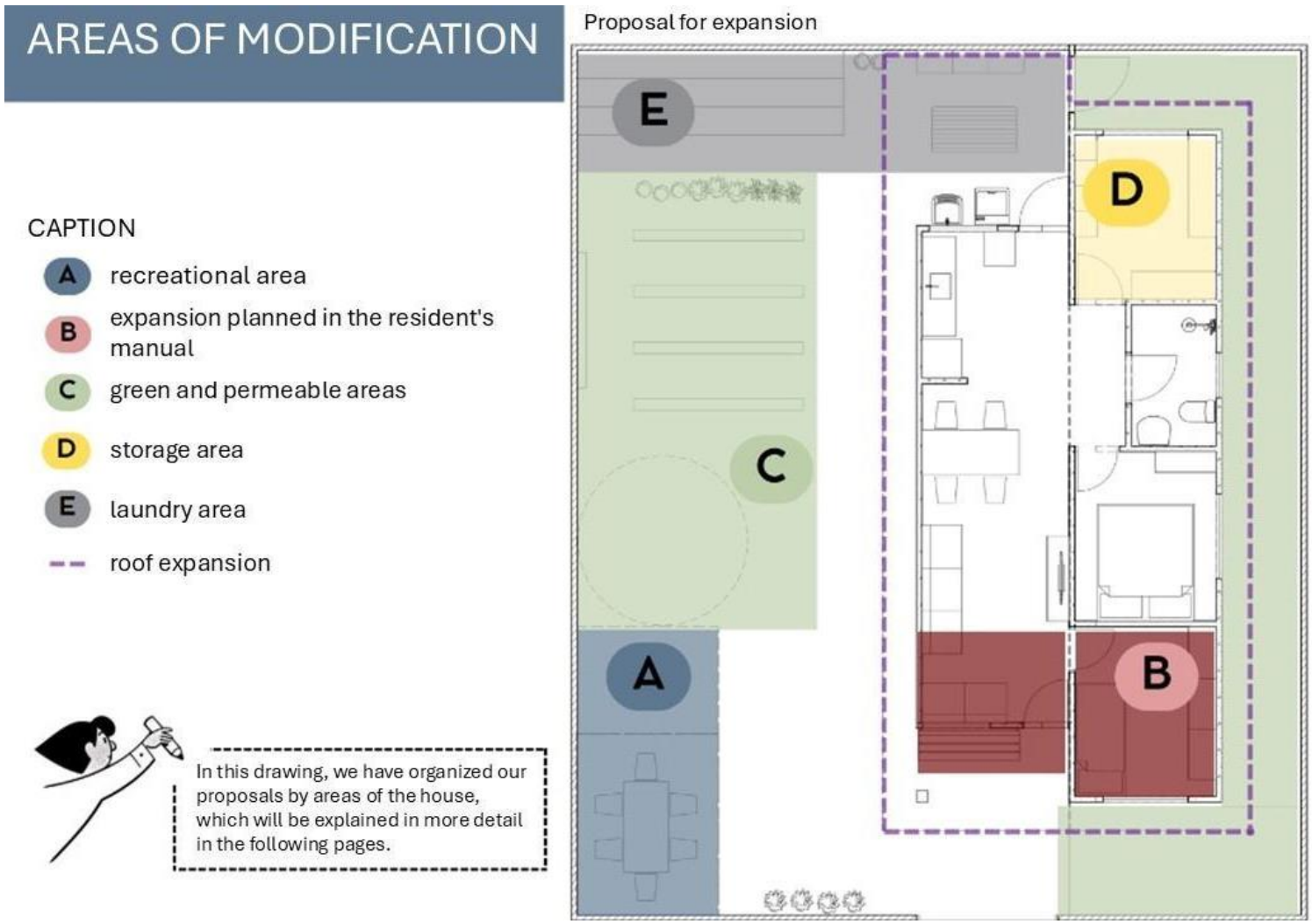

Fig. 11: Material delivered to residents. Source: Authors, 2025.

