Grammars of development. From informal economy to informal settlements

Gramáticas do desenvolvimento. Da economia informal aos assentamentos informais

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Abstract

This article seeks to deepen the discussion of the term 'informal' and its history. Through a genealogy based on scientometric and documental analyses, we observed that it emerged in the field of economics in 1960 and was widely disseminated until the late 1990s, when it was re-signified as an urban typology associated with slums. The Habitat I, II, and III conferences revealed alignments and inflections between international agendas of diffuse rights and urbanization strategies for precarious settlements. We verified the moment when the term 'informal settlement' started to be used in Brazil, its generality, imprecision, and the disqualifying aspects that its use as an adjective enables. The final comments point to necessary revisions in public policies and academic research to obtain greater precision in concepts and reduce the stigmatization of territories.

Keywords: informal economy; informal settlement; informal urban nucleus; Ministry of Cities; UN-Habitat.

Resumo

Este artigo busca aprofundar a discussão do termo informal e de sua trajetória. Por meio de uma genealogia baseada em pesquisas cientométricas e análises documentais, observa-se seu surgimento na economia, em 1960, sendo amplamente difundido até o final dos anos 1990, quando é ressignificado como tipologia urbanística associada às favelas. Nas conferências Habitat I, II e III, revelam-se alinhamentos e inflexões entre agendas internacionais de direito difuso e estratégias de urbanização de assentamentos precários. Constatou-se o momento em que se inicia o uso do termo assentamento informal no Brasil, sua generalidade, sua imprecisão e seus aspectos desclassificatórios que a adjetivação possibilita. Comentários finais apontam revisões necessárias nas políticas públicas e nas pesquisas acadêmicas, buscando maior precisão nos conceitos e menor estigmatização dos territórios.

Palavras-chave: *economia informal; assentamento informal; núcleo urbano informal; Ministério das Cidades; UN-Habitat.*

Informal, a widely disseminated term

Over the past 50 years, the idea of “informal” and its derivative adjective suffixed with "ity" – “informality” – has been used in several areas of the human sciences and in debates about development in all regions of the world and in diverse ways.

Commonly, the notion of informal conveys various characteristics. On the one hand, they can be positive: close and intimate relationships; the idea of imagination applied to development; alternative forms and means of problem-solving; innovative or low-cost technologies, etc. On the other hand, informal also connotes negative and detrimental characteristics to development and social relations: unsafe, low-quality solutions; anything that goes against standards, norms, plans, planning – and, why not, dogmas – can receive the adjective informal.

It is initially assumed that the widespread use of the term[1] informal and its derivatives is due, on the one hand, to its explanatory capacity, as it is able to depict phenomena and ideas over time. However, it is also presumed that its diffusion is not associated with the rigor of scientific analyses, but with the ability to pull together multiple phenomena and ideas. Its polysemy, empty of rigor and scientific criteria, allows for the representation of various economic and socio-spatial practices and phenomena over time.

However, defining phenomena as simply informal, outside of rules, standards, characteristics, pre-defined and ordered criteria, can lead to reductionist methodological paths or moral (dis)qualifying adjectives.

Based on the analyses carried out, the aim is to demonstrate that the definition of something as informal consists of designating in the negative, that is, by what it is not, emptying possible and necessary conceptualizations, making room for negative ideas related to poverty, old-fashioned and lagging notions, as well as to a state of exception and, consequently, to the denial of rights and standards related to development, including the denial of the right to the city in the urban context (Roy, 2005).

The goal of this article is to discuss the term informal by looking upon its genealogy and seeking to contextualize conceptualizations, characterizations, or classifications that explain specific attributes or qualities of phenomena and practices. Idealizations related to the informal and linked to practices contribute to the formation of dualistic logics supported by explanations formatted from exogenous realities taken as standard, regular, normal, formal.

The aim is to shed light on elements that still underlie dualistic views, such as the formal and informal city, the divided city, the hill and the asphalt, etc., and to raise the possible meanings of the introduction of the term "informal settlement" in the Brazilian academic production and public policies.

The scope of this contribution is framed by the ideology set by international development agencies, specifically urban development, with special attention to development policies "proposed" to Southern nations and the particularities regarding the assimilation and repercussion of these policies in the Brazilian case.

In the current context of neoliberalization and financialization of cities, societies, and life itself, it is relevant to discuss, in the scientific

field, how the construction of international discourses, subsidized by science – that is, with some degree of scientism and that become part of agreements, agendas, norms, and guidelines for investments and financing – has contributed to spreading ideas sometimes radically opposed to the right that is claimed, particularly regarding the right to the city and, specifically, in corroborating with a new urban agenda. In the current context of recovery and reconstruction of the Brazilian urban agenda, this reflection becomes pressing and even more relevant.

Foundations for the emergence of the term "informal"

During the 1950s and 1960s, the academic community in countries of the Global North and their partners in the Global South, including Brazil, shared the understanding that poor countries were in transition: from traditional, slow, and lagged economies to the development paradigm and progress produced in the West.

Furtado (1970), in his classic *Formação Econômica da América Latina* [Economic Formation of Latin America, in a free translation], points out the contradictions of this process. In his assessment, the transposition of technological advances from highly complex societies to Latin America would give rise to a new dualism between productive units of modern and highly capitalized technology and productive sectors of traditional techniques. "Since this technological progress mainly means an increase in capital endowment per employed person" (ibid., p. 355), its assimilation could cause structural distortions, marginalization, a phenomenon mostly pronounced in urban areas, where precarious housing conditions would become widespread (ibid., pp. 353-356, in a free translation).

Santos (1975), in *L'espace partagé* [The Shared Space: The Two Circuits of the Urban Economy in Underdeveloped Countries], a classical critical thinking piece from the Third World, reconstructs the various conceptual approaches to urbanization in underdeveloped countries during the 1960s and concludes that, in general, such approaches were "adjective".[2] Previous knowledge was applied by "adjectivizing" concepts, creating dualisms between the challenges of peripheral development in relation to the modern and advanced standards of the West.[3]

Pre-industrial cities, parasitic cities, primary urbanization, mature urbanization, and many other attributes - adjectives - "suit" the logics of the South to a linear and, to some extent, reductionist seizure, according to Santos (1985), of the historical model of development in stages that Rostow (1959) classified as: 1) traditional society; 2) preconditions for takeoff; 3) takeoff; 4) drive to maturity; and 5) age of mass consumption (Rostow 1959; Santos 1985; Fisher 1993). These stages of development arise as a way of relating economic rationality to political and social forces, according to specific historical moments.

However, one of the criticisms made to this generalization is that Rostow (1959) did not give due importance to the driving forces of those who effectively control the means of production (Fisher, 1993, p. 58), having used them differently from the development planning; and also because this linear sequence

is "naturally disturbed" by unpredictable political and social contradictions in the model, which accelerate the linear course of history.

Quoting Rostow's (1959) logic is relevant because, in the 1960s and 1970s, leaps in these stages promoted by peripheral industrialization also became evident. As can be learned from the analysis of Furtado (1970) or Santos (1985), these leaps positively impacted small segments of society, deepening inequalities, stigmatizing ways of life, and marginalizing traditional groups. Further in this article, we will explore how the Kenya Report (ILO, 1972) points out this phenomenon by proposing the term "informal sector".

