

“Hallucinated City”: The Ongoing Rejection of the Periphery and the Revenge Performed by São Paulo Cultural Groups

Sílvia Lopes Raimundo

Translated by Daniela Caielli Penteadó

Introduction

Throughout its territorial formation, the São Paulo metropolis underwent successive peripheralizations, marked by allotment launching and popular dwelling. The “do-it-yourself” technique was implemented in peripheral, precarious areas and places where there is an accumulation of needs and absences that were never surpassed. In São Paulo, the State never invested enough in basic infrastructure construction or public policies on education, culture, health, mobility, or housing.

Given this situation, we understand the peripheral residents’ need to create new forms of survival and other methods of solving problems and restrictions imposed by a harsh reality. More than “turning strategies” (Ribeiro 4), they create a way of “making it happen” on a daily basis, befitting peripheral ways of looking and analyzing the world and its relations between scales, as well as new ways to solve problems of all orders, both simple and complex. Residents take routes from the creation of organic epistemologies and teleologies, such as the so-called *sevirologia*, “a multidimensional methodology to diagnose, plan, and act on reality” (Ferreira), and this is the basis of the work carried out by the *Comunidade Cultural Quilombaque* (Cultural Community Quilombaque), an artistic and cultural groups that, despite the everyday

reality, overcomes difficulties with creativity by formulating and producing methodologies, technology, and knowledge. Grounded in the *sevirologia*, the Cultural Community Quilombaque and other urban groups create a community network and a base for confronting the pressures of the real estate market, military police violence, and black youth genocide. These groups occupy places, produce art, promote teaching and self-teaching, discuss new ways of conceiving the city, and, moreover, produce public policies. They created the Lei de Fomento à Cultura das Periferias (Law to Promote Culture in Peripheral Areas), a municipal program aimed at cultural and artistic groups, and contributed to the elaboration of the Território de Interesse da Paisagem e da Cultura (Territory of Landscape and Cultural Interest, or TIPC), a City Master Plan instrument.

The city of São Paulo was built to serve the rationale of a modernization project, introduced in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century and enhanced during the following century. The city was also part of an urbanization process, which accelerated significantly after World War II, when the economic globalization process started. Modernizing vectors were unequally set on the urban territory, enriching and clustering around the downtown to the detriment of peripheral areas, which went through depletion at the same time. It was a corporate urbanization, designed to benefit big corporations' interests and part of the society by prioritizing some locations to the detriment of others and therefore building a fragmented city (M. Santos, *Metrópole*). In peripheral areas, there are many places with high social-vulnerability levels and significant isolation of the population in comparison with different downtown locales. This exile experienced by the peripheral population relates to a historical process of social and spatial segregation and, also, to the exclusion of societal groups from accessing different benefits.

In a form of "territorial revenge" (M. Santos, "A revanche"), both the language and aesthetics present in art become means of expression to condemn the hegemonic order. Art and culture create spaces where freedom of expression and shared knowledge are possible, signaling conditions to build aesthetic and ethical projects that are committed to peripheral areas, while peripheral cultural groups affirm new political aesthetics for the city.

Peripheral cultural groups, seen as one of the liveliest expressions among contemporary social movements in Brazilian urban spaces and in other parts of Latin America, constitute organized groups that fight for common interests. Overall, these are groups that prize democratic processes, with less hierarchic structures, and whose cultural actions partake of a critical reading of reality and contemporary society's predominant values. Their members—shaped within the context of the fight for better living conditions in peripheral areas during the 1970s and 1980s—develop practices in different artistic languages,

many times associated with agendas and discussions related to gender, ethno-racial relationships, among other themes.

At present, many peripheral cultural groups in the city of São Paulo act in a more integrated way. The initiative of gathering in bigger groups, such as “Fóruns de Cultura” (Cultural Forum) and the “Movimento Cultural das Periferias” (Cultural Movements of Peripheral Areas), shows that an important moment in the organization of culture workers’ struggle is occurring. Many groups are integrated virtually and in person, using social networks, meetings, seminars, and political formation events.

The peripheral cultural movement aims to create collectively internal organizational structures. The movement makes room for debates and decision making and elaborates activist tactics, such as manifestos, “enquadrões” that lead to public policies, protests in the streets, and occupations of old buildings, including the municipal culture bureau (Secretaria Municipal de Cultura).¹ The movement does so without abandoning artistic creation processes, therefore promoting actions in different places and fighting for space against the centralization of cultural production and the distribution of financial resources.² It is necessary to recognize that a hegemonic narrative prizes cultural and artistic production created in downtown areas and always considers that art to be the vanguard in the cultural scene, whereas the diversity and potential found in popular and peripheral creations are denied. This perspective, based on an erudite frame of reference, has monopolized the majority of cultural productions—particularly the cultural production of downtown areas—and has disregarded peripheral cultural manifestations. Nonetheless, taking into account the meaning of the word “vanguard,” which is derived from the French word “avant-garde,” peripheral groups have been producing artistic activities for a long time while taking part in political combat.

Tropical Vanguard, Fresh Air from Europe

When we consider this exile from the city center, caused by the processes of socio-spatial segregation, it is clear that it is not only a fundamental part of development based on industrialism, but also a part of the process of creating the idea of a modern city. Thus, the working class was concealed from the memories of many São Paulo historical events on purpose, especially regarding milestone events such as the 1922 “Semana de Arte Moderna” (Modern Art Week) and some civil festivals.³ In contrast, when the working class was represented, it was by artists or scholars belonging to another social class who were influenced by European ideas. This sort of event was used to foster intellectual production by the ruling classes, including part of the city’s official

historiography, in a moment when different literary works were competing for a central role in the debate about Brazilian identity and national culture.

