

Editorial 49

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The thematic dossier “Waters that Shape Territories: Reinventing Rivers in Contemporary Cities” emerges from the international research and action network Cyted RUN | Rios Urbanos Naturalizados, dedicated to revaluing river landscapes and integrating them into contemporary urban dynamics. The six contributions assembled here reflect a shared commitment to rethinking the relationship between cities and rivers. They explore rivers as ecological, technical, and cultural elements, highlighting their potential to foster more sustainable and inclusive urban futures.

Rethinking urban rivers today requires overcoming fragmented approaches and recognising water as a central component of urban design and daily life. It also calls for greater awareness of its role in an era of climate urgency and increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

This dossier, coordinated by Nagayamma Aragão, Luciana Bragança, Diego Torres, Natasha Cabrera, and Sergio Caruso, invites reflection on innovative practices in planning, research, and civic action that view rivers as structuring elements of the urban landscape and catalysts for regeneration. In doing so, it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that water presents in shaping contemporary territories.

In addition to the dossier, issue 50 of *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* (*CITIES, Communities and Territories*) features six articles covering a wide range of topics and geographical areas, one policy brief and a book review. The first article, entitled “Políticas públicas y práctica profesional de la arquitectura para un hábitat sostenible de la ciudad de Mar del Plata” positions us in Argentina. Authored by Laura Romero, Agustín Loredo, and Julia Romero, this study examines regulatory instruments and public policies implemented between 2000 and 2024 at multiple scales to promote sustainable urban habitats in Mar del Plata. It emerges amid major shifts in urban living and construction, exposing tensions between planning frameworks and the spontaneous growth of settlements. Grounded in the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), the research employs a mixed descriptive and interpretative approach, analysing regulations published in official documents. Findings show uneven implementation and limited alignment with urban sustainability goals. The study concludes by highlighting the gap between global frameworks and their local application, calling for stronger dialogue, consensus, and policy integration to address environmental and urban challenges.

From Argentina we go to Spain with the second article, authored by Maria Ángeles Rodríguez Domenech, and José Prada-Trigo. “Significant correlations in residential segregation in medium-sized cities: the case of Ciudad Real (Spain)” focuses on residential segregation in medium-sized cities as the case of Ciudad Real. While segregation has long been associated with social inequality, recent evidence reveals a more intricate relationship. Combining GIS data with a quintile-based correlation analysis, the study confirms that higher inequality intensifies residential segregation. It argues that addressing segregation demands an integrated approach that links labour dynamics and inequality, as factors such as education, unemployment, income, and welfare dependence are deeply interconnected. Effective and sustainable policies must therefore rest on a holistic understanding of these socio-economic and spatial dynamics.

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Brazil is the territory that provides the context for the third article, “Da opacidade à luminosidade imagética: as interfaces do muro”, authored by Thaís Maria Rossetto, Silvia Mikami Pina. This article interprets the wall as a physical expression of historical, social, political, and economic segregation, as well as of growing individualisation. Seen as a multifaceted barrier with diverse impacts on public space, the wall is analysed through three interfaces—the oppressive, the mutable, and the appropriated—revealing how artistic interventions can transform its meaning. Focusing on a case study in Jardim San Diego, a peripheral neighbourhood of Campinas (São Paulo, Brazil), the study shows that graffiti fostered more welcoming environments and new patterns of spatial appropriation. These practices re-signified the neighbourhood by turning an oppressive structure into a site of belonging and identity, where art becomes a form of resistance and affirmation for marginalised groups.

A Portuguese case dedicated to a very unusual topic is presented in the fourth article. “La construcción de la red de abastecimiento de agua en Barreiro (Setúbal)”, by Lucia Alvaredo, analyses public water management in mainland Portugal from the mid-20th century onward, contributing to the environmental history of the period. Focusing on the relationship between urban-industrial development and aquifer resources—a topic rarely addressed in Portuguese historiography—it examines the case of Barreiro to reveal the environmental consequences of the Estado Novo’s developmentalist policies. Based on extensive archival and institutional sources, the study shows that the creation of a water supply network improved hygiene and living conditions while initiating wastewater management. More critically, the combination of industrial concentration, intensified water extraction, and state incentives for private exploitation led to severe imbalances in groundwater resources. The network ultimately contributed to the overexploitation and contamination of aquifers, leaving Barreiro among the areas most affected by these problems in the early 1990s.

