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**The Urban Peripheries**

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# The personal is political: Emotional performances and political mobilisations among Bangladeshi women

*Fabiene Gama*

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## Abstract

This paper analyses the role of emotions in women's political mobilizations in Bangladesh. Reflecting on how the political platform *Gonojagoron Moncho* updates discourse on Bengali nationalism and the traumas of Liberation War, I focus on the non-verbal aspects of the emotional performances of female activists in order to understand how they use their bodies to mobilise people politically. Their embodied challenge to religious and cultural restrictions on their behaviours – both on and offline – points to the importance of their performances for acquiring more powerful positions in the group and society. This research was developed through the combination of different qualitative methods, particularly participant observation and photographic documentation.

**Keywords:** performance, emotions, activism, women, Bangladesh.

# O pessoal é político: performances emocionais e mobilizações políticas entre mulheres bangladechianas

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa o papel das emoções em mobilizações políticas de mulheres em Bangladesh. Partindo da reflexão sobre como a plataforma política *Gonojagoron Moncho* atualiza o discurso nacionalista Bengali e o drama do trauma da Guerra de Libertação do país, eu foco em aspectos não-verbais das performances emocionais de suas ativistas para compreender como as mulheres utilizam seus corpos para mobilizar pessoas politicamente. A forma corporificada como desafiam as diversas restrições religiosas e culturais impostas ao comportamento feminino – no mundo *online* e *offline* - apontam para a importância de suas performances na conquista de posições mais poderosas no grupo e na sociedade. Esta pesquisa foi desenvolvida através da combinação de diferentes métodos qualitativos, mas especialmente da observação participante e da documentação fotográfica.

**Palavras-chave:** performance, emoções, ativismo, mulheres, Bangladesh.

# The personal is political: Emotional performances and political mobilisations among Bangladeshi women

*Fabiene Gama*

This article<sup>1</sup> analyses the role of emotional performances in women's political mobilisations in Bangladesh. I focus on the female activists of *Gonojagoron Moncho* ["The People's Uprising Platform"], a political platform<sup>2</sup> that emerged from the mass protest that took place in Shahbag<sup>3</sup> in February of 2013, and which championed the same cause as the protestors: to push the government to prosecute and punish criminals of the Liberation War<sup>4</sup> with the maximum penalty - death by hanging - and to ban Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami<sup>5</sup> and its student branch, Jamaat Shibri, from Bangladesh politics.<sup>6</sup>

By "emotional performances" I refer to performances enacted in order to experiment with and express emotions<sup>7</sup>. Emotions are at the centre of performance in *Gonojagoron Moncho*. Young women who shout out slogans are responsible for conducting these performances in relation to their audience. I take emotions to be "communicative performances", as defined by Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz (1990); a kind of communication that exceeds discourse. More than words, they are a kind of practice (Scheer, 2012) in which many other elements - bodily, expressive and personal - are at play (Leavitt, 1996). They involve the whole person, as stressed by Michelle Rosaldo: "Emotions are thoughts somehow 'felt' in flushes, pulses, 'movements' of our livers, minds, hearts, stomachs, skin. They are embodied thoughts, thoughts seeped with the apprehension that 'I am involved'" (Rosaldo, 1984: 143). In other words, they result from a combination of thinking and feeling, experienced and expressed through the body (Leavitt, 1996, Pernau, 2013, Rosaldo, 1984).

Emotions are embodied practices that can occur consciously or inadvertently. Performances, on the other hand, help channel both positive and negative emotions and to minimize or maximize their power. They can be seen as "emotional practices": manipulations of body and mind that help us to achieve certain emotional states and feelings that we can experiment with (Scheer, 2012). They can be carried out alone, but they are frequently embedded in social settings for inducing feelings. And the way they are experienced and expressed depends on where, how, by who and to whom they are performed. We see and feel things differently in different places/spaces (Gammerl, 2012).

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2 "Platform" is a doubly apt term to refer to the group, since it is mostly composed of bloggers and members of different political parties and organizations.

3 Shahbag is an important place for social, cultural and political manifestations in Bangladesh.

4 Islamists who committed several crimes against civilians, fighting against the Independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971.

5 The largest Islamist party in Bangladesh.

6 In 2009, the government of Bangladesh (Awami League party) created a domestic tribunal called "International Crimes Tribunal" to prosecute Liberation War criminals. The tribunal is polemical and has been criticized by many international human rights organizations for its lack of transparency, harassment of witnesses and especially for the deployment of capital punishment to the defendants, mostly from the political party opposed to the one that is in power.

7 In this way, the performances that I will discuss in this article are both 'emotive', in the sense that they induce emotions in the audience and the performers, and 'emotional', in the sense that they display and reveal the emotions of performers and audience. Indeed, the performances largely efface or elide this distinction. I have preferred to use the adjective 'emotional' for political implications.

In this article, I take a road march organised by *Gonojagoron Moncho* in the beginning of 2014 as a case study for demonstrating how a cultural trauma (Eyerman, 2004; Alexander et al. 2004), updated and imagined collectively through a process of agentive emotional practices, can mobilise communities – and specially women - around political issues. Although not a ‘women’s movement’ per se, it gathers an exceptionally large number of women who belong to different groups and institutions. This high coefficient of women is particularly remarkable when compared to the relatively low involvement of women in political demonstrations unrelated to women’s rights in Bangladesh.

By focusing on women’s demonstrations, I analyse the roles of these women, how these roles were negotiated, and what I could learn about them by observing and documenting their performances in political mobilisations. To investigate their embodied emotions in detail, I have chosen to focus on the visual aspect of the performances through photography. Reflecting on the aesthetic component of the performances is an innovative approach. However, it stems from debates regarding the limitations of thinking about emotions essentially through their discursive elements, which is a highly developed theme in Emotion Studies. This research therefore follows the ground-breaking lead of pioneering studies that aim to bridge persistent dichotomies such as body and mind, structure and agency, nature and culture, expression and experience.

I will begin by explaining my methodology and stressing the importance of using photography and Facebook as tools of investigation. I will then contextualize the group’s demands and the role of women in the political sphere, followed by a reflection on the group’s performances and emotions, indicating how they renew and update the trauma of the war. Finally, I will conclude by analysing the contemporary performances of women in political mobilizations in Bangladesh.

## Note on Methodology

This research combines different qualitative research methods, such as participant observation, open interviews, focus groups, and photographic documentation. Adherence to the research method of ‘ethnobiography’, which consists of combining biographical and ethnographic methods (Gonçalves et al., 2012), compelled me to work with the emotions transmitted by leaders to the audience rather than with the latter’s responses.

Emotions and performances were observed in political manifestations, but also in other public and private activities. They were analysed as reflections on the different degrees of theatricality of the activists’ performances (Goffman, 1959), as well as on how their gender identity, or their becoming *female* activists, was being produced and reproduced in their actions (Butler, 1990). I incorporated Butler’s (1990) notion that gender is not just *performed*, but is also *performative*: it produces a series of effects through its everyday confirmation. I thus also seek to assess how gender norms were being established and policed in Bangladesh.

To think about aesthetics, I chose to use photographs at different stages of the research, including during moments of data collection, when expanding my network in the field, interviewing, and presenting the results of my research to the activists. Photographs helped me build a relationship of trust and to garner interest in my research. At first, some activists were suspicious of my curiosity. It was only after seeing the first photos I published on Facebook, their main means of online activism, that some changed their behaviour towards me. Facebook, in particular, was an important research tool. Through the activists’ networks, I could reach out to them and follow them as fast as they could check on me.



Cultural processes of remembering the past are frequent, serving to (re)build the foundations of shared identity as Bengali Muslims. They stimulate imaginings of the war and collaborate with the cultural trauma related to the origin myth of Bangladesh. According to Jeffrey Alexander (2004), to experience a cultural trauma one need not have experienced the traumatic event itself; it is enough to be part of a group that has the event as its formative myth. The trauma is established through an on-going process that is constantly reaffirmed through the ‘trauma drama’, an agentive and creative process of mediation and representation (Eyerman, 2004). National holidays, monuments, films, and music function as shared recollections of past experienced in the present.

Some of the *Gonojagoron Moncho* activists suffered traumatic experiences during the Liberation War. But many of them were not even born at that time, nor did they lose close relatives in the war. The stories of 1971 are nonetheless part of their imaginary of Bangladesh. Most Bangladeshis today see themselves as part of a group that survived massacres and cultural and religious violence. First, after the partition of India, when West Bengal became East Pakistan and many Bengali Muslims felt disrespected and exploited by the western part of the country. Then, after independence, when Muslims around the world considered it an anti-Muslim act and rejected the new country. (Van Schendel, 2013; Sobhan, 2013).

The war was obviously a “critical event” (Das, 1995) that generated new forms of action, gave new meanings to politics, transformed social identities. The violence shared by Bengali Muslims created a “moral community” bound by the experience of suffering. Some of them – the activists - also formed a “political community” in the process of engaging with the State to demand justice and punishment for the war criminals. But there were differences in experiencing religion and politics, and these were more significant for women used to the traditional norms of *purdah*, but who also lived a public life attached to cultural practices (music, literature etc.). Consequently, the war had a greater impact on them (D’Costa, 2011).

Although Bengali Muslims share a sense of collective identity that emerged from the Liberation War, men and women embodied these experiences differently. According to Yasmin Saikia,

The strategic claim that the enemy Pakistanis had raped two hundred thousand Bengali women transformed the real women into an abstract number of bodies. Reduced into objects, survivors could not tell who had raped them, but the omnipotent government decided that rape of women was done by Pakistani enemy. The revenge rhetoric that followed made the rape of women during the war of 1971 a spectacle without the backing of an investigation and allowed for continued gendered subjectivity (Saikia, 2011: 1207).

*Gonojagoron Moncho* appropriated the Bengali nationalist narrative without taking gender issues into account, which provoked criticism of the group, but also reveals a political strategy. According to Yasmin Saikia (2011), silencing women’s voices in order to establish a collective memory of Bangladesh as a secular ethnic Bengali nation ravaged by Pakistanis and their collaborators justifies a call for revenge and hate. By claiming that, despite a Muslim majority, Bangladesh is a secular country, *Gonojagoron Moncho* furthers the Liberation War myth of a democratic, secular and socialist nation, free from conservative Islamists “made in Pakistan”. But by ignoring women’s narratives of the war, which include references to Bengali violence, they reproduce revenge rhetoric and stimulate feelings of moral outrage against Islamists and Pakistan. For Jasper (1998: 409), “[a]ctivists work hard to create moral outrage and anger and to provide a target against which these can be vented.” Negative emotions are powerful. A sense of threat, outrage, anger, or fear moves people into action much more readily than positive emotions. In social mobilisations, anger is more than a desired feeling; it is also a requirement for engagement (Hochschild, 1975).

Since the first years after the Liberation War, many activists have demanded justice for the victims. Different artists, movements, political parties, and organisations emerged demanding the punishment of war criminals and the banishment of Jamaat-e-Islam. In their actions, they usually re-stage emotional practices (discourses, art, performances) of the war, taking advantage of meaningful places and dates. The examples are endless, and *Gonojagoron Moncho* is just the latest one. Music, theatre, poetry, and drawing are the most important types of performances related to Bangladesh's trauma drama, and they are often staged in political mobilisations. They have an important role in stimulating and incorporating feelings of political activism, as evidenced by Scheer:

Conceptual knowledge that war crimes are morally wrong (...) can be transformed into bodily knowledge and thus be buttressed by reading or hearing of concrete details, viewing photographs, discussing with others in shared outrage, marching and chanting at demonstrations, or watching others do so (Scheer, 2012: 210).

In the process, hate and anger, as well as a desire for revenge, assume an important role. They are strong characteristics of the platform's struggles, stimulated through their discourses and performances inspired by the Liberation War, as we will see shortly. And despite the fact that their main demand – the punishment of war criminals with the maximum penalty, death by hanging – is highly criticized by most human rights activists, it is presented by the group as an honourable feeling that moves people to fight injustice and violence.

### **Gender activism: women and their bodies in the political sphere**



Women marching in the street of Dhaka, 1971. Photographer: Rashid Talukder.

Women have occupied very active roles in Bangladesh's political scene since the birth of the country, establishing a presence in different spheres of public life. From political parties to artistic organisations and educational projects, many of them are activists in women's associations, while some of them engage in non-gender related programmes. Bangladesh has numerous groups dedicated to and led by women. However, despite the huge female activism in the country, they are forced to be silent on certain issues, such as their participation on the Liberation War.<sup>9</sup>

Stories of the war are basically told in four genres: narratives of male freedom fighters, district reports, documents of war crimes, and novels and other writings on civil society (Saikia, 2011). In these stories, women are relegated to subsidiary roles, usually as victims: the muted *birangonas* [the raped women]. These gaps in history produce a type of memory regarding women that contributes to the cultural norms of gender: when they are not altogether absent, they appear as passive and silent victims (Mookherjee, 2002; Saikia, 2011 and D'Costa, 2011).

In Bangladesh, as elsewhere, women are expected to be constrained and discreet. They must cover their bodies, speak softly, and not direct their gaze toward men. Their place is in the home, not on the street, and strict control is exercised over their bodies, their behaviour, and their sexuality (Huq, 2003). According to Shiren Huq, women are

socialized into 'becoming woman' on the basis of a combination of Islamic strictures and Bengali cultural norms of gender propriety whereby we are not to be seen or heard. We are expected to speak quietly, to keep our eyes downcast, to cover ourselves in the presence of strange men and to eat when everyone else has eaten. (Huq, 2003: 169)

Furthermore, the "woman outside the boundaries of her family and home is [...] either destitute - an object of pity - or immoral - an object of shame." (Huq, 2003:169). One can easily understand how this image of secluded women can be disfigured by war. For Bina D'Costa (2011:133), "[i]n a country such as Bangladesh, where virginity was considered the 'virtue of chaste women', the issue of rape sparked an immediate debate about honour, shame and 'pollution'". In the name of preserving their dignity, women who had been raped suffered social exclusion and the silencing of their voices and experiences. The Liberation War had a devastating impact on all Bangladeshis, but especially on women.

The dominant representation of women who endured the war as *birangona*, therefore, aligns with the nation-building project by equating the rape of women by the Pakistan Army<sup>10</sup> with the rape of the country itself.

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<sup>9</sup> Some recent and exceptional publications address this gap and deal with the different roles women played in the Liberation war. See: Shahen Akhtar et al. (2013), Nayanika Mookherjee (2002), Yasmin Saikia (2011), Bina D'Costa (2011).

<sup>10</sup> Rapes committed by Bengalis are ignored.



Raped woman, 1971. Photographer: Naib Uddin Ahmed

Silencing occurs alongside images of (silent) naked women's bodies, becoming part of the imaginary of the Liberation War. This photo of a dead, anonymous raped woman is one of the most famous pictures of the violence that occurred in 1971. The process of silencing women and making a spectacle of their bodies is a powerful way of objectifying and disempowering them. A strategy updated and intensified through the wide availability of images and technology in the present, as I will demonstrate later.

Today we often see opponents trying to delegitimise female activists by publishing photomontages of their faces on naked bodies. The images seek to provoke fear, shame and dishonour. They also intend to push women back into the house and out of public life. But many young female activists resist these intimidations, using social networks like Facebook to empower themselves. So, even if social networks are of little use as a long-term mobilizing tool (Lewis et al., 2014), it is a place for affective expression and social influence. The ways that women are resisting, as well as the ways they are being threatened, therefore reveal to us important battlefields in Bangladesh and abroad. Investment in the moral de-legitimation of the performance of the activists points to the place and space of women and the female body in political struggles.

### **Gonojagoron Moncho: Gender roles in the People's Uprising Platform**

*Gonojagoron Moncho* is a platform composed of groups that have different interests and functions. There are civil society activists, nongovernmental organisations, and political parties on the left and centre-left of the spectrum, and organisations<sup>11</sup>, bloggers (mainly men in their thirties and forties, responsible for the group's speeches), *slogan konya*<sup>12</sup> (mostly young girls, students in their twenties who shout slogans and organise students), other students and student union leaders, videographers (women in their thirties, like myself), and other activists between fifty and sixty years of age engaged in different organisations (political parties, NGOs, the UN, etc.).

<sup>11</sup> Mainly Awami League, the Communist Party of Bangladesh, and Chhatra Union [Bangladesh Students Union].

<sup>12</sup> Slogan Konya [Slogan Daughter] is a term exists only in a female version, although in Bangladesh there are also boys shouting slogans.

The women in the group are mainly middle class and live in the urban area of Dhaka. They are educated and have a politically active background. They have university degrees (sometimes a MPhil or PhD.) or they are currently studying in one of the universities of Dhaka. Most of them are Muslims, with a few Hindus, but none of them follows religion traditions faithfully. There are artists, teachers, filmmakers, former UN officials, leaders of political parties, members of NGOs, feminists, and others.

Two activists became the most well-known faces of the group: Lucky Akter, an English student in her twenties who was the General Secretary of the Bangladesh Students Union; and Imran Sarker, an anaesthesiologist in his thirties, member of the Blogger and Online Activist Network. Each one of them has a function in the group, coordinating different emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). Akter mobilises the students and shouts slogans at the audience before formal speeches and during the marches. Sarker has become the spokesperson for the platform and is responsible for giving interviews and official statements. He does not have a venerable political background, and is called Dr. Imran Sarker as a sign of respect.

Akter, who is called *slogan konya*, prefers to define herself as an activist, as does Sarker. The difference in the treatment given to Akter and Sarker is related not only to their age difference and performances, but also to their gender differences. In connecting with the public, however, Akter is responsible for adding a great deal of emotion, especially through her performances. By her own account, she establishes a true connection with the audience. While her male counterpart has a restrained and distant relationship with the public, her performance engages the audience through sensorial experiences (sounds, rhythms and bodies).

Students have been responsible for various political uprisings in Bangladesh and they have actively participated in many historical moments in the country. According to Meghna Guhathakurta, “[t]he students’ movement in Bangladesh has always been in the vanguard of progressive democratic protests against militarisation, cultural repression and economic exploitation.” (Guhathakurta, 2013: 319). Students have always played and continue to play important roles in turning political grievances into popular resistance and forcing governments to change their policies. They put on the most energetic performances, bringing emotions to every stage of their protests.

Akter’s role also reveals important aspects of women’s activism and resistance in the country. While Sarker was chosen by his peers, Akter has to fight every day for her position within the group. Yet, because she was recognised by the public as the poster child of Shahbag’s new generation of freedom fighters, people developed a charismatic relationship with her, which, in turn, obligated the elders to accept her and her demands. She is proof that her fight for recognition as a leader, rather than a “cheerleader”, is a political struggle, even within the movement.

Regarding the play on the term “cheerleader”, some feminists complain that Akter’s function within the group is restricted to entertaining audiences. They see no leadership in her and consider the *slogan konya* performances to be a new way of objectifying women’s bodies. But Akter is not silenced, as were her predecessors, nor does she remain accommodated in a subsidiary position. Slogans have an important role in political mobilisations, captivating audiences and succinctly communicating the messages of a group. They present what the group represents. Even if they are expressed through language, they are strongly intensified by the place, the rhythm and the form in which they are spoken. Their meanings are affected and reframed by the ways they are embodied. Akter’s performances, as I will demonstrate, are capable of provoking - in herself and the audience - small trances capable of stimulating certain states of mind in the audience, creating an atmosphere within which her message can be effectively transmitted.

## Road march: emotional performances, mobilisation, and community of sentiments

In late 2013, the government of Bangladesh hanged Abdul Quader Mollah, a leader of Jamaat-e-Islami charged with war crimes. The sentence, along with the protests against the general elections of January 5, 2014, created an atmosphere of great turmoil. Islamists attacked Hindu communities and strikes were called all over the country. *Gonojagoron Moncho* organised two road marches to cross the country protesting against communal violence, in support of the victims of the attacks and hoping to attract new activists to their cause. The first road march went to Jessore (southwest Bangladesh) and the second one, which I joined, went to Takurgaon (north Bangladesh).

The trip to Takurgaon lasted four days and involved around two hundred activists in eight buses, visiting over ten cities. Several activities took place on the road, both inside the buses and in the cities: music and slogan performances, speeches, meetings, parades, etc. The collective manifestations were strongly performative, and performances were intensely emotional. We travelled in the buses, but when approaching a village some activists moved to an open truck to shout out slogans. Activists who were documenting the group's performances followed them. Only a few activists were allowed to be on the truck and there was a hierarchy of functions (*slogan konyas*, security staff, filmmakers, coordination team, students etc.).



Activists entering a village

When in a city or a village, we were sometimes allowed to get off the bus, depending on how dangerous the place was considered to be (the group was being threatened by the Islamists that they were protesting against). When we could attend the manifestation, we were divided into groups: some of us went to the stage where some people spoke, others protected them (security staff), others still were filming and photographing. Some of us joined the audience, and a few activists took the opportunity to arrange a parallel political meeting with local organizations or parties.

The public ceremonies were deeply regulated and each character had a defined role and specific times for expressing outrage, compassion, hatred, or angst. As Marcel Mauss (1979 [1921]: 147) has pointed out, “a whole series of oral expressions of feelings are not exclusively psychological or physiological phenomena,

but social phenomena marked by non-spontaneous demonstrations and more perfect obligation.” So while leaders demonstrated anger and outrage on stage, when they were with the victims they were caring and compassionate.

During the march, certain scenes repeated themselves: when we reached a designated place, young activists from the security team encircled Sarker and Akter and led them to the stage. Meanwhile, other activists tried to prevent the public from approaching the two. In a routine reminiscent of a performer arriving at a concert venue, a chain of activists segregated leaders from the audience. Once they were on stage, a local union leader or political authority affiliated to the group introduced them and passed the microphone to one of the *slogan konya*, who started shouting slogans.



Imran Sarker, Lucky Akter and Shammi Haque on stage during the road march.

One of the few women on stage were the *slogan konya*. While the men remained restrained, their performances were very corporeal. They shouted, shook their bodies and engaged the audience via emotional performances. A great part of the emotional labour was under their responsibility. This gendered division of emotional labour (Groves, 1995) may suggest stereotypes related to gender in the West (emotional women versus rational men), but in fact they invert Bengali and Islamic gender codes of behaviour: while the women engage in a loud aggressive performance, the men remain reserved.

When there were scheduled visits to the houses of victims, these mimicked a parade: a mass of locals followed the leaders, who were protected by the Dhaka activists. Sarker and other bloggers led the main parade. But Akter took advantage of these moments to create a parallel march, imposing her leadership.



Lucky Akter with the student activists during the road march.

In Akter's parade, local student activists followed her, while Dhaka student activists protected her, generating a scene where she focused attention on herself. She also had a personal photographer documenting everything in order to later to post it on the internet, especially on Facebook. These situations empowered Akter: for a few moments, she occupied a prominent place in the platform, eliding her position either as a *slogan konyā* or as a sidekick to Sarker. During her march, she went as far as to invert roles, having boys shouting slogans while she marched.

Akter and Sarker sometimes visited the same houses, sometimes they visited different ones. The visits were also highly ritualized (and intensely documented). Once we reached the houses that had been attacked, only the leaders, photographers, and videographers were allowed to enter and speak during the encounter or record it. They lasted just a few minutes, purportedly for security reasons. The threat of an Islamist attack was always present. The visits were prearranged by local partners who directed the activists to the selected victims. Meetings were very emotional and important for both the victims – who had the opportunity to approach the leaders, tell them about their suffering and get support – and for the leaders, who could show empathy for the victims.



Lucky Akter with one of the Hindu victims.

The leaders examined the burnt objects and quarters, embraced the victims, said words of comfort, recorded their (very emotional) testimonies and pledged to keep on fighting the Islamists. Sometimes the leaders and other activists cried. All the meetings, speeches, and performances were well documented by the group to be circulated online. In fact, many activities were organised precisely in order to affect an audience that could only be reached through the Internet. A great part of their activism happens online. The documentation hence functioned as ‘awareness-raising devices’ (Traïni, 2012) that helped to shape the emotions of the cause, giving strength to the group. According to Christopher Traïni (2012: 573),

[l]e terme dispositif de sensibilisation désigne l’ensemble des supports matériels, des agencements d’objets, des mises en scène, que les militants déploient afin de susciter des réactions affectives qui prédisposent ceux qui les éprouvent à s’engager ou à soutenir la cause défendue.

These awareness-raising devices also strengthen their “community of sentiment” (Appadurai, 1996), online and *in locus*. According to Arjun Appadurai (1996), communities of sentiment are created through collective experiences and imaginings. They are groups that imagine and feel things together and that carry the potential of moving from shared imagination to collective action. Imagination is a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity, a real social practice. As an “emotional practice”, it needs to be constantly re-enacted through performances, thus yielding “performances of community”<sup>13</sup> that produce emotional identification. Places, music, photographs and people are means through which we can reach some states, which may provoke performative effects on the constitution of feelings.

The presence of numerous famous Dhaka activists in a house that has been attacked, in a small village, was in itself an emotional encounter. The victims were grateful for the visit and hopeful that they would not be abandoned. For the activists, the meetings were also a deeply emotional experience. While smelling the burnt houses, seeing what the victims lost and hearing their tragic stories, they became embedded in an emotional knowledge learnt through their own bodies and senses, and they could demonstrate their emotions in a very personal way.

<sup>13</sup> Performances referring to shared emotions and values (Cf. Margrit Pernau, 2013).



Lucky Akter with a Hindu victim during the road march.

Meetings between women, in particular, were very affectionate. Akter frequently took the victims in her arms, sometimes with tears in her eyes. The performances on and off stage were enacted to experiment with emotions and sought to engage the public and the activists of the group through sensorial means. As in the Australian funerary cults studied by Marcel Mauss (1979), the activities organised by *Gonojagoron Moncho* included a compulsory expression of feelings, with fixed times, conditions and agents for expressing it. It functioned as a kind of ritual where the actors participated in the performances by recognising and accepting the authenticity of the other's intention and duty. According to Jeffrey Alexander (2004b: 527),

Ritual effectiveness energizes the participants and attaches them to each other, increases their identification with the symbolic objects of communication, and intensifies the connection of the participants and the symbolic objects with the observing audience, the relevant "community" at large.

For the author, there are a number of elements that must be fused in a social performance in order for it to succeed: the background representations; the scripts of the performance; the embodied performer; the audience; the means of symbolic production; the *mise-en-scène*; and the power dynamics of the society. The road march had all of this. Through the shared narrative of the Liberation War, enacted by the leaders, embodied by the *slogan konya* engaged with the audience in meaningful places, the activists of the group participated in a ritual that inserted them in the very core of Bangladesh's history. In this experience, women had a central role: conducting audience involvement through their bodies. If people were quiet and distant during the speeches, they were fully engaged through the slogans.

During the road marches through the country, the activists themselves experienced Islamist attacks. On the first day of the march, Molotov cocktails were thrown at our buses.<sup>14</sup> The attack frightened the activists, who threw themselves on the ground, fearing for their lives. When we left behind a dangerous zone, in contrast, everyone got very excited and started to sing songs from the Liberation War, convinced that they were the new generation of freedom fighters.

<sup>14</sup> According to the activists, the march was being attacked by supporters of Jamaat-e-Islam who did not want the movement to continue. The bomb attack event is itself an important moment of the road march that I will be unable to address in this article.



Objects found in a victimised house.

To see, touch, and smell burnt places while hearing details of how the events happened on location affected the group in many ways. It provoked sensorial experience of the violence inflicted on Hindus, as well as on themselves. At the same time, it evoked an emotive image of the Liberation War itself, increasing the feeling of community of the group. They sang songs, shouted slogans, and recreated performances of the war. Struggling to bring closure to the events of 1971, the activists were able to construct their roles as (the new generation of) freedom fighters, thereby inserting themselves in the history of their country and of the Liberation War. In this new story, women have prominent roles.

### **Slogan Konya's Emotional Performances**

With almost 50,000 followers on Facebook, Akter usually speaks of political topics, shares her thoughts, comments on articles and publishes images on her page. So even if most of the people do not take Akter as seriously as her male counterpart, she is nonetheless recognized as a leader. Her emotional performances associated with the slogans communicate in a special way, particularly to young women. The act of shouting, clenching their fists in the air as if punching something, and shaking their bodies from back to front is an aggressive performance by the *slogan kaya*. It challenges the image of *purdah*, the secluded woman.



Shamima Shawan, vice-president of Students Union of Bangladesh and *slogan konya*, shouting slogans on the stage during the road march.

The body movements of the activist while shouting slogans is strengthening, and the audience recognise it as an act that conveys power and emotion to the people. First, she bends backwards, pushing against the air to start proffering the slogans. Then she bends forwards to finish it. For the classic “Joy Bangla” [Victory to Bangla], for example, she would lean backwards while building up the “Jooooooooooy”, and then shout “Bangla” in the forward motion, simultaneously punching the air with violence, thereby energising the audience.

The slogans address contemporary topics as well as the Liberation War: they challenge Islamic fundamentalists, demand an end to communal violence, and commemorate the struggles of the freedom fighters. Almost all of them refer to Muslim and Hindu men. That is, *Gonojagoron Moncho* describes Bengali people as a masculine entity, much like the Hindu nationalists of RSS studied by Paola Bacchetta (1999). But some female activists have begun to change the lyrics to incorporate women, indigenous groups, and religions that had been left out in 1971. The Samati women studied by Bacchetta do much the same. Thus, slogans like ‘Hindu-Muslim bhai bhai, ekshathe bachte chai’ [Hindus and Muslims are brothers, they want to live together] became ‘Hindu-Muslim bhai bhon, ekshathe bachte chai’ [Hindus and Muslims are brothers and sisters, they want to live together].



Lucky Akter shouting slogans on the stage.

The messages transmitted by the *slogan konya* provoke performative effects in themselves and their audience. They modulate their voices and bodies to induce emotions to be experienced during the demonstrations, all the while conducting the intensity, the volume, and the speed of the audience's response/performance. Participants must react to what the activist says, engaging in the message that is being shouted. For example, the latest slogan goes as follows:

Akter: Hindu-Muslim bhai bhon

Public: ekshathe bachte chai

The slogans are repeated several times. Sometimes the order of those who speak each part of the slogan changes. The words are adjusted throughout the repetitions, since the audience does not always have time to reflect on what they will say. Occasionally they repeat the slogans automatically, and occasionally they react to the changes. The tempo, volume, and performance linked to the slogans push participants into a trance. Akter herself became famous in 2013 after spending days shouting slogans in Shahbag until she became ill. Many people join *Gonojagoron Moncho* to experience the emotions enacted by the *slogan konya*. By mobilizing people, they are particularly inspiring for young women.

Finding women managing experience through their bodies in political mobilisations in Bangladesh is special. It challenges the multiple restrictions Bengali women face concerning their bodies and behaviours (Chatterjee, 1989). But it is dangerous at the same time. As we have seen, a woman who does not behave modestly and discreetly, upholding 'feminine virtues', is seen as sexually promiscuous and thus unworthy of respect. This is an indictment that all the women activists face throughout their lives, and one that they must fight against if they are to achieve powerful positions. It is a high-risk daily struggle, as we will now see.

## The meaning and feeling of being a “risk taker”

Criticising the modern Western way of thinking in dichotomies, John Leavitt (1996) argues that emotions are special because they do not fit into them. They implicate meaning and feeling, body and mind, culture and biology. It is impossible to think about emotions and performances as the product of one thing or the other. In this sense, certain analyses of emotions as ‘emotional performances’ work best if we think in terms of ‘emotional complexes’, rather than individual emotions. Love and hate, happiness and sadness, and desire and guilt are emotions frequently tied to the same experiences.

During my research among women activists in Bangladesh, I realised that being characterised a “risk taker” was a trait valued by interviewees. It involve both courage and fear, and meant that one was brave enough to deal with dangerous situations. In Bangladesh, violence and the fear of violence are the greatest obstacles women face when they decide to participate in political mobilisations. Sexual violence tops the list of violent acts committed against women, and although the platform attracts a large number of female activists, women do not exceed 10% of the participants. This means that every woman who decides to participate in the activities of the platform often finds herself surrounded by a mass of men.



Rowshon Ara Nipa, video maker, during the road march.

According to Shiren Huq, “fear about their personal safety acts as a crippling constraint on what women can be and do in Bangladesh.” (Huq, 2011: 170). Rape, often referred to as “the loss of honour”, is both a memory of the war and a contemporary threat. Anonymous phone calls, photomontages of their faces on naked bodies published by fake users on Facebook, and text messages sent from unknown phone numbers are some of the strategies used to scare women in the country. Threats of rape and lewd comments about their bodies appear alongside pornographic images on their personal Facebook pages.



Reactions to one of Akter’s profile pictures on Facebook.

Receiving sexually explicit messages on their phones, or having pornographic messages and images posted on their personal webpages by strangers, can cause girls to question their real interest in political actions. Fearing they might lose their honour, some girls become terrified and ashamed when they are threatened by phone or on the Internet. Harassment is itself equated with dishonour. The mere suggestion of a sexual act can be a sign of pollution or promiscuity.

On the first day of the road march, for example, Sonika, my assistant, who was in her early twenties, received a Facebook message on her cell phone that said: “Muio tuk sath phuto khichbar chai pasa dul kahibe” [I too wanted to take photos with you while your ass dances]. Not knowing who sent the message nor how it appeared on her page, Sonika was so embarrassed and scared that she did not dare to speak of the incident with anyone.

I was really fused up by the message and also got a paranoid feeling that someone is following me, otherwise how come someone knows I’m back to Shahbag and started sending me dirty messages? I felt bad and started thinking whether it was a good idea to join the road march. And then, only an hour or so later the cocktail exploded. I actually lost my voice in fear and couldn’t chant slogans though I wanted to. (...) I was actually trembling inside and felt so lonely. (...) But then I felt that in the bus I can’t really talk to my friend, besides he is my male friend and I don’t want him to read this either. Also dealing more with these things makes you more afraid. (...) I was afraid that if I read the whole thing or saw any porn photos I would never be able work for the rest of the days among this crowd of unknown people. (Sonika, in a personal communication in 2014).

She had already been harassed in previous participations in *Gonojagoron Moncho* activities, which distanced her from the movement for a time. When she received this message inside the bus, Sonika feared she was being watched and kept silent. It was only when panic seized her, moments after our bus was attacked by molotov cocktails, that she decided to share what had happened with me. Despite her fear, she decided to continue the trip because she believed leaving the group would be more dangerous.

Pornographic photos and messages, as well as sexual threats and harassments are part of the everyday life for many women activists in Bangladesh, as we can see on Akter’s Facebook pages.



Reactions to one of Akter's profile pictures on Facebook.

Whenever Akter changed her Facebook profile picture, or someone tagged her in a photograph, fake Facebook accounts published hundreds of comments and pornographic images, as in the images above. The images do not only seek to provoke fear, but also to dishonour her through her profile page. A selfie of an erect penis with sperm, for example, did not only indicate a man masturbating to her picture in a demonstration, but also carried with it the threat of rape, and was hence itself dishonourable.

Activists engaged in political parties or organisations devoted to women's rights tend to understand these attacks as strategies meant to frighten them, and they therefore do not feel intimidated by the publications. Akter, for example, uses these comments to get empowered. Allowing anyone to comment on her Facebook page, she does not react to the aggressions, but lets her supporters do so. Remaining silent while her opponents publish lewd images, she conveys that she is not a silent, naked, unnamed victim (like the women of 1971), but a leader who does not need to be afraid of the threats: she has a whole army to defend her. And everything is public, there for everyone to see.

Were her privacy settings restricted to friends, Akter would not receive as many threats as she does, her supporters would have less space to react on the Internet and she would convey a weaker image. The more indifferent she remains to the violence directed at her, the stronger she appears to her admirers, especially girls. People come to see her as a brave young woman, a "risk taker", a girl who ventures.

To be a "risk taker" is thus a key means for women to acquire more powerful positions in Bangladesh; but it is also a fundamental characteristic for a girl to become an activist in the country. The image (and the feeling) of being a risk taker is what allows Akter, as well as other female activists, to be respected and to remain in powerful positions inside a political organisation.

## Final comments

In this article, I have analysed the role of women in political mobilizations in Bangladesh. From the Liberation War trauma drama, updated to take into account the contemporary context, adding - with reservations - gender narratives, *Gonojagoron Moncho's* activists not only struggle to push the government to punish war criminals, but also to inscribe themselves in Bangladeshi history as the new generation of freedom fighters. In this story, women have an interesting role: they are responsible for managing audience involvement through their performances.

Stimulating certain states of mind in themselves and in others while managing experiences is exceptional due to the multiple restrictions women face in Bangladesh concerning their bodies and behaviours. There is a range of dichotomies - home/world, spiritual/material, feminine/masculine - that shape the everyday life of a Bengali woman with regard to their dress, food, behaviour, education, and their role in organising life at home and in the public sphere (Chatterjee, 1989).

Historically, women have been present in the political sphere in Bangladesh. Violence against them is one of the most stirring issues that bring women together in a non-partisan manner. And the country has an increasing number of groups dedicated to and led by women, which also struggle against conservative and fundamentalist groups and regimes. As pointed out by Shahen Akhtar et al.,

Women's struggles in Bangladesh both individually as well as in the form of social movements have historically been located in the civil rights discourse accompanying the process of democratization, which included struggles against military regimes, national liberation struggles and anti-fundamentalist struggles (Akhtar et al., 2013: xiv).

However, despite the prominence of female activism in the country, many women interviewed for this research claimed that they were usually pushed into secondary positions in political organisations that were not directly concerned with women's issues. Even those who took up arms in 1971 and led underground guerrilla groups never attained positions of leadership in their parties, despite their experience. They were always relegated to domestic activities, as Jolly, a former member of the Communist Party, confessed: she and other women were frequently requested to prepare coffee and snacks for the men at the headquarters of the party as soon as public demonstrations were over.

Some of these unequal gender relationships are reproduced in *Gonojagoron Moncho's* platform. For example, during the road march I participated in, women were responsible for organising the buses, the food, and places to sleep. They ensured the safety of the women in the group, guaranteeing that women would be free from male harassment. But their duties were not restricted to these. Women also arranged political meetings by organising activities, visits, and demonstrations. There was even a small quorum of activists engaged in the women's rights movements that led women's demonstrations within the platform. They were responsible for presenting women's demands to the group. Creating a core of women within a group is a strategy that many activists in Bangladesh and India use to articulate their demands (Bacchetta, 1999).

In the platform, women play a central role in shaping emotions. Through slogans, emotional performances, songs and images, the means by which people reach emotional states, they provoke performative effects on the feelings of the audience. As highlighted by Jasper (1998), many people join a social movement to enjoy the pleasures of the protest. Through their performances, women direct the emotion of the other activists and, in the process, acquire more powerful positions in the group and in society.

The expression chosen as the title of this article, "the personal is political", is a well-known motto of American feminist movements. But it is not restricted to it. Using Ron Eyerman's concept of cultural trauma (Eyerman, 2004), I have demonstrated how personal (or personalised) stories and emotions provide a foundation for the political actions of activists engaged in *Gonojagoron Moncho*. Bringing to the fore memories of the Liberation War, including slogans, performances, music and speeches, even the calls to ban Jamaat-e-Islam and Jamaat Shibir, are recurrent practices that can be found in different historical moments of Bangladesh (Guhathakurta, 2013). The platform only renews the (Bengali) nationalist discourse.

Many feminists in the country argue that controlling women's bodies is part of nationalist discourses in Bangladesh (Huq, 2011; D'Costa, 2011; Akhtar et al., 2013). In this sense, *Gonojagoron Moncho's* discourses partially converge with traditional constraints on women. But it also offers women a freer and less conservative atmosphere for their engagement (Akhtar et al., 2013). As with Hindu nationalism studied by Bacchetta (1999), *Gonojagoron Moncho's* Bengali nationalist discourse becomes, for each women in the group, "a point of referentiality, a position from which to speak and act with a maximum of agency and personal safety". (Bacchetta, 1999: 126).

There are foci of resistance inside the group, especially in the performances. Yet when activists point out that women's engagement in the group is a symbol of being modern, or of showing respect toward women – a fact that would ostensibly differentiate them from conservative Islamic groups – they also indicate that women and their bodies are still "the conquered subject on which national and community boundaries were marked." (D'Costa, 2011: 10).

What motivates women to join in political action and what keeps them involved in it is strongly related to their experiences as women in society. The platform offers a space of safety and relative freedom to women, affording them situations where they were able to smoke, travel and spend the night outdoors, among men. The freedom provided by a safe environment is an important element for experimentation and the expression of emotions in political contexts in the country, where extremists frequently kill "secular activists". As Paola Bacchetta observed, "Participation allows [women] to move freely in public space and simultaneously retain (or even gain) respect from their immediate familial milieu as well as wider sectors of society". (Bacchetta, 1999: 125-126). For the author, women experience a mechanism of expansion/adjustment: i.e., they join the movement because of their desire for expansion and the obligation they feel to adjust.

One can think of their manifestations – on and offline – as rituals where emotions are not only expressed, but also felt. They happen individually and collectively at the same time, and both the person and the group display agency. John Leavitt (1996) talks about a "stereotypical set of emotions" in rituals. For him, collective rituals operate through common symbols shared in a process of cultural stereotyping of experiences. In this process, expectations, imaginations, and memories are shared; and feelings and depend "on personal elements that to a large degree are common to those who share common experiences and a common exposure to stories, songs, images, and ritual practices" (Leavitt, 1996: 527).

During the road march, various events were organised to strengthen the community of sentiment (Appadurai, 1996). The preparations that took place inside the bus, on stage, or in the encounters with the victims were part of a program that gave meaning to the march and to the platform at the same time. Women – in particular the *slogan konyas* – led many of them. They served to remind the participants of their moral commitment and to reinforce a sense of we-ness in the group.

Collective rites remind participants of their basic moral commitments, stir up strong emotions, and reinforce a sense of solidarity with the group, a "we-ness". Rituals are symbolic embodiments, at salient times and places, of the beliefs and feelings of a group. (Jasper, 1998: 418)

The different elements brought together during the manifestations (the cultural trauma, the Bengali nationalism, the gendered division of emotional labour, the *slogan konya's* emotional performances, Shahbag, etc.) assured the effectiveness of the group's ability to mobilise.



Lucky Akter on the stage during the road march.

At the same time that women's performances in the platform mobilised old and new activists, they offered daring examples to women in the audience. By participating in the mobilisations of the group as a photographer, I had a double function: I was a (foreign) researcher and an online activist. The camera provided the researcher with a function, but it also elicited performances, which then helped me to understand the dynamics of their activism. Through my own behaviour (on and offline), as well as through the performances of the activists, I understood the importance of images and women's bodies in *Gonojagoron Moncho's* activism.

Highly attentive to the images they wanted to be shown, the activists used Facebook and other social networks to mobilise people for their cause. If online mobilisation has limitations regarding the long-term engagement of the activists, it works as an important battlefield for the supporters and the opponents of the group. At a distance, abetted by the security of anonymity for displaying their engagement, and through its simple interface, people used Facebook to support, but also to threaten the activists of the group. This generated even more violence toward women. If in 1971 people photographed the dead, naked bodies of women to denounce rapes, at present they produce photomontages of the young female activists on naked bodies to dishonour and threaten them with rape. As in the past, their bodies are intimidated.

On Facebook, they are not silenced but rather choose to be silent. When they provide a platform for the followers to react, they stimulate their performances and become empowered. By using their bodies to resist through emotional performances, on and offline, these activists challenge their opponents and mobilise other activists – especially young women – through gender performative practices; which produce series of effects through sensorial experiences.

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# Exchanging through difference

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## Abstract

This article presents and discusses different sorts of economic exchange between nut gatherers from the São Francisco do Itatapuru community, in Brazilian Amazonia, and Brazil's largest cosmetics company, Natura. Based on fieldwork conducted both at Natura and in the Amazonian community, the ethnography reveals that this encounter makes visible different logics of thought and action, which indicate what has value in the relational sphere of nut gatherers and businessmen. The paper argues in favour of the possibility of communication and exchange through specific conversions, despite their different conventions. Exchange takes place precisely in the domain of difference: in other words, where one sees nuts – in the form of *debts* and *commodities* – others see cosmetics – in the form of *profitable products*. The model, made visible by ethnography, is compared to the anthropological literature dealing with the distinction between gifts and commodities, offering an alternative analytical bifurcation.

**Key words:** Amazonia, exchange economies; debt; company-community partnership; gift-commodity; economic anthropology.

# Trocando por meio da diferença

## Resumo

Este artigo apresenta e discute diferentes tipos de trocas econômicas entre castanheiros habitantes da Comunidade São Francisco do Itatapuru, na Amazônia brasileira e a maior indústria de cosméticos do Brasil, Natura S/A. A descrição, baseada em trabalho de campo tanto na empresa de cosméticos quanto na comunidade amazônica, sustenta que este encontro torna visíveis diferentes lógicas de pensamento e de ação, as quais indicam aquilo que possui valor na órbita relacional de castanheiros e empresários. O artigo argumenta em favor da possibilidade de comunicação e intercâmbio por meio de conversões específicas não obstante suas distintas convenções. É precisamente na diferença onde a troca se realiza: onde uns vêem castanhas – na forma de *dívidas* e *mercadorias* –, outros vêem cosméticos – na forma de *produtos lucrativos*. O modelo tornado visível pela etnografia é cotejado à literatura antropológica interessada na distinção entre dádivas e mercadorias, oferecendo uma bifurcação analítica alternativa.

**Palavras-chave:** Amazônia; economias da troca; dívida; empresas; dádivas-mercadorias; antropologia econômica.

# Exchanging through difference

Magda dos Santos Ribeiro

This article reflects on the different knowledge practices of nut gatherers and businessmen through the ethnographic description of aspects of a relationship that lasted for more than 10 years between Natura, the largest cosmetics company in Brazil, and members of the São Francisco do Iratapuru community, located between the states of Pará and Amapá, in the eastern portion of Brazilian Amazonia. It aims to compare the different ways of creating and perpetuating relationships and balancing exchanges that emerge from the economic practices of nut gatherers and businessmen and, above all, from the encounter between their ways of knowing. These differences go beyond the *gift-commodity* model consolidated in the anthropological literature, which is insufficient to address the ethnographic complexity that characterizes the encounter. It is not so much that a distinction between commercial and non-commercial relations is lacking, but rather that existing differences suggest an alternative analytical bifurcation.

People from different worlds can always agree, because agreements do not depend on a consensus on the terms that are agreed upon<sup>1</sup>. Many agreements were reached during the more than ten years of negotiations between Natura and the families of nut gatherers from Iratapuru. However, they were not *practical agreements for utilitarian purposes*, as those who subscribe to the business perspective might think. Rather, they concern the possibility of exchanging things of various kinds – knowledge, technical know-how, botanical species, favours, material goods, images, money, etc. – and although the events and things that result from such encounters can take different forms, there is a clear capacity for communication and exchange in the numerous agreements and contracts that are established. If, in what follows, the worlds of nut gatherers and businessmen sometimes appear self-referential or closed in on themselves, the dynamic of the encounter nonetheless makes each one permeable and vulnerable to the other.

The word “encounter” is not meant in an ordinary sense. It refers to a recurrent notion in anthropology, first systematized by Faier and Rofel (2014), concerning daily engagements between groups that occur despite the significant differences between them. The authors focus on encounters that involve transnational capitalism, notions of space and place, and relationships between humans and nonhumans. They are thus part of an ethnographic tradition that describes particular types of *encounters*; in this case, those that address contingency and the often unexpected effects of practices articulated by participants from different worlds. However, instead of assuming mutual understandings that converge in diverse interconnections, the encounter described here shows how misunderstandings and equivocations can generate relations amidst the constant tensions that surround observed negotiations.

Comparing different modes of existing and relating, this article addresses the encounter between distinct knowledge practices, as well as the negotiating mechanisms that bridge such practices, revealing the reciprocal ties between the agents involved and exposing inequalities in position and power. The term *modes of existence*, borrowed from Latour and Stengers (2009), emphasizes the ontological singularities of economic values, in which each corresponding domain brings out a multitude of different categories. Comparison highlights the equality and diversity that converge in the act of exchange.

I conclude by exploring similarities and differences between native models and anthropological models. The anthropological *gift/commodity* model upholds the division between person (*gift*) and thing (*commodity*) as categories, while the native model provides a bifurcation that leads to new understandings of the relationship between the categories of *goods/debt* and *product/profit*.

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<sup>1</sup> These agreements are based on a kind of immanent rather than transcendental ethics, as proposed by Donna Haraway (2003). In this case, although the business environment presents a model of ethics that is content with the application of general principles, negotiations and relationships with peoples from the forest often reveal new paths and unforeseen agreements.

## Sharing Profits

The first meetings between Natura and nut gatherers from the Iratapuru River were mostly mediated by government agencies, political figures, lawyers, business consultants and anthropologists. This mediation provided a sort of equivalence between parties considered to be *a priori* dissimilar. Nut gatherers, it was assumed, lacked experience, mastery of legal matters and clarity about how their knowledge and practices were seen as traditional. Natura, it was assumed, lacked understanding of modes of living proper to forest peoples and their ways of negotiating and relating, wherein contracts, papers and documents do not usually ensure binding ties.

Through one of its partner companies, Cognis do Brasil, Natura Cosmetics had purchased a small amount of Brazil nut (*Bertholletia excelsa*) oil directly from the São Francisco do Iratapuru community in 2002. They wanted to conduct laboratory tests to verify the effectiveness of this ingredient in manufacturing soaps and creams. Through engagements with the Iratapuru community, Natura also came to experiment with *copaiba* (*Copaifera landesdorffi*) and *breu branco* (*Protium heptaphyllum*).

*Breu branco*, a greyish, oily and amorphous resin, is obtained from the trunk of the *breu* tree, also known as *almacega* or *almecegueira*, which is similar to the *seringa* (rubber tree). Once extracted and dried, the resin hardens and becomes extremely flammable. It is often used as fuel, emanating a very pleasant aroma that also makes it suitable for fumigating or as incense. For the nut gatherers, however, its main function is to caulk canoes – *brear canoa*, as they usually say. Nut gatherers make excellent boats and barges, using them to navigate the rivers and transport nuts. The resin of *breu branco* is used for waterproofing boats, preventing leakages during the navigation and transportation of tonnes of nuts.

In 2000 and 2001, following requests from Natura, IFF Essências e Fragrâncias Ltda. carried out tests and took samples of *breu branco*. Its use in the manufacture of fine perfumes was considered promising. In 2003, Natura contacted the Iratapuru community again, in the hope of buying a large amount of *breu branco* and then launching a perfume made from its essence later that year.

Nut gatherers had not traded in *breu branco* very often. They initially asked the state government for permission to trade the resin with Natura at R\$ 6.00 per kilogram. The commercial value of *breu branco* was not considered as attractive as that of nuts. In the local market, nut gatherers used to sell *breu* at R\$ 3.00 per kilo, and Natura was willing to pay double for the same amount. Concurrently, Natura had begun to place orders for nut oil as well. SEMA – the Department of the Environment of the State of Amapá (Secretaria do Meio Ambiente do Estado do Amapá) – was a key institution in the mediation of these agreements, particularly since the extracted resources would come from the Iratapuru River Sustainable Development Reserve (hereinafter referred to as IRSDR), which was under its direct responsibility.

A small group of nut gatherers extracted 300 kilos of *breu branco* and prepared to send it to the company. The sale, however, was judged illegal by the government of the state of Amapá, since it violated state regulations on access to biodiversity, according to which only SEMA could authorize bioprospecting initiatives by companies and researchers. As Natura had not consulted with SEMA on the extraction of genetic material from the IRSDR for bioprospecting purposes, SEMA embargoed the sale of *breu branco* and filed a formal complaint with the Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF), demanding that the company negotiate access with the state government.

The then newly created CGEN – Genetic Heritage Management Council (Conselho de Gestão do Patrimônio Genético) – had been established by the Provisional Measure 2,186 on the 23th of August 2001. Its creation was indeed crucial for regulating the existing exchange relations between Amazonian populations, companies, biologists, pharmacists and researchers. Questions about the ethical implications of these relations gave rise to calls for recognizing the intellectual and territorial rights of these varied local populations. CGEN was formalised in 2001 as a governmental body responsible for these regulations, and its

creation reconfigured the terms in which these exchanges were carried out<sup>2</sup>. Reacting to pressure from the Government of the State of Amapá and CGEN, Natura began to consider the technical instruments required for accessing *breu branco* within the criteria established by the legislation. In addition, the state government demanded a kind of compensation from the company for making film recordings inside the IRSDR without SEMA's authorization. Natura agreed to pay R\$ 23.00 per kilo of *breu branco*, and to fund the management plan and the certification process of extraction areas as compensatory measures (Moreira dos Santos, 2008: 163). Rejecting the terms proposed by the company, the state government decided to meet with the community in order to develop other parameters for the negotiation.

As Natura intended to launch the perfume in the following year (2003) and had already made several investments toward this end, it acquired the raw material it needed from Bituba, a community located in the municipality of Monte Dourado, next to the Iratapuru community but just across the border in the State of Pará, where the legislation concerning access to genetic resources is different. Natura was thus able to launch two products containing the essence of *breu*: a perfume (*Perfume do Brasil*) and a bath water.

The fact that the samples for the tests were extracted from the IRSDR by nut gatherers and members of the Vila São Francisco do Iratapuru community meant that this access had to be regulated by the CGEN, and in accordance with the current federal legislation on the use of genetic heritage components with trading potential. The legal process regulating consent of access to *breu branco* needed to be accompanied by an anthropological report produced by an independent anthropologist, which would indicate the forms of social organization and political representation of the community, evaluate the socio-cultural impact of the project, the extent to which the content of the proposal was understood by the community, as well as its consequences. The aforementioned report concentrated its efforts on regularizing access to elements of genetic heritage, and excluded access to traditional knowledge regarding the use of *breu branco*, as the following excerpt shows:

“The Anthropological Report refers exclusively to the access to an element of genetic heritage that is unrelated to traditional knowledge, since the use of *breu branco* as a fine fragrance and bath waters in personal perfuming was the result of a research conducted by Natura in partnership with the IFF [company]. The traditional uses of *breu* as a repellent through smoke caused by burning reveals a perfuming potential that could be interpreted as deriving from traditional knowledge. However, since it is found in numerous communities in the northern region, its ownership is dispersed” (Allegretti, Anthropological Report 2007: 07)

Natura's first attempt to regulate access to *breu branco* did not take traditional knowledge into account when calculating the terms of benefit sharing. In this context, the CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity, held in 1992 –, emerged as a way of striking a balance between the conservation of biodiversity and the survival of local populations. *Benefit sharing* was branded as a way of transferring resources to native populations while at the same time presenting itself as an incentive for environmental conservation and the preservation of forests. Those who intend to have access genetic resources, species or plants native to the Amazonian biome with the purpose of technological prospecting for commercial and profitable use should share those profits (benefits) with the government of the country, state or community where the access was granted. Broadly speaking, the transformation of (natural) genetic resources into (cultural) usages should generate some kind of compensation, which would then provide financial and non-financial benefits to those identified as the precondition for obtaining resources (Almeida and Carneiro da Cunha, 2001; Carneiro da Cunha 2000, 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> For an ethnographic description of how CGEN works, see Soares (2010).