During the 1920s, Brazilian artists self-consciously launched a modernism movement, and that character of renewal continued to be prioritized in further decades. At that time, self-proclaimed as a vanguard, modernism in Brazil presented itself first as an upgrading and modernizing process, characterized by a rupture with traditional language, along with an aesthetic and linguistic renewal based on communication channels established with cultural hubs in France (Moraes). Later, in a moment marked by the elaboration of projects and ideas about national culture, a period also featuring the emergence of nationalist artwork of an ideological nature (yet lacking the unanimity of the earlier stage), differences split modernists into distinct groups (Moraes). In this stage, we locate the Manifesto Pau-Brasil (Pau-Brasil Manifesto) of Oswald de Andrade, which led to the discovery and appreciation of his own country, as well as Tarsila do Amaral and her discovery of tropical nature. The Movimento Antropofágico (Anthropofagic Movement) was skippered by Oswald de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral, Raul Bopp, and Alcântara Machado, all of whom stood for a sort of devouring of European culture. In response, the Movimento Verde-Amarelo (Green-Yellow Movement) of Plínio Salgado, Cassiano Ricardo, and Menotti Del Picchia, together with the Movimentos Anta e Bandeira (Tapir and Flag Movements), sought to break with the tendency to view European culture as a way to reach modernity and, instead, valued indigenous people and land as responsible for the formation and maintenance of the national territory (Raimundo; Salgado). Mário de Andrade—author of *Pauliceia Desvairada* (Hallucinated City, 1921), which was marked by the use of concepts created by the European vanguard; “Amar: Verbo Intransitivo” (“Fraulein”); and *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* (Macunaíma)—distanced himself from the nationalist conservative pathway established by the members of the Green-Yellow Movement. In addition to research and literary writing, he carried out his dream “of creating a cultural institute capable of giving continuity to the process of valorizing and discovering national culture, a political achievement of modernist proposals” (Salgado 30), when he became the director of the Municipal Culture Bureau from 1935 to 1938.

The appeal to the European vanguard meant defending change in the material life of the city of São Paulo, followed by cultural revitalization in visual arts, literature, and music. Paulo Menotti del Picchia’s talk “Modern Art,” during the “Semana de Arte Moderna” (Modern Art Week), was among the first modernist texts to connect the modern aesthetic to the city landscape:

Queremos luz, ar, ventiladores, aeroplanos, reivindicações obreiras, idealismos, motores, chaminés de fábricas, sangue, velocidade, sonho, na

nossa arte! E que o rufo de um automóvel, nos trilhos dos dois versos, espante da poesia o último deus homérico, que ficam, anacronicamente, a dormir e sonhar, na era do jazz-band e do cinema, com a flauta dos pastores da Arcádia e os seios divinos de Helena! (Menotti del Picchia qtd. in Moraes 65)

(We want light, air, fans, airplanes, construction demand, idealism, engines, factory chimneys, blood, speed, dreams, in our art! May the ruff of an automobile, on the track of two verses, scare away the last Homeric god from the poetry, anachronistically sleeping and dreaming, during the jazz band and movie era, with the sound of flutes by shepherds of Arcadia and the divine breasts of Helena!)⁴

Brazilian urban modern awareness, also built upon the idea of modernization, took place when São Paulo was growing as a metropolis at the beginning of the twentieth century. This city, provided with geographical advantages, infrastructure, and workforce, became the main industrial and commercial center of the country, and the term “modern” was taken as an “epiphany-word”:

Moderno se torna a palavra-origem, o novo absoluto, a palavra-futuro, a palavra ação, a palavra-potência, a palavra-libertação, a palavra-alumbramento, a palavra-reencantamento, a palavra-epifânia. Ela introduz um novo sentido à história, alterando o vetor dinâmico do tempo que revela sua índole não a partir e algum ponto remoto no passado, mas de algum lugar no future. (Sevcenko 228)

(Modern becomes a starting-word, the new absolute, the future-word, the action-word, the potential-word, the freedom-word, the breathtaking-word, the re-enchantment-word, epiphany-word. It introduces a new sense to the history, changing the dynamic vector of time which reveals its indole not from any remote point situated in the past, but from some place in the future.)

Even though the modernization project (which started in São Paulo at the end of the nineteenth century and inspired modernist artists) has been

characterized by urban improvements—with the construction of a transportation network and the structuring process of a speech supported by modernity—the city segregated the poor and the workers (Belo). Oswald de Andrade's and Tarsila do Amaral's appreciation for black and indigenous culture, seen in many of their most celebrated works, only happened after their travels to France and their exchanges with European artists.

While modern artists defended material progress and the creation of a culture of national character that supposedly (and from the top down) planned to include everyone, regardless of class or race, the most vulnerable groups of society did not have access to the alleged benefits of the growing modernization, nor could they play a central role in the elaboration of their own stories and memories. They became research objects in literature and other arts made by those who claimed to be the vanguard.

