Illegalisms, armed territorial control and the city: reflections from the perspective of a research agenda

Introduction

This special issue was conceived through a series of discussions held by the Illegalisms and the Production of the City Network[1] at various times: in biweekly debate meetings, in national and international seminars promoted by the group, in an inter-institutional course and also in a series of publications in which this set of articles is included. In fact, the three organizers of the dossier are absolutely tributaries of these discussions and so we begin this presentation by thanking all the participants in the Network, which involves research groups from different universities, NGOs, social movements, state institutions and philanthropic organizations.

At the core of these discussions is an understanding of the contemporary dynamics of urban space production associated with a set of actors and practices located in the interstices between legality and illegality. In the case of Rio de Janeiro, it can be said that many lines of historical continuity consolidate fundamental layers of "city-making" through a grey area that has always blurred the boundaries between state and society, the official and unofficial realms, with this web being part of the dynamics of a historically very unequal city. However, it seems to us that with the emergence of the militias, themselves heirs to the death squads and extermination groups, it can be said that an important update of this already established history is happening. We refer to a type of openly extractive urban economy whose horizon is accumulation by dispossession, whether through state practices marked by violent political authoritarianism against Black, poor, and favela residents, or through armed groups whose core business revolves around the city itself and extortion practices.

The militias have reconfigured the field of illegalisms in Rio de Janeiro. This means that they operate within a criminal political economy that is much more closely aligned with political and police powers than the illegal drug trafficking factions. This is due to their inheritance of illegal networks by the "*jogo do bicho*",[2] their formation primarily by police officers and other state agents, their construction of businesses on a larger scale than the old "*bica d'água*" politics,[3] and their promotion of new public representatives and state officials from top to bottom. Furthermore, from the beginning these groups engaged in a range of activities involving land occupation, real estate development, property acquisition and leasing, as well as the provision of urban infrastructure, including transportation, waste management, debris removal, and utilities such as water and cooking gas. Thus, they adhered to a highly diversified business model, consistently operating within an urban context.

In permanent transformation, the activities of militias and armed groups that control popular territories has undergone various reconfigurations in recent years. Recognized as a phenomenon that originated in Rio de Janeiro, but – in varying formats – is also present in other parts of Brazil, the militias seem to have entered a new phase of ostensible control of territories, investing in diversifying their business and expanding to other areas of the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region and to other cities in Brazil. Likewise, drug trafficking has also been reconfigured, adopting practices similar to those promoted by militia groups. The production and exploitation of the real estate market and urban services seem to be a central element in the new business model of paramilitary groups. The economic model of the militias is sustained both by the armed control of territories and their articulation with the political institutional system. Leaders affiliated with or supported by militia groups seek to be elected and recognized as representatives who mediate the community interests with the executive power.

In this renewed activity of armed groups in general and militias in particular, the urban question seems to have become central, both from the point of view of business, the dynamics of conflicts, disputes and negotiations of their networks formed between legality and illegality, as well as in driving societal dynamics in which the use of force, political patronage and violent forms of enterprise are being supported in the production of urban space – particularly in its infrastructural networks.

In this context, the challenges of empirical comprehension and theoretical and conceptual analysis to define the different configurations of armed groups, and especially militias, and to understand the related processes of militarization and *militialization of* cities seem to be great, given the diversity of these phenomena in Brazilian cities. The extractivism present in their rural and urban economic practices, and the political and social authoritarianism as a mean of building the social fabric, both situated in social practices and representations, constitute multifaceted phenomena that require the composition of different research to be better understood.

Understanding illegalisms as a transnational phenomenon, especially in the Global South, and an expression of the contradictions of contemporary capitalism, this Special Issue sought to mobilize contributions that presented concrete situations of armed groups' actions in relation to urban dynamics, as well as original conceptual constructions that would advance the understanding of these matters.

Inconclusive notes on militias, drug factions and illegalisms configurations

Based on the contributions presented here and also on the academic dialogue carried out in the "Rede Ilegalismos e a Produção da Cidade" [Illegalisms and the Production of the City Network], in this presentation we propose to systematize and deepen elements of our reflections, around some unfinished notes, in order to provoke debate and contribute to a research agenda.

