

## Paths of Resistance and Intelligence in Periphery Networks

*Collaborative platform Matchfunding Enfrente assists support-networks in managing the pandemic through 265 initiatives in favelas and peripheries*

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| Brazil |

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**F**or more than 150 days, we have endured social isolation due to the novel

coronavirus. And in this devastating scenario, fear and uncertainty plague us in relation to what to do in the present and, subsequently, in the future. During this period, the inconsistent decisionmaking and the lack of importance given by, mainly, the federal government have placed the country among those with the highest absolute numbers of fatal victims in the world. Brazil has already surpassed 100 thousand lives lost.

When we look at how the pandemic has affected peripheries, it exacerbates racial and territorial social inequality and the lack of effective emergency, social, economic, and infrastructure policies for periphery populations. We already know that “the virus is democratic, but the sickness is not” and that the lack of structuring policies has contributed to the virus’s lethality, especially among Black and peripheral populations. Periphery territories are Black, and it’s fundamental to invest in research and data collection that include race and gender statistics in order to plan strategic actions for the benefit of these

territories' populations.

At the onset of the pandemic and its negative impacts in the peripheries, the *Coalizão Negra por Direitos* (Black Coalition for Rights) was able, together with the Ministry of Health, to release race and gender statistics through the Access to Information Law. However, the federal government's authoritarian and antidemocratic actions led the Ministry of Health to impede access to this information. When the Ministry of Health decided to deny the transparency of pandemic data, it became more difficult to understand the spread of the disease in the country and, consequently, its impacts in peripheries.

The absence of data reduced the capacity of civil society and governments to plan the most adequate strategies to combat the pandemic by taking into account different territories' demands. So, in addition to historically living in the margins, we, Black men and women, are also more disposed to chronic illnesses like diabetes and high blood pressure, making this population even more susceptible to complications related to Covid-19.

In this context, the following question emerges: how can Black and periphery populations practice social distancing in these conditions?

Because this situation has become even more entrenched over the last few months, the main challenges that have emerged in peripheries with regard to the pandemic have been economic. In Brazil, there is an army of informal workers — close to 40%. People do not have savings. The reality is what's lived, it's what's in the arena of daily life, and solutions to the financial issue need to be immediate.

The battle against the novel coronavirus in a country as unequal as Brazil cannot be undertaken by cabinet strategies or ideas with dubious criteria like the ones we've seen since the beginning of the pandemic. The solutions to combat the problems brought about or made worse by coronavirus need to be publicized and bolstered in various ways and in multiple territories, and peripheries have a lot to contribute in proposing solutions for peripheral territories. For those who live in peripheries, government-promoted preventative measures and measures to combat the pandemic need to be articulated by those who live in

and know the place. Here, I'm citing the importance of linking with periphery networks — groups, collectives, institutions, and their principal leaders.

Policies to combat the novel coronavirus in peripheries should be a collective endeavor between governments and peripheries, conceived from each territory and their different contexts. Data monitoring is of the utmost importance in the decision-making process, but monitoring without proposing assertive and effective solutions only contributes to punishing those who cannot practice social distancing. The challenge is creating real world solutions and conditions for the urgent needs of daily life, such as, for example, access to water, electricity, food, internet, and a basic income.

In contrast to uncertainties about the future and the fear of either getting sick or losing income, it's important to highlight that a powerful network of civil society support, with an emphasis on periphery networks, has been articulating and bolstering initiatives throughout the country in order to combat the impacts of the pandemic. Indeed, it's necessary to highlight the force that emerges from periphery territories in all of Brazil. The Tide Setubal Foundation has kept up with this movement through a new mode of fundraising.

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**I**n 2019, the Tide Setubal Foundation and Benfeitoria platform launched Matchfunding

Enfrente, a collaborative call for financing whose main goal is to unite people and institutions to co-finance projects that contribute to combating and overcoming the material conditions and subjectivities that stigmatize and segregate Brazilian urban peripheries and other urban areas in peripheral contexts. The match happens when the public supports the project through the platform and the Enfrente Fund triples the donation.

This initiative also collaborates with eight institutions in the creation of a collective fund,

ten important institutions from Brazilian peripheries, and another four institutions dedicated to promoting and mobilizing organizers from groups, collectives and institutions in peripheries to announce solutions for their territories on the platform. In total, 740 initiatives have been launched from all over the country, with the exception of the state of Amapá. Of these, 265 solutions for peripheries were selected in order to sustain micro and small business owners, coronavirus awareness campaigns, physical and mental health care, and the distribution of donated goods and resources. In total, through MatchFunding Enfrente, more than R\$7 million has been allocated to Brazilian peripheries through donations from all of Brazil and 36 other countries, supporting 161 donation drives, 23 coronavirus awareness campaigns, 19 physical and mental health initiatives, and, finally, 63 initiatives supporting entrepreneurs in peripheries in maintaining their micro and small businesses.