By this time, the population of São Paulo was composed, in its majority, by immigrants—in particular, Italian and Portuguese immigrants and their descendants—and freed black people who were exploited and, therefore, barely integrated into the local economy. Many black women and men, marginalized because they could not find work in other areas, “worked in someone else's home” (J. C. F. Santos 150). Black women worked as “wet-nurses, housemaids, maids and so-called domestic servants in someone else's homes” (150) and as vendors of food, usually on a tray. Men provided temporary services, such as streetcar track cleaners, street sweepers, teamsters, carriers, street sellers, milkmen, charcoal burners, drovers, bricklayers, and baggers at warehouses by the São Paulo and Sorocaba railroads (Belo; Rolnik; J. C. F. Santos).

In São Paulo, where there was a strong relation between the construction of the modern city image and socio-spatial segregation (Marchezin; J. C. F. Santos), far from the districts that received all the benefits of modernization, black women and men, barely tolerated in a society marked by racism and huge cultural and ethnic disparities, worked and organized their own celebrations, searching for ways to their enjoy leisure time while also participating in political decisions within a black community frame (Belo). In Brazil, the prejudice against skin color and the structural racism, which prevented black people from participating in institutions and entities established by white people, caused black people to create their own entities. Leisure clubs, cooperatives, carnival blocks, journals, and independent media were created not only for the possibility of social interaction and leisure but also for social and ethnic resistance, representing “a very important role as a convergence factor and an elaborating pole to a group ideology” (Moura 48). In these groups, black people became aware of the community's activities. There, they could know about religious celebrations, leisure activities, sports competitions,

proms, birthdays, and a multitude of events. If there were no organizations, they would hardly have information and access to social, cultural, religious, and political activities:

while segregated in their territories, the black community sought to keep their traditions alive through rereading their memories, in everyday experiences, promoted in a new globalized social urban ensemble, expressing themselves in popular celebrations, batuques, pernadas and capoeiras, football teams, samba circles, macumba and jongo circles. (Moraes 67)

In this urban cosmopolitan context, where there was an intensified denial of the black community, these organizations had an immense importance. Religious entities such as Brotherhoods, like the Brotherhood of Pretos do Rosário de São Paulo (a black independent initiative), the Brazilian Black Front, the Unified Black Movement, the Samba Schools, and the religions of African origin, fulfilled a role as unification and resistance platforms for black people facing difficulties in the city (Moura).

This condition of creating exclusively black recreation forms and forms of political participation, replicated by immigrant workers of different nationalities and their descendants, strengthened solidarity and cooperation ties, first in workers' neighborhoods near the downtown and later in peripheral neighborhoods, which were increasingly far from the downtown.

Black and poor residents were relegated to the periphery due to a dominant ideology that supported both the modernization of privileged city spaces and the exile of subaltern residents from those spaces. Ideologies were engaged in subordinating poor people, as well as their culture, while erudite culture was seen by hegemonic classes as the only legitimate form of representation of modern São Paulo. That erudite culture—displayed in the art of the “Bienais de Arte,” the “Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo” (MAM-SP), and the “Museu de Arte de São Paulo” (MASP)—projected an internationalized urban experience extremely valued and celebrated by the Brazilian elite.

However, despite the segregation and containment of the working class in urban peripheral areas and in defiance of a selective modernization project, some important cultural movements arose in peripheral areas. These movements—bridging the aesthetic and the political—condemned a city that denied their existence. In an effort to reverse this logic, Sérgio Vaz, the poet and founder of Cooperifa (Cooperativa Cultural da Periferia), wrote the *Manifesto da Antropofagia Periférica* in 2007. As a rereading of the Week of Modern Art's 1922 manifesto, the text is a poignant critique of the modernists' vanguardism

in which Vaz denounces the injustices and the neglect of the peripheries. The text, which is emblematic for artists and collectives, decries “the barbarism of the lack of libraries, cinemas, museums, theaters, and spaces for accessing cultural production,” while celebrating the union and the constitution of “a new type of artist: the artist-citizen,” capable of undertaking artistic production made for and by the periphery (51). After all, “art that liberates cannot come from the hand that enslaves. For a Periphery that brings us together through love, pain, and color. It’s all ours!” (51–52).

Revenge in a City that Refuses to Look at Itself as a Whole

The outskirts, areas where workers are “sentenced to not have access to social services or to use them precariously, even when paying a high price for them” (M. Santos, *O espaço* 63), are the spaces where civil, political, and cultural rights are denied every day, where modernization projects are scarce, and where black youth, a section of the population that is under-served by educational, sport, leisure, and cultural public policies but severely affected by security public policies, experience violent actions while living in peripheral areas. The violence against young people in the streets, as well as the mass imprisonment and systematic murder of this part of the population by state forces, are part of a set of technologies of death management composing both necropolitics and necropower. These concepts are defined with the purpose of understanding how, in our contemporary world, firearms are arranged with the aim of causing destruction to as many people as possible (Mbembe).

These spaces were created from selective modernization processes that prioritize certain areas to the detriment of others. This produces multiple situations of scarcity, dwelling, public health facilities, mobility, recreation, culture, education, etc., as well as different forms of occupation, because “urban space is used differently according to the social classes that divide urban society” (M. Santos, *O espaço* 110). Many residents of these areas work in informal jobs or in precarious working conditions, activities in which creativity and solidarity are constant features (Xavier and Kahil).