Configurations of territorial armed control are historical phenomena and were formed from the progressive organization of criminal groups

By stating that the configurations of territorial armed control are historical phenomena, we try to emphasize that they are not new phenomena, but on the contrary, they are practices that have been present for a long time in the history of Brazil and many Latin American countries, especially on the outskirts of their big cities, taking on different configurations and specific characteristics. An analysis of its genesis shows its historical links with authoritarian culture and the forms of domination mobilized by the continent's elites. But, despite being old, there are changes that need to be studied, interpreted and understood.

Armed territorial control by criminal groups is a historical phenomenon that expresses itself in configurations characterized by bonds of opposition, alliance, cooperation, conflict and competition with the legal system and with other criminal groups in the territory and beyond.

In the case of Rio de Janeiro, specifically, the configurations of illicit drug trafficking gangs and militia groups have developed in a correlated manner. In other words, changes within one group (such as territory, supply networks, markets, and exploited goods) lead to adaptations in other competing groups. In this sense, the transformations and adaptations observed in the organization of these armed groups are continuous and linked to the dispute over resources and markets. Similarly, armed territorial controls are structured within contexts of significant material and symbolic precariousness, produced by both the market and the state, and create various forms of "siege" in the lives of those living in such areas (Alves, 2003; Silva, 2008; Leite et al., 2018; Rocha, 2019; Cano and Duarte, 2012).

The militia/trafficking opposition is fundamental to these configurations

Although both "trafficking" and "militia" represent forms of armed territorial control, the configurations of this control are structured based on their distinction from one another. The literature on crime and territorial control in Rio de Janeiro has defined militia groups in opposition to drug trafficking gangs, primarily because militias have cultivated an image of "community" initiative aimed at combating violence stemming from the actions of drug traffickers (Cano and Ioot, 2008; Manso, 2020). However, as noted earlier, the updating of operational dynamics and changes in the organization of these groups are constant and progressive. Consequently, recent years have seen a convergence in the practices of these groups, which were previously seen as opposing, as well as the formation of potential partnerships between them (Rocha, Carvalho, and Motta, 2024; Manso, 2020). Nevertheless, these updates do not eliminate the distinctions between them. On the contrary, distinctions remain crucial in shaping and characterizing the specific configurations of armed control in territories, involving their practices and representations, as well as the institutional practices of the state intertwined with them.

The central element distinguishing configurations of armed territorial control is not the level of violence

Based on the evidence presented in the research here and other studies conducted by our network, it is observed that violence is not the central element distinguishing trafficking and militia as "territorial regimes" (Leite, 2018) or as devices of territorial control. The level of armed violence experienced in the territories is related to factors such as the competition for control over localities (as opposed to territories with already "consolidated" control) and the degree of management and control over internal cohesion within the territory (in terms of enforcing rules of sociability). These factors emerge in the cases analyzed as more influential, affecting the level of violence – whether higher or lower – regardless of which group controls the territory.

The central distinguishing element of territorial armed control configurations is the business model

We argue here that the central element distinguishing militias from drug traffickers is their respective business model or, in other words, their *political economy*. Comparatively, the illegal drug market represents the structural business of drug trafficking, a market deemed morally negative, namely, the use of narcotic drugs, often linked to crimes against property and individuals (Souza and Silva, 2018). In contrast, the illegal security market, supplemented by the illegal trade and services market, is the structural business of militias. This market is associated with access to goods and services considered essential for quality of life, such as security, cable TV, internet, gas, mobility, and basic food supplies, among others (Manso, 2020). Real estate development also emerges as one of the most significant businesses in diversifying this market, which remains dynamic and ever-changing (Hirata et al., 2022). This distinction, which appears as an opposition, is fundamental to the organizational forms of each type of armed territorial control.

However, there is a common element that emphasis. Territorial control is a fundamental aspect of both business models; it generates different forms of income, which could be characterized as a form of urban extractivism (Gago and Mezzadra, 2017), associated with various modalities of dispossession (Harvey, 2003).

The legitimacy of armed groups is strongly related to their ability to provide a sense of peace and security in in the territories they control and their surroundings

Various forms of criminal control sustain their legitimacy primarily through their ability to provide a sense of internal peace and security within the territory and its vicinity, either through the absence of crimes against property and individuals or through the absence of police operations in the area. Thus, the feeling of security and "peace" (in an emic category, meaning the absence of armed conflicts) can be provided by both drug traffickers and militia members; however, it is a commodity – meaning it is marketed, sold and bought, and structures the business model of the group – only for militias. It is also worth noting that the legitimacy derived from ensuring security and peace is

undermined when, in the case of territories controlled by drug traffickers, the quantity and intensity of armed conflicts are considered by residents to be "excessive," disrupting daily life and threatening the safety of those not "involved" (Zaluar and Conceição, 2007; Misse, 2008). In the case of the militias, however, it is observed that excessive extortion (through increasingly higher fees for a growing range of services) can undermine their legitimacy.

