

Urban marginality, racial inequalities and welfare expansion in Brazil and South Africa

Marginación urbana, desigualdades raciales y expansión del bienestar en Brasil y Sudáfrica

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Recibido: 31/04/2021

Aprobado: 30/05/2021

Abstract

The expansion of social rights in Brazil and South Africa over the last decades until the 2010s have encouraged quite optimistic understandings about both countries. In relative contrast with them, in this article, I seek to deal with the question of how territories that incarnate the historical injustices and racial inequalities of Brazil and South Africa have been transformed in recent times. In order to do so, I rely on literature review and qualitative research methods. I put the emphasis on recent dynamics of social change in two historically marginalized urban spaces, namely: Rio de Janeiro's favelas and Johannesburg's townships. In so doing, I seek to discuss the interconnectedness between welfare policies and patterns of urban marginality.

Key words: Racial Inequalities, Welfare Policies, Segregation, Brazil, South Africa.

Resumen

La expansión de los derechos sociales en Brasil y Sudáfrica durante las últimas décadas hasta la década de 2010 ha alentado entendimientos bastante optimistas sobre ambos países. En relativo contraste con ellos, en este artículo trato de abordar la cuestión de cómo los territorios que encarnan las injusticias históricas y las desigualdades raciales de Brasil y Sudáfrica se han transformado en los últimos tiempos. Para ello, me baso en la revisión de la literatura y los métodos de investigación cualitativa. Hago hincapié en la dinámica reciente del cambio social en dos espacios urbanos históricamente marginados, a saber: las favelas de Río de Janeiro y las townships de Johannesburgo. Al hacerlo, busco discutir la interconexión entre las políticas de bienestar y los patrones de marginalidad urbana.

Palabras clave: Desigualdades Raciales, Políticas De Bienestar, Segregación, Brasil, Sudáfrica.

Introduction

Unlike what happened in South Africa (and the United States), in Brazil, after the abolition of slavery in 1888, there have never been racially based laws nor straightforwardly racial segregationist urban planning initiatives. Actually, there were times when, while in South Africa (and the United States) racial segregation was institutionalized and enforced by law; in Brazil, there were laws against racial discrimination (Skidmore, 1993 [1974]). However, this does not mean that there has not been either racism or racial separation in the Brazilian city. The porousness of the Brazilian racial order does not negate the existence of either racism or racial separation in the city space¹. For instance, it is difficult to detach the origins of Rio's *favelas* from historical events that have an obvious racial component, such as the abolition of slavery in 1888. Granting all that, what needs to be pointed out here is that Rio's *favelas* have provided shelter for the lower strata of the population and have consolidated as a space of multiracial concurrence on the margins of the formal city. Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* could be depicted as a well-known space of urban poverty in the city, with class being the leading element behind their genesis and evolution². The situation is quite different for the many South African townships that make up Soweto. In this case, race surely comes to the fore over class. Racial homogeneity was forced upon township residents from the beginning by the state. Thus, from a historical point of view, while Rio de Janeiro's *fave-*

las, although in many cases less heterogeneous originally, have evolved toward configurations that are more diverse regarding race and class; in Johannesburg's townships such as Soweto and Alexandra, class diversity progressed a long time within the overpowering framework of racial segregation. Perhaps the question now is to try to illuminate how such dissimilar segregation patterns historically constituted have been affected -if ever- in each one of the two urban contexts in recent times.