Nevertheless, when we consider the dialectic between the production of space and everyday spatial practices, in addition to the appropriation of networks and technology related to new conceptions of city models, we realize that another type of answer—a disobedient and rebellious answer—contests the logic imposed by the hegemonic rationale. The periphery, where the conditions create different forms of suffering for the population, is also contradictorily marked by creativity, solidarity, and even hopes for the construction of another city. The movement of thinking about the city as a process of

reflection and interpretation, which claims the right to the city in the sense of repossessing the right to think about the city as a matter of autonomy, is a liberating achievement of the outskirts.

In the context of the emergence of different social movements, David Harvey returns to the reflections made by Henry Lefebvre on the right to the city, reminding us that this idea did not emerge as a whimsical intellectual trend nor was it simply derived from the struggle for infrastructure or facilities. Instead, it came from the streets “as a cry for help and sustenance by oppressed people in desperate times” (Harvey xiii). These people had experienced and thought about this city and had considered the transformations necessary for creating a different kind of city based on their desire. At the same time, they thought about creating the kind of people they wished to be: “To claim on the right to the city . . . is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade, and to do so in a fundamental and radical way” (5).

When we consider the cultural movements in peripheral areas of São Paulo, this radical and fundamental positioning consists of building a more democratic and equitable city, where everyone’s civil, political, and cultural rights are respected. These movements fight for an equal construction in which the outskirts also receive resources to build and maintain public facilities, in addition to fighting for the condition of being allowed to go wherever they wish. In São Paulo, this form of considering the city in a way that is not submissive announces the “Período Popular da História” (M. Santos, *Por uma* 147) (Popular Period of History), when peripheral cultural groups, regardless of their precarious situation, marked by a lack of time, space, and resources for production, create a repertoire of strategies for struggle, along with cultural and artistic activities.

Understood as absent spaces of indefinite future, peripheral areas started to be identified as capable and “do-it-now” spaces, places of a praxis implemented by popular movements in different areas, such as housing, health, education, or culture. In this sense, aesthetic actions by these groups, which often occurred to address the lack of cultural activities in the neighborhood, play a role as political spaces as well. José Queiroz, who is recognized by many people as Mestre Soró and a member of Cultural Community Quilombaque (a relevant group and important cultural place in the outskirts), notes during an interview:

The desired city is not defined by how land is valued, nor by property speculation. On the contrary, it should be defined by what brings life to human territory and its circumstances, its cultural and educational background,

fundamental components that define human beings. The city design that we want is not only the territory of what is essential but also of what we judge cool, awesome. It's a way of confronting what determines the city as a product, merchandise. (Queiroz)

This way of facing the builders of the city's privatization, including real state entrepreneurs, urban landowners, and the State, also goes through artistic creation and the desire for humanity through culture and art. In a poetry reading or a slam, you can listen to several poems that deal with urgent daily life issues, such as racism, sexism, urban transport, and housing, among others. In occupations of public spaces, old and underused buildings, or public squares, places of political formation emerge. Artists, producers, popular educators, and activists participate in these occupancies, at first in a precarious way and then in a way for meeting and partaking in politics.

In these spaces, which resemble quilombo people, it is possible to interfere with everyday life in the outskirts, propose new social interactions, and create spaces similar to what used to happen at the old Largo da Banana, where black porters in the early twentieth century, while waiting for the freight trains to arrive, created a vibrant social space. Therefore, they take over their right to play, sing, and dance, while also criticizing the city and representing it as they wish. At the same time, the inner urban reality interferes with the formation and the accomplishments of artists and cultural producers enrolled in peripheral groups. The relation between cultural groups and the appropriation of public spaces occurs in a dialectical way. Teleological practices of committed individuals may create different spaces for exchanging experiences and solidarity, and this constant engagement with artistic and cultural activities allows these formation processes to reach a larger number of people and expand the group and its mobilization.

This sort of practice shows that, in the periphery, insurgent possibilities emerge from the social practices, experiences, and interactions that are established during everyday life. This practice also involves the symbolic production of space via observation, mapping, and analysis. To the extent that languages and concepts are created for this analysis, important spaces to represent the city are built. In this way, peripheral areas of São Paulo become spaces where political praxis and the valorization of the routine recreate real possibilities of accomplishing other possible realities. The outskirts provide "shelter for Brazilian working classes (most of whom are black people), urban indigenous and immigrants whose cultural traits are intoned by heterogeneity as a result from the encounter (not always peaceful) in this multicultural coexistence" (Fórum de Cultura da Zona Leste). In these outskirts, we find significant cultural diversity and innovative experimentation. New conceptions of reality are disseminated

in languages that differ from the pattern imposed by the hegemonic power, which spreads a single thought, and which is published by major international information agencies. Rappers present themselves as representative models of a peripheral movement, whose essence is mainly territorial, when creating new narratives based on their experiences in the territory (M. Santos, *Por uma*).

Therefore, these groups accomplish an ensemble of practices and actions, which allows different manifestations of contestation and criticism to rise up, at first aimed at the ways of making and promoting culture and, secondly, at the ways of designing a fragmented city. A “revenge of the territory” (M. Santos, “A revanche”) becomes possible because the distance between the radars of big corporations enables peripheral groups to develop creativity through the appropriation of certain technologies, independent of all the difficulties imposed by the peripheral territory, such as an increased scarcity.