Based on projects posted on Matchfunding Enfrente, the peripheries have demonstrated their full potential, creativity, organizing power, and solidarity through these different initiatives. The potency of the peripheries has emerged in the form of partnerships with different sectors of society in order to collect and distribute donations of food, hygiene, and cleaning kits. This initiative has demonstrated a coordinating and logistical expertise thus far unknown to those who do not live in or discredit the mobilizing power of the peripheries, especially in crisis situations like the one we are enduring with this pandemic. Here, I highlight networked actions in different territories that have delivered basic food baskets, hot meals, cooking gas tanks, and income support payments to thousands of women, single mothers, and families in peripheries throughout Brazil.

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Redes da Maré<sup>1</sup>Maré Development Networks, located in the grouping of favelas of Maré, in Rio de Janeiro, through the Maré de Sabores<sup>2</sup>literally, Tide of Flavors social impact buffet distributed at least 200 meals per day — close to 6000 per month — to homeless populations in Maré as part of the campaign “Taste and Care: Women Producing Daily Meals for People

Experiencing Homelessness in Maré.” The campaign also generates steady work and income for 20 women at the Maré de Sabores Buffet project, whose jobs were suspended due to the pandemic. The work is carried out in the industrial kitchen of the Maré Women’s House [A Casa das Mulheres da Maré], the headquarters of the “Maré de Sabores” project, which offers women of the 16 favelas of Maré professionalization courses in gastronomy in order to unequivocally support women’s financial independence.

Also important are the creative forms and manners of communicating in peripheries. Since there are no official communication campaigns that use the language of periphery territories, the peripheries have developed alternatives so that information meaningfully reaches these communities. In São Paulo, communications specialists connected to the *Agência Mural* journalism outlet produced the podcast “Agência Mural na Quarentena”; it has been a secure port in a sea of mis- and disinformation. Also, in Maré, the Favelas Observatory produced the “How to Protect Yourself from Coronavirus” campaign. Both campaigns creatively inform people about prevention, combating fake news and government measures related to the pandemic in a language that is accessible to periphery populations.

In regard to the local economy and the maintenance of micro and small businesses, peripheries have created different support models for business owners, ranging from short-term solutions like direct cash payments (to cover lost revenue) to long-term modes of combating poverty like below-market interest rates. There is also a set of initiatives that aims to restructure small businesses so they can migrate to online marketplaces and shopping platforms, given that the world has been thrown into using new technologies and the internet.

In addition to periphery initiatives that were supported by Matchfunding Enfrente, another example of a solution to support business-owners is “Fundo Éditodos,” or the “It’s For Everyone Fund” — [sponsored by PretaHub/ Agência Solano Trindade / AfroBusiness Brasil (SP)/ Vale do Dendê (BA)/ Fa.Vela (BH)/ Latinidades Afrolatinas (DF)]. The initiative delivers resources to Black entrepreneurs, formal or informal, and circulates money among them. Another innovative initiative for the current context is “Fundo Volta Por Cima” (Get Back Up Fund) [an alliance between Banco Pérola and ANIP – Articuladora de Negócios de Impacto

da Periferia, A Banca, FGV EAESP - Centro de Empreendedorismo e Novos Negócios e Artemísia], which aims to provide zero-interest loans to entrepreneurs that operate in peripheries. This is a direct response to the urgent challenges they face due to the crisis caused by the pandemic, allowing them to remain active, guaranteeing jobs and salaries

We know that this is an enormous challenge and that there is still much to be done. We know that opportunities to collectively construct solutions with governments are usually complex or non-existent. Nevertheless, the current conjuncture demands collective action to create effective policies for the peripheries. And, even in the face of adversities, the historic negligence of governments, and the challenges that social, racial, and territorial inequalities impose on favelas and peripheries, these territories continue, as they always have, to articulate and innovate collectively with other sectors in order to present paths and solutions, through the strength, inventiveness and intelligence of the periphery.

With the goal of fostering, bolstering, and spreading the solutions and strengths of the peripheries, the Tide Setubal Foundation and Benfeitoria platform have launched a new call for financing, Matchfunding Enfrente. Different from the first call geared towards emergency projects to combat the novel coronavirus, this new call is open to scaleable and long term projects capable of solving problems that, due to the pandemic, arose or became entrenched in peripheries. Up to 15 projects will be selected to participate in a three-year program during which they will carry out an annual matchfunding campaign to implement the project with the guidance of the Tide Setubal Foundation.

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