Given these circumstances, requesting access to an element of genetic heritage meant including the State of Amapá as a part in the negotiations. As a consequence, the relationship between Natura and the Iratapuru community began with disagreements and conflicts between community members, state representatives and company employees.

The proceedings of one of the first meetings<sup>3</sup> in which the impasse was discussed reveals obscure aspects of these early encounters between Natura and members of the Iratapuru community:

“Eraldo Neves, head of the SEMA Conservation Units (...), asked Eliane Moreira to continue conducting the meeting, and she asked the community to talk about their impressions regarding the partnership developed with Natura. Sabá said that he was worried when Natura first asked for *breu branco*, feeling that there could be something wrong. At that moment, Eraldo asked him how Natura arrived in the community. Arraia said that he arrived around 2001, that they knew there was *breu branco* there, and that they wanted to develop a product out of it. Luiz de Freitas said that a shampoo and a moisturizer made out of nuts were sold under the name of Iratapuru Reserve. Luiza said that they came as visitors, as if they were sightseeing, took some of the *breu*, then soon came back and took a little more, saying that they would make a contract later” (Allegretti, Anthropological Report, 2007: 15).

At the time, the consequences of establishing a contract with a large cosmetics company were not clear to the nut gatherers, nor did they fully understand what benefits the relationship could generate. An aggravating factor was that Natura did not have a clearly defined representative with whom the community could clarify their doubts and maintain an interpersonal relationship. The fact that Natura relied on other companies to find raw materials native to Brazilian Amazonia, sending their own representatives to collect samples, made an interpersonal relationship even more difficult.

Since the nut gatherers were the key figures in the discussion, SEMA, representing the State of Amapá, sought to explain to them the rights involved and the legislation on access to genetic heritage and traditional knowledge. They were advised to take advantage not only of a commercial relationship, but also of the benefits emerging from the commercialization of commodities containing the botanical species extracted by them.

The meaning of the expression “benefit sharing”, however, was not evident to the nut gatherers. As far as they were concerned, ‘benefits’ meant changes and improvements in their way of life, solutions to existing difficulties, by meeting particular demands and receiving material goods, none of which necessarily involved transferral of money. Historically, and especially during the period when the system of *aviamento*<sup>4</sup> was in operation, nut gatherers exchanged labour (extracting products from the forest) for benefits, which often took the form of food, tools, medicines, or *mercadorias* (“goods or merchandise”), as they were called by them. *Mercadoria* is a recurring term among nut gatherers and usually indicates a diverse set of staple foods, ammunition, medicines, etc. Typically, the cooperative forwarded the goods for the gatherers to travel to the nut groves as ‘advances’, or as ‘shopping vouchers’ which were good for use in the village’s grocery stores or the supermarkets in the cities of Laranjal do Jari and Monte Dourado. Travelling to the nut groves required goods and fuel. Material goods were used to finance the expeditions; money never made it into the equation.

3 Meeting held in the community on January 14, 2004, and partially transcribed by Allegretti (Anthropological Report, 2007: 15).

4 *Aviamento*, known as *habilitación* in Spanish, is a legal and economic system that includes the practice of offering advances of goods as credit, leading to the production of debts. It emerged in the colonial period and became consolidated in Amazonia in the period known as “rubber cycle”. In this system, traders advance consumer goods and work tools to the population. People should then pay off the contracted debt with their work and products originating from forest extraction (Aramburu, 1994). According to Santos (1980: 156), the *aviamento* system was the “*embryo of a large-scale mechanism that put the entire Amazonian rubber-cycle economy into operation, and that persists in our days, although modified and with a reduced importance.*”

However, the way that the notion of benefit sharing figured in the legislation and was understood by the company indicated what was most valuable and important to business activities: sharing *profits*. Sharing benefits explicitly referred to sharing the profitability of trading in beauty products. Generating profits was, indeed, the main objective of business deals aimed at producing material goods.

Natura proposed the establishment of a Fund as a way of distributing benefits, that is, of transferring part of the profits obtained from the sale of beauty products containing the plants extracted by nut gatherers. The company believed it could thereby transfer part of its profitability to nut gatherers, conforming to Brazilian legislation. However, nut gatherers were to have access to this Fund by resorting to mechanisms that only make sense in the business world and that correspond to the logic of the state-run system: the elaboration of projects. These projects would make it possible to convert benefits (profits) into benefits (goods), accommodating the relationship between nut gatherers and businessmen.

Nut gatherers would frequently meet with SEMA in order to discuss this issue and to determine what benefits Natura would provide in compensation for having inappropriately acquired *breu branco*. In these meetings, community members expressed a number of individual and collective concerns about life in general and extraction activities in particular. Benefits were considered terms of generic improvements which should have a positive impact on all families living in Iratapuru.

From its economic standpoint, Natura conceived of these benefits in other terms: as a way of obtaining profitability and investing in economic growth and sustainable community development. These ideas and notions sounded abstract when compared to the concrete needs raised by members of Iratapuru community.

On March 1, 2004, an important meeting between Natura employees, members of the Iratapuru community and representatives of SEMA took place. After some twelve hours, the group came to an agreement on the benefit-sharing proposal:

“(…) Mrs. Sônia Tuccori [representing Natura] started the presentation of the Fund for Sustainable Development of Communities, which aims to promote the sustainable development of the community, and that should be used according to its needs, to aide it what regards training, infrastructure, generation of alternative sources of income and in social and cultural areas. This Fund would be composed of 0.5% (half of the net revenue obtained from the sale of the products of the EKOS line), referring to the supplies provided by COMARU [a cooperative of nut gatherers] – which, in this case, were products made from Brazil nuts, *breu branco* and *copaiba*. The 2004 sales would yield an estimate of R\$ 138,000.00 (one hundred and thirty-eight thousand reais) to this Fund” (Allegretti, partial transcription of the proceedings of the meeting, Anthropological Report: 2007: 17)

Natura agreed to a concrete proposal at this meeting, which was accepted by the nut gatherers as a response to the needs raised by the community. The consensus generated by the proposal was a way of adjusting the relationship between the company and nut gatherers, providing each of them with what really mattered from their perspective. The ultimate aim of the businessmen was to earn and accumulate money (profits), usually fostering the production of more money through sharing (with shareholders, employees, other companies, etc.) and accumulation. Transformed into beauty products, *breu branco*, *copaiba* and nuts became devices through which the company made money. Nut gatherers, by contrast, aimed at obtaining goods; money allowed them to have access to various things. Money, in this case, was not an end, but a means. It did not even have to be directly present in the relation. In other words, there could be a direct exchange between nuts and things; money did not have to be the main mediator of relationships. For companies, however, there is no relationship without money. From their perspective, exchange happens exclusively between products and money, never between products and other objects.

The notion of *partnership* thus assumes specific connotations in each knowledge practice. On the one hand, it is a commercial activity, producing business partners in a relationship between producers and self-interested suppliers<sup>5</sup> who work together for the simultaneous profitability of their commercial activities. On the other hand, it has to do with aid and mutuality, since money has no value in itself (and does not serve to multiply profits), but is an entity capable of acquiring material things. This is what the nut gatherers were interested in. The relation that I am describing hence transacts and transforms, dislocates and converts elements from one regime of knowledge into those of another.

From Natura's perspective, the Fund was not a way of helping the community, but of regularizing its legal situation in the State of Amapá by complying with federal legislation, and providing an incentive for the community to organize itself in institutional terms and to strengthen its productive capacity. In this sense, the community cooperative was perceived as a company that should use the resources of the Fund to develop and improve itself as a company. Aspects related to the development of the productive chain seemed to be a priority for Natura, since they could not imagine the management of any institutional body outside of a production-oriented logic. The community, however, conceived of its relationship with cooperativism from a different angle. To some extent, cooperativism took the form of a patron-client relation between a bosses and nut gatherers characteristic of the *aviamento* system (Almeida, 2012: 143). Cooperatives could thus function as a new type of "boss", purchasing the nuts and supplying gatherers with *mercadoria*, mostly as advancements to enable them to travel to the nut groves. Nut gatherers would no longer be indebted to a boss, but to the cooperative.

Even if the company and the community could establish a kind of communication that made the relationship operational, the terms and the rules that conditioned it – defined in the contract signed between the two parties – were not evident to the nut gatherers. The contract that regulated Natura's access to *breu branco* was the first of its kind signed in Brazil by a forest population and a private company<sup>6</sup>, laying down specific criteria for the distribution of benefits through the establishment of the so-called *Natura Fund for Community Development* (Moreira dos Santos, 2008: 15).

When the contract was finally signed, the Iratapuru community remained unclear as to what exactly they were signing into. However, there was a general feeling that the agreement would be beneficial to the community, and it was perceived in a positive way by the nut gatherers involved in the negotiation. Starting in 2004, Natura and the São Francisco do Iratapuru community began to maintain a written contract of indeterminate duration, aimed at regulating access to the genetic heritage of *breu branco*. The main object of the contract stands out among its clauses: "access to the genetic heritage of the *breu branco* resin for as long as it is commercially exploited" (cf. Moreira dos Santos, 2008). Natura had agreed to trade exclusively with the community of São Francisco do Iratapuru, and would be prohibited from buying *breu* from other sources. The company also agreed to share the benefits, transferring part of the profits obtained from the sale of products that contained *breu* to the nut gatherers.

Ten thousand reais were immediately paid to the Iratapuru community for the 20 kilos of *breu branco* samples collected for testing, as was 0.5% (half of one percent) of the net revenue obtained from the sale of products that contained *breu*. This money was to be applied in the Fund and used in accordance with a new agreement between the company and the community. Nut gatherers, for their part, agreed to collect

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5 This is the hypothesis, developed by economic theory: that self-interest is the key variable explaining human behavior in whatever society (Bresser-Pereira, 2003). Thus, self-interested individual behavior has played a crucial role in modern economic theories (Kerstenetzky, 2005), either explaining the behavior of consumers (people) or explaining the behavior of companies (firms and institutions).

6 The contract was signed on June 22, 2004, after four years of negotiation and many meetings between Natura, SEMA, representing the state of Amapá, and Iratapuru nut gatherers (Moreira dos Santos, 2008: 160).

*breu branco* in a sustainable manner, to allow Natura employees to enter the IRS DR, to keep the community organized as a cooperative or association, to issue invoices, to refrain from using child labour and, finally, to partition benefits in the best interest of the community.

Specific rules for the use and management of the monetary resources applied in the Fund were established in a new contract, also signed in 2004. It stipulated that the Fund was to be managed by Natura and would be composed of resources from 0.5% of the net revenue obtained from the sale of all products supplied by the community (Brazil nuts, *breu branco* and *copaiba*). In order to gain access to the Fund, the community would develop a Sustainable Development plan and submit projects that itemised how the amount would be applied. These projects would be submitted for analysis and approval by Natura and would receive priority status when associated with the productive chain.

Natura would estimate the amounts to be allocated to the Fund every year and, after analysing and approving submitted projects, would be responsible for the deposit of the amount in a bank account in the name of the community cooperative. COMARU,<sup>7</sup> in turn, would issue a receipt every time funds were deposited, and Natura would reserve the right to carry out audits in order to verify the application of resources whenever deemed necessary.

As the contract and the agreement for the use of the Fund were signed in 2004, and Natura had already launched products containing the *breu branco* resin in 2003, the company carried out an assessment of the amounts obtained from the net revenue resulting from the sale of these products, and deposited R\$ 101,222.00 (one hundred and one thousand, two hundred and twenty-two reais) into the Fund. This was the beginning of what would become a long-standing relationship between Iratapuru nut gatherers and Natura Cosmetics.

## Keeping debts

Between 2002 and 2007, Natura approached numerous Amazonian groups through their associations, communities and cooperatives, prospecting new plants and botanical species that seemed attractive to the manufacturing of cosmetics. Efforts were made to recognize traditional knowledge associated with the relevant species, largely due to existing legislation and the demands of the Public Prosecution Service. This was the case, for example, of access to *priprioca* (*Cyperus articulatus* L.) in Boa Vista, Acará, in the State of Pará, and to *priprioca* (*Cyperus articulatus* L.), *breu branco* (*Protium heptaphyllum*) and *cumarú* (*Dipteryx Adorata*) from the Ver-as-Ervas association, based at the Ver-o-Peso market in Belém, also in the State of Pará (Allegretti, LA, 2007: 08). The latter stirred a lot of controversy at the time<sup>8</sup>.

In a way, these cases of access and benefit-sharing agreements for Associated Traditional Knowledge (ATK) inspired the company to write up a new contract with the Iratapuru community. In addition to sharing benefits from access to the genetic heritage of *breu branco*, Natura would also share benefits from learning about traditional ways of using it. Again, it was a matter of retrospectively regulating a process that had already been carried out, but which continued to raise issues between Natura and CGEN and hindered authorizations of consent from other communities.

<sup>7</sup> The Iratapuru River Joint Cooperative Producers and Extractors (Cooperativa Mista dos Produtores e Extrativistas do Rio Iratapuru), officially formed in February 2003.

<sup>8</sup> The conflict took place in 2005, when Natura executives visited the Ver-o-Peso market and took photographs, made interviews and film recordings of the Ver-as-Ervas vendors. Some of them accused Natura of misappropriating their knowledge for manufacturing perfumes. The case was analyzed by the bioethics commission of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) and by the Federal and State Public Prosecution Service, resulting in reparations in the form of compensations (Tanure and Patrus, 2011: 106).

Three years had passed since the first contract was signed. The Iratapuru community could not remember exactly what terms had been negotiated at the time, nor did they recall to what uses the resources provided by Nature were put. When Natura proposed a new contract, the general feeling that prevailed was that the company was indebted to the community:

“Natura knew it had to pay, but it did not know how much it should pay. (...) SEMA said that it had to pay but did not say how much. It had to pay for traditional knowledge. How much did it have to pay? I did not know, nor did CGEN. Everyone just kind of stood around, not knowing what to do. No one knew what had to be paid. CGEN never came to the community to ask what the community wanted”. (Delbanor Viana, nut gatherer (Arraia) *apud* Allegretti, LA 2007: 11)

Nut gatherers vividly remembered the challenges of the last negotiation, but they could not clearly remember the terms that had been agreed upon and signed into contract. Conflicts and impasses were recalled and described in greater detail by the nut gatherers than any resulting consensus. Negotiations and disagreements seemed more salient than their resolution. In this sense, the temporality that marks the calculation of the debt makes it generic, unlike the specific debts established through promises made in meetings and expressed in contractual terms.

For the nut gatherers, the fact that Natura went after them three years later, rehashing the same discussions, was the most patent evidence that it acknowledged that it was still indebted to the community concerning access to *breu branco*. This view made a new contractual proposal even more difficult, given that the terms defined in the previous contract needed to be revisited and understood anew, since, as far as the community were concerned, this was first and foremost a question of reparations.

In addition, the community remembered that a lawyer was present in the previous negotiations, and that she had stated that the company owed millions to the community. Fearing that such a magnificent sum could undermine the continuity of the partnership with the company (to which they also sold nut oil), nut gatherers chose to accept the proposed conditions so as to avoid the risk of terminating the relationship. Nonetheless, the R\$ 10,000.00 paid at the time left the community feeling that it had been cheated. Meanwhile, the Fund was tied to so much bureaucracy that the community did not regard it to be an available resource.

Natura interpreted all of this very differently. The previous contract and the payments made through it had completely remedied any irregularities in terms of access and bioprospecting of *breu branco*. This new contract, which would be based on different prerogatives, paying for the traditional knowledge associated with *breu* and not for accessing it as genetic heritage, would start a new round of negotiations, and could not be seen as a resumption or correction of aspects of the previous contract. Debt, from this perspective, does not extend beyond the length of the contract. It is limited to it and becomes settled in its terms.

The anthropologist Mary Allegretti, who had written the required anthropological reports, met with the community to try and recall the terms of the previous negotiations and to provide them with a who's who of the new negotiations: to clarify what CGEN was; to discuss the Provisional Measure and the regularization of access to genetic heritage in Brazil; to advise the community on how the payment of benefits for access to traditional knowledge should be established between the concerned parties, etc. The community, however, caught very little of the technical and legal jargon, instead engaging the anthropologist with details of the events that punctuated their relationship with Natura over the course of the last three years.

They explained that they had become indebted to Natura as a result of unpaid loans and unrealized projects. According to the anthropologist, the cooperative was ill-prepared to manage resources stemming from commercial contracts, and Natura failed to adequately determine the quantity of raw material to be purchased, thereby creating debts for the nut gatherers (Allegretti, 2007: 14, Anthropological Report).

Another commercial agreement was signed in 2005 between COMARU and Cognis, a company that acquired and processed nut oil for Natura. This contract included the purchase of 16 tons of nut oil, an amount greater than the productive capacity of the community. The cooperative became excited with the advances it would receive for the promised oil, and excepted an early payment, which it then advanced to the gatherers so that they could travel to the groves. However, the amount of nuts gathered was not enough to pay off the debt that they had contracted, which kept the nut gatherers indebted to the cooperative. COMARU, meanwhile, was indebted to Natura for the amount advanced for oil that they could not deliver. Without the advances, the nut gatherers could not plan and carry out their trip to the nut groves. The money was used to acquire tools, fuel for the boat and all the necessary goods; the advances were an *aviamento to the nut gatherers*, a latter-day iteration of an economic system that had been in place since the beginning of extractive activities in the region. These advances were essential for the subsistence of nut gatherers even when they lived in nut groves.

Although the anthropologist's objective was to discuss the terms of a new benefit-sharing agreement for access to the traditional knowledge associated with *breu branco*, nut gatherers insisted on discussing the problems related to the purchase of nut oil and the debts they had with Natura. The nut gatherers thus saw their relationship with Natura comprehensively. All these matters were related to the relationship that they had with the company, and would need to be clarified before a new contract was signed.

Natura, however, subdivided the relationship, treating the purchase of nut oil and the payment for access to *breu branco* as independent processes (ties). This division was itself the result of the organizational structure of the company, with its many specialized departments. Furthermore, different partner companies mediated the relationship, and completely different contracts regulated the agreements. In the eyes of the company, there was thus nothing in common between questions relating to the purchase and sale of nut oil and the benefit-sharing contract for obtaining access to *breu branco*.

This division made no sense to the nut gatherers. Their main activity – the extraction and collection of Brazil nuts – was a central issue, even though the object of the new contract was *breu branco*. In addition, nut gatherers had specific demands and complaints about the way the purchase and sale of nut oil had been negotiated with Natura. One of these difficulties was precisely the need to fund their trip to the nut groves. The cooperative then had the idea of using Fund resources for this purpose. It suggested that the resources received from the sale of Brazil nuts – derived from a purchase and sale contract – and those received from access to the genetic heritage of *breu branco* – derived from a benefit-sharing agreement – could work in favour of their primary activity: the annual trip to the nut groves.

In general, the relationship that the members of the community had established with Natura over the previous three years, as well as its continuity, was highly regarded by them. Discussing the drafting of a new contract was paradoxically ambivalent and unclear: it could be seen as a way of clarifying misunderstandings in the previous contract or, in a worst case scenario, it could be seen to cancel and replace the previous contract with a new one, thus undermining the relationship. Since nut gatherers did not master the legal aspects of the contract and did not see the relationship in the same way that Natura did, the elaboration of new contracts was always approached with a degree of suspicion.

We could say that maintaining the relationship as it existed was just a way of perpetuating a cycle of indebtedness and payments, debits and credits, which were constantly being renewed. While, on the one hand, the company helped nut gatherers to pay off their debts, by making available resources from the Fund that were independent of the work carried out by extractivists and contingent on the sales of the company's products, on the other it made them incur new debts by offering advances higher than those that could be cancelled with the delivery of nut oil.

Nut gatherers found a creative way to preserve what was their most important activity: going to the nut groves. Natura's resources were used for this purpose: the company advanced an amount for part of the purchase of the nut oil, but the quantity of nuts collected by the gatherers was insufficient to pay off the debt, let alone to receive any profit, and hence these debts were carried over into the following year (to be paid in nut oil only).<sup>9</sup> They needed to return to the nut groves in the following year to pay off the accumulated debts, but they did not have the necessary funding to do so, since Natura would only provide them with new advances when previous debts being settled. So they used the money from the Fund.

The company prevented nut gatherers from remaining indebted to it. Considering its values and its corporate ethics, it was important that the nut gatherers had profits and not debts. The resources of the Fund should not be the main financing mechanism of extraction activities; they should rather be invested in the organizational improvement of the cooperative, as well as in the management of its productive chain. In the eyes of the nut gatherers, however, such resources emerged as means to fund the trip to the nut groves (i.e., to support the nut gatherers), making Natura, unwillingly, the main funder of the extraction activities. This was an obvious message from the nut gatherers: whoever wanted to buy the nuts must fund trips to the nut groves, "*aviar o castanheiro*", as they said.

For the company, this situation resulted from a profound lack of managerial experience on the part of nut gatherers. From a business point of view, it was inconceivable that nut gatherers sold oil well above the rates of the local market and still remained constantly in debt. The resources of the Fund should be applied in projects aimed at the sustainable development of the community and the economic growth of the cooperative, as agreed upon in the contract. The cooperative should itself accumulate the working capital necessary to fund the trip to the nut groves, without depending on the company. These pieces of advice showed up very frequently in company-community meetings. The company also provided training in technical accounting for the nut gatherers in an attempt to solve the problems of indebtedness.

Taking a radical approach to curbing the nut gatherers' indebtedness to the company, Natura sharply reduced the amount of nut oil purchased from the community from 16 tons to 2 tons per year. This measure generated enormous dissatisfaction among nut gatherers. They reported the details of the problems they faced to the anthropologist, seeking her support and help before signing a new contract:

"Since the meeting that we had last night, we have been thinking about what a fair relationship with Natura would be. At the beginning, when Natura came, it proposed 16 tons of oil; it was a difficult goal to achieve at that moment and a debt remained, but everything is solved now. But we did not think it was going to drop that much, to 2 tons. We can make 6 tons nowadays, but our contract says only two. The image, the distribution of benefits is fine, but working is what matters the most; if we do not receive this payback for our work, in what other way could we receive it? We were counting on that. We are interested in a more regular contract; they agreed to help us find other markets, but it dropped sharply. We do not know how much the benefits shared correspond to, nor if they are fair and equitable. But our biggest issue is how the relationship is in this sense, since the commercial problems have been solved... We understand that Natura has a stock (...) I saw it, it uses little oil and ends up using more the image than the oil. It would be more interesting for us if it consumed more oil. It would be very difficult if the sharing of benefits did not exist, and if it were all about the oil. Because everything is interconnected. If it wasn't for production, there wouldn't be benefit-sharing" (Eudimar Viana, nut gatherer, *apud* Alegretti 2007: 16-17).

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<sup>9</sup> In the interviews that I conducted in 2011, we see that nut gatherers had not yet completely paid off the debt contracted with Natura in 2005.

Eudimar, then the president of the cooperative, emphasizes a very relevant aspect of how the nut gatherers understood the relationship with Natura. The trips to the nut groves and the extraction of Brazil nuts were the key activity, and should therefore be the most valued aspect in the relationship. Natura proposed a new contract in order to share the benefits of access to the traditional knowledge of *breu branco*. However, the nut gatherers were concerned about the increasingly smaller amount of nut oil bought by the company. Reducing the purchase of oil impacted directly on the activity that was most valued by the nut gatherers. It meant that no guarantees were provided for the annual trip to their groves. Going to the nut groves was the only way for gatherers to guarantee possession over them and their maintenance, as well as being the founding activity of their way of life. Eudimar emphasizes that there is no nut without nut extraction; there is no knowledge without practice.

From a different angle, the resources originating from the benefit-sharing fund could be seen as a measure that required much less work on the part of the nut gatherers, not directly linked to the extractive activity, but rather to the quantity of goods sold and the profits obtained by Natura. One might see the distribution of benefits much like Natura did: as being more advantageous to the nut gatherers, since this was a way of accumulating much more money than what was received from the sale of nut oil, besides requiring much less effort. They were paid for their accumulated traditional knowledge, and not for the work that they do; they were paid for the fact that they *were* nut gatherers, and not for *doing* what made them nut gatherers. In the eyes of the people of Iratapuru, this payment, however, was intangible and not very concrete. It was so abstract that it was doubtful. Trading nuts was a tangible activity in which the nut gatherers had skill and experience; , above all, it made trips to the nut groves possible, maintaining their way of life.

After many meetings to discuss its terms, the new contract was finally signed in 2007. It regularized Natura's pending issues with CGEN and put an end to the difficulties it was facing for having inappropriately accessed *breu branco*, a species native to Brazilian biodiversity. Natura proposed to pay the benefits with a base calculation of 0.15% of the net revenue of all products that had *breu branco* on the label (soaps, perfumes and oils), and 0.05% of the net revenue of all products that had *breu branco* in its formula, either "mixed" with other ingredients or not, as Natura's representative explained to the nut gatherers (Allegretti, Anthropological Report, 2007: 17).

During the past three years, the company realized how laborious the management of the Fund resources had been. The community, with little experience of the dynamics that the formulation of projects demanded, had found it difficult to elaborate them, and this was just one of many setbacks it faced. This time, therefore, Natura decided that it would not associate the transfer of the benefit to any project, nor would it oversee their implementation, an obligation that would fall to the CGEN.

The community made countless calls, sent numerous letters and presented several demands concerning the Fund and how to use it. A representative of Natura was regularly sent to the community, entailing costs for the company. When a project was approved and resources were released, the community would eventually allocate them to other things, generating pending matters. Accountability was equally chaotic, since the need for invoices, receipts, and transfer of funds to third parties was completely oblivious to modes of organization proper to the community. In addition, the community requested low values from Natura, making the management of Fund resources extremely difficult and costly. Furthermore, Natura's proposal to offer percentage participation in product sales caused confusion since the nut gatherers would prefer to know the *total amount* received by Natura with the sale of the products that contained what they had extracted, so that they could then analyse whether they considered the portion that they received to be fair or not:

“Natura always talks about amounts and percentages but never talks about the total amount, explaining that 0.05% is a portion of a total. We have many doubts and Natura has to tell us what the total amount is. There has to be a technician to explain this to the community” (Eudimar Viana, president of COMARU, *apud* Allegretti, Anthropological Report, 2007: 18).

Natura’s representative, for his part, did not know how to explain the details of the calculations, which required knowledge of administration and accounting. He talked about assets and liabilities, percentages of net revenue, cost spread sheets and the composition of the final amount – a jargon incomprehensible to the nut gatherers. Although the meeting had its difficulties in terms of communication, nut gatherers understood that they would receive an amount of approximately R\$ 101,361.00 (one hundred and one thousand, three hundred and sixty-one reais) as a result of Natura’s access to its specific traditional knowledge about the extraction and use of *breu branco*. Months later, when Natura submitted the contract, the amount used as a basis for calculation had changed. The sales of products containing *breu branco* had been higher than expected. The amount to be received by the community, then, would be R\$ 210,770.88 (two hundred and ten thousand, seven hundred and seventy reais and eighty-eight cents).

### Sharing benefits, sharing power

The claims of nut gatherers concerning the amount of nut oil purchased by Natura *versus* the money advances they received – and, as a consequence, the debts they accumulated – were issues of primary interest to them. Natura understood that these problems were caused by their lack of experience in managing the cooperative, and by their need to acquire knowledge in administration and accounting. Much of the money that the nut gatherers received – originating from the sales of nut oil or from the payment of benefits shared with the community – was used to pay off debts. Most of these debts were contracted through the purchase of food and merchandise for the members of the cooperative, intended for the payment of the cooperative’s fiscal debts. The community had further debts with Cognis, a partner company of Natura, from one of the very first advances that the community received.

There were frequent meetings between the community and Natura representatives to account for the use of Fund resources. In April 2007, there was an outstanding debt of R\$ 97,000.00 referring to the advances transferred to the nut gatherers for their trip to the groves, and only 50% of the debt contracted with Cognis had been paid in nut oil. Part of the Fund resources were thereby set aside for the payment of debts, and the other part was reserved to fund the nut gatherers’ trip to the groves again.

In September 2007, Natura reported that the Fund had an estimated R\$ 1,748,053.00 (one million, seven hundred and forty-eight thousand, fifty-three reais). The exact amount was never really clear to the nut gatherers, in part because the Fund received deposits based on calculations which they did not understand, and because monthly values varied greatly since they were related to Natura’s sales. Natura also often redid the calculations, altering values because of mistakes or mismeasurements. In September 2008, the Fund exceeded R\$ 1,900,000.00 (one million, nine hundred thousand reais). This significant increase was due to Natura’s spontaneous acknowledgement of a mistake made in previous surveys (Moreira dos Santos, 2008: 188). The amount stemmed from increased sales of products containing *breu branco* and the fact that the community rarely used the Fund resources. Nut gatherers were more engaged in finding alternatives to internal disputes over who would control resources coming from the relationship with Natura, and how these were to be used. They were more concerned with delegating powers and redoing hierarchies than with the actual use of the available resources.

In November 2011, during my fieldwork, the Fund was an important object of dispute and an extremely confusing resource in the eyes of the nut gatherers. They knew that the community had *a lot of money* with Natura; they talked of millions, but they did not know exactly how many millions there were and how they could use them.

“They say that this community is very rich, Natura’s ads show it has millions, but we live the same way we have always lived, we are poor and this is how we live. We have to know whether we have some money or some right, we need to leave it to our children. Nobody explains what we can do with this money and everyone who comes here says something different”. (Interview, Mr. Mauro, November 2011)

Even those most engaged with the negotiation process did not understand the exact meaning of the contracts they had signed, and did not see the creation of the Fund as a compensatory and participatory measure for the community:

“(…) at the time a proposal was put forward by the company and we did not know where it was going. It was a shot in the dark. No one knew if we were asking for too little or too much money. If you ask for more you will scare away the company. We had no clear reference base to follow. Even today we do not know exactly what too little or too much money is”. (Eudimar Viana *apud* Moreira dos Santos 2008: 195).

There were many doubts about the actual amount available to them and how they could use it. Despite the intermittent release of Fund resources, and although they remained a recurring theme in meetings and the object of debates and disputes, the day-to-day routine of nut gatherers was still characterized by the extraction and commercialization of nuts. The amount of nut oil purchased by Natura, as well as problems of indebtedness, affected the work of the cooperative, which remained dedicated to funding annual trips to the nut groves despite facing difficulties in the management and production of nut oil for Natura.

Even though Natura had been buying nut oil from the Iratapuru community since mid-2002, in 2010 it proposed that a contract be established to take into account the Traditional Knowledge of Brazil nuts (henceforth TK of Brazil nuts), as it had done in the case of *breu branco* in 2007 (TK of *breu*). This time, the contract would be signed directly by the new association of members of the Iratapuru community, BIORIO, which would be responsible for the management of resources obtained from benefit sharing related to traditional knowledge, as had been agreed by the nut gatherers. BIORIO – the Iratapuru River Sustainable Development Reserve’s Traditional Biodiversity Population Association (Associação da População Tradicional da Biodiversidade da Reserva de Desenvolvimento Sustentável do Rio Iratapuru) – was created in May 2008 by families who did not actively participate in the COMARU nut cooperative, under the justification that this new institution would be eligible to formally receive and manage resources in favour of the whole community rather than just transferring them to members of the cooperative. The purpose of this association, as the nut gatherers explained, was to *take care* of social aspects of the community, benefiting all families. Prior to the creation of BIORIO, COMARU was the only representative of the community, even in what pertains to contracts signed with Natura. The unaffiliated members of the community did not feel represented by the cooperative and hence founded a new association to represent them. To a large extent, BIORIO was created to resolve internal conflicts between Iratapuru families, and as a way of distributing power in the community, particularly regarding the use of resources from Natura’s benefit sharing scheme, an amount that was steadily increasing.

According to Natura, one of the main reason for formalizing this new contract was the re-launch of the Ekos Brazil Nuts line, creating new products containing the Iratapuru nut oil as its main selling point. To some extent, the discussions that had been taking place since 2007 concerning the reduction of the amount of oil purchased from the cooperative and the need to remunerate the communities for their traditional

knowledge motivated the company to establish a new contract with the nut gatherers. In addition, the creation of BIORIO as a new institution in the community, dedicated to applying resources independently of the cooperative, provided a way of distributing the powers associated with the maintenance of the relationship with the company. Thus, while the resources derived from the increase in the amount of nut oil purchased by Natura would be managed by COMARU, as usual, those derived from the benefit sharing for the knowledge associated with the extraction and use of Brazil nuts would be managed by BIORIO.

The new contract was conceived of and described by Natura as a *new relationship*. We might ask what it means to conceive of contracts as relationships. Contracts update and define the terms of a relationship: they confer a concrete dimension upon a relationship that existed beforehand, but they are, in fact, only forged in the dynamism of the encounter. From a commercial point of view, contracts imply a specific kind of relationship, that is, one governed by rules and regulations that are defined and agreed by the parties involved and set down in writing. The relationship is based on the definition of the rights and duties of the contracting parties, limiting the actions of those involved to previously agreed terms. This situation also highlights the fact that relationships are always thought in terms of business relationships, in this case between Natura and the population that is the object of their interest.

The term *new relationship* had no effect on nut gatherers, since the 'old relationship' never ceased to exist. In addition, relationships necessarily incorporate past events. Above all, they have to do with the accumulation of a set of events, occurrences and favours, which can be thought of in terms of a continuous reproduction of debt and credit, of pending matters and gratifications. In the eyes of the nut gatherers, what Natura was offering was the continuity of the model through which they transacted: a new contract was never seen as a *new relationship*, but rather as a means to maintain the existing relationship through the settlement of debts or an increase in aid. It therefore enhanced those bonds in which both parties had invested.

The relationship that the community had with Natura would thus be strengthened through the prospect of new debts and credits, as well as increasing the amount of nut gatherers involved in the relationship, this time including not only members of COMARU, but also members of BIORIO. Natura's proposal thus considered that:

"In order for Natura to continue the work we started together, we need your approval, otherwise we will not release it [the new EKOS Brazil Nuts line]. For us to release it, we will regulate and make the TK with you in the amount of R\$ 250,000.00. We want to regulate it, we want to recognize the value of the knowledge that you have passed on to us, and we want to value it through projects of R\$ 250,000.00. (...) I don't want to suggest anything, but I tell you that you cannot have a treadmill tractor, for example, and that you cannot have a chainsaw. I don't want to say what I think, I want you to think about it. If you do not agree, we will continue to work with the Fund alone". (Ronaldo Freitas, GRC Manager at Natura, *apud* Allegretti, Anthropological Report 2010: 39)

The proposal of R\$ 250,000.00 (two hundred and fifty thousand reais) interested the nut gatherers mainly because they had already organized the distribution of resources and allocated the families that would be responsible for using them. A consensus on how these resources were to be used, however, was a more demanding task, which required many meetings and discussions between families, who were roughly divided between those who supported the cooperative and those who supported the association.

After a formal relationship of more than seven years (2004-2011) with Natura, Iratapuru nut gatherers had made little use of the resources of the Fund. Although the social impact of the relationship of a small group of nut gatherers with the largest Brazilian cosmetics company was significant, the material impact – assessed as either positive or catastrophic by different individuals – was not evident. Nut gatherers included the relationship with the company in their ways of making transactions, inviting them to participate in

their world and their social prerogatives. Natura, in turn, also incorporated the nut gatherers – and many other Amazonian groups, in different ways – into their logic of transaction. Even though the terms of the agreements were understood in different ways by each of the parties, the specificities of these meetings express the stratagems through which this kind of relationship became possible. These are *sui generis* forms of conceptualizing exchange in which elements or concepts that had remained stable begin to oscillate when, through a movement of reversal, they transform into their opposite. Where some saw nuts – in the form of *debts* and *commodities* – others saw beauty products – in the form of *money* and *profit*. Where some distributed *profits*, others converted them into *debts*.

## Forms and Concepts in Exchange Economies

Understanding the emergence of the debt economy that governs the life of Iratapuru nut gatherers and the principles that allow the reproduction of their model of exchange is as important as understanding an economic paradigm that targets the accumulation of capital and is governed by profitability.

Doing so, however, presupposes imagining these economic logics as disparate or dissimilar. We would then have to agree that the economy of the nut gatherers is nothing like the economy of the businessmen. To put the question another way: What are the implications of thinking about the knowledge practices of nut gatherers and businessmen as entirely distinct and, furthermore, of classifying them as belonging to a logic characterized by *debt* and a logic characterized by *profit*?

We cannot continue to use certain terms without making explicit what is being assumed in the relationship between the language of description and the analysis of the object of study. This bifurcation strategy (Strathern 2009, 2011) involves dealing with a gap between the language of description and what is described, revealing a key analytical avenue in the way actors describe their actions and explain what they do; that is, how they use words, metaphors, and tropes to explain their actions and intentions. Before us is the descriptive and recursive task of analysing ethnographic data with the aim of forming new analytic concepts while, at the same time, making evident the knowledge of others. ‘Profit and debt’ thus emerge as metaphors explaining that which is valued by people in their relationships. The interpersonal-conceptual relation is central to the production of anthropological knowledge, insofar as we make relations visible through this analogical exercise, extending the conventions implicit in these practices to the conceptual work that emerges from the ethnography. *Profit* and *debt* function, at one and the same time, as practice and metaphor, themselves containing numerous other encompassed practices and notions.

The importance of metaphor as an analytic-descriptive and theoretical-ethnographic device appears often in the anthropological literature (see, for instance, Barth, 1987; Mímica, 1998; Strathern, 2006; Wagner, 2012; among many others). Metaphor can encompass many things – this is precisely what makes it so instigating. When we transform it into analytical concepts we also decompose or disclose its content. In the same vein, the anthropological concepts of *gift* and *commodity* can also be read as analytical metaphors. Comparing and contrasting native knowledge practices to the anthropological model of gifts and commodities can thus widen our understanding of the objects of our study while simultaneously allowing us to offer an analytical bifurcation of the classic anthropological model – if for no other reason than for the fact that the anthropological model of *gift-commodity* cannot account for the ethnographic complexity of the present study.

In what follows, we will partially resume this debate through the data discussed and presented in this article. This approach is useful in as much as it discusses contrasting social forms, whether through field data or through the anthropological theory of exchange. Native concepts, when contrasted to

anthropological concepts, allow us to observe the possibilities and limits of an analysis that is centred on the relation between nut gatherers and businessmen, but also on the relation between different ways of conceiving economy and exchange.

I have shown that nut gatherers were not captured by a hegemonic economic model when they established commercial contracts with Natura. On the contrary: by participating in an economy of profit they devised techniques and formulae that safeguard their economy of debt by converting one into the other. In the process, the nut gatherers have found ways of accommodating their practices without abdicating of their relations with businesses interested in the products of their livelihood, thereby generating a nexus that can make them tolerate and, above all, resist<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, it does not seem plausible to assume that companies and businessmen can adopt the economy of nut gatherers by relating with them. Nonetheless, capitalist accumulation depends on the conversion of things that have been created in the most varied ways. Profit can then obviate non-commercial relations, even while it depends on them entirely, as convincingly demonstrated by Anna Tsing (2013, 2015). The author's argument is straightforward: despite the apparatus of private property, market, commodity fetishism, etc., it is exceedingly difficult to completely sever the gift from the commodity (Tsing 2013: 20). Tsing thereby offers us a kind of twist to the classic anthropological contrast between gift and commodity.

Businessmen and nut gatherers may have different motivations. While the former maximize capital (inputs), the latter invest in the production of dependency (outputs). If the Capitalist is quintessentially interested in profit, focusing on the object's potential to produce it, the nut gatherer produces and maintains debts, garnering a large number of followers that are institutionally, but above all morally, subordinated to him. While one multiplies money (profit), the other multiplies personal relationships (debtors). Yet this formula fails to adequately account for the relation observed and described, since Natura, by establishing the Fund as a means for distributing the profits obtained from the sale of products that contain Brazilian biodiversity, and by appropriating the images, life histories and knowledge of the gatherers themselves, sustains a process which can only function via credit and lingering debts, which are not cancelled when exchanges are effected, but instead outlive them and persist in time, converting contracts into interminable relations.

Roughly speaking, the classic anthropological scene of exchange is a transaction involving two parties or agents, each possessing a (material or immaterial) thing to be exchanged. The distinction between gift and commodity is revealed to be a difference in the types of relations that the exchange establishes: gift exchange upholds a relation between agents, while commodity exchange puts the objects exchanged (and not necessarily the people exchanging them) into relation (Gregory 1982: 41-42). In anthropology's *gift-commodity* model, the pertinent distinction concerns what type of reciprocity holds. Commodity exchange implies a reciprocity that is independent of the exchanging agents, who may be strangers or distant acquaintances. In other words, commodity exchange affords a type of *equalization* that establishes a symmetry between the things exchanged. However, when Natura offers payments meant to compensate gatherers for their traditional knowledge of the extraction of *breu branco* and Brazil nuts, it is incapable of producing this equivalence, since the creation of the Fund and the projects that provide access to it entail a constant disequilibrium between what is solicited and what is put into practice. The projects, which were meant to promote what the company understood to be sustainable development, end up, from the point of

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<sup>10</sup> I am referring here to a specific notion of *resistance* formulated by Deleuze (1996), which mostly concerns the result of new configurations and alternative answers to mechanisms of power. The idea that these populations resist through their own social arrangements was described by Vieira (2015) in her ethnography of the *maroons* of Malhada, in the upper backlands of Bahia, Brazil.

view of the nut gatherers, sustaining a particular way of life which unfolds in the heart of the Brazil nut groves. It is precisely in the difference between these perspectives that exchange takes place, and it is hence inherently asymmetrical. Exchange can only happen in these spaces of dissimilarity.

In gift exchange, it is people who find themselves bound to one another through rights and obligations of a different sort, creating a state of reciprocal dependence (Gregory 1982: 42). In the exchanges between Natura and the gatherers of Iratapuru, something similar occurs. However, the materiality that produces the ties, binding relations between people, cannot be deprived of its meaning, since it is itself impregnated by the prestations: botanical species, nut oil, different types of *mercadoria*, money advances, perfumes, creams and contracts. It becomes impossible to equalize the social properties of agents and exchanged objects taking into account only their particularities. This difference, nonetheless, will be expressed in the dynamism of the relation and cannot be known beforehand.

By accepting the Fund as retribution for sharing their knowledge with Natura, the nut gatherers instantiate their own way of transacting. The time of relations has its own flux, as do ways of *relating*. It is in the dynamism of the use of resources that the nut gatherers will be subordinated, allied, partnered or rendered superior to Natura. Debtors and creditors can alternate; these positions will never be equalized. One may receive more money than was owed and should therefore provide more knowledge (relation); or one may provide more knowledge than one was paid for, which, in turn, demands more money (relation). Both money and knowledge are understood in terms of *relations*, and relations, for their part, are never entirely proportional. This difference becomes the very means of exchange. In this way, domination and subordination frequently switch over and are not given beforehand, but emerge empirically: superiority may be moral, social, material or defined in another way through criteria established in the relation.

Nor can economic theories account for the specific dynamic of these encounters. The universality of neoclassical economic models transforms definite categories into generic ones, ignoring the fact that such categories are always in transition and presuppose certain conditions of existence. They thus assume that capitalism is the natural economic order, tending toward universalization. The category of *exchange* is reduced to a single type of relation, with no regard for its multiplicity. Through this lens, interested exchange cannot not always materialize. Through years of planning, ethical guidelines of conduct and company policies, Natura got what it wanted, but not necessarily in the way it envisaged. Through exchanges that the company imagined to be disinterested, the nut gatherers sought out obligations, maintaining debts and producing enduring bonds. These twists blur both classical economic and anthropological models.

Through its myriad ways of conceptualizing exchange, anthropology offers us a constellation of examples of how different peoples organize and conceive of their models of transaction, whether in non-western or industrial-capitalist contexts. Some analyses, despite their differences, focus on the objects exchanged and how they are circulated and possessed (Miller, 2001, 2008; Appadurai, 1986; Carrier, 1995); others explore the theoretical-analytical distinction between gifts and commodities (Strathern 2006; Gregory 1982); while yet others have tried to dissolve these distinctions (Thomas, 1991; Latour e Callon, 1997).

We can here return to the twists that Tsing (2013, 2015) found in analogous ethnographic contexts. When anthropologists contrast gifts and commodities as icons of different systems for producing value, they seek to clarify and make visible social logics through abstraction (Tsing 2013: 23). Most of the time such contrasts seek to highlight the distinctive qualities of gifts in opposition to the frigidity of commodities. Yet the specificities of the encounter between Natura and the nut gatherers of Iratapuru shows how the beauty products sold by Natura invariably incorporate various forms of the gift – even when it obliterates them.

The debts of nut gatherers are not pure gifts, because they are welded with, and are inherent to, the diverse material goods originating outside the forest that they call *mercadorias*. Debt and its reciprocal and social ties assume the form of consumer goods, clothing, drinks, medicine, fuel for boats, and a range of other things. The *gift/commodity* pair is fundamental to the social reproduction of the nut gatherers and the maintenance of their affects. The products and cosmetics sold by Natura, in turn, are incapable of being detached from non-commercial relations. We do not need any conceptual acrobatics to argue that these products and their profit margins are composed precisely of non-commercial relations by the explicit incorporation of gifts. Natura accepts and converts the *hau* of nut gatherers, to borrow the term made popular by Mauss' (2003). When Natura's products convey visible parts of the gatherers, of the nuts, the rivers and forest in their labels, ads and television commercials, the company discloses the presence of gifts in their commodities, affording us a clear view of the needle that sows their commodities to the gifts of others. The gift received is thus an essential part of the existence of commodities, co-opted in a transforming movement, a sort of swirl.

This does not mean that commodities and gifts get mixed up, nor that it is impossible to know where one begins and the other ends. This is a crucial point. We cannot simply disconsider the anthropological debate on how different research contexts manoeuvre these concepts, using them to shed light on distinct empirical realities or to widen our theoretical scope. Recall, for instance, Appadurai's (1986) discussion of how the distinction between gifts and commodities ceases to have meaning when the commodity comes to be an inescapable phase or stage of the social life of most (if not all) objects. In his anthropology, the centrality of the concept of the commodity as a *universal social form*, and the possibility of tracing its biography, draws our attention to how things circulate, bracketing out, even if only temporarily, the emphasis traditionally placed on the relations between people.

In his defence of the distinction between gifts and commodities, Gregory (1997: 66) argues that, in this case, binary logic is an important instrument for anthropology, through which we can avoid transforming our analyses into an expression of our own western, and therefore commodity, logic. The invigorating way Strathern (2011) tackles the problem of binarism in anthropology also enables its analytical bifurcation. This bifurcation becomes relevant when it reveals to us the difference between *profit* and *debt*, which does not necessarily take on a binary form but rather appears in a twisted manner. Exactly where the distinction between the terms occurs, the analysis can follow an alternative path – which is the path that we have travelled in the present analysis. The distinction can lead the anthropologist to theoretical discussions of reflexivity, or to ethnographical elucidation, or, still, tempt her toward both at once. The contrast recognizes *profits* as belonging to the universe of commodities, which are, however, converted into debts, in a sort of deformation of the gift-form, but also, equally, of the commodity-form.

The model that emerges from the encounter between the nut gatherers of the Iratapuru and Natura therefore extrapolates the limits of the *gift/commodity* model in anthropology, insofar as the relation between the pairs *gift/commodity* and *products/profits* – the latter produced from the conversion of gifts – leads us to the peculiar interpretation provided by the ethnography. In other words, the debts of the nut gatherers incorporate commodities (*mercadorias*), but these are not the commodities of the anthropological model. Natura's beauty products convert non-commercial relations into *mercadorias*, reproducing capital through gifts. It is this type of rearrangement of social forms, relations and exchange, or, more simply, of economic forms, that seems interesting to me, and which emerges from this double contrast between, on the one hand, the practices of nut gatherers and businessmen, and, on the other, the models that fieldwork and anthropological theory provide.

Thinking of these distinctions as conceptual bifurcations does not necessarily make them into pairs or opposites. The value of a binary opposition is that it moves a discussion in one direction while offering us a different one. Every concept, or analytical path, carries with it numerous other conceptual possibilities. Profits, in this case, imply in the existence of markets, prices, gains, profitability, contracts; they convert gifts into commodities. Debts, for their part, imply obligations, levies, gratitude, favours, and, in many instances, take the form of material goods lent, advanced or donated, which the nut gatherers call *mercadorias* in opposition to everything that forest provides them: game meat, fruits, fish, roots, nuts. In brief, the validity of this division lies in the possibility of promoting comparisons by speaking of one set of material by means of another.

However, when we seek to completely dissolve concepts that we have ourselves devised, we also risk obliterating ways of relating that are absolutely contrastive, fusing what they share in common while ignoring their singularities.<sup>11</sup> To think in terms of a distinction between economies of profit and debt is to find one possible bifurcation to the model of gifts and commodities, and to thus continue to reflect on the usefulness of certain western concepts, such as 'individual', 'property' or 'market' and, furthermore, on how we continue to incorporate such concepts into our descriptions and analyses when we should be busy unpacking them. In this way, domination and inequalities do not disappear, but rather become visible from other angles. To show how capitalism works through its gaps is to make evident processes which remain open, unfinished, within which historical contingencies move. These contingencies not only reproduce ways of doing business, but also display excesses, inequalities and injustices.

Capitalism reaches its creative form as a system when its vulnerability exposes the very elements that account for its force. When Natura offered a benefit-sharing agreement to the nut gatherers, seeking to repair the inadequate conditions under which it first accessed *breu branco*, they proposed that the company should buy *breu branco* only from them. This concession, which may seem largely irrelevant in light of the transgression that the company was guilty of, nonetheless ensured something for the nut gatherers that they considered fundamental: the maintenance of the relation for an *indeterminate amount of time*. As we know, this (indeterminate) temporality is not a part of the range of contractual relations available to a business logic. For this reason, the first contract between Natura and the nut gatherers of Iratapuru was questioned by the company's lawyers. Natura typically offers contracts lasting three years, under the argument that this corresponds to the life cycle of a product in the market. In what concerns Iratapuru, the nut gatherers saw themselves as being privileged for the fact that Natura would acquire *breu branco* only from them, and for the growing importance of this species in the chemical composition of their cosmetic range. To sever the relationship, Natura would have to forego the product. The commercial relation became subordinate to personal relations, rather than vice versa. The separation of subject and object which guides business practice is temporarily at risk: profits depend on the incorporation of gifts.

What is remarkable about the relationship between nut gatherers and businessmen is how their economies are capable of establishing distinct parameters for that relation and, somehow, still be effective for all involved. Debts and profits conjugate but do not dissolve one another; they impose themselves without annihilating each other. *Mercadorias* mean debts and affects, while at converting gifts and non-commercial relations into commodities.

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas' (1991) work is a good example of this. His ethnography *Entangled Objects* is a scathing critique of the distinction between gifts and commodities in anthropology. It stands opposed to analyses such as those provided by Marilyn Strathern in *The Gender of the Gift* and Chris Gregory in *Gifts and Commodities*, arguing that, in their criticism of missionaries, capitalist expansion and the administrative institutions of the state, anthropologists unwittingly close their eyes to the serious implications of colonial history and transcultural exchanges, which have consistently affected the peoples that the discipline traditionally studies.

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# Abortion, embryos, euthanasia, and gender theory: an anthropological analysis of the Catholic Church's Bioethics Manual at World Youth Day

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## **Abstract**

The present article analyzes the *Keys to Bioethics – JMJ Rio 2013* handbook, produced by the Jérôme Lejeune Foundation and the National Commission for Family Pastoral Care, linked to the National Conference of Bishops in Brazil. This booklet was offered to people attending the World Youth Day that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 2013. It is a student's guide, created to educate young people about the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The text presents bioethical arguments against abortion in any situation, and defends the human rights of embryos and fetuses through topics such as: prenatal diagnosis, medically assisted reproduction, pre-implantation diagnosis, and embryo research (stem cells). The text also condemns euthanasia and repudiates 'gender theory' as false. In essence, it questions individual autonomy. The distribution of this booklet is an example of the activities of the Catholic Church in public spaces.

**Keywords:** Catholic Church, bioethics, abortion, gender, right to life.

# Aborto, embriões, eutanásia e teoria de gênero:

uma análise antropológica do manual de bioética da  
Igreja Católica na Jornada Mundial para a Juventude

## Resumo

O artigo analisa o manual *Keys to bioethics - JMJ Rio 2013*, editado por Fundação Jérôme Lejeune e Comissão Nacional da Pastoral Familiar, vinculada à Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil. Esse material foi distribuído aos inscritos na Jornada Mundial para a Juventude ocorrida no Rio de Janeiro em 2013. O objetivo do manual é formar jovens segundo as diretrizes doutrinárias da Igreja Católica. O texto apresenta discussão bioética contrária ao aborto em qualquer situação, manifestando-se pela defesa dos direitos humanos de fetos e embriões em tópicos como: diagnóstico pré-natal, assistência médica à procriação, diagnóstico pré-implantação e pesquisa sobre o embrião (células-tronco), além de condenar a eutanásia e denunciar como falsa a “teoria de gênero”. A tônica do manual está no questionamento da autonomia individual. A distribuição do manual é marca da atuação da Igreja no espaço público.

**Palavras-chave:** Igreja Católica, bioética, aborto, gênero, direito à vida.

# Abortion, embryos, euthanasia, and gender theory: an anthropological analysis of the Catholic Church's Bioethics Manual at World Youth Day

Naara Luna

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Analyzing the Catholic Church's position on demands for individual liberties and the debate over human rights, what immediately springs to the fore is abortion, along with other themes related to the 'right to life,' such as euthanasia. The conflicts between the Church, a conservative religious institution, and human rights groups are played out in public space over issues linked to sexuality and reproduction (abortion, birth control, sexual diversity, etc.), as well as questions touching on life, such as embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, or the right to a dignified death. The Catholic Church has publicly expressed its opinions on all these topics and has formed pressure groups to try to turn these opinions into policy, particularly in Latin American countries and those European nations that are traditionally Catholic (Vaggione 2012, Ruibal 2014, Zúñiga-Fajuri, 2014). Minkenberg (2002) has analyzed the relationship between religion and public policy, comparatively studying western liberal democracies. He found a positive correlation between restrictive abortion legislation and Catholic heritage, with Ireland being a prime example of this tendency. The correlation is also confirmed in Latin American nations where Catholicism is still hegemonic and which have weak secular traditions and strong anti-abortion legislation (Ruibal 2014, Zúñiga-Fajuri, 2014). Uruguay is the sole exception in this regard, having a strong secular tradition and having legalized first trimester abortions in 2012. Ruibal also describes the reforms that have liberalized abortion in a limited fashion in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. Abortion has also been legal in Cuba since 1965 and in Guyana since 1995 (Ruibal 2014).

At the World Youth Day event held in Rio de Janeiro in July 2013, a bioethics handbook was distributed among those attending, reinforcing the Vatican's position against abortion under any circumstances, and defending the right to life of fetuses and embryos in the context of topics such as stem cell research and assisted reproduction, condemning euthanasia, while also denouncing 'gender theories' as false.

This manual, *Keys to Bioethics*, included discussions about human reproduction, sexuality, and death. Its table of contents listed the following themes: the history of the small human being; abortion; prenatal diagnosis; reproductive health care; pre-implantation diagnosis; research using embryos; euthanasia; organ donation; and gender theory. Each chapter included a series of moral issues, addressed via religious, biological (biomedical), and legal viewpoints. The Catholic Church's intention was to use this manual to guide its young followers' views of the world.

