



## Article

# In Defense of a Peripheral Epistemology: Exploring “Decolonial Cognitive Triggers” for Epistemic Disobedience in Urban Peripheries

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**Abstract:** This paper presents an approach to decolonial thinking and epistemological disobedience through what we call “decolonial cognitive triggers”. It is based on the struggles of urban peripheral communities in Brazil and explores eight triggers in the making of a Peripheral Epistemology. The unique points of our reflection are the sociocultural practices emerging from urban peripheral communities in Brazil and their responses to structural racism. As a part of this, we will explore the concepts of *potência* and *convivência* as core components of the decolonial debate, as well as their role in enabling epistemic disobedience in urban peripheries. We conclude by suggesting shifts in policy-making directed towards urban peripheries through the recognition and incorporation of such concepts and triggers.

**Keywords:** Peripheral Epistemology; urban peripheries; Global South; epistemic disobedience



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## 1. Introduction

“... our address is a complicated address ... we do not have formal documentation for our house. The bank does not recognize it as a requirement for lending. So, even for us to prove we are poor is difficult ...” (Resident of a favela in Rio de Janeiro. Cited by Duarte 2019, p. 67)<sup>1</sup>

Peripheral groups are dissonant subjects in the urban landscape. Their sociocultural practices tend not to be recognized or symbolically valued by public agents or wider society. Strategies adopted to give responses to practical problems, such as the legalization of their dwellings, have historically been downplayed because existing “formal” legal systems were unable to create mechanisms to accommodate their specific needs and, more than that, recognize the inventive power they employ to give practical responses to structural problems affecting their everyday lives. While “informal” systems of property ownership have worked for decades inside favelas, the barriers for accommodating them in the existing legal and policy systems remain an issue (Magalhães 2013). This is an example of the need to rethink the ways state mechanisms address the problems faced by peripheral people. We argue for the need to address such problems from an epistemological standpoint because they cannot be addressed comprehensively without a more situated epistemology emerging from the contexts in which such problems take place.

In this article, we propose some guiding elements to develop a Peripheral Epistemology that dialogues with urban peripheral struggles across the Global South (and the South in the North). It aligns with the disruptive epistemologies proposed by “subaltern urbanism” (Roy 2011) and aims to contribute to a necessary critique and alternative to the dominant paradigm of coloniality/modernity (Quijano 1992) that emerges with the European colonization in Latin America.

The authors of this article are themselves peripheral subjects, bringing diverse social, territorial, and corporeal experiences from the margins. Therefore, the article presents an elaboration of ideas developed over the past decades as part of our work, lived experience, and political activism within urban peripheral communities in Brazil. Despite being located in Brazil, the ideas presented here are expected to offer what we will be calling “decolonial cognitive triggers” to enable “unlearning” (Santos 2018) and “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo 2009) in the wider Global South, in particular to urban communities sharing similar struggles.

There are some aspects we wanted to bring to the forefront of the discussion to clear the path as we move towards the principles guiding the making of a Peripheral Epistemology. First and foremost, urban peripheral communities must be acknowledged as an integral part of the urban fabric, being an indissociable component of urban history and dynamics. In Brazilian terms, there is a political-intellectual statement which says “*favela é cidade*” (favela is city). This sounds trivial, but in the plan of the collective imaginary, favelas do not belong to a certain project of a city dominated by market-driven ideologies. They are, indeed, seen as a problematic area in the cities that, according to such an ideological project, should be stripped from the urban fabric (see, for example, Freeman and Burgos 2017; Barbosa and Coates 2021). This is in fact part of the early narrative about favelas (Valladares 2000), that gradually acquired different perspectives insofar as favelas spread across the urban fabric and established themselves as an integral part of the urban landscape—despite numerous attempts to eradicate them, the favelas resisted, rose and stood in the urban landscape across Brazilian cities as well as across cities in the Global South—where they name them *slums*, *barriadas*, *villa miseria*, *periferia*—to refer to a few of its diverse and plural connotations.

Favelas and urban peripheries represent dissonant territories and subjects in the city (Fernandes et al., forthcoming). In this paper, we want to reaffirm their geographical, embodied, historical, and symbolical place in the city. This will be made through a conceptualisation that puts favelas, their residents, their socio-cultural practices, and history, at the centre of urban debate through a decolonial approach. To achieve this aim, we will explore key ideas which contribute toward what we call a “Peripheral Epistemology”. We emphasize that such a Peripheral Epistemology is relevant to encapsulate Brazilian urban peripheral struggles in their specificities as well as their commonalities with other peripheries across the Global South. Indeed, we follow Robinson and Roy (2016) in claiming that we can destabilize urban theory from Rio de Janeiro as a locus of debate across Global South urban centres. With that in mind, we intend to provide a framework that can be utilised as a starting point to enable decolonial conversations with urban peripheral communities. Central to our efforts is the need to articulate relevant counter-conceptualisations to provide a critical, decolonial, cognitive framework to challenge established paradigms underpinning policies and practices that have a direct impact on urban peripheral communities. We argue that creating democratic forums for engagement and participation of peripheral urban communities is necessary, but not sufficient unless peripheral subjects and allies (civil society organizations, academics, politicians, and policy-makers) are equipped with a cognitive framework that offers them alternative parameters to overcome what Silva (2012) defined as a “paradigm of absence” (*paradigma da ausência*). In simple words, policy-making has been dominated by a middle-class *habitus*<sup>2</sup> (Bourdieu 1990) as well as taken for granted, naturalized ideas (Bourdieu 2001) that reproduce the dominant coloniality/modernity paradigm in the form of singular socio-relational and institutional dynamics in Brazilian society. Such dynamics are defined by social hierarchies and a sense of symbolic distinction that are underpinned by three core elements: racism, sexism, and institutional patrimonialism (Silva 2012). Moreover, it sets out parameters and aesthetics that prevent policies from addressing the underpinning problems of reproducing social inequalities in urban environments. For that reason, we take onboard the need to engage in what Mignolo (2009) referred as “epistemic disobedience” to challenge dominant systems of knowing and doing that underpin colonized policy-making. This is relevant because

policy design and implementation need to incorporate different references, emerging from peripheral epistemologies, to fully address the problems faced by peripheral communities. This is an important point because even “progressive” policies may still contribute to the reproduction and reinforcement of inequalities because the root causes of problems are not addressed from an epistemological perspective (Lechaptois 2014).

