

Presentation

Challenges from Peripheries

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Academic research on urban peripheries is not a recent trend. Theses and publications on the theme have existed since the 1940s.

These urban peripheries have experienced substantial changes (or ruptures) as a result of specific national processes of industrialization, immigration and migration, and the collapse of some cultures around the big cities, making way for an intense expansion of the railroad network.

This dossier focuses attention on an object of study constructed by anthropologists, along with experts from other areas of knowledge such as sociology and geography, setting out from the transformations produced by these variables.

In this sense it aims to contribute to the relatively new interest in so-called peripheral phenomena, a theme that has come to prominence in the recent anthropological literature, which, while not yet reaching the volume of research observable on other more traditional topics, already possesses some exemplary works.

On this point, it is worth noting the profile of the responses to the call for papers made by Vibrant, an interesting sign of the range of topics opened up by the term ‘periphery.’

The articles received can be grouped along the following thematic axes, listed in order of relative size. In order to delineate the subject matter of the articles more precisely, we used the keywords suggested by the authors as filter terms. These articles reflect interfaces that add further complexity to the shifting object that academics have been developing in response to the social and scientific challenges faced by contemporary Brazilian society and academia.

Axis 1: Public Security, Crime, Violence (35% of received articles).

Keywords: religion, security, police, community policing, drug trafficking, memory, politics, kinship, violence, militias, security, residents associations, daily life, 'favelas' (shanty town), pacification, stigma, identity, poverty.

Axis 2: Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation (20%)

Keywords: gender, sexuality, sex, homoerotic, consumption, marriage, social and spatial negotiation, social projects (social action), transvestites, cities, borders, urbanity.

Axis 3: Leisure, Artistic Expressions, Cultural Consumption (20%)

Keywords: lambadão, production, flow, consumption, piracy, graffiti and the pacification process, state, industry and land management, urban theory, city, soirées, mobility, community empowerment.

Axis 4: Urbanization, Management, Relations with the Public Power (15%)

Keywords: housing estate, urban planning, governability, public policies, Minha Casa Minha Vida, governance (administration), morality, middle classes, politics and local associativism.

Axis 5: Rural-Urban, Migration (5%)

Keywords: movement, periphery, farm, rural-urban flow.

Axis 6: Generation, Youth (5%)

Keywords: youth, politics, generational relationships.

This is not the space to analyse these prevalences in more detail, which in principle would also demand a close examination of the sampling itself. Readers of this journal, most of whom are social science experts, will be able to perform this task themselves if they judge necessary. It does serve, however, as an initial reminder of the structure of this dossier.

We shall explore these thematic preferences, and the prevalence of each, at the end of the second volume.

The title of the dossier was particularly open and neither pre-empted the object of study, nor meant that earlier approaches to the issue of 'urban peripheries' were allowed to determine a single analytical and *native* category. Instead, this format enabled us to accept the work of social scientists who identify themselves with the theme in general.

The articles collected in this dossier provide a wide range of approaches, objects of study and ways of discussing 'urban peripheries.' Hence, beyond the contributions offered by each text to our comprehension of the set of problems under study and to the thematic axes listed above, the cohesion of the dossier derives primarily from its diversity. It can be taken as a non-exhaustive roadmap to contemporary urban studies that address the phenomena related to 'the periphery' in diverse ways.

For the above reasons, then, the present dossier adds to previous efforts made in this direction (see, for example, Feltran and Cunha, 2013) and contributes by introducing readers to contemporary empirical studies and comprehensive surveys of the current ways of discussing 'the periphery' – a term that refers to contents, phenomena and approaches that are increasingly diverse, polysemic and plural. This trend follows the path already traced by studies of 'urban peripheries,' although it presents analytical bifurcations that lead to a 'thickening' of the term where it is possible to analyse, among other topics: complex circuits, markets and orders; places inhabited by a diversity of actors and with multiple and solid urbanities; new forms of demands and complaints in the public space; forms of management and control devices; the methods of discipline and pacification that regulate these territories; a history of forms of associativism, negotiation or new expressions of collective action; 'popular culture' and religion; the blurring of the borders between the public, friendship, death and threats in certain parts of the city and the uncertainty that these situations depict; the transit across social, spatial and moral borders (for example, 'rural' and 'urban') that are either enhanced or blurred, but always reframed.

Reference

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