In this article, without disregarding the history of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* and Johannesburg's townships, I have chosen to put the emphasis on recent dynamics of social change in Brazil and South Africa that might have had consequences for these two historically marginalized urban spaces. I have preferred to place the weight of the analysis on recent times characterized by the expansion of social rights of citizenship (Marshall, 1998 [1950]), that is, the period that starts somewhere between the 1990s and 2000s and goes on into the 2010s. There are significant differences between the two contexts, but one could say that overall we are talking about a historical moment that begins from the successful resistance to oppressive regimes in Brazil and South Africa and that has given way to the hopefulness that the upcoming future ought to be better than the past in both countries. The **African National Congress's (ANC)** 1994 electoral victory in South Africa and the **Workers' Party's** 2002 presidential election in Brazil are certainly major hallmarks of the time. Nonetheless, we should not delink these two key political moments from the general contexts that have characterized the recent history of both countries across the 2010s: high levels of political participation, implementation of innovative and progressive social policies, economic growth, and greater international recognition, of which their integration into the so-called **BRICS group** offers a good instance. The two countries have expanded their welfare policies and, alongside China, Russia, and India, have been referred to as among the world's *rising powers* (Tillin and Duckett, 2017). Brazil and South Africa have seemed to be doing quite well while addressing their historical injustices and social inequalities in the shifting global context opened up by the 2008 global financial crisis.

These circumstances have encouraged quite optimistic understandings of Brazil and South Africa and other countries of the global South (see, for instance, Neri, 2009; Seekings 2010, 2011;

¹ As Roger Bastide and Florestan Fernandes (1959), Florestan Fernandes (1965, 1966), and Abdias do Nascimento (1978, 1982 [1968]) have argued, the myth of racial democracy is in fact nothing more than a myth. Even though in the legal-formal realm there may be some norms and institutions endowed with more or less equal rights of citizenship, racial inequalities have persisted in Brazil (Schwarcz, 1993; Munanga, 1996; Guimarães, 1996, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2012; Costa, 2002). Abdias do Nascimento (1982 [1968]), writing at the end of the 1960s, was among the first to point out how the conditions of the Brazilian social structure ended up benefiting the white elite while cornering Afro-Brazilians in the Brazilian city, driving them away into the doomed reality of the favelas. He argued that precisely in Rio de Janeiro residential segregation reached its highest point (Nascimento, 1982 [1968]: 79).

² It is true that poverty can be discursively conflated with determinate racial or phenotypic features, which very often goes hand in hand with the stigmatization of the urban poor. Despite the complete inaccuracy of these kinds of understandings, I would say that they have framed the social imaginary about Rio's *favelas* inhabitants repeatedly. Racial discrimination should not be explained (exclusively) by the legacies of slavery and previous racial inequalities (Costa, 2002: 132).

Comaroffs 2012). In relative contrast with them, in what follows I intend to deal with the question of how territories that incarnate the historical injustices and racial inequalities of Brazil and South Africa have been transformed within what might be termed *overall positive contexts*. And we shall see that, in opposition to any bigoted dystopian narrative about urban marginality, both favelas and townships have gone through development, which has led to their change³. Nevertheless, if social change is for real, I mean, if it is potentially emancipatory, it should have positive consequences for those in the lowest ranks of

³ Drawing upon Wacquant's (2008: 9) work, I want to remark that these two urban settings of the global South are not fixed realities but dynamic historical entities.

Brazilian and South African society, which surely include the racialized people living in places like Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* and Johannesburg's townships. Otherwise, we should seek a radical critique that denounces how racism and racially-driven inequalities have prevailed, despite the recent economic development and expansion of social rights. Even though civil and political rights of citizenship (Marshall, 1998 [1950]) are key for a balanced analysis of the racial and social dynamics of urban segregation, my focus here will be on the consequences of the recent institution of social rights and the correlative expansion of welfare policies in Brazil and South Africa. I will pursue this analysis in dialogue with Wacquant's (2008) seminal comparative study about the so-called advanced marginality.