Regarding their relationship with residents of the territory and its surroundings, the markets divisions also lead to differences and oppositions. On one hand, the sale of illicit drugs requires protection for the selling locations, known as "*bocas de fumo*", which implies larger weapon arsenals and a more ostentatious display of these weapons – to dissuade potential adversaries from controlling the "*bocas*". Control of information and circulation in the areas is also considered necessary. Consequently, drug traffickers relate to the residents of the localities and surroundings where they operate in a more overtly violent manner, with more explicit threats of physical violence. On the other hand, the commercialization of services by militias implies a more nuanced relationship with residents, where the group's "business façade" is more evident. However, moments of fees' collection can become explicitly violent, especially due to the excessive and growing extortion that residents of these areas are subjected to (Rocha, Carvalho and Mota, 2024).

In the same vein, these structural oppositions are also reflected in social representations of the participants in each type of armed control modality. According to interlocutors interviewed in one of our network's research projects (Carvalho, Rocha and Motta, 2023), militia members are perceived as "*people like us*", "*could be anyone*", "*well dressed*" and, initially, well-mannered and cordial, as long as their interests are not threatened. In contrast, drug traffickers are seen as the stereotypical figure of the young Black favela resident: permanently under the influence of drugs and uncontrollably violent. It's important to highlight that both figures are feared for the violence they exercise or potentially exercise. The "siege" may vary in terms of the type of experience, but it is always a "siege" (Silva, 2008).

The existence of differences in configurations does not imply the absence of intersections

The presence of distinctions in configurations, although they are fundamental to the organizational forms of each type of armed territorial control, does not mean that intersections do not exist. For instance, drug trafficking groups can commercialize services and goods, and militia groups can allow or operate with drug trafficking within the localities they control. However, both will maintain their core business activities. In cases where alliances between the two are observed, it is evident that the partnership between drug trafficking and militia is based on the division of business interests (illicit drugs and services) and the provision of "peace and protection" derived from the "political advantages" mediated by the militias, such as avoiding frequent police operations (Hirata et al., 2022). These alliances are more or less punctual, depending on the relationships historically

established in the territories as well as the commercial interests at stake. In some cases, they are sporadic and limited to the sale of a specific resource (economic or otherwise), such as arms. In others, they are more long-lasting, establishing themselves as a "consortium" for the shared exploitation of a locality while maintaining markets divisions (Carvalho, Rocha and Motta, 2023).

Organizational structures, articulation, and command are also distinguishing elements, as are the forms of interconnection with legal and police institutions.

The organizational and command structures of armed territorial control configurations also vary according to the group in question. Drug trafficking relies on the supply of drugs to the wholesale market, which involves international trafficking and control over national distribution routes. The organization of these markets has resulted in the formation of factions. Some groups have gained strength and power nationally, notably the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and Comando Vermelho (CV). Locally, smaller groups, more or less affiliated with the groups controlling drug distribution routes, also emerge. Criminal groups associated with drug trafficking are organized in more vertical and hierarchical structures, even though they may exhibit decentralized organizational forms in territories under the command of different leaders. Since their inception, prisons have been a key site for the articulation and coordination of these structures (Amorim, 1993; Manso and Dias, 2018). Conflicts may arise (1) between factions over control of markets and routes; (2) within a faction over power and control – disputes over leadership; (3) within a territory due to internal disputes within a faction or external disputes involving the replacement of factions controlling the territory.

Militias rely on the protection of police institutions to secure their political market for protection and also on state institutions to maintain their monopoly over the services and goods they sell. They tend to have a decentralized structure following the distribution of police battalions. They depend on controlling political spaces, particularly parliaments and other state institutions. Police institutions (battalions) play an important role in articulating this structure, as do parliamentary mandates (Manso, 2020). Conflicts may arise between militia groups over control of territory markets, within the same militia group over command, or due to external disputes involving other groups, often related to changes in police structures.

Armed control of territories has a major impact on associative and political dynamics and also involves forms of resistance and contestation

Armed control of territories has a strong impact on associative practices, imposing a variety of sieges (Silva and Rocha, 2008; Silva, 2016). Due to their specific organizational configurations and structures, there are also fundamental differences here.

