EDITORIAL: THE "POLY-PERIPHERY" AND THE "PERIPHERAL TURN" IN URBAN STUDIES

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This dossiê addresses a theme that will seem very familiar to readers of the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Urbanos e Regionais*. 'Urban periphery' has been a core category in Brazilian urban studies since at least the 1970s. However, the familiarity of this label conceals considerable ambiguity regarding what those who use the term – whether urban scholars or subjects out in the world – actually mean by it. Of course, a degree of ambiguity is inherent to any scientific or social category. However, it would seem that use of the term 'urban periphery' has become more ambiguous since the turn of the century. On one hand, spaces that seemed to clearly belong to this category have undergone significant urban, social and institutional transformations. At the same time, voices coming from – and that identify themselves with – the urban peripheries increasingly participate in these academic debates from which they were traditional excluded, with the effect of destabilizing old categorical and epistemological certainties (D'Andrea, 2022).

One aspect of these changes is captured in the argument that urban peripheries have become more "heterogeneous", whether in terms of their urban characteristics or in the social characteristics of those who inhabit them. Such analyses are expressed in the growing tendency to refer to "peripheries in the plural" (Ramos et al., 2023; Cunha; Feltran, 2013, p. 7), rather than as a single, relatively homogeneous category. Working from the Mexican context (in many ways comparable to the Brazilian), and inspired by an evocative short story by Jorge Luís Borges (1995), Lindón and Mendoza refer to the periphery as '*Alephian*', or "the place that contains all places" (2015, p. 39). In this dossiê, we use the term "poly-periphery" to capture this idea of

plurality and of growing heterogeneity in urban peripheries and interrogate how far these claims hold up.

The term "poly-periphery" was initially proposed by Hopf (1999) in a study of Russian regional geopolitics. One of the objectives of this special issue is precisely to examine its usefulness for urban studies, considering that it has been used in recent works. Considering the concept of "polycentrality" is often used to refer to the growing complexity of the center-periphery model in urban analyses, it is argued that it makes no sense to continue conceiving the periphery as singular, univocal and homogeneous (Morcuende; Legroux, in press). As such, in addition to (i) the plurality of peripheries, which identifies different types of peripheral territories (Ramos et al., 2023), the idea of polyperiphery also attempts to account for, among others: (ii) the diversity of configurations, conditions and situations within the same type of peripheral territory (between one favela and another, for example); iii) the existence of a mosaic of built environments, types of habitat, daily practices and ways of life, culture, etc., in each peripheral territory; iv) the differences in terms of the presence of the State, solidarity and support networks, political, social and cultural organization between one peripheral territory and another (Legroux; Sposito, in press).

At the same time, we note the apparent paradox that, just as urban peripheries have purportedly become more heterogeneous, the labels of "periphery" and "peripheral" have been increasingly assumed as powerful identity markers by movements, collectives and individuals coming from these territories. Indeed, the 'periphery' has served as a basis for the formulation of new forms of artistic expression, social critique and political claim-making that have reverberated across wider society and penetrated at least some institutions from which these voices have traditionally been excluded. Xuefei Ren (2021) coined the term "peripheral turn" to refer to the growing interest of urban scholars internationally in (re)theorizing cities from the peripheries. We invoke the term here, adapting it to current Brazilian realities, where the demands of "peripheral subjects" (D'Andrea, 2022) to participate in and lead these debates, with the construction of new peripheral epistemologies, are growing ever louder.

The special issue, then, critically addresses these two phenomena – the "poly-periphery" and the "peripheral turn" – together, examining their respective dynamics, but also the tensions and possible interconnections between them.

1. From homogeneous to heterogeneous peripheries: a new orthodoxy?

As noted by D'Andrea (this issue), it has become something of a new orthodoxy in recent years to assert that the peripheries are "heterogeneous" and "plural".

However, this trend needs to be considered in light of the context from which it arose. We argue that it emerged, in part, as a more positive narrative that sought to push back against dominant, homogenizing and largely negative portrayals of popular urban territories.