Methodology

This article depends on literature review and relies partially on qualitative data that I gathered during my doctoral fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* and Johannesburg's townships between 2013 and 2015. My use of qualitative methodology (participant observation, in-depth interviews, etc.) has a clear goal: To interpret how (urban) development and the expansion of social rights of citizenship have met favelas and townships, which go hand in hand with changes in the everyday life of favelas and townships, and that, as such, can be examined from this very specific level of social life. Even though economic develop-

ment and social policies usually start from above and beyond everyday life, we need to go to the ground, to the level of everyday life, if we want to apprehend and discuss them.⁴

⁴ The adoption of this methodological orientation is based on Lefebvre's idea that it is necessary to approach socio-spatial forces from the level of lived experience, that is, from the fertile soil of everyday life (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 31-46, 230, 2002 [1970]: 77-98, 128-9, 2014 [1947] [1961] [1981]: 161-2, 210). Lefebvre (1991 [1974], 352-400, 2002 [1970], 77-98, 2014 [1947] [1961] [1981]) suggests that emancipatory transformation can only exist at the level of everyday life, in the life of ordinary people, which confers everyday life a special status, at least for those of us seeking to evaluate social change.

Welfare retrenchment and the making of advanced marginality

In his comparative study of *advanced marginality*, Wacquant (2008) analyzes the ghettos of the United States and French *cités périphériques* at the close of the twentieth century. Despite marginality being a characteristic of these two urban contexts, one of Wacquant's main aims is to show that there is no convergence between them. According to him (2008: 2-5, 150, 272-76), the superficial similarities between ghettos and *banlieues* do not allow for the neglecting of structural and functional differences that emerge from the historical matrix of labor market, ethnoracial segregation, and state action characteristic of each society and metropolitan order they belong to. Wacquant portrays and discusses these differences drawing upon a diverse range of methodological resources, among them qualitative research. The French social scientist claims that, in spite of the damages of deindustrialization and the disconnection of macroeconomic growth from the attenuation of urban marginality, with the ugly prospect of structural unemployment materializing across the so-called 'advanced world,' urban marginality is decidedly more resilient in the hyperghetto of the United States than in the French *banlieues*. Even though deindustrialization and labor market retrenchment are common tendencies in both countries, Wacquant suggests that the welfare range and the ethnoracial and ethnonational diversity characteristic of

French *banlieues* reveal the non-convergence of urban marginality on the two sides of the North Atlantic. Wacquant (2008) explains the variegated urban marginality of the hyperghetto and the *banlieues* by the degree of retrenchment and dissolution of the welfare state, that is, by the extent of service cutbacks in social policies and their replacement by mechanisms of surveillance and control of the urban poor in the form of a *penal state* (Wacquant, 2008:276-79), something that came to be much more prominent in the United States than in Western Europe (Wacquant, 2008, 2009). In France, urban marginality has been attenuated by state structures and policies whereas, by contrast, in the United States, it has been aggravated by the same powers (Wacquant, 2008:5). Wacquant (2008: 4) argues that in view of the sharper welfare reductions in the United States, and of the biased housing policies and narrow-minded regional planning that prevail in the country, the extreme marginality of the *hyperghetto* is economically underdetermined and politically overdetermined. He maintains that *the highly peculiar physical and demographic configuration of the urban purgatory that is the US hyperghetto is a political creature of the state* (Wacquant, 2008:80). To put it briefly, Wacquant (2008:6) sees the state as the main vector commanding the genesis and trajectory of urban marginality.

Welfare expansion and its disconnections with the dynamics of urban marginality

The intersection of welfare range and urban marginality has a very dissimilar configuration in Brazil and in South Africa in comparison to the development of *advanced marginality* in the two sides of the North Atlantic (Wacquant, 2008). First of all, neither Brazil nor South Africa has ever developed powerful welfare state systems. Despite the existence of social policies, like those established by the authoritarian government of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil between the late 1930s and 1940s and the racially biased welfare policies of apartheid, none of the two countries has achieved even the ungenerous welfare state that the United States had instituted before the mid 1970s. As Costa (2002:178-79) suggests in

his critical exchange with Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, societal uncertainty and social insecurity are not precisely new developments but rather long-standing historical realities in most parts of the world. But what is perhaps more relevant is that precisely because of the non-existence of well-established welfare systems, Brazil and South Africa have not followed the route of welfare rollback in recent years but, instead going the way of welfare construction/expansion.