In our view, the critical need to challenge dominant epistemologies sits within what we called a “symbolic battle” (Fernandes et al., forthcoming). In this symbolic battle, the first step is to work to decolonize the gaze, thinking, and actions to overcome a tendency to take things for granted. For example, in the history of urban inequalities in Brazil, negative and stereotyping social representations have had a central influence on the way peripheral urban communities have been conceived, and the treatment dispensed to them. The narratives on peripheral communities were built around social disgust and dehumanization, which we defined as part of a “pedagogy of monsterization” (Fernandes et al. 2018), and, in a broader sense, what Silva (2019) defined as a “paradigm of hostility”. Both monsterization and hostility are sustained by a politics of extremism and hostile narratives, such as the one observed with the rise of the “politics of hate” in Brazil (Gallego 2018). The consequences of such a narrative can be observed in the wide social indifference to everyday tragedies faced by peripheral groups and, beyond that, their systemic criminalization—as demonstrated by the proportion of peripheral people populating prisons or being victims of homicides.<sup>3</sup> Peripheral groups have however, developed strategies and responses to their everyday struggles that are embedded in their lived experiences, ontological systems and epistemological accounts of worldviews and practices. We agree with Mignolo (2000) that such knowledge systems developed by peripheral groups are often ignored or downplayed. In our view, peripheral knowledge is rarely considered when policymakers design solutions to address problems faced by peripheral communities. As we argue in this paper, this is a problem related to a hierarchy of knowledge that is sustained by a dominant epistemological system which is reinforced by a negative view (social representation) of peripheral communities. As such, we agree with Mignolo (2000), Santos (2007) and Visvanathan (2009), who believe that social justice can only be achieved with “epistemic justice”. For us to achieve such epistemic justice, there is a need for alternative approaches to knowledge construction and ways of doing and knowing. This agenda is at the heart of this paper.

The matter of epistemic justice demands an elaboration on the knowledge systems produced by peripheral groups, and how these can be used not only to simply *dispute* hegemony against dominant epistemologies, but to *dialogue* in equal terms and, in doing so, help society to visualize and conceive solutions to social problems from a different perspective. This seems to be a simple equation where diverse knowledge is better. But it is not as simple as that because knowledge produced by peripheries does not enjoy the same symbolic legitimacy of dominant knowledge systems. In other words, symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1998, 2001) underpins what Santos (2007) defined as “abyssal thinking”.

Our emphasis on a Peripheral Epistemology is to offer a conceptual and epistemological framework that reflects upon the struggles faced by urban peripheral communities in Brazil. These communities have experienced high levels of historical inequalities, in which structural racism (Almeida 2018) is a major driver. From there, we explore “decolonial cognitive triggers” for a broader conversation across the Global South. In our view, it is necessary to develop a decolonial cognitive framework that can help with the creation of the enabling mechanisms for epistemic disobedience. Without a cognitive framework that provides a common ground for the struggles faced by these communities, there is a risk of missing the opportunity to engage in dialogue with governments, legislators, and policy-makers to address the underpinning issues affecting these communities. This can be explained because policy-making (as well as policy delivery) is dominated by the paradigm of absence (Silva 2012) and colonized thinking (Lechaptois 2014). Because of this, we defend a Peripheral Epistemology as the doorway to an alternative way of engagement with public agents. Our intention is, therefore, to equip grassroots groups, civil society

organizations, and engaged academics to reflect upon a new paradigm in which established cognitive structures guiding social activism, advocacy and policy-making are challenged.

## 2. Exploring the Paths to a Peripheral Epistemology

The defence of a Peripheral Epistemology concurs with the critique of the European paradigm of modernity/coloniality (Quijano 1992). Coloniality, as Mignolo (2011) argues, is the “darker side” of modernity because the project of modernity initiated by Europe cannot exist without coloniality. Coloniality, first introduced by Quijano (1992, 1998, 2000b), implies that the power system established by the Europeans as part of their colonial project was initiated by the invasion of Latin America. Mignolo (2011) reminds us of two core dimensions of the European project observed by historian Karen Armstrong (2002). Firstly, the economic dimension, based on the reinvestment of surplus to increase production capacity which enabled European economies to reproduce and amplify economic resources indefinitely. This seed of the capitalist model was made possible as part of colonial economies. Secondly, the epistemological dimension. Arguably, the European Enlightenment provided the intellectual and cultural basis for the dominant epistemological system in which scientific rationality was crucial to sustaining the expansion of capitalism. It is not our intention to go into much detail on the coloniality of power as this is well documented. Our key point here is to highlight how this imposes an idea of world, nature and social norms that became so dominant that it created what Santos (2007) referred to as abyssal lines, which are cognitive systems inherited from a colonized world, in which European dominant epistemologies largely disengaged from other epistemological systems by downplaying their contribution. This is more evident with regard to scientific rationality, but is also present in philosophy and theology. As Santos argues, abyssal thinking can only be overcome through “epistemic justice” in which subaltern/peripheral/Global South epistemologies are acknowledged as contributing to solutions that dominant epistemologies are incapable of addressing.

We call it Peripheral Epistemology, understanding that it is an epistemology from the peripheries, both corporeal, subjective, and territorial. From our perspective, Peripheral Epistemology is a toolbox for knowing and comprehending the world. At the same time, it is also a proposition and (re)construction of new ways of living in dimensions of the self, the community into which one is inserted, other communities, and the environment.

Fundamentally, the importance of using these tools stems from the realization that the global society in which we live is not fair or egalitarian at all. Social inequalities are historical. Ever since the foundations that led to the creation of capitalism as a world-system (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992), the same groups of people have been exploited, expropriated, made precarious and considered disposable. And it is their knowledge, their work and their ways of life that are delegitimized. So, when talking about bringing the knowledge of those people to the centre of the production of knowledge, we are also referring to epistemic justice.

Very little has changed for centuries, and, in our understanding, part of the problem lies in the way the problem itself is conceived, and which bases/references are used in seeking a solution. It is empirical, concrete, material: the dominant classes are interested in remaining dominant, and they create mechanisms in all areas of life to give visibility to strategies of all kinds—including theoretical-conceptual ones—that do not alter the systemic structures.

The Peripheral Epistemology we propose is based on different foundations, drawn from the struggles of urban peripheral communities in Brazil. What we are proposing, however, is not some form of inversion, but new ways of seeing, thinking, learning, and understanding the world because the epistemic tools that are currently the most widely used, the Eurocentric epistemologies, are failing to change reality, even the contestatory theories (Santos 2018).

To understand the reality of our country it is necessary to develop a conceptual and epistemological framework that reflects the specific struggles faced by Brazilian peripheral



communities. There are many reasons for that. Firstly, Brazil is a diverse country, marked by invasion and colonization by the European ruling classes, at a stage of modernity prior to the colonization of the British Empire over India and the African continent (Lander 2005). Secondly, Brazil is also distinct from the region in which it is located, as it is the only country in Latin America to have been colonized by the Portuguese. That resulted in unique cultural configurations, in which the idea of *mestiçagem*<sup>4</sup> (Freyre 2006) contributed to a false idea of a “racial democracy” (Tadei 2002). Thirdly, urban peripheral communities display the historical struggles emerging from structural racism, which is a form of violence reproduced in the social fabric through cultural and institutional practices (Almeida 2018). Here, it is important to highlight that although urban peripheries are diverse territories, with different regional and ethnical compositions, they reflect one core element of urbanization in Brazil, which is the role of structural racism as a driver for socio-spatial inequalities (Ribeiro 2020; Paula 2016; Campos 2005; Alves 2018). An epistemology addressing Brazilian urban peripheral struggles therefore needs to bring in distinct elements contextualized in the country’s reality. Despite that, we recognize and value knowledge from different parts of the world, so a Peripheral Epistemology dialogues with a wide range of contestatory knowledge, practices, and theories.

