

**PRACTICE AND PROCESSES IN THE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE:
DECENTERING PERSPECTIVES**

***PRÁTICAS E PROCESSOS DE PRODUÇÃO DO ESPAÇO URBANO:
DESCENTRANDO PERSPECTIVAS***

***PRÁCTICAS Y PROCESOS DE PRODUCCIÓN DEL ESPACIO URBANO:
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In the eyes of classic urban sociology, the city represented new horizons of uncertainty and expectations. Its importance was associated with modern ideals of freedom and equality, counterpoints to the hierarchies and immobilities of the rural/traditional world. Thus, for many authors of the early 20th century (BURGESS, 2017; PARK, 1970; SIMMEL, 2002; WEBER, 1966; WIRTH, 1967), the emergence of urban life entailed ambiguous collective experiences, linked to specific patterns of sociability, sometimes related to cosmopolitanism, civility, coexistence and tolerance, sometimes to processes that generate isolation, loneliness and indifference.

However, a critical rereading of this tradition and its way of framing urban life that, at the time, emerged in Europe implies a care that contemporary research must exercise: it cannot be ignored that these predicates, in general, were confused with the dimensions of the process of modernization, industrialization and urbanization that a few metropolitan regions of the Global North were going through, which calls into question the explanatory locus on which part of the canon of Urban Sociology in the 20th century focused.

This essay, which opens the dossier “Practices and processes in the production of urban space: decentering perspectives”, takes this tension as a premise. The classical perspective that apprehended and analyzed the city as a terrain of civil progress, of the development of human potentialities – or else, as a stage of reverberation of “modern” distrust and fears – lost sight of a series of experiences of urban life that have accumulated and developed on the peripheries of global capitalism. These experiences are marked, on the one hand, by the colonial past – and,

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therefore, by the effects of the transatlantic slave trade, the massive deterritorialization of people, slavery, genocide and racism –, which historically intertwine “North-South” and “South-South”; on the other hand, due to the persistent legacies of this past, which make it difficult for contemporary problems to be solved – such as segregation, inequalities, lack of infrastructure, problems in regulation and urban-environmental management etc.

The cities of the Global South, when considered by the geography of hegemonic urban theory (ROY, 2009), appear in a doubly idealized way: inscribed under the sign of underdevelopment and insufficiency, that is, stuck to the historical destinations that they themselves architected, of poverty, informality, diseases, violence, deprivation; or else as interesting, anomalous, exotic and esoteric ethnographic fields. There is a binary that supports the background of these analyses: on the one hand, “developed” cities constitute “models” from which theories and policies are produced; on the other hand, “underdeveloped” cities are considered “problems” that require diagnoses, in general, by importing solutions (CASSIÁN-YDE, 2019) provided by a tailored transnational urbanism (MURRAY, 2013).

For Carlos Vainer (2014), this prism that persists in the social sciences³ stems from a “coloniality of urban knowledge”, which results in the dissemination of city models and urban spaces that do not accommodate the specific dynamics of the Global South. It is an epistemological imposition that generates “exemplary practices” of bourgeois urbanism, with supposedly universal planning recipes, evaluated as more adequate and considered by public authorities and private initiatives as references. But it is necessary to consider that such models are not neutral: they were conceived in specific and situated historical contexts, although substantially different from those for which these projects will be exported and activated in the form of urban policies (CASSIÁN-YDE, 2019; JAJAMOVICH, 2017; JANOSCHKA; SEQUERA, 2014; PATEL, 2014; VAINER, 2014).

The aim of this dossier is that, in order to avoid discrepant readings of the urban realities of the Global South, we must think of a “relational” sociology of urban space, which implies perceiving it from its “rhythms”, from its cartographies of meanings (FORTUNA, 2012), as well as the practices, dynamics, divergences and convergences that bring to the center of the

³ Part of the debates that unfolded from the Chicago School and the French School of Urban Sociology, throughout the 20th century, followed attached to a “hegemonic territorial imaginary of the world” (AMIN, 2004). But this field began to change with the empirical knowledge produced in the Global South itself (KOWARICK, 1979; SANTOS, 1993) and with the new epistemologies that emerged in Sociology between the 1970s and 1980s, such as Critical Urban Theory (BRENNER, 2009); DEAR, 2003; MARCUSE, 2010) and Subaltern Urbanism (PATEL, 2018; ROY, 2011; 2015; ROY; ONG, 2011). These shifts put in check the supposedly universal grammar of the “city” – considering variations from local dynamics – and the metrocentric trends of western urbanism – which focus on “global cities”, from a normative and Eurocentric perspective.



analysis oscillations, modulations and negotiations that produce contemporary urban spaces (SIMONE, 2018). This reorientation – theoretical, methodological, and epistemological, but also ethical and political – can help Urban Sociology face a double challenge for its decentering. First, how to problematize the authorized spaces of production of legitimate knowledge of/about the city, including spaces historically denied, silenced, or neglected? Second, how can we shed light on the dynamics of urban life woven in other latitudes and take seriously what Agier(2015) called new ways of doing the city?