The distribution of this handbook on World Youth Day is an example of the work the Catholic Church carries out in public space. Authors like Casanova (2010) and Berger (2001) have questioned secularization theory by pointing to religion's retreat into the private domain with the onset of modernity (Berger 1985).

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<sup>1</sup> The article forms part of the project "Abortion and sexual diversity: statute of the unborn child, homophobia, individualism and conservatism in the public debate on human rights in Brazil," financed by a productivity scholarship.

Berger identifies an ongoing process of desecularization (2001), while Casanova questions the privatization of religion as a consequence of the process of secularization. According to Casanova (2010: 49), Catholic globalization is a process currently being expressed along three different axes. The first is papal intervention in peace processes; the second is the Pope's visibility as a "symbolic priest of the new universal civil religion of mankind" and "the first global citizen of civil society". What is of interest for the present article, however, is the third direction this globalization is taking: "Today's encyclicals not only deal with matters of Catholic faith and morals and the internal discipline of Church, but also with the global secular matters that affect all of mankind" (2010: 49). The distribution of a youth manual containing such content is an excellent example of conservative Catholic activism (Vaggione 2012), which pushes to curb particular groups' rights.

Taking another approach, Turina (2013) analyzes what he calls the Vatican's biopolitics, employing the latter concept – coined by Michel Foucault – as a key to a better understanding of the Vatican's teachings on family, sexuality and human life. According to Foucault (2005), biopower is a technique of power that became installed in human social life from the second half of the eighteenth century. This technique is directed towards humans as a species and takes as its focus the human body via a mass implementation of power. Its objects of knowledge and control are birth, mortality and longevity, and it concentrates on disease as a phenomenon of population management. Turina (2013) argues that over the twentieth century, the Pope took on the role of managing populations of believers, while the Church's functions were related to biopolitical issues, mainly contraception and human life, the recruitment of members and the clergy, the maintenance of a Catholic identity, competition with other religions, and competition with nation states.

The present article analyzes the Church's bioethics manual as a document that reveals a particular institutional orientation. My aim is to utilize this document to look at the controversy surrounding abortion and other topics, which sets the Catholic Church against feminist movements and those in favor of the right to a dignified death (Gomes and Menezes 2008). I believe that distinct concepts of human rights and citizenship are exposed in this confrontation.

The article examines instructional and educational material that seeks to guide young Catholics on problems related to bioethics from the point of view of Catholic doctrine. The manual distributed at World Youth Day will be analyzed in terms of the discourse used, as well as commenting on some of the illustrations. In this sense, the present article continues the tradition of studies of collective representations inaugurated by Durkheim in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1973) and developed in his other works, such as *On Some Primitive Forms of Classification* (Durkheim and Mauss 1981) and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1989), in which Durkheim affirms the social origins of categories of collective thought, concepts and value systems.

My decision to analyze the manual as the principle source for this article might seem strange to some readers.<sup>2</sup> But the manual, as educational material, synthesizes a series of social controversies<sup>3</sup> involving abortion, research with human embryos, euthanasia, and sexual diversity. Several points and problems pertaining to these controversies are addressed in the manual, which seeks to establish the viewpoint of the Catholic hierarchy as correct and the one that must prevail in society. Social actors who claim different rights with respect to autonomy and to the right to life or to cease living are represented indirectly

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2 Like Giumbelli, I argue that: "The textual source is not privileged because of its opposition to fieldwork, but because in it is inscribed the methodologically relevant and sociologically significant information" (2002: 102). The textual source, in this case the manual, is in certain circumstances the most relevant material.

3 I adopt Giumbelli's view of controversy: "When one observes a polemic in which a series of social agents become involved, this might be merely an ephemeral convulsion, slated to disappear as soon as other topics become the center of attention. The majority of controversies disappear in this fashion, in fact. However, and without denying their ephemeral nature, one can consider these as a moment of expression and redefinition of points and problems, which may be important and even crucial in the constitution of a society, even if they do not awaken general or intense interest" (2002: 96).

in the manual's didactic structure of questions and answers. In analyzing this document, then, we find the responses given by the Vatican through its authorized voice, the Jérôme Lejeune Foundation, to the feminist movements, LGBT movements, dignified death movement, and those who seek access to assisted reproduction or who wish to develop research with embryonic stem cells.

Furthermore, the Church's anti-abortion stance was reinforced among the young pilgrims of World Youth Day through the distribution of the manual.<sup>4</sup>

## The manual

World Youth Day took place in Rio de Janeiro from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, 2013. According to the CNBB's website,<sup>5</sup> the *Keys to Bioethics* manual was distributed to all those enrolled in World Youth Day. The manual was composed by the "Jérôme Lejeune Foundation, in partnership with the National Commission for Pastoral Family Care, an organ linked to the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), the Center for Biosanitary Studies (Spain) and the Jérôme Lejeune Foundation (USA)." According to the website, 2 million copies were printed in four languages, including 900,000 printed in Portuguese. The manual is 80 pages long and formatted as a magazine, with numerous illustrations and different colors for each chapter.

The manual is divided into the following topics: the history of the small human being; abortion; prenatal diagnosis; reproductive health care; pre-implantation diagnosis; research with embryos; euthanasia, organ donation, and gender theory. The last item (gender theory) is presented as an appendix. Each chapter is composed of the following sections: "what is?" "methods," "questions," "ethical reflections," "testimonies," and "what the Church says." Themes related to life, its generation, reproduction and purpose, predominate in the manual. An exception is the final, annexed chapter on gender theory, which also addresses the issue of sexuality. The themes are chained together in such a way that Chapters 1 through 6 form a cohesive set related to the defense of the lives of embryos and fetuses, opposing abortion, research using embryos, or any assisted reproduction technology.

Before proceeding to describe the contents of the manual in detail, I should advise readers that this article will follow two distinct, but not incompatible, analytic threads. One analyzes the manual as something that exemplifies modern individualist ideology and its value system, with this appearing codified in the manual's various categories and visual images. For this line of analysis, I shall employ Dumont's (1997) approach, opposing two configurations of value that characterize traditional societies and modern society. In traditional societies, with their holistic configuration of values, the emphasis is on society as a whole, as a human collective. The holistic ideal is the organization of society towards its own collective ends; its aims are order and hierarchy. In modern societies, centered on individualistic configurations, the human being is the atomic, indivisible element, appearing as a biological being and thinking subject. Every human being incarnates all of humanity and is the measure of all things. Society is the means, while the life of each and every person is the end. In this worldview, the human being is the individual: an a-social entity devoid of relations, which is the foundation of the axial values of equality and freedom that are present in the modern western social configuration. This category of 'subject' does not suppress the existence of others. Strathern (2005), analyzing the constitution of kinship and its relation to individualism in the West, states that people can be autonomous and relational simultaneously (2005: 27).

4 During World Youth Day, many Young pilgrims applauded the police operation that closed down an abortion clinic in Copacabana, the neighborhood taken over by the event. Anselmo Góis. Anselmo.com. Peregrinos aplaudem ação policial em clínica de aborto. Available at: <http://oglobo.globo.com/rio/ancelmo/posts/2013/07/26/peregrinos-aplaudem-acao-policial-em-clinica-de-aborto-504836.asp>. Accessed on: 31.05.2014

5 "Manual de bioética será distribuído durante a JMJ." Available at: <http://www.cnbb.org.br/imprensa/noticias/12269-jmj-distribuir-manual-de-bioetica>. [http://www.cnbb.org.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12269:bjmj-distribuir-manual-de-bioetica&catid=114&Itemid=106](http://www.cnbb.org.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12269:bjmj-distribuir-manual-de-bioetica&catid=114&Itemid=106). Accessed on: 25/04/2016

Relating the individualistic configuration of values to the manual analyzed here, we can see the centrality of the notion of the person in the values that the manual seeks to convey to youth in order to instill in them elements of Catholic doctrine.

The second analytic reading of the manual is through the prism of biopolitics, as suggested by Turina (2013). In this sense, the manual is an instrument of Catholic biopolitics, created in order to influence correlations of power. The manual seeks to contribute to the formation of faithful Catholics and its existence emphasizes the presence of the Catholic Church in public space as part of an attempt to affect the legislation of the world's nation states. In this sense, it is an example of Vatican policy in the public sphere, illustrating the process of Catholic globalization pointed out by Casanova (2010) above.

The manual's first chapter, entitled "The history of the small human being," defines the beginning of human life in fertilization: "the human embryo is a living being, endowed with a human genetic patrimony. It is a human being, in fact" (p. 5). The choice of the title induces the reader to think in a certain way. While it is possible to speak of the beginning of human life, "the history of the small human being" refers to the biological process as if it were a biography, an aspect later repeated in the manual chapter describing embryo research.

The chapter goes on to describe pregnancy, beginning on the first day, and follows the embryonic and fetal development each month from the first to the sixth, then jumping to the eighth, with a linear graph containing photos of each stage. In the section entitled 'the embryo in question,' the main questions of the bioethical debate are listed, addressing abortion, assisted reproduction and embryo manipulation, and embryonic stem cell research.

Questions are always followed by an answer. One observation defines the beginning of pregnancy at fertilization and not at the implanting of embryo in the womb, "contrary to what may be read in certain textbooks" (p. 9). The questions are: "Is the embryo just a clump of cells?"; "Is the embryo a human from fertilization onward?"; "The embryo is a human being ... but will it be a person?"; "Is it a matter of opinion to consider the embryo to be a human being?"; "What causes the embryo to be a human being?"; "Does the embryo or fetus feel pain?"; "Since the embryo is dependent on the mother, can it be a human being?"; "If the embryo does not look like a human being, can it be one?"

The answers provided to these questions dismantle any argument that puts in doubt the embryo's status as a full human being – that is, a person – from the moment of conception. The embryo is not just a bunch of cells, then, because it is an 'organism' or, from the very beginning, "a living being, organized in such a way as to develop on its own in a continuous manner" (p. 8). Here we encounter the argument for autonomy, which is associated with the argument for the individuality of the embryo. Thus, when it is factually stated that the embryo needs "an appropriate **environment** [my emphasis] in order to develop," this does not alter the status of the embryo as a human being. A classic representation is given of an individual placed in a medium, but without any consideration of the fact that this 'environment' in which the embryo develops is itself a person. According to Salem (1997: 84-85), the presentation of the embryo as "social or pre-social, that is, logically prior to social relations" disconnects and hides relationships. According to the manual, the "unique genetic heritage of the person" (and, once again, we see here the argument of individuality) and the fact that this 'heritage' belongs to the human species guarantees the embryo's status as a human being. Should anyone question whether the embryo is a person, a comparison is made with slaves: humans that are not considered to be people. As for considering it to be simply a matter of opinion whether the embryo is a human being or not, this idea is countered with 'biological reality' or 'scientific evidence.' Here we encounter the use of a biological foundation for metaphysical answers concerning the human condition. The question regarding pain sensitivity likewise refers to the characterization of a human being as a living entity endowed with perception and senses.

All of the answers are intended to humanize the embryo and bring it closer to the characteristics of people who are already born and fully developed. This argument prepares the reader for the next chapter on abortion.

The chapter on abortion defines the latter as the “premature death of the embryo or fetus during its development” (p.10). It discusses the different laws pertaining to abortion around the world, the distinction between voluntary termination of pregnancy and medical or therapeutic termination of pregnancy, and estimates the number of abortions per year. The next section describes the methods used to abort: aspiration; curettage; partial birth abortion (“too terrible a method to be described”); abortion by injection; use of an intrauterine device (IUD); abortion by Mifepristone (RU 486); and the day after pill or ‘contraceptive’ emergency pill. These descriptions emphasize that “the IUD and the morning-after pill may induce abortion by preventing the embryo from embedding itself in the uterus” (p. 12). The section “Abortion questions” begins with questions concerning the situation of women: “Abortion: can women be helped?”; “Pregnancy and loneliness: how to overcome the situation?”; “Does abortion have psychological consequences for women?” (p. 13). The answers illustrate a stance that aims to create solidarity with woman, offering help and shelter after abortions, but mostly warning of the serious psychological consequences caused by the practice. The items of the following section do not follow one central line: “Is there a right to abortion?”; “Abortion in the world”; “A paradox surrounding the death of the six-month-old fetus” (p. 14). The text denies the right to abortion, presenting the ‘child’ as defenseless. A panorama of abortion worldwide is presented, with an estimation of the annual number of abortions and a history of abortion legalization, first by ‘totalitarian regimes’ and then by ‘developed countries’ in the 1970s. The next section addresses ‘ethical reflections’: “woman / child : friend / foe?”; “And in the case of rape?”; “Does abortion represent the liberation of women?” (p. 15); “Abortion: can we talk about choice?”; “Material problems”; “What about the parents?”; “Abortion or adoption?” The answers sustain the idea that “**the child is always innocent**” (in bold in the original) and that an abortion after rape is “to add drama to drama.” The feminist argument of the “right to dispose of one’s own body” is contested, arguing that “biologically, the child is not part of the mother’s body, but her guest” (p. 15). In this respect, it is useful to turn to Strathern’s analysis (2005) of the relationship between mother and fetus. If, as discussed in the bioethics manual, biotechnology provides new ways of conceptualizing the fetus’s individuality, the pregnant woman becomes a paradigmatic example of the opposite insofar as she constitutes “a nexus of relations.” The relationship between mother and fetus is thus not one of equal partners. The maternal body’s separate existence is the basis for the interdependence of the pregnant woman and the fetus: mother and fetus are both separable and parts of each other (Strathern 2005: 30).

Returning to the manual, the text asserts that the right to choose is “to decide to kill.” As for the material problems that motivate a woman to abort, it is suggested that she does this to “**resolve her problems**.” The text also reflects on the situation in which there are differences between parents: when the woman “feels obliged to abort” because the father of the child does not want to assume paternity, or when the woman aborts against the will of the ‘father.’ Adoption is presented as an alternative to abortion. One section contrasts “abortion and contraception,” being composed of the following items: “The contraceptive mentality and VIP”; “Does contraception prevent abortion?”; “The contraceptive pill and abortion.” In this section, specific elements of Catholic doctrine become clearly perceptible in its critique of contraceptive methods that tend to be widely accepted by society. The ‘contraceptive mentality’ is defined as “refusing a child,” a position that leads to an acceptance of abortion. The idea that contraception prevents abortion is contested. Contraception is understood as increasing the number of unstable relationships and inciting the use of contraceptive pills that produce early abortions.

The section entitled “Testimonies” presents the testimony of a woman who has aborted and repented, as well as a statement by Mother Teresa of Calcutta that “the greatest destroyer of peace in the world today is abortion, since it is a war declared against the child” (p. 18). The final section of the chapter is entitled “What the Church says...” and is divided into three items: “God, the only master of life”; “Abortion is a serious offense”; “God is mercy” (p. 19). Two Church documents are quoted: the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. Here human life is postulated as sacred because it results from the creative action of God. Abortion is a grave misconduct because it involves “the deliberate death of an innocent human being.” Women who have had abortions are urged to repent in order to obtain forgiveness.

These two chapters of the manual are the most important for the purpose of this article because of the crucial nature of the themes that they expound. The chapters that follow them will be addressed in more summary fashion. It is important to emphasize that the tone of the message present in Chapter 1, on the history of the small human being, and Chapter 2, on abortion, are repeated throughout the manual. In Chapter 3, entitled “Prenatal Diagnosis” (PND), the procedure is defined as “the set of tests performed to prevent early disease or malformation of the fetus in the mother’s uterus.” Here readers are warned against the use of these techniques in order to detect anomalies, because diagnosis may lead to the decision to have an abortion instead of being used for “the protection of the health of the mother and child” (p. 20). The manual’s authors denounce the fact that many countries allow the interruption of pregnancy “up to the day of birth” if a ‘strong probability’ exists of the fetus being “afflicted with a serious and incurable condition” (p. 21). The limit between a ‘serious’ and a less severe condition is questioned. On the next page, one of the items claims that “Down syndrome is widely diagnosed” as a serious condition (p. 22). Questions are also raised regarding eugenics (p. 23) and the use of prenatal diagnosis (p. 23). The section on ethics is all about questioning abortion: “What if I’m expecting a disabled child?”; “Abortion, because my disabled son will not be happy?”; “Who can judge the value of a life?” In particular, the complaint is that “PND has made trisomy 21 syndrome (Down syndrome) a deadly disease [...] 96% of the fetuses identified with the disease are aborted” (p. 24). In the same direction as the earlier chapter on abortion, one of the issues raised is “the suffering of parents.” The solution to this is compassion for everyone, but allied to the question: “how could one think that the suffering of a human being will be relieved by killing another human being?” The following reflections denounce eugenics: “A social malaise?” and “Is there a phobia regarding disability?” A photo of a boy carrying a stop sign reading “stop chromosomal racism” is shown. Turning to phobias towards disability, the manual presents the case of a doctor who was sentenced to indemnify the parents for failing to provide a prenatal diagnosis of a “deeply deficient” child and sentenced also to indemnify the child “for the harm caused by being alive” (p. 25). The section entitled “Testimonies” relates the experience of the mother of a Down Syndrome patient who was glad that she had not made the prenatal diagnosis, which she claimed meant avoiding inducements for her to abort.

Chapter 4, “Medical Care for Breeding,” addresses Assisted Reproduction (AR). In this article I focus in more detail on the chapter’s discussion of the status of embryos, although it also addresses the confusion in kinship relationships supposedly caused by AR. In describing the methods of ‘artificially assisted reproduction,’ the manual’s authors criticize procedures that entail the death of embryos in “frightening numbers.” They ask how many embryos must die to provide a single birth, before claiming that 16 must die “to obtain a living being.” The section “Questions about AR” asks “Does freezing have consequences for the embryo?” and highlights some of the risks. One prominent note makes the Church’s position explicit: “Through *in vitro* fertilization, embryos are conceived outside the mother’s body. From fertilization onward, these embryos are human beings, exactly like embryos created *in vivo*, even if they are not implanted in the womb. To destroy these embryos, *in vitro* or *in vivo*, is an abortion” (p.31). Of the eight items listed in the “Ethical reflections” section of the chapter, five are related to embryos: “Parental design and dignity (1)”; “

“can we speak of ‘surplus’ embryos?”; “Parental design and dignity (2)”; “Freezing embryos?”; and “Embryos for research?” In the two topics on parental design, the IVF technique is questioned as a form of eugenics, given that it depends on the selection of ‘healthy’ embryos, while those “without qualities are destroyed.” A second selection process is also denounced in similar terms. This is the case of embryonic reduction or, in the manual’s words, “Aborting 1 or 2 children to limit the risks of multiple pregnancies.” The second topic questions the expression ‘parental project,’ associating this notion with debates about abortion. It states that even if there is no parental project for the ‘child,’ the child, whether embryo or newborn, will always be a human being (p. 34). The section also questions the term ‘embryo surplus,’ referring to embryos that are not used in the parental project and become transformed into objects. In the last few items of the section, the number of frozen embryos is denounced and the use of human embryos for research judged to be illegitimate: “they are men [sic] and we do not have the right to dispose of the life of another human being, even if it is to save another life” (p. 35). With regard to kinship, the manual questions the “desire for a child at any cost” and calls for “protecting gametes and procreation against manipulation” (p. 33). The final “Testimonies” section tells the story of a woman who conceived through IVF and does not know what decision to make regarding her frozen embryos (p. 36). Although the chapter focuses on defending the life of the embryo, it also questions the artificiality of assisted reproduction techniques.

Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is discussed in Chapter 5. This is an embryo selection technique used by “fertile couples concerned with hereditary genetic disease” (p. 38). Emphasis is given in the chapter to the destruction of embryos bearing diseases or lacking desired genetic features. One note prominently states, “whether *in vitro* (by IVF) or *in vivo* (in the woman’s body), **the destruction of a diseased embryo amounts to an abortion**” (p. 39, original emphasis). Of particular note is a statement by Jerome Lejeune: “Chromosomal racism is as horrible as all other forms of racism” (p. 35). In the explanation of the methods involved in PGD, “Private selection: double PGD or baby medication” is highlighted. This is where an embryo is selected through PGD via IVF with the goal of treating an older brother who suffers from a serious genetic disease. The section “Questions about pre-implantation genetic diagnosis” has the following topics: “Is it true that PGD cures a child?”; “Can PGD be justified because it prevents abortion?”; “On an ethical level, is it better to have a PGD than a late abortion?” The manual denies that PGD provides cures, claiming that it only eliminates patients. In “On an ethical level,” the manual claims that embryo destruction by PGD “is the same thing as an abortion” and states that “for children identified as sick, the result is the same regardless of the date: they will be killed” (p.40). The manual predicts that some “people may have post-abortion syndrome because they cannot ignore the seriousness of what they did.” The chapter continues in this section with three “ethical reflections”: “Is PGD eugenics?”; “Towards the creation of a ‘superman?’”; and “Babies as drugs: a choice for parents?” (p. 41). These reflections denounce PGD as a eugenic technique. With regard to “babies as drugs,” the authors wonder “how many embryos will be conceived and disposed of so that only one can live?” They also ask how the older brother will feel when he learns that “dozens of embryos were eliminated because they could not serve as a remedy” (p. 41). The chapter emphasizes that human embryos cannot be treated as “simple laboratory materials” and that a diagnosis of deficiency should not be a reason to interrupt a pregnancy (p. 43).

My analysis will focus in more detail on Chapter 6, “Research on the embryo,” because of its continuity with the theme of defending embryonic life. The chapter begins with a question: “Stem cell research: What is at stake?” (p. 44), which reveals the chapter’s emphasis on embryonic stem cell research, the main form of applied research with embryos. The chapter’s second section is entitled “Human stem cell types in the development of the human being.” An illustration shows stem cells in a line with images of a single cell zygote, a 2-7 day old embryo, a 3 month old fetus, a baby, and an adult. Again, there is the same presentation of biology found in the opening chapter on the history of the small human being.

Waldby (2002) asks whether this beginning represents a biography (the starting point of a human narrative that must be allowed to follow its social course), which is the position the Catholic Church takes in the manual, or whether the life of the embryo is a form of brute biological vitality (Luna 2010), which is the position of those in favor of the legalization of abortion or the use of the morning-after pill. The following section examines the characteristics and different types of stem cells – totipotent, pluripotent and multipotent – discussing their origin and explaining IPS cells (“induced pluripotent stem cells”: taken from the adult body and deprogrammed to become undifferentiated cells) (p. 46). Next, stem cells are discussed in relation to cell therapy and research. The authors advocate the use of adult stem cells and describe their application (p. 47). Human embryonic cells, obtained from the embryo between 2 to 7 days after fertilization, and IPS cells are also compared. A table shows the strengths and weaknesses of human embryonic stem cells and IPS: both supposedly have the same capabilities, cause cancerous tumors, and have no current clinical application. Certain strengths are then associated with IPS cells: “Absence of rejection when coming from the patient”; “Producing pathological models directly from the patient’s cells” and “not involving ethical problems.” By contrast, the production of embryonic stem cells implies “the destruction of human embryos” (p. 48).

Chapter 6 also discusses the use of umbilical cord blood and animal embryos in research and cloning. It praises the scientist who discovered the IPS “as a result of his studies with rat embryos.” Reproductive cloning (“aimed at reproducing a being intended to be born”) is opposed to therapeutic cloning (“cloning useful for research”). The section on “Ethical reflections” includes the following questions conscientious objection; new slaves; adult stem cells or embryonic cells; the ethical problem of human cloning; and prohibitions on patenting the embryo. One prominent note includes the following statement: “Regardless of the mode of conception (fertilization or cloning), the developing embryo is a living being. If it is a human embryo, it is a human being” (p. 50). The chapter argues that embryo research “is contrary to ethics, because it destroys a human being” (p. 50) and questions the option to pursue non-therapeutic research in detriment to potentially therapeutic research. Conscientious objection is invoked to argue that no researcher is required to participate in studies involving human embryos or embryonic stem cells, citing European Council Resolution 1763. In this case, we can observe that secular legislation is invoked to give legitimacy to the Catholic public position. The embryos used in research are compared to “new slaves,” comprising “a class of humans used to satisfy the needs of other human beings.” In its stance against the destruction of any human embryo, the manual states that “reproductive cloning, which at least aims to give life, is less serious in ethical terms than therapeutic cloning, whose goal is to create a new human being to serve the purposes of research” (p. 51). It is important to note that the enormous risks of generating a baby through reproductive cloning are not considered in the Catholic manual, which limits its complaints to embryonic stem cell research, because this supposedly entails more risks than research with adult stem cells. The chapter’s emphasis is on not reducing the human body to the sum of its cells, but treating it as a human being from conception onward. In this sense, the authors affirm the value of human life and its inviolability: is research using embryos ethical;

Chapter 7 begins with the question “Euthanasia: What is at stake?” It is divided into the following sections: “Palliative treatments/Euthanasia”; “Questions about euthanasia”; “Ethical reflections”; “Testimonies” and “What the Church says...” The chapter begins by setting out the general thesis of the manual: “every stage of human life has an irreplaceable value.” The end of life is thus cast as potentially the most important step in the human experience, presenting an opportunity to care for a person by demonstrating that they are worthy of esteem and consideration. It may be necessary to relieve pain through palliative treatments. The second section contrasts palliative treatments and euthanasia. Palliative treatments are not aimed at healing, but at end-of-life care, and include procedures for reducing

suffering and distress. In medical practice, the priority is the fight against pain, but psychological and bodily treatments are also included, as well as “establishing a privileged space for friends and family” (p. 55). Euthanasia is defined as “deliberate medical action or omission in order to cause the patient’s death” (p. 55) by injecting the patient with a lethal substance or suspending essential treatments. Proponents of euthanasia claim that it alleviates suffering, but the manual’s authors believe that the proper course is to alleviate pain until such a time as death occurs naturally. The questions section of the chapter interrogates the differences between euthanasia and therapeutic obstinacy – “when can one fall into the practice of euthanasia?” – and the distinction between active and passive euthanasia. “Therapeutic obstinacy” is defined as “continuing treatment that is unnecessary in view of the patient’s condition” (p. 56). Discontinuing disproportionate treatments, whose objective would be to *artificially* prolong (my emphasis) the patient’s life, is not euthanasia. The patient’s basic needs cannot be interrupted, however. The text questions laws that permit euthanasia, but admits the possibility of suspending food and hydration at the request of the patient, which would condemn him or her to death. The distinction between active and passive euthanasia is criticized, since euthanasia only occurs by either action or omission. The section on ethical reflections raises questions about whether suffering is moral, dying with dignity, and the impact of the denial of death. There are sections on “what good is it to live connected to a machine?” and “what use is it to live unconscious.” Finally the manual asks if suffering is indeed unbearable. As for the morality of suffering, the manual states that it can be attenuated by care and that patients who receive affection and care will not seek death. It claims that the defense of death with dignity is an opening for legalized euthanasia, since “every human being is worthy regardless of their condition.” The manual also points to society’s difficulties in accepting death, “considered more of an injustice than a *natural* process (p. 57, my emphasis). As for living connected to a machine, this possibility is deemed valid only when it can temporarily assist a damaged vital function. The manual questions the validity of this option if the goal is to extend the life of a terminally ill patient. With respect to living while unconscious, the text asks to what extent the actual degree of consciousness is known and affirms that no right exists to steal the last moments of a life. It also raises doubts about the existence of unbearable suffering, since palliative treatments alleviate most of this.

The “Testimonies” section relates the experiences of medical staff who deny requests for active euthanasia, attributing to the patient’s confusion or to the doctors’ lack of understanding. The defense of palliative care is key in this chapter.

The section entitled “What the Church says” contains the following items: “Life is a gift of God’s love,” based on the expression *iura et bona*, which considers the ‘homicidal’ gesture to be a “violation of divine law,” an “offense to the dignity of the human person.” The next item, entitled “The confusion between good and evil,” is grounded in the Encyclical *Evangelium vitae* and addresses the elimination of “human lives that are in decline,” affirming that ‘dazed’ human consciousness has difficulties perceiving the distinction between good and evil. Of all the manual’s chapters, this one addressing euthanasia is the least repetitive and simplistic in its arguments. Although it does not admit euthanasia as a medical option or a patient’s choice, refuting the existence of unbearable suffering or total unconsciousness, it is ambiguous in its criticism of therapeutic obstinacy, while continuing to recommend that basic care for life support not be suspended. The religious foundation for this position is, again, life as a gift from God, a conception derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition (Franklin 1995), which bestows a sacred character upon life (Durkheim 1989), allowing no room for human choice, even in the case of preventing suffering. In this respect, the arguments used in relation to abortion or embryonic stem cell research continue to be deployed in this chapter. Human dignity does not imply the right to choose, for the sacredness of life as a divine gift is greater. In its defense of palliative measures, the manual’s arguments hover at the limit between deciding to suspend care or not (Gomes and Menezes 2008).

The chapter on “Organ donation” is one of the shortest in the manual, as well as the least controversial. It addresses the purpose of organ transplants as an important medical advancement that allows improvement to a patient’s quality of life and that may even save a patient from death. The topics discussed in the section “What is it?” include organ removal from live bodies and corpses, the criteria used to determine death, and the types of organs that can be removed. The emphasis here is on the distinction between dead and living donors. The manual explains the criteria involved in declaring encephalic death, that is, the cessation of encephalic functions, which only occurs with the “total and irreversible destruction of the brain” and not only of the cortex. Removal of organs from a living donor is understood to be ethical only in cases of “directed donation,” that is between a donor and related recipient, requiring the free consent of both. The questions section on organ donation actually focuses on defining the concept of death more clearly. Differences between a deep coma and death are discussed, emphasizing that in the first case there is still brain activity. As for the question of whether or not the criteria for death are valid, the manual informs us that scientists question these criteria. Finally, the manual asks whether cardiac arrest is the correct definition of death. The section on ethical considerations addresses the following questions: transplantation and ethics; respect for the corpse; and consent and respect for the living donor. For organ removal to be ethical, a conscious and free agreement on the part of the donor and their family, and the certainty of the recipient dying without an organ donation, is indispensable. The respect due to any human person is also extended to the corpse. Consent for the donation must be made, therefore, while the donor is alive, which is understood in different ways according to the laws of different countries. In the case of a living donor, the rules that require due respect for the body and the obligation to act for the good of the patient may be nullified in favor of a greater good: saving the life of another person, provided it is through a voluntary act of the donor. The “Testimonies” section is provided by a doctor responsible for resuscitation who opposes the concept of presumed consent and denounces the risks of appropriating the organs of the dead without asking for permission. The section on “What the Church says” is composed of a subsection on “Loving as God loves,” based on the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, which discusses organ donations made in accordance with ethically acceptable forms. The next item, “Respect the donor,” is drawn from the Youth Catechism and describes as key elements the donor’s free and informed consent and the certainty of brain death. The section ends with “A culture of gift and gratuitousness,” in which organ donation is depicted as an act of love, based on Benedict XVI’s address at a congress sponsored by the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Chapter 8 is the least controversial in the manual, but its principles can be contrasted with those presented in Chapter 6 on embryo research. In embryo research, the manual argues, it is unjustifiable to use human embryos to manufacture stem cells in order to benefit sick people. This contrasts with the manual’s praise for organ and tissue donation. The rules that require respect for the body are not nullified in organ donation, as shown by the recommended practice of consensual donation among the living. The manual argues that these rules are absolute, however, when it comes to the use of human embryos.

The final chapter on “Gender theory” is an annex. In the version of the manual published in Portugal as *Bioethics for Young People* in 2012, a year before World Youth Day in Brazil, the part on organ donation included the chapter on “Euthanasia / donation of organs” while the chapter on “gender theory” was absent. In the initial section of this chapter, gender theory is defined as “a hypothesis according to which the sexual identity of the human being depends on the sociocultural environment and not on the sex – boy or girl – that characterizes the human being from the moment of their conception” (p. 68). After observing that, according to this theory, gender should be based on sexual orientation, the manual informs readers that “some people” (not stated who) claim that there are as many as “six genders: heterosexual male, heterosexual female, homosexual, lesbian, bisexual and undifferentiated – neither male nor female)” (p. 68). Here we can see that this example of ‘genders’ mixes gender and sexual orientation, as per the

concepts defined by Grossi (1998). After this rather odd definition, the manual presents its critical thesis: gender theory “underestimates the biological reality of the human being. Reductionist, it overestimates the sociocultural construction of sexual identity, opposing it to nature” (p. 68). This is one of the richest chapters in terms of imagery. The first section is illustrated by a young man reading a book, asking himself, “Well, what gender will I choose this year?” Heavy irony also permeates the illustration in the following section regarding the consequences of this theory: a boy observes a female kangaroo carrying two joeys in her bag. He then asks himself: “Among the kangaroos, is it society that decides whether the mom will have a bag to carry the babies?” (p. 69). The supposed consequences of gender theory are portrayed in the topics “A new family model” and “A new organization of society”: families formed by a couple composed of a man and a woman are, in this view, no more legitimate than other forms, meaning that the law should recognize ‘homosexual marriage’ (quotation marks in the original). The consequence is to allow all couples to have children, including through adoption and assisted reproduction. The organization of society is no longer based on the differences between men and women, but on the diverse forms of sexuality. A prominent passage shows the position of the manual’s authors in response to this model: “the union between a man and a woman is the only one capable of generating a child and inscribing it in the continuity of the generations” (p. 69).

The section entitled “What makes us a boy or a girl?” explains the difference between males and females by utilizing genetics: the 23 pairs of chromosomes resulting from the union of the ovum and the sperm, and the existence of the X and Y sex chromosomes. Although the manual contests gender theory, female is represented by pink and male by blue according to the symbolism of hegemonic gender representations. “The sex of the child (XX girl or XY boy) is determined at the instant of conception, from the constitution of the first cell.” The manual then affirms the continuity of this genetic heritage throughout life and repeats statements from previous chapters on the history of the small human being, abortion and research on the embryo: “Genetic heritage is unique. Every human being is unique and irreplaceable” (p. 70). In addition to the schematics showing the distribution of the chromosomes, there is an illustration with a naked boy who asks, while looking at his own penis: “I’m not a man? Me? So what’s this?” (p. 71).

The “Key points” section asks about the difference between sex and gender, the definition of homoparentality, and whether two people of the same sex can have a child. The manual states that gender theorists define sex as a “biological reality,” while gender is understood to be the “social dimension of sex.” Gender is thus stipulated as subjective and something dependent not on sex, but on an individual’s perception of themselves and “the sexuality they choose to live.” Homoparentality designates the role of parents who are of the same sex. It differs from ‘kinship,’ which is linked to procreation (birth by father and mother). The manual states that parenting claims hide the child’s right to know his or her father and mother and grow up with them. It also states that the child will ask about his or her biological origin and that they need sexual differentiation to form their personality. Children “deprived of their affiliation” are, the authors argue, thrust into a situation of inequality. Finally, the manual states that two persons of the same sex cannot bear a child (even though the original question was ‘to have’ a child) and that, even with assisted procreation, it is necessary to unite a female and a male gamete. It also criticizes the use of gamete donation and ‘surrogacy.’

The section on ethical reflections presents three questions, the first being: “Why can no one decide to become a man or woman?” The answer is based on biological difference and admits that sexual identity is formed by psychological and cultural forces, yet it must be in harmony with biological sex, since to do differently would be a source of suffering. The biological basis of the manual’s arguments becomes apparent here: “adherents of gender theory pretend that by a simple act of will, we can change the reality of who we are,” accusing gender theorists of “erasing evidence.” The manual’s authors ask whether “our bodies

would lie to us?” (p. 73) This question reproduces a popular belief formed during the Enlightenment period during which the modern Western cosmology became founded on the domain of facts. Biology – the stable, a-historical, sexed body – is understood as the epistemic foundation for claims about the social order (Laqueur 1992). The body is real, while cultural meanings are epiphenomenal.

The second question is “Are all family models valid as long as the child is loved?” The answer calls for realism regarding birth as a boy or a girl. The manual states that every child needs a father and a mother in order to develop properly. The last question asks: “Isn’t it homophobia to refuse to allow homosexuals to adopt?” The answer resembles the earlier critique of medically assisted reproduction: “having a child is not a right.” A child is not a “consumer good.” Ignoring the biological evidence that a man and a woman are needed to create a child would be an indication that homosexual claims to children are unjust. The manual defends the child’s right to have a father and a mother in order to build the child’s personality. In the “Testimonies” section, an unidentified author’s testimony is taken from the website “Liberté politique,” mentioning a scientific study, based on a vast set of samples, according to which the stable union between father and biological mother are the most suitable environment for a child’s development. This upholds the principle of “the best interests of the child,” based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Children.

This chapter is one of the most strongly marked by a biological determinism, which is contrasted to the ‘will’ advocated by what they authors call gender theory. It takes up and reworks elements defended in previous chapters on genetic identity as something established from conception on. Interestingly, the criticism in this chapter turns against homosexual identities basically by appealing to genetic determinism. It describes the differences between men and women as necessary for the constitution of the family and naturalizes maternal and paternal roles. The manual admits that the personality is formed and not given by genetics, but considers only one type of family to exist and only one type of development-friendly environment. As in the chapters on abortion, rights are considered to belong to the ‘child.’ Similar elements are found in Butler’s 2003 paper analyzing the debate on the civil solidarity pact in France. Butler also identifies how kinship variations that stray from the heterosexual family model are considered to be dangerous for children. Butler compares the debate in the United States, where conservatives denounce the unnatural character of homosexuality, with the controversy in France where, according to philosopher Silviane Agacinsky, the State’s recognition and tolerance of the formation of families by homosexuals goes against the ‘symbolic order.’ In an editorial entitled “Against the erasure of the sexes,” Agacinsky identifies “a certain variety of queer and gender theory” as contributing to “the monstrous future of France,” if such changes in kinship are allowed to occur (see Butler 2003: 267). Her views are very much in line with the criticisms presented by the manual. Agacinsky accuses gay kinship of being unnatural and a cultural threat. According to Butler, concerns are expressed about the child’s upbringing in a homoparental family: “the child appears in the debate as a dense nexus for the transference and reproduction of culture” (Butler 2003: 232). Such a position is explicit in the manual, which claims to be defending “the best interests of the child” in line with UN declarations. This approach to child protection, aiming to protect children from being raised in a non-natural family of same-sex parents, is an example of Catholic biopolitics according to Turina (2013). The Church has seen the family as a strategic partner from the late nineteenth century onward, with increasing emphasis on this alliance in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Considering the millennial history of the Catholic Church, its recent emphasis on family and child rearing reflects a political project of ensuring the growth of truly faithful Catholics, which is related to the Vatican’s competition for preeminent influence on the laws of national states and international organizations. It also is an attempt to compete with other growing religions, particularly Islam, as well as defend the vocation of the Church’s clergy, who tend to come from larger families. Turning to the manual (in contrast to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which recognizes homosexuality, although it states that homosexual

acts are “intrinsically disordered,” p. 2537), the interpretation of gender theory presented by the manual rejects the possibility of it even occurring in nature, opting instead for an argumentation that considers sexual difference as simply and completely natural and rooted in genetic identity from conception onward.

## Final considerations

This article is based on the analysis of a document chosen as an example of the Vatican’s doctrinal position on certain issues: namely, the *Keys to Bioethics* manual that was distributed during WYD in Rio de Janeiro in 2013.

The chapters analyzed above form a coherent set of so-called abortion-centered, pro-life teachings, touching on related issues in fetal and embryo defense in the case of stem cell research or assisted reproduction. The description of the problem in each item, along with its practical and ethical implications, reiterates the thesis of life from conception and absolute respect for the life of the embryo or fetus, regardless of its context, whether formed in the laboratory or as a result of sexual intercourse, whether inside or outside the mother’s womb. The physical conditions of the embryo or fetus are also relativized. Any allusion to a malformed or nonviable fetus, in the case of prenatal genetic diagnosis, or to an embryo that will develop with serious or incurable genetic pathology, in the case of pre-implantation diagnosis, is considered to be a form of eugenics. Since the fetus or embryo is a full human being, in the sense of being a person, any manipulation or experimentation undertaken with it is seen as a crime and as murder (in the case of embryonic stem cell research). The image of the slave is employed, defined as a human being used for the benefit of another, disregarding any health benefit or development of scientific knowledge that might result from using or experimenting with embryos. The initial raw vitality of the set of cells is portrayed as an inexorable process of development, the first step in making a full person. Again, the embryo is presented as an individual in the sense formulated by Dumont (1992, 1997): an a-social entity devoid of any relations, which is the basis of the axial values of equality and freedom present in the modern Western configuration. The life of the embryo or fetus is sacred just as the individual is sacred, according to the ideology of the modern West (Durkheim 1970). Notions of sacred life embodied in the embryo recall Durkheim’s (1989) approach to the power contained in magical objects. Durkheim (1970) had already pointed to the individual as an object of worship in modern Western societies, a hypothesis that illustrates the individual’s assertion as an element of value (Dumont 1992). By emphasizing the biographical dimension in the linear and automatic description of embryonic and fetal development (cf. Strathern 1992) and by representing fetuses and embryos as sets of biological and genetic characteristics, the presence of a network of relationships involving the embryo is thereby hidden (Salem 1997). Any reference to the motivations of pregnant women who want abortions or who do not assume the role of maternal kinship, or those of both parents when faced with a serious illness that will entail serious suffering for the unborn child, is minimized. According to the hierarchy of values (Dumont 1992) expressed by the manual, comprehension of the suffering of the parents is secondary in terms of absolute weight when compared to the life of the embryo as a person endowed with life granted by God. As in other Catholic documents (Luna 2010 and 2002), biological argumentation is the outward aspect of a prior metaphysical assumption, based on previously held religious convictions.

Another essential point in the manual’s moral arguments concerns its notions of life and personhood. To better understand this, I take up the analysis proposed by Dworkin. The author identifies an intellectual confusion in the public debate on abortion, specifically regarding the pro-life position, which states that human life begins at conception, that the fetus is already a person from this moment on, and that abortion is murder or an assault on the sanctity of human life. In Dworkin’s view, different ideas are embedded

in the following two phrases: 1. the presupposition of the existence of rights and interests held by all human beings, including fetuses, given that the latter are entities with their own interests from conception onward; 2. abortion is wrong because it disregards the sacredness of any form of human life. In the first case, the government should prohibit or regulate abortion because of its derivative responsibility to protect the fetus; in the latter case, however, the government is taken to have the independent responsibility to protect human life itself. The first objection recognizes the fetus as a person, a subject of rights, while the second objection argues for the sacred value of human life. These are the themes in the anthropology of the relationship between person and life. According to Dworkin, claiming that abortion is an iniquity because human life is sacred is different from saying that it is wrong because the fetus has the right to live (2003). The rhetoric of the pro-life movement presupposes that the fetus is a person in the total moral plenitude of the term from conception onward, with rights and interests of equal importance to those of other members of its community.

The manual presents the anti-abortion stance of the Vatican, displaying a special interest in the protection of embryos and fetuses. This position is based on the narrative of embryonic and fetal development as a biographical continuum from fertilization until death as an adult. This perspective underpins the anti-abortion position that abortion is considered unjustifiable under any circumstance. Even contraceptive methods are accused of promoting an 'abortion mentality' or constituting abortion methods themselves in the case of emergency contraception. Along the same lines, this position condemns the generation of embryos in vitro, since this implies the death and destruction of such embryos. It likewise condemns any embryonic or fetal diagnostic technology that is not exclusively therapeutic, questioning tests that involve the non-transference of the embryo and its destruction or abortion. Any diagnostic intervention is qualified as eugenics, promoting the exclusion of those who are different. The humanization of the embryo and fetus is associated with the dehumanization of those around them, whose interests and motivations are disregarded in view of the priority of fetal rights (Strathern 1992).

Another aspect of this self-styled 'defense of life' is the attack on euthanasia. The right to choose is challenged when it contemplates choices that touch upon lives taken to be sacred, whether these are extracorporeal embryos consisting of a few cells or endangered human subjects. The desire to intervene to reduce suffering is as heavily questioned as the person's self-determination of the experience of gender identity or sexual choice. Criticism of gender theories emerges against a prior backdrop of the questioning of choice and will and the defense of natural determination of identities. Just as in the case of abortion, here it is argued that to defend the child's greater interest, the constitution of families that do not correspond to the model of heterosexual marriage must not be allowed.

The positions of the Catholic Church defended by the manual attack the exercise of individual autonomy and the right to choose (Gomes and Menezes 2008) in the name of a higher dimension: religious values. In this sense, the manual confirms Turina's analysis of Catholic biopolitics:

The biological body has now become a battleground. The State, the Church and individuals strive to maintain a firm grip on it. The Vatican states that the body belongs to God, who has created it; only the Church, representing God on earth, has the authority to judge which uses of the body are right and which are wrong. In sum, the Catholic Church has passed the threshold of biological modernity (Turina 2013: 139).

The biological body has become a battlefield disputed by the Church and State, as well as individuals. The Church, claiming to be God's representative on Earth, wants to have the authority to judge the correct uses of the body and, for that purpose, it wishes to disseminate its values. These values were reaffirmed during World Youth Day with the distribution of the handbook to the 'pilgrims' enrolled in the event,

in order to instruct them regarding these controversial themes. While the pro-life discourse prioritizes the autonomy of the fetus and embryo, the feminist and LGBT movements defend the autonomy of subjects and their decisions about the body itself. In a conflictive situation in which individual liberties and the hegemony of the Catholic tradition in the Brazil are opposed, abortion, sexual diversity and other actions related to the right to choose, such as euthanasia, are transformed into public issues by the publication of the manual. These feminist and LGBT movements protest against the interference of the Vatican in the lives of women and men with respect to their decisions about sexuality and reproduction as well as gender identity. In the controversy surrounding the public debate on abortion in Brazil, a dialogue between the deaf is constructed in which a closed doctrinal position on abortion, refused under any circumstance, a viewpoint extended to other reproductive techniques, is opposed to claims of autonomy that accuse religion of fundamentalism, focusing on the Catholic Church as the main antagonist. The claims made by the latter groups on the secular state propose the curbing of religious influence on legislation and public policies (Ruibal 2014, Zúñiga-Fajuri 2014 and Diniz 2011).

Another significant point, clearly exemplified in the dilemmas about abortion and euthanasia and in the discussions on whether or not someone can decide to cut short a life (Gomes and Menezes 2008), is the manual's portrayal of social processes as grounded in nature. We thus find here a critique of the artificial prolongation of life in therapeutic obstinacy, but also a demand that death occur naturally, without euthanasia, even in the context of great suffering. The use of assisted reproduction techniques is also attacked as artificial. The defense of natural determination is likewise at the core of the arguments against so-called 'gender theory,' with its effects considered to be harmful to the identities of subjects and to the reproduction of the family. Sex is natural; 'gender theory' is an invention and has harmful consequences for the development of children. Hence the argument, "our bodies would not lie to us." From the perspective of biopolitics, the Catholic Church thus has a project for power. The manual represents several strategies within this perspective to achieve control of biological bodies in the regulation of practices such as abortion, contraception, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, reproductive modalities, and marriage. This represents one possibility for addressing the issue. However, another possible approach, attempted in this article, is to understand the value systems that underlie Catholic doctrine, whose various aspects are exemplified in the manual. The manual defends the value of life as the gift from God. To this value of life is connected a conception of nature as the foundation of reality, a characteristic belief of the modern West (Laqueur 1992). However, the metaphysical definition of life predates this belief and nature is subordinate to it. Nature is used to deny assisted reproduction and to refuse the formation of homoparental families. The 'nature' argument grounds the reality of the embryo as being (genetically) autonomous from conception. In the case of Catholic doctrine, a metaphysical argument about life, God's gift, slides into a naturalist argument that aims for greater legitimacy in public space. The third argument presented concerns autonomy. The document denies women's autonomy to decide with regard to their own pregnancies and situates women who terminate pregnancies as victims of abortion. It denies the legitimacy of a reproductive autonomy that seeks to regulate the number of children or seeks to create children through assisted reproduction technologies. On the other hand, the autonomy argument is put forward in favor of the embryo and the fetus to claim that any abortion is a murder, or that the use of embryos in research, which requires them to be destroyed, is a crime and the same as abortion. The fetus is an autonomous human being and the woman is subordinate to it, encompassed by it, comprising a receptacle for its development. This idealized image of motherhood is celebrated in the manual.

In some respects, when it comes to population control, the biopolitical argument for maintaining a Catholic contingent makes sense. It does not make sense, however, in the context of stem cell research which seeks to develop therapies that would allow Catholics to remain alive or in better health. Neither does

it make sense in terms of opposition to abortion even in the case of anencephaly or other conditions in which the fetus is nonviable. The analysis of the Catholic position through the lens of biopolitics highlights some important aspects in the Church's struggle to retain its power, but it is also restrictive and cannot encompass the rationale of various Church arguments. The intransigent defense of the right to life of embryos and fetuses under any circumstance is not necessarily consistent with the growth of the Catholic contingent, which would be a reductionist view of the biopolitics identified by Turina (2013). Sexuality, family and human life have become important investments for the Vatican, in both a symbolic and strategic sense, in its competition with other religions and in recruiting clerics and followers (Turina 2013: 144). From the 1960s onwards, there has been a growing divergence between religious law and civil law in many countries with regards to abortion, contraception and homosexuality. According to Turina, it is crucial to have heterosexual couples who provide education for their children in the Catholic faith as a means of propagating and maintaining Catholicism, and this is one of the reasons for the biopolitical emphasis identifiable in many of the Catholic Church's pronouncements.

Among the tensions and contradictory aspects present in these conflicts, it should be noted that in the debates on euthanasia and abortion "[i]ndividual autonomy – a central reference in contemporary Western society – is conveyed by movements for the 'right of the unborn,' 'death with dignity' or the 'right to die'" (Gomes and Menezes 2008: 96).

This is observed in the manual, which conveys a tense relationship between Catholic and Christian values and individualism (Dumont 1992 and 1997). Although the manual reaffirms the values of individualism by consecrating the idea of the embryo as an autonomous entity and the subject of rights (Dworkin 2003), it also refers to already born human subjects and their responsibilities as Christians. Here the individual is portrayed as a human being in relation to a God, as someone who owes God obedience, the Catholic doctrine being understood as the correct interpretation of what such obedience comprises (Dumont 1997). It is possible to speak of a selective assimilation of elements of individualist ideology in the manual, as in the prescription of contracts of free and informed consent for organ donation. This selective assimilation of liberal ideology can be seen in the denunciation of so-called 'chromosomal racism,' in which racism appears as synonymous with discrimination against those who are different.

If there is an understanding of citizenship in the manual, it refers to the rights of fetuses and embryos. But a woman faced with an unwanted pregnancy, LGBT couples who wish to have children, those who seek to avoid prolonging a process of suffering and who opt for its termination, those who care about the health of the fetus, or the possibilities for treatment opened up by embryonic stem cell research... in terms of the position taken by the manual, none of these would be considered to be citizens.

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Dossier “The Urban Peripheries”

III. Construction of a new imaginary of the city and public space:  
Saraus movement, mobility and religion

# City as mobility: a contribution of brazilian *saraus* to urban theory

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## **Abstract**

The article analyzes *saraus* movement – poetry readings in São Paulo’s periphery – as a cultural phenomenon that over recent years has transformed the city space into a vibrant socio-political project. The movement offers important insights for an anthropology of cities by highlighting the materiality of mobility and spatiality, understood here as a set of social and cultural practices that involve the existential knowledge, social networking, and local community empowerment gained from mobility between predominantly peripheral neighborhoods and urban labor centers. We examine how *saraus* contribute to the construction of a new imaginary of the city and public space occupied by the socially excluded and racialized peripheries. We provide an analytical and empirical contribution to city production and urban theory, and demonstrate that mobility and the encounter are not simply temporary extraneous interactions, but rather experiences constitutive of social knowledge.

**Keywords:** Urban Theory, City, *Saraus*, Mobility, Community Empowerment.

# A cidade como mobilidade: uma contribuição dos *saraus* para a teoria urbana

## Resumo

O texto analisa o movimento dos *saraus* das periferias paulistanas como fenômeno cultural que, em anos recentes, vem transformando o espaço urbano em um vibrante projeto sócio-político. O movimento oferece *insights* importantes para pensar uma antropologia das cidades na medida em que possibilita evidenciar a materialidade da mobilidade e da espacialidade, entendida, aqui, enquanto conjunto de práticas sociais e culturais que envolve conhecimento existencial, formação de redes e empoderamento comunitário adquiridos mediante a mobilidade urbana. De modo geral, buscamos examinar de que forma os *saraus* podem contribuir para a construção de um novo imaginário da cidade e do espaço público ocupado pelas periferias socialmente excluídas e racializadas. O argumento central do artigo sugere uma contribuição analítica e empírica para a teoria social urbana e para os processos de produção da cidade, demonstrando que a mobilidade e o encontro não são apenas interações temporâneas e alheias, mas sim experiências constitutivas do próprio conhecimento social.

**Palavras-Chave:** Teoria Urbana, Cidade, *Saraus*, Mobilidade, Empoderamento Comunitário.

# City as mobility:

## a contribution of brazilian *saraus* to urban theory

Derek Pardue; Lucas Amaral de Oliveira

In the turbulent late 1960s, Henri Lefebvre declared that the city is a “virtual object,” the work of historical and social agents, who produce it through an uninterrupted succession of conduits, decisions, and messages (Lefebvre, 1968). In the same vein, David Harvey added that Lefebvre’s famous slogan of people’s “right to the city” would depend on the ability of social and cultural movements to give meaning and intelligibility to the city and to institute new modes of urbanization (Harvey, 2012). More recently, anthropologist Michel Agier, in an attempt to escape the trappings of an urban social theory with no empirical object, argued that it is necessary to consider the processes of “city-making” as essential in our assessment of the “right to the city” (Agier, 2015). In the following discussion of *saraus*<sup>1</sup> – open mic events – we demonstrate that poetics of the performers reveals an insight into the materiality of mobility. In other words, *saraus* not only represent an emergent circuit of cultural production in the working-class urban periphery, they also highlight the trajectories of participants and everyday life as part of “city-making,” frequently articulated through banal but meaningful landmarks.

*Sarau* performers use the everydayness of urban mobility as a rhetorical resource. Movement is momentarily captured in things like alleyways, bridges and public sewers that function as city rivers. In this manner, *sarau* participants demonstrate what sociolinguist Alastair Pennycook described as “ways in which language practices and language localities construct each other” (Pennycook, 2010: 10). This poetic transformation and performative deployment is important because it demonstrates the geographic force of mobility. Our argument is that *saraus* contribute to a city-making in this respect and thus support the idea of Lefebvre, Agier and other scholars that the city is not an *a priori* given entity but rather a dynamic result of sociocultural production. Given the social fabric and discursive materiality of *saraus*, they also contribute to the argument that the sociocultural production of the urban is a political negotiation involving power relations (Harvey, 2005).

### A Brief Contextualization

“The *sarau* is for who doesn’t exist, not for who does.”<sup>2</sup> With these words, Sérgio Vaz, the founder of *Cooperifa*<sup>3</sup> and one of the leading voices of the *saraus* community, established a motto and ideological base for the contemporary open microphone grassroots movement led by disenfranchised populations in urban Brazil. Vaz used this phrase several times in a workshop in 2010 with the implication that it had already become a stock phrase: a simple opening salvo for those unaware that the *sarau* is a critical performance targeting issues of social status and rights to the city.