The Peripheral Epistemology that we present in this paper is a way of thinking, organizing, and acting. It is not intended to be in any way universal. Instead, our intention is to provide *one of many possible* interpretative frameworks to support and inform peripheral urban communities and allies to formulate ideas, projects and policies that can be presented as alternatives to dominant systems of thinking and doing that reproduce and reinforce historical inequalities. Peripheral Epistemology is a proposal to approach “knowledge”, knowing, being and doing by recognizing the inventive power of the peripheries in responding to the problems they face. It also recognizes the richness of this diversity as an inflection point in blurring borders (Anzaldúa 2007), building bridges (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015), coalitions (Sandoval 2000), and confluences (Santos 2015). Forming coalitions in the pursuit of worlds in which a full, loving life in solidarity is a reality that can be achieved by all of us, and perhaps especially, by those who have been deemed disposable in the current world system.

Eurocentric epistemologies are insufficient for understanding the reality of a world that is fundamentally racialized and gendered. In the insistence on maintaining these paradigms, we lose sight, for example, of the importance of the Haitian Revolution as the first anti-racist revolution. Haiti was the first country where the slavery system was abolished and the freedom of black people was conceptualized (Desrosier 2022; Dacilien and Silva 2023). In other words, the centrality of the Eurocentric paradigm of freedom and equality continues to privilege those notions from a continent that instituted the enslavement, kidnapping and extermination of different populations of the world. Insisting on the symbols from the French Revolution and the US war of independence as egalitarian and liberatory disregards the importance of Latin American, Caribbean, and other epistemologies and struggles.

The belief in the neutrality of concepts and theories, so strong in Eurocentric epistemology, resulted in the definition of airtight “objects” of study and mathematized language as a primordial form of expression, the camouflage of ethical and political aspects naming them as “universal”, and the devaluation of ancestral practices, or those derived from experience and testimony. None of that brings any assistance on understanding the diversity and plurality of the world and on building new epistemologies to address real matters that need to be addressed in the pursuit of alternative ways of existence and socio-environmental relations.

Therefore, the fundamental challenge in thinking of a new epistemology is to denaturalize and historicize the usual forms of constructing knowledge and criticize the way institutions behave in relation to them. For this, we should work on preparing an episteme, based on peripheral references, but without ignoring a dialogue with critical references developed in the Global North. To achieve that, we want to work towards an ecology of knowledge and intercultural translations (Santos and Meneses 2019; Santos 2007) and

suggest paths that can enable more horizontal dialogue for epistemic justice. This demands, however, the recognition of peripheries for their *potências* as well as the elaboration of conceptual tools that can make such inventive power a driver for epistemic disobedience and decolonial thinking.

### 3. Periphery as *Potência*<sup>5</sup>

We conceptualize peripheries in two ways. Firstly, as a geographical location the periphery is an umbrella concept that accommodates the diversity and plurality of peripheral formations in the urban landscape. Secondly, “periphery” is not solely a geographic location but also a political concept in reference to people, territories and sociocultural practices that operate in the margins (Fernandes et al., forthcoming). It refers, therefore, to dissonant subjects and territories formed as part of a historical process of economic, social, and symbolic domination. Peripheral subjects relate, in many ways, to the conceptualization of the *subaltern* explored by Roy (2011) within subaltern urbanism: the economies of entrepreneurship and political agency—something that in our work we referred to as “inventive power” (Fernandes et al. 2018). As such, in our view, and considering a decolonial approach, peripheral subjects and territories constitute the antagonistic force in which peripheral epistemologies emerge, themselves being the fundamental agents of epistemic disobedience. But epistemic disobedience does not occur, necessarily, as part of a binary antagonism. It may also not be explicit. Indeed, the most insurgent forms of epistemic disobedience are implicit and embedded in everyday sociocultural practices. Therefore, we defend the theory that epistemic disobedience is an act exercised in everyday struggles, which we conceptualized as *potência* (Fernandes et al. 2018).

*Potência* refers to the inventive power of peripheral subjects while responding to structural struggles in everyday life. *Potência* refers to the combination of forces emerging from peripheral practices that call into question established forms of producing meaning and agency in the world. It is necessary to consider such forms of agency in terms of being, thinking, acting, feeling, and expressing feelings and emotions from a different (not necessarily confrontational) perspective. *Potência* is not a simple response to oppression. It is an alternative to oppressive practices that sits within a new ontological and epistemological perspective. *Potência* is creating meaning to seemingly ordinary things, such as reappropriating and re-signifying public spaces (street parties, kids playing, neighbourhood bonds) and providing alternative ways to living in a community, in contrast to impersonal, cold and distant street life usually seen in ordered wealthy neighbourhoods. *Potência* means questioning Northern concepts such as “circular economy” or “green technology”, because everyday life, historically, has always been, in many ways, “circular” and “green”—to illustrate, frugal innovative practices of *jeitinho*<sup>6</sup> and *gambiarra*<sup>7</sup> (or what Indians call *jugaad*) as a necessity to reuse waste, to extract everything possible, to be creative and innovative as a part of everyday life (therefore, not a necessity emerging from consumerist models that result in excessive waste). *Potência* is the “spontaneous architecture” of self-built houses that are fascinating to Northern architects and urbanists. *Potência* is also the development of practical solutions to structural problems such as the ways in which people living in favelas have created to recognize property and, therefore, give movement to the local estate market and safety to inheritors—even when the state does not recognize such solutions in their own systems. All these examples are *potências* occurring in spite of the disgust and hatred of the colonized gaze that operates to symbolically devalue them.

