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## THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE TERRITORIES

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## THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE: TERRITORIES O DEBATE DECOLONIAL: TERRITÓRIOS

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## Abstract

The paper highlights the relevance of decolonial epistememes in the debate on urban planning and social movements, valuing the protagonism of subjugated groups in the construction of new knowledge capable of adding tension to the current order. The decolonial key allows us to understand that the formation of segregation patterns is a social-racial-spatial event through which various mechanisms of oppression linked to race, gender, class, and regional backgrounds operate. The focus of the research is the dimension of the periphery as a sociopolitical territory, that is, the analysis of expressions, actions, and initiatives of movements and/or social groups that gain legitimacy by producing their own political, social, and cultural perspectives about and for the city. The methodology adopted values the epistemic protagonism of the bearers of the analyzed experiences, articulating categories of the decolonial debate with the process and results of two field experiences within the *Quilombo Abayomi* collective, based on the methodological perspective of Oscar Jara Holliday's systematization of experiences. As a result, it presents challenges to the field of urban planning by introducing decolonial theoretical and methodological approaches that value peripheral territorialities and promote a paradigmatic shift composed of other epistememes..

**Keywords:** Decolonial epistememes, Urban planning, Social movements, Systematization of experiences, Participatory methodologies

## 1 Introduction

Decolonial epistememes gained relevance in social science discussions in the late 1990s, being associated with the Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) Group (Ballestrin, 2013). This group was responsible for developing and systematizing categories and analyses that redefined history and political practice in Latin America, in addition to opening space for new theoretical-methodological propositions. According to the author, the decolonial perspective positioned Latin America as the founding continent of colonialism and, consequently, of modernity (Quijano, 2007), becoming the first testing laboratory for racism in the service of colonialism. Given this scenario, it is understood that the decolonial approach can provide new horizons for the construction of a thought focused on human liberation, through dialogue and articulation with knowledge production (Ballestrin, 2013).

In this paper, the focus is on the possibilities for the decolonial perspective to draw new horizons and, mainly, to reflect on **with whom** these articulations have been thought. This is perhaps the most significant shift caused by the decolonial perspective which, by placing the understanding of people's dynamics at the center of the process, opposes the prevalence of academia as the promoter of knowledge.

The paper's proposal points to the field of urban planning and social movements as a locus for reflections on "other" ways of doing research based on a decolonial perspective. This choice is highlighted considering the most diverse socio-territorial experiences of occupation and production in Brazilian and Latin American cities. Such experiences lead to a social reorganization, through which territories become spaces for survival and the construction of an alternative sociopolitical dimension.

Therefore, they are socio-territorial and peripheral experiences that address struggles against mechanisms of oppression linked to race, gender, class, and regional origins, as well as their intersectionalities. In this sense, they go beyond the traditional debate about access to resources and spaces, such as public equipment, health, housing, and culture, by questioning the roots of the processes of expropriation and exploitation they suffer. Through a decolonial approach, they incorporate the right to production and identity recognition, challenging the structures imposed by the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2007). Thus, groups gain legitimacy by producing their own political, social, and cultural perspectives on and to town.

Despite the existence of contributions concerning the analysis of the mentioned dimensions, many approaches still remain aligned with critical theories that treat the capitalist production of space in a way that is disjointed from the dimension of its coloniality. In this regard, two important aspects stand out. First, it is essential to understand the epistemic relationship between coloniality and the production of space, in which Eurocentrism acts as a driving and structuring element of territorial, urban, and architectural colonialities (Farrés Delgado, 2016). Second, inspired by the perspective of the autonomy of the design or project (Escobar, 2014; Freire-Medeiros & Name, 2019; Porto Gonçalves, 2001), new sociopolitical dimensions emerge aimed at popular control of territories and the space for new uses, which they challenge the classical order of space production.

The paper proposes to advance in observing "how" and "with whom" to think about social transformation, debating the methodology in the decolonial field to guarantee the epistemic protagonism of the bearers of the experiences analyzed. Holliday's (2006) methodological perspective offers paths for analytical readings with a propositional intention, which allows the creation of new horizons and ways of being in the world, that is, with the subjects themselves involved as protagonists in the transformation processes.