At a time in which the United States and many states in Western Europe have been cutting back on welfare expenditure, there has appeared to be a commitment to state-led redistribution in Brazil and South Africa. Tillin and Duckett (2017),

for instance, have collected papers that show that Brazil, China, India, and South Africa have expanding, not shrinking, welfare states. While dialoguing with Wacquant's work, Perlman (2010:158-61) offers a similar view. She shows that Brazilian policies such as the **Bolsa Família** (Family Grant) and the **Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (PAC)**, the Growth Acceleration Program, meant welfare state expansion rather than welfare state withdrawal. This common trend in social policy is a background similarity between our two case studies that materializes within the *overall positive contexts*, which, as I have mentioned before, stem from the successful resistance to oppressive regimes in Brazil and South Africa, providing some objective justification for the adoption of confident views about

both countries. Therefore, amidst high levels of political participation, innovative policies (like participative urban planning) economic prosperity, and greater international recognition, the recent welfare expansion/construction in Brazil and South Africa suggests the reverse tendency of welfare shrinkage prevailing in the United States and Western Europe.

The question then is in what manner the recent welfare expansion has affected urban marginality in Brazil and South Africa. How could the recent welfare policies be related to urban marginality in both countries? What consequences have they had for those living in places like Rio de Janeiro's favelas and Johannesburg's townships? How do they relate to the racial inequalities existing in the city space?

South Africa

Some years ago, Jeremy Seekings (2010, 2011) advanced a provocative interpretation of race, class, and inequality in the contemporary South African city. In opposition to the relatively well-established view that the South African city has been subjugated by neoliberalism after *apartheid*, Seekings (2010:6-8,13-4) maintains that there has been decommodification in the South Africa city due to the expansion of welfare policies⁵. He mentions government grants, non-contributory pensions, and the redistributive financing of public services as vectors of decommodification: *the most important element of decommodification in South Africa is the government's set of social assistance programmes* (Seekings, 2010:14). Seekings concludes by stating that, at the end of the day, decommodification has been in course in South Africa, having positive outcomes for poor urban dwellers. In his own words: *there has been a widespread and rising decommodification of service provision for poor people in many parts of South Africa's major cities* (Seekings, 2010: 13). In short, despite South African public authorities' emphasis on *cost recovery* and **public-private partnerships (PPPs)**, Seekings maintains that *there has been a massive improvement in services in poorer parts of*

the city, and this has not been funded along market principles (2010:14).

Seekings's argument (2010, 2011) is far from uncontroversial. Patrick Bond (2000a, 2000b, 2004a, 2004b, 2011), for instance, has advanced the convincing interpretation that the South African state dismantled apartheid in order to embrace neoliberalism. But even if we are convinced by Seekings's interpretation, this does not mean that there are no problems with the recent welfare expansion in the country. In view of our examination of Johannesburg's townships, I would regard Seekings's judgment (2010, 2011) of the contemporary South African city as overly enthusiastic. Transformation has been evolving in historical townships like Orlando West, Diepkloof, Jabulani, and Pimville. Even relegated areas within Soweto, like Mofolo, have seen improvements in service provision after apartheid. As a rule, we could say that transportation, street paving, electricity supply, garbage collection, health care, sport facilities, schooling, and other public amenities have been improved in historical townships *vis-à-vis apartheid* times. However, does this mean that decommodification has been finding a way amidst the neoliberal order? Does it mean that decommodification is at least possibly on the horizon? And, above all, what has happened with urban marginality? At variance with what Seekings has maintained (2010, 2011), my fieldwork in Soweto and Alexandra suggests that instead of decommodification there has been a deepening of commodification, and of correlated dynamics such as monetization and privatization, on the