It seems clear that, by applying variables, academic postulates, and political guidelines imported from developed countries, the plans for industrialization and urbanization in the Global South delivered the benefits of development to only a small portion of its inhabitants. In the 1970s, poverty and unemployment persisted, despite efforts to emulate successful models applied in the reconstruction of Europe and Japan in the 1950s and 1960s.

It is in this context, of both theoretical models and public policies, marked by dualisms and adjectives, following an almost natural evolutionary line of transformations, that critical researchers and the only agency of the United Nations (UN) constituted not only by Nation-States, the International Labor Organization (ILO), sought, each in its own way, time, and place, to innovate in the understanding of the specific logics of development in poor countries.

The informal sector on international agendas

Certain authors attribute the earliest uses of the term "informal economy" to the Dutch economist Julius Herman Boeke[4] and to the Antillean economist William Arthur Lewis[5] (Gonçalves, Bautès, & Maneiro, 2018). Both approach the economies of former colonies in Africa in a dualistic manner and suggest the transitory nature of informal activities, which would be absorbed as capitalism progressed.

Other authors, such as Boanada-Fuchs and Fuchs (2018) and Hawkins (2020), credit the formulation of the term "informal sector" to Keith Hart, a British anthropologist who published studies on "underemployment" in Accra, Ghana.

In such studies, he describes creative techniques of rural immigrants, the Frafras, to ensure their own subsistence. The informal sector operates residual activities, and the distinction between formal and informal is primarily related to the income earned and to the autonomy of the worker, which is the explanatory key to the degree of rationalization of work (Hart, 1973, p. 68). The author also highlights the relationships with illegality, often legitimized and morally accepted (ibid., p. 74), and suggests corresponding classifications, such as "urban sector of low productivity", "reserve army of the unemployed" or "traditional urban sectors".

Dating back from these early deployments of the term, "informal" has evoked practices external or marginal to "developed" capitalism

and State regulation. This framework gave the term a long life among studies of various nuances and political-intellectual orientations, being incorporated into theories of marginality[6] and underdevelopment in Latin America.

During the same period, seeking to understand why the efforts of international agencies, especially those focused on job creation, did not produce the expected effects, the ILO created, in 1970, the Employment Promotion and Planning Department, with the mission of reviewing the model of its technical cooperation, aggregating local and multidisciplinary researchers and knowledge (Bangasser, 2000).

The new mission model, the "Comprehensive Employment Missions", produced several reports in the 1970s and 1980s, with emphasis on the Kenya Report (ILO, 1972), which institutionalized internationally a reality seen as particular to Third World countries: the "informal sector" of the economy, its relationship with sectors fostered by multilateral development policies, and its relevance to economic dynamics and modernization.

The main characteristics of the informal sector of the economy and its activities, as defined in the Report (ibid.), are related to the ease to start a function or activity, to the dependence on local resources, to the predominance of family enterprises, to the small scale of operation, to labor intensity, to the use and development of adapted technologies, to the skills acquired outside the traditional education system, as well as to the operation in a deregulated (according to the state's understanding) and highly competitive market.

However, the Kenya Report reveals, right at the beginning, paradoxes among the use of the term "informal", as well as some risks of its pejorative appropriation. According to its authors, the informal sector operates under severe restrictions and difficulties, a consequence of a pejorative view of its nature, with an imminent danger that this view will become a self-fulfilling prophecy (ibid., pp. 5-6), something that has been verified, that has materialized.

Overcoming simplifying and sometimes reductionist dualisms has been a widely debated task in the "world of labor"[7] for decades, based on elements that had already been pointed out in the Report, which criticized technical views focused only on the positive effects of the westernization of the economies of poor countries (ibid.). These views proposed concentrating incentives in certain modern sectors of the economy to reduce the cost of capital compared to the cost of labor (credit benefits, fees, licenses, review of economic barriers, etc.).

The formal economy, as the target of international development policies, would be composed by the largest companies, which adopted more technology-driven means, with higher salaries, profits, international investors, and even in accordance with the standards of international labor "laws" (Bangasser, 2000).

The informal economy, ignored by State action, would have less access to credit and would not attract international capital, even though it would be able to carry out similar activities, but often in a context of illegality, irregularity, or non-compliance with the definitions of agencies and governments, resulting paradoxically in the deepening of inequalities.

That is, the concentration of incentives would not only reinforce inequalities but also promote the multiplication of the informal sector, or of marginalization, as postulated by Furtado (1970).

Usually seen as modern as well, it is worth noting, the informal sector would assimilate peripheral innovations with the diffusion of international investments and would be responsible for complementing stages of complex productive chains. This complementarity would occur in an "improvised" manner, alongside with formalities and regulations, generating poorly paid, insecure, and rights-less jobs.[8]

Thus, under the guise of underdevelopment, the informal economy, through the reduction of labor costs, hence at a low cost, provides the means for complementation and expansion of modernization. This modernization, which combines "formal" and "informal", selective and incomplete, is sustained by poverty and the deepening of inequalities, which are causes and not consequences, as also confirmed several times in the Kenya Report, of activities related to labor and the informal economy.

To some extent, by classifying as informal practices and modes that do not correspond to the standards of central countries, it would be possible to claim that this imputation is part of a geopolitical process, as explained by Hart (2010). In the post-World War II period, "D/development" policies were used by European "empires" in their decolonization strategies (ibid., p. 121).[9]

As the central countries rebuilt and Developed, they also began to determine the process of (under)development of the former colonies, deepening the "tutelage doctrine"[10] as the main means of relating to these countries (Lewis, 2019, p. 1959). For authors like Lewis, this understanding continues to organize contemporary theory and the practice of development.

It is worth noting that, in each specific reality, in countries or regions, regulations for legitimizing work and its impacts can be both "ignored" and used as political and economic "assets", reinforcing the instability and subordination of activities and workers in the so-called "informal sector of the economy". This also occurs in the regulation of other sectors and circuits that are subject to the predefinition of what would be formal, normal, standard, regular. Also, it is worth emphasizing, in the circuit of human settlement production.

Paradoxes of the informal urban economy

Since its emergence, particularly in the works of the ILO, the idea of the informal sector has been directly associated with the urban economy. Answers were sought for a complex situation involving institutional efforts to generate employment and income through the revenue of modernization/urbanization, and the resulting persistence of unemployment, low income, peripheralization, and precariousness of life in the cities of poor countries.

The so-called informal urban economy expanded with rural migration, where the majority of the world's poor still reside today. In rural areas, most of these workers performed and still perform activities outside the boundaries defined as formal economy (ILO, 2002, p. 103). However, in urban areas, the representation of this distinction would be obviously clearer, easier and more objective, since it was and continues to be "standardized."

The informal (sub)sectors of the economy, associated with the modernization/urbanization process, offered economic alternatives, as well as improvements in access to health and education for rural migrants, the poor, and the less qualified to settle in cities, contributing to the emergence of slums and precarious peripheries in Nairobi and Mombasa (ibid., p. 18), as well as in major Latin American cities.

According to the seminal ILO Report, this "low-income sector" would be literally and figuratively peripheral. Literally, the place of the poor is beyond the borders of the rich, planned, and regulated urban area - formally established - where the poor provide "informal" services at a low cost. Figuratively, it is peripheral because it has only fortuitous and restricted access to sources of wealth (ILO, 1972, p. 503).[11]

It is relevant to highlight that the Kenya Report does not present the informal sector as a problem for development; on the contrary, it identifies it as a source of growth based on local practices and talents shaped at a low cost, with great innovation capacity.

