

Territorial Organization and Territories of Intentional High Risk: For the Right to the City

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Abstract: When distributing infrastructure, politically motivated policy results in the creation of some territories that are safer for human life than others. Risky territories created by design are urban ones with less infrastructure (health, safety, leisure, education, etc.) when compared with other territories within the same city. These differences in urban territories are a result of this unequal distribution of infrastructure, as well as of existing segregation in cities. The concept of an at-risk territory created by design is useful in studies in fields such as urban geography, the geography of crime, sociology, urbanism, architecture, public administration, law, public health, security, history, human rights, and engineering. In its urban planning and territorial development processes, the State creates some spaces with more infrastructure than others, and the latter suffer from the lack of these public services. This lack of state provisions can intentionally create at-risk territories, and the intentionality resides in the lack of action on the part of the government. Through this lens, violence can be expressed at different levels. However, this study is focused on homicide-related crime. This type of crime (homicide) is considered herein because it is a crime with many consequences and with a brutal effect on society. Moreover, it has typically been the most severely punished crime throughout the history of human societies. In Brazil, the spatial distributions of the city of Rio de Janeiro and Distrito Federal, the district that encompasses the current capital of the country, were both motivated by the strong presence of public power. Rio de Janeiro was the federal capital and seat of government of Brazil from 1763 to 1960 (approximately 200 years). Brasilia has been the federal capital of Brazil since 1960. Therefore, the presence of public power is and always has been decisive in these two cities. Thus, the analysis of this study provides a concrete emphasis of spatial divisions within both Distrito Federal and the city of Rio de Janeiro to determine the relevance of these spaces to the concept of territorial order, which segregates the provision of infrastructure to certain populations, and the importance of these spaces within the context of Distrito Federal and Rio de Janeiro. The analysis focuses on data from 2013, for which the most recent and comprehensive data was available at the time of the present study. The objective of this case study was to determine whether there is a relation between infrastructure and the number of homicides in the city of Rio de Janeiro and in the capital district known as Distrito Federal. The infrastructures considered were the numbers of public hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers. A combination of statistical methods and dialectics was the most viable methodology for this study. The products of this study are maps that report the number of homicides, its association with infrastructure, and the creation of the term “intentionally at-risk territory.”

Key words: urban geography, geography of crime, violence, Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro, civics

1. Introduction

The ultimate goal of this study on territories of intentional high risk is to preserve human life. This is because inequality in the distribution of infrastructure creates a real risk to human life. Therefore, this concept is of interest to all fields that seek to generate

environments that protect human life.

The study of public safety requires going beyond the police presence. Therefore, this study analyzed the influence of infrastructure on the number of homicides.

2. Police Violence in Spaces Occupied by Poor, Black, and Mixed-Race Populations

The violence practiced by the State requires reflection as the State, which should protect its citizens, often ends up being the very agent and producer of

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violence:

Today, citizens' lives and safety are more endangered than ever — not only by the violence and savage powers exhibited by individuals, and not only by corruption or illegal behavior exhibited by individual politicians, but also, and to a dramatically greater extent, by the State itself through war, weaponization, the dangers resulting from military conflict. These threats, as well as internal violence, such as torture, massacres, and kidnappings, represent incomparably more serious threats to human life. The saying may be true that the history of punishment is more infamous for humanity than the history of crime; even so, their combination does not equate to the ferocity and dimension of crimes committed by States. In summary, to return to Hobbes' image that "the artificial man that is the State", born to dominate and tame the "werewolves" that are natural men, has often become an artificial wolf. These artificial wolves are more savage, uncontrollable, and dangerous than the natural men who created them to secure their guardianship [1].