1 Unsurprisingly, the term itself contains multiple etymologies, all leading to Europe (Latin, Catalan, Galego) and all indexing tardiness. The *sarau* is a performance of late growth, a loose tongue, a brainstorm of potential plans for tomorrow. We discuss this term in more detail later in the section “*Saraus* as Cultural Critique.”

2 The phrase works better in Portuguese: “O *sarau* é para quem não é, não para quem é.”

3 This name refers to the Cooperativa Cultural da Periferia, a neologism combining “cooperative” with “periphery.”

The *sarau* as a poetic, and at times political, speech genre has a long history in Brazil, which reveals important markers of nation building and socioeconomic class by distinctively connecting speakers and texts to Western Europe and bourgeoisie notions of culture and art (Medeiros, 2002). It has frequently represented tension, a dissonant note of critique, which in its current iteration has become a fundamental component of its existence. However, the contemporary *sarau* running through the urban peripheries has garnered greater attention from state culture and education agencies. As Bin (2009), Nascimento (2006; 2009), Silva (2011) and Tennina (2013) demonstrate, the *saraus* have been essential in the expansion of so-called “marginal literature” in that they give visibility to the literature produced *in and by* the working-class urban periphery, fostering its publication, practice and consumption.

However, while academic and activist communities have been quick to discuss the ideological significance of the contemporary *sarau* in terms of empowerment and literary importance, little has been said about the movement’s spatial contours.<sup>4</sup> *Saraus* offer an insightful case study for a more general theory of cities that highlights spatiality, understood as a set of social practices that involve the existential knowledge and social networking acquired from mobility, rather than a conventional notion of networks based on static indices of geographic and cultural presence.

We are certainly not advocating a diminishment or even a dismissal of the power of the *sarau* as part of agency on the periphery. The work of dozens of activists,<sup>5</sup> as well as that of scholars like Nascimento (2010; 2014), Tennina (2010), Silva and Tennina (2011), Pardue (2014), Muniz Jr. & Oliveira (2015), Silva (2011), Hapke (2012) and Smith (2015), provide cross-cultural demonstrations that poetry contributes to an individual and collective desire for change. Recently, Leonora Souza Paula (2016) analyzed the ways in which the movement of marginal literature and *saraus* renders a social vision of the world in which the periphery is no longer understood and represented as a stigmatized culturally impoverished space, but rather as a legitimate site of enunciation representing locally lived experiences. In this sense, *saraus* seem to stoke the drive to survive this world and imagine another, what the inspirational US black feminist lesbian writer Audre Lorde (1985: 36) once expressed as “what we [black women] feel within and dare make real.”

Our article “places” this empowering rhetoric and, in effect, extends what local actors and social movements are already saying, thereby bringing these logics into dialogue with urban theorists and cultural geographers of São Paulo. Our inductive approach to *saraus* suggests an alternative to urbanization in terms of perpetuating a center-periphery spatial dynamic and the growth of high-surveillance gated communities. By contrast, *saraus* reveal a set of working-class, subaltern, migrant identifications that has emerged not simply through local community empowerment, but also through circuits, interactions and mobility.

## Position in the Field

This text builds on a selection of interdisciplinary scholarship related to cities, space and expressive culture, and addresses a conceptual gap identified in this field. Urban mobility researchers, for instance, are predominantly concerned with empowerment in terms of institutional access via labor, education and conventional cultural centers (see Gupta and Yesudian, 2006; Nyanzi et al, 2005; Zentgraf, 2002). By contrast

4 One exception is José Carlos G. da Silva (2011). While the analysis in his article focuses primarily on rap lyrics and hip hop posse organization, Silva points to a vital connection between hip hop, *saraus* and marginal literature movements as practices that demarcate “spatial-symbolic frontiers” in the city (see Silva, 2011: 91).

5 For example, the volume *Polifonias Marginais*, an important work edited by Ingrid Hapke, Mario Augusto Medeiros da Silva, Lucía Tennina e Érica Peçanha do Nascimento (2015), brings together interviews with writers and activists from the marginal and black literary movements as well as the *saraus* community. Collaborators include Allan da Rosa, Alessandro Buzo, Binho, Dugueto Shabazz, Elizandra Souzam Esmeralda Ribeiro, Ferréz, Raquel Almeida, Sacolinha, Sergio Vaz, Sonia Regina Bischain, and Zinho Trindade.

to such frameworks, spatial networks involve housing and transportation, and indeed *sarau* performers reflect on residential spaces and commuting experiences. They criticize the shortcomings of conventional educational institutions and cultural centers as both ideologically and geographically exclusionary. Through provocative manifestos and emotive neologisms, marginal poets deconstruct such conventional categories of urban mobility. The distinction to which we draw attention here is the material significance of these rhetorical expressions and the role of materiality in the sociopolitical movement of so-called marginal literature.

The overt performativity of *saraus* creates alternative geographies through the use and representation of alternative trajectories of urban mobility. We draw from the work of cultural geographers and anthropologists like Werlen (2004) and Haesbaert (1997) who help us distinguish “environment” from “landscape” by emphasizing the role of social interpretation in the latter. We contribute to this literature by connecting expressive performance – such as music-making and poetry reading – with place. In so doing, we also enter into dialogue with scholars from the field of sound studies, like Cohen (2012) and Roberts (2012), who underscore the role of assemblage in sonic perception and its parallels with spatial orientation. We borrow from architect Bernard Tschumi’s conception of architecture as the activation of space by the movement of bodies (see Cleary, 2017) in order to show that the articulations of everyday mobility by *sarau* performers produce a new infrastructure of the periphery, attributing new names, meanings, shapes and significance to the previously disregarded and overlooked. Finally, underpinning our own work and that of the colleagues cited above is an appreciation of the mutual intersections between objects and people (Urry, 2007).

Mobility and networks in this article are simultaneously straightforward conventional terms for physical movement and sociality, but also theoretical provocations to get us to think about urban space as a dynamic matrix of encounters. Following Doreen Massey, the meaning of spaces and places is discursively and temporally structured. It is the accumulation of narrative weight that makes the street corner or condominium salient as a point of protest or community: “if space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations, within the wider power-geometries of space” (Massey, 2005: 130). Peripheral places in São Paulo appear to be mere surfaces, rudimentary scratches in the pragmatics of life and/as labor. “There is no culture” there, citing the long-standing popular view of Brazilians regarding the sprawling favelas. The point is not just that there is indeed culture in the periphery but that the “there” is not static; rather, it is a product of mobility and encounters.

Theories and observations regarding “flexible citizenship” (Ong, 1999) and “shared economies” (Kostakis and Bauwens, 2014) imply processes of accumulating power through movement. Indeed, trajectories can be empowering. Similarly, displaced migrants often have little control over their movement and thus trajectories become devoid of power. Refugee mobility, for example, affords little in the way of knowledge or power. The logic of such paradigms is limiting, and excludes many of the peripheral realities and specifically the social action of cultural and urban movements. Instead, the *saraus* demonstrate, in an outwardly performative fashion, that marginal, out-of-the-way places and people construct their own circuits, not as hermetically sealed enclaves of subalternity, but as competing trajectories vying for control over city spaces. Furthermore, in so doing they periodically (and often strategically) enter into dialogue with conventional cultural, educational and even financial institutions. In this manner, *saraus* exemplify what Agier describes as a *cidade bis* – that is, a possibility to:

[...] design a multiple city, starting from the perspective of practices, relationships and words that inhabitants, such as those of the ethnographic researcher, observe, collect, note, directly and situationally, and that this city is not less real than that of the architect or urban planner or city administrator. It is different. (Agier, 2015: 486)

The *sarau* is one example of the collective design that Agier describes. But before analyzing the performative material, we need to address the issues of access, elicitation and methodology.

## (Performative) Methodology

The data presented in this article is taken from fieldwork research conducted between 2010 and 2015. We used contacts from former research with hip hop performers and writers from the periphery, as well as a knowledge of living in São Paulo accumulated in different moments of our lives. The *sarau* fieldwork consisted of attending and participating in a variety of events, many of which normally occurred on a weekly basis. These include literary meetings, *saraus*, slams<sup>6</sup> (poetry battles), writer workshops, conferences, and international book fairs, as well as local literary activities and public debates on periphery culture and public policies. The web of *saraus* is extensive. For the purposes of this article, we have given particular attention to the following: Sarau do Binho, Suburbano Convicto, Cooperifa, Slam da Guilhermina, Sarau Poesia da Brasa, and Mesquiteiros.<sup>7</sup>

We consulted monthly publications such as the *Agenda Cultural da Periferia*, organized by the NGO Ação Educativa, and the *Mapa Cultural da Quebrada*, a project run by the Solano Trindade Popular Agency in Embu municipality (today part of an extended South West periphery of São Paulo).<sup>8</sup> In addition, we consulted *Boletim do Kaos*, edited by writer Alessandro Buzo, the founder of Suburbano Convicto Productions. We also participated in social networks and listservs dedicated to the development of cultural collectives and marginal literary events throughout the city.

Part of the impetus for this article arose from a methodological question. Whereas the various publications mentioned above imply a particular *sarau* geography in terms of event location, they do not tell us anything about the urban trajectories of participants. We decided that a questionnaire might be the best solution. However, a question remained: how should such a questionnaire be distributed during what can only be described as an intense performance? The answer was to create a performative methodology. Below we describe a strategy used by one of the authors, Derek Pardue, and, for this reason, the personal pronoun “I” appears. We decided to employ this discursive shift and include this brief vignette because the methodology directly relates to *sarau* performativity, while also exemplifying the kind of *bis city* described by Michel Agier.

Despite the fact that Brazilians, especially young people, have closed the information and communication technology gaps in recent years, in part due to the unprecedented public and private stimulation of consumption via social media platforms (see Nishijima et al., 2016; Sorj and Fausto, 2015; Holmes, 2016), some acts of communication, like a foreign anthropologist asking for access permission, need to be done in person. It was clear that I needed a flexible and dynamic methodology based on interpersonal skills, especially with the *sarau* organizers, and a concise, entertaining pitch to convey my

6 *Slam* is a worldwide known competition in which poets recite original poetry. The performances are judged and given numerical scores by pre-selected members of the audience. This format arrived in Brazil in 2008, and was popularized predominantly by the *Núcleo Bartolomeu de Depoimentos* with their *ZAP-Slam* events.

7 Within this group, it is important to mention two sites as particularly significant for our reflection: *Suburbano Convicto Bookstore* (SCB), created and managed by writer Alessandro Buzo, and the *Sarau do Binho*, created by poet Robinson Padial and his wife Suzi Soares. The SCB is the only bookstore dedicated exclusively to marginal literature. These two sites hold a special status, because the former displays a mix of veteran and newcomer authors while the latter functions as an obligatory rite of passage for writers. The *Sarau do Binho* is where one enters the market of “marginal”. Moreover, Binho along with Suzi Soares are responsible for the organization of a large portion of all literary events in the whole south side area of São Paulo.

8 Solano’s great grandson, Zinho Trindade, is a leading presence in the *sarau* and marginal literature movement.

idea to the event's participants. Again, my experience with hip hoppers,<sup>9</sup> as well as being a public lecturer and a scholar, helped me engage with difference and ultimately produce a significant response about what upon first glance seems esoteric – urban mobility, transportation trajectories and a sense of community.

Following the spirit of the *sarau*, I shouted my story. A clueless *gringo* wanderer, who in the late 1990s got lost in the urban peripheries and discovered a great many life truths and learned something of the art of marginality. “The periphery became a place I go when I get confused about the world.” I made a self-deprecating joke and quickly arrived at the point – the importance of place and movement in everyday life. I then asked permission to distribute a short questionnaire with the goal of mapping the neighborhoods and the traveling involved in these *saraus*. What was implicit in my speech and what is more explicit when performers insist that *saraus* are periphery “window displays” (to be discussed below) is that the rush of arrivals and anxious expectations of performances are event highlights.

Four performative introductions by Pardue at four different *saraus* during June and July of 2014 produced 214 entries. To summarize, the quantitative data clearly shows us that the overwhelming majority (84%) of participants used public transportation (some combination of buses, mostly, followed by the subway and less frequently trains) to arrive at the events. The responses to the question “where do you live” shows a remarkable geographical distribution with over 50% of replies indicating a neighborhood outside of the district, thereby bolstering the argument that *saraus* are not simply local events: in fact, they attract significant numbers from farther afield and prove to be a consistent element in *sarau* sociality. Crosstown trips comprise discursive resources for marginal poets to articulate individual and collective experiences and knowledge.

### ***Saraus* as Cultural Critique**

The contemporary form of the *sarau* involves a strong identification and presence in the urban peripheries of Brazil, especially in the country's biggest city, São Paulo. Such a move to the scattered public spaces of the periphery led by the working poor of Brazilian society might appear odd were one to read the short stories of Machado Assis,<sup>10</sup> the magnificent author of Brazilian realism and master of subtle sarcasm, who promoted *saraus* as a young writer during the 1860s.

In contrast to the *sarau* events of today, the *saraus* of Assis's time were “recitals,” i.e. distinct cultural events in bourgeois salons of the nineteenth century, held predominantly in Rio de Janeiro and later in São Paulo. These were occasions to “elevate” poetry to a “fine art” of elite “good taste,” which, in this case, meant an approximation with the customs of European *haute culture*. According to critic Roberto Schwarz, this kind of social and artistic gathering, commonplace in many Parisian salons of the aristocracy, was important for Brazil to mediate its relationship with Europe. Within the arts, the *sarau* became a forum to simultaneously transport and mimic traditions, as well as “adopt, quote, ape, rob or devour the mannerisms and styles in a way that they could reflect the kind of cultural knot in which we find ourselves” (Schwarz, 2009: 76-77). The *sarau* was thus an arena to work out personal and collective anxieties around “being civilized” and “having culture.”

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Pardue (2008), especially the introductory chapter, and Pardue (2009) as particular examples of performative methodology regarding hip hop research in São Paulo.

<sup>10</sup> *Saraus* and salon gatherings periodically appear in Assis's novels and short stories (Assis, 2007). One example of the latter is “Um Homem Célebre” (“A Famous Man”), originally published in *Gazeta de Notícias* in 1888.

In Brazil, the *sarau* dates back to the early nineteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese royal court in the colonial capital of Rio de Janeiro in 1808. It would not be until a century later, though, that the genre would find a home in São Paulo via the elite class of coffee barons, who acted as patrons to avantgarde art and philosophical movements. As shown in the research of Ana Luiza Basílio and Jéssica Moreira (2014), Silva (2004), Camargos (1999) and Saliba (2001), salons such as Villa Kyrial in the Vila Mariana neighborhood featured *saraus* as part of their aesthetic agendas and contributed significantly to the cultural infrastructure during the early decades of the twentieth century – the *belle époque* of São Paulo elite life. Silva argues, in fact, that Villa Kyrial, for example, was “most probably the birthplace of the idea to hold the Modernist Week of 1922, one of the most important events for São Paulo artists” (Silva, 2004: 24). In complementary fashion, Camargos (1999) describes the political role of *saraus* in salon spaces during Brazil’s transition from an oligarchy in the First Republic (1889-1930) to a populist government, albeit in the form of dictatorship, under Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945).

The resurgence of *saraus* in contemporary urban peripheral culture is both a continuation and a significant break with the past. These festive rants, generally nocturnal affairs with a literary focus, resurfaced in a robust manner in hole-in-the-wall corner bars of the urban peripheries on the South Side of São Paulo. The geographical trajectories have moved farther south, away from Vila Mariana, and the discourses are not of an anxious but hopeful wait for cultural modernization (or “Europeanization”) but rather of an anxiety concerning the present failures of modernity. “In the periphery, the desire to speak was so great that the people wanted to do something. They wanted to produce stuff. So, there were many folks who hung out at the bar and who ended up becoming poets,” relates Binho, one *sarau* founder. Sérgio Vaz, following a similar logic, often says that the contemporary *sarau* in the urban periphery occurs “when poetry comes down from the pedestal and kisses the feet of the community.”<sup>11</sup>

In the period from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, this cadre of writers and cultural producers achieved an artistic transformation of their respective neighborhoods. The pioneer projects on the South Side include: *Cooperifa* in Jardim São Luís, founded in 2001 by poets Sérgio Vaz and Marco Antonio Iadocicco (aka Marco Pezão); *Sarau do Binho*, in Campo Limpo, founded by Robinson Padial (aka Binho) and Suzi Soares. Binho’s *sarau* has operated since 2004 as a poetic *sarau*, but it existed earlier in a slightly different version under the name of *Noite da Vela*. These *saraus* continue to operate regularly today and are still organized by poets and activists of the marginal literature movement.

Nascimento (2009; 2011), a leading scholar of *saraus* and marginal literature, recognizes in the movement an elaborate arrangement by artists to stimulate new leisure options for creativity and participation. In so doing, the *sarau* reveals new forms of association among community members that promote a diversity of social action, empowerment and ways of *being in* (*estar*) and *being of* (*ser*) the periphery. *Sarau* participants tend to frequent multiple *saraus* and develop a sociogeographical circuit of expressive culture. In this light, the circulation of authors is highly significant, because it empowers actors to create and maintain translocal networks, thereby increasing the visibility of the movement as part of the urban fabric. The result is that their “own” sacred spaces become stronger and cultural dissemination of their texts easier.

Keeping in mind both Nascimento’s work and the *sarau* founders’ periphery-centric manifestos, we can move to the next section of the article. Having provided a basic account of *sarau* history and its social function, we shift the reader’s attention to the main contribution of *saraus* to urban theory. Our argument rests on two interconnected points. First, it is essential to recognize the periphery as a network of cultural creativity and not simply an object of artistic representation. Second, as a vehicle of marginal literature,

<sup>11</sup> This quote from Binho was published by the journalist Leandro Cruz (see <https://goo.gl/GOClpT>). The phrase from Vaz is standard jargon used by the poet, not unlike the opening phrase of this article.

*saraus* create geographic value through a mixture of recuperated landmarks, resignified banalities of public space, and knowledge-building from urban travel. The second point follows on from the first and provides an insight into a particular cultural geography of the city.

## The Urban Periphery as a “Center” of Cultural Production

Brazilian and Brazilianist scholarship spent the first decade of the twenty-first century documenting the cultural value of the periphery.<sup>12</sup> What connects this interdisciplinary scholarship is an urgent need to show that when confronted with increasing inequality and high rates of violence during the 1990s, significant numbers of residents used artistic practices to give value to their communities. Furthermore, performers organized themselves into collectives so that the shared experiences and articulations of marginality and the urban periphery have become a link between artistic production and social reality (see Nascimento, 2011; Oliveira, 2016).

In the following passage taken from a documentary film on *saraus*, Vaz describes their advent as a grassroots literary movement that transformed state abjection into cultural production:

In the periphery, there is no theater, no museum, no library and no cinema. The only public space that the State allowed was the bar. They thought we would just end up drinking *cachaça* [a popular sugar cane liquor], but we transformed the bar into a cultural center [...]. Their plan went down in flames, because the State lost control of us: what the periphery certainly does not lack is bars. (See *Curta Saraus*, 2010)<sup>13</sup>

Vaz’s declaration underscores that *saraus* are a result of cultural activism, a grassroots operation that privileges pedagogical politics and stimulates readership and textual creativity in a way that develops literary circulation, the symbolic (and real) consumption of local goods, as well as the promotion of new authors. In his book *Rebel Cities*, David Harvey discusses the tight but not totalizing link between urban planning and State/elite control. While *saraus* do not demonstrate anti-capitalist rebellion or revolution at the level of spectacle that Harvey describes (see, for example, Harvey, 2012: 115-119), they do show the development of alternative economies and socialities at the everyday level of regular assemblies and periphery-based routes of mobility. If art is a medium through which people not only imagine but also construct and commodify social realities, then what sort of landscapes and other material effects are produced?

Similar to what happened with hip hop, marginal literature redefines urban spaces. Moreover, the process of creating new cultural landscapes and social networks often affirms a tension and a contradiction present in urban life. Marco Pezão’s poetry demonstrates this idea:

Who are you, worker / Who waits before sunrise for the same old bus / To take you like a packed can of sardines / To one more day of work / Making more wealth for the boss // Who are you, brother / smelling like *cachaça* / with the breath of a no-nutrient meal / You get a ride back home in a VW bus / Given up / Defeated / Just looking for a little peace and quiet / A hot meal / After giving all your blood and sweat, of which there isn’t much / To someone who just gets fat // Shit is fat, bro / It’s just like that / What chance do we have / On this ride of life? /

<sup>12</sup> With regard to the marginal literature movement, we can cite the work of Nascimento (2009), Silva (2013), Silva (2011), Patrocínio (2013), Oliveira (2016), Salom (2014), Eslava (2004; 2008), Reyes (2013) and Tennina (2010); music in D’Andrea (2013), Felix (2005), Pardue (2008) and Salles (2004); audiovisual expressions in Cota (2008), Costa (2009) and Aderaldo (2013; 2016); and other performative art in Levinson (2005) and Pereira (2010).

<sup>13</sup> Transcribed from a clip of Sérgio Vaz in *Curta Saraus* (2010). The film provides a panoramic view of *saraus* that take place in various bars throughout the São Paulo periphery, especially in the South Side regions of Capão Redondo, Jardim São Luís and Campo Limpo. See: [www.curtasaraus.blogspot.com.br/](http://www.curtasaraus.blogspot.com.br/). Accessed on 20/10/14.

If you're from the periphery / You're hanging on the edge like a moustache / Close to the mouth, but always on the outside looking in. (Pezão, 2013: 55)<sup>14</sup>

The worker's life conditions – living far from the workplace and downtown, the long bus ride, always crowded – all of this routine, interspersed with alcohol, desire, unhealthy food, exhaustion, is viscerally present in Pezão's text. We can utilize part of Agier's theory of "city-making" to understand Pezão's iteration and its wider representation of *sarau* social geography. For Pezão and Agier alike, the concept of "margin" is best understood as:

[...] an epistemological and political position: to understand the limit of what exists – and what exists under the official appearance and what is recognized as done, established, ordered, central and dominant – allows one to perceive the dialectic of the empty and full and describe what, emergent from almost nothing or from an apparently chaotic State, makes the city. (Agier, 2015: 487)

The contingencies central to the everyday lives of periphery dwellers commuting from suburb to center, as Pezão describes in brief but affective minutia, help define São Paulo. The drain of the haul to work, a trajectory of emptiness, is challenged and potentially inverted or "refilled" through the alternative trajectories of *saraus* and the re-ordering of the mundane.

The city exists not only as a backdrop, but also as a constitutive element in the literary construction. Using the material of everyday violence, marginal poets reorganize the cityscape through their social experiences, and in so doing construct alternative perspectives of the city:

Rough inclines, corners in raw flesh / drumming heartbeat where the weak don't dare to tread / Puddles accumulate serene, orange acids / and apocalyptic trumpets playing fun(k)anon<sup>15</sup> / announce faithful litters birthed from the Evangelical songs / TV and Nigerian beauties made out of steel / SP, a (precious) stone jungle / And, don't be fooled, son / here, everything is just this way: this zone, this tumult. / On New Year's Eve there's a road race / one called São Silvestre / and it's just like this, fast and furious, that we run all year long. / A funky, diabolic lyre in São Paulo heats everything up. / Upside down SP, *Piratininga, punga, uma pinga* / and the lyrics escape the elitist salon, naked running in the streets. / *Baticum*. It's a communal cry. A prayer, some slang [...]. (Danziger, 2012: 64-65)<sup>16</sup>

Inherited from rap, the poetry's orality is fundamental here as the author articulates his belonging in a literary form and places the city as the pivotal point for discussion. This kind of imaginary is distinctly urban and runs counter to the trends toward "deterritorialization" within narrative theory (Tavares, 2001). Furthermore, poets valorize individual testimony as it relates everyday situations focused on social issues and moments of inspiration in a fragmented city. The famous poem "Nóis é Ponte" ("We 'is' the bridge")<sup>17</sup> by Pezão, often recited in *saraus* throughout São Paulo, makes explicit the link between existential angst and urban materiality:

14 Poem by Marco Pezão, "Pendurados." Original text: "Quem é você, operário / Que antes do clarão do sol espera o buso / Pra te levar enlatado, mordido / Pra mais um dia de trampo / Proporcionar a riqueza do patrão // Quem é você, irmão / Que cheirando à cachaça / Bafo de rango mal nutrido / Volta nessa lotação / Se entregando / Se encoxando / Querendo um aconchego / Um prato quente / Depois de dar o sangue, que já é pouco / A quem só faz engordar // Barra, meu chapa / É foda, chegado / Que chances temos / Na aventura da vida? // Quem é da periferia / Tá ao redor feito bigode / Perto da boca, mas sempre por fora."

15 Bombastic bass-heavy pop music.

16 Excerpt from Walner Danziger's poem "Eles não usam Black Power." Original text: "Ladeiras ásperas, esquinas em carne viva / coração-tambor onde os caras pálidas não ousam pisar / Poças acumulando ácidos serenos alaranjados / e trombetas apocalípticas do fun(k)anhão / anunciam ninhadas fiéis emergindo em cânticos evangélicos / belezas televisivas e nigerianos de aço. / SP, (S)elva de (P)edras (preciosas) / E não se engane não, moço, / que por aqui é tudo assim mesmo: essa zona, esse alvoroço. / Na virada tem corrida pedestre / uma tal de São Silvestre com largada no ano novo / e é desse jeitinho, velozes e furiosos, que a gente corre o ano todo. / Uma lira paulistana endiabrada esquentando a chapa. / Paucicéia Desvairada, Piratininga, punga, uma pinga / e a letra fugindo do salão elitista, nua correndo pra rua. / *Baticum*. É reza, gíria [...]"

17 *Nóis* is a popular, grammatically "incorrect" way of saying *we*, followed by the third person singular conjugation of the verb "to be" (*is* or *é* in Portuguese) rather than the first person plural (*are* or *somos*).

Conjugate this verb / Errant consonance / As a manner of speaking // We is the bridge (*Nóis é Ponte*) and we crosses any river. // The “we” for us / It is singular / The “we” for us / The plural is personal // We is the bridge and we crosses any river. // [...] Show your strength / Face reality / Leave aside the bad / Without being all good / If not, the world will make you crazy / And no one is a biscuit / to let yourself be eaten. // We is the bridge and we crosses any river. // Find another shore / Being smart is not a crime / Rainbow, lagoon / It’s all good / Hold the rudder firm and cross the bridge. // Come periphery // We is the bridge and we crosses any river. (Pezão, 2013: 124-125)<sup>18</sup>

Pezão’s text demonstrates an intertextuality with the rap song “Da ponte pra cá” (“From the bridge to here”) by the legendary rap group Racionais MC’s. In both cases, social agency mediates urban scenes of tension and thus serves as a political instrument. The protagonist’s trajectory functions as a base from which one can interpret the collective experience. The bridge is simultaneously a metaphor of encounter and of separation. The dialectic of interaction and isolation is even more pronounced in the following poem, published as part of the edited volume *Coletivo Cultural Poesia na Brasa*:

The elite meet in the huge shopping centers, surrounded by the periphery that they themselves invented / the periphery arms itself and terrifies the central elite / In armed warfare, the rich oppress the impoverished with state force via the police / But, now things are different, the periphery arms itself in another way / Now, the weapon is knowledge, the munition is the book and the shots come from the text [...]. (Brasa, 2009: 31-32)<sup>19</sup>

One can identify here an attempt to construct a reading of the city that not only alters the way residents of the periphery are labeled, but also the manner in which residents conceive of collective identities and how they construe social space in general. Akin to Massey’s conceptualization of “place” (see Massey, 2005: 5-6), *sarau* performers often mobilize the local, not in retreat into a barricade of authenticity and essentialization, but as a defining perspective of authority in the narration of what the city is. The “marginal” author is both subject and object of the composition. This collective self is a witness to urban realities and a certain authority at the moment of representation, which, in fact, is a kind of “presentification” of marginalization, i.e. a mechanism that transcribes urban experience into script.<sup>20</sup> Such a mechanism is similar to representation insofar as it brings diverse experiences into the text through use of a lexicon of terms, such as “periphery,” “margin,” “bridge,” “ghetto,” “back alley,” “quilombo” (settlements originally founded by escaped slaves, dating back to the seventeenth century) and “shantytown” (*favela*) in order to understand the various types of situations afforded by urban mobility.

Implicit in the following text, “Eu viela” (a play on words: “I saw her / I alley”), is the experience of mobility between peripheral neighborhoods and urban centers. Poets challenge conventional metaphors in their texts with the ultimate objective of re-making the city:

Today I saw her [I alley] / She has changed so much / Stripped of ceramic tiles / Scintillating pebbles / And I saw her children / Like I used to be / Running around the alley / Content, innocent // The alley grows / Always the mother to yet another / A welcoming alley / For those who have nothing and no one / The alley gives shelter /

18 Original text: “Conjugué esse verbo / Errada consonância / Na maneira de dizer // Nóis é Ponte e atravessa qualquer rio. // O nóis pra nós / É singular / O nóis pra nós / O plural é pessoal // Nóis é Ponte e atravessa qualquer rio // [...] Mostre força / Encare o real / Deixe de lado o mau / Sem ser bom de todo / Senão o mundo te faz tolo / E ninguém é biscoito / Pra se deixar comer. // Nóis é Ponte e atravessa qualquer rio. // Busque outra margem / Ser esperto não é vadiagem / Arco íris, lagoa / Numa boa / Segure o leme, atravesse a ponte. // Venha Periferia // Nóis é Ponte e atravessa qualquer rio.”

19 A fragment from *Nosso manifesto* (*Our manifesto*) by the Coletivo Cultural Poesia na Brasa, Brasilândia, called “A elite treme” (“The elite trembles”). Original text: “A elite encontra-se nos grandes centros comerciais, rodeada pelas periferias que ela própria inventou / a periferia se arma e apavora a elite central / Nas guerras das armas, os ricos reprimem os favelados com a força do Estado através da polícia / Mas agora é diferente, a periferia se arma de outra forma / Agora o armamento é o conhecimento, a munição é o livro e os disparos vêm das letras [...]”.

20 In the end, as the writer Ferréz is wont to say, “to live inside the topic is complicated” (see, for example, Resende, 2008: 35; also Coronel, 2013: 29). The situation is full of paradoxes and traps that fix the place of origin of the author as genuine and literal (Ferréz 2006, back cover material). “I don’t want to be a chronicler of hell for my entire life. I already live it. To have to ruminate on this too is painful” (Ferréz, 2012: 32).

To dream of a better life / Danger lies on the corner / But I've seen her worse / the alley is worse // An alley disrespected / As though it were nothing / Even the women stopped by the cops / Just for living in a favela / An alley discriminated / An alley fallen silent / An alley washed clean / Of blood from an ambush // Dead end alley / Or ending on a big flight of steps / Alleys linking up / Spreading the occupation / Alley and the population / Of the favela / A work party by candlelight / Against the darkness of the cell // Helpless alley / Without any address / Flooded alley / Without a manger for the crib / Dimly lit alley / Full of compost and garbage / Frightened alley / Watching the guy sweep up the girls // Bare-foot alley / Taking care where you tread / Rocks roll, a fall is certain / Nobody is unaware / So it's an alley after all / Look carefully / Step slowly / Because that's how things go down // Barricaded alley / After the death of a daughter / Executed / By a cartel / Alley up in flames / Under gunfire and gas / The elderly, infants and ladies / With no right to peace // Afterwards / The alley is even stronger than before / Even with its children badmouthed / As criminals / An alley rebuilt / By the neighbors / An alley more united / We are no longer alone // Alley waiting for the lookout / Up on the roof / An alley going about its business / Doesn't put up with snitches / An alley under siege / By the police news / An alley interrogated / By the local cops // An alley marginalized / By society as a whole / An alley criminalized / For being a community / Because it is persecuted / Because it is suspect / Perhaps because it lives its life / In a narrow perspective // If she could talk / She'd hold a rally / Maybe that way / life on the periphery would improve / But whatever she might declare / Will be used against her / What isn't a tree-lined avenue / Is just an alley // When I first saw her [I alley] / It wasn't love at first sight / I thought she was ugly / Awkward and vulgar / Today I understand her / And the people who live in her / And I am not ashamed to say / It's us favela! (Shabazz, 2010: 37)<sup>21</sup>

Shabazz's poem is an obvious example of play with linguistic form that makes direct reference to the urban and historical configurations of São Paulo's outskirts. Beyond the alliterations (more present in the original language) and the personification of the alley, Dugueto Shabazz plays with the semantics of territory. He combines indictments related to the social conditions of the Afro-Brazilian and favela populations and individual memory. "Alley" or *viela* alludes to a narrow street in the urban periphery, one that is stigmatized, disrespected, a dead end, occupied, dark, unprotected, trashed, and always under suspicion. The narration possesses a movement, which, Patrocínio (2013) suggests, draws its inspiration from rap and employs the keywords of "way, way back" and "today" to convey the process of marginalization that occurs over time. Furthermore, the text flows with descriptions of the play of children, maternal caretaking and, despite all the challenges, a community unity, a collective fortification and, ultimately, an unabashed declaration of pride: "*é nós, favela!*"

21 Poem by Dugueto Shabazz, "Eu Viela." Original text: "Hoje eu viela / E ela mudou bastante / Mesmo ainda sem ladrilhos / De pedrinha cintilante / E vi seus filhos / Como eu antigamente / Correndo por ela / Contentes, inocentemente // Viela crescendo / Sempre sendo mãe de mais alguém / Viela acolhendo / Os que nada têm, nem a ninguém / Viela dando abrigo / Pra sonho de vida melhor / Na esquina há perigo / Mas já viela pior // Viela desrespeitada / Como se fosse nada / Até as tia enquadra / Só por ser favelada / Viela discriminada / Viela calada / Viela lavada / De sangue na fita dada // Viela sem saída / Ou se acabar no escadão / Viela encontrando outra / Aumentando a ocupação / Viela e a população / Da favela / Um mutirão de vela / Contra a escuridão da cela // Viela desamparada / E sem endereço / Já viela alagada / E sem manjedoura pra berço / Viela mal iluminada / E cheia de lodo / Viela assustada / Vendo o bicho passar o rodo // Viela descalçada / Não se pisa sem cuidado / Pedras rolam, tombo certo / Ninguém tá desavisado / É viela, então / Vê direito / Pisa devagar / Que o bagulho é daquele jeito // Viela em barricada / Pela morte d'uma filha / Executada / Por organizada quadrilha / Viela em chamas / Debaixo de tiro e gás / Anciões, bebês e damas / Sem direito à paz // Depois disso / Ainda viela mais forte que antes / Mesmo com filhos difamados / Como meliantes / Viela ser reconstruída / Pelos vizinhos / Viela mais unida / Não estamos mais sozinhos // Viela guardando campana / De cima da laje / Viela que na atividade / Não admite cagoetage / Viela assediada / No jornal policial / Viela interrogada / Pela seccional // Viela marginalizada / Por toda sociedade / Viela criminalizada / Por ser da comunidade / Por que ela é perseguida / Porque é suspeita / Será por viver a vida / Em perspectiva estreita // Se ela falasse / Um comércio faria / Talvez assim melhorasse / A vida na periferia / Mas o que ela declarar / Será usado contra ela / Que não é alameda / É apenas viela // Quando eu a vi / Não foi amor ao primeiro olhar / A achava feia / Constrangedora e vulgar / Hoje eu entendo ela / E a gente que vive nela / Que como eu não tem vergonha em dizer / É nós favela".

## Combining Materiality with Mobility

In general terms, one can say the *sarau* performer-cum-author embraces extreme locality through a thick description of the mundane things around her/him and seeks to diffuse such specific knowledge across the city. In so doing, s/he not only links points on an urban map but also incorporates the journey as expressive culture. The routine of *sarau* signification becomes, in part, the routine of travel.

*Sarau* performers are heterogeneous in their expression of space as an accumulation of encounters and mobility. Some, often older veteran performers, such as Sérgio Vaz from the article's introduction, focus on the local transformation of mundane local spaces such as bars, "the only thing the State gave us" in his words, into cultural centers. Mobility comes in attracting like-minded people from other peripheral localities to the neighborhood *sarau*. As literary scholar Lucía Tennina describes, one can think of the *sarau* as an act of renaming neighborhoods and urban districts by way of *sarau* landmarks:

One can now affirm that the periphery is not simply a delimited space in terms of economic value and social structure; rather, it is an affective mapping of *sarau* circuits and its participants. In this manner, the stigmatized neighborhoods of Capão Redondo, Campo Limpo and Brasilândia, for example, become known as the neighborhood of the "Sarau of Vila Fundão," "Binho's Sarau" and "Brasa Poetry Sarau." (Tennina, 2013: 13)

For Banks, a veteran B-boy from hip hop who in recent years has become increasingly involved in *saraus* and slam poetry, the *sarau* is the "new window display of the periphery."<sup>22</sup> While Vaz (2008) saw the *sarau* primarily as a force of local change, Banks emphasized the *sarau* as a collective *vitrine* or window display, and for this reason he became more geographically mobile traveling to *saraus* almost daily to contribute to the general "display." And others still, such as Rodrigo Ciríaco, a relatively successful self-published author of marginal literature, frequent performer at *saraus* and creator of *Sarau dos Mesquiteiros* in the East Side of the city, believe that material production, i.e. books and literature, is a way to occupy public space.

The marginal literature press is beginning to share the space of local corner bars, sold alongside sacks of charcoal for the typical Saturday barbecues and bottles of cachaça. Literary production imposes a kind of presence and marks a certain identification. In his interactive book *Vendo pó... esia*, a play on words, *Seeing/I sell powder/poetry*, that references how dwellers of the urban periphery are stigmatized as drug pushers, *pó* is a term for cocaine powder as well as the first syllable in poetry, he declares: "this is a book-object to read and move and be active" (Ciríaco, 2016: back cover). The implication is that by turning discourse into a thing, poets and *sarau* performers circulate identities and mark city spaces.

Beyond incursions into formerly abject spaces (dilapidated public parks) and marginalized private spaces (corner bars), *sarau* participants also encounter the state and have had a significant impact on its institutions, most commonly schools and public libraries. A visible example of this interaction is the CEU (Unified Education Center). As part of a public policy introduced in the early 2000s by former mayor Marta Suplicy, the CEUs helped change the educational landscape in São Paulo's periphery (see Pardue, 2007). These large structures combine formal education and organized social activities in a single institution. The idea was that the CEUs would compensate for some of the spatial inequalities in the periphery, including the scarcity of public parks, libraries and recreation centers. The *saraus*, among other popular community groups, work to claim a percentage of the budget and make their presence felt.

In June 2014, DJ Erry-G pulled up to Alvarenga CEU, located in a far-flung peripheral neighborhood on the South Side of São Paulo. His car, its seats piled with vinyl records, sound equipment and the odd misplaced sandal and set of earphones belonging to his pre-teen daughter, coasted into a parking spot next to the back door of the CEU's auditorium. The winding route of the bus ride along the Alvarenga highway,

<sup>22</sup> This phrase appeared several times in fieldwork interviews. Sadly, Banks died in late 2017, which itself has generated a number of *saraus* and slam events in his homage.

overlooking the huge Billings Reservoir, had left us disorientated. Struggling to find our bearings, we met a rushed but welcoming Erry-G. “Today is all about the Guerreiro Productions Web Radio show. We’ll have a couple of guests. I try to match up the young and new with seasoned veterans. The format is *sarau* with interlude sounds from myself and the ever-present MC skills of Oswaldinho,” Erry-G explained.

The CEU Alvarenga was a steady gig for Erry-G, a professional DJ who has lived his whole life in makeshift housing in various neighborhoods located in the precarious watershed regions of the Billing Reservoir. As a tireless cultural entrepreneur, Erry-G travels back and forth across São Paulo throughout the week and on the weekends. Yet he continues to reside in Alvarenga and is dedicated to the CEU. Oswaldinho, a long-time journalist, editor and Afro-Brazilian activist, sees Alvarenga and the CEU in terms of a “pilgrimage,” an almost spiritual service undertaken to maintain his connections to what was an important area of labor activism during the 1960s and 70s and then later black activism. “I live on the North Side of the city and I don’t mind making this trek. It is a journey of the soul for me. I hope I can share a bit of my experiences with the local kids inside the CEU. Let’s see how it goes today.” Despite their differences in geographical orientation and professional goals, both Erry-G and Oswaldinho share the cultural, historical and political information from their inter-urban travels as part of their management of the local *sarau*.

When on the turntables, Erry-G speaks little, occasionally interjecting a quick remark connecting a break beat or interlude mix to a spot outside São Paulo or a historical moment. “Catch Z’Africa Brasil’s new release. It uses a beat based on this tune.” For his part, Oswaldinho plays the crowd and is conscious that the majority of audience members are listening and checking video clips from the internet. He thus combines interview questions for the *sarau* participants with mini-history lessons on Luís Gama, the nineteenth-century black Brazilian writer and abolitionist, whose statue is the destination for an annual march through São Paulo that Oswaldinho helps organize. He peppers this more academic information with news on current events in a bulletin style.

On this particular day, the new group being featured was *SarauArte*, whose name involves a straightforward combination of the words *sarau* and art. The members introduced themselves explicitly in terms of spatial occupation:

We are mostly from Cidade Tiradentes. We all kind of knew each other before and a couple of us had noticed this abandoned orphanage nearby. We decided to take it over and transform it into a cultural center. *SarauArte* is a collective of a dozen individuals and it stands as one of the results of that occupation.

*SarauArte* then broke up into smaller groups featuring guitar duets in the country music style known generally as *caipira*. They performed classical guitar pieces, Brazilian rock and MPB (a catch-all category of “Brazilian Popular Music” generally derived from samba and bossa nova). *SarauArte* culminated their presentation with a piece called “12-bit,” an allusion to video games, an original composition mixing video game background music and European classical compositions. The example of *SarauArte* playing at CEU Alvarenga demonstrates the penetration of *saraus* into public educational institutions and state-sponsored leisure and youth activity spaces. We emphasize the role of travel and trajectory in the production of the CEU space as expressed in the narratives of Erry-G, Oswaldinho and the *SarauArte* members. This brief ethnographic account complements that of the marginal literature performers who consistently reinforce the value of place as both subject matter and a point of encounter in their overall efforts to recuperate the periphery as a producer of culture and the *sarau* as a mechanism of “city-making.”

## Moving Towards Urban Theory

In this article, we have delineated potential new approaches to the dynamic of the *sarau* movement by highlighting the materiality of mobility. Following theorists such as Agier and Massey, our approach to the city (and *saraus*) is neither normative nor evolutionary. There is no bounded place called São Paulo in which human actors operate. Nor are the socio-political critiques emanating from the *saraus* part of a discursive-spatial development towards a new and improved city. In São Paulo, individuals experience and participate in *saraus* by relating their daily activities and their symbolic goods to peripheral urban spaces. They also create and amplify “marginal voices” emergent from working-class peripheral urban neighborhoods by exploring a variety of artistic languages, as well as community empowerment and the democratic right to the city. Such transformations are what we are primarily interested in and what we propose is, in effect, “city-making.”

Overall, *saraus* emphasize the relatively underdeveloped link between literature and social interaction by intensifying the performativity of text. In so doing, they whet the appetite of audience members who expect a certain level of experience to be attached to literature. However, these are not simply private experiences but shared ones to be enjoyed in the moment of poetry recitation and also, importantly, in the interactive experiences of transportation and mobility. *Saraus* signify a trip, then, and the frequency of these cultural and social events means that there is a routinization and socialization of local travel. Our contribution to urban theory is the approximation of the aesthetic, performative and discursive with the spatial and political in the making of the city.

The fact that the various urban peripheries are the destination of mobility, social interaction, political awareness and aesthetic pleasure is noteworthy. *Saraus* are more than just an inversion of conventional notions of urban geography with “new” peripheral locations as destination points for participants and curious consumers. Our analysis suggests a theoretical and empirical contribution to city formation and sociality: namely, *saraus* demonstrate that mobility and the encounter are not simply temporary conduits and extraneous interactions but rather constitutive experiences of social knowledge.

This argument emerges from the premise that things, like city buildings, corner bars, alleyways and bus depots are social facts. Setting out from this basic assumption, we have examined agency, and by extension visibility, power and the production of new meanings, in terms of a subject-object intersectionality contextualized by a range of social inequalities and differences. Furthermore, movement and encounters inform this field of socio-material engagement. The present moment represents a certain clash between a “paradigm of mobility” (see Sheller, 2011; Urry, 2007) in which people try to reckon with regimes of value and judgment associated with fluidity and flexibility, and the existential investment involved in the acts of dwelling and emplacement.

Such realities frame the contemporary urban dialectic, a dynamic that produces new meanings for cities via new forms of agency that often challenge the new tensions articulated around difference and likewise express new sensibilities of solidarity as a result of an awareness of difference. The point here is that, following the concept of locality proposed by Massey (2005), Pennycook (2010) and others, an investment in “place,” such as *saraus*, is not a rejection of the global or more specifically mobility. Rather, and this is our main theoretical contribution to the debate, when we approach place as necessarily a performance of encounters involving both experiences and the materialization of mobility, we are able to jettison the conception of the periphery as an enclave, a sorry leftover of haphazard urbanization.

To finish, we turn to the politics of social science and especially the foundational work of radical geographers such as Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey and David Harvey. *Saraus* are manifestations of a real and growing grassroots movement that have transformed city space into a socio-political and cultural project based on the idea of “rights to the city.” Urban spaces have become material and symbolic stages of

struggle, which performers use as existential resources. Our argument (and our theoretical and political wager) is that *saraus* are the quintessential event of the marginal literature movement and engender both self-transformation (and thus identification) and “city-making,” to return to Michel Agier’s pithy turn of phrase. In so doing, the *sarau* movement, along with contemporary marginal literature as a whole, contribute to the construction of a new imaginary of the public space and the city, occupied by the socially excluded and racialized peripheries.

While it has become banal for scholars to claim that popular movements influence the reckoning of public space and the contours of civil society, our contribution has been to unravel the precarious but promising connections between urban mobility and the material dimension of the city. We have theorized this relationship in terms of culture and performance rather than infrastructure and planning, thereby allowing for a real, engaged sociology and anthropology of the city from the perspective of marginalized working-class artists, a class of residents who inhabit and dwell perhaps more expansively in the city than anyone else.

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# Pentecostal cultures in urban peripheries: a socio-anthropological analysis of Pentecostalism in arts, grammars, crime and morality

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## **Abstract**

In past decades, Catholicism in Brazil has emerged as a privileged theme in the Social Sciences literature, coming to be recognised as a key element in the formation of a “national culture”. For the less affluent residents of the city, Catholicism constituted what Sanchis (1997) called “traditional urban popular culture”. Despite the abstraction contained in the notion of a “popular culture”, Sanchis’ perspective has had wide academic repercussion. With the growing presence of Pentecostal Evangelicals in the public sphere, and the percentage of people who claimed to be “Evangelical” in the IBGE censuses since 1990, part of the social science literature began to reflect on the possible establishment of a “Pentecostal culture” in Brazil. In this article, I analyse the formation of a Pentecostal culture in urban peripheries. To this end, I consider that the increase in the number of Pentecostal churches and their devotees in these localities provoked changes in different spheres of social life. This article is based on empirical field research carried out intermittently between the years of 1996 and 2015 in the Acari shantytown (Rio de Janeiro).

**Keywords:** Pentecostal Culture; Peripheries; Favelas; Drug dealer; Evangelical Graffiti.

# Cultura pentecostal em periferias: uma análise socioantropológica do pentecostalismo a partir de artes, gramáticas, crime e moral

## Resumo

O catolicismo no Brasil assumiu lugar privilegiado em análises de diferentes autores das Ciências Sociais em décadas passadas como elemento chave na conformação de uma “cultura nacional”. Em meio aos segmentos citadinos menos abastados, o catolicismo compunha o que Sanchis (1997) chamou de *cultura popular urbana tradicional*. Apesar da abstração produzida pela noção de uma “cultura popular”, a perspectiva trazida por Sanchis teve grande repercussão acadêmica. Com o crescimento da presença de evangélicos pentecostais no espaço público e de seus percentuais nos censos do IBGE desde 1990, parte da bibliografia especializada passou a refletir sobre o possível estabelecimento de uma “cultura Pentecostal” no Brasil. Neste artigo, pretendo analisar a formação de uma cultura Pentecostal em periferias. Neste sentido, considero que o aumento no número de igrejas pentecostais e de seus fiéis provocou mudanças em diferentes esferas da vida social nessas localidades. Este artigo tem como base empírica uma pesquisa de campo realizada de modo intermitente entre os anos 1996 e 2015 na Favela de Acari (RJ).

**Palavras-chave:** Cultura Pentecostal; Periferias; Favelas; Traficantes de Drogas; Grafites Evangélicos.

# Pentecostal cultures in urban peripheries: a socio-anthropological analysis of Pentecostalism in arts, grammars, crime and morality<sup>1</sup>

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The meaning of the preferences of the poor and the apparent switch from Catholicism to Pentecostalism tends to represent a transit between two cultures: the traditional Afro-Brazilian-Catholic culture and a modern culture of individual choice. The New Era, for instance, represents at the same time a strong denial of an individualistic, rational e desacralizing modernity; the attempt to resume the global, spiritual, carnal and cosmic aspects of man's path to a never-attained or complete fulfilment. The Brazilian religious context, especially, but not exclusively, popular religion, is undergoing a certain spiritualistic mood that seems to be shared by various mentalities in Brazil.

(Sanchis 1997b: 29)

In past decades, Catholicism in Brazil has emerged as a privileged theme in the Social Sciences literature, coming to be recognised as a key element in the formation of a “national culture”, setting down patterns of sociability and their basic moral values (Sanchis 1986, 1994, 1997, 1997b; Oro 1988; Steil 2001; Novaes 1997; Droogers 1987 among others). According to Sanchis (1997), Catholicism was the “traditional urban popular culture” of the poorer sectors of society. He defined this cultural form by its “low moral rigour, low civic discipline, a work effort that, while often intense, is also anarchic, and, from a religious point of view, a porosity of identities which allows everyone to participate at the same time in multiple institutions’ (Sanchis 1997: 124) – even if, publically at least, people tended to define themselves as ‘Catholic’. With the growing presence of Pentecostal Evangelicalism in public spaces, and the growing numbers of ‘believers’ (*crentes*) in the IBGE census since at least the 1990s, studies have begun to focus not only on the reactions of the Catholic Church to this growth, but also to the possible emergence of a “Pentecostal culture”<sup>2</sup> in Brazil. These studies stress either the incorporation of secular culture<sup>3</sup> by the new cultural forms, or the latter’s break with a pre-existing cultural order

In this article I develop the view, consonant with those I have presented elsewhere, as well as with the analyses of other scholars, that there is a significant analytical convergence between religions and cities. More specifically, I will analyse the constitution of a Pentecostal culture in urban peripheries, taking into account how an increase in the number of Pentecostal churches and their faithful led to changes

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<sup>1</sup> I thank my dearest master and friend Luiz Antonio Machado da Silva for the attentive reading and comments on the first draft of this article.

<sup>2</sup> My approach to a “Pentecostal culture” in this article is based on the analysis of social situations, interactions that occur in a determinate time and space. Throughout the article I provide empirical data that will allow the reader to follow and check my analysis. My focus is on practice, grammars, aesthetics, and moral frameworks that are explicitly associated with an Evangelical (and mostly Pentecostal) religious universe. What has caught my attention is how the symbolism and the moral framework of Pentecostalism has diffused throughout all sectors of the social life of urban peripheries, more than their consolidation in the institutional settings of Pentecostal religious life. My study of Pentecostal culture is therefore not so much concerned with how faith is experienced by pastors and believers in the many Pentecostal churches that exist, but rather with what happens beyond the confines of Pentecostal churches, congresses and meetings. In brief, my focus is on how people activate, manipulate and operate this faith and its daily moral framework and grammar.

<sup>3</sup> I take “secular” here not as a socially consolidated pole of the opposition between the religious and the secular (Weber 1982; Eliade 1992; Berger 2004; DaMatta 1991), but as the persistence of the religious in domains considered to be secular, where it becomes its own means of presentation and existence (Asad 1993; Taylor 2010 among others).

in different spheres of social life in these areas, including changes in sociability, economics, aesthetics, politics, landscape and in the grammar<sup>4</sup> of the day-to-day interactions of their residents, whether they have direct ties to Pentecostal Evangelicalism or not.

This article is based on empirical data gathered during field research carried out intermittently between 1996 and 2015, in the Acari shantytown in the Northern region of Rio de Janeiro. The ethnography of the region provides us with “good case studies to think” the local and supralocal context.

### **Pentecostalism and modernity: a brief history of its emergence and expansion in Brazil**

Pentecostalism is a religious movement that originated in the United States of America (Los Angeles, 1906) and arrived in Brazil through the *Congregação Cristã do Brasil* (Christian Congregation of Brazil, São Paulo, 1910) and the *Assembleia de Deus* (Assembly of God, Pará, 1911). The scholarly literature on the Pentecostal movement in Brazil typically identifies three ‘waves’, each of which corresponds to distinct theological and ritual approaches (Freston 1994)<sup>5</sup>. The first wave (1910 to 1950) was mostly confined to the north of Brazil. Inspired by the Biblical narrative of Acts 2 of the New Testament, its main characteristic was an emphasis on the manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, much as in primitive Christianity, including speaking in tongues and curing through intramundane asceticism, austerity and an incentive toward irreproachable conduct. A rejection of politics, television and music were also typical of this period, as was moderation in behaviour, and in what was consumed and worn. Followers emphasised knowledge of the “Word” and the teaching of the Bible in Sunday Schools. Government was congregational and decentralized. The education of pastors was continuous, much longer than it had been in former periods, and followed a sequential logic: one started out as an assistant, before becoming a deacon, a vicar, an evangelist and finally a pastor. The doctrine of the churches founded during this period was based on a pre-millenarian eschatology that expected the return of Christ and the salvation of souls. This posture required keeping a distance from “worldly” things in preparation for the return of the Lord.

The second wave began in São Paulo toward the end of the 1950s and lasted until the final years of the 1970s. The pioneer denominations for this period were the *Igreja Quadrangular* (Foursquare Church, originally from California) and the *Igreja Pentecostal Brasil para Cristo* (Pentecostal Church Brazil for Christ) and *Igreja Deus é Amor* (God is Love Church). These churches were organized along congregational and Episcopalian lines. Liturgy predominantly emphasized the gift of healing. During this wave, a number of evangelizing innovations were implemented, including financial investment in radio programmes and large-scale services held in sports arenas. Evangelicals gradually consolidated their presence in public spaces, and maintained the study of the Word in Sunday Schools.

The third wave started with the foundation of the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (IURD; Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), in Rio de Janeiro, in 1977. Similar denominations soon emerged, such as the *Igreja Sara Nossa Terra* (Heal Our Land Church), *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (International Church of the Grace of God), *Igreja Internacional do Poder de Deus* (International Church of the Power of God) and the *Igreja Renascer em Cristo* (Rebirth in Christ Church). All of these Churches were founded in Rio de Janeiro and spread to other regions. These denominations preach the abdication of intramundane

4 By “grammar” I mean the socioculturally established relation between the terms activated by different social actors during their engagements. My inspiration for this definition comes from the work of Veena Das (1998; 2007) on the grammar of gender and its associated violence. The author asks to what extent gender is activated as grammar that authorizes violence. In her view, bodies are taken to be signs and expressions of that grammar. In my view, it is not only bodies, but also the images (murals and graffiti) that are signs of Pentecostal grammar activated by residents and drug dealers in the shanty towns.