This dossier seeks to face new challenges imposed on Urban Sociology produced in the Global South. However, a warning is worth mentioning here: even if we recognize a certain ineptitude of the Global North approaches in dealing with peripheral realities (EDENSOR; JAYNE, 2012; WATSON, 2009), mainly due to a universalist analytical structure that fails to tension its own places of (RAO, 2006), following Mabin(2015), we reject the perspective that theories from the North cannot be useful in the South – epistemologies travel, intersect and feed each other, enriching places, people, policies, networks, repertoires and moves. More specifically, it is about facing phenomena and problems that are contemporary and that affect different Latin American cities, from axes involved in global processes of production of urban space but analyzed in decentered contexts. Among these phenomena and problems, we can consider, for example, urban assemblages, cultural practices, sociability patterns, uses and counter-uses of public spaces, historical experiences of occupation and reterritorialization, segregation dynamics, new borders that circumscribe the “urban question” in the current stage of global capitalism and the “subaltern resistances” (ROY, 2011) that are present in post-colonial cities.

Through the articulation of some disciplinary fields - such as Urban Sociology and Sociology of Culture -, the objective was to gather empirically oriented research and reflections, which, at the same time, tension the geographies of theory, from figurations, arrangements, dispositions and strategies responsible for material and symbolic displacements, negotiations of meaning and forms of reappropriation of contemporary urban public space.

This introductory text is divided into three more sections. Initially, we review the literature that informs studies on contemporary cities, focusing on segregation, a significant feature of urban spaces in the Global South. Then, we trace displacements that have redesigned, today, the debate about public space, sociabilities and cultural practices, three dimensions that reveal that the urban does not constitute a static geography, but a relationship. Finally, we articulate these frameworks to the contributions that make up this dossier. Each of the articles, in its own way, registers different dynamics of production of contemporary urban space,



whether hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, instituted, or emerging, central or marginal, as well as important agencies that, in recent years, have driven the processes of space and culture reappropriation in Latin American cities.

The City in the Global South and the Question of Sociospatial Segregation

In recent decades, a series of transformations in urban spaces have led the Social Sciences and the Urban Sociology produced in the Global South to reorient conceptual repertoires, methodological frameworks, and analytical keys. Little by little, the city ceases to be a scene of unfolding activities, events, dynamics, relationships, and processes, to be treated, on the one hand, as a socially constructed space through interactions, assemblages and disputes, and, on the other hand, as a producer and reproducer of social determinations of class, race, gender, occupation, residence and other cleavages.

These rearrangements have brought new thematic intersections to urban research to deal with the problems that affect contemporary cities on the periphery of global capitalism, such as the systematic dissolution of public space (BORJA, 2003; BORJA; MUXÍ, 2003), the rejection of intercultural coexistence (JIMÉNEZ, 2000; NORONHA, 2022), the weakening of sociability ties established in alterity policies (CALDEIRA, 2000; DAMMERT, 2013; DAVIS, 2009; DUHAU, 2001; SENNETT, 1988) etc. Related to these are the closure of urban life (SMITH & LOW, 2006), the proliferation of fortified enclaves (CALDEIRA, 2000; MARCUSE, 1997), suburbanization (HERNÁNDEZ-FLORES *et al.*, 2017), peripheralization (SANTOS *et al.*, 2017) and sprawling urbanization (SANTOS, 1993), a tendency to flee from urban pathologies (ARANTES, 2014), land ownership racism and socio-environmental injustices (ACSERALD *et al.*, 2004; GOMES, 2019; JESUS, 2020), the policies of gentrification, revitalization and boutiqueization (BIDOU-ZACHARIASEN, 2006; CARRIÓN; HANLEY, 2005; SMITH, 2007), the normative models of public space with hygienist biases (CASSIÁN-YDE, 2019), the new disputes over peripheral spaces (OLIVEIRA, 2020; PARDUE; OLIVEIRA 2018; RAO, 2006; ROSA, 2018; ROY, 2011) etc.

These rearrangements also impacted more global agendas of urban research, albeit with locally variable impacts and modulations. Examples are studies on neoliberal governance and the financialization of large cities, which have questioned the extent to which processes of privatization of public space have been accentuated under the aegis of local development (ARANTES, 2021); or the works that analyze how city dwellers, frightened by the increase in



violence and media repercussions encouraged by the “capital of fear” (BAUMAN, 2009), increasingly seek “self-segregation” in search of protection, privileges and distinction (FREY; DUARTE, 2006). These and other processes are linked to the scale and shape of contemporary cities, as well as to the inability and omission of states to develop policies aimed at expanding public spaces, which has repercussions on the dynamics of agency of everyday life in public spaces and patterns of sociability.