This type of revenge happens when subversive actions lead a percentage of the population to disobey laws, regulations, and rules, all of which are created as fundamental actions to instrumentalize the economy and State. These disobediences and insubordinations are “proliferating those seen as illegals, irregulars, informal” (M. Santos, *Por uma* 120) in cultural occupations and in graffiti, which screams for transgressions and is a typical subversion of the Popular Period of History. Therefore, “fractions of society pass from a previous situation of compliance and conformism to a further stage of fostering awareness” (120). Based on these movements, what initially was seen simply as a single narrative of daily life, one which reveals some problems, ethical codes, and behavior—as visible throughout rap songs lyrics—may rise up as a movement capable of transforming thoughts and the urban territory. At that moment, as Rodrigues and Souza argue, many with experiences of great potential appear to form political agents who are capable of looking at the city and proposing new ways of organizing urban life and its space. On the way, new meeting points are created and public spaces, such as schools, libraries, streets, parks, and squares, are occupied, thus creating collective projects based on values that glimpse a new scenario of social and economic justice. With the appropriation and occupancy of spaces, which were previously ruled by another social class, such movement becomes revolutionary because

Por meio da cultura [os jovens] projetam-se socialmente por um canal legítimo, e na nova perspectiva se tornam sujeitos plenos, cidadãos . . . É por meio da cultura e dos grupos que podem propor outras experiências de vida, e é através das suas ações que se percebem enquanto sujeitos políticos, participantes da sociedade e capazes de mobilizar e transformar. (Maia 61)

(Through culture [young people] project themselves socially through a legitimate channel, and in a new perspective become fully subjects, citizens . . . It is through culture and groups that they can propose other life experiences, and it is through their actions that they acknowledge themselves as political subjects, participating on society and capable of mobilizing and transforming it.)

Hence, we believe that change comes from a “freed individual that participates in new mass movements, in opposition to a chained man; free-thinking instead of a single speech” (M. Santos, *Por uma* 14). Freed individuals are those who can create spatial consciousness and spatial practices that question the corporate world in its interference with urban space and fragmentation of space, which is crystalized in an unfair distribution of public facilities of health, transport, culture, and education. Different cultural groups, artists, and cultural workers who are involved with and reframe public spaces based on desires and plans take part in a dialectical game as they change and transform themselves by living alongside the process of occupying public spaces.

Yes! Artistic Outskirts Can Teach⁵

Brazilian social movements used diverse action strategies during the 1980s, some accepted as legal, others not. The most common action employed by the population at that time was the undersigned document delivered to politicians, a very mild strategy of reclaiming. Neighborhood associations would ensure there was dialogue between inhabitants and public authorities. However, as time passed, occupations, which were understood as illegal, became the most effective collective and political action in the urban environment. In addition to the land where the first favelas appeared in the late 1980s, occupations became a collective and politically strategic action (Iffly). Nowadays, we have several forms of occupations in cities, such as occupations of lands, houses, buildings, city councils, state assemblies, schools, warehouses, and squares, among others.

These occupations follow the example of trade union movements, land occupation movements, housing movements with their “rebellious repertoire,” cultural movements, and, further on, the Movimento Cultural das Periferias (MCP). In moments when the conflicts were negotiated, the groups that were organized around the Fórum de Cultura da Zona Leste (FCZL) and around the Movimento Cultural das Periferias (MCP) used certain strategies, such as undersigned documents, letters that delivered to public managers and/or

read in political events promoted by the City Hall, motorcades, space occupations, and cultural occupations, among other protests. The Fórum de Cultura da Zona Leste and the Movimento Cultural das Periferias draw on the track record of all these other movements and on the interactions that had occurred before, such as the Movimento Cultural de Guaianases and the Movimento Popular de Artes de São Miguel Paulista (MPA). The latter, which has been active since 1978, had as a major goal the construction of the Casa de Cultura de São Miguel Paulista.

The groups that formed the first edition of Fórum Cultural da Zona Leste—and, afterward, the Movimento Cultural das Periferias—gathered for the first time in the beginning of the 2010s to discuss the conjuncture and the situation related to the possibilities of working in São Paulo. During the first dialogues, there was a noticeable resemblance among the difficulties found in their everyday lives. In the beginning, these meetings would only bring together members of groups settled in the Zona Leste, where the Fórum de Cultura da Zona Leste (FCZL) originated. Later, due to the unification of agendas, groups who were engaged in artistic-cultural activities from other areas of the municipality began to interact politically, including the Espaço Sociocultural Sacolão das Artes, Rede Popular da Cultura M’Boi Campo Limpo, Comunidade Cultural Quilombaqué, Centro Independente de Cultura Alternativa e Social, and Casa no Meio do Mundo

These groups and spaces involve many collectivities acting in places that historically concentrate the worst social, economic, and cultural indexes of the city of São Paulo and where the greatest victims are young people. But, despite their importance and positive impact, these places have suffered from harassment and extreme situations like repossession, which is often done in a repressive manner and without dialogue with the management group. There are similar stories among the groups. The Espaço Sociocultural Sacolão das Artes (2007–2018), created out of an occupation of a big, abandoned warehouse that was previously used as a fruit and vegetable shop, went through the processes of interdiction and repossession by a local agency of the Municipality (Prefeitura Regional do M’Boi Mirim). The Centro Independente de Cultura Alternativa e Social (CICAS) also lost its headquarters in an occupied abandoned space in the Zona Norte, which was previously closed in 2007 after disputes with the municipality. The Comunidade Cultural Quilombaqué, created in 2005 from a young residents’ initiative in Perus, is currently fundraising to buy the land where their headquarter is located. All three are fundamental places for art and cultural production and fruition in the city. The Casa no Meio do Mundo, a group located in the Zona Norte that, at a certain point, was also associated with the CICAS, has been paying rent for their headquarters, which is a difficult situation due to scarcity of financial resources.