Grupos	Principais problemas identificados	Principais soluções dos alunos
1	Lack of adequate space to work as a manicurist; Need for another bedroom for one of the children; Lack of privacy in the house; Small living room with difficult circulation; Poor natural lighting in the interior; Lack of cabinets and storage space; Cramped and impractical kitchen; Outdoor area with no defined use; Excessive heat in some rooms throughout the day; Lack of space to comfortably receive clients.	Create an exclusive space for manicures, expanding to the front of the room; Build a new room at the back of the lot; Reorganize the layout of the room to improve circulation; Translucent tiles to increase natural lighting; Custom furniture for storing manicure supplies; Separate the service area with a light partition; Restructuring the kitchen to make it more functional; Creating an organized outdoor area for relaxation or socializing; Including cross ventilation with new openings or replacement of window frames; Adapting the entrance for customers to access the workspace.
2	Leaks in the bedrooms and water seeping into the bathroom; Bad smell and clogging in the grease trap; Worn flooring and grouting; Excessive heat in the bedrooms at night; Strong sunlight in the living room and kitchen (furniture wear); Lack of space and storage areas; Roof and ceiling covered in dirt and difficult to maintain; Poorly covered and poorly functional laundry room.	Repair roof and ceiling with waterproofing membrane; Repair and seal grease trap; Replace bathroom flooring and grouting; Enlarge living room, kitchen, and laundry room; Create pantry and new bedroom. Replace window frames for better sealing; Extend the front roof for sun protection; Add green areas and flower beds; Create a leisure area with a pergola and table.
3	Fully covered garage with no ventilation; Small room with poor circulation; Hot kitchen with refrigerator obstructing passage; Few cabinets and lack of storage space; Enclosed recess with no ventilation or natural light; Grease trap with bad odors and clogs; Waterproofed outdoor areas; Hot suite with leaks; Dark facade that gets very hot; Granddaughter's room without a bed and disorganized; Old kitchen not in use.	Installation of translucent roof tiles; Replacement of gates with openwork models; Inclusion of cobogós on the façade; Reorganization of the living room and replacement of the TV panel; Creation of a living room/dining area in the former kitchen; Installation of a wind-powered exhaust fan; Construction of a pergola with vegetation; New layout and custom cabinets in the kitchen; Replacement of the suite's window frames; Renovation of the bathroom slab; Installation of a wardrobe and storage bed in the granddaughter's bedroom; Painting of the house in light colors; Creation of a winter garden in the recess.
4	House unpainted and unfinished appearance; Lack of finishing in several rooms (plaster, flooring, walls); Patches on the roof, with leaks and poorly sealed areas; Lack of green space and shade; No space to store recycling bins; Adequate space for the family's worm farm; Little furniture and lack of cabinets for organization; Dark rooms with little natural lighting; Insufficient ventilation; Poorly used and heavily waterproofed backyard; Bathroom with poor finish; Kitchen and living room with little circulation.	Exterior and interior painting with light-colored, economical paints; Application of plaster and leveling in unfinished areas; Complete roof repair, replacing patches, changing tiles, and sealing critical points; Creation of simple flower beds, pots, and a small green area; Construction of a light storage shed for recyclables; Creation of a ventilated and protected space for the worm farm; Installation of niches, shelves, and simple cabinets for organization; Enlargement or opening of windows to increase natural lighting; Reorganization of the yard with permeable areas and multifunctional space; Improvement of the bathroom with minor repairs and replacement of finishes; Adjustments in the kitchen with redistribution of furniture and economical countertops.
5	Lack of adequate lighting and natural ventilation in the bedrooms; Little privacy in relation to the social area; Poorly designed bathroom, with a door that hinders the use of the shower; Lack of organization and storage space (kitchen and laundry area); Inadequate coverage and thermal discomfort in outdoor areas; Small and impractical rooms, with furniture disproportionate to the space.	Reverse the bedrooms (master and guest rooms); Reverse the bathroom stall entrance; Install flashings on the walls; Add translucent tiles in the laundry area; Sliding door in the bathroom; Create a backyard garden; Renovate the facade with hollow bricks and new paint; Replace the tiles with sandwich tiles; Renovate and raise the external roof.
6	Lack of adequate space in the kitchen for storing utensils, cooking, and washing dishes; Limited circulation between the kitchen and living room due to the cabinet next to the refrigerator; Cramped environment due to excess furniture, especially two sofas taking up too much space; Poorly positioned shelf in the hallway, obstructing movement; Kitchen and living room with little usable space due to the existing wall, reducing fluidity between the rooms; Current furniture poorly organized, compromising the functionality and privacy of the bedrooms.	Removal of the kitchen wall and extension of the side wall, creating a hallway and expanding the space; Increased circulation area between rooms; Possibility of placing a table if one of the sofas is removed; Greater privacy in the bedrooms with the new hallway; Better organization of existing furniture; Creation of greater support for cooking and washing dishes; Removal of one of the sofas to optimize the living room space; Relocation of the cabinet near the refrigerator, opening up circulation space; Relocation of the hallway shelf to free up the passageway and better organize the environment.