That said, we defend the periphery as *potência* in first place. Beyond that, we defend the need to affirm such *potências* as instances of epistemological disobedience and value the knowledge and *technologies*<sup>8</sup> produced by peripheral people to address their problems. The *potência* of peripheries has a central role in enabling a Peripheral Epistemology to challenge the established dominant order and contribute towards a more equal and just society.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. The Struggles of Brazilian Urban Peripheries and the Role of Structural Racism: An Empirical Reference Point for a Global Dialogue

The making of a Peripheral Epistemology needs to encapsulate the struggles of urban peripheral communities in the wider Global South. We believe that there are convergencies that could bring these communities together, despite their local singularities. Most of this was synthesized in *Letter from Maré—A Manifesto of the Peripheries* (Instituto Maria e João Aleixo 2017)<sup>10</sup> in which we took a relevant facilitating role as part of our work at UNIPeriferias,<sup>11</sup> a civil society organization based in Maré, Rio de Janeiro. The document was produced by a diverse group of urban peripheral stakeholders who came together to share their struggles and to explore a common ground for epistemic justice. So, although our empirical reference is the Brazilian urban peripheries, we want to present its struggles more as an element to start a conversation rather than creating a definitive framework from which to work. Specifically, we wanted to highlight the role of structural racism (Almeida 2018)—one of the underpinning components of the coloniality of power and shared struggle across the Global South (and the South in the North).

Historically, urban peripheries in Brazil are the result of socio-historical processes whose epicentre combines the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the increasing pressure for housing during this period. Campos (2005) argues that reminiscent urban *quilombos* became the seed of peripheral urban territories, that is to say, the first favelas. He uses the example of Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil at the end of the XIXth century, to explain how black people created communities that would later become largely the peripheral neighbourhoods of the city. The strong component of racial inequality in the formation of unequal urban spaces was also explored by Ribeiro (2020) using the access to land in São Paulo as an example. Both cases illustrate how structural racism operated as the root of urban inequalities in Brazil. Paula (2016) goes further by demonstrating how the legacy of structural racism operates in contemporary urban policies.

One of the key components of structural racism in the urban is what we called the “pedagogy of monstrosity” (Fernandes et al. 2018). The pedagogies of monstrosity operate by bridging symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1977), state genocide and necropolitics (Mbembé 2003). The symbolic violence inculcates a widespread narrative of social monsters associated with people living in urban peripheries, in particular black people. Such narratives underpin necropolitics performed by the Brazilian state. Such necropolitics can be translated not only in the actual genocide of people living in peripheral communities—largely as a result of the “war on drugs” (Rio on Watch 2019; Ota and Mason 2022), but also as a systematic attempt to “soft-kill” peripheries through a symbolic war. This symbolic war entails reducing urban peripheries down to territories of violence, ignorance, and absence—therefore, downplaying the humanity and *potência* they carry within. The immediate consequence of such a symbolic war is the devaluation of life: people living in urban peripheries are believed to be worthless and, therefore, disposable. Historically, that resulted in a lack of state investment, or mis-investment with inadequate policies that only consider either the need to contain violence or what externalized and colonized eyes understand their needs to be, which tend to be related to basic survival needs, rather than anything else. As such, for example, access to “culture” does not always recognize forms of culture emerging from and produced by these territories.

Over the past decades, there has been a wave of political activism to fight these historical legacies. We observed the emergence of progressive local organizations, grassroots movements and an increasing number of external allies that are helping to bridge historical reparations with insurgent citizenship (see, for example, Montuori 2022; Comelli 2021—also the very interesting compilation of histories, ideas, practices, and resources offered by the *Dicionário de Favelas Marielle Franco*<sup>12</sup>). Many of these groups have been exploring new conceptual frameworks to respond to the struggles of urban peripheral communities, as is the case with UNIPeriferias. In the next section we elaborate on these ideas, having as a reference the work we developed in/from UNIPeriferias and Maré. This involved not only

our direct work at UNIPeriferias, but also active collaboration with other organizations, academics, and grassroots movements.

### 5. In Defense of a Peripheral Epistemology: Eight Decolonial Cognitive Triggers to Help Inform Epistemic Disobedience

Peripheral Epistemology is rooted in a framework of critical and anti-counter-decolonial world theories which intend to be a destabilizing source of hegemonic traditions (Quijano 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Santos 2015; Nuñez and Lessa 2021). Like all thinking which is assumed to be critical, they are traversed and conducted by ethical, political, and theoretical concerns, which aim to contribute towards emancipatory social transformation. It assumes that, more than ever, outlining dialogues from a Eurocentric perspective in Brazil does not call the status quo into question in any field, particularly racial. In addition to political bias, there is damage to an adequate understanding of Brazilian (and wider peripheral) social reality processes. We recognize, and engage with, the knowledge established by European authors, particularly the criticism of the hegemonic order, but it is insufficient, in our view, to understanding the challenges faced by Brazil and the wider Global South (and the South in the North). Therefore, where applicable, a reappropriation process of European conceptual and critical categories is required, from the territorialities of Brazil, Latin America and other countries that have undergone colonialism.

Thus, Peripheral Epistemology dialogues with authors involved in social emancipation processes, which also expose the effects of colonialism, imperialism, and the colonality of power and knowledge (Mignolo 2000, 2011), although they may not use these terms. The dialogues are possible from the perspectives of margins/peripheries and from the blurring of borders (Anzaldúa 2007), calling upon appropriate subjectivities, willing to be supported on the edge of language structure, and the concern prompted by being in this place, withstanding destabilizing tension, in the active search for worlds that could mean new languages and new meanings. We seek to challenge the traditional assumptions of “knowledge”, “expertise” and “reason”, also of “unlearning” and “dis-educating” (Mignolo 2009) ourselves from the traditional, to propose new ways of thinking, understanding, and apprehending the real.

The adjective *peripheral* forms the concept we propose for no trivial reason: the starting points of epistemology are *potências* emerging from the territories and their corporeal, subjective, and physical dimensions. The building of a Peripheral Epistemology is a permanent construction, and our intention here is to provide some elements that can guide further developments and part of (re)appropriations and (re)interpretations. Indeed, one of the principles of decolonial thinking is its pluriversality (Mignolo 2011). It is expected to be an initiative of people with different life stories, interests, and bodies, unified by the same belief that the revolutions in the contemporary world must have at their core the dissonant subjects and territories constituted outside of the central dynamic favoured by the dominant powers. With the objective of dealing with this reality, Peripheral Epistemology embraces diverse and plural corporeal, territorial, and sociocultural references. As a result, different struggles, bodies, cultures, and geographies are reflected in the way peripheral epistemologies are shaped. In this direction, we expect our ideas to contribute to existing efforts to produce counternarratives for epistemic disobedience and, as part of it, help (re)shape the way things are, especially in relation to policies and practices affecting urban peripheral communities.