To some extent, these ideas were similar to those being developed by Milton Santos. As a contemporary scholar of several authors already mentioned here, Santos (1975), in his analyses and propositions, does not use the terms “formal” and “informal”, seeking to overcome simplifying dualisms and adjectives. By proposing spatial circuits of the urban economy in underdeveloped countries, he reveals complementarities, connections, and disputes, thus, the interaction between diverse and similar productive models, with competing and complementary areas of operation in the competition for markets and in the production and appropriation of space (ibid.). In this sense, his theory goes further by associating forms of production and division of labor with the uses of geographic space, and not just peripheral location, as pointed out in the Kenya Report.

Santos (1985, p. 132) bases himself on the idea that the production of goods is concentrated, and their consumption is diffused, identifying that each city actually has two areas of influence, with distinct dimensions corresponding to each circuit of the economy, the upper and the lower.

In major cities, the limit of the market covered by the lower circuit would tend to coincide with the limits of the agglomeration. The intraurban space of the lower circuit is continuous and can be differentiated into a central space of the lower circuit and a residential space of the lower circuit (Santos, 1975, p. 350), dormitory neighborhoods, self-constructed peripheries, villages, precarious settlements, favelas, and other distinct forms of urban expansion that, in common, harbor economic and social dynamics, political dimensions and ways of life.

Santos (1996) also reveals that the urban economy benefits from complementarity effects, spreading its rationality throughout the territory through solidarity and competition relations that occur between the circuits of the economy.

The upper circuit, which is concentrated in major cities, often as islands of high urbanization, spaces of globalization, technological enclaves connected as in a network, would expand its influence regionally by using modern circulation systems. The upper circuit is a direct result of technological modernization, and its market area is defined by the fluidity of the territory.

In smaller cities, it would be up to the lower circuit to spread urban economic rationality in even larger areas of the territory

not covered by the technical and normative systems of the upper circuit: lack of modern circulation systems and suitable technologies or lack of interest from economic power.

This association and the complementarities and rationalities that organize the two circuits of the urban economy were later synthesized by Santos (1996) in the term "tropical flexibility," with the innovations arising from this flexibility being economically effective responses to normative rigidity, to the formal, expanding consumption patterns and arenas and enabling leaps in Rostow stages (1959).[12]

Due to these possible stage climbs, it was argued that necessary support to the informal sector in the form of support received by other sectors of the economy – with the risks involved in this support being similar to those involved in supporting other companies, as highlighted in the Kenya Report (ILO, 1972, p. 505), revealing since then that formalization, according to the precepts of international agencies – would not be a condition for guarantees and credit.[13]

Similarly, Hart (1973) critically addressed the formal and informal dualism, indicating the need to overcome a Keynesian view according to which the creation of so-called formal jobs was seen as the only solution to unemployment. Hart raises a moral issue, suggesting policies aimed at reducing the participation of the informal sector only in socially disapproved activities or in those with very low marginal productivity (ibid., p. 82).

The ILO faced these and other paradoxes in 1991 when it debated the "dilemma of the informal sector" in its 78th Conference. The question posed was whether to foster the informal sector as a provider of employment and income, which would include reviewing regulations, or to expand regulations aiming to increase social protection, probably reducing the economies' ability to generate jobs.

The discussions emphasized that the dilemma should be resolved "tackling its underlying causes and not just its symptoms through a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy" (ILO, 2002, p. 1) which would involve from growth strategies and extension of social protection to the review of regulations, with a priority concern for social justice issues such as gender equity, race, ethnicity, age, etc. (ILO, 2013). In the Decent Work Report (ILO, 1999), the term informal is replaced by informalization of labor relations worldwide.

The new scale of problems, also impacting the North, partly resulting from the then-called new information and communication technologies (ICTs), pointed to the overcoming of the direct relationship between the informal, urban poverty, and underdevelopment. The "bourgeoisification" (ILO, 2002, p. 4) of the informal economy coincides with the convergence of the agendas of the rights of other UN system agencies in search of globalization with social justice, as portrayed in the Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals - MDGs (United Nations, 2000). This broader view also includes improving housing and living conditions in cities.

In conclusion, the term informal urban economy, derived from the initially coined term "informal sector" or "informal subsector" (ILO, 1972) of the economy, refers to economic activities carried out in urban spaces as opposed to those in rural areas. In urban settings, multiple understandings of informality are more easily represented, or at least are subject to greater interest, leading to the historical paradox of the "bourgeoisification" of informality, encompassing inaccuracies such as

informal space production, informal city (Brant, 2009), informal settlements, or even "informal urban cores", a Brazilian neologism created in recent national legislation.

That said and following the genealogy of the term "informal", its widespread (polysemic and uncritical) use in research and development policies, for over 50 years, may explain its uncritical transposition from an economic process to its use related to urban forms. But through what connectors? What are the political intentions behind associating, for example, slums and a variety of poor settlements with a universal urban typology called informal settlement?

An important contribution to overcoming dualistic perspectives was made by Magalhães (2012) in analyzing the right to the city in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. The data from his research reinforce the thesis of the existence of "a continuous and conflictive process of dialogue" (ibid., p. 397, free translation), in his terms, between the State right and the favela right.

Magalhães rejects ideas such as alternative law, parallel law, or terms that give the impression of a deficit order, which would exclude the reality of an effective order built in the confrontation, its complementarities, etc., corroborating with the debate proposed here to overcome dualisms and with the view on urban economy circuits (Santos, 1975).

Another contribution to this debate was made by Leitão (2007) and by several other authors who have been revealing the diversity and strength of the economy of favelas broadly speaking, of the lower circuit of the economy.

Additionally, considering the current financialization of globalization and the commoditization of the urban setting (Rolnik, 2013), would it be plausible to relate the recent and widespread use by international agencies of the term "informal" as an urban typology, informal settlements, to geopolitical strategies to reinforce domination? Would these be strategies to subjugate non-State forms of rights recognition and practice? We will seek to bring more elements to this debate in the following section.

The informal on urban agendas

Following the argumentative line proposing a more detailed urbanistic view of the "informal," based on agendas set by multilateral agencies, and considering that at least since the 1970s, these agendas have been articulated,[14] it is possible to relate evidence to the appropriation and transformation of the use of the term "informal" in the main urban agendas, namely, the final reports of the three UN-Habitat Conferences, held every 20 years since 1976.

In 1972, in the same year the Kenya Report was released, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm (ILO, 1972, 2002). A milestone in multilateralism, the Conference inspired new global meetings with specific themes and transversal and multisectoral approaches,[15] and brought other organizations into the debate beyond the Nation-State.

Four years later, Habitat I, in Vancouver, 1976, kept the definitions of the Stockholm Conference, as well as refined and deepened instruments and strategies for "Development" (Hart, 2010). In its Final Declaration, Habitat I not only recommends public and local government[16] participation in seeking answers to global issues, but also reveals the

understanding and importance of the informal sector of the economy for overcoming global challenges. Of the 64 Recommendations for National Action in the Vancouver Action Plan, eight are exclusively dedicated to social participation in various decision-making forums for urban policies.

The final Recommendations document of Habitat I, divided into six items or themes, dedicates one of the 64 recommendations, number C8, "Housing, Infrastructure and Services - Construction by the informal sector," to affirm that "[...] the so-called 'informal sector' has proven its ability to meet the needs of the less fortunate in many parts of the world, despite the lack of recognition and assistance from the public sector." It is concluded that the informal sector should be supported in its efforts to promote not only housing but also infrastructure and services (UN-Habitat, 1976).