The experience of public spaces and the constitution of sociability relations are faced with trends of segregation and privatization. Ultimately, socio-spatial segregation can be identified today as a fundamental characteristic of cities in the Global South (CALDEIRA, 2000; DAMMERT, 2013; DE MATTOS, 1999; 2004; DUHAU, 2001; JANOSCHKA, 2002; RAMÍREZ KURI, 2008; VEIGA, 2005). This mark is one of the colonialities that shape cities on the periphery of capitalism, mirroring economic, racial, social and cultural differences that define societies that, until today, suffer from the remnants of colonialism.

Although in the classic sociological literature several authors have called attention to injustices resulting from urbanization processes, the theme of segregation became the object of sociological concern with the works of the Chicago School⁴, which focused, in their approaches, on ethnic segregation and racial discrimination of black people, migrants and other minorities (BURGESS, 2017; PARK, 1928; STONEQUIST, 1935; WHYTE, 2005; WIRTH, 1997). Later, in France, studies began to focus on inequalities between occupational categories, framing the phenomenon as a direct and indirect consequence of the dynamics of the labor market, with emphasis on the issue of social class (PRÉTECEILLE, 2003). In Latin America and, in particular, in the Brazilian sociological tradition, urban analyzes are also based on the perspective of stratification; but the focus fell on the income dimension and socio-occupational categories, especially when showing how the segmentation of the labor universe, the dynamics of the land market and the State's performance were still determining factors in the persistence of socio-spatial segregation (MARQUES, 2005; RIBEIRO; RIBEIRO, 2013).

Until the 1990s, few studies produced in Brazil addressed the articulation between race and segregation. Possibly, this was due, in the first place, to the influence of Marxism in the

⁴ We must not forget that there was – as there is in every tradition – the erasure of contributions from women and blacks, an expression of racism and androcentrism in social theory (ALATAS; SINHA, 2017). We can cite two examples: the pioneering spirit of W.E.B. Du Bois and the group of black intellectuals and civil rights activists that formed around him at the “Atlanta Laboratory”, focusing on the dynamics of urban racial exclusion (MORRIS, 2015); and the initiatives of contemporaneous thinkers with Robert Park and Du Bois – such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Ellen Gates Starr and others –, who made up the “Hull House”, a group concerned with issues involving housing, migration, social assistance policies etc. (SELTZER; HALDAR, 2015; VALLADARES, 2010).



conformation of Brazilian Urban Sociology, between 1960 and 1980, which centralized the question of class; second, the idealized image of a cordial society built throughout the 20th century, motivated by discourses on racial relations in the country⁵. However, new works have placed the racial issue and other markers at the center of the analysis of segregation (CARVALHO; ARANTES, 2021; FRANÇA, 2015; GARCIA, 2009; ROLNIK, 1989; SILVA, 2006; SILVEIRA; MUNIZ, 2014; TELLES, 2003).

As Bógus (2009) pointed out, the idea of segregation, in a generic definition, refers to a separation between certain groups in the space of societies. This division is the result or reflection of the relationships that are established, historically, from the structure and stratification, norms and cultures in force, to which are added the land tenure model and access to land. Segregation, therefore, concerns the inequality in the appropriation of the territory which, in turn, generates a hierarchical separation between the various population segments that make up the structure of urban space. Therefore, segregation concerns relations of power and domination, often associated with issues of class, race, gender and occupation. After all, segregation is responsible for linking geographic predicates with other cleavages, for example, relating spatial hierarchies (separation of segments in the physical space of the city) and socio-racial hierarchies (which reproduce inequalities in the appropriation of urban land⁶).

Marques (2005) shows that segregation involves at least three processes: radical isolation, inequality of access and homogenizing separation. The first case refers to an extreme dimension of socio-spatial segregation, connoting total isolation, which translates into the formation of “ghettos” or “citadels” (MARCUSE, 1997). While in the ghetto there is an external force that prevents individuals from leaving, in the excluding enclave it is an internal force that prevents the entry of undesirable groups, an increasingly visible reality of contemporary cities that Caldeira (2000) called “cities with walls”. ” or “fortified enclaves”, which refer to areas of leisure, consumption, work and housing protected and monitored by advanced security technologies, restricted and private to the upper classes of the social structure. The self-segregation of elites has increased the separation between groups, imposing an evident racial

⁵ Donald Pierson, for example, a student of Park and an important sociologist in the design of the “UNESCO Project” on race relations in Brazil, in his research in the city of Salvador, in the 1930s, identified the socio-spatial segregation existing between black and white segments, but interpreting it as a “coincidence” between the social and racial dimensions, noting that there would not be, in Bahia, “a purposeful effort to segregate races in order to maintain caste distinctions, as in several parts of the United States” (PIERSON, 1945, p. 73-74).