The new forms of political organization through groups, the creation of debate spaces, and the traumatic experiences described in the last paragraph all contribute to the perceptions of these subjects, related not only to their work conditions but also to the relation between their work conditions and social and spatial discrepancies. These connections create positive conditions for the elaboration of repertoire, including public policies and political and ethical projects that are committed to peripheral areas and their problems. Art and ethics intertwine, creating aesthetic and ethical experiences, a praxis in which values, including solidarity, truth, and beauty, walk side-by-side. Via their struggles, they achieved the Lei de Fomento à Cultura da Periferia, a law of popular initiative, as well as a change in the city budget, the transfer of management of the Houses of Culture (Casas de Cultura) to the Municipal Secretary of Culture, and the acknowledgment of the importance of Cultural Occupations.

Daily and political experiences find in art a language to express an infinite number of questions, projects, and utopias, which creates favorable conditions to elaborate repertoire, including public policies and political and ethical projects that are committed to peripheral areas and their problems. In this movement, artists, cultural producers, and activists all create projects capable of overcoming the restricted role of the consumer, ensuring full enjoyment of the right to culture within the context of Human Rights and City Rights.⁶

The activities that often occur in public spaces gain meaning when they become meetings for exercising and fostering the right to read, produce, and enjoy. That would be the full enjoyment of the right to literature (Candido). In these meetings, which are promoted by cultural groups, human rights, racism, women's rights, prejudice, environmental issues, real estate speculation, and living conditions in the periphery are constant themes. In this sense, such meetings always are, as a matter of principle, spaces where poets, musicians, activists, and art producers share knowledge and learn from each other.

It is through daily experiences within the cultural context and by reflecting on achieved and denied rights that they recognize each other as peripheral subjects, with pride and awareness of what it means to live a "mutilated citizenship" (M. Santos, *O espaço* 14), as subjects who cannot fully enjoy all their achieved rights as is guaranteed in a democratic environment.

In Brazil, citizenship and democracy are deeply connected. Citizenship is the best concept for expressing the absorption of social benefits by the people and the presence of social rights, which provide "to the citizen minimum participation on material and spiritual wealth created collectively" (Coutinho 64). These social rights were not fully guaranteed by the Constitution of 1988. It is not rare "that neoliberal policies strive today, including in our country, to eliminate them [not only social, but also civil and political rights] from legal rules, in particular from the Constitution itself" (Coutinho 65). Social

rights are of no interest to the bourgeoisie because the idea of full citizenship is incompatible with the capitalist mode of production. Historically, the relationship between citizenship (or democracy) and capitalism is one of contradiction.

Therefore, in the outskirts of São Paulo, the initiatives against rationality and the processes of local resistance depend directly on the existence of collective organizations in civil society (Cavalcanti). In this case, citizenship awareness appears in collectively organized spaces, which foresaw ways and unprecedented solutions to everyday life questions. There are individual protagonists, such as artists and militants who are equipped with the condition of political action; however, major resistance protests against hegemonic ideas are organized in a collective way (D’Andrea).

In Brazil, the struggle for the universalization of access to basic education and to public universities “has its roots in the urban-industrial-development process, which has awoken and triggered many popular struggles (expressions of the contradictions of capitalism)” (Castro 168). As examples, the movement for public school during the 1950s, under the leadership of Florestan Fernandes and Paulo Freire, and, further on, the struggle for insertion into the spaces of public universities, the context in which the first preparation courses for university entrance exams emerged, at once connected student bodies, academic centers, and central student directories.

Between the decades of the 1960s and 1990s—knowing that strength comes from collective resistance and the critical formation of the working class, political parties, and trade unions—these working-class movements played an important role outside the formal educational system, as represented by schools and universities. From the beginning of 2000s, the emergence of preparation courses for university entrance exams (the *cursinhos alternativos e populares*) and of cultural groups created new spaces of popular education. All these experiences happened in the context of popular education, which was afterward conducted by educators who belonged to the popular classes. Because of this movement, there are today in São Paulo several preparation courses for university entrance exams, which work in the institutional spaces of universities, public schools, trade unions, churches, and resident associations. Many of these are organized by student movements, academic and student-union centers, political activists, and the ecclesial movement, among other groups (Castro). Among these, there are preparation courses for university entrance exams that are part of three significant popular education movements in other cities and Brazilian states: Education for Afro-Descendants and the Poor (Educafro), Union of Centers of Popular Education for Black Women and Men and the Working Class (Uneafro Brasil), and Emancipa (Emancipate) Network of Social Movement for Popular Education.⁷

The expression people educating people (Gramsci) made a lot of sense when young artists and cultural producers were awarded funding by different edicts sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, the State Secretariat of Culture, or the Municipal Secretariat of Culture. When cultural groups started to organize events and cultural occupancies in libraries, Casas de Cultura (Houses of Culture), Pontos de Cultura (Spots of Culture), or open spaces, such as public squares and streets, they transformed São Paulo into a more educated city—that is, a “city as content and a city as an educating actor” (Cavalcanti; Freire). In São Paulo, a city that sometimes is an educator and other times is a scholar, when spaces are occupied by peripheral groups, there is a noticeable transformation of spaces of exchange and experience, which constitute quintessentially privileged spaces for practices and actions in the context of popular education.