The business model of drug trafficking depends less on the representation of interests in the territory, and could be threatened as the presence of state institutions in the territory grows. In this sense, the relationship with social organizations tends to be one of monitoring, requiring

social organizations to request authorization for activities to be carried out in the territory. When there are internal conflicts within the groups that control the territory, there tends to be instability in the relationship with the organized associations. At the same time, it is very common to criminalize residents' associations in territories controlled by drug traffickers (Rocha, 2018).

The militias' business model depends on brokering interests (access to public goods and services), which tends to lead these groups to seek a monopoly on territorial representation, including parliamentary political representation. In this sense, the relationship with collective organizations tends to be one of direct control or the extinction of community forms of organization. Hence the symbiosis between residents' associations and militias (Araujo, 2019; Manso, 2020).

In addition, there are numerous studies that establish a relationship between the growth of militias and the conservative turn Brazil has experienced in recent years, especially the growth of ultra-right-wing groups and the election of President Bolsonaro (Burgos, 2021; Santos Junior, 2022).

All this underscores the need to examine the processes that would enable territories to resist the detrimental effects of armed control. At the same time, it is necessary to reflect on how activism within these territories can serve as agents of social transformation. Resistances mobilize new individual and collective strategies (Sonoda, Assis, and Schenker, 2016). From the perspective of collective action, new social movements and strategies of confrontation and advocacy are shaping new action repertoires in response to the use of violent territorial control mechanisms, whether by criminal groups or the state itself. Within these new repertoires, cultural occupations of public spaces, struggles for the common good, and demands for the right to the city emerge, combined with legal protection strategies and efforts to internationalize the reporting of human rights violations (Santos Junior, 2022).

The configurations of territorial armed groups are linked to regimes of illegality, power games, and political commodities

The configurations of territorial armed groups are shaped by the relationships between militias, drug trafficking, and the legal system, particularly the police, as well as by regimes of normalization, political systems, and the penal system, which legalize and criminalize, regulate and deregulate, and configure and reconfigure militias and drug trafficking groups and their interactions with legal apparatuses.

These relationships define and are defined by power games that operate in the interstices of the legal and the illegal (Telles, 2009) and structure the ways conflicts are negotiated (Pires and Kant de Lima, 2021) and political commodities (Misse, 2011) concerning protection, security, and the "right to kill," always marked by asymmetric, coercive, and violent exchanges and by unstable and variable power dynamics. In this power game within the folds of legality and illegality, police operations in controlled territories have proven to be a mechanism that can favour certain groups over others (Hirata et al., 2023). Additionally, state agents operating under the law, particularly police officers, have significant power to decide who and what is criminal (Garau and Costa, 2020), making the justice system a key component of this dynamic.

Militias and drug trafficking groups exhibit different patterns of relationship with popular religiosity in the controlled territories

Despite the limited research on this topic, it appears that differences in the configurations and structures of militias and drug trafficking factions, as well as their encirclements, are also reflected in their relationships with religiosity. In particular, the relationship with certain conservative Pentecostal churches stands out, though one must avoid overgeneralization given the diversity of religious denominations that identify as Pentecostal.

Due to the illegality and moral stigma associated with drug use, the relationship between certain churches and factions is marked by tensions and conflicts, though it is not impossible (Cunha, 2008; 2024). A local drug leader's affiliation with a Pentecostal religious group can shape specific practices in the territories, such as persecution of African-based religions or the proliferation of biblical graffiti on walls, but generally does not result in significant convergence on behavioral rule enforcement.

For militias, whose legitimacy is founded on delineating right from wrong, accepted from condemned, sinful from virtuous, the relationship with certain Pentecostal churches may reflect cognitive affinity. In this context, moral control may emerge as a structural element. There is potential convergence between the behavioral control exerted by militias and the conservative values of certain Pentecostal churches, which could manifest in controlling bodies, expelling LGBTQIA+ individuals, and prohibiting drug use. This convergence could lead to a complicity in agendas and support for militia candidates by certain conservative Pentecostal pastors and evangelical candidates by militia groups within these territories (Manso, 2023).

Together, drug trafficking, militias, and the police form inseparable dispositifs of biopower, managing life and death, and eliminating the undesirables

Living "under siege" by armed groups can be strongly determined by the type of armed group controlling the territory and their practices in managing territories and populations. Such practices – which undermine life from an economic, political, and security perspective – can be exercised in various combinations and involve the state apparatus in different ways, but always based on coercion and violence. The distinction is not between "violence" and "peace," but in the agency mobilized in siege and violence practices and the daily strategies employed by residents to coexist with these violences.