⁵ From here onward, when referring to *commodification* I do so in broad terms and mean to encompass dynamics which, in fact, relate to commodification, monetization and, ultimately, privatization and even consumption. *Commodification* entails a series of dynamics that relate to the capitalist expansion into sectors of the social and natural world that were beyond it, and, as such, were not treated as commodities.

urban margins. Notwithstanding the expansion of welfare policies, which might be related to the (partial) decommodification of labor power (Esping-Andersen, 1990), several events signpost that commodification has taken root at the bottom portions of the urban order. While talking about commodification, I am not referring to the commodification of labor, which happened long ago in South Africa, but to the commodification of urban space, including peripherally located urban land, and of everything that comes to be on it (for details on this theoretical perspective see Harvey, 2014). Whereas many of the changes in townships landscapes indicate that development is on the way, we should not overlook that the private sector has been leading it all (Huchzermeyer, 2002, 2003, 2010, 2011, 2014).

There are several changes in townships that may be connected to the expansion of (capitalist) markets in these territories of historical marginalization: From the privatization and monetization of service provision, to the commodification of heritage and poverty by the tourist industry, to the erection of massive malls and private-led housing developments. Here we observe a wider dynamic, common to cities of both the South and the North, that has been of central concern in the critical urban literature: *The commodifications in the housing markets of the world have opened up a vast field of capital accumulation through the consumption of space for social reproduction* (Harvey, 2014:190). Besides, in this panorama, inasmuch as the urban poor see their probable engagement in markets as consumers (of goods, electricity, water, housing... of the city), social rights of citizenship appear to take the form of inclusion via consumption. In short, the recent transformation of townships, which includes (urban) development and involves welfare policies, indicates the expansion of capitalist relations into the everyday life of townships, not a reversal of commodification.

On the other hand, my empirical data fully corroborates Seekings's arguments regarding the reproduction of social inequalities and the permanence of racial segregation in the South African city, which means that the recent welfare expansion has had little impact upon urban marginality and inherited segregation patterns. It is easy to realize this all when you stay for a while in a place like Mofolo, like I did during my fieldwork in 2015. Despite all the massive improvements in services in poorer parts of Johannesburg and other South African cities, and notwithstanding the recent expansion of welfare policies in the country, when we go to the ground it is not difficult to realize that urban marginality remains an overpowering reality shaped faithfully along racial lines. The mushrooming of informal housing within historical townships conceivably epitomizes it. More than two decades after the official end of apartheid, present-day inequalities in South African cities may not be explained

exclusively by the legacy of the past. Instead, we should assume that postapartheid policies have been either reproducing the inequalities of the past or engendering new ones. For instance, living conditions can be really hard in postapartheid public housing projects, low-cost government subsidized housing areas, usually called Reconstruction and Development Programme houses or just RDPs, most of which have been erected within or next-door to historical townships, that is, on peripheral land. In some cases, public-housing schemes can resemble informal settlements considerably. This is the case of the temporary camp erected by public authorities on the borders of Alexandra or Braamfischerville, Kliptown, and Snake Park in Soweto. People living in those places were supposed to be assigned free-standing RDP houses. But it never happened. Instead they were given only small serviced plots and compelled to construct their homes with cheap materials. Like other RDP housing areas across South Africa, there too, the dusty roads promptly recall the townships landscapes of the apartheid years. The general standard of living in all these postapartheid public-housing schemes appears not to be so different from that of townships during racial segregation. Actually, some of my interviewees claim that it is worse now. To say the least, despite welfare expansion in South Africa, contemporary townships reveal deep ambiguities, with the commodity kingdom flourishing side-by-side with urban marginality.