To address historical injustices it is necessary, above all else, to fight its foundations. As argued, the colonality of power is the key force sustaining and reinforcing racial, sexual, gender, as well as territorial and socioeconomic inequalities. It operates at all levels of society. From everyday practices and habits that are taken for granted and naturalized, to the way policies and legislations are designed and implemented. It is the colonality of power, the driving force of cognitive systems, that sustains a certain perspective of the world as the starting point. Therefore, unless we question and fight these systems, it is not possible to address the problem beyond its surface. Epistemic disobedience is an immediate



and necessary response. It can take shape through a range of actions, performances, and speeches that reflect alternative ways of doing, thinking, and feeling. However, if these actions are dispersed it becomes more difficult to challenge the “abyssal thinking” that is so deeply rooted in society. Because of that, we believe it is necessary to develop robust counternarratives to equip the agents of change—namely: peripheral groups and allies. By “robust” we mean counternarratives that are well embedded in our thinking and practice. Therefore, the first exercise should be the creation of “decolonial cognitive triggers” to decolonize the gaze and the thinking of those who are at the forefront of this battle. For that, we propose a reflection on eight decolonial cognitive triggers that should be considered in the making of a Peripheral Epistemology. We expect these triggers to provoke thinking and help inform epistemic disobedience, with a special focus on urban peripheral communities across the Global South (and the South in the North). Our proposal is to explore these triggers with no hierarchical order, but always having in mind the centrality of the paradigm of *potência* as a core component underpinning Peripheral Epistemology and epistemic disobedience.

### 5.1. Decolonize the Gaze

One of the key dimensions of a Peripheral Epistemology is the decolonization of the gaze. A Peripheral Epistemology has the task of helping us in the process of denaturalizing the forms instituted by colonial thinking and material structures that conform with abyssal thinking (Santos 2007). The forms of representing the real, and how we relate to it, interfere in the construction of the reality we experience. Social representations have a crucial role in shaping social reality because they constitute the construction of meanings and coherence to a discourse, making this assimilated and incorporated by individuals and groups (Jodelet 2001). We also acknowledge there are social processes that contribute to inculcating normative ideas about the self, the other and the world around us, which naturalize the world around us as taken for granted (Bourdieu 1998). Epistemic disobedience has a lot to do with challenging these processes by proposing alternative representations and interpretations. This means exercising the gaze to not take anything for granted, and challenging the visual and imaginary systems that suggest a normalized and colonized gaze. For that to happen, we must bring together a wide range of subjects, representations, and practices that propose alternative ways of doing and thinking. Moreover, a fundamental aspect of a decolonized gaze is overcoming the centrality of cognitive elements in the production of doing/knowing. Cognitive skills help us to construct the entire process of a rational apprehension. Therefore, the skills of identifying, relating, comparing, classifying, analyzing, summarizing, and many others should be developed, but they do not complete the knowing/doing process. To address these issues, it is necessary to recognize and value other experiences and practices, mainly those of subjects who have not historically been recognized for the ways they live and (re)create their lives.

For example, we need to question historical conventions created by the North to fulfill the Northern colonial/imperial needs, such as the representation of the world map. It became taken for granted that the world was represented by the dominant convention with Europe at the epicentre. There are many examples of epistemic disobedience for decolonial mapping and counter-topographies (see for example, Rose-Redwood et al. 2020, and The Decolonial Atlas project<sup>13</sup>). Another example, this one created by UNIPeriferias, is the “Mestre das Periferias” (Master of Peripheries) award. It was created to celebrate and give visibility to peripheral artists, activists, entrepreneurs and personalities that have contributed to the creation of new narratives and aesthetics emerging from peripheral epistemologies. Adopting alternative and plural representations such as these examples will help embed epistemic disobedience in intellectual-political agency.

### 5.2. Self-Awareness of Systems of Privilege

The making of a Peripheral Epistemology demands observation of systems of privilege that may be so deeply rooted in our thinking that they tend to be naturalized and taken for

granted. It is wrong to assume that only non-peripheral groups are privileged. There are historical privileges shared across social groups that need to be observed. One of them is gender. Gender inequalities and gender violence are things that are also present among peripheral groups. The masculine domination, as elaborated by Bourdieu (1998), is present across society, including traditional/peripheral communities such as the Kabyle society Bourdieu investigated in Algeria. One can argue that being a male from an ethnic minority can be different from being a white European male in the context of a world system and coloniality of power. This is a fact, and we cannot ignore the intersections crossing gender inequalities. However, we need to acknowledge that the central point in Bourdieu's theory is the "paradox of doxa" in which the symbolic order of the world is naturalized and taken for granted.

That said, it is crucial to observe these systems of privilege and address such historical advantages held by certain groups. We cannot ignore the fact that peripheries are not free of internal inequalities and tensions; otherwise, we would be romanticizing peripheries. But peripheries have a key role in bringing experiences, knowledge and practices that form a key contribution to decolonizing urban spaces. Adopting a critical self-reflective approach can help with the rebalance of power. Members of peripheral communities and allies have a duty to acknowledge the systems of privilege they may carry. Otherwise, adopting a Peripheral Epistemology becomes a contradiction.

### 5.3. *Take Someone Else's Shoes Off*

Perhaps one of the biggest misconceptions in the narratives of "social justice" is the one about "putting yourself in someone's shoes". This is not possible because we will never experience the same as others, because we share different life histories and experiences. This, however, can be a genuine gesture of empathy and an attempt to build a collective identity through shared commonalities. In our view, the best approach is to create the enabling conditions for people to express their views, opinions, ideas, and emotions by themselves. So rather than being in their shoes, we need to facilitate spaces for *dialogue*. Using the initial empathy is key, but we need to go beyond that. Here, there is one crucial aspect to be considered in a Peripheral Epistemology: every person is a singular person. There is no way to reproduce or universalize who they are, or what they think or feel. This challenges a dominant paradigm that aims to create universal theories and classification parameters. There are indeed attempts to explore commonalities to enable the sharing of common struggles and, with these, create a sense of collective identity. The idea of "peripheral" that we defend is, in many ways, an attempt at creating that sense of collective identity. That is why we defend the idea that the "periphery" is, in principle, a collective of diverse and plural individuals who share similar struggles in a broader sense but suffer the consequences of such struggles in their own way.

These reflections are important because the democratic policymaking process demands the engagement of diverse groups in forums that do not always offer the enabling conditions for plural manifestations of ideas. Policymaking is still deeply rooted in colonized thinking, based on written technical language that usually does not have "cognitive connectors" to facilitate its sociocultural translations. Furthermore, the arenas for debate are usually limited to manifestations articulated through an elaborated speech, which limits peripheral and subaltern alternatives forms of expression (linguistic, artistic, corporeal, spiritual). Therefore, policymaking is a *field*, as Bourdieu (1998) would conceptualize, with clear symbolic boundaries in which codes are defined by the dominant colonial epistemology. Here, we want to reflect upon a recurrent problem observed in policymaking in peripheral urban communities: the issue of representation which is limited to those who "know how to play the game", and the taken-for-granted assumption that knowing how to play the game is enough. This is insufficient for two reasons: firstly, the game, as it is, is designed to reproduce historical structures of colonized power due to its colonized rationality. Secondly, by playing the game, peripheral and subaltern opinions will remain excluded. They may

be physically represented but may never be epistemologically balanced. Instead, they will remain hostages to the rules of the game.

