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Editorial: Reviews in cities in the Global South: 2022

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Reviews in cities in the Global South: 2022

In recent years, the landscape of urban studies has undergone a transformative shift, marked by an increasing interest in Southern cities as well as growing appreciation of perspectives emerging from the South. Articles in this Frontiers Research Topic—“Reviews in cities in the Global South: 2022”—reflect on this growing field in offering critical overviews of the state of the art and contributing important insights into emerging and interlinked themes of interest, such as the infrastructures of knowledge production. These contributions identify opportunities for future research in response to urgent knowledge gaps.

In her contribution, [Chakrabarti](#) critically examines the notion of “Southern urbanism” and how it is practically implemented as “Southern urban theory.” She maps out systematically the extent, impact, and geographical distribution of knowledge creation in this domain, finding that there has been an increasing tendency to undertake urban studies in Southern cities. Over the last 5 years, there has been a substantial increase in published research from the South, on topics that cluster around (i) politics, informality, and power; (ii) land and tenure models; (iii) urban sustainability, community resilience, involvement, and impact; and (iv) infrastructure and accessibility. [Chakrabarti](#) highlights the important contribution of Southern urban theory to global urban studies.

With a view on more practical matters, [Adhikari et al.](#) focus on the increase of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in South Asia over the past decade and examine the impact of green space on NCDs. They show that the reduction of green areas associated with urban development poses a significant threat to the health of individuals living in South Asian cities. This situation particularly affects urban inhabitants who already have cardiovascular problems, making them more vulnerable. The study advocates for prompt community and policy measures targeted at the development of green spaces, including strategies that involve multiple agencies with expertise in health, physical development, transportation and ecology.

In a similar vein, [Cilliers](#), in their contribution, highlights the societal contributions, appreciation and use of urban green spaces. Based on an extensive analysis of the literature and empirical research on the viewpoints of professionals in South Africa, [Cilliers](#) sheds

light onto the perceptions of urban green areas and their critical role in shaping how urban threats are viewed. Cilliers, too, sees the engagement of urban decision-makers and the general public in discussions around the value of urban green spaces as vital to their protection and development.

Finally, focusing on the case of Brazil, Valencio et al. employ network analysis to shed light onto the interconnectedness between poverty, sanitation, and disasters in this context. Their analysis of the literature demonstrates that a major body of work focuses on the link between poverty and disasters, highlighting that research on the relationship between disasters and sanitation is urgently needed in order to address knowledge gaps and progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Collectively, the contributions in this Research Topic shed light on the increasing prominence of Southern urbanism and its theoretical implications, the societal significance and critical impact of green spaces on public health in Southern cities, and the infrastructural interlinkages of poverty, sanitation, and disasters. These reviews not only offer critical overviews of the current state of research but also urge scholars and policymakers to address critical knowledge gaps for the betterment of urban environments in the Global South. They identify problems, obstacles, and strategies for the project of decolonisation. The emerging themes discussed demonstrate the multidimensional nature of urban studies in the Global South, warranting continued scholarly attention and interdisciplinary collaboration toward inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable urban environments, as stipulated by the SDGs.

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