The text is divided into three sections, in addition to the introduction and final considerations. The first section addresses the contributions of the decolonial debate to urban planning. The second one broadens the focus to discuss dilemmas and advances in the field of urban planning, emphasizing the pedagogical role of the experiences of social movements as a space for tension and proposition. In the third section, reflections are presented on the methodological dimension of decolonial studies, as well as the results of two field experiments with the *Quilombo Abayomi* collective, developed based on the methodological perspective of the systematization of experiences by Oscar Jara Holliday (2006).

## 2 The territorial dimension of coloniality under debate

The concept of coloniality of power, elaborated by Quijano (2007), represents the lasting and systemic legacy of colonization in Latin America, which includes not only economic exploitation but also racial categorization and the hierarchization of social groups as an integral part of this system of power. The idea of race, developed to legitimize relations of dominance in the conquest of America, continues to structure power relations in contemporary times.

In this scenario, other categories such as "coloniality of knowledge" and "coloniality of being" emerge as developments of the coloniality of power. Lander (2000) addresses how colonialism impacted the construction of knowledge and forms of knowledge production, which revealed how Western knowledge imposed itself as universal and superior, thereby marginalizing and subordinating other forms of knowledge produced in colonial contexts. The coloniality of being, in turn, refers to the construction of identities and subjectivities under colonial logic and examines how notions of race, gender, and sexuality, among others, were forged and instrumentalized for the perpetuation of power relations and oppression (Maldonado Torres, 2007).

Although the decolonial debate has advanced on several fronts, the territorial dimension is still underexplored. The coloniality of power approach allows us to analyze the urban beyond class issues, incorporating other hierarchies present in Latin American experiences, such as the relationship between modernity and coloniality. Farrés Delgado contributes to the debate by shedding light on the epistemic relationship between coloniality and the production of space (Farrés Delgado, 2016).

The concept of "territorial coloniality", formulated by Farrés Delgado and Matarán (2012), describes a set of power patterns that hegemonically establish a conception of territory over other perceptions considered "inferiorized".

These patterns are structured in a triangular relationship between the "coloniality of territorial being" (the hegemony of the "urban being" over non-urban forms of human existence), the "coloniality of territorial knowledge" (as practices of designing and inhabiting the territory) and the "coloniality of territorial power" (as the unequal distribution of the power of enunciation and decision-making over the territory). These dimensions are interconnected. The "coloniality of territorial being" acts as the basis of the structure, establishing power relations that determine the other dimensions. The "coloniality of territorial

knowledge" is influenced by the hegemony of the "urban being" and, in turn, reinforces such hegemony. Meanwhile, the "coloniality of territorial power" is influenced by other dimensions, reinforcing the hegemony of the "urban being" and territorial occupation practices (Farrés Delgado, 2016).

The triangular structure of territorial coloniality feeds back and reinforces each other, revealing the complexity of power relations within the decolonial debate in Brazil and Latin America. In this way, we can better understand how territory is shaped and instrumentalized by colonial logic and how the struggle for decolonization must consider the interconnection between the different dimensions of coloniality (Farrés Delgado, 2016).

### **3 Dilemmas and advances in the decolonial debate in the field of urban planning: from urban insurgencies to the possibilities of the autonomy of *diseño*<sup>1</sup>**

In the 21st century, especially in Brazil after the 2013 protests, the theoretical debate has focused on conflicting issues in the urban context. Among the several authors who have contributed to the discussion, Harvey (2014) stands out, whose argument on "Rebellious Cities" exposes the contradictions of urbanization from the perspective of movements critical of the capitalist management of the territory.

Insurgent planning approaches, emphasized by Holston (2016) and Miraftab (2009), gain relevance for understanding urban life and resistance to neoliberal management of territories, including the gentrification of urban centers and the expansion of peripheries. Miraftab highlights that insurgent practices strain the vision of professional planners and challenge the idea of their isolated action. These perspectives show the role of territory in the capitalist world system and resistance but often neglect the dimension of coloniality.

To deepen this debate, the understanding of the peripheral territory as a sociopolitical space of life is presented (Zibechi, 2015; D'Andrea, 2013; Silva & Oliveira, 2017; Haesbaert, 2020). Such an approach emphasizes the actions of movements and social groups that rework their existence and promote a new social organization through political, cultural, and social expressions. Such actions result in the reconfiguration of the territory, which becomes seen as a space for survival and the construction of a new sociopolitical dimension. In this context, the decolonial debate emerges as an interpretative key capable of expanding the understanding of the aforementioned transformations and contributing to rethinking the field of urban planning (Silva & Maciel, 2021). In this work, we will focus on analytical categories of design autonomy (Escobar, 2014; Escobar, 2016), and "r-existence" (Porto Gonçalves, 2001) for a debate that intertwines decolonial epistemologies and planning.