⁶ Segregation in cities is also manifested in the form of environmental racism (ACSERALD *et al.*, 2004; JESUS, 2020) and “landing racism” (GOMES, 2019), socio-spatial injustices to which racialized groups – that is, non-whites – are systematically subjected, causing their territories, properties and ways of life to suffer disproportionately from spatial determinants of inequality (OLIVEIRA; MANZI, 2020).



divide. Regarding the ghettos⁷, their formation is related to a more radicalized and open process, since it is not an external force - which could be the balance of contingencies in the economic field -, but to institutionalized legal and state devices for the maintenance of hierarchies, such as zoning.

In the case of Brazil, Marques (2005) emphasizes that socio-spatial segregation must be addressed indirectly, using its two other meanings – inequality and separation. On the one hand, the different urban spaces are characterized by differential access to services, infrastructure, equipment, goods, opportunities etc. On the other hand, segregation can be examined from the conformation of different groups in space, a dynamic that produces sub-areas of relative homogeneity, with people from the same class and race segments. The two dimensions coexist in the Brazilian reality, in which areas of socio-racial homogeneity of poverty mirror the precariousness of access to policies, opportunities, capital.

To complicate the analysis of cities on the periphery of global capitalism, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that there is a difference between spatial segregation and social segregation (BÓGUS, 2009), insofar as large socio-racial distances can exist in contexts of geographic proximity. According to Andrade and Silveira (2013), most Brazilian cities live with different levels of segregation. At the macro level, the “center-periphery” pattern is generally maintained, in which geographic distance naturalizes socio-racial distance. However, this model coexists with the presence of areas of popular occupation in areas of greater appreciation or, more recently, in enclaves built in peripheries and suburbs. In this model, although there is physical proximity, the distance is constructed by other markers of difference that are material – such as walls, gates and fences – but, fundamentally, symbolic – skin color, physical appearance, practices etc.

Socio-spatial segregation brings to the fore a dialectic based on the contradictory relationship between the city's social heterogeneity, a striking element of the agglomeration of people in spaces, and the relations of power and domination. This phenomenon impacts urban life in general, but above all specific territories of the various social segments that produce the city, as well as their sociability patterns, their encounters in public spaces, their interaction dynamics, their assemblages, their experiences, and practices. The diverse social realities

⁷ According to Wacquant (2004), the concept of “ghetto” is used mainly in the historiography of the Jewish diaspora and Nazism, as well as in the sociology of the black experience in the 20th century American metropolises and in the anthropology of ethnic marginality in Africa and Eastern Asia. In these approaches, “ghetto” denotes a restricted urban area, with a network of institutions linked to specific segments and a cultural and cognitive constellation made up of values and mentalities. This implies stigmatization that undermines ties of local solidarity and favors the “racialization” of spaces, generating isolation of some groups (WACQUANT, 2001) and the truncation of the space itself and the life opportunities of its members (WACQUANT, 2004, p. 155).



existing in cities in the Global South are marked by these arrangements, which oscillate between the diversity of the urban fabric and its internal contradictions, which comprises not only the dynamics of agents in/by the city, but also the economic processes and cultural, where the inequalities and hierarchies of urban culture have relevant weight. This is an important dialectic for understanding the urban in its various contexts.

Public spaces, sociability patterns and urban cultural practices

Public space is the place where relationships between people and cities are more directly articulated (RAMÍREZ KURI, 2008), revealing forms of organization, resignification and/or disintegration of common life. Therefore, dealing with the production of contemporary space is to reflect on the public space in its various manifestations, which allows us to understand how are constituted the interactions, arrangements, networks, and sociabilities put into practice by its agents, who make, live and transform the city (AGIER, 2015; CARLOS *et al.*, 2014).

According to Joseph (2002), the term public space designates phenomena that are not exactly the same, such as the public sphere and urban public space. According to the French sociologist, there are two more canonical traditions that have thought about public spaces: the European tradition, focused on an understanding associated with urbanity, citizenship and democracy; and the American tradition, linked to the Chicago School's urban ecology studies, concerned with analyzes of the city's spatial structure and urban hierarchy systems.

The European tradition, strongly influenced by the formulations of Jürgen Habermas initially presented in *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (2003), refers to a public sphere that began to take shape in the 18th century, when the constitution of an urban culture was opposed to spaces of power of the court and the church. Such culture was constituted in salons and cafes and, later, took the written press as a medium. The free and public use of reason – an expression taken from Kant by Habermas – would be the constitutive rule of this public space that conforms to an abstract arena of debates. Free and public reason would guarantee the self-regulation of the heterogeneous society that was based on the presupposition of equality between members of the public sphere (HABERMAS, 2003; JOSEPH, 2002). This tradition understood the public space as a sphere or culture of the common and, therefore, as an environment where things can be stated, a locus of discussion and visibility. In other words, it is a place of dispute, controversy, and debate, where conversation is at the heart of the device of civility. This society, which is based on urbanity – and, indeed, on stability and coherence –



, has characteristics that are opposite to the model of monarchical society, tied to hierarchies and dependencies, based on mystique, and closed and interior experience (JOSEPH, 2002).