The analytical distinctions between the business models of each type of armed territorial control presented in this text imply, as we aim to argue, differentiated political economies in terms of their effects on social relations, associative fabric, types of extractivism, institutional and political relationships, and the process of city-making. However, when considered collectively, these forms of armed territorial control compose a single mosaic, where the resulting image is of a "city under

sieged" (Graham, 2016) governed violently and abusively by armed groups in conjunction with the state. The pieces that form this image can be a locality, a network of various agents navigating between legality and illegality, an expanding business frontier, or a contextual shift in the city's political landscape. Continuously transforming, these pieces produce effects on the overall image and are, in turn, affected by it. By examining each of these pieces closely, it is possible to identify the combination of different degrees of coercion, surveillance, discipline, use of force, and imposition of death upon the undesirables, as well as the production of cohesion and moral adherence. Together, these pieces create dynamics on a different scale, revealing new alliances, conflicts, and effects that produce a fragmented representation of the city, shattered into different territories under armed control. This logic of fragmentation includes various police forces, which establish contextual and volatile alliances with armed groups, while being fundamental to the power dynamics in disputes and the consolidation of business interests.

However, from this fragmented image, the role of the state in producing this city management, its territories, populations, and conflicts stands out. The state is not alien to the phenomena described here but is a co-producer and co-manager of this armed territorial governance, where life and death are produced through the logic of maximizing exploitation via differential management of illegalisms (Foucault, 1997; 2015). Whether through its repressive policies, which, rather than suppressing, stimulate criminal dynamics, or through the intentional absence of public policies ensuring rights to public services, economic development, and security for these populations, the state is present in all these processes.

About the articles in this special issue

The articles gathered here discuss several of these points based on theoretical reflections or case studies. From the cases analyzed, it is possible to observe how illegalisms operate through the institutional dimension, how they are a condition of possibility for the conformation of markets and how they produce an experience of living in the city marked by terror, violence and authoritarianism for the inhabitants of peripheral territories.

Illegalisms as structuring policies in the area of public security and urban control, producing a system of government rooted in our historical and social conformation

Camila de Lima Vedovello's article entitled *Urban slaughters in the city and Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (2009-2020)* makes an important research effort to understand massacres in São Paulo. Analyzing 828 massacres in the state and 138 in the capital, in the period 2009-2020, the author finds well-defined patterns that help to characterize the phenomenon. In most of these events, the author finds police forces acting in an extralegal manner, approaching young black men in alleys located in peripheral neighborhoods during the night, asking which of them had already been in the prison system or if they were selling drugs, with subsequent armed execution and collection of evidence,

such as, for example, the capsules of the ammunition used to kill their victims. This scenario has many lines of continuity with the work of São Paulo's so-called death squads, but it is updated by the ongoing militarization of public security, insofar as the drive towards social hygiene extermination is also accompanied by others, such as disputes over illegal markets and institutional revenge.

Matheus Vieira, in an article entitled *Animals wearing combat boots: relationships between bookies and militiamen in the West Zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro*, uses records such as legal proceedings, reports and press articles to recover the long-standing relationship between bicheiros and militiamen in Rio de Janeiro, highlighting how the "jogo do bicho" business was constituted in the relationship between its bosses and institutional politics, with the transaction of political commodity with police officers as its modus operandi. With the development of the militias as groups interested in territorial control for the exploitation of markets, bicheiros and militiamen began to relate to each other on different terms, especially with the rise of some militiamen to the top of the state's institutional politics, highlighting the trajectory of well-known figures in Rio de Janeiro politics, such as the federal deputy and Secretary of Public Security, Álvaro Lins. Although autonomized as a criminal group, the militiamen continue to act as mediators between the bicheiros and institutional politics. The article thus describes the intersections between types of criminal activity that are distinct from a legal point of view, but deeply articulated.