Following Brazil's redemocratization, in which peripheral social movements and neighborhood associations had played an important role, the 1990s brought a degree of disappointment with the concrete results of democracy in these territories. While the "perverse confluence" (Dagnino, 2004) of democracy and neoliberalism brought about moderate reductions in extreme poverty, inequality and unemployment persisted at extremely high levels and criminal and police exploded across Brazil's major cities. Public representations – in newspapers, music, cinema, and, in less sensationalistic ways, the urban academic literature – emphasized that popular territories were still predominantly poor, more violent than ever, and subject to increasingly intense forms of segregation from wealthy territories (Caldeira, 2000; Lopes de Souza, 2000). Referring to the urban impacts of neoliberalism elsewhere, many scholars emphasized poverty and homogeneity in popular urban territories, whether in Mike Davis' (2006) description of informal urban growth in the global South as creating a "planet of slums", or Loïc Wacquant's (2008) claims of the emergence of a new form of "advanced marginality" across Europe and the Americas.

Seen in this context, the shift to emphasizing heterogeneity in Brazil's urban peripheries since the early 2010s may be partly understood as a push back against the rather negative and often homogenizing characterizations life that prevailed at the turn of the century. In this way, it may be regarded as part of a far older dynamic in the literature on Latin American cities – and their popular territories – characterized by extreme oscillations between pessimistic and optimistic readings (Rodgers; Beall; Kanbur, 2012).

In Brazil, the discourse of heterogeneity is also the result of concrete conjunctural shifts. By the start of the second decade of the century, economic growth, policies of social and economic inclusion, and urban interventions implemented by successive Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT) governments from 2003 were leaving their mark on Brazilian cities. In the urban peripheries, rising incomes manifested in increasing consumption, while public services expanded unevenly, but visibly. At the same, peripheral landscapes were transformed by major federal infrastructural programmes like the Growth Acceleration Programme (*Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento*, PAC) and housing programmes, like My House My Life (*Programa Minha Casa Minha Vida*, PMCMV), in addition to countless state and municipal programmes across the country, and private investment. Student

grants and affirmative action quotas allowed a still relatively small, but historically unprecedented proportion of the population of these areas to access higher education for the first time.

However, these changes did not represent a total break with the past, either in terms of the social and urban conditions of urban peripheries or in public representations of them. Unlike some of the more celebratory discourse around the emergence of a so-called "new middle class" (Neri, 2012), older, more negative representations of urban peripheries always persisted and competed with emerging, more positive narratives. As described by Feltran (2014), the peripheries came to be represented in public discourse simultaneously through a positive figuration of the upward social mobility of a segment of the urban poor, and a more negative one that continued to identify the peripheries as the main source of an ever-growing problem of "urban violence" in Brazil.

Although rejecting such dualistic representations, urban scholars also came to emphasize heterogeneity, plurality and complexity within and between urban peripheries, in this way, constructing what we refer to here as the idea of a "poly-periphery". A key overarching theme of such analysis is the observation that important social differences and inequalities in Brazilian cities today not only separate wealthy central areas from poor peripheries, but now also cut through the peripheries themselves. However, as we shall see, scholars who invoke "heterogeneity" understand it – and, indeed, the category of "periphery" itself – in very different ways, complicating the task of properly evaluating these claims.

2. Defining urban periphery and heterogeneity

To evaluate claims surrounding the emergence of a "poly-periphery", it is first necessary to define some key terms. This is a more complex task than it may seem. Before the question of what criteria should be included in a definition of "heterogeneity", it is first necessary to define "periphery" itself. Readers will note that up to now we have referred to both "urban peripheries" and "popular territories", but it is important to clarify that these are not equivalent, nor interchangeable, terms. The second refers to urban territories inhabited by the popular classes, which may be found in any part of the city. The former, by contrast, implies a "geometric" position – ie. an outer circumference in relation to a core (Hiernaux; Lindón, 2004) – and does not, at least explicitly, designate a particular social character.