Violence directed at poor, black, and mixed-race populations can be seen in police operations in the *favelas*, or slums, of Rio de Janeiro — operations that are often referred to as "war". In this process, the segregated population comes to be treated disproportionately as an enemy of war. On the topic of segregation and violence, Souza says:

War metaphors have also become even more abundantly employed. "The War in Rio" is an expression that has been used for years in the newspaper *O Globo*, as well as in several other major Brazilian newspapers such as *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo*. "War", "battle", "drug trafficking soldiers", and other common expressions have been used in combination with other, more careless terms, including "D-Day". And the irony of all ironies is that the favela complex that the State sought to "reconquer" on its "D-Day" was the one known as *Complexo do Alemão* [literally, "the German Complex"]. Unlike Normandy, however, which was occupied by Third Reich troops, the "enemies" are now people born in the same country as the "liberators." Incidentally, "liberation," is also a commonly used term. The overwhelming majority of these "enemies" are young black and mixed-race citizens who are often thin and armed with huge rifles but wearing rubber flip-flops. The poor young

citizens in segregated spaces are ultimately the great (real or potential) "enemy" to be feared in the imaginations of the elites and the upper middle class [2].

There is a history of police violence in spaces occupied by poor, black, and mixed-race populations. In the invasion of spaces belonging to marginalized groups, such as runaway slave communities known locally as *quilombos*; slave community centers known locally as *zungu* houses; *favelas*; and urban underground parties known as *bailes funk*, the groups constituting a portion of the population are treated violently by the police state. The idea underlying these actions taken by the police is the reinforcement of stereotypes that promote racism and social discrimination.

When some people have money, power, and prestige and others do not, those who have it usually act in such a way that justifies and maintains their reality. An extreme example was slaveowners who saw slaves as lazy, ignorant, and irresponsible by nature — bearers of the inherent traits that "justified" their enslavement. In general, women are seen as insecure but sensitive, and, as such appropriate for the caring tasks they traditionally carry out (according to Hoffman and Hurst, 1990). In short, stereotypes rationalize inequalities [3].

The idea that poverty or skin color influences violence enables the perpetuation of prejudice against these groups, particularly given the following fact:

Discrimination also increases prejudice and encourages stereotypes as a result of the reactions it has for its victims. In his classic 1954 book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport noted that discrimination can produce anger or self-harm among its victims. These two reactions can create new basis for prejudice through the classic dynamics of victim blaming. If the circumstances of a life in poverty lead to a higher crime rate, one can then use the higher crime rate to justify continuing discrimination against those living in poverty [4].

Spaces where poor and black citizens come together and engage in activities involving food, music, religion, and culture are unfortunately oppressed by both

security-related institutions and the country's legislative and legal system as police activity serves to violently de-structure these groups with the support of the courts and the lacunae in Brazilian law.

The consequences of this police activity not only include the deaths of citizens but also reflect attempts to exterminate various marginalized cultures.

In the nineteenth century, certain urban spaces in Rio de Janeiro were hit hard. *Zungu* houses, where black slaves and freedmen gathered, are just one example. *Zungu* houses were seen as a public safety issue [5].

The *quilombos*, which were true, organized black cities, were also investigated and decimated by public power. Both *zungu* and *quilombos* were places where African culture was spread and reproduced. They were two of the few domains in which Afro-Brazilian cultural practices had a firm footing and were spread on a large scale.

On the scale of social segregation and territorial organization, Brazilian law and police control in the nineteenth century restricted the movement of this poverty-stricken population comprising slaves and freedmen as if these members of society were "always faced with the "general suspicion" of having committed a crime or of being a runaway slave" [6].

These members of society were often required to present free papers or other documentation to justify their presence around town when stopped by the police. There were, therefore, two instruments at the disposal of the ruling class to control urban captives: "the whip and the prison." These two threats were "always present in the life of any urban slave, and all this system was intended to guarantee the safety of the elites and the maintenance of order" [7].

Bailes funk have been the focus of recent attacks by the State. After the entry of Peacekeeping Police Units (known locally as UPPs) into the *favelas*, several *bailes funk* were banned. It should be noted that, as with samba and the religious practices involved in *candomblé*, Rio de Janeiro's funk music and its associated scene represent a cultural expression of

African roots, which faces exclusion. Afro-Brazilian culture has continually suffered from this legal, legislative, police-based, and institutional persecution.