Finally, let me remark that, despite the existence of consistent infrastructural urban upgrading in specific locations within townships, like in the tourist spots in Orlando West, Soweto, many members of the black township's elite and middle-class young people have been leaving the townships for other locations since the end of apartheid. Moving out of Soweto, or aspiring to do so, was a subject often mentioned by the people I interviewed during my fieldwork. We could surely mention the **Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)** and other affirmative action programs when approaching this issue. Seekings (2008) and Selzer and Heller (2010:178) indicate that the postapartheid racial mixing in middle-class neighborhoods has been accelerated by policies such as **Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)**, which provided non-white South Africans the potential economic means to move from historical townships into white middle-class areas. On the other hand, it is undeniable that racial segregation has persisted at the bottom of the South African city. Soweto, for instance, remains a *black continent* to the south of downtown Johannesburg⁶. South African cities have remained deeply segregated along racial lines.

⁶ According to the 2011 Census, more than 98% of Soweto's population was classified as *Black Africans* and the prevalent languages in the township were respectively isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, Xitsonga, and isiXhosa (Stats SA, 2011).

Brazil

Now let us have a look at welfare expansion and its (dis)connections with urban marginality on the other side of the South Atlantic. I should probably start by mentioning the establishment of the poverty-targeting program **Bolsa Família** (Family Grant) in the early 2000s in Brazil. During the two first terms of **Workers' Party** rule, with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as the country's head (2003-2010), conditional cash transfers (social grants to low-income families, usually conditional on them attending to children's education or health) were expanded and consolidated into the program that came to be known as **Bolsa Família**. The **Bolsa Família** unified three former programs created by preceding administrations of the Brazilian **Social Democracy Party (PSDB)** and one program created by the **Workers' Party** itself. Widely credited for raising living standards in the country, the **Bolsa Família** turned out to be a significant source of income for millions of poor Brazilians. By the end of 2010, the nationwide program to fight poverty had already reached almost thirteen million families, with a clear focus on the poorest layers of Brazilian society (Paiva *et al.*, 2013:29). It has been regarded as one of the largest programs of its kind in the world (Sugiyama and Hunter, 2013; Langou, 2013). Together with the increase of wages and educational advances in the 2000s, the program fostered social justice and, above all, poverty alleviation in Brazil (see, for instance, Seekings, 2012; Campello and Neri, 2013; Sugiyama and Hunter, 2013; Langou, 2013; Pereira, 2015; Maiorano and Manor, 2017).

In view of the expansion of welfare policies, debates about the emergence of *new middle classes* have arisen in Brazil.⁷ Neri (2009, 2012) and Neri and colleagues (2013), for instance, have suggested that programs like the **Bolsa Família** rescued millions from poverty, propelling them into the middle ranks of Brazilian society. On the other hand, critics have denounced the limits of social inclusion via participation in markets in a context in which labor exploitation has been neither abolished nor lessened but deepened (Jardim, 2009; Souza, 2010; Pochmann, 2011, 2013; Saad-Filho, 2015). As Jardim (2009) argues, the recent social inclusion via market expansion endeavors to realize the project envisioned by the

⁷ The supposed emergence of *new middle classes* fostered a series of debates in Brazil (see Neri, 2012; Pochmann, 2013; Tible, 2013). In South Africa, the *new middle classes* has been a subject of great interest too (see, for instance, Selzer and Heller, 2010).

Workers' Party of *taming capitalism* in Brazil. In 2010, Lula praised himself for making capitalism work properly in Brazil. The likely upliftment of the poor in the social structure as consumers, rather than as citizens, via extemporaneous Keynesian-inspired counter-cyclical economics, generates aggregate demand, which, at best, means the promotion of mass consumption. To use the Marxian vocabulary, recent changes in Brazil relate to the realization of *surplus value*. In broad terms, recent Brazilian welfare expansion is analogous to that occurring in South Africa. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, nobody has claimed that there has been decommodification either in Brazilian cities, such as Seekings (2010, 2011) did regarding South African townships. And this is so despite the fact that, unlike in the case of Johannesburg's townships, the state has played a leading role in the recent transformation of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*.