However, historical urbanization processes and the cultural associations that emerged around them in Brazil (and Latin America more widely) lead many to view the label of "urban periphery" as necessarily a particular type of "popular

territory". One's definition of the "urban periphery", then, may strongly shape their perceptions of heterogeneity. A purely "geometric" definition can encompass any degree of heterogeneity, as social character is external to the definition. A definition that assumes that the urban periphery is necessarily "popular" can only tolerate a certain degree of heterogeneity, because, if a particular territory exhibited a different social character, it would have to be reclassified. Here, we adopt a historically contingent definition, which recognizes that the urban periphery assumed a particular content in the Latin American context (and in other global contexts) but is also subject to historical change.

It is no coincidence that "urban periphery" has come to be seen as having an inherently popular character in the Latin American context (Hiernaux; Lindón, 2004). From at least mid-twentieth century onwards, the regions cities tended to expand outwards via the irregular subdivision or occupation of land and autoconstruction of housing by poor populations unable to afford rents, let alone the purchase of a home, in the legal market in more central areas. Later, this social character in peripheries was reinforced via the construction of state subsidized social housing. While a significant proportion of the poor populations of these cities have always lived in *cortiços* (tenements), favelas, and other types of housing in central areas, via the process of peripheral urbanization the majority of the urban poor settled in the peripheries and the urban peripheries became predominantly poor. The influence of dependency theory helped to cement the perception of this inherently "popular" character of the periphery (*ibid.*), as these areas came to be seen as the urban expression of Latin America's peripheral position in the global capitalist economy, that is, as the space where its mass reserve army of labor was socially reproduced under conditions of "urban spoliation" (Kowarick, 1979).

Defining the urban periphery as a particular type of popular territory does not imply fixity and homogeneity – indeed, these areas are often characterized by particularly rapid change. That is to say, the basic dynamics of urban growth and long-term shifts in urban living conditions already generate change and heterogeneity in urban peripheries. Given the general tendency for cities to grow outwards, spaces that were in the distant periphery thirty or forty years ago are today located in a relatively more central location (in the geometric sense) in relation to the city as a whole. Of course, geometric location is not the only factor that determines urban conditions – factors like access to transport, state and private investment, and the enduring legacies of urbanization on the built environment and social character of different territories may undermine or intensify locational advantages and disadvantages. Nonetheless, the outward expansion of the city tends to create heterogeneity via the mechanism of locational differentiation between different peripheral neighborhoods.

Heterogeneity also emerges through the tendency for neighborhoods to become more "consolidated" over time, thanks to the piecemeal work of their residents to improve their homes, establish small-scale services and commercial activities, and through the gradual expansion of state provision of at least basic urban infrastructure and services (Caldeira, 2017). All of this is to say that peripheries are, in one sense, "heterogeneous" in their built form and social character merely on the basis of locational differences and temporal change. Such a view would be widely accepted by urban researchers, but it falls short of the idea of "poly-periphery" as explored here.

3. The historic emergence of the "poly-periphery"

The notion of a poly-periphery makes a broader claim, which is that processes associated with historic shifts in the production of space, social life and everyday practices in cities have produced more significant social and spatial variations, inequalities and divisions within urban peripheries. For example, the aforementioned observations of upward social mobility in peripheries during the 2000s and 2010s are not linked to general tendencies of urban growth, but rather to social and institutional changes associated with a particular historical conjuncture. Several articles in the special issue identify historic transformations in the social life of urban peripheries. An interesting phenomenon, often missed in discussions of the physical consolidation of peripheries, is discussed by Filippi Filho and Rossetto (this volume). Using historical imagery from Google StreetView, they demonstrate how security devices have become increasingly prevalent in popular peripheral neighborhoods in the western region of the São Paulo Metropolitan Area. This not only shows important transformations to the built environment but also implies a shift in the way these areas are experienced by many of their own residents, alongside a diffusion of practices of urban fortification in popular territories, traditionally associated with upper- and middle-class neighborhoods.