We go back to Brazil in the fifth article, authored by André Vaz, Leandro Brusadin, and Lia Proença Brusadin. “Ruptura temporal das vivências cotidianas: do passado sensível ao patrimônio afetivo de Paracatu de Baixo, Mariana, MG” analyses the 2015 collapse of the Fundão dam—one of Brazil’s worst socio-environmental disasters—and its implications for memory, identity, and heritage studies. Focusing on Paracatu de Baixo, a devastated community in Mariana (MG), it explores how cultural heritage endures through emotional ties, transforming the ruins into a symbol of resistance. This resistance enables the community to reaffirm its identity and historical belonging through engagement with a “sensitive past.” The study shows that preserving collective memory and community logic is essential for rebuilding identities after the tragedy. The disaster exposed deep social inequalities and institutional neglect, highlighting the need to acknowledge affected memories and ensure that territorial reconstruction incorporates both the rupture’s sensitive past and the community’s affective heritage.

Mexico is also represented in this issue with the sixth article. “La planeación de infraestructuras: balance entre la visión regional y el megaproyecto en el caso del tren interurbano México-Toluca” is authored by Monica Yñigo, Luis Miguel Montes, and Arturo Flores. The study examines transport infrastructure planning and the balance between regional vision and megaproject development through the case of the Mexico–Toluca Intercity Train (TIMT). Positioned within broader debates on planning objectives and processes, it assesses whether a regional perspective guided the project’s implementation. The findings indicate that, while the TIMT met its goal of improving mobility and reducing traffic and environmental congestion between metropolitan areas, it failed to maintain a coherent territorial vision or effective coordination among national, state, and municipal authorities. As the focus shifted toward economic and financial priorities, planning became fragmented, resulting in a physically functional but regionally disconnected project.

“Networks as a strategic arrangement to achieve scale in housing improvement initiatives” is the Policy Brief authored by Catarina Sombrio, Cristiane Guinancio, and Vanda Zanoni. The document addresses a central challenge in Brazil’s housing sector: how to scale up technical assistance for housing improvements. Currently, the right to such assistance for low-income families is applied on a case-by-case basis, which limits efficiency and prevents economies of scale. Meanwhile, the need is overwhelming — the rate of inadequate housing in Brazil is more than four times higher than the official housing deficit.

To meet this demand, the policy brief proposes the formation of networks as a strategic solution. These networks would bring together public and private actors at municipal, state, and federal

levels to expand coverage, streamline operations, and improve outcomes. The analysis highlights the importance of complementary strategies that promote social innovation and community participation. It calls for the institutionalisation of network formation as part of strategic planning, supported by process standardisation and coordinated logistics. By adopting these measures, Brazil could optimise public resources, achieve greater impact, and transform housing improvements into an integrated and scalable public policy.

Filipa Serpa closes the issue 50 signing the book review of *Habitar em Comunidade. Habitação Cooperativa em Cedência de Direito de Uso*. Published by Bambual Portugal in March 2025, under the initiative of Rede CoHabitat, this book is the Portuguese translation of the original Spanish edition *Habitar en comunidad. La vivienda cooperativa en cesión de uso* (2020), authored by the collectives Lacol and La Ciutat Invisible.

The book makes a significant contribution to the theory and debate surrounding the cooperative housing sector based on the right of use. It serves as both a conceptual reference and a practical manual for promoting this model, which combines affordability with strong elements of innovation, collective governance, and shared living. Comprehensive, well-structured, and contextually grounded, the book is an essential resource for all disciplines involved in the implementation of co-operative housing policies. It is particularly relevant for architects, whose work spans from the domestic to the urban scale, shaping not only the physical form but also the social and political dimensions of this collective project.

Confident that this issue gathers a diverse selection of high-quality articles on timely and engaging topics, the *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* editorial team wishes all readers an inspiring and thought-provoking read.