5 Although this classification remains hegemonic in the Brazilian literature on Pentecostalism, I argue that, given the wide variety of existing denominations, interactions between believers through internet social networks, and the influence that the theology of prosperity exerts on these denominations, we should always consider social behaviour in context, according to the meanings that subjects attribute to their own acts. This analytical proposal is set out in Vital da Cunha et al. (2017).

asceticism and of “the old revelation of the Cross” (Mariano 1999), according to which the earthly suffering of Christians was necessary so that they may attain paradise in the afterlife. Rituals are long, leaving little time for reflecting on Biblical verses. In contrast, there is a lot of time for music (in different styles, from choirs to Evangelical rock and pop), impassioned sermons and individual testimonials. Sunday schools cease to be important in some denominations, or disappear altogether in others. Sermons are emotive, involving effusive manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The denominations of this third wave make extensive use of media of mass communication, curing rituals and exorcisms. They seek out public life, engaging with culture, politics and the arts. They believe that life should be prosperous and happy here on earth. Ostentation is a valid expression of the grace and glory of God. Churches are Episcopalian, with a centralized administration, liturgy and doctrine<sup>6</sup>. Although it is beyond the aims of this article, it is important to observe that the rise of Neopentecostalism had an effect on the whole of the religious field in Brazil.

As I noted above, the arrival and diffusion of Pentecostalism in the country seemed to be a “direct challenge to traditional Brazil” (Sanchis 1997: 124). The *jeitinho brasileiro* (‘Brazilian way’), adept at bending norms and adjusting laws to customs, was said to be coming to an end, quashed by the Modernity imposed by this new Christianity (Mafra and De Paula 2002). From this angle, Pentecostalism was considered to be a cultural and ethical break with the patterns upon which Brazilian society was based, with religious traditions organized under the banner of syncretism, and with the moral flexibility characteristic of the daily interactions of Brazilian people. We still find statements to the effect that Pentecostalism is a religion that severs its ties with the past, that is exclusivist and ascetic, that dissolves social ties and cultural heritage. But we also increasingly find views that recognize a degree of underlying cultural continuity, suggesting that, in a way, Pentecostalism has itself been “Brazilianised”:

Nothing is apparently more inapposite to national identity than Pentecostalism. Reinstating a dualism between good and evil in its wake, Pentecostalism seems to divide the world in two, allowing for no middle ground. Moreover, popularizing doctrines that demand chastity and moderation, Pentecostalism appears to reverberate a modern version of North American puritanism [...]. In the same vein, through a study of the ongoing expansion of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Pierre Sanchis (1998) suggests that ‘between the Pentecostalization of Brazilian culture and the Brazilianization of Pentecostalism’, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God is irrefutable proof that the latter has taken precedence over the former. Various other studies have restated this view: it has since become well-established that Pentecostalism’s break with national parameters was, at best, partial (Mafra and De Paula 2002:61).

Similarly, Joel Robbins (2004) attributes the success of Pentecostalism to a propensity to adapt “in its own terms”. Its global growth results as much from its many adaptations as from its modern, western and neoliberal character.

According to Sanchis (1997), prosperity – the last term in the transformation of Pentecostalism in Brazil – establishes a new way of being Christian in the country. After converting traditional Brazilian ‘pre-modernity’ into ‘modernity’, Neopentecostalism confronted the struggles of religious ‘post-modernity’ through practices of self-cultivation, self-help, the natural healing of the body, well-being and

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<sup>6</sup> This characterization of a historical process in *waves*, as occurs in other research areas in the social sciences, privileges a consideration of denominations. However, in more contemporary analytical terms, in what concerns the analysis of the public behaviour of Evangelicals, the denominational base ceases to be central insofar as ideas and worshipers tend to circulate between churches. There has also been a steady growth in the post-denominational movement in Brazil, the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). The NAR results from the work of the North American theologian Peter Wagner, “whose perspective announces the transition from the denominational model to a post-denominational one, followed by ideas that, in the last decades, the Holy Spirit has re-established the ministry of the prophets and the apostles” (Oro Alves 2013: 127). On the necessity of rethinking the classification of Evangelicals in contemporary Brazil, see Vital da Cunha et al (2017).

the realization of desire, adapting and creating hierarchies as demanded by specific social situations. From these encounters a particularly creative reinvention of the Biblical tradition emerged. But it was also here that Neopentecostalism reacquainted itself with the currents of “positive confession”, Christian Science and The New Thought Movement that are at the origin of its contemporary esoteric rebirth.

The popular character of the Neopentecostal movement is one of its most striking characteristics, so much so that it has been called “a religion of the poor” (Sanchis 1997). For one, it is readily identifiable with poorer neighbourhoods, whether aesthetically or because of a certain use of the body (Mafra and De Paula 2002, Robbins 2009; Campos and Maurício Jr. 2013, among others). Once again, I quote Sanchis:

The figure of the pastor, or even of the believer, stamping ‘the street’ with the austerity of his clothing, his selective itineraries, characterizing ‘the house’ with his ascetic conduct and the visible fruits of an economic discipline of work and savings. Above all, the predominance of a clearly defined and uniquely religious identity, a wedge between the old popular tradition and modernity (Sanchis 1997: 124).

Another index of Pentecostalism’s association with the poor is the nature of its services. Starting in the 1980s, Sanchis (1997) observed a cultural adaptation of Pentecostal (or Neopentecostal) ritual “in its own terms” (Robbins 2004): “The Pentecostal service, markedly musical, emotive, made up of collectively regulated individual effervescences, found its specific albeit logical place among the ‘festivals’ that have always been a part of Brazilian popular religious customs” (Sanchis 1997: 124).

### **Data on evangelicals in urban peripheries**

In the 1990s, Evangelicals made up a growing religious segment, expanding their presence in different spheres of Brazilian social life: in media, politics, the economy and culture. The percentage of Brazilians who declared themselves to be ‘Evangelical’ in 1980 was 6.6%, according to the IBGE census data. In 1990, this number had increased to 9% of the national population, while Catholics amounted to 83.8%. Although their ranks were increasing, and though they have been very active in public life since at least the 1970s, we knew very little about *them*, which strengthened a general feeling that they were the *other* in relation to a Catholic *us*. The anthropologist Rubem César Fernandes, with the collaboration of Regina Novaes, Otávio Velho, Clara Mafra and others, carried out research to address this feeling. They sought to understand how these Brazilians behaved, and to elucidate their habits, values, political and power strategies. The results were published in 1998 in the book *Novo Nascimento: Evangélicos em Casa, na Rua e na Política* (‘New Birth: Evangelicals at home, in the streets and in politics’). The data of the Censo Institucional Evangélico (CIN, the Evangelical Institutional Census, 1992), composed of statistical and ethnographical data, were important for the research that resulted in *Novo Nascimento*. This data had already established the relationship between Pentecostalism and urban peripheries. The table below helps us to visualise this relationship.

**Table 1** – Church building per region

<b>Region</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Number of temples per 10 000 inhabitants</b>
Region 1	Southern Zone	1,33
Region 2	Northern Zone and Downtown	2,94
Region 3	West Zone	3,78
Metropolitan Region	Niterói	2,86
	Paracambi	3,02
	São Gonçalo	3,76
	São João do Meriti	4,19
	Maricá	4,30
	Nilópolis	4,44
	Itaboraí	4,71
	Nova Iguaçu	4,95
	Duque de Caxias	5,0
	Magé	5,99
	Mangaratiba	7,23
	Itaguaí	7,26

Source: Evangelical Institutional Census – 1992, ISER.

In the following decade, Evangelicals reached 15.5% of the national population, whereas Catholics had dropped to 73.8%. Using microdata from the IBGE, Jacob et al. (2004) produced religious maps of Rio de Janeiro and its greater metropolitan area, identifying the recurrence of religious identity by region. These maps show that Catholicism was predominant in the long coastal strip “that extends from the Recreio dos Bandeirantes to the City Centre, passing through Barra da Tijuca, São Conrado, Leblon, Ipanema, Copacabana, Leme, Botafogo and Flamengo. We can add the neighbourhoods of Gávea and Jardim Botânico to those contained in this strip” (Jacob et al. 2004: 136). In this region, Catholics represented almost 80% of the population. Conversely, in peripheral municipalities, Catholicism represented “less than 48% of the population. The percentage of Catholics was even lower in areas such as Nova Iguaçu, Belford Roxo and São Gonçalo, at between 41% and 30%” (Jacob et al. 2004: 136).

Analysis of microdata on the Pentecostal presence in Rio de Janeiro<sup>7</sup> showed that it “was like a mirror image of the map of Catholics, since it was mostly concentrated in the peripheries” (Jacob et al. 2004: 137). The municipalities of the Baixada Fluminense, in particular Nova Iguaçu, Belford Roxo and Duque de Caxias, show high percentages of Pentecostals at 30%. According to Jacob et al. (2004), the same phenomenon is reproduced in São Gonçalo and Itaboraí. In Rio de Janeiro, the highest percentages are found in the Zona Oeste (Western Zone), where, in some areas, they amount to more than 20% of the population. Data provided by the DataFolha Institute for 2007<sup>8</sup> confirm this tendency, attesting that 37% of the residents of the Baixada Fluminense declared themselves to be “Evangelical”, in contrast to 41% who claims to be “Catholic”.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that Pentecostals were 68% of those who self-declared as Evangelicals.

<sup>8</sup> These data can be methodologically compared with those of the IBGE.

According to IBGE data, in 2010 Evangelicals totalled 22.2% of the national population. Catholics totalled 64.6%, decreasing almost 10% relative to the previous census. Despite a relevant increase in the number of Pentecostals in the middle and upper classes, IBGE data attests that the growth of Evangelicalism in Brazil that began in the 1970s is an urban<sup>9</sup>, and particularly a peri-urban, phenomenon, occurring mostly in the social and geographical outskirts of urban centres, as we saw above. A diverse range of ethnographies have tracked the growth of Pentecostalism in favelas and peripheries, analysing its impacts on these region (Mafra 1998; Machado 2013; Galdeano 2014; Marques 2015; Esperança 2012; Vital da Cunha 2015 among others).

In the next section, I will focus on data gathered during fieldwork in the Acari favela to analyse more recent changes in the modalities of expression and organization of the local population, including that of drug dealers. While I have thus far been focusing on statistics and a review of the relevant literature, I will now turn to “image reading” as a methodological device, inspired by Lilia Schwarcz’s call “to scour uses of images not as illustrations, but as documents that, like other documents, construct models and conceptions” (Schwarcz 2014:393). I therefore consider that images (here, murals on favela walls) exert some type of agency, which is central to the current study. I propose that they actualise and memorialise religious sentiments, in the terms put forward by Latour (2004). Rather than expressing a rational message, images produce feelings in those who gaze upon them. As Latour stresses, the exercise of un-freezing images, that is, of accompanying their flow, is a *sine qua non* condition for understanding processes of mutual transformation (in those who emit and those who perceive images). My aim is to analyse the transformations, perceptions and strategies of the emitters in action. As we saw above, the literature has tended to emphasise the importance of the body, ritual music and, more generally, the religious experiences of Evangelicals. In contrast, I will highlight the images they produce, taking them to be fundamental symbols of a community, even if it is ultimately an imagined one. Images, in brief, will be analysed as aspects of a Pentecostal identity.<sup>10</sup>

### Three decades of paintings in Acari

I have elsewhere analysed the paintings made by residents of the Acari favela, or by artists commissioned by drug dealers, during the 1990s and 2000s as a way of envisaging the social dynamic of the region, which, I argued, mirrored those occurring in other urban spaces (Vital da Cunha 2014, 2015). In the 1990s, for instance, the most common religious symbols and paintings in shared spaces in the Acari favela were St. Cosmas and Damian, St. George, St. Jerome and Our Lady of Aparecida. Zé Pilintra images were also common in altars or saint-houses made of cement and covered in tiles, found in the street corners of the favela. In many of these representations, Catholic symbols referred to their correlates in Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Umbanda or Candomblé. We would thus find Salve Doum, Xangô and Ogum next to paintings of saints<sup>11</sup>.

9 For instance: IBGE data from 2000 show that 87% of those who declared themselves to be Evangelical lived in urban settings.

10 I cannot provide a review of the concept of ‘identity’ in the social sciences in the space of this article. However, I should make it clear that I do not treat ‘identity’ as if it were an emanation of “the way of being of a particular group, nor the immediate result of its material conditions” (Montero 2012). Identities are constructed discursively and rely on a process of social mediation, in which different actors and social symbols take part. Identities are thus the result of configurations (disputes and consensus) always situationally defined in space and time. Identity thus implies difference, which takes on an absolutely crucial role in social relations, inasmuch as “the difference before individuals is much more important than the similarity between them” (Simmel 2006 [1908]:46). As Poutignat & Streiff-Fernat (1998) also remind us, the concept refers to a range of possibilities for identification which betrays its analytical vitalities and possibilities, being seen by Lévi-Strauss as a “totemic illusion” (Rocha 2014).

11 Through so-called “Brazilian popular religiosity”, we often find syncretisms between Catholic saints and the entities of Umbanda or the divinities (orixás) of Candomblé. Some saints, entities or orixás were thus more commonly depicted, such as St. Cosmas and St. Damian (or Doum in the Umbanda tradition), represented by two children covered in robes and wearing brimless cylindrical hats. They are the patron saints of children, traditionally commemorated on the 27th of September when families distribute candy in homemade paper bags. It is an important sociocultural event, particularly in the Northern and

**Image 1:** Moment 1- Medieval Aesthetic. Image of Saint George slaying the dragon.  
Unidentified author. Acari shantytown.



Photo by Marcos Alvito. 1996.

**Image 2:** Naif Aesthetic. Mural in Acari shantytown – Saint Jerome/Xangô.



Photo by Marcos Alvito. 1996.

Western Zones of the city, as well as in the favelas. The rise of Evangelicals and their aversion to the worship of saints reduced the social strength of this festival in recent decades. St. George, also known as St. George the Warrior, is Ogum in Umbanda and Candomblé. He is seen to be a strong protector, lord of weapons and a victor in war. His Saint Day in the Catholic tradition is on the 23rd of April, which is a holiday in the state of Rio de Janeiro. St Jerome is Xangô in Umbanda and Candomblé, the patron saint of justice and a punisher of liars. Our Lady of Aparecida, a representation of Mary Mother of Jesus, is the patron saint of Brazil, and is venerated by many popular religious traditions. Zé Pilintra é a Umbanda entity, an important spiritual guide in ritual.

**Image 3:** Zé Pilintra – Umbanda entity featured in altar.



Acari shantytown. Photo by Marcos Alvito. 1996.

According to residents, drug dealers and a prestigious *mãe de santo* ('mother of saints', a Candomblé priestess) that I spoke to, local *terreiros* (Candomblé places of worship) had routine activities open to the public at the time. The most important functioning *terreiro* in 1996 hosted residents and *filhos de santo* ('children of saints', Candomblé novices) from other parts of town, who went to consult with the *mãe*<sup>12</sup>. Local drug dealers also visited Dona Isabel's *terreiro*, consulting the shell oracle, asking the orixás for protection, presenting offerings, and helping out with the Saint Feasts. For St. George's Day and St. Cosmas and Damian's Day, in particular, there would be fireworks, festivities and, during the latter, sweets and toys were distributed to local children. Inspired by Mauss' (2003), Maggie stresses the occult aspects of magic, the fact that "it hides from the collective and the public, reserving itself for more individual and private spaces" (Maggie 1992: 21). Nonetheless, as the author also notes, magic "overflows the spatial limits of the house where rituals are carried out, mysteriously asserting itself in public spaces, concealed in *despachos*, *ebós* [types of offerings] and sorcery". (ibid: 21). In Acari, magic, the beliefs of residents and drug dealers, extrapolated the limits of the houses and the *terreiros* not in a mysterious way, but ostentatiously occupying streets with its sacred icons, songs and prayers.

The growth in the number of Evangelicals in Acari was already noticeable in the 1990s. It was evident in the creation of an Evangelical landscape of churches, banners and billboards publicizing sermons; campaigns, testimonials, worship, and celebration through music, commerce, and in the moderate clothing of women and men in contrast to the dress of non-Evangelicals, as we saw in the statements by Sanchis (1997) and Mafra and de Paula (2002) concerning the Pentecostal presence in poor areas. It was, in fact, in the end of the 1990s that the conversion to Evangelicalism of a drug dealer who was at the time the leader of the Terceiro Command (Third Command, a drug gang) gave rise to the commissioning of paintings in the favela.

<sup>12</sup> An affectionate way of referring to the *mãe de santos* for the Candomblé and Umbanda faithful.

It was in the early 21st century, however, that the Evangelicals came to dominate the favela. The number of Evangelical Churches in the region grew by about 50%, while the *terreiros* discontinued their public activities. Paintings of saints, music celebrities, ethnical references and football symbols gradually gave way to Biblical passages. Reading of these images (Schwarcz 2014), we can see their agencies and the meaningful combinations of text and stylistic form. Most images (text and form) refer to The Old Testament, the God of War and the God of David.

**Image 4:** Written religious references signed by a collective. Evangelical Universe of the Spiritual Battle. Acari Shantytown.



Photo by Christina Vital. 2008.

“It is true. Our Saint is strong. He needs no candle. Yet He has his own light. With His gaze, He soothes the largest waves in the ocean; heals all diseases; casts out all types of bad spirits; and even the spirit of death. He rose on the third day. He is the only living God. He is the Saint from Israel. Jesus Christ. By: Acari Community. Fanatic and neurotic for Jesus.”

**Image 5:** Biblical text – “And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not”. God is Faithful. Exodus 20:20. Acari shantytown.



Photo by Christina Vital. 2008

During this time, the most wanted drug lord of the gang Terceiro Comando, born and raised in Acari, converted to the Assembly of God of the Latter Days. His arrest, widely reported by the press, was meant to contribute to the collective feeling that the safety measures put in place by Anthony Garotinho, then-governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, were on the mend. Sometime later, with little fanfare, he was released and returned to Acari. After his conversion and return to the favela as both drug lord and Evangelical believer, a series of changes were effected in public life and local economics. The destruction of Catholic and Afro-Brazilian religious images, which had begun with the police in the mid-1990s, continued unabated, now with the blessing of the drug cartels who sponsored local artists to paint murals with Biblical texts.

Then, after Jorge Luis died, Heremias took over. He started to go more to the Evangelical side. Biblical texts. Wasn't that long ago he had a little house for St. George in the Amarelinho and they removed it not too long ago... Now it's the gangs. They started to spread Biblical passages throughout the community in the Piracambu court. Where there used to be a St. George, they wrote "Jesus is the Lord of this place", if I'm not mistaken. He also told them to put two outdoors in the main entrances to the favela, and today, wherever you go there's a huge wall where you're going to read Biblical sayings, not only here but all over the Acari complex: Acari, Vila Rica, Vila Esperança... (Interview with a resident of Acari; Acari Favela, January 2009).

Much as Anderson (2008) argues for the formation of imagined national communities, paintings in Acari simultaneously affirm and foment identities suited to the religiosity which predominates at a given time. According to Anderson, these symbols take hold in the interior of a particular logical community, wherein, despite the conflicts that are always present in the lives of any social group, the proclaimed identity and collectivity appear to be "essential, natural" precisely because they are shared. In the present case, the images, at different times and in consonance with hierarchical relations situationally established, reinforce an intrinsic relation between a collectivity and specific religious universes: first, Catholic and Afro-Brazilian; later, Pentecostal.

Tracking images-in-movement is a methodological strategy that I had not foreseen before fieldwork, but which enabled me to find analytical keys for each moment and its respective social dynamism. Thus in the 2010s, more specifically in 2013, the images in Acari were different. They were still Evangelical, but their aesthetic had changed. Paintings with passages from the Old Testament were substituted by new messages. Alongside wide usage of passages from the New Testament, one could also identify a set of words that together composed a motivational landscape made up of texts, words and colours linked to happiness, well-being, and incentives to faith, peace and love. Letters came to have a more rounded shape, leaving behind the Old English font, or other styles identified with the papyrus or parchments of ancient sacred scripts. The youthfulness of the new messages emerged from an aesthetic associated with graffiti, but also through the depiction of comic book characters.

**Image 6:** Evangelical graffiti – “Go ye therefore and teach all nations” Matthew. 28:19. Acari shantytown.



Photo by Christina Vital. 2013

**Image 7:** Evangelical Graffiti – “Kindness, Love, Union, Peace” – Acari shantytown.



Photo by Christina Vital. 2013

**Image 8:** Evangelical Graffiti – “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

Matthew 21:22. Acari shantytown.



Photo by Christina Vital. 2013

Authorship was now attributed to the paintings: they are the work of a collective of artists (The graffiti artists of Jesus) and, in some cases, of a specific artist (André Soldado). The *hall of fame* graffiti style caught my attention. The change that the images underwent – the religious motivational message now rendered in a sweet tone, as Gilberto Freyre used to say about Christianity in Brazil – reflected both changes in techniques of Evangelization and the participation of the Evangelical youth, specially marked in urban peripheries, but increasingly present in Graffiti events throughout the city, from the Zona Sul to the Zona Oeste, as well as changes in the social dynamic of drug dealing in the region. In an interview in April of 2017, André Soldado told me that the paintings had been paid for by local drug lords. But the artistic project was conceived and offered to the drug gangs by a young believer, who attended services at the Assembleia de Deus dos Últimos Dias. The deal was that he would paint all the walls of the favela for a weekly wage which would then be distributed to the artists that worked with him. According to my interview with Soldado, both the style and the passages were selected by the young man who came up with the idea in order to produce a more “pleasant, happy” landscape.

As argued by Taussig (1999), Musil (2006) and Sansi (2005), the destruction of former images makes them strikingly visible, un-freezing and releasing them from the invisibility that had been imposed by the ostentation of their presence in the area.<sup>13</sup> The religious graffiti from 2013 thus marked the emergence of new phase in the management of drug dealing in the favela. The former images, most of which were commissioned by the drug lord active at the time, expressed a phase in which the drug trade tried to identify itself with the religious narrative of a “spiritual battle” through its association with the Igreja Pentecostal Assembleia de Deus dos Últimos Dias, drawing from the political prestige of this Church among drug dealers and part of the population. Later, when he distanced himself from this Church and attempted to create his own Church in Brasília, the murals changed. By accepting the project of a believer who acted as a intermediary with the artists who painted the murals, the new drug lords signalled this new phase in relations between crime and religious leaders.

<sup>13</sup> On processes of unfreezing images, see Latour (2004). For an interesting discussion on the uses of active invisibility, see Giumbelli (2010).

In 2015 the head of the drug trade in the region was a young man linked to the Afro-Brazilian Umbanda religion, but the commissioning of murals with Biblical passages continued. At the gate of the sports court (formerly known as the ‘Sand Court’) there is a large mural with references to Jesus. In the 1990’s there was a painting of Bob Marley superimposed on a marijuana leaf at the same spot. In the next decade there was a Biblical text on a parchment. In 2013 and 2015 new paintings with Christian references emerged.

**Image 9:** Wall to the right of the entrance to Quadra da Areia (Sand Court).



Picture by Marcos Alvito. 1996.

**Image 10:** Wall to the right of the entrance to Quadra de Areia.



Picture by Christina Vital. 2006.

**Image 11:** Graffiti on the gate and wall of Acari court: “God is the owner of this place”. On the right, the graffiti says “Jesus guards our community”.



Picture by Christina Vital. 2015.

The Sand Court is identified as a privileged (though not exclusive) space where drug dealers and their allies in Acari socialise (Alvito 2001). Football matches, card games, funk parties and gospel shows sponsored by the drug gangs were often held there. At present, other games are carried out in the multiuse court, which is draped in a new aesthetic, even though it is still known as “drug gang territory”. The current drug lord decorated the inside of the court with graffiti (commissioned from Carioca artists) that commemorates race, music and sports icons. They share space with a four-meter high painting of a rat that has been there for some time. The rat is a reference to the preferred pet of drug lords; keeping pet rats was a tradition in the 1980s and 1990s, as reported in various news articles and books (Alvito 2001; Barbosa 1997; Larangeira 2004, among others).

**Picture 12:** Graffiti inside Acari’s court.



Photo by Christina Vital. 2015.

**Picture 13:** Graffiti inside Acari's court. Alongside the Hip Hop and Reggae icons, we can read: "The opinion is yours, the reality is mine".



Photo by Christina Vital. 2015.

It is striking that the exterior of the court displays Christian symbols, conveying a youthful aesthetic and an Evangelical grammar, including references to Jesus, as Droogers (1987) proposed in his article on Brazilian 'minimal religiosity'. The author argued that Catholic hegemony in Brazil was also visible in the recurring use of the Word of God and the names of saints in public spaces. This changed with the rise of Evangelicalism, particularly in cities, after which Jesus and other terms started to be used either mockingly, in comedy shows as a stereotype of suburban "believers", or in colloquial conversations between middle and working class residents, mostly confined to the Zona Norte, the favelas and the peripheries of Rio de Janeiro and other cities. These expressions, which draw from prosperity theology and ritual events associated with Pentecostal churches include: victory, struggle, confirmation, spiritual warfare, provocation, fear of the Lord, kneel, the heat of the Holy Spirit, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me, I am more than a winner, in the name of Jesus, the Word has power, the blood of Jesus has power, the joy of the Lord is our strength, cure, anointed, blessed, blessing, feet on fire, glory, Hallelujah, Amen, you're tied up/ wrapped up with the Gospel, vases [to refer to the fragility of people], male servant, female servant, work, in honour and in glory, malignant, trembling, God will use you tremblingly, God is with you, shroud, Peace of the Lord, among many others. Images and words, articulated in order to enliven religious feelings and identities, as well as in the service of crime.

These expressions are part of the day-to-day of the residents of the favelas and the urban peripheries, whether as a sign of adherence or as critique, revealing a dynamic of domination and dispute, and of religion as a device, but also a practice, of feelings that bind. It is also a way of seeking protection and identification between residents and drug dealers, of communicating moral agreements and belongings, relations and adherences, even when these remain partial. Speculations concerning these grammatical and aesthetic usages emerge in the speech of the favela dwellers. In the moral cleansing put into effect by the "true believers", as some of the interviewees – mostly women – defined themselves, the religious affiliation of drug dealers who do not bear "true testimony" was always questioned:

...in the community there are many Candomblé saints. I can't say for sure, but I only know of one centre that is not totally active, but... there have been changes in relation to this. But that doesn't mean that there were changes in thought and in attitudes. People who were tied to Candomblé, who believed in images, stopped believing. And they turned to a more Evangelical side, let's say. It's not that everyone believes. Many go to the services, but, like, it's... they go even when they ask for protection. Just like they went to the macumba [Candomblé] centres to ask for protection, to seal their bodies, wore their spirit guides... it's changed today. Today they go to church, ask for prayers and carry the Bible in their pockets. This is something that's actually very good. Before they wore their spirit guides, their omens, and today they go to church, ask for prayers and carry those pamphlets in their pockets, carry the Bible in their pockets, those New Testament Bibles and the Book of Psalms, but they are not there in the world. Like, I don't know what security they have. I don't know if it's the same view that they had, the spirit guide protected them and the Bible will protect them as well... I don't know what their view is (Interview with a resident of the Acari favela, Acari, January of 2009).

It has become a common language, a code that communicates across social spaces, sometimes mockingly, but most of the time as evidence of a social base which, while not institutionally connected to Pentecostal churches, tends to see this religious universe as a horizon with which it must engage – whether to experiment the comfort that comes from being among peers, or to understand and challenge. The facts from my fieldwork pose a further challenge to those who hope to analyse social life in urban peripheries. I argue that it is impossible to investigate the economic and political dimensions of crime without taking into account the analysis of Pentecostal moral codes and symbolism.

The paintings inside the court and on its gate, establishing its threshold with the exterior, producing and affirming itself as an Evangelical collectivity, are emblematic of this double movement of hiding and revealing beliefs and values, of the very relationship between drug gangs and the “imagined community” of Evangelicals that surround them. While in the interior the paintings are “profane”, in the exterior they conform to how the “imagined community” identifies itself. We can think of the interior and exterior of the court as distinct moral regions<sup>14</sup>, the grammar and aesthetic of which draw the distinction: outside the relation with wider society, which expects certain behaviour and presents itself through particular symbols; inside the revelation of a self that intersects with others. Unlike notions of a violent sociability (Machado da Silva 2008), and despite the fact that guns create an inequality in all dealings between drug dealers and residents, the sale of drugs depends, to an extent, on the fear of favela dwellers and on the peaceful coexistence of all involved. Thus, although the current drug lord is not a believer, in the public spaces of the favela he sponsors Christian graffiti. Inside the court, the domain from which he cannot relinquish control, graffiti has other forms, aesthetics and textual messages.

## Final considerations

The social dynamics which I have been following through intermittent fieldwork carried out between 1996 and 2015 in the Acari Favela, as well as through the analysis of three decades of images and my own understanding of the literature that has investigated the interfaces between Pentecostalism and social projects, drug dealers and former drug dealers, former criminals, militia-men, prisoners, police officers, etc., in favelas and urban peripheries (Novaes 2003; Mafra 1998; Mafra e De Paula 2002; Machado 2013; Souza 2017; Teixeira 2011, 2013; Galdeano 2014; Marques 2015; Esperança 2012 among others), allow us to reflect on

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<sup>14</sup> I use the notion of ‘moral regions’ inspired by the analyses of Goffman on social interactions and representations. The moral regions analysed here would include the “façade” and the “back”. Both are conditioned by different factors, and correspond to social situations which demand distinct positionings/behaviours from the actors. The façade favours a greater degree of public constraint, of exhibition, which demands that one behaves according to a variable number of social expectations. In the moral region of the back, subjects still interact one before the other, but in a manner that is less publicly constrained, which allows participants “to be who they are” in individual terms, but also in terms of gender roles – as the author explains by reference to the work of Simone de Beauvoir.

the anatomy of an urban culture of Pentecostalism, particularly prevalent in areas that are geographically, as well as socially, peripheral. An urban culture of the periphery within which elements of a Catholic tradition and Afro-Brazilian religions compete, and in which, more recently, Pentecostalism has made itself preponderant. This Pentecostalized mode of expression encompasses and hybridizes other, older religious references, making evident disputes over symbolic, aesthetic, grammatical, political, moral – in a word, cultural – hegemony. It does not exclude, but rather ‘updates’, both in terms of morality and ritual. It makes use of a common and pre-existing Christian infrastructure and of disseminated beliefs in spirits and supernatural entities.

Pentecostalism thereby appropriates a set of beliefs and updates them in its own terms, as Robbins (2004) would say. Pentecostals, for instance, do not deny the power of the Catholic message, but consider it mistaken in its idolatry of saints and the Virgin Mary. Similarly, they do not deny the power of the entities and orixás of Umbanda and Candomblé, but they attribute to them an exclusively malignant character. Powerful, but demoniacal, they must therefore be defeated. In urban peripheries, Pentecostal grammar and its moral values thus gradually transform into common codes that emerge from distinct forms in bodies, minds, murals.

This “Pentecostal culture” which has been growing in the peripheries and the favelas, and spreading beyond these confines, vying with the national secular culture, is, in part, a challenge to traditional Brazil, as Sanchis (1997) would have it. It is, on the one hand, disruptive; it dilutes family bonds because it severs itself from the foregoing collectivity. It is predatory, extractivist (Pierucci 2006).

And so it is. A religion of individual salvation can only establish itself, at first, extractively: it systematically extracts members of other collectivities – collectivities with which, before hearing the “good news” that triggers apostasy, they considered themselves to be structurally and inertly part and parcel. A Congregationalist religion, it “con-gregates” individuals that it “dis(a)gregates” from other grates, by secession or abduction, individuals that it recruits by uprooting, deterritorializing them from their conventional settlements, deviating them from their conventional routes, systematically disqualifying other religious systems of belief and practical life, unapologetically criticising or condemning other ways of life, other agendas of behaviour – religious or otherwise, collective or otherwise, significant or otherwise” (Pierucci 2006:112).

In contemporary public debates, Pentecostalism, and particularly those denominations associated with Neopentecostalism, is linked to violent, anti-democratic and intolerant practices. Empirical data show how the exclusionary, demonizing and intolerant practices of Pentecostalism found room for contextual concessions. It spreads because it adapts to styles (aesthetic, musical, commercial, etc.), updates meanings and rituals. Today, in favelas and urban peripheries, Pentecostal networks re-enforce family values, ties of friendship, kinship and neighbourliness. It presents itself as a fundamental way of life<sup>15</sup> in the urban environment, struggling between forces for good and evil. It gains momentum through diffusion, gradually secularizing what it has updated in its doctrines and rituals, making these common to all. Conflicts emerge and disappear regularly, as observed in the ethnographies mentioned previously.

However, it should be noted that the exhibition of Pentecostal images in the moral region of the façade (in the wall of the Court, for example), and their absence in the moral region of the inside (the interior of the Court, for example), does not invalidate their analytical status as a common code. On the contrary, their presence in the region of the façade is not indicative of what is “true”, but of what is socially imposed, what is positively valued at different times.

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<sup>15</sup> Wirth (1979) offers a classic discussion for urban studies on the notion of “way of life”. This idea is the inspiration for important studies of urban spaces in Brazil, such as that of Magnani (2012) on the blocks and thoroughfares of cities.

By following a strand of the history involved in all of this, we can say that the basis of what Pierre Sanchis identified as a “traditional urban popular culture” in the 1990s, and which included Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions, has changed drastically. The basis of this culture of the urban periphery updates existing beliefs in a typically Pentecostal way, producing new sociabilities, urban circulations, social movements of the favelas and peripheries (Vital da Cunha 2015; Lânes 2017), new aesthetics, music (Novaes 1990; Sant’Ana 2017; Carvalho 2017), grammars. In contrast to what was considered an “urban popular culture”, we can say, very succinctly, that the traits of an urban culture of the periphery at present would include: (1) High valuation of entrepreneurship and of discipline as a means for success, resulting from different sources of influence, among which I would stress prosperity theology<sup>16</sup>, diffuse references to positive psychology and (consequently) the affirmation of a new relation between employment and unemployment. In this sense, as well as providing incentives for followers to start their own business, there is also a positive appraisal of cultural, artistic and sporting projects (often practiced in religious institutions), advertised as potentially instilling a “discipline for success”; (2) A sense that personal effort produces victories, which sets the groundwork for the former elements. It is worth stressing that, in a social context of vulnerability, where state services are, at best, only partially available, the sense of “relying on oneself”, on one’s “own efforts” and on more or less organic networks of kinship and coresidence, have always been basic resources for survival. Nonetheless, it is easy to discern an emphasis on individual effort, even if existing networks, when available, are engaged; (3) High valuation of the morality of the family (increasingly the nuclear family, rather than the extended family) and of well-defined gender roles; (4) From the religious point of view, a decrease in what Sanchis called a “porosity of identities, which allowed each person to engage in multiple institutional definitions at the same time” (Sanchis 1997:124); 5). Wide use of metaphors that refer to warfare (between good and evil), struggle (over souls and between antagonistic forces), tribulation (daily struggle of individuals for material and spiritual survival), all inspired in a theology of domination which stamps the doctrines and rituals of contemporary Pentecostal churches.

I propose that, among other factors<sup>17</sup>, this culture of the periphery results from the growth of Pentecostalism in these areas of the city and the combinations and exclusions that thereby result. Its spread, and the establishment of a cultural base forged in Pentecostalism, take place in the midst of conflicts, resistances, passionate affiliations and restraint. This is life pulsating; it could not be otherwise. The lifeways of institutional Evangelical Pentecostalism is therefore much more restricted than the population that is affected by its practices, and which manipulates its symbolism – indeed, updates it.

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<sup>16</sup> Prosperity theology became prominent in Brazil after 1980, with denominations that emerged in this decade, although all of the Evangelical (and even the Charismatic Catholic) field has been affected by it. This theology is based on the interpretation of certain Books of the Bible, particularly The Book of Malachi. Some of its main proponents include: Essek M. Kenyon, Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, T. L. Osborn. This theology claims that the domination of societies will occur through the personal empowerment of Christians. As Teixeira (2016) reminds us, prosperity is not exclusively linked to financial success, but to the harmony between the many dimensions of the life of the faithful, such as education, health, family, marriage, etc.

<sup>17</sup> Methodologically, this is the seminal sociological orientation of Weber, in which an aspect of social life is accentuated so as to be analysed in depth. We are thus, evidently, in agreement with the multi-causal character of all social situations.

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Dossier “The Urban Peripheries”

III. Construction of a new imaginary of the city and public space:  
Saraus movement, mobility and religion

# What happens between the *roça* and the urban periphery?

## Some questions about movement

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### **Abstract**

This article explores the idea of movement through an analysis of the flows between rural and urban areas, more specifically between small farms (*roças*) and the peripheries of big cities. I turn to my own ethnographic research on rural and riverside communities in the north of Minas Gerais, as well as ethnographies produced on populations in the Cerrado Mineiro, in order to question the primacy of movement in the definitions of the city and to extend the notion through an approach that incorporates the relations between persons and things circulating in both these social spaces.

**Keywords:** Movement, peripheries, small-scale farming, rural-urban flows.

# O que há entre a roça e a periferia?

## Algumas questões sobre movimento

### **Resumo**

Este artigo busca problematizar a ideia de movimento a partir do trânsito entre os universos rurais e urbanos, mais especificamente entre a roça e as periferias das grandes metrópoles. Para tanto busco no meu material etnográfico sobre comunidades rurais e ribeirinhas no norte de Minas Gerais, bem como em etnografias realizadas no Cerrado Mineiro, instrumentos para por em questão a exclusividade do movimento como definidor da cidade e estendê-lo para uma abordagem que incorpore as relações entre pessoas e coisas que circulam pelos dois espaços sociais.

**Palavras-chave:** Movimento, periferia, roça, fluxo rural-urbano

# What happens between the *roça* and the urban periphery?

## Some questions about movement

Luiz Felipe Rocha Benites

### **Ethnographic preamble**

Afternoon is drifting into evening as I return to the house where I am lodged in Gerais Velho, a quilombola community in the small municipality of Ubaí, in the north of Minas Gerais, following a conversation with an interlocutor. On the way I cross paths with two lads from the community. As I greet them, I note that they are carrying hoes and that one of them has a mobile phone playing a song by Racionais MC's, a well-known rap group from the outskirts of São Paulo and widely popular throughout Brazil. The mobile phone signal was poor in the locality, save for some points on higher ground and a few homes equipped with special antennae to boost the signal. But this mattered little to the young people from this rural black community. The more recent models, purchased in São Paulo, were not only desired as status symbols, they were also a means of sharing the musical styles most enjoyed by them: forró and rap. The association of rap's image with the urban outskirts of different cities across the planet does not erase the fact that appropriation takes place far beyond these spaces. In this case, the taste for rap is just one element connecting rural areas to the urban periphery in a scenario where people circulate people between and through the two spaces.

### **Beginning the conversation**

The idea of this article is to produce a small analytic shift in approach and explore some of its implications: what happens when we take the viewpoint of those people who live in rural areas, but frequently transit between these areas and the city, as a basis for reflecting on urban peripheries, the city itself and the movement that tends to be associated with the urban world? The exercise proposed here sets out from an ethnographic observation: the inhabitants of two black rural communities in the northern region of Minas Gerais where I conducted my research, Ribanceira and Gerais Velho, take the practice of moving to large urban centres, especially Brasília and São Paulo, as an important reference point in the constitution of local social life. In these displacements, an intense flow of exchanges and appropriations is established, historically explored by the social sciences as a question of the impact of the urban world on rural ways of life. Undoubtedly, the unidirectionality of this process has already been relativized and further research has provided an insight into the emergence of new ruralities (Carneiro 1998). What I propose here, though, is to contribute to problematizing the circulation of people and things outside the analytic frameworks of migration and the difference in scales between rural and urban collectives.

The people living in Ribanceira and Gerais Velho are described, including by themselves, as inhabitants of the *roça*. Originally referring to land cleared of forest or scrubland for plantation, the latter is a native category readily encountered in diverse Brazilian rural contexts. As will become clear from the material discussed below, my interlocutors refer to the *roça* as a place (rural area), a labour activity (agriculture and livestock breeding) and a condition (being 'from the *roça*' means to have a social origin and

habits related to the rural world). As a concept that encompasses the ideas of place, labour and condition, the *roça* also functions as a parameter capable of situating other spaces (urban, fluvial, etc.), activities (work in charcoal kilns, fishing, etc.) or sociabilities (chats, visits, festivals, etc.). Fishing is an activity that does not exclude work in the *roça*, especially in Ribanceira where it is practiced conjointly. Neither the temporary work in charcoal kilns nor even long-term work in the city seem to erode the feeling of territorial and identificatory belonging linked to the *roça*.

On the other hand, while the category of *roça* has a deep connection to the ways in which my interlocutors problematize labour, what also clearly emerges from these formulations is a dimension of freedom associated with the control over labour activities that extends the meaning of *roça* to life outside of work, as I shall demonstrate later. It includes the practice of visits for *prosear*, chatting,<sup>1</sup> the unregulated consumption of *pinga*<sup>2</sup> and other situations, such as the frequent local festivals, the *folias de reis*, etc., which interrupt the work cycles and mobilize communities in activities of intense enjoyment. Hence, in the contet studied, *roça* constitutes a concept that is not reducible to the idea of *farm*.

The motivation to explore the rural-urban movement comes from a text by Michel Agier (2015: 492) where he argues that the “...impulse towards a virtual centrality, embodied by the vital heart and identity of the city, simultaneously insatiable desire and infinite movement of the frontier to the centre, is the motor of urban action.” The context in which this idea is formulated is made is an interpretation made by Henri Lefebvre, and later picked up by David Harvey, of the 1872 Paris commune as an event that was less about a working class uprising and more an urban struggle. Agier cites this interpretation in support of his proposal to situate what he calls *city-making*, that is “...an endless, continuous process without finality” in which “movement is essential to this conception of the city as a permanent construction. One of its declinations is displacement.” Hence, “movement towards the centre from the peripheries and suburbs or the ‘poverty zones’ is a displacement and a spatial conquest” (idem: 491).

Agier’s viewpoint is, without doubt, a rich form of apprehending the relations constituting the *urbe*. However, since I subscribe to the idea of a *primacy of movement* evoked by Tim Ingold (2011: xii), I think that a danger lurks in heuristically limiting our idea of movement to the urban circuit, or likewise in taking centre and periphery as substantive rather than relational entities. Consequently, I wish to bring the circulation of persons and things in themselves to the centre of analysis, leaving the departure and arrival points of these movements at the outer edges of the present reflection. Conferring centrality to movement, rather than the poles between which it occurs, allows us to think about mobility from both extensive and intensive perspectives, irrespective of the scale from which we approach the topic. In this way, we can affirm movement not only as the displacement or mobility between points or places, but also as a virtual intensity. This enables us to extend the idea that the city is *made* by movement to the analysis of any other *topos*, as well as approach movements in their intensive quality, perceiving what they mobilize within people.

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<sup>1</sup> A local term that designates the activity of conversing. *Prosear*, *dar* or *ter uma prosa*, is a practice so appreciated and important in the everyday life of the two communities that there exists an expression, *prosa-ruim*, ‘bad chat,’ for disagreeable or annoying people. There is a relation of identity between the characterization of the person and the quality of their conversation. A *prosa-ruim* individual is someone whose conversation, in their form of expression and/or the topics discussed, displeases or bothers his or her listeners.

<sup>2</sup> *Pinga* or *cachaça* is a distilled spirit made from sugarcane.

## Between *roça* and periphery

In a lively bibliographic survey of works up to the 1970s, Moacir Palmeira and Alfredo W. B. de Almeida (1977) show how the idea of *migration* – and a wide assortment of derivatives: emigration, immigration, exodus and so on – became an important interpretative tool for thinking about, among many other demographic movements, the mobility of inhabitants of rural areas to urban centres. Works like those of Eunice Durham (2004), based on research conducted in the 1960s and 70s, highlighted the connections between spatial mobility and the prospects of social advancement among rural migrants to the city of São Paulo, especially those settling in its outlying areas. On interviewing these migrants, the author noted a constant in their explanations for the quest to “improve their lives” in the state capital. She refers to the ‘difficulties’ of rural life, which she orders into four sets of allegations: “poverty and the lack of comfort; ‘hard’ work; the uncertainty of production; the impossibility of improvements” (Durham 2004: 170). While such explanations may still make sense for those seeking to “hunt a better life” (*caçar uma vida melhor*), as my interlocutors in the north of Minas Gerais would say, the transiting of people between the periphery and the rural world seems to be pushed into the background in favour of these fixed reference points.

The classic monograph *The Hobo*, by Nels Anderson (1967), originally published in 1923, was one of the first urban ethnographies to show how the activity of moving about is, in itself, a central element in the characterization of some social subjects. The sociologist’s research was carried out in an area he calls *Hobohemia*, a locality to which the hobos gravitated, homeless and jobless wanderers, generally migrant workers originally from rural areas or small towns from the interior of the United States, who would transitorily find themselves in Chicago at the start of the twentieth century, even though they often found no work there. I would argue that the *mobile way of life* of the hobos, as expounded by Ulf Hannerz (1980: 34), albeit from a fixed viewpoint, the *main stems* located in *Hobohemia*, challenges the heuristic limits of the notion of migration insofar as it relativizes some of the ideas central to it, including the point of departure, point of arrival and direction.

Far from the large metropolises, a number of authors conducting ethnographic investigations in small municipalities, rural areas and riverside communities in the Cerrado region of Brazil, both in Goiás and Minas Gerais (Andriolli 2011; Benites 2015a; Carneiro 2010; Dainese 2011; Guedes 2013; Pereira 2011; Weitzman 2015), have recently expressed the same discomfort over the limitations that the ideas of departure, arrival and direction impose on the analysis of the movements of people and things explored in their research. In these works, we can observe the apprehension of “movement not only as displacements, flows, mobilities and circulations, but also as rhythms, tendencies, courses, speeds and sequences whose variations are irreducible to a single pattern” (Carneiro & Dainese 2015: 146). Here movement is not reduced to scales, trajectories, coordinates or motivations given *a priori*: instead these works strive to apprehend the meanings constructed and mobilized in relations (between humans, but also between humans and non-humans) that generate a variety of movements. In this way, they aim to “ascertain, clarify and emphasize some of the specific forms through which movement emerges in analysis as an organizing principle of social dynamics” (ibid: 145).

Avoiding conceptualizing movement simply as the passage between a starting point and a destination, an approach that divests the phenomenon of any value in itself, André Dumans Guedes (2013, 2015) explores the distinct meanings possessed by the native idea of movement for inhabitants of the small municipality of Minaçu in the north of Goiás. For these people who witnessed the construction of three hydroelectric dams that ended any possibility of gold prospecting in the river running through the municipality, mobility is a value expressed in a rich vocabulary (‘wandering,’ ‘travelling the road,’ ‘still,’ ‘dead,’ ‘animated,’

<sup>3</sup> *Caçar*, “hunt”, is a common expression in Minas Gerais to designate the activity of searching – sometimes uncertain in terms of the paths taken or end effects – undertaken by people with different objectives in mind.

‘agitated,’ ‘fever,’ ‘captivity,’ and so on) that confers meaning to the practices and memories that weave the fabrics of their own lives. In the author’s own words, movements, according to his interlocutors, can be conceived and experienced in the following acceptations:

a) movement as circulation, as spatial displacement, as travel or wandering, referring to the experiences of someone who, far from home, experiences the *trecho* [road] or the world; b) movement as agitation, animation, frenzy, fever; c) movement as effort or struggle, emblematic of the harsh and omnipresent reality of the impoverished who are always left chasing; d) movement as autonomy, associated with the freedom of someone in control of their own body, life and time; e) the latter aspect being closely associated with movement as evolution, progress, advancement, improvement of life, ‘social mobility.’ These axes can also be apprehended through the reference to that which, in each of them, problematizes or opposes the idea of movement: a) the lived experience of home and the family (Guedes 2012), or the calmness or rest experienced after a day of work and wandering; b) what is frozen, inanimate, dead, lifeless; or, on the other hand, calm or tranquil; c) being unable to walk with one’s own legs; d) being captive or trapped; e) remaining still (Guedes 2015: 135).

The five axes listed by Guedes, based on the formulations and experiences of his interlocutors, provide a wealth of suggestions for contemplating other ethnographic contexts. Grazielle Dainese (2011), for example, encountered the same connection between movement and animation/agitation evoked by Guedes. In Dainese’s work there is an association between ‘liking the *roça*’ and the greater ‘movement’ existing in it. This connection derives from the fact that, in the Minas municipality studied by the author, a contrast is made between the ‘desert’ (absence of movement) of the town and the ‘movement’ of the rural world. The reason for the latter movement are the novenas and festivals held in celebration of Catholic saints at the weekends. This movement provides the chance to practice ‘welcoming others,’ feeding into the image of residents as a ‘hospitable people’ or ‘welcoming people.’ The animation and agitation of the festivals also extends to the so-called ‘time of politics,’ i.e. the electoral campaign periods when the disputing ‘sides’ expose the divisions, conflicts and social realignments existing in the region’s small municipalities, as demonstrated in the works of Benites (2010, 2015b) Chaves (2003), Dainese (2011), and Palmeira & Heredia (1995).

Returning the discussion to the transiting between rural areas and large metropolises, the work of Rodica Weitzman (2015) merits special attention. In a study of dietary and farming practices among Mineiros moving from Ubuporanga, a municipality in the east of Minas Gerais, to the Morro dos Prazeres and Escondidinho communities in Rio de Janeiro, the author shows how the activated memories, the practices of giving-receiving and requesting-offering, and their food classifications (*Minas food, Rio food, strong and weak food*, etc.) constitute intensive qualities within the emotional syntax and social circuits fomented in the rural-urban flux.

The quality of ‘being Mineiro’ evoked by the subjects studied by Weitzman refers back to their supposed origins: the *roça*. This is an important factor in social navigation within the Rio communities in question, specifically when it comes to reconstituting ties with kin and fellow Mineiros who have also settled there. Coming to Rio de Janeiro did not sever the bonds with their place of origin. Rather these ties are permanently actualized by the work of memory concerning life in the *roças* – nostalgic when referring to food, or painful when associated with the hard manual labour and hierarchical relations with bosses/farmowners – and by the intense transit of people and things from the interior of Minas Gerais to the Rio capital. Relatives and friends visit frequently, when they are not swelling the labour networks of those who have already converged on the Morro dos Prazeres and Escondidinho communities. Some interlocutors visited Ubuporanga, especially during the *Festa dos Ausentes*, the Festival of the Absent, an annual event held for people from the municipality who have moved away to other cities. In this rural-urban circuit we

can also observe a flow of goods, especially food items (cheeses, sausages, breads, seeds for home vegetable gardens, etc.). Also recreated in the Mineiro circle of these urban communities are various practices of small-scale farming, such as planting vegetable plots, a circuit of visits and reciprocity among *conterrâneos* (fellow Mineiros) and even the gathering of some medicinal herbs in the neighbouring Tijuca Forest. It is within the movement inscribed in the material and mnemonic shifts between the rural and urban worlds that the dichotomies of city-rural and past-present, though still reference points, “become diluted and blurred through lived practice” (Weitzman 2015: 26).

## Looking from Ribanceira and Gerais Velho

Ribanceira and Gerais Velho are located in the São Francisco River Valley, in its Minas Gerais portion, and some of their residents maintain relations of kinship and friendship. Ribanceira is situated in the municipality of São Romão, on the left shore of the ‘Velho Chico’ (Old Francisco River) while Gerais Velho belongs to the municipality of Ubaí, which shares a border with São Romão, on the right shore of the same river. Ribanceira has around eighty-eight houses and Gerais Velho seventy. In both communities, a significant portion of the population *mexe com roça*, ‘works the fields.’ This expression designates the work dimension present in the everyday life of these interlocutors. The category *mexer*, shake, stir, functions here as an equivalent to the verb ‘work,’ but also frequently indicates the more general idea of dealing with something. In this sense, *roça* evokes the action of people working a terrain to produce some kind of foodstuff. The *roça* as a productive activity – felling forest, preparing the land, planting, harvesting and, in certain cases, processing what has been harvested, as in the case of the production of manioc flour; but also the breeding of livestock like cattle, pigs and chickens – mobilizes domestic groups and neighbours, producing and actualizing relations of affect and mutual consideration.

Social life in the two communities is characterized by an intense roaming in which the relocation to large urban centres is just one more movement in trajectories marked by mobility. In Ribanceira and Gerais Velho, the trips to and from home and the areas of cultivation and livestock breeding, the orchestration of work activities, their pauses for *prosa*, visits to relatives, friends and *compadres*,<sup>4</sup> as well as the savouring of *pinga*, weave the fabric of social relations and the very meaning of life in the *roça* and on the waters of the São Francisco River. The personal trajectory of many of its inhabitants, especially the elderly, is marked by the mobility of relocating from one farm to another, working as *agregados* (tenant farmers) and *caçando* (hunting) a better life. The seasonal journeys to work in the coffee plantations in the Minas Triangle region, or in the region’s charcoal kilns, also involve experiences of constant mobility. Additionally one kind of practice that pervades the life of these communities in regular cycles is also itinerant in fashion: the festivals. These events tend to be linked to a Catholic religious calendar (Nossa Senhora Aparecida, Bom Jesus, Santos Reis) mobilizing the choice of ‘kings and queens’ responsible for rituals of commensality in which food and drink are offered to members of the community, as well as processions of *congado* and *caboclos* leading the ‘festival-goers’ through the city, performances on horseback – called *cavalhadas* – around the churches, and ‘whirls’ of groups of *folias* celebrating Santos Reis or Bom Jesus, depicted on flags that circulate through homes. In this context, I would also call attention to another notion of movement that emerges from these rural communities in relation to this type of event and that tends to suspend the work of the *roça* in order to initiate the festivals: agitation and animation, as in the ethnographies of Dainese (2011) and Guedes (2013).

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of *compadrio* relations (co-parenthood or Spanish *compadrazgo*) in the Latin American context, see Mintz & Wolf (1950).

These small and large displacements not only form part of the everyday life that I was able to record in fieldwork, they are part of the personal histories of the inhabitants of the localities in question. A world that oscillates, sometimes in tense form, between poles of fixedness and mobility, stability and instability, emerges in the studied life trajectories.

The temporary or definitive move to work in other localities is a phenomenon present in both communities. Leaving in search of better pay and regular work, many workers, especially young people, are mobilized by intermediaries with contacts in the city who call them to work in the harvesting a variety of crops in other regions of Minas Gerais and São Paulo. Others journey to large urban centres, especially São Paulo, Brasília and Belo Horizonte. In this case, the men usually find employment in the civil construction sector and the women in domestic jobs. The majority have kin in Ribanceira and Gerais Velho to whom they send financial assistance, especially wives and children, when the latter are not among the kin and friends in the networks of employment allocation in which they are inserted.