In the same vein, exploring the issue of food consumption and commercial infrastructure and services, Tavares, Nagib and Wojciechowski (this volume) also identify a transformation of the built environment via the proliferation and diversification of the commercial and service sectors linked to food consumption in the peripheries. Mobilizing quantitative data, they compare a peripheral to a more central (and wealthier) district in the city of São Paulo, concluding that, despite the expansion and diversification of consumer infrastructure in the peripheries, there are still glaring inequalities between the two districts in access to a varied and healthy diet. However, based on interviews with residents, they also note differences in food consumption within the peripheral district itself, based on factors like the income, location and mobility conditions of different residents.

Two other papers in the special issue address another important process: the precaritization of the world of work and the consolidation of range of practices and strategies geared towards survival and/or social reproduction through "hustling" (*viração*) and unsalaried work. In this context, Canettieri (this issue) identifies a diversification of strategies of social reproduction in a peripheral neighborhood in Belo Horizonte. These strategies vary between – and often combine – salaried work, diverse forms of micro-entrepreneurship and odd jobs, unpaid female labor, rentierism via the letting of rooms and studio flats in autoconstructed homes, as well as participation in illegal markets.

Costa and Iamamomoto (this issue) also explore changes to the world of work, focusing on the rise of "entrepreneurial" discourses and projects among a segment of young people in the South Zone of São Paulo. They observe how some more highly educated peripheral youth have abandoned the "utopia" of registered formal employment, which structured the world of many of their parents, and instead seek the "utopia of autonomy" – oriented towards cultural and intellectual production through micro-entrepreneurship, albeit under broader structural conditions that make such autonomy difficult to achieve in practice. These aspirations distinguish these subjects from a partisan middle-class left, but also from many of their neighbors in the peripheries. Like Canettieri then, Costa and Iamamoto demonstrate how social and economic changes that have tended to precaritize and fragment the working lives of the popular classes have produced increasingly heterogeneous strategies, lifestyles and even subjectivities in the urban peripheries.

Calil and Góes (this issue), meanwhile, take the precaritization of social life as a starting point to argue that the notion of "urban periphery" need not refer to the "geometric" periphery at all. Analysing territories of concentrated crack cocaine use in São Paulo and Bogotá, they argue that "content" and "codes" traditionally associated with the peripheries have become entrenched in historic central areas of these two large metropolises. The notion of "hyper-periphery in the centre" draws attention to the transitoriness and mutability of life among the most marginalized segments of the urban poor, which contributes to a rupture of the centre-periphery structure of urban segregation. While some might question this use of "periphery" completely detached from a spatial referent, Calil and Góes' approach demonstrates the strength of the historical convergence of "periphery" and diverse structural and cultural features associated with the popular classes in Latin America, as well as the socially and spatially destabilizing impacts of more recent transformations.

The precaritization of work and social reproduction in the urban peripheries also draws our draws attention to the highly gendered and racialized inequalities

that result from these processes. Of course, studies of urban peripheries have long identified the clearly racialized nature of urban segregation patterns and been attentive to gendered household divisions of labor within peripheral households. However, the adoption of consciously "feminist and decolonial" approaches, like that proposed by Rovere (this issue), have center and deepen the analysis of these dimensions of inequality. In her study of a social housing project in the town of Santa Cruz do Sul in Rio Grande do Sul, Rovere focuses on the burdens and constraints placed on the bodies of predominantly black women in this context, but also their capacity for "(re)existence" through networks of mutual support. This example highlights a point made by D'Andrea (this issue), that the periphery has always been heterogeneous – in terms of race, gender, histories of migration, and forms of work, social reproduction and local organization. The heterogeneity emphasized by researchers today is at least partly the product of the very conceptual frameworks used, which render this heterogeneity more visible to them.

