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The challenges of Rio de Janeiro's development

Os desafios do desenvolvimento do Rio de Janeiro

Los desafíos del desarrollo de Río de Janeiro

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The Pereira Passos Municipal Urban Planning Institute reaffirms, with this edition of the Coleção Estudos Cariocas Journal, its commitment to the production and dissemination of knowledge aimed at understanding reality and improving urban public policies in the City of Rio de Janeiro.

The special dossier "The future of Rio de Janeiro's development" brings together eight articles selected by the double-blind peer review method and an opinion piece, which seek to understand economic transformations and point out possible paths for the city's future. The papers analyze, from different approaches, the role of Rio de Janeiro in the resumption of national development, especially in the face of the contradictions emerging from deindustrialization, social inequality, and transformations in the use and regulation of the urban territory.

A diagnosis shared by most articles in the special dossier is that the state of Rio de Janeiro, and more acutely its capital, underwent a process of deindustrialization evidenced by the loss of importance of the manufacturing industry in economic indicators and the urban landscape.

The article "Premature deindustrialization: an analysis of the stock of formal jobs in the carioca manufacturing industry" (Carvalho et al., 2025) demonstrates, based on official statistical data, how manufacturing industry jobs shrank in the state, the metropolitan region, and the capital of Rio de Janeiro state throughout the 21st century, both in absolute and relative terms. Between 2006 and 2021, the sector went from 153 thousand to 128 thousand formal jobs in the City of Rio de Janeiro, representing a loss of 16%. The sector's share in the total formal labor market of the municipality fell from 7.8% to 6.1% in the same period. Considering this scenario, the authors emphasize the importance of the State's leading role in developing reindustrialization policies.

Analyzing the qualitative changes in the sector, the article "Labor market and productive complexity in the manufacturing industry of the City of Rio de Janeiro in a comparative perspective" (Maggi, Aucar, 2025) points to a loss not only in the number of jobs but also in the added value and technological intensity of carioca production. Using official data on formal employment and foreign trade, the authors propose a classification of industrial activities by level of productive complexity (high, medium-high, medium-low, and low) and an index that synthesizes and measures, in numerical terms, this level in the territory. Using this method, it is possible to observe a proportionally greater loss of jobs in high-complexity activities and a more intense decline in the Productive Complexity Index (ICP) in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro compared to the state of RJ and the municipality of São Paulo.

The deindustrialization process left marks on the urban landscape: the carioca railway suburbs, once favored by the developmentalist cycle of the 20th century, now concentrate ruins of old factories. Adopting a multiscalar approach that crosses geoinformation, social history, and socio-spatial microanalysis, the article "Impacts of industrialization and deindustrialization in Rio de Janeiro: an investigation in the railway suburbs of the city's North Zone" (Albernaz, Contarato, Diógenes, 2025) shows that, as early as 1920, only the districts of Inhaúma and Irajá concentrated 27% of the economically active population employed in industries in the city. The

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research also mapped the "portions of the urban fabric where there existed, or still exists, a factory establishment" (Ibid., p. 3), called industrial remnants. The work points out that "in the total of surveyed industrial remnants, from before 1930 to the 2000s, more than half lost their manufacturing function" (Ibid., p. 13) and, of these, approximately 1/4 remained inactive, without having been converted to new uses.

These industrial remnants, however, are not only marks of devaluation processes but also carry a potential for reappropriation, as highlighted in the article "Refunctionalization of industrial remnants in the railway suburbs of Rio de Janeiro's North Zone: obstacles and opportunities for reindustrialization" (Albernaz, Alves, Diógenes, 2025). Of all the 250 cases of industrial remnants mapped in Planning Area 03 of the City of Rio de Janeiro, 26.1% had been converted to new uses, mainly residential and commercial, such as condominiums and shopping malls. Unlike what is observed in cities of the Global North, "where the revaluation of old industrial complexes is often associated with heritage listing and urban regeneration" (Ibid., p. 9), these spaces in the carioca suburbs become the object of disputes in a context marked by precariousness and the absence of public interest. The authors, therefore, point to the need to structure new institutional and technical arrangements that take into account the industrial legacy and aim at social transformation and territorial dynamization.

According to the article "The influence of the political context on the deindustrialization of Rio de Janeiro" (Trece, 2025), this deterioration of the carioca and fluminense manufacturing industry is related to the "absence of the implementation of a regional economic development plan" (Ibid., p. 18) in a politically troubled context in the state since the last decades of the 20th century. In 1985, ten years after the merger of Guanabara with Rio de Janeiro, the manufacturing industry accounted for 10.1% of the gross value added of Rio de Janeiro state. This share fell to 6.5% in 2022. This is the worst cumulative result in the period among all federal units. One of the legacies of the former national capital condition would have been the "lack of prioritization in addressing local interests" (Ibid., p. 18), associated with political crises and complacency with revenues from oil extraction. A reaction to this process, according to the author, could start from planning that tries to take advantage of opportunities opened by the energy transition.