In Distrito Federal, residents of marginalized regions suffer police abuse in the marginalized territories themselves as well as in the more central areas of the city. The citizens' rights seem to change in the eyes of the police, varying according to a citizen's skin color and home address.

In a discussion on legal and legislation-based violence, Fernandes [8] affirms that defendants are given the unalienable right to representation ("defense must be ensured starting from the moment of arrest") as well as the right to an effective representation ("defense must be effective; the mere appearance of defense is not sufficient"). However, judges rarely question legal and police procedures that contain errors and irregularities in the handling of the rights of marginalized defendants, whether during police investigation or during criminal proceedings.

In these cases, the defendant's own lawyer must effectively oppose the violation of their (the defendant's lawyer's) client's rights. The defendant must have access to a competent lawyer for this to take place. However, it is at this point that a crucial question arises: do poor defendants' lawyers fully ensure the rights of their clients?

This type of violence against poor, black, and mixed-race populations is permitted by judges and by law (as the law does not provide mechanisms for effective punishment in cases where defendants' rights are disregarded), thus allowing for rights violations to be committed as part of police-related actions and within police stations.

These different historical factors reflect the same issue: the repeated legal, legislative, and police persecution of blacks and the poor. This persecution is reflected in not only the mortality rates among blacks but also the maltreatment meted out to Afro-Brazilian culture.

However, the police also play a major role in disrespectful treatment toward, and in the State's violations of, poor, black, and mixed-race citizens' rights; these cases often occur in Brazilian inner cities, where there is substantial police presence. These members of society are treated as though they do not possess legal protection. Their houses are violently invaded in cases in which "a warrant for search and seizure becomes an ostensive obstacle or simple nuisance" [9].

Poor, black, and mixed-race populations are frequent targets of police operations as though all occurrences involving violence against these populations were acts of self-defense resulting from criminal actions exerted by these populations. These measures are compounded by the fact that they are carried out by the police under the garb of legitimacy because in the struggle "against poverty and blackness", anything goes in the efforts to arrest "the bad guys".

According to Brito [10], "the *favela* is treated as the locus of evil, and those who live there are understood as potential, imminent or even established enemies." Manichaeic logic seems to be an argument used since the nineteenth century for this criminal treatment of poor, black, and mixed-race populations. From this social construct, which divides citizens into the good (or property owners) and the bad (the rest), the State uses judges and other agents to legitimize police violence against, and homicides in, this population with the justification that they were necessary deaths or that the violence was a necessary evil. As part of this dehumanization, the following is the case:

Abuses become commonplace, especially when the aforementioned facilitating conditions are present: a sense of urgency, the dehumanization of enemies, victim blaming, secret operations without supervision or oversight, the anonymity of perpetrators, and generalized moral disengagement. Dictatorships adopt these conditions more explicitly than democracies, since dictators do not have to be as concerned about opposition among citizens. Democracies need to be more controlled and secretive in their acts of violence in order not to

arouse reactions by opposition parties or zealous citizen groups. Democracies are likely to make more of an effort so that citizens do not believe that torture occurs, that the media does not reveal torture, that police do not investigate allegations of its existence, that lawyers and courts do not make accusations against torturers and accept the evidence obtained during torture-based confessions. It has already been said that the virtually universal lack of accountability for torture makes of it "the perfect crime" in most societies [11].

However, the fact remains undiscussed that citizens from marginalized territories must be treated in ways that respect their rights and citizenship.

When the debate presents the treatment meted out to the people inhabiting these marginalized "ghettos" solely as a matter of public safety, issues involving health, education, and leisure are obscured. This is a political ploy in which institutions choose to view marginalized territories through the tinted lens of "public safety" rather than staring in the face the lack of health, education, and leisure-related infrastructure.

Police violence in these territories is a consequence of this governmental approach of apathetically treating social exclusion as a "police issue". However, this crime-based perspective must be deconstructed; it is an attempt to hide both human rights abuses and social and infrastructure-based inequality.