The discussion so far is consistent with an understanding of peripheries as popular territories that are subject to continual urban, social and cultural transformation and exhibit significant and, in some respects, growing heterogeneity. However, other researchers expand their focus to encompass territories that are far from "popular". It is worth noting here that the historic convergence in Latin America between the popular classes and the "geometric" periphery is contingent, rather than necessary, and not reflected in other global contexts. An obvious counter example is Anglophone North America, where mid-twentieth century suburbanization was initially primarily a middle-class phenomenon. Indeed, growing recent interest in peripheries beyond Latin America, in Asia (Ren, 2021), Africa (Mabin; Butcher; Bloch, 2013) as well as the global North (eg. Keil, 2017), generally does not make any assumption of an original "popular" character of peripheral urbanization. Rather, urban peripheries tend to be understood as ambiguous spaces characterised by heterogeneous (including rural) land uses and populations and identities still in formation. In one sense then, Ren's (2021) "peripheral" turn is concerned with exploring these complex urbanization processes at the geometric periphery and the diverse actors, projects and property regimes that they encompass.

In Brazil, some recent shifts in the patterns of peripheral urbanization, which resemble these processes, have been interpreted as a producing rupture to an established centre-periphery structure. The spread of horizontal elite and middle-class condominiums in peripheral areas was a major theme of analyses 1990s and 2000s (eg. Caldeira, 2000; Lopes de Souza, 2000) and has recently been further researched and theorized under the framework of "socio-spatial fragmentation"

(Sposito; Sposito, 2020). In this special issue, Amorim et al. adopt this approach in their analysis of transformations in the cities of Mossoró (Rio Grande do Norte) and Sobral (Ceará), two intermediate cities in Brazil's semi-arid region. They observe that the peripheries of both cities have been subject to heterogeneous processes, including the development of highly segregated, high-end gated condominiums, but also the construction of state-subsidized social housing projects and the persistence and expansion of irregular subdivisions and favelas. Miranda Neto et al. (this issue) identify similar transformations at the "heterogeneous edges" of four cities in the Amazonian state of Pará – the Belém Metropolitan Area, Castanhal, Marabá and Altamira. What becomes clear in both texts is that the greater geometric proximity between social classes in these peripheries of varied "textures" (Amorin et al., this volume) does not translate into greater coexistence between them, as physical and social barriers reinforce a fragmentation of spatial practices – a point also demonstrated visually by Filippi Filho and Rosetto (in this volume) in the western sub-region of the São Paulo Metropolitan Area.

The concept of "centrality", which appears in the analyses of both Amorim et al. (this issue) and Miranda Neto et al. (this issue), takes centre stage in the article by Ueda et al. (this issue), whose study explores transformations, both concrete and subjective, in the intermediate city of Ribeirão Preto (SP). Specifically, they identify the emergence of a new centrality, the "Cidade Norte" (North City), with the implementation of major urban commercial and residential developments in the city's historically peripheralized North Zone. The authors find that long-term residents of these areas reproduce discourses that distance it from its historic identity as an urban periphery and displace this stigma onto more distant areas – a process that points to a dialectic between urban and subjective transformations and also to the success of the neoliberal "*dispositif*" that produced this discursive and subjective transformation. It is interesting to note that is in intermediate cities, whether in the interior of São Paulo state, the semi-arid northeast or the Paraense Amazon, that urban transformation and socio-spatial fragmentation are identified as most disruptive to traditional understandings of the periphery as a popular space.

By contrast, working from the context of the city of São Paulo, an important voice in debates on peripheries and peripheral subjectivities, Tiaraju D'Andrea (this issue) pushes back against arguments that, in his words, "seek to invalidate the periphery as an explanatory category of the urban". These arguments include some of those already discussed, such as the impacts of state and private investment, growing heterogeneity, socio-spatial fragmentation, and the presence of popular classes in other urban territories. D'Andrea offers an important corrective to

over-zealous approaches that seem ready to write the obituary of the centre-periphery model and, with it, of the urban peripheries as the primary space of urban social reproduction of the popular classes. He also identifies important dynamics that tend to preserve broad centre-periphery patterns of spatial segregation in São Paulo and many other Latin American cities.