According to Joseph (2002), the North American tradition, on the other hand, escapes this abstract understanding of dialogic space and descends to the level of the street and concrete space to question its nature, its relationship with everyday and ordinary activities. The emphasis turns to material space, which does not mean simply physical space, but a visual and sound space, full of agents and objects. It is not a space of mutual visibilities built around judgments, but an environment of encounters and displacements, a place with niches, margins, and borders. This approach forces us to think about the cohabitation and co-presence of different populations, but, above all, their competition for space, the dynamics of cooperation and the patterns of socialization that are at stake in urban ecology. In the dynamics of this space, the mobility of people becomes a central phenomenon, as it creates mixtures and spaces for intermediation and negotiation. Urbanity, then, changes its nature and starts to assume the civil capacity to administer and manage class, interethnic, socio-racial and cultural conflicts, that is, conflicts between the most diverse population segments that live in the same territory. This tradition, therefore, focuses on the interaction between different social groups in their everyday uses of urban space.

Thierry Paquot (2009) poses similar questions to Joseph's (2002) regarding the differences between the public sphere and the urban public space. According to his considerations, public space is a singular whose plural – public spaces – does not correspond to it. The first evokes the place of political debate, confrontation of opinions, a form of communication, circulation of ideas and, ultimately, a democratic practice. Formation in the plural, in turn, designates places open to the public, according to the conditions of accessibility and gratuity, regardless of their legal status. Public spaces put people in relationship, at least potentially, since in these spaces they cross, touch, greet, talk, get to know each other or then, avoid each other, ignore each other, attack each other (PAQUOT, 2009). Despite the difference between the terms, the two formations have in common the idea of sharing, relationship, exchange and circulation. They are not equal phenomena and therefore cannot be reduced to one another; but they have a deep articulation, which justifies an analysis that brings the two phenomena to a good term.

This dossier seeks to approach a more fluid image of public space, understood beyond its physical-spatial meaning, encompassing borders and symbolic territories of experiences, coexistences, politics, encounters, and affections. Indeed, it can be treated in two ways: in its ordinary dimension, that is, of the “vital social minimum” related to both everyday details and



in its extraordinary dimension (AGIER, 2011; SIMONE, 2018); and also from mobility and transit, forms of cohabitation and co-presence, in the dynamics of competition in niches and margins (JOSEPH, 2002; FREHSE, 2016).

Public spaces are not given in advance; they are phenomena produced through dynamics that can be of political and cultural, local and translocal, hegemonic and marginal orders. Trying to overcome conceptualization difficulties with a view to developing empirical research, Arantes (2021) considers that urban public spaces involve, in their ideal-typical form, at least four dimensions: a) a *public geography* (they are accessible physical spaces broad, which are not closed a priori to diversity and social exchanges); b) a certain *vitality* (they are effectively used, allowing different uses and expressing a relative social diversity); c) a *diversity* of sociability actions and relationships; and d) a *functionality* as a stage, arena or scene of political movements and cultural practices, when they conform as substrates of mobilization, participation and debate (HARVEY, 2014).

Thus, it is understood that public spaces involve a practical dimension, which articulates the concern of their effective uses, according to the American tradition, but also their contents, according to the European tradition. This allows the concept to be used in new decentered empirical contexts, sometimes very distant from the places where it was originally developed – as in the case of urban spaces in the Global South.

In this sense, we can say that sociability is the concrete expression of the realization of public spaces, in the sense of *rituals* and *practices* (BORDREUIL, 2002), which give meaning to their uses and counter-uses of the city (LEITE, 2002; FORTUNA; LEITE, 2013). The publicizing of life is a process that involves socialization and the public – both the public sphere and urban public spaces –, that is, it refers to a place of communication and action. As highlighted by Paquot (2009) and Carrión (2016), public spaces are relational, insofar as they place people in constant articulation. According to Joseph (1999, p. 22, our translation), “with sociability, the aesthetics of conversation and concerted consensus [associated with the public sphere] are transferred to the street system”, so that public spaces become instruments for dramatizing the practical intersubjectivity and collective assemblages. This perspective breaks with a contemplative vision of urban space, identifying its “interactional ballet” (BORDREUIL, 2002, p. 52), and its public character does not depend solely on the physical space, but on the types of practices, relationships and assemblages that are disputed, constructed and that prevail in these spaces.

It is important to consider that, whether fragmentary or not, generating bonds or conflicts, the interactions that shape sociability express and reconstruct fundamental elements



of the formation of a given society, the social and racial hierarchies and privileges, the forms of appreciation of equality and difference, cultural and social experiences, political demands, as well as elements associated with different conflicts and forms of distinction. The symbolic dimension of public spaces and their uses and counter-uses gain, in this sense, contours that can be stated by the idea of “urban cultural practices” (OLIVEIRA, 2018; 2020). To reflect on such practices is to consider at least two dimensions in an articulated way: a spatial conception of culture and a cultural conception of the city.

