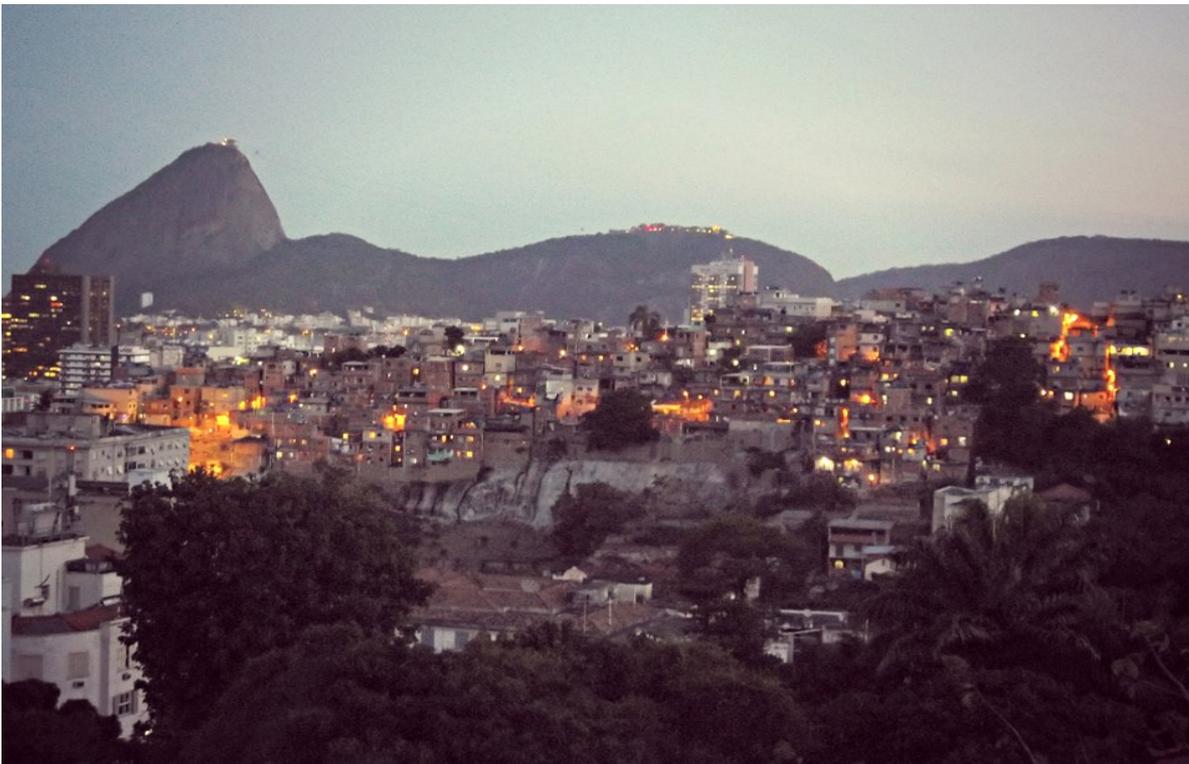


The best bookshops in Latin America and the Caribbean: Rio and São Paulo, Brazil



Which are the best bookshops for academics to visit in Latin America and the Caribbean? As part of their series of [Bookshop Guides](#), our colleagues at [LSE Review of Books](#) have been finding out. Here [Cheryl Brumley](#) (LSE Public Policy Group) shares her favourite bookshops in Rio and São Paulo, Brazil.