Welfare policies and other public interventions, like the PAC and the creation of the **Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora** or **Police Pacification Units (UPPs)**, have not ensured positive outcomes for all those inhabiting the bottom of the network of places that make up contemporary Rio de Janeiro. Thousands of people in the city have been victims of forced evictions and market-driven displacement in recent years because of development projects and urban upgrading in the city's *favelas*. After a short on-site observation in Santa Marta, and in accordance with my own approach here, Fleury (2012) has shown how the formalization of services and market relations have emerged together. In the context of recent urban development in Rio de Janeiro, the *asfalto* has been harassing the *morro*, making land and markets hitherto out of reach available for capitalist accumulation. Despite all improvements, general living standards are still low in most of Rio's *favelas*, with inherited segregation patterns being largely reproduced across the city.

The residential supply and the opening of credit lines within the framework of the Brazilian housing program **Minha Casa, Minha Vida (MCMV)**, **My House, My Place**, relate to an increasing process of monetization of social life and to the inclusion of the urban poor into the formal city not as citizens but as consumers. Always in accordance with the Workers' Party ideal of *taming capitalism* and its correlate Keynesian-inspired counter-cyclical measures, housing has been massively produced and traded by a hand-

ful of big real estate companies. Furthermore, the vast majority of the more than five million housing units erected under the umbrella of the program since its introduction in 2009 has been erected on cheap, under-serviced, peripheral and reinforcing, therefore, the unequal segregation pattern in Brazilian metropolises around the polarization between center and periphery (see, for instance, Maricato, 2009; Cardoso, 2013; Amore *et al.*, 2015; Rolnik *et al.*, 2015). The broadminded urban legislation embodied by the **Estatuto da Cidade** (the City Statute) sanctioned in 2001, has done little to remedy the situation. Akin to the spatial pattern set during the wave of favela eradication policies of the 1960s and 1970s, far-flung quarters across Rio de Janeiro's metropolitan area, such as Cidade de Deus, and in other Bra-

zilian metropolises, have been beneficiaries of projects linked to the **Minha Casa, Minha Vida** program. Ribeiro (2016) goes as far as to suggest that twenty first century Rio de Janeiro remains pretty much the same segregated metropolis that was engendered during the preceding century. He argues that, after the recent welfare expansion and economic prosperity of the 2000s, the double pattern of segregation based on *social distance/territorial proximity* and *social distance/territorial distance* characteristic of the city remains virtually untouched. It is problematic to fully separate class and race while examining Brazilian urban milieus, but racial inequality is an undeniable component of this unfair dual pattern of segregation in which racialized groups suffer symbolic and social segregation in the city space.

Discussion

Relying upon our two case studies, we could surely suggest here that the recent welfare expansion in Brazil and in South Africa has not accomplished much by way of attenuating urban marginality, which may pose a problem for Wacquant's thesis (2008) concerning the role of the state. I am completely sympathetic to Wacquant's idea (2008:6) that the state is a main power commanding the genesis and trajectory of urban marginality. This certainly applies to *favelas* and townships too. Either by action or omission, the state has set up the general circumstances for the existence of townships and favelas from both outside and above. However, in view of the recent transformation of *favelas* and townships, we could argue that Wacquant (2008) overestimates the state's capacity to cope with urban marginality. Our cases suggest a disconnection not only of the concrete dynamics of urban marginality from labor markets (and of macroeconomic growth cycles) -like Wacquant (2008) himself indicates- but also from welfare arrangements. Besides, despite minor changes, broad patterns of racial segregation have remained largely in place and are reflected in the Brazilian and South African urban landscapes. Urban marginality along class and race still is an overwhelming reality in both favelas and townships.