7	Lack of space to welcome students' mothers; Small classroom, needing to be relocated to better accommodate students; Need for a separate bathroom for students' use; Desire to keep the backyard garden and create a flower bed for the husband's vegetable garden; Fear of losing the laundry area, used for family activities; Small master bedroom and kitchen, with little storage space.	Installation of tempered glass shower enclosure in the bathroom; Turning bricks upside down to prevent water accumulation and dengue proliferation; Alternative of placing stones in place of bricks, preventing dirt from the ground; Reorganization of the classroom layout to improve the flow of students and teachers; Reuse of tiles to create gardens around trees; Sink with countertop and lower cabinet, expanding storage space; New room layout, transforming the old classroom into a TV room, bedroom, and kitchen.
8	Uneven bathroom tiles; Fragile front door offering little privacy (glass frame); Inadequate kitchen too close to the living room, causing discomfort due to smells and grease; Dissatisfaction with kitchen sink and cabinets; Daughter's bedroom door does not open fully because of the study table; Mother's bedroom door does not open fully because of the wardrobe; Small living room; Lack of space for a larger dining table; Uneven terrain, making it difficult to move around and causing rainwater to accumulate; Lack of space for work/study.	Painting with water-based epoxy paint, suitable for ceramics; Installation of fitted or freestanding furniture under the sink; Installation of a shower enclosure; Replacement of the door to enlarge the internal space of the bathroom; Replacement of the bed with a conventional double bed (master bedroom); Reversal of furniture layout for better circulation; Enclosure of the space (current living room) with MDF panel and built-in door, increasing privacy; Use of a 3-in-1 bunk bed, allowing for more comfort and space optimization (daughter's bedroom); Multifunctional furniture with desk built into the closet, improving space utilization.
9	Insufficient kitchen size; Many leaks (problematic roof tiles); Living room floods when it rains; Floor stains easily; Bedroom and kitchen are very hot; Lack of space to accommodate visitors; Lack of space for washing machine; Lack of protection from light; Lack of space to store food; Problems in the bathroom (door, humidity, lack of separation).	Replacement of damaged roof tiles; Replacement of bathroom door; Addition of shower stall in bathroom; Relocation of refrigerator, storage table, and kitchen cabinets; Transfer of washing machine; Installation of roofing in the back; Installation of cobogós in the back; Planting of tree to filter sunlight in one of the bedrooms; Reorganization of the kitchen to improve storage; Improvement of ventilation and shading with hollow elements and trees.
10	Water seepage and leaks in the ceiling; Recurring problems with the gutter; Slippery floor; Poorly constructed covered area that gets everything wet; Poorly executed electrical installation (low wires); Weak door that is difficult to open and close; Water running down the walls and damaging furniture; Lack of sealing on the windows; Excessive heat and poor ventilation; Backyard with dirt floor; Plans to repaint the interior of the house; Lack of vegetation and shade.	Replacement of fiber cement tiles with concrete tiles; Replacement of PVC lining with material offering better thermal insulation; Repair and overhaul of gutters and drainage systems; Plastering and painting of ceramic brick walls; Paving of outdoor areas with more permeable materials; Correction of the dirt floor at the rear; Overhaul of electrical installation and outlets; Improvement of garage roof and outdoor area; Incorporation of vegetation and shade in the yard; Overhaul of window frames to prevent dust and dirt from entering; Painting and general maintenance of the house.
11	Lack of space to store the child's school supplies; Lack of adequate space for plants and a small garden; Rooms with poor lighting during the day; Feeling of a “dark” and poorly ventilated house; Lack of organized spaces for general storage; Small or poorly used backyard; Living room and kitchen not very functional due to lack of free space; Feeling of crampedness and difficulty moving around inside the house.	Creation of custom furniture for the son to store work materials; Transformation of part of the backyard or hallway into a vertical garden for plants; Installation of translucent tiles or new openings to improve natural lighting; Reorganization of the living room/kitchen to increase circulation; Creation of upper cabinets and niches to optimize storage; Expansion or renovation of outdoor area to include flower beds and green space; Replacement of window frames with models that allow more light to enter; Use of a pergola with climbing plants to create a shaded, green area; Review of the internal layout to free up space and organize the flow of the house.