Therefore, if participation and lived experiences are to be valued and taken onboard as part of a genuine democratic policymaking process, the enabling conditions for conversations need to be addressed beyond the forums and political mechanisms themselves. They must, indeed, embed the epistemological dimension underpinning such a field.

#### 5.4. Enable Conversations

If we are not in someone's shoes, but we sympathize with them, we must be committed to creating the spaces for them to express by themselves how they see their problems, and which solutions and strategies they adopt to address them. That does not mean leaving them alone to solve the problems with the resources they have, but instead, finding ways to maximize the opportunities of change by having their ideas as a starting point. This is a very important point for what became commonly known as "knowledge exchange". The idea of exchanging knowledge must be underpinned by horizontality and the acknowledgement that every form of knowledge—be it a Northern idea, or a Southern idea (to simplify the complex layers "in between") is welcome. That sits in what Santos (2007) called the "ecology of knowledge". An ecology of knowledge takes on board the diverse contributions of plural epistemologies. It creates the basis to facilitate the dialogue between "high tech" medical science developed in the so-called "most prestigious" research centers in the world, and the indigenous forms of curing diseases. There should be no hierarchy, but recognition of complementarity. But this is not something easy to achieve because of "abyssal thinking" (Santos 2007).

To achieve an ecology of knowledge, it is necessary to create the conditions for diverse voices to be heard. Such a recognition of plural knowledge demands the adoption of horizontal, creative approaches to facilitate conversations. Indeed, as Santos (in Phipps 2007) reminds us, we need to promote conversation—not *conversion*. Taking this reflection, we can argue how easy it is to "convert" by using language and approaches that seem to be progressive and transformative, but that do not actually enable a genuine conversation because they may be ignoring the preferred language codes, representations, space-time and thinking adopted by other groups. In policymaking, it can be observed in the timing of dialogue, that does not always enable genuine conversations and may end up with rushed (and at times tokenistic) approaches to "participation" or "co-production" (see, for example, the critique made by Paul and Villaman 2022; Mesa-Vélez 2019; Monno and Khakee 2012; Gilchrist 2006).

#### 5.5. Build New Alliances

Probably one of the most controversial quotes in Western culture is the Christian idea of "love your enemies" attributed to Jesus Christ. Indeed, the full quotation sounds even more provocative: "You have heard that it was said 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those." (Matthew 5:43–48). Probably the deeply rooted nature of oppression experienced by peripheral groups may suggest something different, and a confrontational approach to the "enemies". In Rio's urban context, it is hard to ask a mother who lost her son, murdered by the police, to "love" the police officers who committed the act. In a similar way, it is hard to ask a police officer to love the ones they are seeking, particularly in such a highly weaponized conflict in which each side has their ways of monsterizing and de-humanizing the other. But there are forces capable of overcoming hate and conflict; starting with building respectful and republican relationships despite differences. Forces that can create some very fragile, but possible, lines of dialogue, understanding, listening, based on common ground that both sides may share. Forging societal changes is not an easy task. Our position is that confrontation and conflict are not the way. We recognize that many changes in the past were achieved through direct confrontation and conflict, and they had a role. But they also adopted a narrative of "reverse othering" (or "reverse monsterization"—see below) that goes against

the principle of *convivência*—which is a core concept we use to encapsulate the idea of living the difference and plurality without hostility, but instead, through the celebration of encountering the differences through love, empathy, and conviviality (Silva 2012; Fernandes et al. 2018).<sup>14</sup> Of course, social life is made up of tensions and conflicts—we cannot ignore that. Indeed, we need to acknowledge differences, tensions, and disagreements to achieve change. However, the way we address them, in our view, is determinant of the outcomes. As such, if “peace” needs to be achieved through confrontation, something is fundamentally wrong. At times, it is necessary to step back for the sake of dialogue, even when we do not believe dialogue is possible; or even when we see the “other side” using every drop of hate and irrational arguments to hold firmly on to their beliefs and prejudices—most rooted in a colonized gaze and thinking. The political divide experienced in Brazilian society in recent years is something that we need to learn from. Indeed, while we continue speaking to our neighbours, writing to our neighbours, using the language of our neighbours, we will never achieve the basic conditions to establish constructive dialogue for change. Such a line of argumentation is at risk of being considered naïve. It is indeed naïve if we adopt the standing point of the dominant epistemological perspectives of the colonality of power. However, if we adopt this approach as an act of epistemic disobedience, perhaps we can achieve something different. For that we believe there are three necessary aspects to be considered. Firstly, do not reproduce what we can call “reverse monsterization”. From the points discussed above, what are the approaches we should adopt when relating to our “enemies”? How to establish a rapport to build respectful dialogue to achieve a more balanced ecology of knowledge and epistemic justice? Secondly, love must be the driving force. Perhaps the most radical form of love—the love of our enemies, is the most challenging and yet, the most necessary attribute of a Peripheral Epistemology. Finally, the celebration of *convivência* is a guiding principle for connecting all the above cognitive triggers.

#### 5.6. Be Watchful of Reverse Monsterization

If building respectful and republican relationships is central to enabling a balanced ecology of knowledge, how can we do that assuming our “enemies” usually represent a threat, rather than a solution to problems faced by peripheral communities? What are the possible approaches to help break down prejudices and barriers? In the highly weaponized and violent context of Rio’s “war on drugs”, some interesting attempts were made, such as the “Pacifying Police Units” (UPP), implemented by Rio de Janeiro state between 2008 and 2019. These units intended to establish a renewed relationship between the police and local communities by adopting alternative approaches such as community projects, a more friendly and continuous presence of the police (in opposition to planned, confrontational, and highly weaponized raids). UPPs have sustained some level of success over a period and shown the possibilities for further developments, in spite of some criticism (Musumeci 2017). They may not represent a radical change in policing but demonstrate that something different and more positive can surface in a social context deeply marked by institutionalized forms of abuse and violence (Larkins 2015; Legrumber et al. 2020a, 2020b).

The big challenge in experiences such as UPPs is the need to avoid reverse monsterization. While the police expected to develop a different approach with communities, by seeing them with a different gaze and, therefore, adopting, in the first place, a non-monsterized perspective, the same could not be expected immediately of the communities—traumatized by decades of police abuse and violence. So, this experience showed a two-way process in which, on the one hand, one side needs to make the first move—and in this case, the side making the first move is the one with a higher level of accountability for historical oppression. On the other hand, the community would need to find ways to adapt to a new situation, in spite of (legitimate) suspicion. For the community, the idea of de-monsterizing their view of the police can be far more challenging. While the police have the state duty of caring for citizens, and therefore, should de-monsterize as part of a self-critique and

accountable improvement, the communities should de-monsterize from past (and present) traumas deeply rooted in their histories and everyday life.