In light of D'Andrea's incisive critique, it should be noted that many analyses of growing spatial and social heterogeneity sit quite comfortably with a view of general continuity of the overarching spatial structure of inequality in Brazilian cities. In the case of those that identify more radical ruptures, such as the growth of elite habitats in the peripheries, these are generally not sufficient in scale (at least in their residential populations, if not the extensive spaces they occupy) to fundamentally alter this broad pattern (Mendonça; Andrade; Diniz, 2019). As such, "socio-spatial fragmentation" should be understood as a process that doesn't replace the center-periphery model, but, rather, overlays it, interacts with it, and complexifies it. As previously noted, the historic convergence between urban periphery and the social reproduction of the popular classes is contingent rather than necessary and is therefore subject to historical change. While recent changes that weaken the center-periphery structure are more visible in some cities than others – as in the case of the intermediate cities mentioned above –, the urban periphery continues to be an essential explanatory category of the urban and certainly will remain so long into the future.

4. The "peripheral turn": by whom, to what?

What is perhaps at stake in D'Andrea's critique, as much as in definitions of "urban periphery", is the capacity of those who identify – and are identified – with this category to be able to create, critique, organize and make political demands based on their own experiences. In other words, what is at stake is the capacity to produce an epistemology of the periphery, from it, for it, and for the world.

This is clear, for example, in Pereira's article (this issue), in which the very process of urbanization of the city of São Paulo, and the periphery as one of its products, are central to artistic forms of production. The periphery is, firstly, the locus for theatrical performances, held in the streets and alleyways of Jardim Pantanal, on the banks of the Tietê River surrounding it, and on commuter trains where "actor/residents" share journey, scenery and scene with passengers heading out to the city's far eastern periphery. But, more than this, urban knowledge and experience from the periphery form part of a legitimate and counter-hegemonic episteme of artistic production, action and intervention conceived and represented by itself, thus embodying a "peripheral turn".

Santos and Whitaker (this issue) adopt an ethnographic approach, accompanying people as they travel between home and work, starting their journeys from two other neighborhoods in the eastern periphery of the city of São Paulo. In a kind of rhythmanalysis in motion, through the windows of metro trains or buses, this article fits into the idea of a "peripheral turn" in two important ways. Firstly, one of the authors of the text identifies herself as a "peripheral researcher", and is recognized as such by her interlocutors, shaping both the conduct of the research and the analysis and the themes ultimately explored. Second, the reader's attention is strongly drawn to the narratives of peripheral subjects themselves and the fact that they express their experiences and opinions not only about their peripheral urban condition, but about the city as a whole.

Sales (this issue), in a different way, also explores identities and imaginaries that serve to reposition and question characteristics directly and indirectly attributed not only to those who live in peripheral territories, but also to what they produce. Thus, his analysis of contemporary music in Salvador engages not only experiences but affects that are crucial to the construction of positive subjectivities. His historical analysis of song lyrics emerging from the popular territories of Salvador highlights a point also made by D'Andrea (this issue): that intellectual production and self-affirmation of peripheral subjects were, until very recently, almost entirely realized through artistic production and political action, not academic work. The fact that the author draws inspiration from a key expression from the work of Conceição Evaristo (2018) – "escrevivência" (writing-from-experience) – reinforces the sense of a "peripheral turn", in basing his reflections on the thought of a black, originally non-academic woman and an important exponent of contemporary peripheral literature.

As such, the "peripheral turn" does not only interpret and reinterpret territories, environments and experiences, it questions and contests the very production of urban space grounded in alternative perspectives to those that underpin hegemonic Western forms of urban planning. This production also results from collective experiences that are less "material" than production, *stricto sensu*, and can lead to a distinct "favela urbanism", as suggested by Cruz Junior et al. (in this volume) in their paper focused on the Maré favela complex in Rio de Janeiro.