The first has to do with assemblages whose arena of manifestation is the urban space, which includes strategies, trajectories and experiences, individual and collective, formal and informal, involved in tensioning the dynamics of different cities. These assemblages constitute forms and processes of organization of subjectivity that people, organizations, collectives, movements and networks articulate, in order to establish affective or politically oriented bonds with urban spaces (CALDEIRA, 2010; PARDUE; OLIVEIRA, 2017; OLIVEIRA, 2018). Since the meaning of these assemblages derives from sociocultural processes that sustain life in contemporary cities, especially in decentered contexts, it is necessary to consider urban space as a place of socio-institutional, physical/spatial and symbolic determinants that people co-construct, daily, as they develop their life trajectories (JOVCHELOVITCH *et al.*, 2020).

This leads us to a more situated understanding – and, precisely because of that, more expanded – of urban culture, which refers to everyday practices that we produce and that produce us, in a concomitant and procedural way, which includes modes of existence, visions of world and patterns of understanding relationships. These relationships give meaning and organize the lives of different population segments, always in response to challenges and changes in living conditions. Considering that they are socially produced and react to specific, contextually conditioned changes, these assemblages have spatial ballasts that imply the way in which sociability patterns and the dynamics of conviviality in public spaces are articulated, including relationships woven in contemporary urban spaces occupied by or denied to marginalized agents – in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, generation, residence, occupation etc.

This leads us to the second dimension of urban cultural practices, which refers to a cultural framework of the city. It is about recognizing that, before a stable and coherent normativity, the city is built through a relationality that involves different agents and geographies, uses and counter-uses of spaces, formal and informal practices of production and reproduction of everyday life, processes of appropriation and reappropriation of territories, forms of self-organization and communalization, conflicts and arrangements linked to the



materialities of life (CASSIÁN-YDE, 2019). In other words, the city is not a mere fiction that regulates contemporary life (ROY, 2009), nor should it be understood as a finished image of metrocentric urbanity (BUNNELL; MARINGANTI, 2010), or else as a desirable and universalizable prototype of the model of *global cities* (SASSEN, 1991; TAYLOR, 2000). The cultural background listed here leads us to scrutinize the city from its zones of intermediation and tension (FORTUNA, 2016; FORTUNA; LEITE, 2013; JACQUES, 2010), from its production processes (LEFEBVRE, 2006), that is to say, as heterogeneous formations that, because they are in constant reformulation, in dispute, are unfinished virtual objects, or rather, because they end up by the creative or destructive power of their agents (SANTOS, 1993).

When thinking of the city as a product of sociocultural and political processes, as a formation that manifests itself from its internal dynamics, we must consider at least two possibilities. On the one hand, the city can constitute the sphere of possibility of existence between different and historical arena of rights and citizenships (HOLSTON, 2013; LEFEBVRE, 2001; MORANGE; SPIRE, 2015; ROSALDO, 2000; STEVENSON, 2003), because, as social, political and cultural fact, condenses open spaces for transformation, for the emergence of the new, for the future (MASSEY, 2008). But, on the other hand, considering that cities are also marked by different regimes of discrimination and violence, they can be the result of local and translocal logics of production and reproduction of inequalities, hierarchies, segregation, colonialities and subalternities.

Thus, when we say that the production of urban space also includes a cultural dimension, we mean that the city is built by people, whose practices and experiences are decisive not only for the generation of feelings of belonging and identification, but, above all, for the composition of sociability patterns and informal strategies of production and reproduction of everyday life. To this extent, an Urban Sociology produced in the Global South must consider these assemblages, as they impact the use, politicization and resignification that contemporary urban spaces have given rise to.

Decentering the Contemporary Urban Space: some contributions

In addition to this introductory article, the dossier “Practices and processes in the production of urban space: decentering perspectives” is composed of seven more items, comprising six unpublished articles and an interview with the Ecuadorian social scientist Fernando Carrión Mena.



The first article, *Territorialized pandemic: everyday life in two neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires*, by María Mercedes Di Virgilio, María Agustina Frisch and Mariano Perelman, from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), proposes a spatially conditioned analysis of social isolation, the quarantine and the progressive reopening in the pandemic context of the city of Buenos Aires. The authors think about COVID-19 from the social practices of the residents of two middle-class neighborhoods – Lugano and San Telmo –, emphasizing the variations that have occurred in the patterns of sociability, mobility, work, leisure and care.