The UPP in theory was considered progressive and with great potential for change. But it failed by not creating the adequate conditions for an ecology of knowledge in which the opinion and feelings of the community were taken as part of horizontal and non-hierarchical approaches. Rather, the police habitus remained as the underpinning driver for police–community relationships, with the historical traits of militarization, social containment, and criminalization of the poor remaining underneath the policing mindset (Corrêa et al. 2015; Poets 2015).

#### 5.7. Create Convincing Narratives Based on Love, Empathy, and Humility

Counter-narratives do not need to incorporate radicalism. Radical thinking, such as epistemic disobedience, is a necessary step for change. But it does not need to be translated into certain “radicalized” practices that may result in confrontational and non-dialogical approaches. We believe radical agency should be at the heart of epistemic disobedience. Radicalized agency has also been a last resort in certain contexts in which peripheral groups could no longer bear the weight of oppression. However, sustaining counter-narratives with radicalism can become counterproductive because one of the outcomes can be the increasing controversy upon radical acts, and, therefore, an increased risk of social divide, fear of change, and conservative resistance. Some examples from experiences of police violence and abuse in Brazilian urban peripheries have led to radical acts such as blocking roads, burning tires and even buses. Although popular revolt is deeply embedded in historical oppression, such manifestations will indeed call attention to the problem, but also, conversely, highlight problems that peripheral groups wanted to avoid—some of them being their association with violent acts and social disorder.

Adopting alternative, yet radical, forms of responding to problems can be a way to build more positive lines of dialogue with public agents, as well as attracting more positive views from public opinion. Here, the act of love and humility, with great examples set by those such as Gandhi and Mandela, can be the driver to create channels in which peripheral groups (and allies) can express their views and ideas to address problems. One interesting example has been developed by community organizations and allies in Maré. The “Fórum Basta de Violência na Maré” (Forum No More Violence in Maré)<sup>15</sup> created an alternative, robust and legitimate forum to respond to violence in the community, providing spaces for discussion as well as producing new narratives and collective solutions in dialogue with civil society organizations, public agents, and the wider society.

#### 5.8. Celebrate Convivência

The counterpoint to the paradigm of hostility and monsterization is that of *convivência*. It recognizes the social world as the space of diversity, difference, and plurality. Therefore, the democratic rule of law, the valorization of human dignity and the guarantee of fundamental rights are the basis for guaranteeing the full rights of all in society. People who adopt this perspective in life tend to experience the public space as opportunities for meeting and socializing—not for confrontation, quarrelling, or conflict.

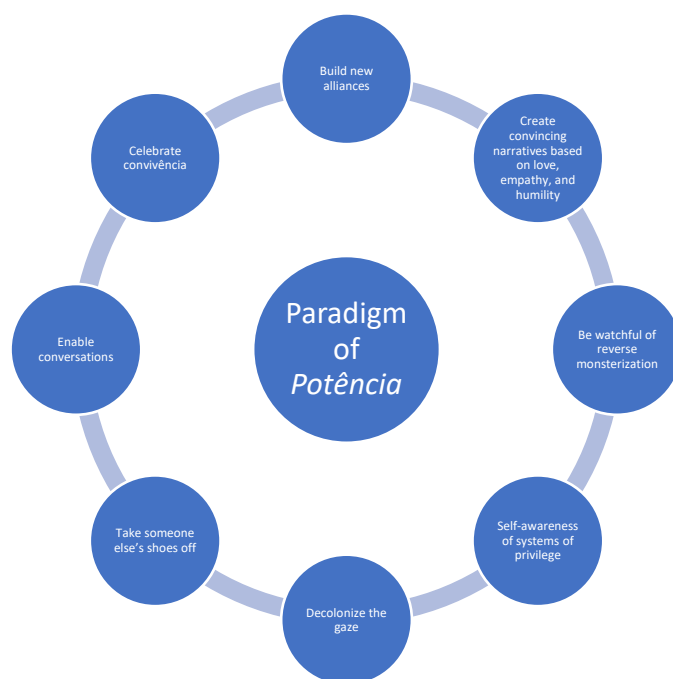
There are two core principles we have been elaborating on over the past two decades, mostly as part of our political-intellectual engagement with urban peripheral communities in Brazil and across the Global South. These are the paradigm of *potência* and the pedagogy of *convivência*. We have written about *potência* in previous sections but wanted to emphasize its relevance in acknowledging the inventive power of peripheral subjects in addressing structural struggles through everyday practices of solidarity, creativity, and resistance. The pedagogy of *convivência* recognizes the social world as the space of diversity and difference in the plurality. The pedagogy of *convivência* sits within the paradigm of *potência*. It reflects the elements of such everyday socio-cultural practices experienced by peripheral groups, and the alternative, dissonant forms of appropriation, representation, and embodiment in the urban space. *Convivência* is embedded in everyday life and is part of the social



*habitus* rather than something programmed. It presents itself as an ontological dimension of experiencing urban life.

A “pedagogy” of *convivência*, therefore, consists of learning from such experiences, to engage people in alternative learning (or “unlearning”). This can open new possibilities for reflecting upon the decolonial forms of living, existing and socializing in urban life. Ultimately, a pedagogy of *convivência* will tackle monsterization and help recentre peripheral subjects as agents of change, rather than objects of state interventions or negative stereotyping. Moreover, the pedagogy of *convivência* proposes new forms of dialogue, to address societal divisions created by monsterization. *Convivência* is key to producing narratives of encounter and conversation (Santos in Phipps 2007) that can challenge social representations of “othering”, decolonizing thinking, speech, and action. Plural forms of *convivência* emerging from the *potência* of urban peripheries can provide alternative responses to challenge established and dominant paradigms in intellectual production, narratives, policies, and practices to overcome social inequalities and promote human dignity. Therefore, *convivência* appears to be one of the structuring cognitive triggers for epistemic disobedience. It is through living in diversity and celebrating plural forms of thinking and doing that we will create the practical conditions for epistemic disobedience and decolonial thinking to flourish. Moreover, a pedagogy of *convivência* can enable “impossible” conversations, help address reversing monsterization and build new (and so very much needed) alliances to achieve epistemic justice.

Figure 1 below illustrates the interdependent connections between the proposed decolonial cognitive triggers to help inform epistemic disobedience. It suggests a circular, non-hierarchical connection, that is guided by the paradigm of *potência*.



**Figure 1.** Decolonial cognitive triggers to help inform epistemic disobedience.

## 6. Conclusions

In this paper, we presented some ideas to contribute to a broader debate on the need to develop alternatives to the colonality of power in urban peripheries. We addressed that by suggesting some decolonial cognitive triggers to help inform epistemic disobedience. The idea was to use our experience in Brazilian urban peripheries to reflect upon some foundational components of a “Peripheral Epistemology”. It was not our intention to provide a framework or universal ideas, but instead, add to existing debate a contribution emerging from Brazilian urban peripheries. We did that by exploring core concepts we have

worked on over the past decades, with special attention to the role of *potência* and *convivência* to help create the conditions for decolonial dialogues and actions in the urban peripheries.