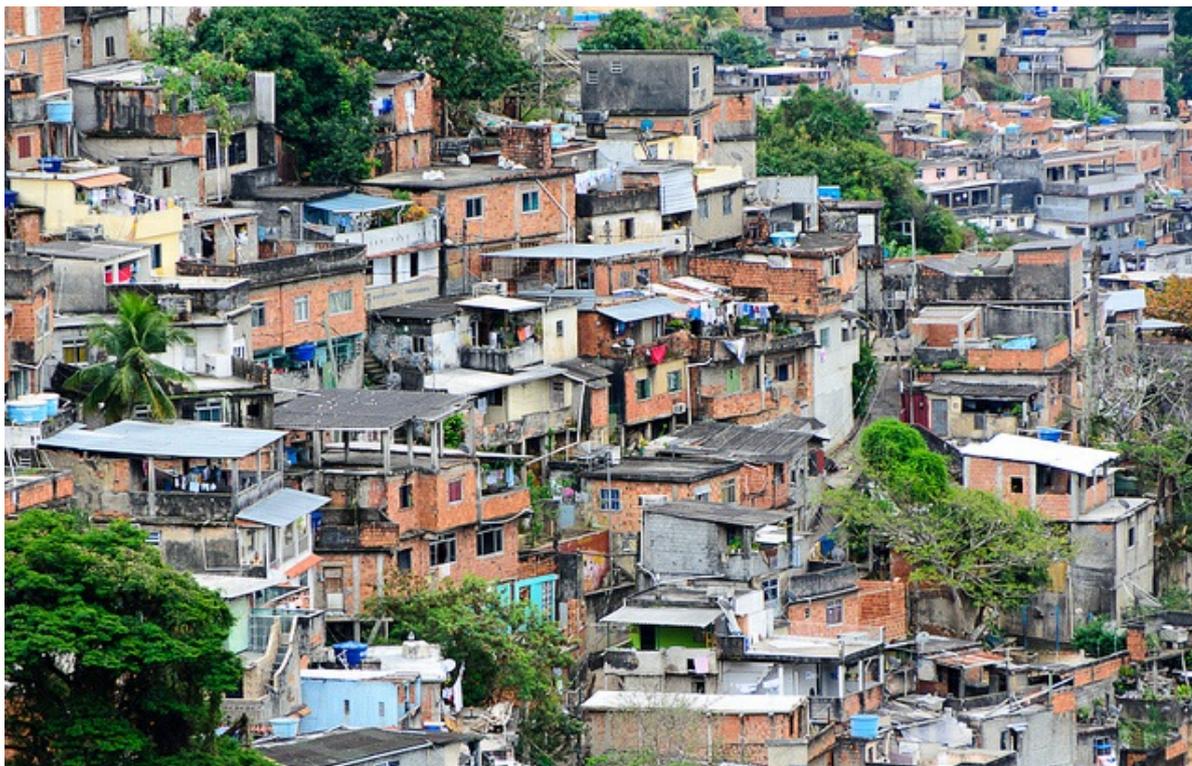
Bookshop visits are a frequent indulgence on my travels. Whereas some travel-weary souls seek out the comfort of global-chain restaurants when they go abroad, I seek out the enduring comfort of bookshops when I feel that longing for familiarity. On a recent trip to Brazil to record material for the [the LSE Review of Books podcast series](#), I found some gems in the country's two largest cities: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.



A view of Sugarloaf Mountain from the German Consul General in Santa Teresa, Rio (© 2014 Cheryl Brumley)

[Livraria da Travessa](#) has multiple branches in Rio, but its branch down the narrow [Rua Sete de Setembro](#), lined with Rio's iconic mosaic pavement, is a particularly memorable one. Its location in Rio's business district, away from the glitzy chaos of the beach, makes it a nice haven for those wanting a memorable

read. Havaianas-clad students and the suited and booted from neighbouring offices can all be found here, casually browsing side-by-side. Livraria da Travessa has an impressive collection of social science books, although most are in Portuguese. There is a gentle chaos to the arrangement of its stock, labels do allude to a specific subject area, but often you'll find, say, a Spinoza amongst the cook books. "I think it's really nice. It's like Rio – very mixed," Cristal Moniz de Aragão, Professor of Psychology at UFRJ told me on a visit together, "Actually, it's like all of Brazil. This is how our cities are [arranged]. You can find a five million dollar apartment next to a favela."



Rio's favelas often sit alongside its wealthiest neighbourhoods ([David Schenfeld, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#))

And then there's São Paulo. If ever an oasis of books were needed, this would be the city for it. Known for being the cultural cousin to Rio, its rich array of art galleries and über-cool bars dot an otherwise overwhelming and homogenous metropolis. The city greets first-time visitors with a heavy-handed dose of traffic and crime-related paranoia, but, thankfully, it is chocked full of unique bookshops to while away the rush-hour and stress.



The São Paulo skyline ([Fernando Stankuns, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#))

[Livraria Cultura](#) is a multi-storied book palace, housed in a shopping centre just off São Paulo's main thoroughfare: [Avenida Paulista](#). Livraria Cultura's size ensures there's something for every book-browser inside. When I visited, the ground floor was abuzz with a book-launch and shoppers, but I needed only to climb to the top floor to find a cozy chair, a good book and some peace and quiet.



[Livraria Freebook](#) in [Rua da Consolação](#), a walkable distance from Avenida Paulista, is a specialist bookshop for design geeks. After ringing a doorbell, visitors are ushered into a long, concrete space where a few rows of shelves display bound treasures on interior design, architecture and fashion. You're then left alone with a cup of tea to browse at your leisure. Maira Serra Teixeira, the

Livraria Cultura, Sao Paulo (© 2014 Cheryl Brumley)

Sales and Marketing Director for the shop, told me, "Freebook is the only place in São Paulo that specialises in imported books... my Dad started the company in 1976". Frequented by the city's stylistas and interior designers looking to populate their clients' coffee tables, Freebook's big-sellers last year were a photobook on graffiti artists [Os Gêmeos](#) and a book on the designs of the Paris fashion-house [Kenzo](#).

Notes:

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- This post originally appeared on [LSE Review of Books](#)
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