Table 1: Main problems identified and solutions presented. Source: Authors, 2025.

During the development of the activity, difficulties were encountered, while at the same time the potential of the extension action became evident. In certain cases, as reported above, some participants dropped out during the process, requiring a reorganization of the groups and the search for new families willing to collaborate with the exercise. This need for rearrangement directly impacted the schedule of some groups, which had less time to carry out the activity compared to those that managed to maintain continuity of work from the beginning. Such unforeseen events highlight the complexity inherent in participatory practices in the field and reinforce the importance of methodological flexibility and adequate time management in extension experiences. During the project feedback stage, some groups reported difficulties in establishing contact with residents to schedule the delivery of the finished material. On the other hand, it was observed that some residents expressed a desire to maintain contact with the students after the activities were completed. Additionally, some groups reported that, at the time of proposals delivery, they had already noticed changes in the residents' domestic environment, motivated by their initial contact with the group. Actions such as rearranging furniture, painting the facade, and general cleaning of spaces were mentioned, indicating a new perspective on housing. In addition, some students reported feeling embarrassed because they were unable to meet the participants' demands. As a result, some of the students are mobilizing to try to implement some proposals from other extension projects at the institution.

In this regard, it is essential to note that the extension courses offered by FAUeD/UFU lack greater institutional support so that their objectives can be fully met. Among other actions, it is necessary to provide financial resources, through the institution's vice-rectorates, to enable the effective implementation of the design solutions developed as well as to transport students to the intervention sites and for residents to the institution and to provide pedagogical support aimed at training the teaching staff to deal with the challenges of extension practices challenges — as also reported by Angela Gordilho-Souza and Heliana Rocha (2018). During the development of the undergraduate program Pedagogical Project, for example, the incorporation of the workload of elective courses, aimed at complying with MEC guidelines, with few exceptions, was added to what was already practiced, in the face of resistance from part of the teaching staff to rethink their courses based on extensionist logic. Additionally, there is still resistance from teachers to take on the courses that have been effectively created, which reveals the contradictions in the process. In the specific case of the experience reported, as explained, some residents refused to receive the students for the final presentation of the solutions precisely because they understood that they would have to spend their own resources, often non-existent, to implement such solutions.