In this sense, countries should review regulations and norms, forms of credit, access to land (for "informal economy" activities), forms of technical assistance, and a series of other actions aimed at social participation and self-construction of means of reproduction of life with dignity, quality, and in a manner adapted to regional and national realities.

Moreover, still under the item Housing, Infrastructure, and Services, the document recommends special attention to self-construction of housing (number C10), recognized as the largest dimension in the "Third World" and, therefore, to be qualified and fostered through regularization policies, simplification of norms, regulations, and financing processes, technical assistance, and development of local and adapted materials, as well as encouragement of cooperativism and provision of infrastructures.

It can be claimed that Habitat I reverberated the more progressive understanding of international agencies and the thoughts of the time, aiming at urban development as a whole, beyond the dualities that proliferated in hegemonic thinking.

Twenty years later, the economic stagnation of Global South countries in the 1980s and the consequent introduction of neoliberal economic adjustments by creditor agencies, the IMF and the World Bank, restructured Development policies (Hart, 2010) with impacts on the urban agenda. The consensus was a complete redesign of the State, reduction, and rationalization, openness to private companies, and focus on the governance capacity of civil society actors that would provide non-essential public services.

The privatization of national housing institutions and the emphasis on governance would allow the implementation of the seven instruments to open the housing market (Arantes, 2006; Soto, 2000; World Bank, 1993). On the demand side: titling, direct financing, and rationalization of subsidies; on the supply side: governance of urban services, adapted regulation of urban land, and organization of the construction industry; the seventh element is the reorganization of the State for governance (World Bank, 1993).

Land regularization, whether it involved the urbanization of precarious settlements (land titling and partial mitigation of precarities), participation from non-governmental organizations and local governments, and direct loans for families to address their housing deficits,[17] were strategies of the period legitimized by countries, local governments, and social movements. In Habitat II, these groups overlooked the principles of

neoliberalism and viewed these strategies as a hope for decentralization and democratization (Balbim, 2016, pp. 11-12).

In general, the urban agenda of Habitat II, held in Istanbul in 1996, aimed to integrate the needs of the growing informal sector of the urban economy into city planning, design, and management systems. It promoted social participation in planning processes and decision-making, thereby strengthening the sector's links with the formal economy, its financing, and regulation. This approach also emphasized reducing the size of the state and enhancing technical and financial cooperation with countries in the global north.

Notwithstanding, an assessment of the Final Report of Habitat II (UN-Habitat, 1996) reveals that the term "informality" appears 17 times. Notably, in only two instances is it related to human settlements, marking an innovation. In the remaining 15 occurrences, the term is associated with the urban economy, consistently in a positive context, linked to banks and credit cooperatives, social organizations, and alternative forms of development.

The Habitat II Agenda predicts how the informal sectors of the economy, empowered, improved, fostered, should be part of decentralized, community-based, local, and democratic solutions to urban challenges.

As an example, the item 160 of the Agenda, in which the term "informal" appears four times, defines actions to be undertaken by small businesses, cooperatives, local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, and financial institutions to improve the capabilities of the informal sectors of the urban economy.

The indication of the informal economy as an alternative to urban challenges corroborates with the thesis that Habitat II, in addition to being decentralized and democratic, as celebrated by social movements and progressive governments, also had a neoliberal bias,[18] namely of shrinking the State and transferring responsibilities from the public sector to residents, NGOs, and the civil society (Balbim and Amanajás, 2015).

Habitat III: the New Urban Agenda adrift?

Over 20 years later, the New Urban Agenda (NUA), resulting from Habitat III held in Quito in 2016 (UN-Habitat, 2016), marks a significant shift in the use of the term "informal." Unlike previous agendas, the term is mentioned 19 times, but only four of these instances relate to the urban economy. The remaining 15 occurrences refer to human settlements in general and slums in particular, without any prior definition of the neologism "informal settlements." This shift clearly indicates that the term had become commonplace during the 20 years between Habitat II and Habitat III.

Even though there is some recognition of the importance of the informal sector for the local economy (ibid., item 13.d) and a commitment to "recognizing the contribution of the working poor in the informal economy" (ibid., item 59, p. 17), the NUA seeks a "sustainable transition to the formal economy" (ibid., item 13.d, p. 7 and item 59),[19] an inflection from the thinking produced by other international agencies, notably the ILO, based on the idea of decent work (ibid.).

Even so, the NUA overlooks advancements in understanding the relevance of the informal economy for development, as well as the impacts of technological transformations on "informalization" and the precarization of labor relations and access to the city, which the ILO has long highlighted (the "bourgeoisification" of informality, addressed in the section 'Paradoxes of the Informal Urban Economy'). Terms like "uberization" and debates on the urban impacts of giants like Amazon and solutions like Airbnb are also ignored (ibid.).[20]

After over half a century, the dualistic thinking that associated modernity, industrialization, and urbanization with backwardness, tradition, and rurality[21] seems to resurface. The modern, smart city is the basis of development, and the informal is related to everything negative or unproductive – and thus should disappear.

The NUA goes further in its drift and associates the idea of the formal economy with the principles of decent work, which would be achieved "leveraging the agglomeration benefits of well-planned urbanization, including high productivity, competitiveness and innovation, by promoting full and productive employment and decent work" (ibid., p. 7, item 14b). The city is presented as an icon of modernity, the engine of development and the economy.

Notably, the term “economy”, which appears two dozen times in the NUA, is given various qualifiers that imprint the exclusive notion of modernity, business, and productivity: global economy, competitive economy, scale economy, vibrant economy, sustainable economy, inclusive economy, innovative economy, and circular economy.

Ideas of solidarity economy and community businesses, which were prominent in Habitat II and reinforced the dynamic role of the informal sector, were notably absent from both the preparation and final agenda of Habitat III (Fernandes and Figueiredo, 2016). The term "social and solidarity economy" is mentioned only once, in item 58, addressing "environmental sustainability and inclusive prosperity," although the specific implications of this reference remain unclear (UN-Habitat, 2016, p. 17).

Thus, the NUA reveals the division between a modern and dynamic city and billions of people living in so-called informal conditions around the world. Despite the detailed diagnoses supporting the Conference process, it does not distinguish poverty from precariousness, irregularity, illegality, or even mere non-compliance with local rules.

By political choice, the NUA categorizes all these conditions into a single urban typology in a pejorative and uncritical manner. This reinforces a disqualifying moral system that justifies exclusionary and segregating mechanisms, alongside global strategies of urban businesses promoted by various international organizations. The rhetoric could not be clearer: the grammar of urban businesses prevails in the NUA (Balbim, 2018).

Finally, the analysis of the repeated appearance of the terms "informal settlements" and "informal settlements and slums" – which are not defined in the document – reveals negative, pejorative, and degrading dimensions associated directly or indirectly with poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and diseconomies,[22] a theme further explored in the next section.

The return of the favela: panacea of informal settlements

In the path of (re)acknowledgment of the term "informal" and its transformations, the period between the Habitat II and Habitat III conferences marks a turning point between the use of the term "informal" associated with the urban economy and its use as an urban typology.

Understanding how this urban neologism emerges and spreads worldwide, and how it is assimilated in Brazil, is a Herculean task. This typology is invariably undefined, unsubstantiated, with no references to theoretical and academic debates, being government programs or manuals from international agencies, particularly UN-Habitat, the main reference source for defining the term.