In his book *Autonomía y diseño* (2016), Arturo Escobar argues that the current crisis is the result of deeply rooted ways of being, doing, and knowing, and that recovering the *diseño* for the construction of other worlds requires a new and effective awareness of historicity of the *diseño* in a patriarchal, capitalist and modern onto-epistemic formation. The term *diseño* has a semantic richness that goes beyond its translation into Portuguese, as explained by Britto (2020) when analyzing the work of Arturo Escobar. In his book, *diseño* means the production of ontological representations of reality, ranging from simple drawings to projects, institutions, and conceptions of the world as a whole. In the paper, we chose to keep the word *diseño* to preserve the breadth of the debate proposed by the author.

Escobar proposes an ontological approach to *diseño* focused on the interaction between understanding and creation, underscoring that this approach can generate new ways of being and relating to the world and emphasizing the relevance of culture in this process. Furthermore, the author critically examines the dualistic ontology of separation, control, and appropriation, which has become dominant in Western capitalist patriarchal modernity. It therefore values cultural diversity, local worldviews, and ancestral knowledge as essential elements for building a fairer world in spatial and social terms.

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<sup>1</sup> The title highlights the debate on the autonomy of design or project within the scope of urban planning, emphasizing decolonial perspectives inspired by the ideas of Arturo Escobar.

In this sense, the idea of "*autonomía y diseño*", proposed by Arturo Escobar, refers to an approach in which communities and local actors assume a central role in defining and creating their spaces and territories.

Freire-Medeiros and Name (2019) enrich the debate by reflecting on the social and spatial dynamics of the Rocinha *favela* in Rio de Janeiro by indicating the occupation of slabs as a form of resistance, as it enables the creation of new spaces for sociability and leisure, in addition to offering opportunities for housing expansion and income generation.

Slabs, often seen as problems to be solved, can be understood as forms of territorial appropriation and social resistance, serving as points of observation and connection between scales, demanding an epistemic approach that rethinks traditional forms of analysis and intervention in the favela and the city.

Porto Gonçalves (2001) proposes the concept of "r-exist", which represents the ability to resist and reinvent oneself in asymmetrical contexts of power, thus transcending the simple act of fighting against something. In this sense, the letter "R" represents both resistance and reinvention, valuing the construction of new forms of life and social relationships amid adversity.

By boosting discussions in urban planning and promoting alternatives to the hegemonic development logic, these epistemic approaches point out the need to critically reflect on the influence of the Eurocentric episteme in this field. The practices and actions of social movements can be pedagogical elements to tension dominant logics by valuing the diversity of local knowledge, increasing the decolonial methodological debate as a way of challenging established paradigms.

#### **4 The methodological dimension of decolonial studies: report on the systematization of experiences with the Quilombo Abayomi collective**

The pedagogical approach to experiences, alongside the recognition of the protagonism of the subject, becomes a relevant theme in the academic and social sphere. In this sense, it is important to reevaluate the methodological dimension of knowledge production, considering a procedural perspective and valuing the protagonism of the subjects involved (Dulci & Malheiros, 2021; França, 2020; Sousa & Cavalcante, 2021).

Borsani (2021) addresses the topic of decolonial methodologies and emphasizes that they are not yet pre-established research procedures, but rather a subsequent reconstruction of the investigation. The author emphasizes that this is not a lack of consolidation due to the recentness of decolonial thinking, but rather a recognition that decolonial methodology cannot be applied in a standardized way in any research. On the contrary, the construction of a decolonial methodology must be sensitive and contextualized, in order to dialogue with the political and epistemological practices of the involved subjects.

Based on these initial considerations about the methodological scope in the decolonial field, we present the systematization of experiences, a proposal developed by Oscar Jara Holliday as a way to think about "how" and "with whom" to think about social transformation. Holliday (2006) underscores the importance of systematizing experiences as a perspective for social action and dialogical, critical reflection on the experiences of specific social groups. The proposal aims to answer questions such as: "What are we doing? How are we doing? Why are we doing it?" Holliday emphasizes that the process is participatory, involving the subjects themselves who have experienced the situations as the main protagonists. Furthermore, systematization is not limited to remembering what was experienced but also seeks to shed light on paths for the future.