In their discussion on the inequality in the violence experienced by wealthier and poorer members of society, Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbardo state the following:

The annual reports by Amnesty International and the United Nations provide evidence of the worldwide spread of torture and other forms of inhumane and degrading treatment of citizens by state-run security forces. A recent news release distributed by Amnesty International's international secretariat (2001b) summarized its worldwide findings on torture: more than 150 countries were identified as perpetrators of torture or mistreatment by State agents, and in more than 70 countries, this type of torture is widespread. Moreover, most of the victims of torture by state agents — victims who have first been accused of crimes — are from the poorest and

most marginalized sectors of society. Most of their torturers are police officers [12].

A positive policy option for this situation may be to view marginalized territories not as “loci of evil” but rather as “loci of exclusion”. In this sense, institutions could choose to invest in these areas to improve infrastructure and reduce social inequality. After all, is social inequality truly a public safety issue to be solved by the police? Instead, is it not an issue involving hunger, health, education, hospitals, employment, and deep income inequality?

3. Methods and Results

The relationship between infrastructures and attitudes is relevant to this research because of the following reasons according to Proshansky cited by Barracho:

The constructed world, be it in the form of a school, hospital, apartment, or highway, is a unique expression of our relations with others... physical spaces, their properties, the people who live within them, and the activities performed therein (...) represent significant systems for individuals and influence responses to the physical environment [13].

In Rio de Janeiro, direct correlations were found between the homicide rate and the numbers of public hospitals, police stations, theaters, and bookstores. Public hospitals were considered to be a factor because of differences in income: the average income of citizens living in wealthy Leblon District is six times higher than that of citizens living in poorer Madureira District, and public hospitals are more frequently used, and are more often necessary, for low-income citizens. Correlations between schools, government-run daycare centers, and homicides were also considered because in the absence of other infrastructures, education alone cannot change violence-related statistics. The lack of infrastructure in Rio de Janeiro (the number of public hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers) was found to be associated with the city’s high number of homicides.

In Distrito Federal, a correlation was determined between the high homicide rate and the lack of infrastructure (numbers of public hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers). Public policies have resulted in the unequal distribution of infrastructure (police stations, hospitals, and theaters).

Statistical methodology combined with dialectics revealed that the general lack of infrastructure in low-income neighborhoods in the city of Rio de Janeiro was associated with higher homicide rates despite the fact that these neighborhoods have more public education infrastructure. These findings suggest that public education alone cannot reduce violence if other types of infrastructure of a high enough quality are not present in adequate quantities.

Because it is a political ploy that benefits certain territories to the detriment of others, territorial organization lays bare, and facilitates a clear reflection of, the stark reality of the abysmal level of infrastructure provided to the regions occupied by the poorest populations. This issue is compounded by the discriminatory police violence that occurs in wealthier areas of Rio de Janeiro and Distrito Federal. This police behavior results in the segregation of poor, black, and mixed-race populations, thus cutting them off from the urban mobility offered in the territories privileged to have infrastructure. This segregation, combined with social inequality and differences in territorial organization, prevents full access to places that facilitate the stimulation, augmentation, and edification of the mind and that give rise to creativity, such as theaters, bookstores, and art galleries, just to name a few.

Reflections on the reasons for higher homicide rates precisely among these segregated populations are vital. In the areas where they live, these populations are not protected by the police; on the contrary, the police are feared because they act in a more arbitrary and discriminatory way in these territories than they do in wealthier districts.

When different political decisions are made, territories are reassessed and equipped with infrastructure. However, if these measures are not taken, certain regions stagnate, or their cultural needs or uniqueness may even be disregarded entirely. Reflections on these territories of intentional high risk may shed light on the political choices and measures that motivate the provision of infrastructure to certain areas to the detriment of others — differences that are associated with higher homicide rates in regions that have been deprived of infrastructure.

Fig. 1 shows the HDI, income per capita, and infrastructure present in the form of hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers in three districts in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Leblon, Madureira e Santa Cruz).

Fig. 2 shows the HDI, income, and infrastructure present in the form of hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers in three districts in the capital district known as Distrito Federal (Brasília, Taguatinga and Ceilândia).