In research carried out in the 1960s and 70s with rural migrants to São Paulo, Durham (2004) had already noted the importance of families and groups of sociability from the community of origin in the dynamics of mobility in geographic and social spaces. In the author's words:

The spatial universe of the workers coming from traditional communities [...] is formed by places where their acquaintances were, or where people to whom they are related live. [...] [M]igration does not necessarily involve a dissolution of relations with the family or with the wider primary group (relatives, *compadres*, neighbours and friends) and possesses an eminently familiar character which, however, is not manifested in the relocation of the entire domestic group. On the contrary, spatial relocation is almost always undertaken by isolated individuals or by very small groups of two or three people. The familial aspect of the process is manifested in the frequent reconstitution, either total or partial, of the original family groups. Alongside relatives, *conterrâneos* [people from the same region] comprise another important reference group (Durham 2004: 189).

The cases observed by myself in Ribanceira and Gerais Velhos corroborate the author's analysis: the favelas of São Paulo's south zone, some on the border with Diadema like Americanópolis, are the preferred destination of residents in the studied localities, since this is where they find networks of social relations that function as their universe of reference and that maintain the connections between the community of origin and the city in which they chosen to settle. As in the study by Weitzman (2015), the histories of the definitive or temporary dislocations of some of my interlocutors and their families are also an axis via which the place of the *roça* is constituted through opposition to the city, specifically the large metropolis, given that the circulation of people between these places is frequent.

The inhabitants of Ribanceira and Gerais Velho who stayed temporarily in São Paulo spent from one to fifteen years in the state capital. Gilmar and Lindaura provide examples of a discourse widely disseminated in Gerais Velho concerning the relationship with time as an instigator of difference between the ways of life in the *roça* and the city. Gilmar, a young man of about thirty, is a *compadre* of Lindaura, owner of a small bar in Gerais Velho. Below I reproduce an excerpt of our conversation in Lindaura's bar. Gilmar lived in São Paulo for 12 years but "likes Gerais" and has no intention to leave there again, "only if necessary." A keen fan of Palmeiras, a leading São Paulo football club, Gilmar explains why he likes Gerais: "In Gerais you have freedom and time to do things. In São Paulo you're always chasing after time." Lindaura, for her part, associates time with slavery:

In the past, you were a slave to the barons. Today the chains have passed from hands to feet. You're a slave to yourself, your bills, the work you have to do, your children. At least here in Gerais that's what it's like: you see Filu? [Filisberto, a neighbour who had just left the bar while we were talking.] He was on his way to take his cattle to the pasture, he stopped by here for a little bit of chat, drank his *pinga*, played some pool with you two [Gilmar and I] and is now on his way. Would you be able do that in São Paulo?

The control over time, combined with a sociability that is not submitted to heteronomic work, seems to delimit another dimension of the *roça* as a space and lifestyle that, despite the awareness of my interlocutors concerning its limitations in terms of access to certain material goods and the 'hard' manual labour involved, affirms an important aspect of how territorial belonging is conceived in these communities. While São Paulo is imagined as a place where "you're always chasing after time," this certainly includes the displacements from the periphery to the centre, as Agier (2015) describes. The sensation of a compression of space and time in the experience of life in the São Paulo capital lend support to Marilyn Strathern's ideas concerning scale:

When distance is measured by time, getting there faster makes the globe seem smaller, and speed becomes a shorthand for space-time compression. [...] When what is being measured is independent of the means of measurement, we talk of the means of measurement as scales (Strathern 1999: 204-205).

In Ribanceira and Gerais Velho, time is configured – in many cases, though not exclusively – in cycles that are delimited by the adaptation to certain activities: the *time of the rains and the drought*, organizing farming and fishing activities; the *time of politics*, related to the period of open conflict that leads to social realignments around the sides disputing the elections; the *time of festivals*, constructing and actualizing relations of alliance and affect for the organization of the festivities, suspending quotidian work and instigating practices of intense enjoyment linked to Catholic worship, but also the profane dimensions associated with dancing, consuming alcohol, and so on.

In these modalities of experiencing time, the latter is measured by the activity that instigates it (the *time of politics* or the *time of festivals*) or by climatic alternations (dry periods and rainy periods). In other words, time is part of that which it designates and not a measure for other things (the working day, spatial mobility in the city, productivity, etc.). This is why "you're always chasing after time" in São Paulo. On the other hand, the experience circumscribed by the cycles of small-scale farming make clear that "it involves creating an appropriate time for the performance of particular activities deemed important by society" (Palmeira 2002:173). Although the relationship between appropriate time and the exercise of specific activities, with the consequent sensation of controlling time, is more apparent in the rural world than in the city, these temporal experiences can coexist, albeit often in conflicting form, in both social spaces. After all, as Bruno Latour (1993: 74) aptly reminds us: "time is not a general framework but a provisional result of the connection among entities."

The relationship with place is also constructed in the experience of transiting between the rural and the urban, especially when it comes to ownership of the land on which one lives. One of my interlocutors, Dona Benedita, told me that during the years when she lived in São Paulo, she worked as a volunteer on social projects run by a parish church close to the favela where she lived on the outskirts of the Santo Amaro district. At this time she knew a lot of people, especially migrants from the northeast of the country, who were living in a vulnerable situation, jobless and incomeless. She asked many of them why they did not return to their home region. These people, most of rural origin, replied that they no longer had 'land': it had been sold either by the migrants themselves or their families. Benedita was saddened by this situation and observed that she and those she knew from Gerais Velho, despite living in São Paulo, still had their own small plots of land to which they could one day return. At the same time, she knew that material needs

meant that many of them had to sell their lands to pay back debts or to seek out better life opportunities in other localities. In her discourse, Benedita legitimized the process under way of obtaining official state recognition of the Gerais Velho territory as a quilombola community, which would transform land into a property for collective use that could not be sold, thereby safeguarding its ownership for future generations of the 'Povo do Gerais' [Gerais People].<sup>5</sup>

## Searching for implications

The Brazilian social sciences, Anthropology included, have conducted exhaustive studies of Brazil's urban peripheries as a destination for large numbers of people moving from rural areas or small town in the country's interior in search of better living conditions. Not infrequently, such relocations tend to be approached through the analytic frame of migration. As Palmeira and Almeida (1977) point out, the problem with the notion of migration is its emphasis on the points of departure and arrival of these processes. This does not mean that such emphases do not yield good investigative results, or robust data and precise analyses. In this article I have proposed an analytic shift that aims to attribute value to the movement of people and things in itself. In this way, we can obtain a clearer idea of the extensive and intensive qualities of movements:

On one hand, it concerns the quality of movement understood as a displacement in space, i.e. mobility in relation to specific spatial coordinates created by movement itself; on the other hand, we encounter it operating without any relation to travelled space, i.e. intensive, non-geographic movements. Yet these two forms of movement are not necessarily separate [...] in general they are enmeshed and interdependent" (Carneiro & Dainese 2015: 148).

By exploring movement in these terms, we are advocating an approach that applies equally to urban and rural worlds. It is not a question here of repeating the worn out simplifications of the invasion of rural areas by urban practices. This idea seems to derive from the idea of migration itself, which fixes rural and urban localities in dichotomous fashion and prevents us from perceiving the more subtle processes involved in the constitution of these two social spaces. After all,

[...] the notions of 'rural' and 'urban,' as well as that of 'rurality' and the duality intrinsic to them, are social representations that express distinct worldviews and values determined by the symbolic universe to which they refer, thus making them subject to re-elaborations and diverse appropriations. Members of the Brazilian agrarian elite resort to practices and habits taken to be 'rural' but which, giving new meaning in other cultural contexts, serve the aim of showing and at the same time instituting their modern face. Meanwhile the Brazilian 'neo-rurals,' motivated by values proper to the old rural world (self-determination, contact with nature, tranquillity, simplification of social relations), reproduce productive and technological urban values at a rational level (Carneiro 1998: 60-61).

While the *roça* is central to the identity of the inhabitants of Ribanceira and Gerais Velho, such communities have also become consolidated as a key reference point for those moving to live in São Paulo for many years. The history of the inhabitants of Gerais Velho as a history of black people in search of autonomy is revealed, for example, in the dialogue that unfolded in Lindaura's bar concerning Filu's 'path.' The experience of freedom constructed on a daily basis by these inhabitants is found among few

<sup>5</sup> *Povo*, 'People', is a regional term used to designate a set of persons linked by at least one of the following relations, which may also be combined, depending on the case at hand: descent and/or alliance, neighbours, or identification with a locality or institution. In the case described here it refers to the inhabitants of a locality (Gerais Velho) who also, though, maintain relations as neighbours and kin.

people, it is true. However, such an experience is replicated in the festivals associated with the Catholic religious calendar, when they draw back to the community those we left the area in search of better life opportunities.

While the rural-urban flow contains exchanges that enable the absorption of technological and musical novelties, like the latest releases by *forró* and rap bands cited in the preamble to the article, in terms of the circulation of food produce (Weitzman 2015), the festivals in the rural communities provide ideal ritual moments for re-encounters and for material and affective exchanges.

The idea of the periphery as a primary locus of poverty, urban violence and sociospatial segregation is not given any special emphasis in the work of memory of my interlocutors, save for remarks concerning rap lyrics and their evocation of the difficulties of life in the metropolis. Instead, the idea of movement as “chasing after time” in São Paulo is mobilized much more as a contrast to the tranquillity and autonomy of life in the *roça*, whose movement, in the sense of animation and agitation (Dainese 2011; Guedes 2015), emerges in the cycles of the religious festivals with their processions, whirling *folia* and *forró* dances. While in the work of Weitzman (2015), the city is evoked as a less heteronomic place of work, given the onerous patronal relations found in the rural world, in Gerais Velho and Ribanceira people say that the farming work is more under their control than in the city. In both cases, the discomfort seems to centre on the relations intrinsic to wage labour. For the residents of Morro dos Prazeres, this involves the relation between the farmer and his tenants. For the inhabitants of Gerais Velho and Ribanceira, who hold ownerships of their territories, the boss-employee relation is located in the city and in seasonal activities like harvesting crops in other municipalities or working at the charcoal burners in the region, neither of which are viewed as *roça* work.

The native idea of belonging seems to be associated with an idea of movement in contrast to the notion of fixity, even though the land on which one produces and lives is an important reference point. This movement is constituted through the very experience of being in transit: from house to work, from work to the bar, from Gerais and Ribanceira to neighbouring communities or to the São Paulo periphery, from house to house in the *folia* celebrations, and so forth. The very language of northern Minas, through the use of categories like *mexer* and *caçar* cited earlier, are signals of this fact. It is within these movements that the social bonds determining the meaning of belonging to these localities are produced and reinforced. In Ana Carneiro’s ethnography, the journey between places is summarized in a saying frequently repeated by residents from Vão dos Buracos: “who doesn’t walk, doesn’t know” (Carneiro 2010: 277). Perhaps we could take this saying as encapsulating a local form of learning with strong echoes found in Tim Ingold’s thought:

...lives are led not inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere [...] Places, then, are like knots, and the threads from which they are tied are lines of wayfaring [...] Places, in short, are delineated by movement, not by the outer limits to movement (Ingold 2011: 148-149).

What we can extract from all this is the idea that the spatial conquest associated with displacement, as described by Agier (2015: 491) in his characterization of the city, needs to be conceived beyond the heuristic limits of the urban world. Movements also need to be apprehended in terms of the autonomy and freedom that they imply for people who settle in the rural world or in the city, as well as for those who continually transit between them. Paying attention to both the extensive and intensive qualities of the movements of people and things can provide a rich source of material for developing a more complex understanding of the relations between rural and urban without running the risks of freezing one of these poles.

Recently some social scientists have claimed the emergence of a “mobility turn” or even of a “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller & Urry 2006, Creswell 2006).<sup>6</sup> This new approach encompasses a broad set of research produced in areas such as anthropology, sociology, geography, cultural studies, science studies and technology. These investigations are characterized, on one hand, by the critique of ‘static’ social science and, on the other, by an apprehension of the new and multiple mobilities of humans and non-humans produced by the sociotechnical transformations of the contemporary world. In this scenario, “[i]ssues of movement, of too little movement or too much, or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are central to many lives and many organisations” (Sheller & Urry 2006: 208).

While this theoretical and methodological turn in the field of the social sciences has contributed to a more complex and refined understanding of the movements of people and things overlooked or underestimated by static or sedentary views of social life, some caution is needed in evoking the idea. It can easily convert into a replication of the vices of the rural-urban opposition by reducing the dynamic of mobilities in these rural areas solely to by-products of the flows of modern capitalist liquidity gestated in the cities.

Classic works like that of Pierson (1972: 39) had already noted in the 1950s “a considerable demographic movement, namely: inside, to inside, from inside to outside, and through the community” in diverse settlements along the São Francisco River. Pierson (1972) and Neves (2011) associated the wanderings of the inhabitants of the São Francisco Valley with a supposed cultural disposition inherited both from the many indigenous populations who historically inhabited the territories along the river and from the *bandeirantes*<sup>7</sup> who later explored the region. Irrespective of this allusion, the mobility of these populations can be conceived in terms of the distinct practices of displacement that make up a swidden-based and riverine sociality. Although Gerais Velho and Ribanceira are not immune from the technological and economic transformations of the globalized world, the circulations and movements of persons and things appear to be rooted in the very personal history of their members and, consequently, in the long-term dynamic of social life of these communities. Above all, the threads that weave the fabric of life in both communities seem to be indissociable from the respective wanderings of their members. Recognizing this dynamic does not mean ignoring their connections to broader and more deterritorialized processes, but rather ceasing to attribute any precedence or exclusivity to the association of the city with movement. Instead, this comprehension can set in motion our own suppositions concerning the city and the periphery.

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6 Tim Creswell formulates a conceptual distinction between movement and mobility: “The movements of people (and things) all over the world and at all scales are, after all, full of meaning. They are also products and producers of power. I want to make an analytical distinction here between movement and mobility. For the purposes of my argument, let us say that movement can be thought of as abstracted mobility (mobility abstracted from contexts of power). Movement, therefore, describes the idea of an act of displacement that allows people to move between locations (usually given as point A and point B in abstract and positivist discussions of migration). Movement is the general fact of displacement before the type, strategies, and social implications of that movement are considered.”(Creswell 2006: 2-3).

7 *Bandeirantes* were the organizers of private expeditions called *bandeiras* (flag), which explored the inland territories of Brazil between the seventeenth century and the early years of the eighteenth century. These expeditions used to carry a flag to identify them. The main objective of the *bandeirantes* was to find gold, precious stones, and to imprison indigenous people who would be sold as slaves.

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## «Ici c’est une copropriété, c’est pas la pagaille»:

Les copropriétés populaires du PAC/PMCMV  
comme instrument de nettoyage moral  
pour d’anciens habitants des favelas

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### Résumé

Cet article présente les résultats d’une enquête sur les copropriétés construites à la fois par l’état et la municipalité de Rio de Janeiro pour y reloger les habitants de favelas, dans le cadre de programmes tels que le PAC et *Morar Carioca* [Habiter Carioca], souvent dans des programmes résidentiels du programme *Minha Casa, Minha vida* - MCMV. Pendant mon travail de terrain ethnographique, j’ai pu remarquer que les habitants employaient différemment la typologie de « copropriété » : partant de son insertion dans l’imaginaire de la ville en tant que lieu de résidence des groupes les plus aisés, ces nouveaux copropriétaires mobilisaient cette représentation dans la construction de leurs *projets de nettoyage moral*, comme une manière de se dégager du *stigmat* d’habitant de favela. La recherche du nettoyage de l’image n’impliquait pas d’abandonner les pratiques des favelas : on observe des comportements et des utilisations des espaces contrastant avec le modèle de la copropriété, ce qui permet à de gens de l’extérieur et de l’intérieur d’utiliser le terme de « favelado » [habitant de favela] en tant que catégorie d’accusation. Et toujours pour échapper à la stigmatisation, les habitants mettent en œuvre trois stratégies de *nettoyage moral* : la redirection du *stigmat*, la personnalisation des règles et l’esthétique de la distinction.

**Mots-clés:** Copropriété, favela, *stigmat*, projet de nettoyage moral.

# «This is condominium, not a mess»:

The low income condominiums of the PAC / PMCMV as instruments of moral cleanliness for ex-slum dwellers

## Abstract

This article introduces the results of a survey on the low income condominiums used by the state and municipality of Rio de Janeiro to resettle slum residents affected by projects such as PAC and “Morar Carioca”, often using PMCMV constructions. Using an ethnographic fieldwork, I observed that the residents made a different use of the condominium type: starting from their insertion in the imaginary of the city as dwelling of the most affluent people, these new condominiums used such representation in the construction of their moral cleansing project, as a way to become disfellowshipped of the favela stigma. The search for image cleanliness did not mean abandoning “favela” practices: it is often observed behaviors and uses of spaces that contrast with the condominial model, allowing people from outside and inside to activate the term “favelado” as a category of accusation. Still to escape stigma, residents resort to three strategies of moral cleansing: readdressing stigma, customizing rules, and the aesthetics of distinction.

**Keywords:** Condominium, favela, stigma, moral cleansing project.

# “Aqui é condomínio, não é bagunça”:

Os condomínios populares do PAC/PMCMV como instrumentos de limpeza moral para ex-favelados

## Resumo

Este artigo apresenta resultados de uma pesquisa sobre os condomínios populares, condomínios utilizados pelo estado e município do Rio de Janeiro para reassentar moradores de favelas atendidas por projetos como o PAC e o *Morar Carioca*, muitas vezes utilizando construções do PMCMV. A partir do trabalho de campo etnográfico, observei que os moradores faziam um uso distinto da tipologia condomínio: a partir da sua inserção no imaginário da cidade como moradia dos grupos mais abastados, esses novos condôminos utilizavam tal representação na construção dos seus *projetos de limpeza moral*, como forma de se desfilarem do estigma de favelado. A busca pela limpeza da imagem não significou abandonar práticas “faveladas”: observam-se comportamentos e usos dos espaços que contrastam com o modelo condominial, permitindo pessoas de fora e de dentro ativarem o termo favelado enquanto categoria de acusação. Ainda para escaparem do estigma, os moradores recorrem a três estratégias de *limpeza moral*: o reendereço do estigma, a personalização de regras e a estética da distinção.

**Palavras-chave:** Condomínio, favela, estigma, projeto de limpeza moral.

# «Ici c'est une copropriété, c'est pas la pagaille»:

Les copropriétés populaires du PAC/PMCMV  
comme instrument de nettoyage moral  
pour d'anciens habitants des favelas

Wellington da Silva Conceição

## Introduction

Entre 2013 et 2016 j'ai mené une étude à caractère ethnographique<sup>1</sup>, dans deux copropriétés populaires de Rio de Janeiro<sup>2</sup>. Comme j'avais pu l'approfondir dans des travaux précédents (Conceição 2014a et 2014b), ces copropriétés avaient été conçues par l'état et par la municipalité de Rio de Janeiro, principalement dans le but de reloger des habitants retirés des favelas.

Le relogement d'habitants de favelas dans des copropriétés mérite une attention particulière. Les copropriétés sont apparues et ont commencé à se multiplier à Rio de Janeiro et dans tout le Brésil dès les années 1960, et depuis cette époque sont identifiées comme typologie résidentielle des classes supérieures (Moura 2012; Ferreira dos Santos 1981; Caldeira 2003), s'imposant comme élément de statut dans la configuration urbaine carioca. L'utilisation collective d'un espace privé, l'homogénéité des appartements, les équipements communs et l'organisation au moyen de normes et de règlements ont toujours marqué la présence de ces constructions dans la ville. L'identification de ce mode d'habitat aux classes moyennes et aisées – au niveau factuel et symbolique – l'a amené à correspondre dans son organisation physique et sociale aux valeurs de celles-ci. Lorsque surgissent ces copropriétés destinées cette fois-ci aux populations les plus défavorisées, se déclenche une série de conflits, en particulier si l'on confronte les représentations autour de cette forme d'habitat et l'*ethos* de ces groupes d'habitants.

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1 Je présente dans cet article l'ethnographie que j'ai réalisée dans des logements populaires projetés et construits dans le cadre de deux programmes publics résidentiels : *Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* - PAC (Programme d'Accélération de la Croissance) et *Programa Minha Casa Minha Vida* - PMCMV (Programme Ma Maison Ma Vie). Tous deux relèvent de l'état fédéral (mis en œuvre en lien avec les états fédérés et les municipalités), et ils ont démarré sous la présidence de M. Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011). Ils sont toujours en activité, bien qu'ils aient subi une série de restructurations. Le premier concerne surtout les infrastructures urbaines et le logement et le second a été créé – initialement – pour s'attaquer au déficit de logements au Brésil. Pour cet article, on s'intéressera avant tout aux actions de ce programme destinées à la construction de logements neufs destinés aux ménages retirés des favelas de Rio de Janeiro.

2 J'emploie la catégorie de « copropriétés populaires » pour parler des ensembles construits dans le cadre du Programme d'Accélération de la Croissance (PAC) et du Programme Ma Maison, Ma Vie (PMCMV) pour du logement social. L'adoption de ce format par ces programmes correspond, d'après divers experts, à une stratégie des entrepreneurs de BTP qui permet de réduire leurs coûts, en particulier grâce à la construction d'équipements collectifs et de logements regroupés dans des immeubles. Je comprends pourtant que ces copropriétés se démarquent dans le panorama résidentiel de celles réservées aux classes moyenne et haute, principalement dans l'état de Rio de Janeiro par la façon dont ce modèle est approprié, et constamment utilisé comme forme d'opposition à la façon d'habiter dans la favela – mais aussi par l'utilisation qu'en font leurs habitants. Non seulement ceux-ci ont créé des pratiques d'adaptation des espaces à leurs besoins, mais ils se servent du fait d'habiter dans une copropriété comme une forme de nettoyage moral. Ainsi une catégorie les distinguant des autres logements populaires et de copropriété est-il importante. Pour aller plus loin sur ces questions, voir Conceição 2014b.

Je me suis rendu compte, au cours de mon enquête, que le format de copropriété a été approprié à la fois par l'État et par les habitants, mais donne lieu à des projets différents. Dans l'appropriation qu'en fait l'État, j'ai pu identifier d'autres utilisations au-delà de celle d'un nouveau logement : empruntant une trajectoire presque séculaire des politiques de logement populaire à Rio de Janeiro, ces copropriétés ont aussi été bâties en tant que moyen de gestion et de disciplinarisation de la pauvreté urbaine carioca. Les « rencontres d'intégration » (Freire et Souza 2010 et Conceição 2014a et 2016), ces « formations » (*cursos*) qui précédaient l'entrée dans les logements, montraient clairement le caractère disciplinaire de ce projet : basées sur une armature morale – se traduisant par des instructions et des règles – où la favela y apparaissait systématiquement comme la référence négative, le modèle d'habitat et d'organisation à surpasser.

L'enquête de terrain m'a permis d'observer attentivement le rapport des habitants à ces dispositifs disciplinaires, qui se présentaient sous le jour de recommandations visant « l'adaptation » de ces sujets, jusqu'ici habitants de favela, à la logique d'habitat et d'organisation de l'espace de la copropriété. Un regard peu attentif, impressionné par l'adhésion de bon nombre d'entre eux au discours véhiculé par les agents publics, pourrait amener à croire que le projet de disciplinarisation urbaine mis en œuvre était approprié par ses destinataires, indiquant ainsi son plein succès. À l'inverse de ce qui s'était déroulé dans des programmes antérieurs qui avaient également un fort caractère disciplinaire, comme les parcs prolétaires et la « *Cruzada São Sebastião* »<sup>3</sup>, les habitants de ces copropriétés populaires finiraient-ils par adhérer à ce discours moral sans résistance ?

Partant de la maxime de Foucault selon laquelle « dès lors qu'il y a un rapport de pouvoir, il y a une possibilité de résistance » (2012: 360), je me suis attaché à dénaturaliser mes premières impressions et, en les confrontant à mes observations de terrain au quotidien, j'ai pu comprendre que l'acceptation de la démarche « d'adaptation » que je retrouvais dans le discours des habitants ne signifiait pas, en pratique, une adhésion systématique à ces principes de logement populaire.

Plus avant dans l'enquête, il devint clair que l'entrée dans le nouveau logement – un appartement en copropriété – représentait pour bon nombre de ces habitants une possibilité de reconstruction de leur trajectoire morale dans la ville, un rite de passage permettant de prendre une nouvelle identité dans la dynamique urbaine : on pouvait se présenter comme habitant d'une copropriété, non plus d'une favela, identité stigmatisée qui circonscrivait souvent les interactions dans la ville. Ainsi se mettait en place, à l'entrée dans le nouveau logement, la construction d'un *projet de nettoyage moral*.

J'appelle *projet de nettoyage moral* une démarche particulière, partie intégrante de la construction de l'identité, qu'adoptent les habitants à leur arrivée dans ces copropriétés (et liée au souvenir des stéréotypes dont ils étaient les victimes lorsqu'ils étaient des « favelados ») afin d'écarter les représentations négatives qui les stigmatisaient et ainsi de *nettoyer* l'image souillée du *favelado*<sup>4</sup>. Cette catégorie de *nettoyage moral* est apparue dans le dialogue avec les théories de l'anthropologie et de la sociologie urbaine. J'emploie ici le

3 Les parcs prolétaires intégraient une politique de logement provisoire des années 1940, et visaient à mettre en œuvre une « réadaptation surveillée » des habitants des favelas (Carvalho 2003) – principalement pour des raisons d'hygiène – avant de les loger dans des maisons individuelles par la suite. Dans le cadre de cette réadaptation, les fiches de renseignement des habitants étaient vérifiées et un règlement interne indiquait même comment et où cracher. L'ensemble *Cruzada São Sebastião*, qui date des années 1950, a été construit au cœur du quartier noble de Leblon pour accueillir les habitants de la favela de la *Plage du Pinto* (Simões 2010). Avec le concours de la Pastorale Catholique, diverses stratégies locales de contrôle de la conduite morale ont été mises en place et devaient être appliquées par les habitants qui souhaitaient continuer à loger dans les appartements : on y définissait par exemple les attitudes de l'homme et de la femme au sein de la famille et dans le quartier. Dans les deux cas, malgré les visées disciplinaires explicites qui avaient pour objectif, selon leurs concepteurs, d'éloigner les habitants de leurs expériences dans les favelas (considérées antihygiéniques ou immorales), ces projets ont été un échec : que ce soit en fonction de l'origine de ses habitants et/ou de son mode d'organisation, la *Cruzada São Sebastião* est vue aujourd'hui comme une favela par les cariocas en général, et subit toujours la même stigmatisation que ces territoires de la ville. Dès les années 1950, les parcs prolétaires étaient, quant à eux, officiellement répertoriés comme favelas par la puissance publique et les autres acteurs de la ville.

4 « Favelado » est non seulement un terme qui désigne un habitant de favela mais il peut encore être employé dans un sens péjoratif et comme une catégorie accusatoire. Dans ce dernier cas, il se réfère à un comportement peu ou en rien « civilisé » et donc à des préjugés et au stigmate qui pèsent sur les formes de classer les favelas et ses habitants. Tout le long de ce texte, nous emploierons ce terme et certains de ces dérivés (comme la « favélistation », autre catégorie centrale dans ce texte) considérant les disqualifications auxquelles ils sont associés.

terme de *projet*, au sens de Schutz (1979), tel que le présente Velho (1981; 2013) : une conduite organisée par des individus ou des groupes d'individus pour atteindre des objectifs particuliers, liés à la construction de l'identité. Les *projets* sont « directement liés à l'organisation sociale et aux évolutions sociales. Ainsi, parce qu'ils impliquent des rapports de pouvoir, ils sont toujours politiques » (Velho 1981: 33-34). Velho affirme : « la consistance d'un *projet* dépend, au fond, de la mémoire qui fournit les indicateurs de base d'un passé qui a généré les circonstances du présent, et sans la conscience desquelles il serait impossible d'avoir ou d'élaborer des *projets* » (2013: 65).

Le *nettoyage moral* (Leite et Machado da Silva 2008) quant à lui renvoie aux stratégies mises en œuvre par les habitants des favelas pour « s'éloigner du monde du crime, en revendiquant la non-identification aux criminels et en soulignant la nature pacifique et tranquille et leurs valeurs de moralité bourgeoise » (2008: 74). Au-delà de l'identification aux criminels, je pense que ce *nettoyage moral* peut aussi être mis en œuvre pour combattre d'autres représentations stéréotypées et négatives qui constituent le *stigmat* qui affecte jusque dans leurs corps les habitants de favelas / "favelados", d'autant plus que la première – l'identification avec les criminels – n'est pas le seul comportement de ces citadins pauvres qui soit considéré répréhensible, dévalorisé et/ou abhorré par les classes aisées et par l'état. Dans mon étude de cas, le principal dispositif de ce *projet* était la morphologie de la copropriété, compte tenu de sa représentation dans la hiérarchie du logement.

En faveur de ce *projet de nettoyage moral*, de nombreux habitants ont adopté une attitude facilement assimilable à l'ajustement au modèle de la copropriété et au projet de l'état. Mais au sein même de ce discours, j'ai pu reconnaître certaines formes de résistance qui ne sont pas toujours en nette rupture avec le projet des pouvoirs publics. Elles trouvaient souvent leur origine dans les interstices de ce projet ou dans une interprétation personnelle de celui-ci. Ce *nettoyage moral*, présent dans les stratégies de résistance déployées, ne peut être envisagé comme une soumission aux valeurs des classes aisées ou aux desseins disciplinaires de l'état. Je le conçois plutôt comme un outil de participation aux jeux de pouvoir, bien que les individus concernés n'en aient pas toujours conscience. Le *stigmat* qui pèse sur le *favelado* le met souvent à l'écart des espaces de participation, empêchant même la reconnaissance de ses potentiels. Quelle que soit sa position face un événement, sa participation est presque toujours biaisée par ce « marquage social » qui l'accompagne.

J'ai pu identifier d'autres formes de résistance encore, lorsque j'ai compris que la recherche du *nettoyage* de l'image ne signifie pas, pour la plupart des habitants, l'abandon des pratiques considérées comme de *favelados*: on observe des comportements et des utilisations des espaces qui contrastent avec le modèle de la copropriété, permettant à des gens de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur de mobiliser le terme de *favelado* comme catégorie d'accusation<sup>5</sup>. Même face à de telles attitudes, ces sujets déploient des stratégies visant à échapper au *stigmat* de la favela et de ses habitants. J'ai pu en identifier trois pendant mon travail sur le terrain, que je présente ci-dessous : la personnalisation des règles, l'esthétique de la distinction et le redirection du *stigmat*.

5 La désobéissance aux règles de copropriétés n'est pas l'apanage des classes populaires. On observe le même phénomène dans les copropriétés destinées aux autres classes sociales. Comme le remarque Caldeira (2003) à propos d'ensemble résidentiels de standing à Sao Paulo, « les problèmes de construction d'une vie publique et démocratique dans les enclaves de Sao Paulo concernent les règles internes et les façons dont elles sont appliquées. Toutes les copropriétés sont dotées de *conventions* (règlements internes) élaborées par le promoteur immobilier ou par les copropriétaires. Fréquemment remises en question dans les assemblées de propriétaires elles sont constamment réécrites. Faire respecter les règles stipulées par ces conventions, là est le grand problème » (2003: 277). Toutefois, pour les copropriétés des classes plus aisées, qui ne sont donc pas la cible d'une représentation stigmatisante, la criminalité ne se voit pas associée à leur nature, comme c'est le cas pour les plus pauvres. Le terme de *favelado*, facilement mobilisé dans ces circonstances représente généralement l'incapacité quasi « naturelle » du sujet à jouer un autre rôle dans la ville.

## La personnalisation des règles

Avant de parler de la personnalisation des règles, je dois préciser l'emploi des catégories d'« ordre » et de « désordre », souvent mobilisées par les agents publics, mais aussi par les habitants, par rapport aux règles et à leur respect ou non. Je les mets entre guillemets de manière à en souligner le caractère subjectif. En 1982, Ferreira dos Santos publiait un article intitulé « Le désordre n'est qu'un ordre qui exige une lecture plus attentive » où il montrait les favelas comme une forme légitime d'organisation urbaine dotée d'ordre, même si celui-ci est assimilé au désordre par les autres secteurs de la ville. Les conceptions autour de l'ordre sur mon terrain d'étude correspondaient plutôt à la représentation décrite par Ferreira dos Santos.

Chez les habitants des copropriétés populaires où j'ai mené mon travail de terrain, j'ai trouvé des perspectives de mise en ordre et en désordre semblables à celles que j'avais rencontrées lors d'une précédente étude de terrain au grand ensemble de *Cidade Alta* (Rio de Janeiro), souvent exprimées par le terme d'« organisation ». J'écrivais déjà, à propos de cette conception :

D'après les informateurs consultés pour les besoins de cette enquête, on reconnaîtra comme « plus organisés » les immeubles et espaces les moins modifiés par rapport aux plans originaux. Cette représentation coïncide avec celle de la « bonne forme urbaine » qui, d'après Vogel et Mello (1983), et Vogel, Mello et Santos (1981) part d'une logique rationaliste moderniste (d'inspiration positiviste), pratiquée par de nombreux architectes et urbanistes, et qui conduit à un aménagement des espaces selon des principes qui, la plupart du temps, ne dialoguent pas avec (voire négligent complètement) les pratiques sociales des classes populaires autour du logement. Les bâtiments de *Cidade Alta*, tout comme tant d'autres construits dans les années 1960 et 1970, obéissent à cette logique de la « bonne forme urbaine » (Conceição 2015: 82).

Tout comme à *Cidade Alta*, une bonne partie des habitants que j'ai côtoyés dans ces copropriétés récusaient eux aussi toute transformation de l'espace contrastant avec le projet original. En 2014, j'ai pu discuter avec Maria et Luciene dans la rue rua principale de la copropriété *Esperança*<sup>6</sup>. Elles regardaient une première tentative de modification substantielle de l'espace public : un habitant du rez-de-chaussée avait remblayé un bout du jardin devant sa fenêtre. Curieux, je leur demandai ce qui se passait et elles m'expliquèrent que, d'après ce qu'elles savaient, cet homme voulait y installer un stand de vente de boissons et de petite restauration.

Il faut dire que jusque-là, il n'y avait aucun espace nommé destiné ou construit pour la vente de quelque produit ou service que ce soit. Quelques habitants vendaient des produits alimentaires ou d'entretien chez eux et d'autres offraient des services (de manucure ou de coiffeur). Les produits à la vente étaient généralement exposés aux fenêtres et les services proposés sur de petites affiches discrètes. Beaucoup de ces activités étaient réalisées dans le salon des appartements, occupant tout au plus le pas-de-porte avec quelques chaises où l'on pouvait, par exemple, consommer sur place une boisson. Le contrat de cession des appartements stipule que les activités commerciales sont interdites dans ces espaces et la crainte d'un contrôle freinait sans doute la multiplication de ces pratiques, de façon trop explicite tout au moins.

Pour en revenir au stand, Luciene et Maria le condamnaient avec véhémence. Elles le voyaient comme un signe de la transformation en favela. Elles n'étaient pas les seules : le mois suivant, l'espace était toujours remblayé, sans aucun stand dessus. Rosa<sup>7</sup> me dit que le syndic avait discuté avec le copropriétaire en question et interdit son installation. A mon retour au mois de décembre, il y avait là une table de billard et une bâche tendue au-dessus la protégeant du soleil et de la pluie. De sa fenêtre, l'homme vendait les jetons et des boissons aux joueurs.

<sup>6</sup> Les noms des personnes et des lieux (relatifs à mon enquête) présentés dans ce texte sont fictifs.

<sup>7</sup> Ma principale informatrice pendant l'enquête. Habitante de la copropriété, elle avait également travaillé comme agent d'impact du PAC dans la favela où elle vivait auparavant, s'occupant – entre autres – du relogement de nombre de ses actuels voisins.

Cette réprobation ne concernait pas seulement les « abus » contre un ordre qui se s'affirmait sur cet espace, mais pour beaucoup, elle était également dirigée aux infractions et aux manquements à un ordre constitué dans la logique de la copropriété. Le « pervertissement » de cette logique pourrait mener à la classification de l'espace comme favela et ainsi mettre en risque le *projet de nettoyage moral*. Il fallait donc les préserver.

Pour mieux expliquer comment se passe – en principe – cette préservation de l'ordre sur la base des règles de la copropriété, je donnerai l'exemple de Julia, sous-syndic de l'ensemble *Moradia 6*, l'autre copropriété où j'ai mené mon enquête de terrain. Elle n'admettait pas la musique à tue-tête et autres types de bruit, ni aucune utilisation de l'espace public pouvant caractériser l'endroit comme favela, ce en quoi nombreux étaient ceux qui l'approuvaient. Lors d'une réunion de copropriétaires, elle parla de l'utilisation des murs d'entrée des immeubles comme étendoir. Elle y déclara avoir vu plusieurs habitants y mettant leurs vêtements à sécher et rappela que disposer des objets personnels dans les espaces communs était contraire au règlement. Elle raconta le cas d'une voisine de son immeuble dont les sous-vêtements restaient étendus sur le mur pendant près de deux jours et comment elle-même était contrainte de voir cette « exposition » en sortant de chez elle. Le rejet à l'égard des sous-vêtements peut être compris comme inscrit dans le processus de civilisation : comme l'affirme Elias (2011), les choses liées au corps et à la sexualité ont été de plus en plus reléguées dans la sphère du privé<sup>8</sup>, leur exposition devenant acte d'incivilité. Mais la présence de tout vêtement ou objet en général dérangeait autant Julia : ce qui la dérangeait se rapportait surtout aux usages des murs par ses voisins.

Bien que les habitants démontraient leur rejet de la subversion de l'ordre inscrit dans l'espace et dans les règles, on remarquait constamment des manquements de leur part, y compris de ceux qui rejetaient ces pratiques de la manière la plus véhémente. Je comprends cela comme une forme d'adaptation personnalisée à l'ordre, où les habitants trouvaient des justifications plausibles à leurs « écarts », les excluant des pratiques « favelisantes » dans la copropriété. Voyons-en quelques exemples.

Je donnerai pour commencer un exemple de l'adaptation personnalisée à l'ordre édicté par le règlement de la copropriété. Lors de la même réunion et toujours sur l'étendage du linge, Julia déclara qu'on pourrait bien utiliser les murs à cette fin, si les gens faisaient preuve de « conscience ». Je reproduis son récit que j'ai transcrit sur mon carnet de terrain :

On pourrait étendre sur les murs les choses lourdes, comme les couvertures et les édredons. Mais il faut les étendre, attendre que ça sèche et les retirer tout de suite. L'autre jour j'ai mis mon édredon et je l'ai enlevé dès qu'il a été sec, je ne l'ai pas laissé toute la nuit. Mais après j'ai vu la voisine y mettre ses vêtements. Elle y a mis des bermudas, des culottes, des slips... Le mur était rempli et elle les a laissés pendant deux jours. Ça ne va pas, si on l'utilise sans conscience, ça devient la pagaille. Après ça, je n'y ai plus jamais mis mon édredon.

D'après cette jeune habitante, « utiliser le mur consciemment » c'est s'en servir pour étendre son linge selon les critères qu'elle considère « normaux/corrects/de bon sens ». Malgré l'interdiction dans le règlement interne de l'utilisation des espaces communs à des fins privées, leur emploi « en conscience » – qui semblait à Julia un concept clair pour tout le monde – permettait à l'infracteur de ne pas sentir déviant. Julia reproduisait une pratique courante dans les favelas et autres formes d'habitat populaire : employer

8 «La tendance du processus de civilisation à rendre plus intimes toutes les fonctions corporelles, à les enfermer dans des enclaves privées, à les confiner 'derrière des portes fermées', entraîne plusieurs conséquences. L'une des plus importantes déjà observée en lien avec diverses autres formes d'impulsion, se voit clairement dans le développement de contraintes civilisatrices à la sexualité. (...)On voit combien l'ensemble de ces fonctions sont, peu à peu, chargées de honte et d'embarras sociogénétiques, faisant que leur seule mention en société soit de plus en plus sujette à un grand nombre de contrôles et d'interdictions. » (Elias 2011: 181).

d'autres espaces (chez soi ou à l'extérieur) – outre la buanderie – pour étendre son linge. En définissant sa pratique contrevenante comme celle d'une personne « consciente », Julia se sent dans le droit d'échapper aux accusations dirigées aux *favelados* et de maintenir intact son *projet de nettoyage moral*.

Sur l'adaptation personnalisée à l'ordre inscrit dans l'espace, je donnerai l'exemple d'une modification que Rosa a faite dans son appartement. À mon retour en mai 2014, (après un intervalle de quatre mois) pour la seconde phase de l'enquête de terrain à *Esperança*, je constatai à ma grande surprise que l'on n'accédait plus à l'appartement de Rosa directement par la porte, car il y avait maintenant un portail. Il y avait une grille en fer, installée des deux côtés qui menaient à sa porte. Cela ne modifiait pas la structure de l'appartement ou de l'immeuble, mais privatisait un espace destiné au passage.

Ainsi la cage d'escalier qui donnait accès aux autres étages, située sur le palier de sa porte, était devenue espace à usage privé de sa famille, comme une espèce de prolongement de son logement. On y rangeait déjà les jouets de sa fille cadette, qui dormait dans la chambre des parents. Mon informatrice n'était pas la seule à avoir procédé de la sorte : d'autres portails fleurissaient dans les bâtiments, altérant considérablement le format homogène des logements.

Connaissant l'aversion de Rosa à toute attitude susceptible de s'apparenter à une *favelisation* (elle considérait les modifications exécutées par certains de ses voisins comme une contribution en ce sens), je lui demandai pourquoi elle avait installé de portail. Elle dit l'avoir fait pour que sa fille cadette puisse jouer en sécurité. Mais le portail n'était jamais fermé à clef et la petite fille l'ouvrait constamment pour se rendre chez sa grand-mère, la mère de Rosa, dans l'appartement voisin, où pour partir chercher son frère qui jouait ailleurs. Je ne crois même pas ici pouvoir caractériser le portail de Rosa comme un type d'*esthétique de la distinction*, encore moins d'*esthétique de la sécurité*<sup>9</sup>. Le portail semblait être une alternative permettant d'augmenter la faible surface de son appartement, où vivaient cinq personnes et un chien. Rosa ne cessa pas pour autant de critiquer les autres initiatives du même genre : elle pensait avoir une raison valable, mais aussi qu'elle s'était efforcée de faire les choses « comme il faut » pour ce que ça n'enlaidisse pas l'immeuble.

Une fois de plus, je me rappelai mes expériences de terrain à *Cidade Alta*. Dans ce grand ensemble, tout comme dans les favelas de la ville, les habitants construisent des *puxadas* (extensions)<sup>10</sup> pour agrandir leur logement. En général, dans les favelas, les maisons sont bâties de plain-pied et, par la suite, agrandies verticalement, la dalle du toit servant de plancher pour le prochain étage. Cette dalle pourra abriter une nouvelle pièce, un nouveau logement, un nouvel espace de loisirs, voire un local public (église, école, commerce, etc., les logements étant déménagés aux étages supérieurs). Ce système d'augmentation par la dalle est tout à fait accepté socialement dans les favelas et la plupart de leurs habitants le pratiquent.

À *Cidade Alta*, cette pratique s'inscrit également dans le quotidien, mais s'agissant d'un ensemble d'immeubles verticaux d'origine, les agrandissements se font à l'horizontale, et le rôle de la dalle des favelas est joué par les murs donnant sur la rue, ou leur absence quand ils sont démolis. L'appartement empiète sur la rue, avec la nouvelle pièce qui occupe ce qui auparavant était un espace commun du bâtiment, ou un tronçon de trottoir. Mais l'acceptation des agrandissements semble y être différente, par rapport à d'autres favelas et quartiers populaires de la ville. Comme je l'avais relevé dans un autre ouvrage :

9 Nous présenterons ces catégories au prochain point.

10 «Le terme de *puxada* (ou *puxadinho*) – extension NdT – est une catégorie locale qui caractérise les constructions visant à agrandir les maisons ou les appartements des populations défavorisées : on crée une ou plusieurs pièce pour répondre à un besoin ou pour des questions de confort des occupants. Si elles sont généralement conçues par les habitants, leur réalisation est confiée à des maçons, sans supervision par un architecte ou un ingénieur.» (Conceição 2015: 90).

mes registres ethnographiques indiquent (autant les récits que l'observation au quotidien), que si plusieurs habitants désapprouvent cette pratique qu'ils classent parmi les principales coupables de la « favelisation » et de la « désorganisation » de la cité, nombreux sont ceux qui adjoignent ce type de construction. Si autant les anciens habitants et les nouveaux arrivants, mais aussi ceux qui en sont partis, les condamnent, rien ne les empêche d'envisager la possibilité d'en construire une : « Tu vois, mon extension à moi, c'est du luxe. *C'est pas comme ces 'machins' qu'on voit ici ou là !* » – me déclara un informateur un jour sur le terrain pour justifier à la fois sa condamnation de cette pratique et l'usage qu'il en avait fait (Conceição 2015: 90-91).

Rosa et d'autres habitants de la copropriété, tous comme ceux de *Cidade Alta*, parvenaient à établir des critères de hiérarchisation, que ce soit sur le plan de l'esthétique ou du besoin, à l'égard des transformations qu'ils imposaient à l'espace. Ces critères, hautement subjectifs et donc personnalisés atténuent chez tous ceux qui partageaient ce discours le poids de l'infraction et l'effet du *stigmat* de la favelisation. Comme dans le cas précédent, cette stratégie permettait d'enfreindre les règles – une façon classique de résistance – sans abandonner le projet de nettoyage moral.

### L'esthétique de la distinction

Dans les réunions de résidents de *Moradia 6*<sup>11</sup> auxquelles je participais – dès la première – les habitants rappelaient constamment l'importance de l'installation d'un portail d'entrée. La copropriété a été construite au cœur d'une favela de la Zone Sud de Rio de Janeiro (*Morro do Gavião*) et elle a été conçue pour être ouverte et permettre le passage entre différents secteurs du quartier. La revendication de fermeture du passage n'est pas restée lettre morte : dès que des moyens financiers ont été obtenus grâce à la location de la salle polyvalente pour des célébrations d'une église évangéliste, la première mesure fut d'installer le portail, contre l'avis du maître d'œuvre de la Cité qui en avait rejeté la demande. Je savais que cela se reproduisait dans d'autres ensembles du programme MCMV de la ville, tous de logement social.

En première lecture, je pensais pouvoir interpréter cela comme des expressions de « *l'esthétique de la sécurité* »<sup>12</sup>, que Caldeira (2003) avait identifiée à São Paulo. Mais ici manquait une des conditions à remplir : la peur des éléments extramuros.

L'enquête de terrain permet d'étayer cette affirmation : quand les copropriétaires de *Moradia 6* demandèrent l'installation du portail, les arguments les plus importants présentés à l'équipe du PAC responsable de la copropriété et qui avait accompagné l'arrivée des habitants dans le cadre d'une prise en charge sociale, ne mentionnaient pas la violence, sans doute parce qu'il s'agissait d'anciens habitants de cette favela-là qui avaient développé une sorte de « compétence citoyenne » (Mello, Kant de Lima, Valladares et Veiga 2011: 513)<sup>13</sup> pour faire face aux effets de la criminalité violente.

Le syndic Carlinhos, défendant l'importance du portail, parlait d'un bal qui avait lieu près de là tous les week-ends, et disait que les fêtards pénétraient dans les parties communes pour boire, se droguer et avoir des rapports sexuels, la preuve étant d'après lui, les canettes de bière vides, les mégots et les préservatifs

11 Ces réunions faisaient partie du second cycle des « rencontres d'intégration » des habitants, une fois qu'ils eurent emménagé. Elles se sont déroulées quelques mois après l'inauguration.

12 Caldeira (2003), qui a mené une étude sur les *enclaves fortifiées* de São Paulo (parmi lesquelles, les copropriétés), affirme que la peur de la criminalité était l'argument le plus invoqué pour justifier la préférence pour ce type d'habitat. En fait, cette peur du crime a progressivement modifié l'architecture de la ville et de ses quartiers, qui au cours de 50 dernières années s'est vue marquée par la présence de murs, de grilles et autres équipements composant un code que Caldeira appelle « l'esthétique de la sécurité ». Cette esthétique a atteint non seulement les copropriétés, mais aussi les maisons individuelles y compris celles des quartiers défavorisés. Ainsi Sao Paulo est-elle peu à peu devenue une « ville de murs ».

13 Les auteurs mentionnés ont eu recours à cette catégorie – par allusion au parcours du sociologue Isaac Joseph au Brésil – pour décrire une sorte de compétence acquise face aux caractéristiques et aux défis du milieu urbain, en particulier à partir des expériences de socialisation et de sociabilité. Ce concept est inspiré des recherches et des écrits des sociologues de l'École de Chicago, comme Robert Ezra Park, Louis Wirth, entre autres.

usagers que l'on y retrouvait. J'étais convaincu que ce portail avait pour fonction de mettre en place une frontière symbolique. Il me semblait toutefois y avoir d'autres intentions en jeu. C'est la seconde priorité discutée par les habitants lors de la dernière réunion à laquelle je participais qui me mit sur cette piste : l'installation d'un interphone. De mes quelques observations de leurs pratiques quotidiennes, je pouvais déduire qu'un tel équipement n'était pas essentiel au maintien de leurs habitudes. Les appartements possédaient au moins une fenêtre donnant sur la rue (il n'y avait que seize appartements répartis sur deux blocs), et même ceux qui habitaient les étages supérieurs avaient bricolé une solution qui leur évitait de se déplacer pour ouvrir la porte de l'immeuble : par la fenêtre, ils faisaient descendre une clé dans un petit panier au bout d'une corde. C'est ce qui me conduit à penser que, plus qu'un réel besoin de sécurité ou de confort, le portail et l'interphone permettaient de rapprocher la copropriété populaire des copropriétés de classe moyenne et, de ce fait, de rendre encore plus efficace de distinction et de *nettoyage moral*.

Une autre observation de terrain me permettra de renforcer cette affirmation. À la Copropriété *Esperança*, avant même que les habitants y emménagent, il y avait déjà un portail électronique pour l'entrée des véhicules, ainsi qu'un autre pour l'entrée des piétons et une guérite<sup>14</sup>. Un gardien s'y tient 24 heures sur 24. Ceci étant, je n'ai jamais vu ces entrées fermées, que ce soit celle des piétons ou celle des véhicules, ni même la fois où je sortis tard dans la nuit après une fête d'anniversaire. Je n'ai jamais vu non plus les portiers prêter la moindre attention à ce qui se passait à ces entrées. Ils étaient toujours occupés à bavarder avec un habitant ou rivés devant leur téléviseur. Je n'y ai vu aucun système de classifications des personnes qui passaient par la guérite, comme avait pu le faire Moura (2012) dans ses travaux sur les copropriétés horizontales de Goiânia. J'en conclus qu'il n'y avait aucune surveillance car il n'y avait aucune crainte, tout comme à *Moradia 6*. La haie en barbelés rasoirs installée à la limite de la copropriété voisine me semblait plus une frontière symbolique qu'un équipement de sécurité, dans la mesure où les portails étaient toujours grands ouverts.

De tels éléments – portail électronique, guérite, barbelés – prenaient toute leur importance quand il s'agissait de présenter le site du nouveau logement comme étant une copropriété, même si dans ce cas précis ils n'avaient que peu de valeur en tant qu'équipements de sécurité. J'en conclus, étayé sur ces deux exemples et bien d'autres non mentionnés ici, qu'au-delà d'une *esthétique de la sécurité*, la présence de ces équipements relève d'une « *esthétique de la distinction* », et que cette distinction rapproche les copropriétés populaires des autres copropriétés plutôt que des grands ensembles (comme *Cidade Alta* et *Cidade de Deus*, généralement identifiés en tant que favelas), tout en étant utilisée par ailleurs comme instrument de *nettoyage moral*.

Lorsqu'on parle de ces stratégies de distinction, il me semble important de souligner ma certitude qu'il existe en toile de fond un intérêt des groupes que j'ai étudiés à changer de *statut*. La recherche d'éléments susceptibles de procurer – ne serait-ce que symboliquement – du *statut* au sein du groupe social auquel on appartient, se retrouve dans diverses sociétés et cultures. Les citoyens pauvres n'en sont pas exempts – et ne doivent pas l'être – du souhait d'accéder à ces usages distinctifs dans ce même but. J'ai toutefois pu observer sur le terrain qu'au-delà de l'élévation du *statut* les éléments permettant une esthétique de la distinction deviennent des preuves matérielles du processus de *nettoyage moral*. Ils servent à différencier la copropriété des favelas, des cités populaires, des lotissements illégaux et des autres espaces de la ville portant les

14 Au départ cet ensemble était destiné au niveau 2 du PMCMV, c'est-à-dire les ménages ayant un revenu compris entre 4 et 7 salaires minimum, et qui achèteraient leur logement, dont le coût de construction était subventionné par le Programme gouvernemental et pour lequel ils bénéficiaient d'une aide à l'accession à la propriété. En raison des fortes pluies de 2010 qui dévastèrent plusieurs favelas de la ville, l'État de Rio acheta la copropriété, dans le cadre des mesures d'urgence, pour y abriter les ménages sans-abris ou dont le logement avait été condamné par la sécurité civile. Les habitants d'*Esperança* venaient pour la plupart des favelas alentour et avaient donc reçu leur appartement comme compensation de la part de l'État de Rio de Janeiro. Le public initialement prévu pour cet ensemble résidentiel justifie sans doute la présence de certains éléments, comme la guérite et le portail, qui d'ailleurs existaient au début du PMCMV dans les cités de niveau 1 (de 0 à 3 salaires minimum).

*stigmatés* de la favela. Je me souviens d'une conversation avec João, le mari de Rosa, qui pensait pouvoir, dans quelques années (le temps qu'on oublie que les habitants étaient venus de la favela et que cet espace soit vu comme une copropriété), revendre son appartement à bon prix, grâce à la relative proximité de deux centres commerciaux et du métro, ce qui permettrait d'acheter une maison dans un autre quartier. Pour lui, dans un futur proche, les éléments distinctifs présents dans cet espace seraient plus forts que le *stigmaté* qui avait accompagné les habitants.

### La redirection du *stigmaté*

Comme on l'a souligné plus haut, les habitants des copropriétés populaires ont un *projet* assez clair : utiliser cette forme d'habitat – entre autres choses – comme une forme de *nettoyage moral* vis-à-vis de la ville. En revanche chez Moura (2012), qui avait travaillé sur des copropriétés dont le public était bien différent du nôtre, un des principaux *projets* des occupants était de construire une distinction sociale – un certain *statut* – vis-à-vis du reste de la ville. Dans les deux cas, autant pour entretenir une image morale propre que les effets de la distinction, il faut déployer des stratégies de maintien de « l'ordre » institué, dont la principale consiste à créer des façons de montrer que les problèmes qui accablent le site ne doivent pas être considérés comme normaux ou courants, mais bien comme des exceptions échappant à la règle. Les habitants publiquement reconnus comme ne rentrant pas dans le moule du *projet*, deviennent les boucs émissaires et c'est vers eux qu'est réadressée l'accusation de responsabilité de tous les problèmes collectifs. A ces individus ou à ces groupes sont alors adressés tous les reproches concernant ou pouvant concerner la collectivité, comme stratégie de purification de l'image. J'appelle cette pratique une redirection du *stigmaté*. C'est celle qui, sur le terrain, a révélé le plus vivement l'utilisation de la copropriété comme dispositif de *nettoyage moral*.