Through his research with social movements and marginalized groups, Holliday observed that systematization allows for a retrospective and prospective analysis of lived experiences, characterizing it as a method of procedural evaluation of daily life.

Three important dimensions are included in this process, as shown in Table 1:



### **Elements of systematization of experiences**

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**Objectify what is experienced:** stop to distance ourselves from what we experience experientially and thus convert our own experience into an object of study and theoretical interpretation and, at the same time, into an object of transformation.

**Putting disordered knowledge and diverse perceptions in order:** by systematizing, people recover in an orderly way what they already know about their experience, discover what they don't yet know about it, but also reveal what they “didn't yet know they already knew”.

**Accept the interpretations of the subjects of the experiences:** systematize not only what one pays attention to the events, their behavior and evolution, but also the interpretations that the subjects have about them. This creates a space for these interpretations to be discussed, shared and confronted.

**Table 1:** Elements of the systematization of experiences. Source: Holliday, 2006, our translation.

Holliday proposes a methodology for systematizing experiences, consisting of five distinct stages, emphasizing the guiding nature of this method and accentuating the importance of considering the particularities and dynamics of the groups involved in the systematization process. According to Table 2, the steps are as follows:

#### **The five stages of systematizing experiences**

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**1st stage:** corresponds to gathering the authors and records of the experiences;

**2nd stage:** it is the time to present and define what you want to systematize and what experiences you want to systematize;

**3rd stage:** proposes the reconstruction of history, the ordering and classification of information and moments experienced;

**4th stage:** aims to analyze, systematize and critically interpret the process;

**5th stage:** it is time to communicate learning.

**Table 2:** Diagram of the five stages of systematizing experiences. Source: Holliday, 2006, our translation.

#### **4.1 Quilombo Abayomi: House of Culture and Resistance of the Black People**

*Quilombo Abayomi*<sup>2</sup>, a representative collective of black and peripheral people created in January 2022, in the city of São José dos Campos, São Paulo, is a non-profit House of Culture supported by collaborative fundraising, whose name, of *Yorubá* origin, reinforces African culture and means "precious encounter" (Quilombo Abayomi, 2022a).

The expression "urban *quilombo*" designates a form of political, cultural, economic, and social organization that combats racism, promotes black culture, and allows everyone to participate as "creators of culture". These urban spaces are places

<sup>2</sup> For more information about Quilombo Abayomi visit: <https://www.instagram.com/quilombo.abayomi/>

of struggle and resistance against oppression and exclusion, promoting the exchange of knowledge between marginalized groups and affirming cultural and ethnic identities. The active participation of those involved is valued, encouraging the collective construction of knowledge and promoting Afro-Brazilian culture (Batista, 2019).

*Quilombo Abayomi* is located on the outskirts of São José dos Campos, the largest city in the Paraíba Valley and North Coast of São Paulo, as recorded by the 2022 Demographic Census (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE], 2023), with a population of 697,428 inhabitants. São José dos Campos was recognized as the first smart city in Brazil by ABNT, following international urban management standards. However, the implementation of certifications is linked to consolidating neoliberal management of territories, which uses urban marketing strategies (Forti, 2020; Araújo, 2022). This hides the existing socio-spatial inequality in the city, which faces problems such as dispersed urbanization, real estate speculation, inequalities in the use and occupation of space, and criminalization of urban social movements.

The Campo dos Alemães neighborhood, where the quilombo is located, is characterized by a high demographic density and is home to a significant portion of the population in the city's<sup>3</sup> southern zone. The neighborhood faces challenges related to infrastructure and public services, such as the lack of urban equipment, poor public transport, and a lack of leisure and cultural spaces. City Hall data indicates that the average income in the region is half the average of the city, and the illiteracy rate is the highest in the municipality. Residents report difficulties in accessing other regions of the city and the lack of health, cultural, educational, and leisure services (São José dos Campos, 2018; São José dos Campos, 2017). Figure 1 locates the neighborhood in relation to the central region of the city.