However, the direct and frequent association of the term with "favelas" (slums) may provide clues to understanding its widespread assimilation and may even allow for hypotheses to be raised about the motivations that lead international agencies and experts to associate themselves with this generalization, instead of using more precise terms and concepts.

Following a methodological approach similar to the one proposed here, Gilbert (2007) reflects on the resurgence of the term "slum"[23] – an old and dangerous word, in his words – by analyzing documents from international funding agencies and their prescriptions for overcoming poverty in underdeveloped countries.

In 1999, three years after the Habitat II Conference, a coalition of international agencies — including the World Bank, UN-Habitat, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and Asian Development Bank — launched the global initiative "Cities Without Slums." This initiative marked a pivotal moment, described by the author as opening a Pandora's box. He argues that the use of the term is dangerous because the campaign implies that cities can eliminate favelas, an idea he deems entirely unattainable.[24]

Furthermore, the confusion between physical aspects of housing quality and the various social characteristics of the human groups living in these settlements is emphasized to question the imprecision of the term, especially when used on a global scale.

At this point, UN-Habitat, with the support of the Cities Alliance, defines the main object of its action as eradicating favelas and their absolute characteristics, a baseline for monitoring and evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness, and efficacy of its actions, a necessary management adjustment to respond to its donors and funders.[25]

The proportion of people with access to sanitation and tenure security were established as fundamental variables to be universally monitored, defining a standardized urban typology — the slums. This approach gained such significance that these elements were incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), notably under goal 7, target 10 (access to water and sanitation), and goal 11, target 11 (proportion of urban population living in slums).

It is an undeniable fact that the revisitation of the term "favela" (slum) was accompanied by a clear political action of eradication, which can either mean upgrading, dealing with titling accompanied by urban improvements aimed at its "formalization," its "insertion" within the city,[26] or eradicating,

through evictions and displacements, a practice continued and frequent and which also relies on arguments promoted by the noblest political and academic intentions.

Furthermore, its resurgence on the global stage post-Habitat II, along with its neoliberal and decentralizing principles, is intertwined with political and economic interests, reflecting a geopolitics that positioned local governments and NGOs as partners more aligned with the agendas of international agencies and banks. For instance, in 2013, a comprehensive report by the World Bank underscored that interest in the issue of favelas was not only economic but also profoundly political.[27]

Brazil: favelas, precarious and informal settlements

Before drawing parallels between this process and Brazilian urban policy, it is necessary to remember that favelas in Brazil were largely invisible until the redemocratization of the 1980s. This invisibility has allowed various political and economic maneuvers against their residents to persist to this day, particularly through the State's use of violence.

The recognition within State urbanism of the existence of favelas and certain rights of their residents began with the redemocratization of the 1980s through the efforts of local administrations.[28] Initiatives such as the creation of Special Zones of Social Interest (Zeis) and the Plan for the Regularization of Special Zones of Social Interest (Prezeis), launched in Recife in 1983 and 1987, were followed by other metropolitan cities, which, a few years later, due to their successful pioneering experiences in urban reorganization, began to incorporate favela territories into their Master Plans.[29]

The connection between the ideas of the "new" UN-Habitat and urban policy in Brazil, especially the strategies of the Cities Without Slums initiative,[30] led by the World Bank and donor countries (mainly France and Italy in the Brazilian case), was somewhat challenged by structured municipal and state programs[31] for intervention in precarious settlements and subnormal agglomerations, created in the early 1990s and later boosted by the creation of the Habitar Brasil-BID Program (HBB)[32] in 1999.

This indicates that the influence of the "Cities Without Slums" initiative in Brazil in the early 2000s was balanced by both the prior consolidation of local Brazilian experiences and the earlier support some of these initiatives received from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which was not part of the coalition that formed the Cities Alliance.

The HBB program was a milestone for recognizing, for the first time, in the national urban policy, the issue of favelas and subnormal settlements. HBB aimed to strengthen municipal institutions to execute urban infrastructure works, housing improvements, and social and environmental intervention actions. In its manuals, the term "informal" was not used, and the term "favela" appeared sporadically, alongside other typologies constituting subnormal agglomerations (Balbim et al., 2012).

In Brazil, a detailed analysis of national public policy documents and academic literature reveals that the term "informal settlement"[33] was not used until the mid-2000s. This trend appears to have changed when the Cities Alliance began supporting the actions of the Ministry of Cities (MCidades).

To understand this moment of transformations, it is necessary to situate what the MCidades was at the time. Created in 2003 as the first ministerial structure with the mandate to produce and implement a national urban policy, the ministry was made up of four National Secretariats in charge of implementing policies – mobility, sanitation, housing and urban programs – and an Executive Secretariat. There was a relative coordination of actions between the first three Secretariats and the National Secretariat of Urban Programs (SNPU, in its Portuguese acronym), as it was basically responsible for urban planning guidelines and fostering the elaboration of Participatory Master Plans, as mandated by the City Statute.

Additionally, SNPU managed the urban land regularization initiative known as the "Papel Passado" Program. Similarly, the National Secretariat of Housing (SNH) operated actions to support land regularization in several of its programs, particularly in the HBB program, which was inherited from the previous government and later broadly transformed into the "PAC Urbanization of Precarious Settlements" [PAC Urbanização de Assentamentos Precários].

Despite the expectation of inter-secretarial coordination, different approaches emerged between programs with similar objectives, such as "Papel Passado" and HBB, particularly regarding precarious settlements – a term used even in the National Housing Policy (Act 11,124/2005). These differences provide a basis to hypothesize and explore how the neologism "informal settlement" began to be used in national urban policy.

In 2006, while the HBB program was still under the coordination of the SNH, the "Papel Passado" Program, in collaboration with the Cities Without Slums initiative, published the distance learning course "Land Regularization of Urban Informal Settlements."

This publication, exclusively in Portuguese, mentions for the first time the term "informal settlements" in official federal government documents, including in its title. Notably, the term had not been used in the National Housing Policy, in the "Papel Passado" and HBB manuals, not even in the rest of the MCidades publications and manuals.

Given its importance, the publication was analyzed in detail. It is made up of eight chapters and one introduction. The terms "informal" and "informality" related to settlements were introduced in the texts signed by Fernandes (2006a, 2006b). Then general coordinator of the course and project consultant, Fernandes uses the term 42 and 26 times, respectively, in each text. Additionally, there are specific citations in Imparato and Saule Júnior (2006) and Alfonsin (2006).

Fernandes argues that segregation and exclusion are causes of the "proliferation" of illegality. More specifically, the existing exclusionary legal apparatus would compel people to violate the law. However, this apparent logic does not explain the vast irregularity and illegality that also spread among the wealthiest. In the same publication, when addressing federal public lands, Imparato and Saule Júnior (2006, p. 76, free translation), state: "informality in land occupation is not exclusive to the low-income Brazilian population but it is a widespread practice in a true culture of land use irregularity".

As an exercise that reveals the risks involved in the widespread use of the term, we replaced each of its 68 occurrences in Fernandes (2006a, 2006b) with substantive

expressions or explanations. The result associates "informal settlement" with not only the obvious lack of titling but also with areas where the right to housing is not recognized, or where there is a lack of socio-spatial integration with the rest of the city (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006). This reinforces the idea of a divided city, where "urban informality" is linked to urban poverty, specific urban planning pattern, lack of tenure security, or low democratization levels in land access.