Avant de parler de deux cas que j'ai accompagnés et qui démontrent cet effort de désignation des *outsiders* du *projet*, pour leur imputer la culpabilité pour ce qui n'a pas marché, j'aimerais citer un récit de Moura (2012), qui m'a aidé à interpréter les situations que j'ai rencontrées. L'auteure raconte, à partir de la page 150, l'histoire du petit Damião, un enfant assez agité, habitant de la copropriété *Campo Alegre* (il était voisin de la chercheuse qui vivait également sur place) et qui, avec d'autres petits habitants, troublait la « paix » locale. A une époque, le comportement de Damião est devenu insupportable aux habitants, au point d'être à l'ordre du jour des réunions de copropriété. Les critiques ne se restreignaient pas au petit garçon, mais visaient surtout sa mère, jugée incapable d'imposer des limites.

La chercheuse a alors cherché à comprendre les raisons de la sévérité avec laquelle on condamnait Damião mais pas ses petits camarades et leurs parents respectifs. Sa conclusion fut que Damião était plus qu'un enfant turbulent ; le profil familial portait atteinte à la bonne image des lieux. Il était l'enfant d'une mère célibataire qui vivait chez son frère, ce qui contrastait avec le modèle de la famille traditionnelle valorisé par les copropriétaires. La mère de Damião n'avait pas de voiture, ce qui ne correspondait pas au niveau social attendu pour les habitants de cette copropriété. Ainsi, elle se faisait emmener et ramener par les prestataires de service, ce qui était contraire à une des règles les plus fondamentales de cette copropriété horizontale de l'état du Goiás : ne pas mélanger les sujets des différentes classes sociales qui y circulent, de manière à ne pas rendre l'environnement « impur »<sup>15</sup>. Ce contexte permit à l'auteure de comprendre pourquoi Damião, bien qu'il n'agisse jamais seul, était considéré comme le « nœud » des problèmes.

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<sup>15</sup> Comme le souligne l'auteure, « la notion de sécurité était directement liée à la capacité à maintenir un statut compatible avec l'auto-stéréotype d'un habitant de copropriété horizontale qui reposait sur l'efficacité d'un système de classement institué. La présence de cette dame avec son fils mettait cette sécurité en danger sous plusieurs angles » (Moura 2012: 157). L'auteure signale aussi la crainte des habitants de voir leur lotissement confondu avec une cité populaire. Des individus déviants de ce type alimentaient la « décaractérisation » du lieu.

Les très fortes pressions sur la mère et l'enfant donnèrent des résultats : dans un premier temps la maman acheta une voiture (dans une tentative d'adaptation) puis finit par déménager de chez son frère.

Dans les copropriétés populaires où j'ai enquêté – *Esperança* et *Moradia 6* – diverses histoires auxquelles j'ai été confronté m'ont permis de reconnaître plusieurs « Damião » locaux, qu'il s'agisse d'individus ou de groupes ; j'en présenterai quelques-unes ci-après. Je souligne également que si certaines attitudes et conceptions exprimées peuvent sembler cruelles au premier abord, j'y ai surtout perçu l'intention ou le besoin de préservation d'une image « propre » et de son affranchissement du *stigmat*<sup>16</sup>, et non pas un désir de mettre l'autre dans une situation gênante, désagréable. Pour mener à bien ce nettoyage, il fallait faire face aux sujets radicalement déviants par rapport aux notions de civilisation (et les interprétations de cette « déviance » peuvent être très subjectives) affichées par l'État lors des « rencontres d'intégration », dispositifs essentiels dans la stratégie visant à empêcher la transformation de ces espaces en favelas.

Le premier cas que je présenterai est une histoire dont je n'ai pas été un témoin direct sur le terrain, mais elle n'en reste pas moins une des plus intéressantes que j'aie pu entendre lors de mon enquête. Elle m'a été racontée par Paula, habitante de *Esperança*. Après plusieurs contacts, nous avons pris rendez-vous le 27/05/2013, pour un entretien chez elle. Nous parlions des ménages qui avaient quitté la copropriété et elle essayait d'analyser les raisons qui les auraient poussés à prendre une telle décision. Je transcris une partie de notre conversation :

Paula: Ici au bloc 13, au premier étage, 18 personnes vivaient dans un seul et même appartement. Parmi elles, il y avait des lesbiennes, des travestis et un enfant handicapé physique. La société GH qui assistait les habitants durant le premier mois d'installation avait été engagée par la Caixa et avait semble-t-il autorisé cette famille à revendre son appartement. Ils ont vendu et sont retournés à la favela. Le petit était handicapé, il avait un syndrome de Down très profond. Il était tout petit, il s'appelait Gabriel. Il se baladait en couches, tout sale. Tout le monde se plaignait d'eux. La femme était en couple avec une autre femme. Elles s'embrassaient au pied de l'escalier. Et ça a commencé à déranger, parce que personne n'aime voir ça. Et même son fils demandait : "Papa, une femme peut en embrasser une autre sur la bouche ? Je sais que l'époque est libérale, mais pas autant que ça quand même. Alors c'était, tu vois... Au début c'était la guerre et aujourd'hui cette copropriété c'est magnifique par rapport à ce que c'était au début.

Moi : Mais que penses-tu qui a changé ?

Paula : Je pense que les changements ont eu lieu à cause des pressions. Les gens ont été automatiquement obligés de partir. Ou tu changes ou tu pars, tu vois ? Ou tu rentres dans le moule ou tu ne pourras pas rester.

Moi : Et d'après toi, d'où venait cette pression ?

Paula : Des habitants eux-mêmes je crois. Moi, en tant qu'habitante ça me dérange. Alors je vais isoler cette personne. Ce ne sera pas quelqu'un que je vais côtoyer, je ne l'inviterai jamais ni à mes fêtes, ni chez moi. Si la plupart des gens font ça, le gars il se sent exclu. Et qu'est-ce qu'il fait ? « Ah, cet endroit c'est pas bon pour moi, je ne peux pas y vivre ». Dans la favela c'était plus ouvert tu vois ? Ici c'est un espace fermé. Que tu le veuilles ou non, ça se passe devant moi et je vais voir deux femmes qui s'embrassent. À la favela, rien ne m'oblige à passer devant leur porte. Je peux passer par derrière, aller sur l'autre trottoir ou ne pas passer. Mais du moment où ils ont mis les gens ici-dedans, il fallait automatiquement voir ça. Et là, cette personne a commencé à être exclue. On est 291 habitants ici et 290 étaient contre. Mais elle était là. Elle-même a commencé à se sentir mal à l'aise. Et ce n'était pas une question de préjugés. Ça s'est fait dans une forme d'acceptation. Parce que je pense que je

<sup>16</sup> Brum avait déjà indiqué des pratiques de ce genre dans son étude sur *Cidade Alta* : « Les accusations entre habitants dérivent d'une tentative de différenciation interne, par laquelle on impute à l'autre le *stigmat* de *favelado*, et où la condamnation de pratiques et d'habitudes est une manière de s'affranchir du *stigmat* (Brum 2012: 181).

peux être d'accord, mais je ne suis pas obligée d'accepter. Je respecte tranquillement les homosexuels, mais de là à devoir ouvrir ma porte tous les jours pour voir deux femmes qui s'embrassent sur la bouche, ça fait deux. Elle a été convoquée, ils ont discuté avec elle, parce qu'il y avait des plaintes. Alors le syndic l'a convoquée et lui a dit : « Marcia, tu comprends ? Les gens veulent monter les escaliers. ». Elle habitait au rez-de-chaussée, et ça puait. En plus des 18 personnes là-dedans, il y avait un chien, des lapins... C'était n'importe quoi. Ils venaient de la favela de *Mucura*, et là-bas c'était pas la même vie, c'était plus ouvert. Ils avaient de la place, il y avait la forêt, ils pouvaient avoir un chien, un perroquet, tout ce qu'ils voulaient. C'est différent d'ici. Avant de venir ici j'avais deux chiens pinchers, parce que j'habitais une maison avec une terrasse immense, et je pouvais avoir des chiens. J'adore ça les chiens, tu vois ? Et je te le dis : je suis heureuse de vivre ici, mais je sais qu'il faudra que j'achète une maison plus tard, parce que j'aime les animaux. Mais là, c'était trop. Il y avait plein d'animaux. Des chiens de race, que je ne sais pas d'où ils sortaient. Et les gens se plaignaient, la cage d'escalier était dégueulasse, quand tu voulais aller au second ou au troisième tu marchais dans la merde. Sur les grilles, en montant au second, ils étendaient leurs draps qui puait la pisse, parce que les gamins faisaient dans leur lit. C'était d'une saleté repoussante. La propriétaire, Márcia, était une femme très polie, mais c'est elle qui portait les pantalons, bien qu'étant une femme : elle s'habillait en homme, elle essayait de se comporter comme un homme, elle se grattait les couilles, tout en n'en ayant pas [rires]. Et elle disait : « Eh Dona Paula, je m'en vais d'ici, je vois bien que ça ne va pas ». Et moi je lui répondais : « Écoute Márcia, c'est quand même compliqué. Ça fait beaucoup de monde dans l'appart, avec des animaux et tout ça. On peut pas mettre tout ça dans un appart. ». Et elle le comprenait bien. Elle l'acceptait, tu vois ? « Et oui Dona Paula, je vais retourner à la favela, là-bas j'avais une très grande maison ». Et c'était vrai. Mais ce qu'elle appelait une maison, c'était une cabane en planches. Parce qu'à la favela, les gens sont comme ça : ils ont une pièce, puis ils ramassent des portes d'armoire et ils les assemblent et ça fait une autre pièce. Et ainsi de suite. Et ils rentrent à trente.

Moi : C'est la seule qui soit partie, ou il y en a eu d'autres ?

Paula : Non. Il y en a eu pas mal qui sont partis. Quand on est arrivés ici, j'étais surprise parce que la police se pointait tout le temps ici. « Qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Pourquoi la police est tout le temps ici ? » Quand ce n'était pas un mari qui frappait sa femme, c'était une mère qui frappait son enfant, des femmes qui se battaient, des hommes, qui se battaient. Dans la favela quand tu te disputais avec quelqu'un, qu'est-ce que tu faisais ? Quand tu avais un problème, à qui t'adressais-tu ? Ça se réglait avec les trafiquants. Et dans de nombreuses favelas c'est encore comme ça : Le juge c'est le *chef* des trafiquants, qui allait soit frapper les deux, soit en sacrifier un. Ici non, si j'ai un problème avec toi, j'appelle le 190 et la police arrive. Et on ira tous les deux au commissariat, tu porteras plainte contre moi et moi contre toi. Et qu'est-ce qui arrive ? Tu rentres chez toi et moi aussi, et il faudra bien qu'on se supporte. Mais, différemment de la favela, les gens sont obligés de se regarder, de passer devant l'autre, même s'ils se haïssent. Et beaucoup ne savent pas fonctionner comme ça, ils sont restés sur le mode de la favela. Et quand tu rencontres le gars, tu veux tout casser, le frapper, et ainsi de suite. Alors la police se pointait tout le temps ici. Et ça a bien diminué. Je ne pourrai pas te dire exactement combien ont vendu leur appartement, mais je peux te dire qu'ils ont été nombreux.

Ce récit de Paula offre de nombreux angles d'attaque permettant d'analyser ces stratégies d'expulsion, ou d'isolement, à l'égard des habitants déviants du *projet*, en tant qu'expression de cette redirection du *stigmaté*. Le premier est l'histoire de cette famille qui, selon notre témoin, a été encouragée par les responsables de l'ensemble résidentiel à vendre son appartement, parce que ses membres s'écartaient trop de ce qui est encore considéré comme un standard dans la plupart des segments sociaux : un homme travesti en femme, une femme à l'apparence masculine et en relation affective avec un personne du même sexe, un enfant handicapé et livré à lui-même, un manque d'hygiène à l'égard des enfants et des animaux, un grand nombre d'occupants dans un seul appartement prévu pour un ménage du genre « publicité de margarine » (le père, la mère et deux enfants).

Dans les représentations de Paula, guidées par son propre *projet* personnel de *nettoyage moral* et s'appuyant sur une notion floue de civilisation, ces voisins sont classifiés comme anormaux. Pour penser l'importance de cette catégorie (anormal<sup>17</sup>) et son rôle dans les formes de socialisation et de sociabilité, il convient de se pencher sur la signification de la norme. Pour Foucault la norme n'est ni absolue ni inscrite dans la nature des choses : la norme est porteuse d'une prétention au pouvoir. « Ce n'est pas simplement, ce n'est même pas un principe d'intelligibilité ; c'est un élément à partir duquel un certain exercice du pouvoir se trouve fondé et légitimé » (2010: 43). Ainsi, les comportements sexuels, les règles d'hygiène, le traitement à l'égard des animaux, contrairement à ce que pense Paula, s'inscrivent dans un jeu de pouvoir qui imprègne notre société dans son ensemble. Ceux qui suivent une voie hors du jeu de pouvoir institué sont alors classés comme anormaux.

On fera remarquer que le « profil familial » de Paula ne correspondait pas aux classifications civilisatrices de notre société basées sur les valeurs chrétiennes permettant d'être considérée comme « normale » par les autres : elle avait trois enfants, chacun d'un père différent. Elle était mariée à un homme de douze ans son cadet, sa fille aînée, bien qu'encore mineure, avait abandonné ses études pendant toute une année et son frère Gerson prenait de la cocaïne.

La famille de Paula avait toutefois trois caractéristiques qui la différençaient moralement de celle de Márcia : 1) Ses « péchés » étaient moins visibles (je n'ai pris connaissance de certains d'entre eux que lors des entretiens ou à force de fréquenter son domicile) et de toute façon moins avaient un impact moindre dans l'univers des valeurs socialement partagées ; 2) Paula et sa famille avaient souscrit au *projet de nettoyage moral*, bien que de manière personnalisée ; 3) Paula avait appris, consciemment ou non, plusieurs règles de ce jeu de pouvoir normatif et s'en servait dans le cadre de ce *projet*. Ces éléments lui permettaient de se reconnaître dans le droit de réadresser le *stigmat*e de *favelada* (et bien d'autres), qu'on lui accolait parfois, vers d'autres voisins, comme Márcia.

Les voisins de Paula, qu'elle voyait comme anormaux, représentaient un danger pour l'image de la copropriété, car, même s'ils étaient passés par un processus disciplinaire, les formations ou « cours d'intégration », ils n'avaient pas souscrit – ni même de manière personnalisée – aux normes fixées tant par la société « civilisée » que par la logique de la copropriété. Pour Paula, qui se voit comme quelqu'un qui respecte les règles au point de les ériger en valeurs, ces voisins sont pratiquement des adversaires, dans la mesure où ils représentent un risque vis-à-vis de son objectif de quitter la favela « corps et âme ». C'est sans doute pourquoi la mise à l'écart était la façon de démontrer son insatisfaction tout en faisant pression pour le départ de ceux dont la présence menaçait tout un *projet* en marche.

L'importance que Paula accordait aux « répertoires de justice » est la preuve définitive de ce que nombre de ses voisins méritaient les accusations qu'on leur faisait et qui devaient donc déménager. Pour elle, alors que dans la favela les trafiquants étaient l'instance saisie pour résoudre une bonne part des conflits locaux, dans les copropriétés ce rôle pouvait et devait échoir à la police<sup>18</sup>. Rappelons, comme le dit Feltran, que dans les banlieues (*periferias*)<sup>19</sup>

17 Les pratiques de classifications en normal et anormal intègrent en général les discours et les dispositifs disciplinaires existants dans nos sociétés. Pour Foucault, ces classifications s'inscrivent dans un jeu de pouvoir entre le champ juridique et le champ médical, qu'il a appelé « pouvoir de normalisation ». Ce pouvoir n'exclut pas et ne tue pas, mais il maintient les individus sous contrôle au moyen des technologies positives de pouvoir, un pouvoir qui n'agit pas par exclusion mais par inclusion dense. « Il s'agit de l'examen perpétuel d'un champ de régularité, à l'intérieur duquel on va jauger sans arrêt chaque individu pour savoir s'il est bien conforme à la règle, à la norme de santé qui est définie » (2010: 40). Ce pouvoir de normalisation est inauguré quand la psychiatrie introduit le critère de la norme, comprises comme règle de conduite et comme régularité fonctionnelle. Comme règle de conduite, elle est « la norme à laquelle s'opposent l'irrégularité, le désordre, la bizarrerie, l'excentricité, la dénivellation, l'écart. C'est cela qu'elle introduit avec l'exploration du champ symptomatologique » (2010:138). Comme régularité fonctionnelle elle est celle qui s'oppose au « pathologique et au morbide » (2010: 139).

18 On remarquera qu'à cette période, première phase de l'enquête de terrain, la drogue était vendue sur place discrètement, sans toutefois être organisée avec une structure de commerce de détail telle qu'on la rencontre fréquemment dans les favelas, et qu'on appelle les « *bocas de fumo* ». Celles-ci ne sont apparues que lors de la seconde phase de terrain.

19 J'ai choisi de traduire la catégorie « *periferia* » par le terme « banlieue » afin de faciliter la compréhension d'un public de lecteurs francophones et

L'existence de ce répertoire d'instances garantissant la justice, au contraire de ce que l'on pourrait supposer, n'est pas perçue par ces sujets comme une négation de l'importance de l'état de droit ou de la légalité officielle. Les habitants des banlieues sont peut-être le groupe social qui se montre le plus désireux de voir s'appliquer la loi officielle pour faire respecter ses droits, menacés en permanence. Dans ce contexte, le choix du répertoire de justice adéquat correspond plus à une décision instrumentale s'appuyant sur le quotidien qu'à un principe normatif idéalisé. Comme il est très difficile – voire parfois impossible – d'obtenir la jouissance concrète de la totalité des droits par le recours aux instances légales et à la justice de l'État, on fait appel à d'autres instances de mise en ordre qui sont ainsi perçues comme complémentaires de celles de l'État qui fonctionnent (2010: 60).

L'opinion de Feltran sur le recours aux différentes instances de justice dans les banlieues de São Paulo trouve un écho dans diverses analyses des problèmes des favelas de Rio de Janeiro. Leite et Machado da Silva (2008), à partir d'enquêtes auprès de *collectifs de confiance*, concluent que « les habitants ne rejettent pas la police en tant qu'institution et ne récusent pas non plus (car ils ne l'envisagent même pas) la nécessité du contrôle de la criminalité et de maintien de l'ordre public. Il lui est plutôt reproché sa manière d'agir, sa violence indiscriminée qui dépasse largement son pouvoir légal « d'emploi mesuré de la force » (2008: 63).

Pour des raisons pratiques et instrumentales – comme les difficultés d'accès à certains secteurs de la justice formelle ou la brutalité de la police à l'égard de la population des favelas en général – les groupes criminels présents de manière ostensible dans les favelas et les banlieues de Rio et de São Paulo se sont constitués en organisme légitime, bien que hors du champ légal, d'accès à la justice et au règlement des conflits. Mais ce que dit Paula c'est que maintenant la police jouerait ce rôle. Comme elle le souligne, dans la copropriété la police se fait présente. Aujourd'hui Paula et ses voisins peuvent obtenir un bien de citoyenneté auquel ils n'avaient pas accès jusque-là. Mais ne pas ajuster son répertoire de justice – de « bandits » à « police » ou de « anormal » à « normal » – revient à demeurer *favelado*. La façon dont on accède à la justice est un élément supplémentaire qui, aux yeux de notre personnage, aide à faire la distinction entre les habitants qui ont dépassé leur ancienne condition sociale et ceux qui doivent retourner « là d'où ils n'auraient jamais dû partir ».

En rejetant ces comportements déviants par rapport à la norme définie (comme le fait l'État lui-même), Paula reconnaît l'existence d'un lieu où ils seront accueillis : la favela. Pour cette informatrice, dans la favela ces gens-là ont une place assurée et c'est pourquoi ils préfèrent y retourner, et à son avis, ils y seront affranchis des règles de la copropriété et des lois de l'État, pouvant même avoir recours aux trafiquants pour arbitrer à nouveau leurs conflits. Ainsi, plus d'une fois Paula m'a affirmé avec conviction : « Il y en a qui ont quitté la favela mais que la favela n'a jamais quittés », qui n'ont jamais assumé la nouvelle identité qu'on leur offrait – celle de copropriétaire – et ce faisant mettaient en péril le projet de *nettoyage moral* dans lequel s'engageaient les autres habitants.

Autre exemple que j'ai pu observer sur le terrain dans la même copropriété : afin de continuer à fréquenter *l'Esperança*, mais aussi de légitimer ma présence dans cet espace résidentiel, de garder le contact avec les habitants et d'observer leur quotidien, dès juin 2013 je me suis inscrit comme bénévole d'un programme de renfort scolaire mis en place par Rosa, avec le soutien du Syndic M. Antônio, installé dans une petite pièce à l'entrée de la copropriété et sans utilisation jusqu'alors.

La pièce avait été équipée comme une salle de classe (presque tous les meubles provenaient de dons) et elle avait été baptisée de « Centre Culturel de la Copropriété *Esperança* ». Le renfort scolaire y était organisé

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considérant que dans les deux cas, ces termes sont fortement associés à des stigmates concernant les espaces et les habitants qu'ils qualifient. Toutefois, je reconnais que ce choix de traduction pose des problèmes d'équivalence sémantique dans le passage d'une langue à l'autre. Alors que la « banlieue » se rapporte en général, et du moins en France, à des territoires populaires et limitrophes par rapport à de grandes agglomérations, souvent associée aux « cités », le terme « periferia » désigne, au Brésil, différents types de territoires populaires qui peuvent se situer dans ou proches des capitales des états brésiliens. Ainsi, par exemple, les favelas de la ville de Rio de Janeiro ou des quartiers populaires de la ville de São Paulo, capitales d'états brésiliens du même nom, peuvent être considérées au Brésil comme des « periferias ».

depuis juin 2013, tous les mardis et jeudis (matin et après-midi), les mêmes jours que je consacrais à mon enquête de terrain. Rosa dirigeait les travaux, mais elle avait dû s'arrêter dès le mois d'octobre, après avoir réussi un concours pour le poste d'agent de santé communautaire. Si elle continua à la tête du programme de renfort scolaire, elle reçut néanmoins le soutien de Luciene, une habitante d'*Esperança*. Luciene est diplômée de pédagogie et travaille comme « explicadora »<sup>20</sup> [répétitrice] chez elle. En août elle avait conclu un accord avec Rosa : Luciene aiderait Rosa pour le renfort scolaire et, en échange, elle disposerait de la salle, aux heures creuses, pour accueillir ses propres élèves. Mais avec la réussite de Rosa au concours et sa rapide prise de fonctions, Luciene prit les cours en charge.

Quel rôle pourrait jouer notre ethnographe ? Je ne souhaitais pas faire office « répétiteur ». Je dis à Rosa et à Luciene que bien que professeur je n'étais pas doué pour faire la classe à des enfants. Il me restait les tâches « subalternes », comme classer des fiches, recevoir les inscriptions, ranger les livres donnés dans la bibliothèque improvisée, dans des cageots de fruits, garder les enfants pendant que Rosa ou Luciene sortaient chercher quelque chose ou allaient aux toilettes. C'était un poste d'observation privilégié qui permettait de voir tout ce qui se passait sans avoir à intervenir sur le déroulement des événements. C'est ainsi que se produisit l'épisode que je relate ci-après.

Le 24 octobre 2013, vers 8h40, Luciene terminait la première classe, destinée aux écoliers inscrits gratuitement. Je la saluai, nous discutâmes quelques minutes puis arriva un nouveau groupe d'environ cinq enfants, ceux dont les parents payaient Luciene pour son travail de répétitrice. En fait, le public était le même : les enfants habitaient à *Esperança* et dans les copropriétés voisines, elles aussi bâties dans le cadre du PAC et/ou du PMCMV. Leurs parents préféraient payer les cours, et ce faisant les enfants pouvaient y assister tous les jours et pas seulement deux fois par semaine. Mais en général Luciene donnait les mêmes cours aux deux groupes d'écoliers, suivant la même méthode et avec le même dévouement.

Une fois la classe commencée, je lui dis que j'allais essayer de me faire couper les cheveux et que je serais de retour rapidement. Le jeune coiffeur qui travaillait dans son propre appartement habitait le bloc en face de la salle de cours et lors de ma dernière visite nous avons eu une conversation intéressante sur la réalité de la vie ici. Il me fallait à nouveau me faire couper les cheveux, cela me donnait une occasion de renouer la conversation. Mais il n'était pas là et je retournai donc immédiatement en cours. En descendant les escaliers depuis le 3<sup>ème</sup> étage, je vis Luciene qui refermait la porte de la salle de classe et partir avec tous les enfants. Elle me fit signe que la porte était ouverte et qu'elle reviendrait bientôt. J'entrai et attendis près de cinq minutes.

Luciene et les enfants revinrent dans une certaine euphorie. Ils étaient allés à la copropriété *Felicidade*<sup>21</sup>, pour ramener une de leurs camarades qui avait la fièvre. Comme je n'étais pas là, Luciene avait préféré prendre tous les enfants avec elle, plutôt que de les laisser seuls. Leur excitation était due à ce qu'ils avaient vu et ressenti sur le trajet.

Ils se disaient choqués par les choses « incroyables » qu'il avaient vues là-bas. Ils parlaient de dégradation avancée, racontée avec des airs de film de terreur hollywoodien. J'étais surpris de telles perceptions car lorsqu'on passait dans la rue, les différences entre les deux copropriétés ne semblaient pas si grandes. Mais ce n'était pas très important : il s'agissait pour moi d'identifier et de comprendre les représentations présentées lors de cette visite. C'est pourquoi j'écoutai sans sourciller les enfants avides de raconter.

20 Catégorie brésilienne qui désigne un métier très courant dans les favelas et autres quartiers populaires de Rio de Janeiro. Les *explicadoras* sont le plus souvent des femmes, qui ont pour mission d'apporter un soutien scolaire aux enfants en difficulté à l'école, moyennant une petite rémunération. Ce n'est pas la formation scolaire qui qualifie ce métier mais plutôt une certaine facilité à comprendre les contenus scolaires et à les enseigner aux écoliers qui ont du mal à les assimiler à l'école.

21 Copropriété mitoyenne d'*Esperança*. Toutes deux ont été construites en même temps et sont dotées des mêmes structures et équipements. Elles ont été achetées par l'État de Rio de Janeiro qui souhaitait y reloger les victimes des pluies torrentielles de 2010.

Luciene commença par décrire un état de dégradation avancée. Elle disait que les habitants de là-bas n'avaient pas su « évoluer », que les femmes sont vulgaires, parlent « à grands cris » comme dans la favela ; elle ne supporterait pas d'y passer un mois. Un des écoliers rappela la scène d'une voiture abandonnée, sans capot, comparant cela à « un truc de film de terreur ». Ils disaient que l'endroit était étrange et semblait désert. La petite Iasmin, décréta : « Je n'y vivrais pour rien au monde. Je préférerais habiter sous les ponts ».

Les critiques de Luciene et des enfants rejoignaient toutes celles entendues pendant les six premiers mois d'enquête. Cette perception de la copropriété Felicidade, dégradée et dangereuse, avait amené le Syndic d'*Esperança*, M. Antônio, à installer les barbelés rasoirs : « Quand la police entrait à *Felicidade*, les voyous sautaient par-dessus le mur et les policiers les poursuivaient jusqu'ici. Ça faisait des histoires. Après les barbelés ça s'est arrêté.

J'ai pu mieux analyser cet épisode plus tard en décembre 2014, quand j'entrai pour la première fois à *Felicidade*, en compagnie de Rosa. Elle voulait y mettre en place un programme social et allait en parler avec le Syndic et les habitants. A l'époque elle était déjà mécontente de la posture de M. Antônio et une bonne partie de ses conversations avec ses voisins à *Esperança* servait à contester sa gestion de la copropriété. Dans les rues de *Felicidade* elle rencontra plusieurs habitants qu'elle avait connus alors qu'elle était agent d'impact social du PAC. À chaque fois, ou presque, elle faisait chœur avec eux dans leurs critiques à la copropriété où elle-même habitait. Les habitants de *Felicidade* reprochaient à *Esperança* d'être un lieu dangereux, de ressembler à une favela, etc. Ils se plaignaient surtout des bals qui avaient lieu toutes les semaines. En résumé, les accusations que les habitants d'*Esperança* dirigeaient à la copropriété voisine et à ses occupants étaient les mêmes que celles que les habitants de *Felicidade* portaient à leur rencontre. On ne trouvait pas forcément d'affirmations précises permettant de classer l'une ou l'autre comme meilleure ou pire. Ces accusations étaient les pièces d'un jeu de représentations qui consistait en un processus croisé de redirection du *stigmat* : l'un porte contre l'autre les accusations liées à la favela, ainsi que le *stigmat* qui y est associé, et vice-versa.

La déclaration d'une habitante de *Felicidade*, durant la même visite me semble un excellent exemple de ce phénomène. Il s'agit de Rebeca, femme noire d'environ 30 ans, dont le garçon, un adolescent de 12 ans, avait perdu sa bicyclette dans l'enceinte de la copropriété quelques mois avant notre conversation. Rebeca et son fils pensaient qu'elle avait été volée. Elle me raconta que sa première réaction avait été de se rendre dans la copropriété voisine car elle présumait que le coupable était un des gamins qui y habitaient. Arrivée à la guérite à l'entrée, elle se sentit tenue d'expliquer pourquoi elle allait faire le tour de la copropriété. Brenda, la femme du Syndic qui tenait la guérite à ce moment-là, lui aurait répondu : « Tu peux chercher, mais d'habitude les voleurs sont de ton côté ». Là-dessus, elles se sont mises à se disputer, échangeant une série d'accusations sur les copropriétés et leurs habitants.

La comparaison d'*Esperança* et *Felicidade* opérée par Luciene et les enfants, et le phénomène inverse que racontait Rebeca me permettaient de discerner clairement un début de compréhension sur ces espaces : les représentations négatives des habitants de chaque copropriété sur les logements et les habitants de l'autre copropriété remplissaient une fonction dans la construction de l'auto-image (personnelle et collective), visant son nettoyage moral.

Ainsi, alors que les deux copropriétés présentent des éléments et des pratiques – outre l'origine de leurs occupants – qui permettent la comparaison avec la favela, il fallait montrer l'autre comme étant celle qui abrite ceux qui « n'ont pas su évoluer ». D'où les lectures subjectives de comportements comme parler fort, ou encore d'éléments comme la voiture sans capot et les bals. Face aux accusations d'être ou de devenir des favelas, cette pratique consistant à montrer du doigt l'autre copropriété constitue une manière de réadresser le *stigmat*, et, cette fois-ci, non seulement à l'égard des sujets mais aussi de l'espace dans lequel ils vivent : « la copropriété à côté est devenu une favela, pas la nôtre ».

## Conclusion

Les copropriétés populaires ont entraîné une évolution du panorama physique et surtout social de Rio de Janeiro et de son agglomération, car leur affirmation au sein de la ville – comme stratégie d'État – allie la représentation générale des copropriétés à un projet de gestion et de disciplinarisation de la pauvreté urbaine. En effet, la mise en place de politiques du logement comme dispositifs disciplinaires n'est pas une nouveauté dans l'histoire de Rio, en particulier depuis plus d'un siècle d'existence des favelas. Comme l'indique Valladares (1991), les citadins pauvres vivant dans les favelas et les taudis au début du siècle dernier étaient vus comme des « classes dangereuses ». Il fallait trouver des façons de les contrôler tout en les faisant souscrire au plan de développement de la nation en tant que main d'œuvre bon marché. Les projets liés au logement semblaient privilégiés de ce point de vue : ils permettaient à la fois de chasser les pauvres des régions les plus valorisées et – associés à des stratégies « éducatives » – d'aider à faire des pauvres dangereux des « corps dociles » (Foucault 2008b).

Il convient de dire que je ne vois pas cette action de l'État à l'égard des *favelados* sous l'angle de la conspiration : elle est mise en œuvre et s'affirme dans un cadre de représentations de ces citadins pauvres présent dans l'imaginaire de la ville dans son ensemble. Si on ne peut nier la participation des collectivités locales (Ville et État de Rio) dans la persistance et la diffusion de cet imaginaire, il faut observer que la perception des pauvres en tant que menace qu'il faut maintenir sous contrôle est plus liée à un attachement à « l'ordre naturel des choses » qu'à un projet conscient de rivalité « riches/pauvres » ou « État/*favelados* ». Cela aide sans doute à expliquer la raison pour laquelle, près de huit décennies après l'inauguration des parcs prolétaires, les projets de logements destinés aux *favelados* gardent encore un caractère de « réadaptation surveillée ».

Ceci étant, le travail sur le terrain m'a permis de reconnaître l'existence d'un dialogue entre ce projet étatique – et disciplinaire – par la copropriété et la reconstruction du quotidien de ces habitants, qui se traduisait par des pratiques de résistance de leur part. Dans les copropriétés étudiées, ceux-ci étaient parvenus à trouver des créneaux leur permettant de défendre leurs intérêts. Dans de nombreux cas, ils constituent des expressions de la résistance à un projet étatique de gestion et de contrôle : si l'État impose la morphologie de la copropriété, les habitants en font un instrument de *nettoyage moral* ; si la copropriété impose des règles et leur non-respect peut entraîner une mise en accusation, souscrivons-y de façon personnalisée ; si certains éléments faisant ressortir le *stigmat* du *favelado* – comme le bal *funk* et le trafic de drogues – restent présents dans ces espaces, il est possible d'y déployer des stratégies individuelles, voire même collectives, pour ne pas « salir » la moralité.

Tout comme Valladares, j'ai constaté sur le terrain que « les habitants étaient conscients de l'enjeu politique qu'ils représentaient et y prenaient une part active pour en tirer le meilleur parti » (1980: 27). Les pratiques de résistance identifiées et rapportées ici avaient pour objectif de présenter cette participation active au jeu politique en question.

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Dossier “The Urban Peripheries”

III. Construction of a new imaginary of the city and public space:  
Saraus movement, mobility and religion

# Lambadão:

## breaking the borders of the periphery

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### Abstract

Non hegemonic forms of musical production have appeared in peripheral regions of Brazil, such as the lambadão genre in the Mato Grosso state. Lambadão is a product of the lower classes that, without expecting recognition from the cultural industry, but in dialog with it, use their own devices to have their music be heard. The objective of this article is to analyze how lambadão is articulated and projected in the peripheries of Cuiabá and Várzea Grande. The recording of CDs at live performances or in home studios and the reproduction and sale of the recordings by street vendors are dynamic processes used to produce and promote this musical genre. Far from being mere responses to a situation of precariousness and marginality in the field of cultural production, these processes are creative practices that attend to differentiated value systems.

**Keywords:** Lambadão, Periphery, Popular Culture, Musical Production.

# O lambadão: rompendo as fronteiras da periferia

## **Resumo**

Formas não hegemônicas de produção musical têm surgido em regiões periféricas do Brasil, como é o caso do lambadão, no estado de Mato Grosso. O lambadão é produto de camadas populares que, sem esperar por reconhecimento da indústria cultural, mas em diálogo com ela, lançam mão de artifícios próprios para fazer sua música ecoar. O objetivo do artigo é analisar os modos como se articula e se projeta o lambadão nas periferias de Cuiabá e Várzea Grande. A gravação de CDs ao vivo ou em estúdios caseiros e a reprodução e venda dos discos por camelôs são dinâmicas acionadas para produzir e divulgar esse gênero musical. Longe de serem meras respostas a uma situação de precariedade e marginalidade no campo da produção cultural, essas dinâmicas se revelam como práticas criativas que atendem a sistemas de valores diferenciados.

**Palavras-Chave:** Lambadão, Periferia, Cultura Popular, Produção Musical.

# Lambadão:

## breaking the borders of the periphery

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Sporadic presentations of the musical genre lambadão in the Brazilian media usually carry an image of novelty and exoticism. This was the case on August 30, 2015 when the presenter Regina Casé announced the main attraction of that episode of the nationally broadcast program *Esquenta!*, on Brazil's leading television network, Rede Globo. With her eyes wide open and an air of suspense, she asked the audience: "Do you know the lambadão genre from Cuiabá?"

Beyond the region known as Baixada Cuiabana, where the musical genre reveals its vivacity, lambadão commonly triggers curiosity: what kind of music and dance are these that seem to have their own trajectory, far from the traditional production and promotional strategies of the Brazilian cultural industry? Lambadão carries the mark of the "periphery" of the Mato Grosso state. It is not isolated, nor definitively separated from the "center". It has flirted in certain times and places, as we will see, with the hegemonic musical production process in the country. But it also demonstrates a defiant autonomy and creativity, which question suppositions about hierarchies and relations of dependency in the field of cultural production.

Phenomenon in the field of "popular culture", such as lambadão, have usually been defined based on their opposition to what is understood as erudite, official or elite culture.<sup>1</sup> But this does not suppose the existence of parallel and separated cultures. To understand the complexity of this relationship, we need to observe the efforts made in the field of cultural studies, inspired by Gramsci, which present a notion of popular culture as a field where a struggle for hegemony takes place, that is, a space of inter-relationships between dominant and subordinated forces. As Stuart Hall (2003) suggests, popular culture (like high culture) is not an essentialized domain that encompasses a constant content, but is the historic and contingent realization of a structural opposition. Popular culture can only be understood in its relational dimension – like the concept of "periphery", which is based on an opposition to a "center". It is thus a relationship with a potential to be continually altered: what is popular today will not necessarily be popular tomorrow, and can break the frontiers of the periphery.

Another characteristic that is usually indicated by scholars of popular culture is the vitality and potential for inventive freedom in this field. As Johannes Fabian affirms, "popular culture theory asserts the existence of spaces of freedom and creativity in situations of oppression and supposedly passive mass consumption" (Fabian 1998: 2). If at times the scholarly debate about popular culture appears to be depleted, trapped in a conceptual search that advances in circles, the phenomenon that it examines is far from depleted. This article discusses this creativity – in particular, in alternative forms of musical production and promotion.

Lambadão is a product of lower class communities that, without expecting recognition from the cultural industry – but in dialog with it – use their own devices to have their music be heard. Their main strategy is the formation of a network of relations that serves to maintain the productive chain, generating profits, whether through the production of live performances or the sale of low cost recordings. In this article we will show that the various dynamics used to produce and promote this musical genre, far from being mere responses to a situation of need, precariousness and marginality in the field of cultural production, reveal creative practices that serve differentiated value systems.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the discussion by Barber (1987: 12) about the "non official" as a starting point for theorization about popular arts.

## The lambadão genre and the projection of the Baixada Cuiabana

Innovative musical movements associated to peripheries and based on non-official systems of production and sales have been gaining increasing space in Brazil. Alongside genres such as funk carioca (Rio de Janeiro) and tecnobrega (Pará), lambadão has a production chain that is based on sustainability. Its producers use different dynamics to have their music circulate, such as the organization of concerts, the sale of CDs – which are recorded at live performances or in home studios at low cost – and the distribution of recordings through street vendors, who are important allies in promoting the work of the bands. Not being directly inserted in the mainstream or articulated to the so-called official media – although they establish some isolated interfaces with it – the producers of lambadão create their own market logic.

We use the idea of a non hegemonic system of cultural production. This approach is inspired by rereadings of Gramsci, such as that made by Raymond Williams (1979), based on notions of ideology and hegemony. According to this theoretical proposal, ideology is a form of power maintained directly by the agency of dominant social groups. It involves an articulated system of meanings, values and beliefs associated to a particular class and that attains the level of consciousness, of both the dominant and subordinated classes (Williams 1979: 108-109). Meanwhile, hegemony, which especially interests us here, refers to a particular type of domination, which acts in a more diffuse and less direct manner. It is marked by a complex combination of forces, and is experimented in various spheres of life – including the field of musical production and consumption. It is a kind of power that becomes internalized in the form of conventions and values.

Nevertheless, even if it is always dominant, hegemony is never exclusive (Williams 1979: 115-116). It must respond to a series of pressures exercised by other (“non-hegemonic” or “popular”) force fields that limit, alter, and challenge it. Dominant culture is not fixed, nor is popular culture. Both domains can only be defined by the relationship of tension between them. Between dominant and popular culture there will always be points of resistance, acceptance, overcoming, influence, rejection, exchange, opposition, capitulation, incorporation, distortion, and negotiation (Hall 2003: 255-259). Even if there are evident relations of domination and subordination, the productions of popular culture respond to what is imposed on them, and can be altered or eliminated by the dominant culture, but can also modify this dominant culture, or simply endure as an important space of resistance.

It is in this relationship of tension between the dominant culture (which is legitimated by the elite) and the popular culture, produced and consumed by people from the peripheries, that we seek to situate the lambadão genre. Lambadão conforms a non-hegemonic system that dialogs with the hegemonic cultural industry, at times subordinated to it, but always capable of challenging it, creating differentiated and relatively autonomous processes of musical production and distribution, based on original values, within a particular logic of market.

To reflect on the dynamics of lambadão as an industry of popular entertainment or as a type of non-hegemonic system, we begin by sketching an overview of this musical genre. The idea is to present a few historic facts and narratives from musicians about the origin of this genre, identifying some elements that are essential to understanding the place of lambadão in Mato Grosso. We also introduce some data about the representations stated by street vendors, musicians and consumers about lambadão, considering its association with the periphery. These elements are fundamental for sketching a characterization of the cultural expression under scrutiny.

Lambadão is projected and sustained with great strength in the Baixada Cuiabana, a region of Mato Grosso whose geographic limits are the Pantanal to the south and the Chapada dos Guimarães to the northeast. It includes the municipalities along the Cuiabá and Paraguay Rivers and its main center is the state capital, Cuiabá.

There is a certain consensus among researchers that musicians from the city of Poconé were mainly responsible for the creation of lambadão. This perception is associated to a historic issue, given that this municipality was where lambada (a musical genre that originated in the Caribbean) entered Mato Grosso, and which was one of the ingredients for the formation of the musical style analyzed here.<sup>2</sup> Researchers also indicate the influence of carimbó music from Pará state, and of rasqueado, a genre that is very common in Mato Grosso (Caldas 2011; Bólico 2011; Rosa 2009).

In conversations with musicians, other perceptions arise to help understand the origins and development of the genre. In addition to lambada, carimbó and rasqueado, new musical practices and new locations are mentioned to compose the diversified landscape in which lambadão is inserted. Many musicians want their own city to be considered the “birthplace” of lambadão. Musicians from Várzea Grande, for example, are certain that lambadão was born in bars and popular festivals of the region in the 1980s. We thus find a set of competing versions, which tend to emphasize the enunciators of each one of these narratives, in a dispute for being recognized as pioneers and for ownership of lambadão.

We also note that in narratives about the origins of lambadão, other elements are mentioned in an attempt to offer a historic reconstruction of the genre, such as details about technical dimensions. For instance, one of the interlocutors in this study explained that lambadão has progressively replaced rasqueado as the preferred rhythm in popular events. According to this musician, the rasqueado genre required greater motor coordination and physical strength of the musicians. So, to simplify the music, they created the beat of lambadão. The rasqueado rhythm is faster, and since the musicians had to play all night long, they began to reduce the time of the pedals, and rasqueado began to lose force. Moreover, according to this musician, rasqueado was very regionalist and spoke only of the iconography of Cuiabá, not winning the sympathy of the public that lived in the interior of the Mato Grosso state: “lambadão arrived, just like forró, speaking more of love”.

These imbrications and junctions became experimentations. Not only through the fusion of styles and techniques, but also because of the bold manner that lambadeiros developed their own market, interacting and maintaining a solid communication with low income communities. These musicians support themselves financially with the cultural market strategies that they developed, without government incentives, in a constant search for ways to make their music viable.

In statements that recall the initial moments of popularization of the lambadão genre in the mid 1990s, some musicians emphasize the indifference of the middle and upper classes, who did not see it as a product of Mato Grosso culture. The indifference came especially from people who lived in the capital. By means of practices and discourses related to the consumption of cultural goods, the Cuiabá elite maintained its distance towards the lower classes and their forms of entertainment. The disdain of the elite towards popular manifestations is not particular to Mato Grosso, as Pierre Bourdieu (2006) revealed so well. Yet as seen in similar cases, this posture of the elite can change over time, particularly when a musical genre reaches new contexts, awakening a curiosity beyond the periphery.

In the article “Funk and Carioca Popular Culture”, Hermano Vianna offers some considerations about the images of funk and its association to official representations about popular culture from Rio de Janeiro. The author questions the idea of authenticity. Vianna (1990) reveals that a cultural manifestation has different consumer environments for different publics and nevertheless is able to remain independent. In relation to Carioca funk, a musical genre from Rio de Janeiro, its products “can be consumed in different manners by different social groups and can circulate (even internationally) through unconventional routes” (*Ibid.*, 249).

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<sup>2</sup> According to Caldas (2011), lambada was taken to Mato Grosso by gold diggers who, after an unsuccessful search for gold in Pará, located in Mato Grosso cities such as Rosário Oeste, Várzea Grande and Poconé.

Similar to the way that funk carioca attained an “official” status, lambadão has gradually conquered its place in Mato Grosso, attracting new audiences, including part of the intellectualized elite who begins to give greater value to the local production, affirming a trend towards the valorization of cultural movements of the peripheries. This has been corroborated by recent monographies from final course projects at the Federal University of Mato Grosso, especially those in the communication school, such as: “Lambadão: a Invenção de um Circuito Cultural e Comunicacional” [Lambadão: the Invention of a Cultural and Communicational Circuit], by Sandra Maria Souza Rosa (2009), and “A Desforra da Periferia” [The Revenge of the Periphery], by Lucas Bólico (2011). Other final course projects include a paper at the Centro Universitário Cândido Rondon, by Dewis Maycon Meneses Caldas (2011), “Vai Descendo Até o Chão, Fazendo ‘nhéconhéco’ no Salão: a Comunicação das Bandas de Lambadão em Cuiabá e Várzea Grande” [Go Lower to the Ground, Doing “nhéconhéco” in the Hall: the Communication of Lambadão Bands in Cuiabá and Várzea Grande]. At the master’s level, we can mention two dissertations defended in the graduate program of contemporary cultural studies at the Federal University of Mato Grosso: “O Lambadão de Mato Grosso: Registros de uma Dança Popular Urbana” [Lambadão of Mato Grosso: Registers of a Popular Urban Dance], by Tânia Fontes (2012), and “A cadeia produtiva do lambadão: rompendo as fronteiras da periferia” [The Lambadão Production Chain: breaking the borders of the periphery], by Lidiane de Barros (2013).

Many of the lambadeiros believe that the “capital of lambadão” is Várzea Grande, since most of the active bands and their musicians come from this city. Yet some have told us that there is a lack of recognition from Cuiabá, the state capital, regardless of the fact that the two cities are separated only by a river. “There are some places in the capital that do not recognize lambadão as regional culture”, one of our interlocutors declared. Nevertheless, the growth of its popularity is notable, even if it has not reached wealthier regions of the state capital as lambadeiros would like to.

In response, one of the methods explored by its protagonists has been to use virtual spaces such as specialized music sites or social networks such as YouTube. In the 1990s, the reality was different, given that the internet was still not used as a tool in the promotion of lambadão and the work of the bands was only accessible through sales by street vendors. One musician recalls that the indifference of some people was also related to the genre’s bad reputation. He recalls that critics of the style thought that the lambadão dance – marked by very fast and sensual steps, with movements in which the hips of dancers would touch – was too explicitly erotic, which impeded the acceptance.

This dimension is reinforced by the words to the songs. Lambadão lyrics touch on various themes, many of them associated to romantic relationships: “I’m crazy about you/ If you want to come back to me/ This time it will be my way/ I’m crazy for you/ Give it a try and see if it changes” – an excerpt from the song “Sou louco por você” [I’m crazy about you], by the band Scort Som. Although they deal with various themes, many of the songs are erotic. The song “Pica Pau”, by the band Erre Som, was inspired by a children’s cartoon character.<sup>3</sup> The lyrics have an ambiguous meaning with an erotic provocation: “Here comes the woodpecker/ He likes to peck/ When he is flying/ he is always pecking/ He likes to peck/ The woodpecker is coming/ Everyone is watching/ He draws attention/ His head is red/ He is very beautiful/ His laugh does not lie”.

Lambadão songs and dancing motivate pejorative analyses about the genre. In 1997, one of the pioneer bands, Estrela Dalva, was invited by the host of a nationally popular daily variety show, Ratinho, who had seen them at a political rally, to participate in his program. The TV host made many pejorative comments about the lyrics and dance style. This left the musicians and public upset. During the study that led to this article, the episode was mentioned by various interlocutors. One musical producer recalled: “The program’s

<sup>3</sup> The cartoon character is Woody Woodpecker. “Pica Pau” means woodpecker in Portuguese, while “pau” is slang for “penis”.

staff were not professional. They invited the band for a ridiculous segment, without even speaking with the musicians to warn them about how they would treat the novelty, given that the lambadão genre, still restricted to the state [of Mato Grosso], began to be promoted nationally”. One musician also mentioned the televised incident and criticized what he considered a “lack of respect for the lambadão musical movement”. In his words, “Estrela Dalva’s appearance on Ratinho was one of the most negative points for the lambadão genre and until today is polemical. Because of the type of dance. But it is very easy to discriminate. The elite do not like it, but at carnival, women can go topless!”.

Nevertheless, lambadão made another national appearance, which lambadeiros consider dignified. The brothers Ronildo, Ronaldinho and Ronny, who form the band Erre Som, reported that in 2005 they were invited to participate in the segment “Central da Periferia” [Central Periphery], on a nationally broadcast show of the Globo TV network, *Fantástico*. Regina Casé, a national star and host of the program, came to Cuiabá just to interview the trio. Moreover, in 2015 she turned the spotlight on the Mato Grosso genre once again on the program *Esquentá!*, as reported in the opening of this article.

Another conquest of the lambadão genre is a more recent flirtation between the periphery and the wealthier economic classes of Mato Grosso. In July 2012, the band Scort Som was cheered at the festival Feijoada de Inverno de Chapada dos Guimarães, an annual event that attracts wealthy people. The band returned to perform at later editions of the Feijoada de Inverno and was also invited to a segment of the program *É Bem Mato Grosso*, on TV Centro América, the regional affiliate of the national Rede Globo TV network, where it performed its music on various segments and told its history. It is important to highlight that this television program, presented on Saturday afternoons, focuses on Mato Grosso culture. The program reports on traditional festivals, various popular manifestations, such as the cururu and siriri,<sup>4</sup> and presents regional artistic talents including painters, artisans and musicians. The program is presented by Pescuma, a regionally well known musician thanks to his performance of rasqueado and who at times conducts projects with the Orchestra of the Mato Grosso state, like the recording of the DVD *Cantos do Brasil*, with a repertoire permeated by popular music. The name of the program is a direct reference to one of his compositions, “É Bem Mato Grosso” [It is really Mato Grosso], a song that praises the regional landscape and culture.

Despite the apparent growing appreciation of lambadão – largely as it is seen as a spectacle because of its irreverence – and the fact that its agents are trying to articulate themselves and perform more regularly, the genre acceptance does not seem to be consistent. According to one of the musicians, there is a notable lack of spaces to play in Cuiabá:

There is this problem here, there are no venues for lambadão. The Praça do Lambadão, in the neighborhood of Bela Vista, closed. Erre Som tried, but did not make it, it could not go on. We suffer a lot of discrimination from government. We conducted the project “Praça do Lambadão” for the first time in 2007. At the time there was rasqueado downtown, and lambadão here in the Planalto [neighborhood]. We won incentives and every Friday for four months we had money. There would be an average of two thousand people a day. Two bands, every Friday. It ended at a fixed time. The musicians were paid. Only musicians who we could pay performed, although there were people who wanted to play for free. We tried to professionalize the concerts, we hired security. So we were able to ideate the project, but today it is hard to organize an event. The police shows up, the environmental agency [SEMA – Secretaria de Estado do Meio Ambiente] stops everything. It’s a fight for which we are preparing, with legal support. We will fight with the city government, with the state attorney general, who is linked to those who want to defeat lambadão.

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4 Cururu and siriri are popular musical genres (and dance styles) that can be found in the Mato Grosso state, performed on percussive and string instruments. Such manifestations are present in festivals celebrated in homage to catholic saints. They are considered to be legitimate examples of local tradition.

The lambadão genre is consumed as entertainment in the periphery, and takes on the character of a bold attraction when it is consumed among the elite. The musicians begin to perceive a small change in how the elite sees the lambadão because of invitations they have received to play, and even if it is not with the seriousness that they would like to be treated, in a certain way, they try to be optimistic and credit this projection to the festive character of the genre.

The image of lambadão appears to aggregate an irreverent and playful quality to events of the elite. The music is still seen as exotic, which is the reason for hiring a band. One interlocutor for the study reported that his band was invited to a “very elegant party”, the wedding of a businessman, owner of a sophisticated restaurant in the capital. The host requested that the band not announce their presentation at his wedding on the band’s website. He wanted it to be a surprise for the guests, who would certainly get quickly involved when lambadão began to be played. “They [the rich] always dance. When its time to say that they like it, they won’t admit it, but when the music plays, they begin to dance right away; if they are a bit ‘high’ then... there they go”.

These episodes, reported during the interviews conducted with the musicians, reveal how, despite the stereotype and the struggle to conquer space in the capital and in Várzea Grande, the lambadão genre proliferates in Greater Cuiabá. A complex process is observed, which does not allow for simplistic dichotomies. Lambadão resists the criticisms and the pejorative images presented by the elite in certain contexts. It is promoted, even without support from the media and government. But its producers know very well how to take advantage of the gaps that open from time to time, whether at local events with a special public, or in the realm of the hegemonic cultural industry. And the same elite that at times looks down on lambadão, at other times adopts it or simply lets itself be influenced by the cultural effervescence that comes from the periphery. In this field of hegemonic and non-hegemonic forces, the diversity of possible relations is very important to consider.

In the interviews with the producers of lambadão, what we saw in general was their concern about being respected. And one of the reasons for the persistence and proliferation of the lambadão genre, even in unfavorable situations, is its particular forms of production. This non-hegemonic system of production and promotion allows the maintenance of this cultural expression and its viability as a source of income for the agents involved in it. Lambadão is a representative of new models of cultural production that are emerging in the peripheries – or in the *backyards*, as in the case addressed in this article.

### **Production, diffusion and consumption of lambadão**

After providing a panorama of the lambadão genre, its origins and images, we will analyze its production, diffusion and consumption. Certain mechanisms will be highlighted, particularly the shift from professional recording studios to recordings in home studios and during live performances, and the rampant distribution of recordings by street vendors.

Concerts are the main instrument for generating income and support for the lambadão musicians and their families, and also provide a financial “reinforcement” in the life of street vendors who work during the performances. Most of the concerts are held at music halls or parking lots that are built in backyards by people who see an opportunity in these open businesses – the horizontalization of production is conducted in network. The expansion of the number of spaces for the concerts entails involvement of various agents.