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<sup>3</sup> According to IBGE (2010), the South Zone is a densely populated region, with 233,536 people. In the specific neighborhood, there are 19,153 residents, according to the census.



**Fig. 1:** Location of the neighborhood in relation to the central region of the city. Source: Google Maps, 2023. Available at: <https://bityli.cc/zfs>. Accessed: 01/23/2023.

Thus, its peripheral position with regard to the urban center and the presence of distinct socioeconomic characteristics give it a peculiar reality marked by the marginalization and criminalization of poverty (Telles, 2001). The neighborhood and its population are stigmatized by the criminalization of poverty, a phenomenon in which vulnerable individuals are subjected to criminal treatment, especially through institutional and police violence. In the Brazilian reality, the criminalization of poverty is intrinsically related to racism, a system that mainly affects ethnic minority communities, such as people of African descent, perpetuating injustices and social inequalities. This complex interconnection sustains a continuous cycle of discrimination and violence.

However, there are actions and experiences of resistance and struggle that promote new peripheral meanings linked to a territoriality that allows other ways of communicating and creating a new perception of the peripheral being and the periphery (D'Andrea, 2013). It is in this context that *Quilombo Abayomi* has promoted spaces for reflection on the periphery, intending to demystify the neighborhood's association with violence and marginalization. Furthermore, these spaces highlight the fight against racism by strengthening local identity and, thus, seeking significant social changes (Quilombo Abayomi, 2022b). The collective's headquarters is a rented house maintained through donations. In 2022, the collective promoted several activities and actions focusing on culture, education, and art. Below, Table 3 exemplifies the main proposals made during that period.

### Activities promoted by the Quilombo Abayomi Collective in 2022

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**Art expression collective:** with a free theme, people painted the walls of the quilombo, in order to express what the place represented to them

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**Pre-university course:** with the support of volunteers, it offered classes to the community and interested parties with the aim of providing access to the university

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**Legal assistance for women:** with the support of volunteers, it maintained a listening space to assist women victims of violence

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**Cultural events:** promoted monthly cultural events that valued racial debate and peripheral culture. One of the examples was *Virada Preta* held in November, which featured a three-day event that promoted shows, conversation circles and debates

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**Musical project:** project proposed by one of the residents, which, around the debate on musical instruments of indigenous origin, promoted practical teaching on how to play and produce *Pife*

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**Distribution of basic food baskets:** the collective has an active support and solidarity project that supports some vulnerable families with basic food baskets.

**Table 3:** Quilombo Abayomi activities that worked on new territorialities in the communities. Source: Prepared by the authors.

#### 4.2 Reports, processes, and reflections of two systematizations of experiences with *Quilombo Abayomi*

This paper presents the process and results of two experiences of applying the experience systematization method carried out by the authors, represented in Figure 2. The first experience was carried out during an undergraduate study that mapped the debate on community planning, linked to the final work entitled "Proposal for Territorial Socio-Cultural Action Based on the Analysis of Peripheral Cultural Manifestations" (Santos, 2022)<sup>4</sup>. The objective was to deepen the debate on community demands and their implications for territorial planning. The second experience resulted from a master's degree research entitled "Community Libraries as Socio-Political Territories: Case Study in Two Peripheral Neighborhoods of São José dos Campos and Jacareí – SP" (2023)<sup>5</sup> which provided joint reflections on the impact of community libraries and cultural collectives in the life of peripheral communities (Alves, 2023).

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<sup>4</sup> Final undergraduate course work (known as TCC in Brazil) in Architecture and Urbanism carried out by Isabela Reis Santos, with guidance from Fabiana Felix do Amaral e Silva.

<sup>5</sup> Master's thesis carried out by Cintia Fabiola Mota Alves, supervised by Fabiana Felix do Amaral e Silva. The fieldwork was approved by the Ethics Committee of the responsible institution (CAAE 58133922.7 000005503) in 2022.





**Fig. 2:** Images of the systematization of experiments I and II. Source: Photos from the research collection.

The presentation of the steps of the processes in the two systematizations depicted in Table 4 and Table 5 facilitates the understanding of the procedures and their interconnections, making the content more accessible and informative.