The article by Leandro Marinho and André Rodrigues, entitled *Political violence in Baixada Fluminense: political power and power to kill*, analyzes violence against political agents in the Baixada Fluminense, an area located in the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro, made up of 13 municipalities. Highlighting the historical link between the configuration of the region, the constitution of local political powers and the use of violent means, the article argues that the conversion of armed power into political capital occurs through various devices, including the control of territories by armed criminal groups and the use of violence, especially the power to kill, in the regions studied. In the study carried out by the authors, the link between agents involved in violent acts, either as aggressors or victims, and belonging to militia groups stands out. It was also observed that most cases of political violence were recorded in territories controlled by militias. This data seems to reinforce the intertwining of violence, business and politics, in which the very power to kill is constituted as a market, as one of the structuring characteristics of the militias in Rio de Janeiro.

In the article *Colonelism without a subject: colonial illegalisms and power concentration*, José César de Magalhães Júnior delves deeper into the analysis of the differential management of illegalisms, debating the Foucauldian canon and Graham's (2016) update for the colonial context with the Brazilian critical historiographical tradition. Foucault's analysis, made in the courses *The Punitive Society* and In *Defense of Society*, and Graham's, in *Cities under siege*, present an argument about the tactics of militarization of civil life, carried out by the imperial powers in their colonial zones – tactics later applied to their internal populations – which established the management of illegalisms at the heart of the colonial regime. However, for José César, the illegalisms present in the colonial

experience were described and analyzed in depth by Brazilian authors, notably Victor Nunes Leal, in his work *Coronelismo, enxada e voto* [Colonelism, the hoe and the vote], originally from 1949 (Leal, 2012). His description of colonelism as a "system" of government that organized Brazilian political life from the grey areas between legal and illegal practices was, in the author's words, an anticipation of the analysis of the "differential management of illegalisms".

Chaos as a strategy and "protection" as a commodity in São Paulo's "Cracolândia" is the article by Thiago Godoi Calil and Aluizio Marino. The starting point of the article is a critique of the policies for dealing with the territory known as Cracolândia in São Paulo, which have been implemented since 1997, based on major police operations, imprisonment and the promotion of forced displacement of *crack* users, using violent means, including torture. The central argument of the article is that the dispersal of people and the violence employed in the operations produce a situation of chaos that promotes favorable conditions for urban renewal projects in the central area of São Paulo, generates popular support for the operations and transforms security into a political commodity, which is traded on the border between the legal and the illegal.

Laurindo Dias Minhoto, Pedro de Almeida Pires Camargos and Eduardo Altheman C. Santos, in the article *Militarization, militianization, and crime management in the neoliberal city*, situate the city as the main stage for the processes of emergence of new forms of control, securitization, war and global economic rationality. The relationships between "new urban designs, differential population management, punishment and capitalism in its neoliberal form" gain materiality in the authors' analysis of the Federal Intervention in Public Security in Rio de Janeiro in 2018. The policies of "zero tolerance" and "*total quality management*" are part of the way in which, during the federal intervention, policing, seen as the militarization of penal control, as well as securitization, carried out through the sanitization of spaces, the control of circulation, especially of demonstrations, leads to a hierarchical social order, managing territories, populations and illegalisms differentially in an efficient way. As a future agenda, the authors put forward the thesis that these processes are vectors for the construction of the *militialization* of security.

Illegalisms as a producer of markets in which land and security stand out as privileged commodities

In Ivan Zanatta Kawahara's article, entitled *Armed groups and the organization of work in the real estate market*, the focus is on the real estate market in favelas, in which the action of armed groups is characterized, as well as their mode of organization in this market. In the context of the public authorities' inability to universalize access to social housing, the author argues that both drug trafficking and the militia operate with more or less entrepreneurial structures in the real estate market, mobilizing labour and generating profits. However, despite the fact that both operate within the legal-illegal folds, the article also identifies differences in the structuring of these markets, in terms of the agents involved and the relationships established with the public authorities and property consumers.

In *State, illegality and space production in Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico,* Diana Zomera Partida and Antonio Fuentes Díaz analyze intense urban transformations in the city of Culiacán, in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico. The authors describe in great detail the large influx of peasant neighborhoods to the city's urban peripheries, which caused the urban sprawl to increase fourfold, in the context of the activities of the notorious Sinaloa Cartel in the cultivation of poppy, marijuana and the production of opium. These transformations combine illegalities and neoliberal rationality, intensifying social inequalities and, at the same time, spreading ostentatious criminal practices. The association between the macro-criminality of the Sinaloa Cartel, business elites and the production of urban space can be seen both in the production of popular housing, "vivienda asequible", and in the so-called commercial corridors, aimed at the development of entrepreneurship. Both were built through combined processes of deregulation, flexibilization and decentralization of urban planning, typical of the neoliberal project for cities, as well as their relations with criminal and business organizations. As emblematic events, the authors describe Culiacán's alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the so-called Culiacanazo, when a transnational mega-operation captured "El Chapo" Guzmán.