If we tackle wider debates around (de)commodification while relying upon our two case studies, thereby seeking to theoretically extrapolate

beyond the specificities of these cases, we could go as far as to suggest that even far-reaching welfare expansion, of which the introduction of a universal basic income is probably the most comprehensive proposal nowadays -a proposal to which Wacquant (2008:7, 254-55, 279) subscribes- may not be enough to eradicate urban marginality and the racial inequalities that modulate and characterize it. One reason for this is that improvements in service provision, urban development, housing, and welfare expansion might leave the underlying logic of the commodity untouched (Marx, 2011 [1857-58]; Jappe, 2016 [2003]), which ought to lead to the commodification of other dimensions of social life: land, city, heritage, everyday life, and so on (see Harvey, 2014). The examination of the everyday life of *favelas* and townships allows us to claim that although there might have been a partial decommodification of labor with redistributive effects -in the ways Seekings (2010, 2011) has suggested for South Africa- commodification pushes have evolved in other realms of social life. Without the end of the imperative of endless growth, welfare expansion will do little good for the urban poor. Another sizable and correlative problem is that, as we have seen before, entrenched racial divisions might remain virtually untouched. In a word, in spite of all recent welfare policies, social inclusion through consumerism is at most only a partial achievement in contemporary Brazil and South Africa.

Conclusions

In this article I have seek to focus on the interconnectedness between welfare policies and racially-modulated patterns of urban marginality by drawing on two case studies, Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* and Johannesburg's townships. This effort must be probably contextualized. Among the most prominent features of recent global setting are the aftershocks of the 2008 financial crisis, the emergence of many nations of the global South onto the international scene, of which the so-called **BRICS** are possibly the best known, and the constitution of welfare state policies in some countries of the South, such as in Brazil and South Africa. Quite optimistic understandings of the South have been forged amidst this new global constellation. The links Seekings (2010, 2011) finds between welfare regimes in contemporary South Africa and decommodification offer a good example of these optimistic understandings. He has also studied the unprecedented rise of redistributive welfare programs in other countries of the global South, including Brazil (Seekings, 2012).

In the field of urban studies, Roy (2014) has shown a comparable -albeit differently articulated- confidence in the global South, whereas Mabin (2014) takes a skeptical approach toward these optimistic understandings and their reverberations in the theorization of the urban realm. The Comaroffs's (2012) *Theory from the South*, and, to a lesser extent, Wagner's (2011, 2012) analysis of the entangled relationships between capitalism and democracy in *non-western* trajectories of modernity, follow pretty much the same vein. On this point, I side more with Mabin (2014) than with the others. Even if the so-called global South has appeared to be doing quite well, with some even proposing that the

future of all, of both South and North, remains deep rooted on those contexts of the South (see, for instance, Comaroff and Comaroff, 2012; Roy, 2014), there are clear limits to the South rise. I hope to have shown how these limits relate to the reproduction of deep-seated racial inequalities that evolve in the uneven pathways of capitalist urban economy. It is true that the **BRICS** have been more than just an acronym (Pinheiro, 2016). For instance, cooperative initiatives among **BRICS** members in different areas have been instituted in response to the shifting world order (Khomyakov, 2016; Yi, 2016). Brazil and South Africa have taken part in these arrangements besides conveying genuine experiences of transition from authoritarian rule to representative democracy and economic growth. But, despite major political ruptures and some achievements in cooperation and in the economic realm, our examinations of Brazil and South Africa indicate that racial inequalities have not been radically transformed in places like Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* and Johannesburg's townships. Urban segregation shaped along racial lines is still a unfortunate and pervasive characteristic of historical spaces of urban marginality in both countries.

Similarly to what many scholars have shown regarding civil and political rights of citizenship (Fernandes, 1965, 1966; Nascimento, 1978, 1982 [1968]), even when the institution of rights of citizenship goes beyond the narrow limits of the legal-formal realm, encompassing, thus, the expansion of social rights of citizenship, racial inequalities might remain vigorously alive. This diagnosis may most likely be extended to other **BRICS** countries. But the examination of all **BRICS** members surely exceeds the scope of this article.

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