

## Editorial 49

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Issue 49 of *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* (*CITIES, Communities and Territories*) features a thematic dossier titled “Between the digital and the urban: readings of the changing space” coordinated by Isabel Carvalho, Sílvia Leiria Viegas, Adriana Nascimento, and Tamara Egler. Digital media are increasingly reshaping how urban life is experienced, represented, and studied. This dossier offers a glimpse into these transformations through 6 articles, 2 essays, and 3 additional contributions exploring the relationship between technology, art and politics. Overall, the authors reflect on how technopower and polarization dynamics take place, namely with reference to a few case studies, while discussing how urban resistance and reconfiguration can be organized around collective initiatives and social movements. These contributions underscore how digital media can enable new forms of knowledge production and civic engagement, inviting researchers to reconsider the boundaries between analysis, intervention, and collaboration in contemporary urban studies.

Following the dossier, issue 49 features six research articles, an essay and a policy brief, covering a wide range of themes and interesting reflections. The first article, “Local development in the context of territorial shrinkage: insights for a model of analysis”, proposes a conceptual analysis of the challenges faced by shrinking territories, articulating the contributions of the literature on regional and local development with studies on the spatial configuration of the knowledge economy. The authors, Bernardo Machado Cruz and Pedro Costa, argue that contemporary development models, centred on competitiveness and technological innovation, are limited in the face of the specific characteristics of these territories, which are marked by unfavourable socio-economic dynamics and population loss. As an alternative, the article suggests the adoption of beyond growth development strategies, centred on valuing the qualitative, relational and affective attributes of places, placing quality of life at the centre of territorial policies. Recognising that development and shrinkage are not mutually exclusive, it points to more comprehensive approaches that enhance the well-being of the resident population and territorial attractiveness, even in contexts of demographic decline.

Jeferson Tavares takes us to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean with the article “Territorial planning as a development strategy for small cities in Brazil”. Based on a critical review of so-called territorial associations, the research discusses experiences of regional co-operation in city systems, highlighting their potential and limitations. The author concludes that, despite the contradictions and inter-scalar disputes, these forms of territorial organisation can strengthen local governance, promote territorial solidarity and create alternatives to the current competitive and fragmented model. Recognising territorial evidence and multi-territoriality is seen as the basis for a new approach to planning, capable of linking endogenous development, spatial justice and regional sustainability.

Also in a Brazilian context, the third article is authored by Emanuela Alves da Rocha, Patricia Regina Chaves Drach and Eloisa Carvalho de Araujo, who present “City, segregation, and food: study of the food environment in the context of socio-spatial inequality in Petrópolis”. They analyse the agri-food environment of the first district of Petrópolis, in Rio de Janeiro, highlighting the relationship between socio-spatial inequality, territorial planning and food insecurity. Based on the mapping of

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commercial and agricultural establishments, combined with income and urban mobility data, the study identifies priority areas for public policies that encourage short consumption circuits, such as open-air markets, vegetable gardens and community kitchens. Integration between producer and consumer is advocated as a central strategy for strengthening local rurality, promoting food security and building a territorial identity based on sustainable and inclusive practices. The approach also proposes the articulation between different areas of knowledge and social agents to tackle the multiple dimensions of food inequalities in cities.

We move from Brazil to Colombia with the fourth article, “Post-peace agreement and its impact on the urban transformation of Gaitania, Colombia”, by Laura Pinilla Loaiza and Ángel Castañeda Rodríguez. This piece analyses the territorial effects of the implementation of the Peace Accords in Colombia, focusing on Gaitania, a locality marked by emerging dynamics in the post-conflict context. Despite the methodological limitations imposed by the scarcity of data and historical cartographies, the research highlights the importance of including small urban centres in studies on territorial planning and post-conflict reconstruction, proposing a broader and more situated reading of the territorial transformations underway.

Back to Brazil, Jaqueline Andrade and Alina Gonçalves Santiago bring us the article “To hope in the educating city”. This study examines the role of the city as an educating agent in citizen education, broadening the understanding of education beyond the school and the family by including the formal, non-formal and informal dimensions. Based on a multi-method approach and case studies in the Monte Serrat and Campeche neighbourhoods in Florianópolis, the research reveals how urban spaces and social relations shape educational opportunities, promoting belonging, collective identity and democratic practices. Despite the challenges – such as socio-spatial segregation, the lack of public spaces and institutional fragmentation – the article argues that integrating the various educational dimensions can broaden the sense of citizenship and contribute to social justice based on coexistence, dialogue and ownership of the territory.

Finally, João Maia introduces the article “The post-human paradigm and the risks of depoliticizing governance”. The author critically analyses the foundations and risks of governance under the post-human paradigm, marked by the advance of automation, artificial intelligence and the internet of things. He argues that this technological model, shaped by the hegemonic logics of neoliberal globalisation, tends to reinforce social inequalities, depoliticise government action and compromise ecological sustainability. The text proposes an alternative form of governance based on citizen participation, the democratisation of scientific and technological knowledge and reciprocity between top-down and bottom-up decisions. It also defends the need for a high-intensity democracy that critically integrates science and technology into social, cultural and ecological processes, pointing towards a structural transformation of institutions and power relations towards a fairer, more collaborative and sustainable economy.

Gabriel Barth da Silva and Júlia Silveira then offer an essay on “Perceiving the difference: participant observation as a methodology in socio-spatial research”. The text proposes a critical reflection on the use of axes of differentiation – such as race, gender, disability, class and other social markers – in analysing socio-spatial contexts, with the aim of contributing to the epistemological renewal of the field of Urban Planning. In response to the historical lack of theoretical reflexivity in this field, the text argues that a sensitive and intersectional methodology, based on participant observation, can broaden the understanding of urban complexity by recognising difference as a relational, contextual and systemic phenomenon. In dialogue with various authors, the work emphasises that urban practices cannot be understood apart from the hierarchies and inequalities that shape territories. The methodological proposal does not start from a hegemonic identity to interpret the city, but seeks to capture local dynamics from the very experiences and meanings of the subjects who inhabit the space. The essay argues that considering difference as a structuring factor in urban reality is fundamental to building fairer, more inclusive planning rooted in the concrete experiences of territories.

Finally, this issue is complemented by a policy brief text dedicated to a subject of great relevance in public policy matters, “Developing a Local Strategy for Dementia using a co-participation methodology – the analysis of a proposal for a central region of Portugal”. Authored by Marlene Rosa, Susana Lopes and Raquel Sabino, this study presents the process of co-participatory construction of a Local Strategic Plan for Dementia, developed with the participation of 15 municipal

institutions and technicians in a territory in the centre of Portugal. The participatory methodology proved to be effective in integrating crucial dimensions of dementia care (processes, social health and policies), in line with person-centred models and social health principles. The plan highlights innovative actions such as informal support networks, specific training, resource sharing and impact indicators, defending the need for continuous monitoring and territorialised adaptation. The work emphasises the importance of involving the community and local actors more widely, promoting co-responsibility and sustainability in the response to dementia, and proposes that the methodology can be replicated in other local contexts as a strategic and sensitive tool for implementing more inclusive and effective public policies.

As the summer season offers a chance to pause and recharge, the editorial team of *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* extends its best wishes for a happy holiday and for enjoyment of this issue.