Therefore, the students' observations and descriptions at the end of the activity demonstrated the significant impact of practical experience on the training process. Many stated that contact with residents and listening during the meetings provided a new understanding of the social role of the architect and the complexity involved in interventions in popular housing contexts. The activity was also pointed out as a challenge in terms of mediating between the residents' wishes and the technical and budgetary limitations faced in the proposals, exacerbated by the inflexible construction standards of the PMCMV housing units in the Pequis neighborhood. These restrictions required sensitivity, creativity, and empathy on the part of the students to propose minimally viable and meaningful improvements, respecting the structural conditions and limitations of the existing houses. Furthermore, the students emphasized the value of knowledge exchange during the process, recognizing that this experience contributed to expanding their design repertoire and strengthening their critical and dialogical stance.

5 Final considerations

The inseparability of teaching, research, and extension has proven to be a structuring principle in the training of professionals committed to social transformation. In the context of ATHIS practices, this articulation allows classroom activities to extend beyond the academic space, while knowledge production is anchored in concrete realities and urgent social demands. By integrating these three pillars, design solutions developed with vulnerable communities gain critical density and operate as spaces for collective learning, both for students and for teachers and residents. Research guides and systematizes processes; teaching shapes and provokes debate; and extension builds bridges between the university and society. In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the embryonic experience reported in this paper confirms the transformative potential of the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension as a basis for actions committed to the right to decent housing. The practical experience provided by the course offers a formative dimension that would be difficult to achieve through theoretical content alone, including through contact with the contradictions of the process. The direct involvement of students with territories, subjects, and concrete challenges contributes to the construction of a more sensitive and ethical view of reality, essential to working in ATHIS. This

experience also encourages the recognition of the limits and potentialities of professional practice, expanding students' awareness of the social role of architects and urban planners. Thus, the inclusion of real experiences in the training process strengthens the development of a critical and proactive stance, which is indispensable for those who wish to act with responsibility and commitment in public housing policies.

The results obtained through this experience, throughout the development of practical activities in the ACE - API V course, demonstrate the relevance of participatory methodologies in the training process of future architects and urban planners. The direct involvement of students in the Pequis neighborhood, based on field diagnosis and proposals for housing improvements, allowed for a concrete approach to the challenges faced by low-income families living in Minha Casa Minha Vida Program complexes, level 1. Given this, despite the difficulties encountered and mentioned in the results, the experience provided a dynamic learning environment, requiring students to demonstrate social sensitivity, technical creativity, and the ability to adapt to the limitations of the context. Another relevant aspect observed was the fact that most students were unfamiliar with the neighborhood, mainly due to its peripheral location and difficult access, which made the activity even more significant for recognizing this urban socio-spatial inequality and distance from the city center. Furthermore, the exercise allowed students to understand, in practice, the complexity of design processes in real contexts, stimulating critical reflections on access to adequate housing and on the challenges related to participatory and extension processes.

Thus, it can be concluded that, despite the challenges faced, the methodological approach adopted in the course demonstrated great pedagogical potential and contributed to the ethical, technical, and civic education of the students involved. By relating the results of this action to the theme Multilateral Dialogues: Praxis, Interlocutions, and Confrontations, it can be observed that the experience consolidated a continuous process of dialogue between the university and the community, in which different types of knowledge were mobilized and confronted. The participation of families, their spatial adaptation strategies, and the students' listening contributed to the construction of a praxis more committed to the housing reality analyzed. It is believed that, in future editions of the course, it will be possible to achieve greater depth, offering more services to the community involved, ensuring the continuity of the process, especially if such practices receive greater institutional support.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank PPGAU-UFU, CNPq (processes no. 422450/2023-5, no. 311624/2021-9; No. 306977/2025-7) and CAPES for their support (process No. 88887.159301/2025-00), through the granting of research scholarships. We also thank the students for their involvement and commitment and the residents of Residencial Pequis for their generous participation in this experience.

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