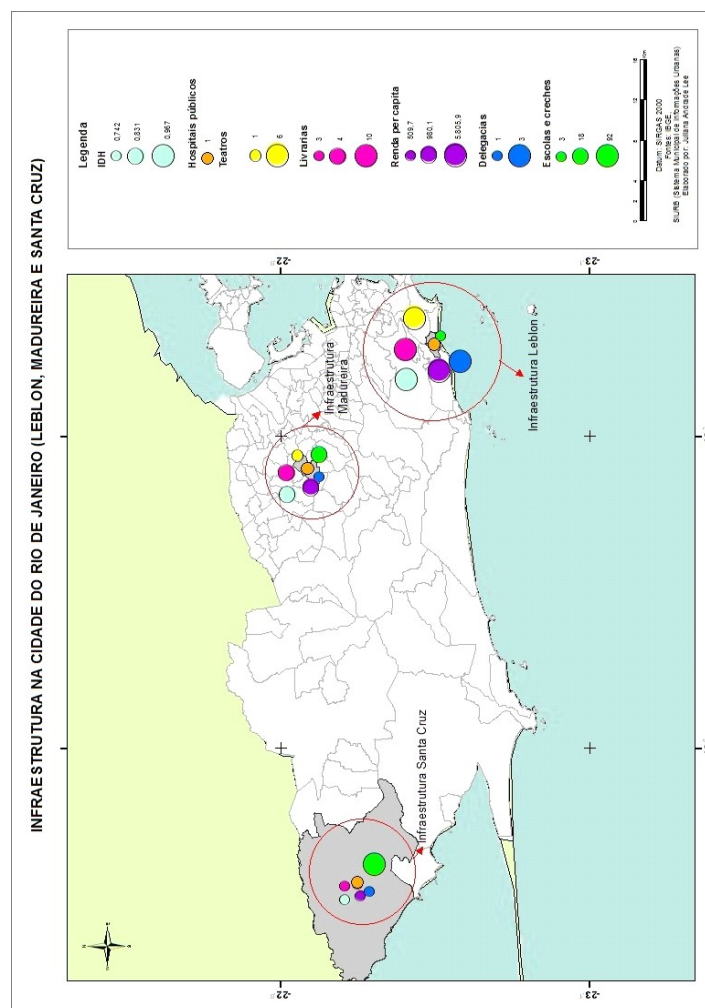


Fig. 1 Infraestrutura in the city of Rio de Janeiro (districts of Leblon, Madureira, and Santa Cruz). HDI, income per capita, and infrastructure present in the form of hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