One of the arguments developed in the text is that the domestic universe has taken on an unusual role, becoming a type of “total space” for work, education, care, health, interaction and entertainment. The daily routine, in turn, was no longer systematized around the workplace, being reconfigured in the residential neighborhoods. In this process that feeds back, relationships of conviviality and neighborhood began to play a leading role in the maintenance of urban life, as well as in the practices and patterns of sociability of the residents. In fact, a new dynamic of space production emerged in the pandemic, establishing renewed ways of seeing and experiencing neighborhoods, which also had an impact on the revaluation of public space, such as parks and green areas. Another point highlighted by the authors is that the pandemic generated difficulties associated with the schooling of children, the constant fear of contagion, concern for vulnerable family members and feelings of confinement and anguish. This context produced new ways of maintaining daily life, which are not limited to the economic component: they involve other forms of sociability, re-signification of the domestic space, revaluation of public space, strengthening of social networks, building strong bonds with the neighborhoods and an affective socio-spatial reaccommodation in these urban spaces. This process, still in progress, has generated a new prism through which the city is perceived and lived.

The second article, *Segregated Urban Experiences: housing places, trajectories and personal networks of blacks and whites in São Paulo*, by Danilo França, from Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), highlights the importance of race and place of residence in the conformation of practices and spatially segmented relationships and, therefore, in the generation of varied urban experiences. Based on 28 interviews carried out in three neighborhoods in the metropolis of São Paulo – Itaim Bibi, São Miguel Paulista and Tatuapé –, the author focuses on spatially conditioned relationships between black and white people from the middle and upper classes. The analysis of personal networks leads Danilo França to argue that space configures a factor of homophily, that is, the construction of personal relationships based on similarities of attributes. In the analyzed cases, middle- and upper-class white people



are more racially homophilic than black people from the same social segment, exhibiting characteristics of closure. In contrast, the results show that black people have more open and mixed networks, even though they are mostly made up of relatives. The analysis of urban routes, on the other hand, reveals that, in general, white people are more focused on moving in noble areas than black people. The whitened personal networks and the greater physical frequency in noble areas of the city, combined with the dynamics of residential concentration of whites and blacks in the city, present a framework of reinforced evidence of isolation – spatial, social, racial and of paths and mobility – by part of middle and upper class white people in São Paulo. Thus, considering that black and white people are residentially segregated in the city, their personal networks and the places they frequent are also segregated.

Arguing that socio-spatial segregation has a cleavage between groups, which in turn is established through the overlap between class, race and space, the author concludes that black people are kept at a distance – territorial and social – even when they belong to the same fraction of class than white people. In this sense, racially conditioned inequalities and hierarchies reproduce a disposition of status type (that is, of status groups), in which “rich-whites” are opposed to “poor-blacks”, which gives segregation in contemporary urban space a significant importance for the constitution of barriers that structure racial relations in Brazil.

In the third article, *Can We Talk about Gentrification in Favelas? A case study on urban requalification in Bairro da Paz*, Maria Gabriela Hita and Emilly Mascarenhas Costa, from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), focus on contemporary processes of gentrification in peripheral communities. Based on a case study that has been taking place since 2005, in Bairro da Paz, in Salvador, but focusing on the 2013-2016 period, the authors analyze the implementation of the Casa Legal Program – put into practice by the municipal government in order to to meet demands for land tenure regularization –, to reflect to what extent actions of “requalification” and “revaluation” of urban peripheries are related to gentrification processes, especially regarding initiatives to attract the interests of real estate capital.

The authors' argument is that Bairro da Paz has been going through a discreet and slow process of gentrification, which could result in the reduction of the central area of the neighborhood, with expropriations framed in the justifications of “environmental risks” or “public needs”. However, the neighborhood may undergo changes with regard to the type of internal social composition of people who leave, stay and arrive. These transformations can lead the neighborhood to a gradual process, in the medium and long term, of greater “bourgeoisness”. The authors conclude that the concept of gentrification, although initially thought to frame processes in centralized regions of cities, when operationalized from local



variations and modulations and captured by ethnographic immersions, can help Urban Sociology to account for contemporary transformations produced by public-private initiatives in peripheral spaces, which were previously understood as the key to hygienist and expropriation policies.

In the fourth article, *The New Condition of Rap: from street culture to São Paulo Fashion Week*, Daniela Vieira dos Santos, from the State University of Londrina, focuses on some contemporary processes of social and symbolic legitimation of rap, based on an articulation between rap and fashion, on the one hand, and rap and gastronomy, on the other. Her hypothesis is that, although the hip-hop movement, in its beginnings, emerged as an artistic and political manifestation of black people who brought the issue of territory and place of origin as fundamental, today, rap is not associated only with “street culture”. As it starts to detach itself from its enunciation space, reaching a wider audience, it starts to articulate with the commercial logics of the phonographic market, being treated in the key of the “musical genre”. Thus, to understand the *new condition of rap*, it is important to observe the implications of the incursion of the hip-hop movement into spaces not necessarily limited to the so-called “peripheral culture” or “street culture”.