The experience of popular education in Brazil is a social practice that has been happening in at least three different forms. First, popular education acts as a learning tool aimed at the population’s awareness. Second, the convergence of educators and popular movement activists—a process in which they contribute with practical experience and practical reason, respectively. Lastly, popular education as an accomplishment by the people themselves, which allows them to think and practice their political work and create knowledge. In this last situation, popular education—a collective work in which people create without the presence of an erudite educator—“occurs in every situation in which, from the reflection on the practices of social and popular movements (‘schools’ where it makes sense to use popular education to ‘teach’), people share experiences, get information, criticize actions and situations, learn, and instrumentalize themselves” (Brandão 72). Peripheral youth, aware of the place where they live and of the difficulties that arise from this situation (D’Andrea), take on the role of protagonists in the artistic processes and production of knowledge.

In peripheral areas of São Paulo, projects and meetings that are oriented toward popular education are common thanks to the work of social movements from 1970 to 2000. Among the many actions of popular education that are carried out by active youth in cultural groups, some are structured as courses, seminars, or projects. Some are organized by a single group, others with forums, networks, or movements, such as the UniDiversidade de Saberes, an assembly of educational actions organized by the Fórum de Cultura da Zona Leste, Casa no Meio do Mundo, and Comunidade Quilombaque. All these groups have been awarded funding by the first edict of the Lei de Fomento à Cultura das Periferias (2016) and the Rede Popular de Cultura M’Boi Mirim Campo Limpo. With the aim of building spaces where it is possible to democratize knowledge and, at the same time, demystify the belief in the

university as the only place for producing knowledge, the UniDiversidade de Saberes seeks to reflect on four main themes and their derivations.

In terms of methodology, these meetings happen in different places, where subjects debate one of the main themes: Zona Leste: Economy; Zona Norte: Communication; Zona Noroeste: Territory; and Zona Sul: Popular Struggles and Human Rights. For ethical and political matters, questions like race, class, and gender permeate the meetings in an integrated way and the activities happen in circles or semicircles because, according to organizers, the circle shape, in contrast to academic settings, allows for the merging of scientific knowledge and the knowledge of griot masters, social movement activists, independent researchers, and artists in a non-hierarchical way.

In São Paulo, many theatrical performances end with a conversation circle and with a reflection on topics brought up by the presentation, a practice used by ALMA (Aliança, Liberdade e Meio Ambiente), a group located in the Conjunto Habitacional José Bonifácio. Yet, the UniDiversidade de Saberes was the first experience that brought together groups from different areas of the city, all of whom were awarded the same grant funding. For critical subjects capable of creating possibilities and ways to transform local realities through education, culture, and struggles for public policies, several meetings were offered in the first edition during 2017 and 2018.

That biennium was surely the best year for UniDiversidade de Saberes (UniDiversity of Knowledges) because it was when groups accomplished several formative activities. The year of 2017 started with the “First Seminar of Peripheral Insurgences: the city that we want,” held in Espaço Sociocultural Sacolão das Artes, located at Capão Redondo, a peripheral area in the Zona Sul of São Paulo. This event closed a cycle of writing and approval of the Lei de Fomento à Cultura das Periferias, a program offered by the municipality for the stimulation and funding of artistic and cultural projects, which started a formative stage that had been carried out since the creation of UniDiversidade de Saberes.

For almost two years, the M’Boi Mirim Campo Limpo Network, the Community Library Djiane Ribeiro, and the Casa no Meio do Mundo, in partnership with the Latin American Studies Center (USP), the Comunidade Cultural Quilombaque, and the Fórum de Cultura da Zona Leste, conducted meetings in different peripheral areas that covered four main themes: Popular Struggles and Human Rights, Culture and Communication, Territorialities, and Political Economy. These themes always considered the intersections of race, gender, and class.

In these formative meetings, themes pertinent to everyday life were discussed and the experiences of culture and arts workers were chosen and planned in a collective manner. In the Zona Sul, there was a reflection on the

history of Popular Cultural Movements of the Zona Sul, the importance of books and reading, and the education of youth and adults; in the Zona Norte, the topics of Popular Communication, alternative media, cultural production in social media, cultural economy, technology, and digital culture; in the Zona Noroeste, social inclusion, sustainable and local development, ancestry, and the production of new territorialities, youth, memory, and heritage; and in the Zona Leste, economy and arts in peripheral areas, self-management of cultural spaces, ancestry, sociability and employability, and exclusions and violence.

Like other activities offered by cultural groups in the outskirts of São Paulo, the meetings held by UniDiversidade de Saberes always started with an invitation to share a meal with bread, cookies, fruits, coffee, milk, and juices. Many participants would go to the place of training right after work; therefore, sharing a meal with the members of the group was always welcome. It afforded a moment to settle and establish the initial conversations and articulations.

Afterward, a group close to the people who were organizing the event presented an artistic performance. Within the activities of popular education, the mystical is a meaningful part, understood by everyone as essential to initiating the meeting. Then, mediated by a local representative, the organizers presented their reflection on the proposed theme, which was followed by a debate among the participants. In each meeting, in a non-hierarchic and democratic way, the participants consolidated a “learning community” where listening is fundamental (hooks 173).