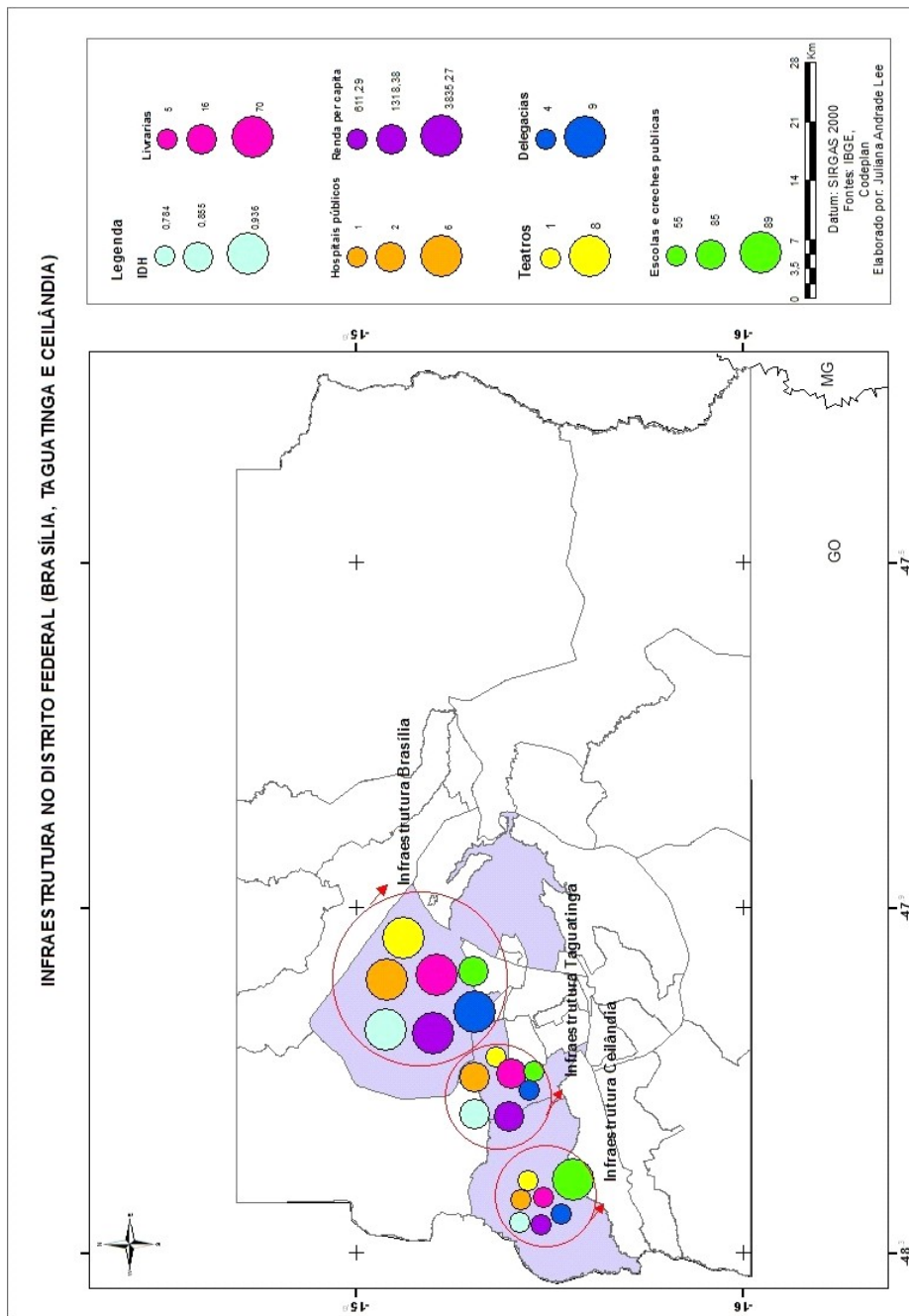


Fig. 2 Infraestrutura no Distrito Federal (distritos de Brasília, Taguatinga, e Ceilândia). HDI, renda per capita, e infraestrutura presente na forma de hospitais, delegacias, teatros, livrarias, escolas, e creches públicas no Distrito Federal.

Fig. 3 shows the correlation between the number of homicides and the HDI, income per capita, and infrastructure present in the form of hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers in three districts in

the city of Rio de Janeiro (Leblon, Madureira e Santa Cruz).

Fig. 4 shows the correlation between the number of homicides and the HDI, income per capita, and infrastructure present in the form of hospitals,

police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers in in three districts in

the Distrito Federal (Brasília, Taguatinga and Ceilândia).