Isadora de Andrade Guerreiro's article, *Informal Real Estate in São Paulo's peripheries: illegalisms under a rent-seeking logic*, organizes very clearly how the relationship between changes in the structure of production, the labour market, access to credit and housing policies have led to an increasingly central role for the PCC in forms of association and real estate production in São Paulo. The author demonstrates how rentier models of housing production are associated in a very concrete and coherent way with central actors who are, in various ways, close to the PCC. She is careful to describe situations far removed from the ghostly images associated with "organized crime" or even the way in which armed territorial control occurs in Rio de Janeiro. In this sense, the specificity of the PCC, its model of organization and of operating in legal and illegal markets, ended up producing a unique configuration of the association between crime and housing, in which brokers, investors, developers and builders, "typical agents of the formal real estate market", are producing new ways of acting on the housing deficit, now reconfigured in a horizon of many passages between legality and illegality, and through a differential management of the illegalisms associated with everyday life and housing.

Next, the article *"Mirrored reflections": moral communities among "military police officers", "militias", and "pi-licias" in Rio de Janeiro*, written by Eduardo de Oliveira Rodrigues, focuses on civilian agents who want to join the police and who often work illegally for police officers in the private security market, informally known as pi-lícias. Based on his participation in a preparatory course for candidates for a military police career in Rio de Janeiro, the author argues that the construction of "moral communities", involving "pi-lícias", military police and militiamen, functions as an important device in the agency of certain illegal private security markets in the city and also in certain illegal police investigation practices. As the article argues, this mirrors game is particularly strong in certain territories located in Rio de Janeiro's most popular neighborhoods.

Larissa Gdynia Lacerda and Vera da Silva Telles investigate, in the article *Urban borders, markets in dispute: power games in the production of spaces*, how the production of urban land and housing markets in São Paulo is currently also operated by the "PCC men", whose business is expanding in the same proportion and intensity as the urban expansion front represented by occupations and popular settlements. Illegalities emerge in this scenario as the way in which these agents navigate the real estate market, through practices of protection and extortion, coercion and persuasion, conflicts and accommodations, in disputes and alliances with other economic agents at different scales of operation. The presence of these actors, linked to the most powerful criminal faction in the country, in São Paulo's urban market changes the power games and the location of other economic agents, at the same time as showing how the land and housing markets are constituted in the gaps between the legal and the illegal.

Illegalisms as co-management of urban life and their effects on local sociabilities

Luiz Fábio S. Paiva, Suiany Silva de Moraes and Valéria Pinheiro analyze the impacts of factions on the ways of living and moving around in the daily lives of residents of Fortaleza, Ceará, in the article *The social effects of crime on the dynamics of Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil*. In view of the confluence between the expansion of the faction logic, its territorial disputes and the low-quality housing programs for the dwellings, without promoting coexistence among the residents, tensions in these housing estates became a constant, preventing sociability geared to the needs of the residents and expanding the spaces of social control by the factions, including the fact that their disputes produced borders that prevented the free movement of people. As a borderline scenario, the authors highlight forced displacements, known as "espirros", when residents are forced to leave their homes. In addition, both interlocutors from state bodies and residents point out that the organization of civil society is an important buffer, a kind of "insurgency", which, even in a scenario of profound changes in popular forms of organization, seems to resist factional domination.

"Siege by terror" in disputed territories in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro, by Monique Batista Carvalho and Jonathan Willian Bazoni da Motta, analyzes the repertoire of territorial government tactics of different actors from the "world of crime", as they participate in the dispute for territories in the Praça Seca region, Rio de Janeiro. In the locations "disputed" by the armed groups, life is understood in terms of a "war": a representation that echoes the image shared by the hegemonic media, which alters routines, suspends the possibility of daily control and planning and has a negative impact on the feeling of security. The authors call this radical experience "siege by terror", in the sense of a subjective experience marked by violence and constant threat. Based on ethnographic work, they describe the tactics used by residents to survive this siege, anticipatory mechanisms aimed at avoiding exposure to risk and guaranteeing the maintenance of life and routine. By being subjected to this "siege by terror", the residents of Praça Seca live, at the limit, the precariousness that armed controls produce.