**Experience  
 Systematization Stages**

**Systematization I - Proposal for sociocultural and territorial action based on the analysis of peripheral cultural manifestations.**

<p><b>First step</b>                  Gather authors and records of experiments</p>	<p>The researcher contacted the leaders and presented the research proposal. Then, using the group's social networks, records of the historicity of the actions were organized. A field visit was carried out to learn about the space and dynamics of the neighborhood.</p>
<p><b>Second stage</b>                  Present and define what you want to systematize for and what experiences you want to systematize</p>	<p>The researcher shared the TCC analysis proposal with the group, with the aim of evaluating the problems of conventional urban planning and the possibilities of use and occupation proposed by the community. Next, together with the collective, the systematization of experiences was defined through cartography. The proposed cartography presented the relationship between social and cultural actions present in the community and interactions with public space and existing cultural/educational/leisure facilities.</p>
<p><b>Third Stage</b>                  Reconstruction of history, ordering and classification of information and moments experienced</p>	<p>Participants were shown a map of the neighborhood with the location of public spaces and equipment. The workshop began with a debate on weaknesses and potential and ended with the presentation of proposals for the use and occupation of public space.                  The dynamics of systematization consisted of a conversation circle that aimed to highlight the weaknesses, potentialities and propositions and which, at the same time, was specialized in the map of the neighborhood.                  The activity took place on May 19, 2022, and it was attended by fifteen people from the community.</p>
<p><b>Fourth Stage</b>                  Analyze, systematize and critically interpret the process</p>	<p>The weaknesses, potentialities and propositions were systematized and critically interpreted and resulted in referrals at different scales of scope, that is, from public policy to the process of occupation and use of public spaces in the neighborhood.</p>
<p><b>Fifth Stage</b>                  Communicate learning</p>	<p>This information was organized by the researcher based on the concepts of community planning and, by correlating community knowledge with technical knowledge, resulted in a proposal for sociocultural and territorial community action.                  In October 2023, the researchers returned to the neighborhood and presented the TCC results for a second community assessment.</p>

**Table 4:** Systematization I - Proposal for sociocultural and territorial action based on the analysis of peripheral cultural manifestations. Source: Prepared by the authors.

<b>Experience Systematization Stages</b>	<b>Systematization II - Community libraries as socio-political territories: case study of two peripheral neighborhoods in the cities of São José dos Campos and Jacareí – SP</b>
<b>First step</b> Gather authors and records of experiments	The researcher contacted the leaders and presented the research proposal. Then, using the group's social networks, records of the historicity of the actions were organized.
<b>Second stage</b> Present and define what you want to systematize for and what experiences you want to systematize	The researcher shared the key question of her research with the group. “How can the actions of community libraries, by raising the sociocultural-spatial dimensions, counteract aspects of the actions of public policies presented separately from the dynamics and social demands of the cities under study?” It was then defined together with the collective to systematize the actions and projects they carried out in their territory in 2022 to assess their reach and how they impact the life of the community.
<b>Third Stage</b> Reconstruction of history, ordering and classification of information and moments experienced.	The group dynamic took place on December 12th and was attended by 12 people from the community. The proposed systematization included two mappings. The first was the <b>Mapping of the collective's actions over time</b> . A table was created with six important moments of the experiences lived. The second was the <b>Mapping of actions and relationships with the territory</b> . Two maps were presented. The first was a map of São José dos Campos and the second was a map of the Campo dos Alemães neighborhood. Participants identified their actions and practices in the regional and local territory, as well as direct capital actions with the aim of evaluating the resistance relationship and its scope.
<b>Fourth Stage</b> Analyze, systematize and critically interpret the process	After organizing the mapping, participants presented their analyzes and it was possible to critically reflect on the process by reliving the six most relevant moments they experienced, their impacts and lessons learned.
<b>Fifth Stage</b> Communicate learning	This information was systematized and organized by the researcher and contributed to the debate on the importance of community libraries as socio-political spaces. In 2023, the Dissertation document was delivered to the community during a subsequent field visit.

**Table 5:** Systematization II - Community libraries as socio-political territories: a case study of two peripheral neighborhoods in São José dos Campos and Jacareí – SP. Source: Prepared by the authors.