"Informal occupation" is related to self-construction, favelas, or illegal and clandestine occupation. "Informal urbanization practices" are associated with low-cost solutions that impose high diseconomies on the city. The "informal urban condition" is described as "precarious, undignified, and unacceptable." The "informal area" is precarious and poses environmental risks. Finally, "informal construction" is synonymous with favelas and self-construction.

This publication is a textbook for a distance learning course on a national public policy, reaching a significant audience of managers, technicians, activists, and researchers. Simply put, it can be argued that the text contributed to the diffusion of an imprecise term compared to previously used expressions in urban practice and policies up to that point. Despite this course, the term was not immediately adopted in national executive policies and programs, practices, or propositions related to the subject.

It wasn't until 2010 that the term reemerged in formal MCidades documents. This happened at the same time the same Cities Without Slums program and in this time the SNH published a bilingual booklet for the distance learning course "Integrated Slum Upgrading Actions." Its Portuguese version focuses on "precarious settlements," a term that appears 44 times in the document, being translated 42 times as “informal settlements”, once as “slum” ––on the cover of the publication––and once (accurately) as “precarious settlements” (in its introduction).

The translation imprecision contrasts with Brazil's global importance in precarious settlements' urbanization strategies. Recognized since 1996 in Habitat II, it is uncovered throughout international academic production, as well as in the history of the HBB, and, particularly, in the Cities Alliance's annual reports (2002, 2003).

It should be noted that in 2010 the SNH, which coordinated the Urbanization of Precarious Settlements under the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC), disseminated its actions internationally "in accordance" with the term of this "hot" international agenda (Neves and Lima, 2012). Four years earlier, the same international agency, at the time in partnership with the SNPU, promoted the dissemination of the term in Portuguese , thereby influencing subsequent repercussions on Brazilian public policies and academic production (Balbim and Santiago, 2023a).

The academic subsidy

In collaboration with governmental instances, the creation of an international political agenda has had clear academic support. Academia has provided the discussion with concepts and theses, resulting in their dissemination as part of the aforementioned "hot agenda" and influencing research, funding, as well as public policies in peripheral countries.

By conducting scientometric surveying (Balbim & Santiago, 2023a, 2023b) which corroborates the analysis of international agendas and previous national public policies, it can be stated that this "agenda" emerges globally in the 1990s and becomes popular in the first decade of the 21st century.

Following the analysis of theses and dissertations that address the term "informal settlement" in English, Portuguese, and Spanish languages, one may conclude that this movement originates from English-speaking centers, facing relative increase in the number of theses between the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. When analyzing the theses in Spanish, it is noted that there is no presence of the theme in the first decade. In Portuguese, there are no theses identified in the first two decades, 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless there is an increase from two theses in the 2000s and to 48 theses published in the 2010s.

The scientometric research was conducted in three of the world's leading databases for scientometric research, Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and EBSCO and shows that the term "informal settlements," related to urban or city contexts, appears in more than ten thousand academic articles between 1960 and 202 – 2,986 articles, considering a combination of WoS and EBSCO databases, and 10,402 articles considering Scopus.

It is important to note that 1999 marks a turning point in the gradual growth trend of publications related to the term "informal" in urban studies. This is the same year when UN-Habitat – an international agency relevant to the dissemination of this term – was shaped and the action plan Cities Without Slums was launched. Over half of the articles were published in four countries: South Africa, USA, England, and Kenya, where UN-Habitat is headquartered.

After evaluating the metadata of the articles, the African continent – especially the previously mentioned countries – stands out as a disseminator of publications related to informal settlements. In parallel, the Global North – especially the aforementioned countries – is characterized as the funding source of these researches. A predominantly functional and interdisciplinary use of the term also emerged, along with a critical use on a smaller scale (Balbim & Santiago, 2023b).

Notably, centers have been spreading the term "informal settlement" and agents and countries have been, to a greater or lesser extent, with greater or lesser understanding of the implications of their associations, and even following a mere trend, transforming the structure of knowledge, daily administrative practices, and public policies.

The hypothesis raised for the Brazilian case is that this movement has allowed for the emergence of the neologism "Núcleos Urbanos Informais", or Informal Urban Cores (NUI, in Portuguese), referred to in Act 13,465/2017. The details are in a specific study of the

legislation and its application following the launch of the Casa Verde Amarela Program by the federal government in 2020 (Balbim, 2022).

Concluding remarks

This article reveals how the term "informal," originally connected to the economic field, becomes part of policies for development and poverty alleviation in the second half of the twentieth century. This piece also briefly uncovers the history of the expression and its trajectory from the "world of labor" context to its assimilation into urban thinking and to its twenty-first century-based shift in use and meaning.

The flagrant diffusion of the term "informal" is linked to cultural, symbolic, and political aspects and relates to the representation of practices and ways of life, which are debated and emphasized in the ILO Report of 1972, as well as in Hart's foundational text (1973).

As attempts to go beyond sectoral economic analyses, these texts reveal practical aspects of dynamics inherent to the development of nations in what is now called the Global South. They also portray mechanisms for transgressing bureaucratically established regulations, as well as the formation of new norms based on moral, habitual, practical, and political bases later used in various knowledge fields.

It has becomes evident that informality is shaped amid the management of official limitations and regulations, especially those in which international agencies and national governments frame the access to and the legitimization of work and urbanized land.

In conclusion, the idea of informality stems from a modernizing development project designed for underdeveloped countries. In other words, its widespread use, which encompasses urban typologies, is intentional as it divides, segregates, includes, and excludes categories of citizens in different urban areas.

The working thesis here sustained lies on the argument that the generic qualification of the urban form and the human settlement as informal reinforces the gears of the territorial exclusion machine. In spite of the intentions of urban academics and managers upon choosing terminologies, it does not seem that funding agencies make any room for choice or critical formulation regarding the grammar of cities, which ultimately impacts research centers.

The article reveals that the term "informal settlement" designates, in a generic and imprecise manner, areas where people live in situations of exclusion, segregation, precariousness, irregularity, clandestineness, and, above all, poverty. These areas should be targeted by public policies, but, in many cases, they most likely attract the interest of real estate capital and become a sort of land reserve, an allusion to the term "reserve army," which designates workers in the informal economy sector.

The association between the idea of favela and the term "informal settlements," – almost a tautology –, rhetorically reinforces the negative attributes linked to them both. While the former is loaded with historical, moral, and cultural aspects –thereby signaling to a universal reality –, the latter expression reclaims these ideas from a technical and scientific standpoint, which is hard to verify due to its polysemy and lack of substantiation.

The analysis of Habitats I and II final documents uncovers an appropriation of the term "informal" coherent to the debates taking place in the past. Habitat III, on the other hand, shows the profound semantic and use transformation the term went through. The backdrop for the “bourgeoisification" of the informal is set when the informal economy is reaching an explicit global scale.

The reintroduction of colonialist patterns follows a script that reinforces the dualistic ideas of center/metropolis versus peripheries as made explicit by the NUA. It seems to be implied that modern, intelligent, and competitive cities cannot coexist with favelas and/or "informal settlements," or with the degradation associated with their residents.

In the engine city of capitalist development there is no room for a planet made of favelas, and for these land reserves to corroborate development, they need to be formalized, titled, and traded in the market via traditional and unique instruments. According to international agencies and certain national governments, security could be guaranteed insofar as families have the means to make investments, improve their living conditions, and the economy as a whole.