The peripheral cultural groups involved in UniDiversidade de Saberes create learning spaces from an attitude that considers the autonomy of those who were involved to think, thereby fostering important debates for the public scenario. Educational spaces capable of questioning public policies were created and their commitment to overcoming social and economic disparities permeated matters of gender and race. A social movement “when acting socially and politically, reconstructs identities, brings inquiries, reframes, and politicize concepts about oneself and social reality” (Gomes 28).

Therefore, these meetings opened a possibility of inquiring about life stories, the role and structure of the State and its conservative regulation, the confrontations of daily life, structural racism, and the history of Brazil itself. Throughout the meetings, the processes of constructing identities became more explicit. There was a progressive trend toward the autonomy of the subjects and the elaboration of systems to interpret the world and concepts about how spaces can generate life, especially in urban peripheral areas. As a “subject of knowledge” (Gomes) and from social and educational experiences, the movement created by peripheral cultural groups has replaced researchers and

systematizers of knowledge with educator-scholars and producers of “organic knowledge” (Brandão 73).

Final Remarks

Artists and producers organize themselves in peripheral cultural groups to undo the logic intrinsic to the urban territorial formation, which is constructed simultaneously in different peripheries, placed far from economical hubs, where workers and their families hardly enjoy the city. Without access to cultural or recreational facilities or activities, and often without resources to buy equipment, the organization of events to read poems marks the beginning of the activities of many groups and the creation of a proper environment for its members to establish cooperation ties and networks. This organization allows collectively organized political subjects to produce political and cultural actions with the view of historically denied rights. As they promote actions and urban interventions, these groups strengthen values related to citizenship and democracy, thereby qualifying the agenda that deals with the right to the city and the use of public spaces.

In this way, the outskirts of São Paulo are “places of political resistance,” in which groups that are outside the market laws forge discourses through the arts against the rationality imposed by big corporations and the hegemonic planners of the city. It is possible to understand the outskirts as places where every day political praxis and the value of the routine recreate real possibilities of transforming life stories. An example of one such possibility is the movement to build and rebuild utopias, created regardless of rationality. It is everyday life turned into art, created within a logic opposed to that of money and which presents projects toward another city.

The city of space as merchandise, the city of consumerism, starts to oppose the idea of accepting the way things are. After all, there is nothing one can do until it becomes urgent and necessary to write a new “metanarrative” and create a new logic marked by the strength and protagonism of civil society, especially of non-hegemonic residents.

In this context, there have been timely experiences spread all over the city, among people who seek to narrate and write from their experiences other versions of history. Once invisible projects become a means of communication, breaking the belief in a single story, an infinite number of discourses arise.

Although the *Semana de Arte Moderna* occupies a central place in the cultural productions of the city, often playing the role of the State, at the eve of the centenary of the *Semana*, it is already possible to realize how engaged

artists and intellectuals are in projects to remember and celebrate the date. As expected, public management once more sets aside those artists and cultural producers who claim a place in São Paulo's cultural vanguard. As in other celebrations, they seem to repeat the past exclusion of the periphery. Yet, we wait to see if the vanguard of this new "Pauliceia Desvairada" (Hallucinated City) once more renounces the same structural ideologies, such as racism, and values the culture of those who were historically underestimated, as has happened before.

Notes

1. As part of the struggle for the approval of a law for the distribution of resources for cultural initiatives in peripheral areas, called the "Lei de fomento à cultura das periferias," peripheral cultural groups have researched the mayor of São Paulo's schedule and have split into groups to go to places where the mayor was and perform the "enquadro."
2. Cultural peripheral groups produce cinema and theater, present movies, organize poetry readings, poetry slams, reading circles, book exchange fairs, musical festivals, dance and theater festivals, street art, as well as value and promote traditional demonstrations, such as maracatu, jongo, capoeira, and maculelê, among others.
3. Among civil festivals, there was the First Centenary of Brazilian Independence (1922) and the Fourth Centenary of the Foundation of the City of São Paulo.
4. The poet and visual artist Menotti del Picchia, son of Italian immigrants, participated actively in the Modern Art Week. In 1924, accompanied by Cassiano Ricardo and Mota Filho, he conceived the Movimento Cultural da Bandeira, which intensely contributed to the elaboration of regionalist thinking in São Paulo.
5. In peripheral areas of São Paulo, the word "quebrada" is used, especially by young people and teenagers, to designate a space of experiences or everyday territoriality close to their residences, and it may be synonymous with neighborhood, place, area, alley, lane, or block.
6. In São Paulo, there have been many occupations in which cultural groups have held poetry readings in municipal libraries. More institutionally, the Municipal Libraries System (Municipal Secretariat of Culture) promoted "Literatura Periférica: Veia, Ventania" (Peripheral Literature: Vein, Windstorm). This program aims to accredit and hire groups for the realization of poetry readings, poetry battles, and slams that may spread literacy and literary production. Veia, Ventania (Vein, Windstorm) may be understood as a project that enlarges the Right to Literature, as discussed by Candido.
7. About alternative and popular preparation courses for university entrance exams, it is important to point out that the first ones, resulting from students' movement struggles,

worked in institutional spaces inside the public universities, sometimes becoming extension projects. In contrast, alternative preparation courses for university entrance exams are the result of student movements and popular movements in peripheral areas of medium and big cities (Castro).

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