The systematization of experiences carried out confirmed the logic of territorial exclusion linked to the practice of criminalizing poverty and controlling peripheral territories. This logic is supported by the planned absence of investments in basic equipment and structures, such as education, leisure, health, and culture. The systematizations mapped territorial weaknesses, mainly those related to the poor management of public facilities, such as the multi-sports gym, which is not accessible to the public, and squares with broken street furniture and a lack of benches. Furthermore, a lack of adequate lighting was observed in the open fields of the region which creates insecurity, especially for women, favors episodes of police violence, and thus reinforces vulnerability and fear among residents. The absence of bus stops with adequate lighting at night for public transport users was also identified.



The comment of one of the participants in the systematization depicts the situation of abandonment of a square, police violence, and the occupation and use of the street by the community:

“It's a huge square with a broken swing, no benches, poor lighting. The football pitch that exists was built by the population.

Here it is as if we were in a war zone. Violence is daily, there are operations in the neighborhood in the morning and everyone is afraid and everyone on the street is suspicious and is approached brutally during the day and imagine here that there are dark spaces in these squares where the police can go over the limit.

We have a culture of staying more on the streets... they are small houses. Many families, so our leisure ends up on the street, it's a barbecue that goes to the sidewalk or a table that goes to the square, and the city hall doesn't see that.” (“Participant”, 28 years old, University student)<sup>6</sup>.

However, the systematizations showed that the actions of the collective pressure the conventional urban planning by demonstrating new forms of occupation and use of space. Through art collectives, pre-university courses, legal assistance for women, and other actions, the collective promotes significant social transformations in the community, providing access to education, culture, and social assistance. Furthermore, the distribution of basic food baskets helps to support families in vulnerable situations, which accentuates active participation and leadership in the territory. These potentialities show how the collective stands out in providing active participation and social transformation in the territory, in addition to demonstrating significant alternatives for the occupation and use of urban space.

The systematization of experiences raised three categories that summarize the sociopolitical role of the collective: community bond; r-existence strategies in the face of the absence of the State; and space for sociopolitical formation. It is worth highlighting that *Quilombo Abayomi* plays an essential role in rebuilding community ties by strengthening bonds that challenge historical stigmas. This is achieved through cultural events that value Afro-Brazilian culture and question narratives of domination and exploitation in the region.

In the peripheries, "r-existence" strategies (Gonçalves, 2001) involve the fight against hostility in the region through the promotion of social, cultural, and educational actions that value peripheral identities and expressions. Therefore, the actions of the community library, the pre-university course, music classes, events, and conversation circles play a central role in the socio-political formation of the community by enhancing Afro-descendant culture and emphasizing the need to combat systemic racism.

## 5 Final considerations

The objectives of this paper were to emphasize the relevance of decolonial epistemes in urban planning and social movements to value the protagonism of subjugated groups and tension the established order.

The experiences of *Quilombo Abayomi* demonstrate popular control of the territory that challenges the traditional, Eurocentric approach to urban planning, as they explore new uses and occupations based on local culture and the needs of communities. These cultural and educational spaces on the outskirts have gained a significant sociopolitical dimension, becoming active places of resistance and social transformation, which value self-determination and the participation of individuals in decisions that affect their lives.

The application of the method of systematizing experiences in studies of architecture and urbanism and urban planning underscores local experiences and knowledge, leading to a more committed and contextualized understanding of the challenges faced by marginalized communities.

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<sup>6</sup> Information taken from the research.



The actions of the *Quilombo Abayomi* play a prominent role in contesting the hegemony of knowledge and territorial power, in light of the concept of "territorial coloniality" (Farrés Delgado & Matarán, 2012). These actions focus on opposing the predominance of the "urban being" over other forms of existence by promoting the appreciation of peripheral cultural identities and manifestations. Within the scope of the "coloniality of territorial knowledge", the collective's initiatives strengthen their beliefs and racial understanding, providing resistance to the structures of Western knowledge that have historically marginalized other expressions of knowledge originating in contexts of coloniality. Additionally, the "coloniality of territorial power" is addressed through actions that cover the social, cultural, and educational domains that denounce the structures of supremacy in the scope of knowledge and territorial power, which, throughout history, have placed on the margins and oppressed communities in peripheral regions.

In this sense, decolonial methods encourage a reflective and critical stance on the part of researchers, who can recognize the asymmetries of power present in research relationships and seek ways to overcome them. In this way, the dialogue in question brings to light challenges for the sphere of knowledge in urban planning and introduces theoretical and methodological perspectives that emphasize the authorship of the actors involved and that strengthen a decolonial theory aligned with social transformation.

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