The NUA contributes to the design of a world of divided cities. On the one hand, there is modernity, business, the engine of development, technology, intelligence; on the other, billions of people live in limited, amorphous, and undefined conditions. Under the vast umbrella of whatever informal may be, there may be an enormous market, and the NUA undoubtedly sets the grammar and the guidelines for such market to be unleashed. This should be further explored.

In this sense, we hope to have shown that, generally speaking, mainstream contributions and efforts by academia have not been able to overcome: 1) the dualisms inherent in the development model applied in poor countries; and 2) a linear perspective of development, based on the standards of capitalist countries of the Global North.

As for the emergence and use of the term "informal settlement," criticisms has been raised in this article regarding its: 1) indiscriminate use; 2) conceptual imprecision; 3) “adjectivization” as a disqualifying moral system; and 4) geopolitical use in deepening (D)development policies.

As verified when the terms informal sector or informal economy emerged, the designation of urban areas as informal settlements mirrors the concentration of public investments in the so-called formal areas of cities. This designation not only deepens inequalities but also promotes the emergence and multiplication of practices and typologies redefined as informal.

There is also a considerable range of land and urban situations hidden by the term "informal settlement," which ultimately seems to foster the duality of the "divided city." By (de)classifying as informal the processes alternative to the exclusionary and elitist model of urban production, are we not making only this model viable?

We align ourselves with Caldeira (2017) and suggest that overcoming the usual dichotomy between formal and informal, as well as asphalt and favela, is key for a decolonized conceptual structure. It is also imperative for a decentralized urban theory and for a model of urban development distinct from that emanating from cities in the North.

If, on the one hand, the formality and regularity characterizing part of the cities in underdeveloped countries are in accordance with the manuals and guidelines of urban planning from the Global North and its dogmas, on the other, informality, treated as opposition and division within the city, is functional to mechanisms of control, domination, and exploitation of the poorest, who, for decades, have built their living space. The result is a fragmented city, "heterogeneous," in constant precarious and peripheral expansion, where symbolic walls and cartographic limits shape social struggles for rights and political disputes for privileges and votes.

We end this essay by looking upon the self-produced city, resulting from the lower circuits of the urban economy, as well as the popular economy. We argue that it seems to present a constant questioning of certain dogmas that associate symbolic values of development with notions and ideals of the planned city according to the urbanism manuals of the North, positivist and formal science.

Overcoming dualisms and substantiating analyses are necessary steps to develop instruments and criteria that include the majority of people and cities from the Global South – the so-called informal city – in public and social policies. Above all, this inclusion should extend to development policies from and for the South, promoting social inclusion, sustainability, autonomy, and originality.

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Notes

(1) In these initial three paragraphs, three different terms are employed to describe the informal: as an idea, as a notion, and as a term. In this study, it is assumed that the most encompassing and neutral form is the "term". When discussed as an idea or notion, it refers to how the term is used, often with a negative connotation. Here, we are not treating the informal as a concept because its usage is not substantive; rather, it is always used as an adjective, which, thus, ties it to a concept.

(2) It is important to note that, when using adjectives, a moral (dis)qualifying system is also operated. Interestingly, this “adjectivization” carries a moral weight, often aiming to discredit anything that does not align with the Western ideal of civility.

(3) This line of thinking has faced criticism from various authors (ILO, 2013; Santos, 1985; Hart, 2010), who aimed to deepen the understanding of the unique logics of underdevelopment. Moreover, the criticism of a dualistic perspective is thereby endorsed. Such perspective, by delineating distinct notions of development and underdevelopment, seems to overlook the unequal and intertwined nature of capitalism (Smith, 2014). This approach also perpetuates a moral-based framework, depicting development as virtuous and formal, while underdevelopment is often associated with negative connotations, rooted in references to informality.

(4) In his study on the economic dualism in Indonesia, titled "Economics and economic policy of dual societies, as exemplified by Indonesia," published in 1953.

(5) British-Antillean black economist and Nobel laureate in Economics (1979). He argued that the "informal" sector delineates the reserve labor force gradually absorbed into the "formal" mode of production.

(6) The concept of marginality was extensively explored in analyses of Latin American dependent capitalism during the 1960s and 1970s. Two notable authors in this regard are Lúcio Kowarick from Brazil and Aníbal Quijano from Peru. Being marginalized does not imply being outside the capitalist model or its developmental processes. Instead, populations on the margins, within the framework of dependent capitalist production, are a condition to the model, which relies on superexploitation, segregation, artificially induced scarcity, and other manifestations. This situation creates a reserve labor force (functional marginality) or marginalized masses, including small artisans, non-salaried rural workers, occasional laborers, and various forms of informal labor. It is worth noting that the concept of marginality remains relevant in interpreting inequalities, such as structural unemployment or the group referred to as neither-nor (those who neither work nor study). Moreover, this concept can be applied to understand movements based on urgence or survival, which emerge in response to the dire social conditions faced by thousands of residents in deteriorating urban centers, leading to an increase in homelessness, a resurgence of hunger, and other related issues.

(7) In an ontological sense, the concept of the "world of labor" encompasses human practice, where individuals shape their existential relations through the transformation of nature, rendering discussions about formal or informal distinctions irrelevant. For example, overwork involved in self-construction processes for housing falls under this ontological understanding, which in turn limits the translation of informality from labor to the resulting product: the house, the settlement, the city. This discussion will be revisited later on.

(8) During a discussion with one of the friends who have read this article, and to whom I am deeply grateful, a question arose about the possibility, at that time, of using an alternative term, perhaps something like "complementary" or "subsidiary" sector, aiming to draw a parallel between sectors and, possibly, reduce negative connotations. It is worth noting that around the same time, Santos (1975) proposed something similar, referring to the spatial circuits of urban economy. One could suggest that the original formulations indeed aimed to distinguish these circuits, either to shed light on a neglected one or to ultimately absorb or eradicate it.

(9) According to Hart (2010), in underdeveloped countries, global development strategies, with a capital "D", were implemented. These strategies were formulated, coordinated, and/or supported by international agencies in collaboration with national governments. Development, viewed as an instrument of global geopolitics, should be understood in terms of power dynamics across interconnected arenas, which are inseparably linked to the uneven social dynamics of capitalist development (ibid., p. 122). These geopolitical instruments are guided and coordinated by the research and programs of international agencies, and they are combined with local development initiatives, denoted with a lowercase "d", which prioritize local needs and strategies.

(10) For more on the doctrine of trusteeship, as mentioned by Lewis and Hart, see Cowen and Shenton (1996).

(11) ILO (1972, p. 503): "This low-income sector is peripheral both literally and figuratively. In Nairobi, it sprang up, and continues to grow, just outside the borders of the wealthy urban zone, to supply goods and services to the fortunate few inside that zone and to its own population. Figuratively, it is peripheral in that it has only fortuitous and restricted access to the sources of wealth."

(12) Examples can be found in the study of piracy and copy-based development, such as the Chinese model. On piracy, economic circuits, and tropical flexibility, see Tozi (2013). On the Chinese development model, refer to Chen and Lu (2016), Garnaut and World Bank (2005), Hsing (2010), and Zi (2019).

(13) It is worth highlighting the existence of specific credit mechanisms, initiatives that have developed and now flourish, for instance, in community credit banks, including those with their own currencies, as well as exemplified in the book edited by Silva (2020), which features several chapters on solidarity economy, addressing the concept of social currency, as well as the practical use of what could be called an "alternative currency" (Silva, 2020).