We close this paper with the hope that our contribution can be taken on board by peripheral groups and allies. We expect, in particular, to have offered some relevant elements to be considered as part of the policy-making process—an area that still demands more active approaches to epistemic disobedience because policy-making remains deeply rooted in colonized thinking. The experiences of Brazilian peripheries demonstrate how much is still needed to reconfigure the way peripheral territories and people are represented—as devalued citizens, often left out of policy-making and decision-making, or, when involved, are not given the adequate spaces to balance the contribution of valuable lived experiences and sociocultural practices. In our view, this is the biggest barrier to decolonizing thinking and actions to address problems affecting peripheral communities. Ultimately, recognizing their inventive power and the role of *potência* and *convivência* is paramount.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Free translation. Original extract in Portuguese: “Para a gente, que mora em um endereço difícil, que não é social, o nosso endereço é um endereço muito complicado. A gente não tem documentação da casa. O banco não entende isso como um pré-requisito para você fazer um empréstimo. Então, para provar que você é pobre, é até difícil” (Duarte 2019, p. 67).
- <sup>2</sup> Bourdieu (1990) elaborated on the concept of *habitus* to address the question on how behavior can be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules. With that in mind, the concept of *habitus* aimed to encapsulate the interactions between social structures and personal trajectory, and its embodiment in individual agency through what he called *dispositions*. In our example, a middle-class *habitus* means the set of socio-cultural *dispositions* that are embedded in the thinking, habits, attitudes, body language, cultural tastes, etc. It is not possible to generalize “middle-class” as a universal concept, but there are aspects related to a middle-class *habitus* that reflect singular forms of being in the world, and related to the sort of economic, cultural, and social *capitals* certain groups value and hold. A good introduction to Bourdieu’s work can be found at Grenfell (2014).
- <sup>3</sup> If we take solely black people as an example, data from 2022 shows that 68.2% of Brazilian prison population are from black backgrounds. If we look at the homicides perpetrated by police forces, data shows that 83.1% of them were of black persons (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública 2023).
- <sup>4</sup> *Mestiçagem* refers to the mixing up of different ethnical and racial backgrounds. Freyre argued that miscegenation was a natural path for social evolution in Brazilian society. Such a thesis created the idea of “racial democracy” as part of Brazilian national identity. This has been a source of debate and critique because the idea of *mestiçagem* ignores racial and ethnical tensions while creating a narrative of apparent harmony.
- <sup>5</sup> There is no direct translation in English for the Brazilian Portuguese word *potência*. The closest translation, that we mistakenly adopted in other works, is “potency”, but it does not fully convey the idea we wanted to elaborate. Therefore, we will be adopting the word in its original linguistic context. We hope, however, that this section helps to clarify its meaning and potential cultural translations in English and other languages.
- <sup>6</sup> *Jeitinho* is the Brazilian way of doing things. It can be literally translated as the “little way” and denotes everyday practices and strategies people adopt to overcome or deal with a range of situations—for example, finding ways to fix a broken car when we have no money; creating strategies to earn extra money to increase scarce income. These are alternative solutions that do not always stay within the boundaries of what can be morally accepted as “right”. The terminology is very controversial in Brazilian society because it is generally associated with bending or breaking the rules that may lead to taking advantage of situations. In our perspective, however, we want to emphasize the *potência* of *jeitinho*, in recognition of the inventive power of people who find ways to survive and navigate across social fields.

- 7 *Gambiarra* is a sort of hack to fix broken things. It can have a provisory aspect, as something that people make to get things running when a definitive solution is not available. But it can become, eventually, the solution itself. *Gambiarra* has a lot of *jeitinho*. It is one of the material expressions of *jeitinho*. In our view, however, *gambiarra*, as a practice developed by peripheral groups, has always been considered an inferior way of addressing problems, that can result in dangerous and unsafe tactics. In many cases, it is, but what the idea of *gambiarra* suggests, beyond the arrogant prejudice of abyssal thinking, is the creativity and *potência* people make use of to address the everyday problems they face.
- 8 As a form of epistemic disobedience, *gambiarra* as well as *jeitinho* and many other derivatives in the Global South culture, are expressions of *technologies* created by peripheral groups to address problems they face. Such technologies are not limited to material life. They also reflect social skills and practices of care and the ways in which people make sense of the world around them by, for example, blending spirituality (“God will help me”), creativity (“we will find a way”), perseverance (“we never give up!”), faith (“this will work”), ancestralism (“that is how my grandmother used to do it”) and lived experience (“I’ve tried it before”) to respond to problems they face. We can refer to such peripheral knowledge and practices as “technologies of socioenvironmental care”.
- 9 It is worth mentioning the overlaps between what we are calling “paradigm of absence” and “potência” and what Santos (2002) articulated as “sociology of absences” and “sociology of emergencies”. This is an area that deserves a more philosophical discussion which we do not intend to explore here. We intend to formulate on that in future works.
- 10 Document produced at the International Seminar “What is periphery, after all”, held by the Maria and João Aleixo Institute in Maré (Rio de Janeiro), between 15–17 March 2017. Accessible in: <https://revistaperiferias.org/en/a-manifesto-from-the-peripheries/> (accessed on 8 April 2024).
- 11 <https://imja.org.br/uniperiferias>—UNIPeriferias work to strengthen democratic values and practices through the diffusion of peripheral narratives. It has three core areas of work: a publishing house to disseminate peripheral narratives (*Editora Periferias*); *Seja Democracia* (a training centre focused on the formation of new political leaderships); and *The University of Peripheries* (with the offering of diverse training opportunities to peripheral groups).
- 12 [https://wikifavelas.com.br/index.php/Dicion%C3%A1rio\\_de\\_Favelas\\_Marielle\\_Franco](https://wikifavelas.com.br/index.php/Dicion%C3%A1rio_de_Favelas_Marielle_Franco) (accessed on 8 April 2024).
- 13 <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/> (accessed on 8 April 2024).
- 14 As with the concept of *potência* (see Note 5) there is no direct English translation for *convivência*. The closest translation, that we mistakenly adopted in other works, is “coexistence”, but it does not fully convey the idea upon which we wanted to elaborate. Therefore, we will be adopting the word in its original linguistic context. We hope, however, that the way we unfold the concept in the next pages will help to clarify its meaning and potential cultural translations in English and other languages.
- 15 <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/br/info/21/forum-basta-de-violencia-outra-mare-e-possivel> (accessed on 8 April 2024).

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