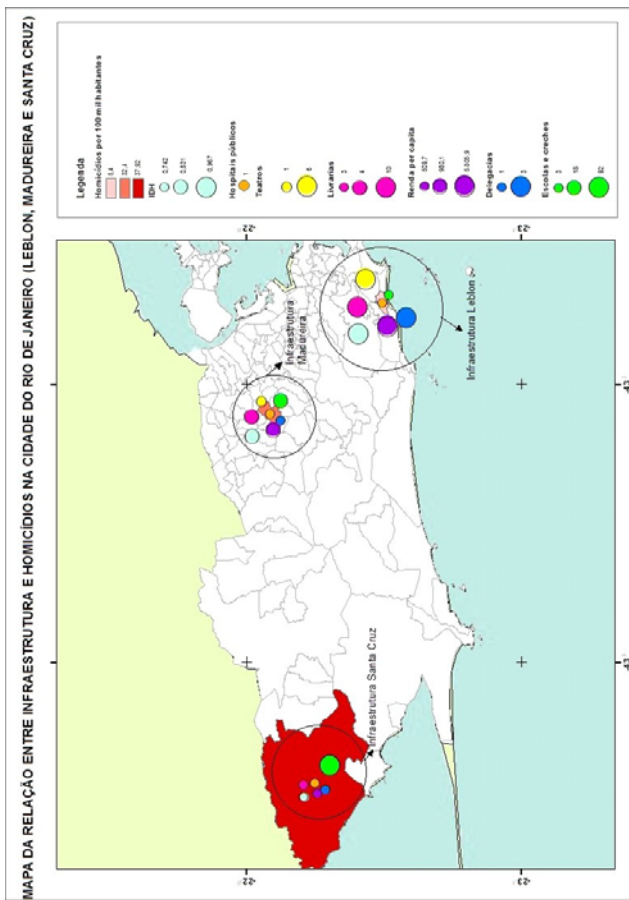


Fig. 3 Correlation between the number of homicides and the HDI, income per capita, and infrastructure present in the form of hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers in the city of Rio de Janeiro (district of Leblon, Madureira, Santa Cruz).

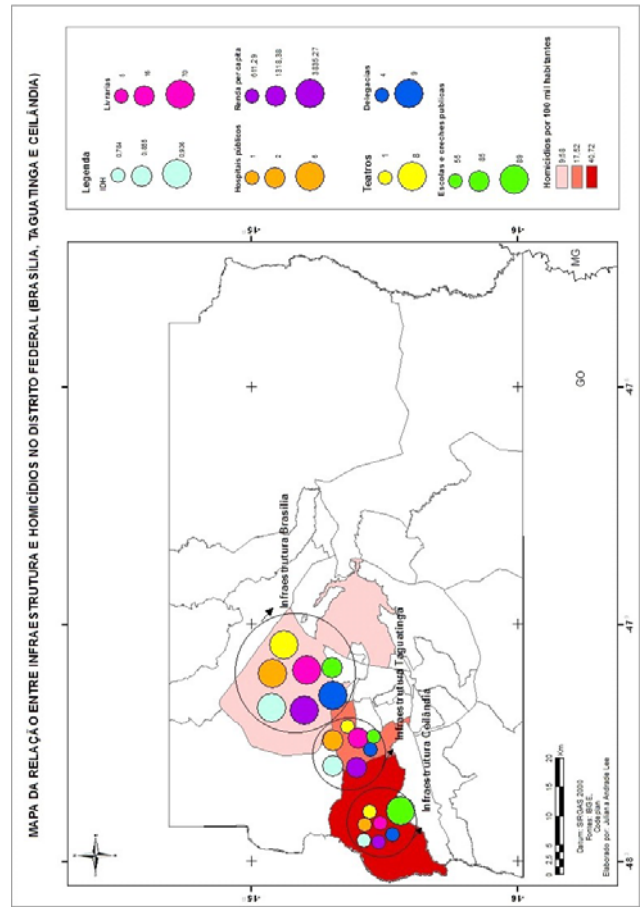


Fig. 4 Correlation between the number of homicides and the HDI, income per capita, and infrastructure present in the form of hospitals, police stations, theaters, bookstores, schools, and government-run daycare centers in Distrito Federal (district of Brasília, Taguatinga and Ceilândia).

4. Conclusion

Public policies (or the lack thereof) are central to the issue of public safety. The motivation behind different political decisions cannot be ignored. Motives differ by subject and historical period. Intentions can also be considered; they may be based on different motives. Thus, it is hoped that these findings will inspire reflections on territories of intentional high risk, as well as on the effects of political decisions in these areas.

In Rio de Janeiro, the infrastructure in low-income districts such as Santa Cruz and Madureira is poorer than that in wealthier districts such as Leblon. The difference in crime rates follows the same logic but not by chance, particularly if political decisions have helped to make Leblon a safer place. In Distrito Federal, political decisions have made the capital city of Brasília safer, which is to the detriment of nearby territories such as Taguatinga and Ceilândia. Both Rio de Janeiro and Distrito Federal exhibit associations between crime and the lack of infrastructure.

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