In addition to the articles in the Dossier, this issue of Cadernos Metrópole features six more articles.

Raquel Oliveira Jordan is the author of the article entitled *Competences in dispute: construction regulation in the I Housing Congress, 1931*. This article looks at the debate surrounding building laws in São Paulo from the First Housing Congress in 1931. The author argues that, despite the focus on housing, the Congress also discussed building regulations, with often contradictory approaches.

Next, in the article entitled *The Ribeirão Preto Metropolitan Region: allocation of financial resources to SDG*s, Erasmo José Gomes proposes a method for evaluating the allocation of financial resources aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular Goal 11: inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities. The author analyzes the budgets of 34 municipalities in the Ribeirão Preto Metropolitan Region (RMRP) between 2016 and 2020. The study argues that, in this specific objective, it was possible to see a very significant budget commitment in the municipalities studied.

Renato Balbim's article, *Grammars of development. From informal economy to informal settlements*, proposes a reflection on the term informal, recovering the trajectory of the debates surrounding its definition. The genealogy of the concept allows the author to see the moment when the term came to be used in a generalized and imprecise way, associating itself with disqualifying and stigmatizing content.

In the sequence, the article *Land price and urban hierarchy in a medium city: the case of Uberlândia, Minas Gerais*, by Gabriel do Carmo Lacerda, looks at urban land prices and the spatialization of state investments to discuss the urban hierarchical structure of the city of Uberlândia, in Minas Gerais.

Clarice Misoczky de Oliveira and Igor Nicolini, in their article *Review of Master Plans in advanced neoliberalism: the case of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul*, reflect on the effects of the spread of neoliberal thinking on the process of revising master plans, focusing on the experience of Porto Alegre/RS. The authors argue that the spread of neoliberal ideology is expressed, among other things, in the productivism approach to the city, in authoritarian management, in the dissemination of project-based planning and in the fragmentation of the master plan.

Finally, closing this volume is the article *Spatiality and control of bodies: Boa Vista and the Venezuelan human mobility*, written by João Carlos Jarochinski Silva, Gabriella Villaça and Vanessa Palácio Boson. In this article, the authors set out to reflect on the socio-spatial transformations in the city of Boa Vista (Roraima) following the arrival of a significant contingent of Venezuelan migrants in 2015. Based on the approaches of Bauman and Foucault, the authors argue that, behind the apparent welcoming attitude, the state promotes the integration of migrants with residents through practices that reinforce prejudiced behaviors aimed at controlling undesirable bodies.

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Notes

(1) The "Rede Ilegalismos e a Produção da Cidade" [Illegalisms and the Production of the City Network"] was formed in 2019 with the aim of reflecting on and promoting public debate about the structure and growing impacts of armed groups operating under the logic of illegalisms in Rio de Janeiro and to develop proposals for confronting them. Since then, it has been developing research and advocacy actions related to the issue. The Network is an inter-institutional working group that brings together various research groups, public agencies and organizations aiming to establish dialogues with individuals conducting research related to the theme of illegalisms and the production of urban space, with a focus on popular territories. More specifically, the Network is interested in the dynamics of association and interaction between crime, the police and territorial control, in its multiple dimensions and updates. It is composed by the following groups and collectives: Cidades – Urban Research Center/UERJ; Fogo Cruzado; Heinrich Böll Foundation; Geni – New Illegalisms Group/UFF; InEAC – Institute for Comparative Studies in Conflict Management/UFF; Right to Memory and Racial Justice Initiative; Labá – Direito, Espaço e Política/FND/UFRJ; LEUS – Laboratório de Estudos Urbanos e Socioambientais/PUC-Rio; Nudedh – Defensoria Pública do Estado do Rio de Janeiro; Observatório de Favelas; Observatório das Metrópoles/Ippur/UFRJ.

(2) The "jogo do bicho" (animal game) is an illegal lottery-like game that began in the late 19th century. It involves betting on the numbers associated with various animals. Despite being illegal, it remains popular in many parts of Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro, where it has deep cultural roots and is often linked to organized crime and corruption.

(3) The term "política da bica d'água," which translates to "water fountain policy," refers to a practice in some Brazilian urban areas where access to essential services like water is controlled by local authorities or influential groups, that grant access to this important resource in exchange of electoral support. This arrangement underscores a form of clientelism and political patronage, very prevalent in Rio de Janeiro from the 1950s to the 1970s.

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