Similarly, the article by Vargas et al. (this issue) adopts a decolonial stance, placing itself clearly within the "peripheral turn" by presenting Participatory Action Research in which the production of data about the peripheral territory in question is carried out by the inhabitants themselves, in partnership with researcher-subjects, from the inside out. In the Guarani Kaiowá occupation studied, located in Contagem (Minas Gerais), processes of participatory mapping and the

identification, by residents, of the main problems to be solved aim precisely at the internal production of data, in order to then be able to formulate concrete demands of the public authorities, in this case, with a focus on basic sanitation, in areas at risk of flooding, and on the problem of solid waste production.

These two articles, together with Rovere's contribution (this issue) on the experience of women in a housing complex in a small city in the South of Brazil, offer examples of alternative urban planning and data collection practices that problematize and contest hegemonic Western processes, thus, in our view, embodying an interesting dimension of the "peripheral turn".

The widely recognised heterogeneity of the peripheries, as previously discussed, can also be seen in the myriad of agents involved in the material production of peripheral urban space, as identified by Gonçalves and Rizek (this issue). In light of the variety of peripheral territories, whether recently established or consolidated favelas, spontaneous or coordinated occupations, the authors call for rigor in analysis of form, content, process, repertoires and naming, highlighting the risk that an uncritical use of categories may conceal conflicts, dilute processes, undermine efforts, confuse residents and technicians, and obliterate achievements and demands, among other important political implications. The "peripheral turn" thus also implies rigor with regard to language and close attention to native categories, which often capture the fluidity and diversity of actually existing processes and territories in urban peripheries better than the taxonomies and conceptual tools produced within universities.

5. Expanding the debate – beyond Brazil and beyond the university

Arising from our view of the importance of establishing dialogue with other perspectives, this special issue also includes a series of shorter articles written by international experts and by representatives of non-academic institutions. Among these are texts written by researchers who have made important contributions to debates on urban peripheries in other regions of the global South. Thus, this section includes the contributions of Xuefei Ren (this issue) on China, Alan Mabin (this issue) on Africa, and Alícia Lindón (this issue) on Mexico. Together, they shed light on current debates in these varied contexts, revealing aspects that complement, but also contrast with Brazilian debates. In this way, they demonstrate the potential benefits of further deepening and internationalizing debates on urban peripheries via South-South dialogue. Related to this, Matthew Richmond (this issue) contributes a review of a classic work of Brazilian urban sociology, the book *Urban Spoliation* by Lúcio Kowarick, which was recently published in English for the first time. He considers it light of current conditions

in Brazil, while also highlighting the importance of this translation for the Anglophone world as a way of enhancing knowledge of Brazilian realities and of Brazil's distinct tradition of critical urban theory.

Our dialogue extends to authors from two key non-academic Brazilian institutions, who contribute to the debates developed in the other articles, but who also, in our view, embody some of the changes identified in this special issue. Letícia de Carvalho Giannella and Larissa Souza Catalá (this issue) of the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, IBGE) discuss the historical evolution of and criteria used to determine the nomenclature of Brazilian popular territories. They focus on the recent change from "subnormal agglomerations" to "favelas and urban communities" – a decision taken after a broad process of consultation with civil society. Their detailed systematization of the temporal evolution and context of these changes constitutes interesting and important material that will be of great interest to researchers. Guilherme Simões, the first Secretary of the *Secretaria Nacional de Periferias* (National Secretariat for Peripheries, SNP), linked to the Ministry of Cities, and Josué Medeiros, emphasize the unprecedented nature of the SNP within Brazil's federal government, as well as providing insights into its functions, activities and achievements. This pioneering spirit is, in our view, emblematic of how institutions themselves can "turn" to the periphery.

We hope the debates and reflections presented here offer new interpretations and approaches and may be generative for future debates. All that remains is to wish you an enjoyable read!

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