(14) The initial milestone in the alignment of agendas among multilateral agencies occurred with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (1972). This model gained significant traction in the 1990s, especially in line with the recommendations and definitions outlined during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, known as ECO-1992, and the Agenda 21.

(15) Habitat I stemmed from the Stockholm Conference. While Stockholm tackled international environmental issues, Habitat I was called to address local environmental concerns such as housing, infrastructure, and transportation services. Similarly, Habitat II was influenced by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, held in Rio de Janeiro. The Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged from the interaction between conferences and thematic structures within the UN.

(16) In this sense, during the ECO-92 in 1992, local authorities and NGOs were recognized for the first time as major groups in a UN conference.

(17) The strategy involved transforming families into account holders, or “bankables” as per the World Bank (1993).

(18) In the neoliberal State, the involvement of new actors in urban governance, especially in vulnerable areas, enables the State to evade commitments to investing in various services. The repercussions of such State absence are diverse. Bayat (2002, p. 10) illustrates how fundamentalist religious groups have become the primary providers of urban services in "informal settlements" in Middle Eastern countries. Regarding Latin American cities, Davis (2004) describes how neo-Pentecostal churches are emerging in these areas as models of governance and service provision.

(19) Certain authors, like Stiphany and Ward (2019), view the NUA as providing the rationale and groundwork for shaping national policies on self-governance and what they perceive as the social production of housing, exemplified by initiatives like the Minha Casa Minha Vida Entidades program.

(20) For instance, the NUA officially embraces, for the first time in a UN conference, the concept of smart cities. Throughout the conference, there were numerous panel discussions on the topic, featuring banks, companies, and international consultants. The idea of smart cities is integrated into the final documents and is presented as one of the solutions to various urban challenges across diverse contexts (Balbim, 2018).

(21) A friend who read this article shared with me a classic example of this dualism. Check out Lambert (1970, pp. 101-125).

(22) This realization highlights a contradiction in this document, as the NUA itself, in item 20 (UN-Habitat, 2016, p. 9), acknowledges the need to confront the numerous forms of discrimination faced by social groups such as HIV carriers, the elderly, refugees, etc., and includes residents of favelas and informal settlements (“informal-settlement dwellers”) among these groups.

(23) Favelas were trendy in the late 1990s. An example of its significance is the opening of the famous Favela-Chic restaurant, bar and club in Paris in 1997. Its ambiance suggested a break from norms through informal social interactions and patchwork décor. Van Ballegooijen and Rocco (2014) also highlight the glamorization and idealization of favelas and other non-state housing solutions by star architects and note that this positive view of favelas often coincides with skepticism toward public housing policies. Different countries and languages have various symbolic and concrete interpretations of terms like favela, slum, barrio, or shantytown. Since the term's emergence in English, probably in 1812, it has been associated with criminal activities, theft, and racketeering (Gilbert, 2007, pp. 700-702). This negative association has influenced the understanding of similar terms used across different languages to describe poor, precarious, irregular, clandestine or simply inadequate settlements according to social and moral standards of each society and era.

(24) “The campaign implies that cities can actually rid themselves of slums, an idea that is wholly unachievable” (Gilbert, 2007, p. 698).

(25) Analysis of reports and documents from Cities Without Slums reveals a certain sense of urgency in presenting results. For example, the Kingdom of Morocco declared in 2018 that 58 of its 85 cities were "slum-free" (Atia Conference 2019, 2019). Additionally, these documents seem to heavily reflect De Soto's ideas regarding the need to secure land tenure for families to invest in housing improvements. However, after decades of self-construction in juridically informal areas in various countries, it appears empirically proven that such a claim is nothing more than a fallacy.

(26) Policymakers expressed the idea of integrating favelas into the city through improvements and conformities during research conducted for the evaluation of the Habitar Brasil BID (HBB) program and the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC). From the residents' perspective, the aim of these programs should be to bring the essence of the city into the favela without altering its identity, transforming it into a city. Residents also express their desire to overcome the negative connotations associated with the favela, allowing them to fully embrace urban life (Balbim et al., 2013).

(27) The Bank suggests that with the growth of democracy, local governments may be taking a more active role in providing urban services, concentrating greater power and facing increased electoral pressure to address favela issues. Furthermore, the higher participation of NGOs and the perception that communities are politically "mature" and willing to financially support urban services also play a role in driving this interest.

(28) It is worth noting that Brazilian federalism, especially regarding urban issues, can be likened to a seesaw or a pendulum. At times, political power shifts from municipalities to the national level (as seen in the 1990s and with the establishment of the City Statute, for instance), while at other times, it moves in the opposite direction. Cardoso and Ribeiro (2000) argue that this dynamic follows a unique logic termed "decentralization due to absence" (in a free translation), where federal policies and definitions are lacking, particularly evident with the demise of the National Housing Bank (BNH, in its Portuguese acronym), the crisis in the Severance Pay Guarantee Fund (FGTS, in its Portuguese acronym), and the rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s. This notion is supported by Klink (2013), who highlights the widespread belief during the 1980s that democracy would flourish at the local level, within municipal governments.

(29) "Several other municipalities were notable for their early adoption of this tool in their Master Plans, even before the City Statute came into effect. For instance, Rio de Janeiro included AEIS (Special Areas of Social Interest) outlined in Article 107 of the Complementary Act. 16/1992, covering areas either unused, underutilized, or occupied by 'slums, irregular subdivisions, and housing complexes earmarked for specific urbanization and land regularization programs.' This provision was made in 1992. Similarly, Belém (1993), Diadema, Natal, and Vitória (1994), Belo Horizonte and Campinas (1996), and Porto Alegre (Brazil, 2001) also integrated this instrument into their plans. Notably, Porto Alegre's 1999 Master Plan was the first to do so, with implementation starting as early as 1995 under the Complementary Act. 338" (Balbim and Krause, 2014, free translation).

(30) The Cities Without Slums program initially backed progressive administrations in cities like São Paulo and Salvador, as well as in the states of Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Sul in the early 2000s. It also partnered with the University of São Paulo (USP) and the ABC Region Consortium in São Paulo.

(31) The Favela-Bairro program, launched in 1995 through a partnership between the Rio de Janeiro City Hall and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), aimed to enhance urban conditions in 168 favelas and informal settlements by 2008. Hailed by the IDB in 2005 as the world's most ambitious favela redevelopment initiative, the program faced criticism for the quality of its interventions and the lack of permanent social services, leading to a rapid decline in the improvements made. However, it also yielded valuable insights into the need for tailored approaches to each intervention, considering the diverse circumstances involved. This experience was expected to subsidize the Morar-Carioca program which, along with the PAC Urbanization of Precarious Settlements, continued the urbanization efforts in the area.

(32) In 1999, just before the global launch of the Cities Alliance, Brazil signed a loan agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) that established the Habitar Brasil BID (HBB) program. It is worth noting that both in the local favela urbanization policies of the late 1980s and 1990s and in the HBB, which expanded its actions to the main cities of the country in 1999, there was a clear guideline not to remove residents except in cases of risk, and an emphasis on community characteristics and social participation. Analyzing reports from all HBB interventions until 2011 (Balbim et al., 2012), it becomes clear that contrary to what the Cities Without Slums initiative might imply, HBB strategies rarely involved removals, and the issue of titling was often a secondary and neglected concern.

(33) The term "informal settlement" first appears in Brazilian official documents, albeit sporadically, in the report presented by participants of Habitat II to the Federal Senate in 1997.

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