The transfer of the federal capital without any type of compensation to the regional economy is also highlighted in the article "International projection as a development strategy: Rio de Janeiro and the loss of industrial competitiveness" (Pinotti, et al., 2025). The transfer is further compounded by the crisis of the 1980s and the subsequent restriction of development-inducing public investment capabilities as causes of Rio de Janeiro's deindustrialization process, according to the author. Seeking to circumvent the productive hollowing out and take advantage of the historical capital status of Rio, successive governments have employed paradiplomacy and the international projection of the city as a strategy for attracting investments and promoting development. Major events such as the World Cup and the Olympics are emblematic of this strategy. The author concludes, however, that this paradiplomacy is a necessary but not sufficient condition to reverse the thinning out of local productive chains, thus requiring public economic development policies capable of reversing structural conditions.

These structural conditions for productive densification also involve agriculture: according to the article "Urban agriculture and nature in/of urban planning: a review at the federal and carioca levels" (Souza, Costa, 2025), the normative evolution of Rio de Janeiro shows that agriculture has come to be recognized as a "strategic component of territorial planning and the promotion of socio-environmental sustainability" (Ibid., p. 15). Whereas, in previous Master Plans, agriculture was relegated to areas of urban land use restriction, it is now authorized throughout the entire carioca territory and even encouraged by current legislation, understood as a kind of "buffer between areas of more intense urbanization and environmental

protection areas" (Ibid., p. 13). Recent public policies, according to the authors, have been paying increasing attention to urban agriculture as a tool in promoting food security and strengthening local economies.

The article "Projeto Rio 2050" proposes a long-term interpretation for the impasses of carioca development, articulating economy, territory, and public policy from the concept of *projetamento* (projecting/planning as a process). By understanding development not as a spontaneous result of the market but as an intentional process of mobilizing productive forces, the text places urban planning at the center of the city's reindustrialization strategy. Rio de Janeiro is conceived as a territory capable of articulating large urban, infrastructure, and mobility projects with a new productive dynamic, simultaneously aimed at increasing productivity and reducing social and territorial inequalities. In this sense, the article offers a conceptual framework that dialogues with the diagnoses presented throughout the dossier and points to the need to rebuild a state capacity to plan, coordinate, and execute structuring projects, repositioning the city in the national debate on development.

Together, the articles that make up this special dossier reveal that the challenges of Rio de Janeiro's development are simultaneously economic, territorial, institutional, and political. Deindustrialization, the loss of productive complexity, the fragmentation of the urban territory, and the weakening of planning capacity are not isolated phenomena, but interconnected dimensions of the same historical process. By bringing together empirical diagnoses, normative analyses, and strategic propositions, this edition of the *Coleção Estudos Cariocas* Journal reaffirms the role of knowledge as a fundamental instrument for the formulation of public policies. More than recording a critical picture, the dossier points to possible paths for the reconstruction of a development agenda that is socially inclusive, territorially balanced, and environmentally sustainable, reaffirming the protagonism of the municipality of Rio de Janeiro in the debate on the future of urban development in Brazil.

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About the Author

Clara Sanchez Rodrigues holds a degree in Economics from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (2013) and was a CNPq scholarship recipient. Her academic path includes an undergraduate thesis on development and foreign exchange and a Master's degree from the Superior War College, where she researched US hegemonic power structures in the 21st century. With professional experience in Economics and Management, she currently serves as Executive Director of the Pereira Passos Municipal Urban Planning Institute.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, C.S.R.; methodology, C.S.R.; software C.S.R.; validation, C.S.R.; formal analysis, C.S.R.; investigation, C.S.R.; resources, C.S.R.; data curation, C.S.R.; writing—original draft preparation, C.S.R.; writing—review and editing C.S.R.; visualisation, C.S.R.; supervision, C.S.R.; project administration, C.S.R.; funding acquisition, C.S.R.. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About *Coleção Estudos Cariocas*

Coleção Estudos Cariocas (ISSN 1984-7203) is a publication dedicated to studies and research on the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro, affiliated with the Pereira Passos Institute (IPP) of the Rio de Janeiro City Hall.

Its objective is to disseminate technical and scientific production on topics related to the city of Rio de Janeiro, as well as its metropolitan connections and its role in regional, national, and international contexts. The collection is open to all researchers (whether municipal employees or not) and covers a wide range of fields — provided they partially or fully address the spatial scope of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Articles must also align with the Institute's objectives, which are:

1. to promote and coordinate public intervention in the city's urban space;
2. to provide and integrate the activities of the city's geographic, cartographic, monographic, and statistical information systems;
3. to support the establishment of basic guidelines for the city's socioeconomic development.

Special emphasis will be given to the articulation of the articles with the city's economic development proposal. Thus, it is expected that the multidisciplinary articles submitted to the journal will address the urban development needs of Rio de Janeiro.