However, the author argues that this new social and symbolic place in the Brazilian context has allowed not only the bifurcation between the terms “musical genre” versus “peripheral culture”, but a process of legitimation in which rap has been formalized beyond the of “musical genre”, gaining recognition in more “ennobled” spaces in the city. Analyzing the debut of LAB Fantasma at São Paulo Fashion Week, in 2016, and the gastronomic project of Rap Burger, also in São Paulo, Daniela Vieira dos Santos examines how representations linked to the hip-hop movement and, more specifically, to rap end up expanding: on the one hand, making both “gender” and “culture” supplant their territories of origin; on the other, making the periphery itself “stylize” as a brand. However, it is not just a commercial brand, but also a brand that opens up possibilities of overcoming some historically constructed racial hierarchies, of submission of black people within a narrative of defeats, exploitation and violence.

In the fifth article, *Cultural Appropriations and Re-appropriations in Salvador-BA: on urban spectacularization and the dialectics of malandragem*, Ewerthon Clauber de Jesus Vieira, from the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), faces ambiguous dimensions of the process of production of urban space. In the context of FIFA's sporting mega-events (2013-2014), in Salvador, the author analyzes the relationships between logic of space production and their effects on the ways in which people experience, use and stress the city. Vieira starts from an analytical typology on the “practices of cultural appropriation and reappropriation”, to



understand the conflicts that occurred during the preparation and realization of mega-events in the Bahian capital. Among the cases analyzed, it is worth mentioning the actions of the *Baianas do Acarajé* in the face of the public authorities' hesitation in issuing the authorization for the commercial exercise of their crafts, the political-cultural and recreational organization of the *Afro Tambores do Mundo* Bloc, as well as the carnival groups *Pipoca Indignada e Rodante*, and the dynamics of informal sellers and “non-consumer” agents in consumption spaces.

Based on the analytical potential of these cases, the author focuses on the relationship between cultural appropriation and reappropriation of space, mobilizing Antonio Candido's notion of “malandragem dialectic”. The objective is to understand the production of the city as a result of antagonistic processes, that is, from the oscillating and residual strategies put into practice by the various agents that dispute the urban, moving between the poles of order and disorder, domination and resistance, correspondence and dissent. The experience of hosting the Confederations Cup, in 2013, and the World Cup, in 2014, fostered the fraying of the urban and cultural commodification of Salvador, mainly through a normative tendency to mobilize supposed particularities as forms of “objectification of local culture” – for example, enhancing consumer images of the city for tourism promotion purposes. In this context, resistances were not managed in the form of collective organizations, but as “marginal survivals”, isolated and often individualized tactics that did not create the necessary conditions for confronting neoliberal urban planning and requalification policies. On the contrary, the empirical cases showed a hostile horizon of “save yourself if you can”, which, according to the author, has become an idealized logic of spectacle *entrepreneurship*.

In the sixth article, *Spatial Fractures: toponymy as a typology of social domination*, Rafael Alves Orsi, from the Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), Rodrigo Alberto Toledo, from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), and Murilo Petito Cavalcanti, from the Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), comparatively analyze the symbology and social burden present in the names of housing projects from CDHU and from the “Minha Casa Minha Vida” Program, on the one hand, and condominium areas in the São Paulo cities of Araraquara and Taubaté, on the other. The objective of this work is to examine the extent to which housing, articulated from territories scrutinized into neighborhoods, lays bare the asymmetries of political-social power and spatial segregation.

It is an important contribution to critical studies on the city. Escaping from a certain tendency of the hegemonic urban social theory of privileging metropolitan regions and “global cities”, the authors focus on two medium-sized São Paulo municipalities in the light of the symbology of urban space through toponymy, as an outline of the rigid, traditional and



excluding structure of cities. The argument is that the urban spaces of the municipalities, having toponymy as a reference and classification, have the leading role of dominant classes exercising the power of naming space and projecting its meanings. This symbolic asymmetry, a mirror of the urban segregation of Brazilian cities, denotes subtle forms of domination and maintenance of both material and immaterial inequalities.

Finally, the dossier features an interview with Fernando Carrión Mena, from the Department of Political Studies at FLACSO (Ecuador), conducted by Carlos Andrés Diaz Mosquera, from the Federal University of Bahia. Fernando Carrión Mena is currently president of the *Organización Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Centros Históricos* (OLACCHI) and one of the leading names in contemporary research on the revitalization of Latin American historic centers.

In the conversation, Diaz Mosquera and Carrión Mena walk through various works by the interviewee, facing issues such as the conflictive dynamics that involve disputes in the historic centers of different Latin American cities, the characteristics of public-private management implemented in these spaces, the validity of the application from the concept of “gentrification” to thinking about contemporary transformations, the tendency towards homogenization of urban spaces that emerge as a result of the application of Euro-North American theories and policies of city planning and management, etc. In the end, the Ecuadorian intellectual still discusses more recent works, which focus on the migratory waves in Latin America, the impacts of COVID-19 on urban policies, the contemporary protests against material and immaterial patrimonies that honor characters linked to colonization - conquerors, pioneers, slaveholders –, in addition to territorial conflicts (urban and rural) that emerge from the widening of inequalities in several Latin American cities.

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