These include the stage crew and operators of sound and lighting, equipments and venue owners, those who do the filming, as well as people not directly involved with the musical production, such as street vendors who work during lambadão events.<sup>5</sup>

The promoters of lambadão also reinvent themselves by improvising and using labor obtained from interpersonal relations. In the region of Várzea Grande, homes on large lots had ground paved and quickly served as the base for concert spaces, at times covered by roofs of straw or asbestos tiles. The house of the manager of the band Scort Som, for example, became the Residência do Seu Gonçalo, known for live music performances. The informal character and domesticity appear to be intrinsic to the cultural market that has developed around the lambadão genre. On days of lambadão concerts, the family routine changes, given that friends and family of musicians and organizers of the concerts perform various functions in a division of tasks, from cleaning the location to attending clients. Moreover, many homes of lambadeiros that are not used for live performances may be used instead as recording studios and rehearsal spaces, as is the home of the musicians from the bands Os Ciganos and Erre Som.

We play a lot in the backyards. The yards have no structure, while the legal spaces have licenses, authorization from the city, the fire department; Galpão, Cabana and Big Chopp [concerts venues] have all the documentation they need. The venue De Paula is closed because the owner invested, but the public, with no explanation, stopped going there. The house “burned”, there is no logical explanation. Keeping a house functioning for a number of years is difficult and that is how the owners of the yards do well, because they do not need to spend on the licenses.

What interests us in this statement is the differentiation between “legalized” houses and “yards”. The legalized venues are the formalized ones, with operating licenses, that follow the laws concerning safety, sanitation and taxes. They are the places with licenses. While the yards are spaces functioning outside of this logic. They are places that are often improvised in the domestic area of the owner. It is an informal business that involves family members and friends. The statement above emphasizes that many of the lambadeiros play in the backyards. Some owners invest to become legalized. However, “without explanation” the public may stop going to their venues. This point suggests that the lambadão genre is organized in informal chains of operation – in contrast to an official circuit with “documentation” – and inserts itself in the logic of the “backyards”.

In addition to the venues already mentioned, there is also the Clube do Zé Pimenta, the Cabana da Dudu, Globo Show, Laço de Ouro, Central Bar and Galpão. In Cuiabá, we may include Salão de Benedito, Mangueiral, Top Fest, A Baianinha, Salão do Baianinho, Retirão and Reserva Restaurante. These venues are mainly located in the neighborhoods of Tancredo Neves, CPA III, Dom Aquino, Campo Velho, Tijucal, Planalto and in the urban perimeter along state highway MT 251, which leads to the Chapada dos Guimarães. Two important points must be highlighted. The first refers to the denomination of these locations. Many of them mention the name or nickname of the owner: Cabana da Dudu [Dudu’s Shelter], Salão de Benedito [Benedito’s Hall], Clube do Zé Pimenta [Zé Pimenta’s Club], Salão do Baianinho [Baianinho’s Hall], etc. The names reveal the domestic character of the lambadão genre. The other point to be emphasized is that all of these locations are relatively far from the city center and wealthier neighborhoods; they are in peripheral neighborhoods associated to the poor and working classes.

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<sup>5</sup> Lucas Bólico noted this issue in his study about lambadão, emphasizing that the resources that circulate in live performances involve not only the musicians or promoters of the event: “Around an event related to the genre in the periphery, there are countless people looking for an extra something. They are people who sell food and drink in the street, people who watch cars, neighbors who open garages outside their houses and people who enter the dance with authorization of the owner, also to make some money” (Bólico 2011: 66).

To complement the discussion about the importance of the backyards in the production of lambadão, we refer to the promotional strategies for the concerts. The main forms of promotion reveal the dimension of improvisation and use of alternative strategies to attract the audience, based on informal models. One of these mechanisms is hanging banners in specific neighborhoods. The promotional methods are made even more complex because people who attend concerts in backyards and also in legalized houses are attracted not only by the certainty that they will have fun, but because they were “prepared” before hand. They are in constant contact with lambadão music, given that there is nearly unrestricted access to the recordings – which can be heard at family parties, in cars, or purchased at shops and stands that sell pirated CDs and DVDs. Musical productions are offered on a large scale at low prices by street vendors, to the extent that performers do not have control of how many copies are made. They benefit from this form of musical promotion, because becoming popular makes it certain that they will be hired to perform at concerts – the main source of income.

We highlight that this is not, in fact, an exclusive characteristic of lambadão. In relation to the music market, in a wide variety of contexts worldwide, there has often been a shift of profits from the sale of recorded music to the sale of admission to concerts. Contrary to the more pessimistic perspectives about the technical reproducibility of music, inspired by the classic work of Walter Benjamin (1973), the digital revolution has positively influenced musical performances, whether in grand spectacles or at smaller concerts, in restricted spaces. The direct experience with live music has been revalued, coming to be the most important source of income in the music market (Braz Dias 2014).

Therefore, it is necessary to relate the lambadão genre to a broader discussion about the music market in the digital era – including both the most alternative and peripheral systems of production and distribution as well as those engendered by the entertainment industry, in the domain usually called mainstream. With the drop in CD prices, even internationally famous musicians who work with large recording studios view recordings more as a way to attract fans to their concerts, where more income is possible. The journalist Robert Sandall (2007) presented a curious calculation: “You could have bought Madonna’s entire catalogue for less than half what it cost to see her perform at Wembley Arena”. Recordings have been reduced to the role of a mere form of advertising.

Analyzing the digitalization of the Brazilian recording industry, Wainer (2016; 2017) reinforces the argument about this diffuse effect of new digital technologies. As this author demonstrates, what in the late 1990s was experienced as a crisis by the Brazilian musical market, associated to the proliferation of pirating of CDs and sharing of MP3 files, has now revealed interesting facets. One of them is the process of decentralization of musical production. The new configuration of the music market at the turn of the century allowed the rise of cases like that of the emblematic group Calypso. Coming from Belém, in northern Brazil and at the margins of the recording market located in central and southern regions of the country, Calypso grew through the use of digital technologies in an autonomous economic circuit outside the mainstream recording productions – although it took advantage of this later on. Independent routes became possible, as is the case presented in this article. Even if we refer to a “specific” market for lambadão, it is not separated from this broader context.

Returning to the situation under scrutiny, professional studios are still inaccessible to most lambadeiros. One musical producer in Cuiabá, the owner of one of the best studios in the region, explained that many of the lambadão recordings originated from the recording of live performances. The recording is done on laptop computers, which does not guarantee good sound quality, according to the criteria of other musical fields. When the bands decide to invest in professional studios, they do what is necessary to reduce costs, as our interlocutor explained:

For example, the recordings are made with the entire band at the same time and they do not pay for extra musicians or for the arrangements, and much less, have a musical producer. At least, in my studio, they never use them. Except for a recording of the track “Judiação” in partnership with the sertanejo musicians João Carreiro and Capataz.

It is important to discuss in greater detail about the “quality” of the production process. We note that what can be interpreted as a lack of care, precariousness and improvisation deserves another interpretation. Considerations about quality only make sense if we have a certain desired standard as a reference. When the final objective is the purity of the sound, a live recording made with a simple laptop computer does not seem to be suitable. But, if the emphasis is on fast promotion and low costs, these strategies may not be seen as precarious and inadequate.

Another example deserves to be mentioned. One of the studios used for lambadão recording is a room in the home of one of the musicians, an interlocutor in this study. The location is simple, with no acoustic insulation. There is only a computer that is equipped to capture the music. There was a time when the room had acoustic insulation. But the owners decided to remove it to create a more pleasant and well-ventilated space. The walls were painted green to make it more hospitable. We note that other values are involved, different from a priority concern for the quality of the sound. A space suitable for sociability can be an important objective, associated to the always present concern of having the music circulate, making the music known.

Concerts are largely promoted through unlimited distribution of CDs copied by street vendors, and sold at a low cost. In addition, banners and posters are hung and sound trucks circulate in the streets. At times there is advertising on TV and radio. Those who perform in Greater Cuiabá may also receive promotion on community radio programs and on the TV Lambadão Show, which began in July 2013.

Today some artists use the power of the internet to promote their songs. However, there are still few groups that share their music online. Most of them have not explored the potential of the web for promoting concerts, even on music sites. Posters, banners, “mouth-to-mouth” and sound trucks are the main channels for promoting events.

Some of the people we interviewed indicated that they are looking for specialists to conduct online promotion because they are not familiar with the internet – which questions the acclaimed democracy of access to the virtual world promoted in the specialized literature. It is important to emphasize the life trajectory of many of the people involved with lambadão. Many of the band members have not completed high school and work in construction or at gas stations.<sup>6</sup>

Even if there are still only a few who invest in digital marketing, the lambadão genre advances on the global internet given that fans often use YouTube channels or sites with music, lyrics and videos – such as *MySpace* and *PalcoMP3* – to promote entire CDs by lambadão groups. This is how lambadão crosses borders and becomes called by new names. In Brazil’s Northeast, it is known as the *forró Cuiabano*. The lambadão genre, which has variations such as the *lambadinha*,<sup>7</sup> has also won fans in neighboring countries, such as Bolivia and Paraguay. It has even gone much farther. Members of the band *Scort Som* say that lambadão can be heard in Japan, Greece and Portugal, promoted voluntarily by friends who live in these locations.

Jukeboxes found in bars in the periphery often play recordings by the better known lambadão groups. The bands are not highly concerned with the recording processes, as mentioned, except if they need to remove some interfering elements from live recordings. But they do not turn to musical producers to do so, which limits the presence of these professionals in the creation process. They make the recordings themselves, sell them at concerts and count on street vendors to make new copies.

6 There is a case, in particular, of a musician and member of a band that is well known and who has a law degree and a political career. He has worked mostly as a broker, mediating relations between the universe of lambadão and other sociocultural domains.

7 A slow and romantic version of lambadão, with a beat very similar to *rasqueado*.

The vocalist from one of the bands said that he knows of at least 49 CDs that were recorded while they played at various lambadão “houses”. “While we play, there is someone with a notebook turned on and recording, and they sell them right there”. Since street vendors have complete control over the recordings when they are released, with freedom to reproduce them, they also intervene in the covers of the CDs. For example, vendors replace the photos of the band with images of semi-naked women (Figure 1 and 2). And the musicians do not mind: “The vendors promote our work which allows our music to reach various places in the state, especially at the borders with Bolivia and Paraguay”. While professional musical producers are excluded from the lambadão production chain, street vendors are an important part of this creative process.

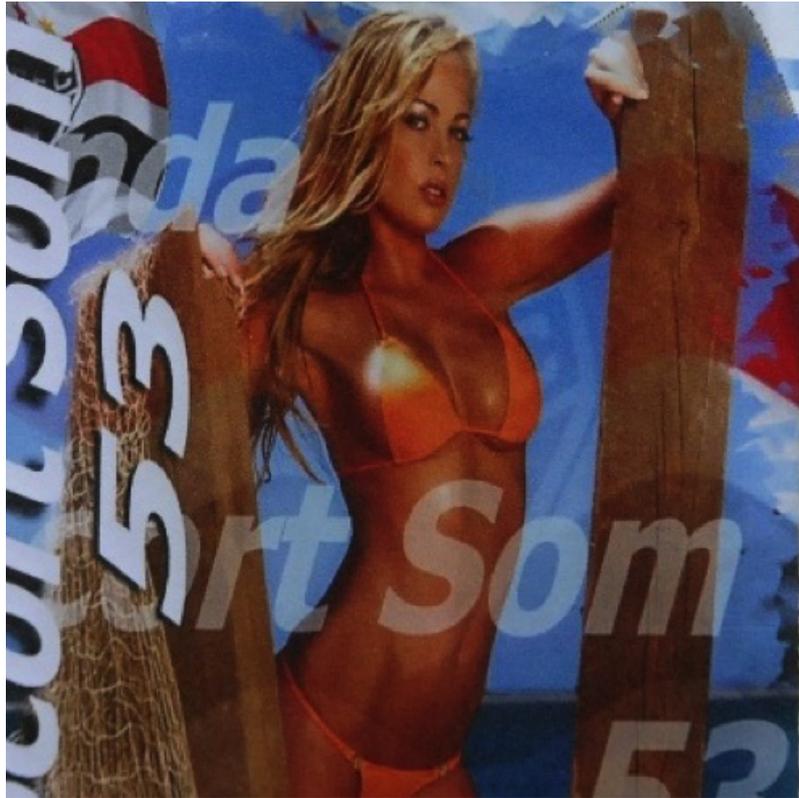


Figure 1. Cover of lambadão CD from the band Scort Som purchased at a street vendor’s stand. The CD had an “intervention” from the reproducers of the CDs and the number 53 on the cover indicates the number of reproductions of the recording.



Figure 2. Cover of CD from the band Os Inocentes. We may note the watermark on the image that identifies the website where the photo was found.

In the early 1990s, the copies were not made on CDs. This technology only became accessible in the decade of 2000. Before then, lambadao circulated on cassette tapes. One musician recalled a pioneer use of the CD:

A friend said that the owner of a store had a device for reproduction and we said that we wanted to record. Our income was very small. So, it all began with the Stilus Pop Som that recorded the CD in a studio and it fell into pirating. In 1999, of every ten songs played on car stereos, nine were from Stilus. We found out that a guy close to home here did recordings with a digital audio deck, but it was very expensive. Until we thought of a proposal. We asked his son: “When your father goes out, bring the deck to my house, we’ll record and give you some money”, which was much cheaper of course. That was in 2000. At that time the bands recorded CDs to play on the radio, they did not make copies and did not sell them. Knowing a guy who dominated the pirating, I made a private copy, a master.

With the recording in hands, he went to a street vendor in the city working on the sale of records and asked him to “hack” the CD. But the vendor wasn’t interested, he said he was wary of making copies of regional music, even if the author himself was asking. That’s when they made the copies and took them to sales points.

But since he did not want to reproduce it, we did it ourselves. The following week, we decided to make 100 copies and took them to him. In a week he sold everything. It was pirating that allowed us to make our dream come true and we now have nine recordings, all released from the start by street vendors. We never went to a professional studio. So we spent an average of R\$80 to R\$100 [approximately US\$25 to US\$30] to buy the disks. They were so successful that in one weekend we went to play in the interior and we earned what we never earned in a month. We kept feeding the vendors every week and never knew how much our band sold, because, after all, our profit comes from concerts. At a concert, if we are not involved with ticket sales, we charge a participation fee. In reality, its as if we pirate ourselves.

The lambadeiros, in addition to producing independent and low cost recordings, need to make the material available to the economically disadvantaged population, whether at street fairs or in low income shopping districts. These strategies were used by two exponents of tecnobrega, Gaby Amarantos and Calypso (Lemos and Castro 2008). At the beginning of its career the band Calypso, mentioned above, made recordings sold at low prices. But later they created their own studio and sold recordings in supermarkets. The projection was more consolidated when the band began to travel throughout Brazil doing concerts in peripheries. Later came recognition from the major media: presentations on the nationally broadcast and famous Sunday afternoon variety program *Domingão do Faustão* on Rede Globo, and appeared on the cover of the Brazilian edition of Rolling Stone magazine. What we want to highlight with these approximations is that both tecnobrega and lambadão have a production chain that is supported by the “metamedias”, a concept coined by Amaral (2009: 16). These are alternative or non-conventional media, like pirate CDs sold freely in the city and even virtual audio editors downloaded for free on the internet by musical producers. The peripheries use new technologies, to which they attribute new uses, to strengthen their strategies and networks. As the author affirms, “the artists do not earn money from the sale of CDs, but with the concerts that they perform and earn them more than they would earn by collecting authorial rights” (*Ibid.*: 37).

Lambadão recordings are sold at low prices. At stands that sell pirated CDs in Mato Grosso, two CDs may cost R\$5 [less than US\$2]. If recording was done with major studios, this would not be possible, given that in this process the prices are determined by production, promotion and sales costs, which increase the cost of the CDs. In an interview conducted with a member of a band, he said that he used to give thanks to God and to the street vendors who circulated his material.

The data just presented inspire us to conduct a theoretical review of the concept of “pirating”. Following other authors who have discussed different meanings of “copying” (Pinheiro-Machado 2012; Ribeiro 2013), we suggest a removal of this practice from the realm of illegality – at least as a universal criteria. Although pirating is framed as a crime in certain contexts, in others, copying is a highly valuable practice.

The negative image of the copy, specifically in the domain of music, is part of a powerful ideology, but is not absolute. Walter Benjamin’s critique, written in 1936, is the basis of one of the best known arguments against the reproduction of works of art. According to the author, “[e]ven the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin 1973: 222). This absence of the “aura” of the work of art – of the space-time identity of the original – has been, since then, evaluated to be the result of an impoverishing process. It is an argument based on the idea of “authenticity” as a fundamental value. This discourse must be understood, however, as located in a specific socio-cultural context. Anthropologists have introduced various ethnographic cases that show explicit contrasts with this ideology. Tatiana Bacal, for example, in studies about electronic music, presents a type of musical creation in which the procedures of recycling/bricolage are central, so that the “theft”, the “expropriation” of the original work, arise as a new way of making art (Bacal 2012: 112).

Lambadeiros also relate to the concepts of copy, authenticity and intellectual property in a very particular way. In the context of the lambadão genre, the “consecration” of authenticity as a positive valorization of the original has little importance. Bands hand deliver a master recording to street vendors. The destination and the phonographic quality of the copies are not a priority given that they will be played at times of leisure and fun. This whole music scene is related to pirating, as one lambadão musician highlighted: “If you go around the periphery on the weekend, you will hear how it [lambadão] is playing in homes. They are pirate CDs. There are very few original recordings”.

For producers of lambadão, copies help perpetuate the diffusion of their music. The reproductions expand the reach of the genre. Copies propagate lambadão and give the bands visibility. This guarantees the survival of lambadão. The authors do not have their authorship denied by using a flexible model, which helps to legitimate their art.

The idea of authenticity (or its absence) in recordings has little influence on the issue of the legitimacy of the artist. After all, the authorship of the recording is a source of unquestionable authenticity. Replicas thus become “authentic” in a universe of artistic production in which the practice of recordings reproduction is not considered falsification or criminal adulteration. In the case of lambadão, the strategy used to circulate the copies helps the music to proliferate based on a collaborative effort involving various agents. Copies of lambadão recordings do not annul any authenticity; they are a source of innovation.

It is important to evaluate the general conditions of production, circulation and consumption of the sectors involved. The agents, mainly musicians and street vendors, legitimate the economic transactions made in these new forms, based on a new system of priorities, to maximize profit and give continuity to this cultural movement.

Pirating has a subversive potential that [...] touches one of the hard cores of capitalism, at the same time that it contradictorily intermixes with it, given that it combines with the very needs of consumption, of (re)production of social identities, and of distinction under the aegis of electronic-computer capitalism. The structural impulse from contemporary reproductive technologies and from the increased ability to communicate and travel to distinct spaces leads us to believe that popular globalization will proceed, and heterodoxically consolidate and tighten the connections between the various links in the non-hegemonic global system (Ribeiro 2010: 35-36).

The reproduction of CDs conducted by street vendors with the authorization and encouragement of musicians, according to a non-hegemonic system of musical production, reflects a dual process of technical transformations and transformations in the domain of values.

In fact, technological transformations, which deeply alter both the processes of audio production *stricto sensu*, as well as the processes of production of material supports for songs and circulation and consumption of music, question in some extreme cases the very representations about artistic creation that constitute the doctrinaire foundation of the particular form of remuneration of the musical workers by the cultural industries, which is the authorial right and or the right linked to the rights of the author. [...] These transformations made economically viable the production of supports by the artists themselves and the circulation and consumption of music without any support from the internet, at the same time that they shifted the recording industry from the central place that it occupied in the music business in the 1970s, destabilizing the division of labor between the artists and those who economically exploited their work, upon which was based the very hierarchy between the “prestigious” artists and the “commercial” artists that symbolically organized the practice and conceptions of the phonographic industry and music criticism at that time (Morelli 2009: 9-10).

If in popular music of the 1970s, as Morelli explains, there was a clear separation between the process of artistic creation and final production of a recording, this is not true in the case of lambadão. The artists are increasingly closer to their public and do not have the entire apparatus of production and promotion that was the responsibility of the recording companies. The distribution of records is conducted by street vendors who reproduce as many copies as they want and distribute them in the locations where they work. They can also assume a creative function, interfering in the artistic production by substituting the original cover suggested by the performers, for others that they find more attractive. They often use pictures of beautiful women that seem to be taken from the internet, without observing copyrights to the image, or even removing the watermark of the original website.

When the phonographic industry system ruled, the authors and performers were remunerated according to a percentage of the sales of records, and performers were hired and received payments for the recordings that they made. In the so-called official system, musicians are not complete owners of their artistic productions, given that they are only those who “authorize a certain use of this product in exchange for a percentage participation in the sales of the new products that arise from that use” (Morelli 2009: 117). And because of the entire recording industry apparatus, the artist was “protected” by copyrights, which “arose as a legal guarantee of remuneration for artistic work at the same time as arose a specifically modern or capitalist form of exploitation of the works resulting from this work” (*Ibid.*: 128).

However, lambadão is not a cultural production protected by copyrights. The authors of lambadão songs do not “suffer” from having their works pirated. They need this type of promotion. As we argued, they are benefited by the informal distribution market for recordings; after all, musicians are interested in the money they earn at concerts. Earning from the sales of recordings at concerts serves to cover the cost of production. With the amount they earn monthly with concerts, they can cover living expenses of entire families. Normally, all family members are included in the artistic life of the lambadeiros.

The environment in which the lambadão genre is articulated and projected reveals the existence of business deals within business deals, in which the concept of sustainability is reinforced in the search for financial maintenance and profit, conquered thanks to low cost productions. These businesses strengthen the circuit as a whole. Backyards become concert venues, changing the domestic routine. Families and friends adhere to the activities, using their yards for parking cars, while other people sell food and beverages at the door of their houses.

Both street vendors, who earn money by selling lambadão CDs and DVDs, and musicians, who are able to schedule concerts because of this type of promotion of their work, are fundamental parts of this music movement. In addition to authorizing the copy of their artistic production in a clear disdain for intellectual property rules, musicians practice self-pirating, by giving their work to street vendors. The artists, the creators of the music, will not know how much vendors earn from sales or how many copies they make. Nevertheless, CDs are business cards. Their intense circulation is a sign of prestige, and a busy schedule of concerts is the thermometer of success. Street vendors earn per copy sold and musicians earn for concerts performed, given the promotion attained from the diffusion of copies to a high number of consumers. This relationship creates a collaborative network. Even if the logic of the so-called official market sees pirating as harmful and criminal, it is crucial to analyze how the use of this resource delineates social relations in the context of lambadão.

The practice of reproduction and distribution of copies of live performances is one of the most important items to be emphasized in the entire production process analyzed in this article. By producing the work at low cost and giving up their authorial rights, the agents of lambadão shift the gears of the movement according to a system of informal and sustainable commerce, which is guided by its own rules.

At the margin of the mainstream, lambadeiros – even if far from the attention of the mass media (with some isolated exceptions) – seek to expand their space and contacts with lower income classes. The search for spaces and the use of pirating are decisive to the consolidation of lambadão.

Finally, it is important to remember that although it is experienced more intensely by people in a non-hegemonic system, the lambadão genre has also conquered insertion in other niches. As we saw, at times it approximates the elite and middle classes, appearing as an attraction on radio and television programs with large audiences or at specific events. Considering as points of comparison the cases of tecnobrega and funk, which are now strongly diffused on the Brazilian pop music scene, it is possible that in the future the lambadão genre will also come to have another relationship with the hegemonic music industry, characterizing one more step of the highly dynamic process that we sought to analyze.

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# The Graffitour of the 13: an aesthetic, political and historical trajectory through Medellín

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## **Abstract**

To think the borders of the metropolis beyond the representations associated with precariousness and crime presupposes recognizing the abundance and vitality of aesthetic practices and productions that are reconfiguring the discourses on the peripheries. In both Brazil and other Latin American countries, the emergence and diffusion of languages produced in the “margins” of cities call into question the center/periphery dualism - relativizing the existence of fixed boundaries, while proposing other ways of narrating different collective experiences.

Commonly seen as a peripheral product, graffiti is an artistic language that express the multiplicity of agencies on the metropolitan edges. In the city of Medellín, Colombia, different groups formed mainly by young people from the edges have been taking on graffiti and hip hop as a resource to understand, narrate and distance themselves from the violence that crosses them. A significant sample of this type of collective experience is the Graffitour proposal, an “aesthetic, political and historical” route organized by the Centro Cultural Casa Kolacho in the Commune 13.

Based on the assumption that the Graffitour transcends the simple representation of the *medellinense* periphery and constitutes a form of cultural and political organization to speak about the violence that appears in the city, this work reports the experience of having carried out this journey through Commune 13. In this sense, it aims to reflect on how discourses are produced on metropolitan edges in contemporary times and on the role of urban artistic manifestations in the interpretation of violence and in the construction of social memory.

**Key words:** Urban Peripheries; Graffitour; Social Memory; Medellín.

# ○ *Graffitour* da 13:

um percurso estético, político e histórico por Medellín

## Resumo

Pensar as bordas da metrópole para além das representações associadas à precariedade e à criminalidade supõe reconhecer a abundância e a vitalidade de práticas e produções estéticas que estão reconfigurando os discursos sobre as periferias. Tanto no Brasil quanto em outros países latino-americanos, a emergência e a difusão de linguagens produzidas nas “margens” das cidades colocam em questão o dualismo centro/periferia — relativizando a existência de fronteiras fixas, ao tempo que propõem outras formas de narrar diferentes experiências coletivas.

Tido comumente como um produto periférico, o graffiti se constitui numa linguagem artística que dá conta da multiplicidade de agências existentes nas bordas metropolitanas. Na cidade de Medellín, na Colômbia, diferentes grupos conformados principalmente por jovens das bordas vêm assumindo o graffiti e o hip hop como recurso para entender, narrar e se distanciar das violências que os atravessam. Uma amostra significativa desse tipo de experiências coletivas é a proposta do Graffitour, um percurso “estético, político e histórico” organizado pelo Centro Cultural Casa Kolacho na Comuna 13.

A partir do pressuposto de que o Graffitour transcende a simples representação da periferia medellinense e se constitui numa forma de organização cultural e política para falar das violências que se apresentam na cidade, este trabalho relata a experiência de ter realizado esse percurso pela Comuna 13. Nesse sentido, objetiva refletir sobre a forma como são produzidos discursos sobre as bordas metropolitanas na contemporaneidade e sobre o papel das manifestações artísticas urbanas na interpretação da violência e na construção da memória social.

**Palavras-chave:** Periferias Urbanas; Graffitour; Memória Social; Medellín.

# The Graffitour of the 13: an aesthetic, political and historical trajectory through Medellín

Natalia Pérez Torres

## Introduction

At the end of March of 2016, I travelled to Medellín, the second largest city in Colombia, in the hope of acquiring an initial scope of the relation between graffiti and the peace process. This is the main theme of my ongoing doctoral research project, structuring it through the hypothesis that visual urban narratives, such as graffiti, furnish the new national peace process<sup>1</sup> with functional devices for the creation of discourse and practices of reconciliation.

My trip from Florianópolis to Bogotá and then on to “the city of eternal Spring”, in the middle of the Easter break, sought to obtain a preliminary engagement with my object of enquiry by seeking out concrete experiences that might aid me in defining the research and (re)defining its aims. Such a task is necessary and always complex, specially when confronted with fieldwork. Although my trip hardly qualified as such, since I had only just begun my PhD. course earlier that same semester, I went after images and practices of Medellín graffiti wherein I could discern signs of the transition from conflict to post-conflict<sup>2</sup> in my country.

Medellin afforded me an opportunity to refocus my analysis away from Bogotá, the city in which I grew up and which had been the theme of my MPhil dissertation<sup>3</sup>. However, it also proved stimulating for two features that I consider essential to my recent academic concerns: its contemporary salience as an example of international urban practices and interventions; and its place in the global imaginary as an archetype of urban violence in Colombia. The way that these two dimensions meet and engage each other – disaggregating a variety of forms of understanding and accepting both the experience of the city and of Colombian violence well beyond official reports and statistics, and of fictional narratives such as the Netflix series *Narcos* – constitutes an initial level for approaching my object: who produces these contemporary narratives of violence and peace? When and where are they elaborated?

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1 In referring to the “new national peace process” I want to register two things. First, the fact that Colombian history has witnessed various attempted peace processes. Since at least the first decades of the twentieth century, different government commissions and non-government groups were established to investigate the causes of, and to propose solutions to, national conflict. Although contemporary dialogue has reached a critical stage, it is but a “new” attempt at negotiation in an ongoing effort to establish peace (c.f. Molano 2015). Second, that the current effort does not seem to be “national”, or at least that its “national” status has been the object of debates in Colombia. Despite the fact that the country has been experiencing war for the past 50 years, the negotiated solution for the conflict does not find support in the general aspirations of the civilian population. Some political, religious, civil and military sectors linked to the political party of the ex-president Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010) have been boycotting the Peace Process, opposing the agreements reached in Cuba, as confirmed in the plebiscite of the 2nd of October of 2016. Conservative sectors which do not necessarily follow Uribe have also opposed the agreements, perhaps due to a critical lack of knowledge of politics and of the importance of a culture of peace for Colombia. This tension risks negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and reveals the underlying tensions to these types of processes (c.f. Gamboa 2016).

2 Peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC began in 2012. This process has led to talk of a “post-conflict” period involving a series of political strategies to promote social restoration and reparation to the victims, as well as for other reasons.

3 The dissertation, entitled *O Lugar do Graffiti no Centro da Bogotá Contemporânea* (“The Place of Graffiti in the Centre of Contemporary Bogotá”), presented at the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Urbanismo, História e Arquitetura da Cidade (Graduate Programme in Urban Planning, History and the Architecture of the City) at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (Federal University of Santa Catarina), aimed to make evident and to debate the trajectories of graffiti in the city from the perspective of conflicts in and over urban space.

Taking my lead from these questions, and having learned of the existence of a tour of graffiti sites in the periphery of the “capital of the mountains”, I planned a series of trajectories in the two days I had in the city. These circuits would provide me with an opportunity to take photographs of spray painted messages, murals, stencils and any other urban intervention through graffiti that dealt, in some way, with the internal armed conflict<sup>4</sup> or with the ongoing peace negotiations. I also hoped to establish contact with local graffiti artists, and to speak with them on an informal basis. I thus visited the city centre, the Universidad de Antioquia, the neighbourhood of Envigado in the south, the Centro Cultural Moravia in Comuna 4 (planned by the noted Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona) and, finally, the neighbourhood of Las Independencias in the Comuna 13 of San Javier, where the Graffitour takes place. The Graffitour is organised by the “Casa Kolacho School of Graffiti and Hip Hop” (Escuela de Graffiti y Hip Hop Casa Kolacho)<sup>5</sup>, where the famous open-air escalators, an internationally renowned urban reference point, were built in 2012. Practically all my movements through town were on foot, in the midst of the pollution that then plagued the “most innovative city in the world”<sup>6</sup>.

What does the international recognition of Medellín’s urban landscape have to do with national conflict and peace, and with artistic idioms, such as graffiti and hip hop, that emerge in modern cities? Why might it be interesting to consider the relation between these types of urban phenomena and the Colombian Peace Process, taking in an aesthetic, political and historical perspective through the case study of a city that still carries with it the stigma of violence associated with drugs? And more: is it the whole city that is representative of this stereotype? Which Medellín are we referring to when we speak of violence, drug trafficking and crime, when we reflect on peace, reconciliation and memory? Who inhabits and this city and how do they inhabit it? Which types of violence are operative in the city and which are expressions of national violence?

While I am unable to develop these question in depth in this short text, I believe that there is a category that converges and sheds light on elements of the questions. The urban periphery, when investigated beyond its spontaneous analytical bond with violence, poverty and criminality; when understood, in this way, without its overriding subjection to a geographical point of view; and when, thereby, it comes to be seen as an expression of new conflicts that relativize the idea of the fringes of the large metropolises (Birman 2013: 7); it then assumes a field of analysis for reflecting on the inter-relations between cities, territories, crime and violence. The aim of this text is to report on the experience of the Graffitour of the Comuna 13 in Medellín through the aesthetic, historical and political elements that structure this trajectory in the *paisa* periphery.<sup>7</sup>

4 There are many notions of what constitutes an “internal armed conflict” in Colombia. For present purposes, it will be defined as in the report prepared by the Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas (CHCV) in 2015, that is, as an internal confrontation characterized for being (1) prolonged (beginning in 1948, the period known as The Violence); (2) complex (involving numerous actors); (3) discontinuous (due to the re-emergence of guerrillas in the 1980s and of far-right groups at the same time); (4) displaying enormous regional differences (as a function of the heterogeneous population density and occupation of the land, as well as the relationship of the local population with national authorities); (5) barbaric (for the damage caused to the civilian population which has been most affected by the conflict); and (6) politically motivated (since it involves projects for society that actors perceive as being antagonistic). Cf COMISIÓN HISTÓRICA DEL CONFLICTO Y SUS VÍCTIMAS, 2015.

5 Unlike the tours *about* graffiti available in cities such as Buenos Aires and Bogotá – which I had the opportunity of taking in 2012 and 2013, respectively – the Graffitour of Medellín is a peripheral event, organized by the young people of the comuna itself. In Buenos Aires the tour was guided by a journalist from London, while that in Bogotá was conducted by an urban artist from Australia. In both cases, the tour moves through areas that are considered neither distant nor dangerous. I perceive this to be a fundamental difference, not only in what pertains to the administration of the trajectory, but also in the sort of narrative that accompanies it and in the reasons for holding it. In Medellín, the Graffitour benefits from the daily experiences of belonging of the young people of the Casa Kolacho and the fact that they are victims of the violence that they convey through urban interventions and the songs they produce. Cf Pérez 2013.

6 In 2013 Medellín received the title of the “Most innovative city in the world”, an internet prize organized by *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Citigroup*, which values different urban practices. At the time, Medellín and São Paulo were the only representatives from Latin America, and they stood out for “the construction of an integrated infrastructure of public transportation, which have reduced the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, supporting the social development of marginalized zones, the reduction of indexes of criminality, the construction of cultural equipment and spaces, and the management of public services”. CAMARGO, María del Pilar. Medellín, la ciudad más innovadora del mundo. *Revista Semana*, 1, mar. 2013. Available at: <<http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/medellin-ciudad-mas-innovadora-del-mundo/334982-3>>. Accessed on 10 Oct. 2016.

7 Among its many meanings, “Paisa” is how people from Medellín are known in Colombia.

**Image 1**

Escalators in the Las Independencias neighbourhood



Source: <http://citisclope.org/>

**Image 2**

Panoramic view of the Comuna 13



Source: Chavocensura

### On Peripheries: the Comuna 13

Studying the edges of the metropolis over and above representations of its precarious nature and criminality, involves recognizing the abundance and vitality of aesthetic practices and political organizations that are reconfiguring discourse on the peripheries. In Colombia, as well as in Brazil, the emergence and diffusion of urban idioms and organizations produced in the “margins” disturb the dualism between centre and periphery – relativizing the existence of fixed boundaries in the cities by proposing other ways of narrating and appropriating different collective experiences.

Among various sectors of the population in Colombia, the notion of the “comuna”, much like the Brazilian “favela” or the Argentinian “villa”, tends to conjure the idea of a precarious and dangerous place. They carry what Hélio Silva calls “the stigma of locality”<sup>8</sup>, a conjunction of prejudice, absence of public policies, segregation, geographical distance, and lack of basic rights of citizenship, among other stereotypes. Unless one is an inhabitant of one of these places, or is otherwise linked to it, the very idea of visiting a comuna is frowned upon and viewed with suspicion. Those who intend to visit, even if only as tourists<sup>9</sup>, should do so with great care, preferably in the presence of someone who knows the place.

As someone used to exploring cities through public transport, the idea of going to the Comuna 13 to take part in the *Graffiti* tour derived less from a tourist’s curiosity about its new urban equipment than from the opportunity to see up close and from within (Magnani 2002: 17) the epicentre of the “Operación Orion”. This was a military operation under the authority of the Presidency, ordered during the first term of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2006)<sup>10</sup>, which was in place, through different mechanisms and in different degrees of intensity, from the 16<sup>th</sup> of October until early December 2002 (CINEP 2003: 21). As one of the most emblematic expressions of the internal armed conflict in Colombia in this century, the Comuna 13 also

8 Through the ongoing research project called “O lugar da residência, o local de moradia, estigma de localização, critério de residência no Grande Rio - o caso da Baixada Fluminense” (The place of Residence, the place for living, stigma and localization, criteria of residence in the Greater Rio area – the Baixada Fluminense case), Hélio Silva has been discussing how prejudice in terms of place of residence manifests itself, which, according to the project’s description in the Plataforma Sucupira “cannot be reduced to notions of ethnicity, “race”, gender, sexual orientation, or age class, but is prolonged and stressed in the consequences, damage and suffering imposed on people through false and generalizing presuppositions”. This category was used by the researcher in teaching the course on “Urban Peripheries in Brazil” in the Programa de Pós-Graduação Interdisciplinar em Ciências Humanas (Interdisciplinary Graduate Programme in the Human Sciences, PPGICH/UFSC) during the first semester of 2016.

9 “Favela tourism”, which for Medellín would be a “comuna tourism”, is a relatively recent phenomenon in the city which, since 2004, has benefitted from the Metrocable system of mass transport. In the Comuna 13, the escalators of the Las Independencias neighbourhood is a further attraction, linked to what is known as social urbanism. It is estimated that around 1,500 people, both locals and visitors, use the escalators every day. Other tours are available in the area, including nightly tours around Christmas time, and those offered during low season, such as the “Pablo Escobar and the Transformation of Medellín Tour”.

10 Initially touted as a military operation to control armed groups present in some of the neighbourhoods of the Comuna 13, the Operación Orion left behind various victims, detained or missing members of the civilian population that were attacked by agents of the army and the police, as well as by paramilitary groups who also held sway in the region. Although the details of the mission have yet to be elucidated, it left evident marks in the population, which anchors a temporality of *before, during* and *after* in the history and collective memory of the community. Cf. Posada and Vergara 2015.

bears what we may call the “stigma of violence”, representing some of the dynamic aspects of confrontation in city peripheries. As in Antonio Arantes’ classic study of the transformations of places in São Paulo, the comuna is conceived as “an aggregate of tensions and conflicts that become specialized in an amalgam of multiple territories (or places) and non-places [...] a flutter of interpenetrated spaces and places, confrontation of singularities, in an explicitly political and ample scenery” (1994: 200). Going there was hence an exercise in approaching the history of the recent conflict, and the ways of narrating these events that may be revealed by the graffiti produced there.

**Image 3**

Operación Orió



Source: Revista Semana (Jesús Abad Colorado)

**Image 4**

Operación Orión



Source: Revista Semana (Jesús Abad Colorado)

Administratively, a comuna is a cluster of neighbourhoods that are organised as a function of the need to delimit urban zones. The city of Medellín, is made up of 16 comunas and 5 corregedorias, according to which, strictly speaking, all neighbourhoods of the city belong to a comuna. However, no one calls neighbourhoods like El Poblado or Laureles by the term ‘comuna’ (Jaramillo 2015: 58). The stigmatizing label of the ‘comuna’, which has been current since the 1990s, also indexes local topography: in Medellín, the so-called peripheral neighbourhoods extend across the mountain tops, while neighbourhoods for which the pejorative label does not apply, and which lie close to the city centre, are situated in the valley bottoms, close to the river after which the city takes its name. The double stigma of the Comuna 13 as both violent and distant is, as Juan Diego Jaramillo has observed, further emphasised by what it means to be “someone from the comunas”:

[...] when one speaks of a comuna or of “people of the comunas”, a specific representation is evoked: *peripheral* neighbourhoods, poverty, youth (young men), violence, *delinquency*; all of those characteristics that, in general, are used to represent what is marginal or marginalized in many cities. This hegemonic representation, part of a common sense, like so many sets of ideas, practices and discourses that are understood to be “natural” or proper to a given context (Gramsci 2007), works in two ways. One the one hand, [...] where there are specific subjects who imagine others in particular situations, and, on the other, where the these very people represent themselves as people of the comuna, with the same negative characteristics that this word assumes (Jaramillo 2015: 57)

The “people of the comunas”, that is, the residents of neighbourhoods that appropriate or put into practice dissimilar forms of urban space in the dialectic between inside and outside (de Certeau 2003: 42), find in their youth a crucial group for understanding how violence has been represented in the last decades in the periphery of Medellín. Through the initiative of the young people of Comuna 13, the Graffitiour emerged from the work carried out in the Casa Kolacho, created in 2009 “as a mechanism of social,

cultural, political and historical transformation of the territories”<sup>11</sup>. In other words, as an alternative to pre-established stigmas and as a means for youth to take on a role which eschews the discourse that frames them as victims (Jaramillo 2015: 30), lacking experience of the world and potentially more vulnerable to the call of the world of crime.

Graffiti is usually seen to be a practice inscribed in the peripheries of cities. Although neither the practice nor the aesthetic of graffiti are at present restricted to the margins of the city, being also present in the many peripheries not located in the fringes of urban spaces, it is difficult to dissociate these practices from these locations, and consequently from the violence associated with them. This violence, we will see shortly, is not unitary, which certainly makes it more expedient to think in terms of “violences”, which find a narrative support in the graffiti produced by these young people.

Making use of the new information technologies available to the young inhabitants of the peripheries, which connects them and gives them access to “renewed spaces of identity-formation” (Feltran 2010: 206), the tours had to be arranged through *Facebook* or *Whatsapp* with Jeison Castaño “Jeihhco”, a hip hop artist and cultural broker for the comuna. Once the time, the price and the tour guide (Ciro) were agreed, I went to a baker’s next to the San Javier metro station, which connects to the Metrocable, which also provides access to the escalators of Las Independencias. The tour cost around R\$40,00 (USD\$12), and included bus fare from the meeting point to the edge of the neighbourhood.

## The aesthetic, political, historical

When we were kids, they told us to be careful because the walls could hear you.

Now we want to say that here in Comuna 13 the walls can speak.

Ciro.

The way stigma permeates the media, and manages to enact the social body as an official account of the territories that make up the Comuna 13, makes itself evident in a certain anticipation of violence, or its explicit scars and agents, when intruding places marked by the internal conflict, or otherwise associated with it. Crossing the boundary, the tense coexistence of division and fracture, of transgression and flux (Feltran 2011: 336), implies crossing the associated notion of the “invisible boundary”, a category that is part of the socio-spatial framework through which violence is being considered in some Latin American peripheries. In this sense, it contains an implicit reference to the “dynamic of fear, restriction and neighbourhood control, which establishes mobility barriers among youth in *combos*<sup>12</sup>, but which affects the population in general, and young people in particular” (Jaramillo 2015: 75).

The concept of the “periphery” articulates aesthetical, historical and political elements that singularize the territory, as is evident in the slogan that promotes the Graffitour. Upon entering the comuna in the sector of the Las Independencias neighbourhood, the aesthetics of the trajectory becomes evident, as I have noted previously, in the convergence of recent urban interventions, the colouring of the facades of brick houses, the patchwork of narrow passages and stairways, and the graffiti on the walls and roofs of the houses. Like a montage, in the sense of a series of elements that take meaning from their interaction as layers of signs that account for history, the landscape of the comuna is a “convergent social space” (Arantes 2000: sp).

11 HIERRO, Lola. Casa Kolacho: La violencia se cura con hip hop. *El País*, 30, jun. 2016. Available at: < [http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/06/23/planeta\\_futuro/1466698760\\_170228.html](http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/06/23/planeta_futuro/1466698760_170228.html) > Accessed on: 10 Oct. 2016.

12 According to the glossary created by Juan Diego Jaramillo (2015), a *combo* is “one name for groups of young people that gather to commit crimes [...] Additionally, it is also used for groups of young people who gather for a particular activity, which need not be violent” (p. 150).

For the organizers of the tour, graffiti art, but also hip hop and rap lyrics, define aesthetics as a tool for transformation. Much as urban planners agree that changes to public spaces trigger large scale changes that have social impact<sup>13</sup>, for the young people who interpret the comuna through the Graffitour, artistic expressions have the potential to transform: “We carry the culture, the processes and the transformation that we want, which comes from the art, from within people. A change that transforms me and helps me transform reality”<sup>14</sup>. Although it is not its sole distinctive element, it is evident that this account of change is built on the axis of violence: the young people of the comuna do not want to be identified by it any longer, and so the deconstruct and resignify it through their art. According to Rose Hikiji and Carolina Caffé, “debates concerning representations of the periphery are not separate from the production of a counter-discourse” (2013: 90). They know that art is always politics and that it likewise constitutes a means to resist and challenge the violence that crosses them, and which automatically defines them.

One of the first stopping points in the trajectory, the escalators are an allegory of the disputes that also lurk behind ways of conceiving and representing the comuna. According to Ciro, they are, at once, “the angel and the demon” of the neighbourhood of Las Independencias I. As we stopped there to shelter ourselves from the rain that threatened to ruin our tour, Ciro offered a paradoxical panorama of the place: the stairs, which evidently beautify the place and facilitate access to the neighbourhood, and further national and international tourism in the peripheries, are also part of an urban marketing that conceals or plays down conflicts involving space and, in the Comuna 13, the lingering manifestations of the violence suffered 14 years ago, and even before the Operación Orión. Comuna 13 aggregates international recognition – awards for innovation, architectural landmarks and successful models of mass transport for the poorer sectors of the population – as well as the living traces of systematic forms of violence that still demand clarification and resolution<sup>15</sup>.

**Image 5**

Members of the Casa Kolacho



Source: Facebook

**Image 6**

Access to the Comuna 13



Source: N. Pérez

Thinking of violence in this way, we are faced with a concept that is by no means homogenous, but rather exceptional and capable of equally affecting all actors involved with it. The very specificity of the Colombian conflict, its complexity and the content of the mechanisms which have been used to erect a national narrative, are incompatible with the idea of violence as stable and predictable.

13 Equipo Editorial. Gustavo Restrepo: O urbanismo pode combater o narcotráfico. ArchDaily, 13, jun. 2015. Available in: <[http://www.archdaily.com.br/768286/gustavo-restrepo-o-urbanismo-pode-combater-o-narcotrafico#disqus\\_thread](http://www.archdaily.com.br/768286/gustavo-restrepo-o-urbanismo-pode-combater-o-narcotrafico#disqus_thread)> Accessed on: 10 Oct. 2016.

14 Hierro 2016.

15 ALDANA, Andrea. A 14 años de la Operación Orión, víctimas piden que se implemente ya acuerdo de paz. El Espectador, 16, Oct. 2016. Available at: <<http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/14-anos-de-operacion-orion-victimas-piden-se-implemente-articulo-660707>> Accessed on: 16 Oct. 2016.

It is thus understandable that, in the Comuna 13, different types of violence, inserted in the logic of the extended duration of the Colombian conflict, have pressed upon the territories, traversing the sphere of crime and delinquency. The historical aspect of the Graffitour can thus be understood as an exercise of constructing collective memory tied to a place of memory which, as such, is the centre of multiple disputes over meaning (Pollack 1992).

Between an institutional sort of violence and the violence of armed conflict itself, the “political meanings of violence”, a category coined by Gabriel De Santis Feltrán (2011), is actualized in the Comuna 13 through the tension between the absence of a state power that might guarantee basic rights and the excess of a state power that makes indiscriminate use of repression, a logic that characterises peripheries throughout Latin America at the turn of the century (Feltran 2010: 209). In the first case, united in systematic discourse that has been produced, since the 1970’s, on the need to remove young and peripheral *Medellinenses* from crime and violence enacted by the “moral and institutional economy against drug trafficking” (Jaramillo 2015: 34), what we find in these places is a public presence geared toward the effective control of the practices of young people rather than to the promotion and consolidation of political tools for constructing citizenship.

After so much time in which the conception of young people was understood to be the shared result of the regulating activity of the family, the Church and the school, it is interesting to see these very subjects at the forefront of processes of self-management and the exercise of citizenship in the face of violence. In the Graffitour of the 13, and also in the parallel work of the Casa Kolacho, we find not only an aesthetic and historical concern with the periphery, but also the reproduction of a political vocation buttressed by its own principles and its own interpretation of the social world that hosts and interpellates them as political subjects: “We went from this small house to the schools, the neighbourhoods, the courts... We go with a sound system to hold a small concert any time in the afternoon, to draw new graffiti, to hold a workshop or a festival in a school where many dudes can participate and sing”<sup>16</sup>.

During the trajectory this becomes evident in the relations that the members of the Casa Kolacho maintain with the other residents of the neighbourhoods. An initial prejudice against the music they produced and listened to and the clothes they wore gradually gave way to the recognition that these young people are hinges in the ongoing urban and social transformations of the comuna. According to Ciro, “Before we were synonymous with hit men, drug addicts, vagabonds... and people crossed the street when they saw us. Today people cross the streets to greet us, they see us as a positive reference in the transformation of this place”<sup>17</sup>. This shift also has something to do with the denaturalization of the category of “youth” or “young person” and the possibilities available to them for engaging the public world in ways other than as the object of control. Hence they have become references, both within and beyond the comuna, and have converted the experience of the tour into a form of resistance – not only against the many types of violence, but also in alignment with the social and institutional expectations of those who see them as protagonists of change.

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<sup>16</sup> Hierro 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

## Image 7

Graffiti alluding to the Operación Orión



Source: N. Pérez

## Final Considerations

Fifteen years after the Operación Orión in the Comuna 13 of Medellín, and under the shadow of the non-ratification of the Peace Accords between the Colombian government and the FARC in the plebiscite of the 2nd of October of 2016, it is worth reflecting on the complexity of the internal conflict and the many ways that the peace process are assumed and resignified by the civilian population. In the cities, and particularly in Medellín, the periphery, which had been the protagonist of the urban scenery of conflict, witnesses the emergence of experiences at the fringes of the violence. Such experiences aim both to escape it, and to develop collective projects for the construction of memory – a trajectory that is always difficult to follow, and which they confront through artistic manifestations articulated around graffiti.

It is noteworthy that the experience of the Graffitour takes place in the Comuna 13 and that it assumes itself as an aesthetic, historical and political trajectory that makes visible other views of the periphery. This not only questions the rigidity of urban boundaries, but provides elements through which we can conceive of the periphery beyond the stigma of place and the stigma of violence. From the point of view of the construction of a stable and long-lasting peace for the country, it is fitting that it is the initiatives of young people that seek to account for the present and to raise the banner of citizenship.

A conception of the periphery that is not exclusively topographical is thus furthered in the analytical passage from places with well-defined borders to places that are not restricted to spatial coordinates nor to the cataloguing of attributes of social difference. This is a perspective that considers the many forms of accessing complex and heterogeneous spaces and the recognizes the political, religious, social, administrative and cultural margins that constitute the periphery: a recognition that enables the convergence of distinct thematic fields that result from an understanding of distinct social domains and the interpretation of the practices that exist in these places (Birman 2013: 8).

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# Desire-cities: a transgender ethnography in the urban boundaries

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the concepts of borders and urbanities based on individuals and collectivities that circulate in the margins of cities and form the fabric of the so-called sex market; they may identify themselves (but not necessarily) as *travestis* and transsexual women. This reflection is part of an ongoing survey linked to the Urban Anthropology Center of the University of São Paulo, whose purpose is to establish a multi-sited ethnography in two regions of Brazil: the metropolitan area of João Pessoa, in the state of Paraíba, and the triple frontier in the Amazon region between Brazil, Peru and Colombia. Based on the circulation of transgender people in the margins of cities, this study is an attempt to understand the kind of urban models that emerge from these liminal experiences, which shift between spatial, physical and symbolic boundaries. This investigation suggests the need to rethink the field of city anthropology in Brazil by taking as its basis the models of urban forms that allow for intersections between countryside and city, forest and metropolis, outskirts and downtown.

**Key-words:** transsexuals, cities, borders, sex, urban.

# Cidades-desejo:

## uma etnografia trans nas fronteiras do urbano

### Resumo

Este texto problematiza as noções de fronteiras e urbanidades a partir de pessoas e coletivos que se movimentam nas bordas das cidades e tecem os chamados mercados do sexo e podem se identificar (mas não necessariamente) como travestis e mulheres transexuais. Esta reflexão faz parte de uma pesquisa em andamento, vinculada ao Núcleo de Antropologia Urbana da Universidade de São Paulo, e pretende elaborar uma etnografia multisituada em duas regiões do país: na Paraíba, compreendendo a Região Metropolitana de João Pessoa, e no Alto Solimões, na tríplice fronteira amazônica, entre Brasil, Peru e Colômbia, em Tabatinga, Letícia, Santa Rosa. A partir da circulação de pessoas trans nas bordas das cidades busca-se compreender quais modelos urbanos emergem dessas experiências liminares, que transitam entre fronteiras espaciais, corporais e simbólicas. A investigação sugere repensar o campo da antropologia da cidade no Brasil a partir de formas do urbano que permitem cruzamentos entre campo e cidade, floresta e metrópole, periferia e centro.

**Palavras-chave:** travestis, cidades, fronteiras, sexo, urbanidade.

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## Introduction

On the margins of the Brazilian cities located outside the country's major economic regions, nor located in the core metropolitan areas, there is an intensive circulation of people through affective, material and symbolic exchanges that constitute the flows of the sex markets and sexual economies. On one hand, these are the places that public security and human rights policies include in the so-called routes of sexual exploitation and the trafficking in persons; on the other, they are spaces of resistance and of ample exchange networks that open up space for modes of existence excluded from traditional familiar models, hosting *travestis*,<sup>1</sup> transsexual women and gay men who engage in various activities, such as hair and beauty services, prostitution and other forms of paid sex.<sup>2</sup> Such flows, moved by material, sexual and affective forces, delineate a peculiar trajectory within the peripheral spaces of these cities, involving urbanity regimes that are not defined *a priori* in the landscape of any given town. Such regimes are detached from any city in itself and shaped by an urban network that comprehends small, medium and large-sized cities. Nevertheless, they are first of all built from the circulation and occupation of the city dwellers.

The proposal in this text, therefore, is to reflect on urbanity regimes related to the trans women universe in two regions of the country: in Paraíba state, located in Brazil's Northeastern Region (North Coast and Metropolitan Area), and in Alto Solimões, part of Amazonas state in the Northern Region (the triple Amazonian border between Brazil, Peru and Colombia).<sup>3</sup> 'Trans women universe' here means an analytical category referring to persons and collectivities that may identify themselves – though not necessarily – as *travestis*, as transsexual women or again as homosexual persons going through processes to transform themselves from the 'male' to 'female' gender. Such a universe involves a wide range of categories, definitions and classifications, some of which are mobile, others fixed. These categories – being or having been a *travesti* or a transsexual woman – depend chiefly on self-identification and community recognition (from a group of sociability or political movement). They shape gender identities, lifestyles, forms of sociability, bodily constructions. Over and above identarian and sexual constructs, this work intends to think about new possibilities of the urban that are not directly associated with specific cities: urbanity in the margins, defined by spatial mobility and bodily transformation.

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1 This is a Brazilian Portuguese word that means literally "transvestite", but does not have a perfect translation into English. The existence of *travestis* is of long tradition in Brazil. They are male-designated persons who assume a female identity and do not necessarily undergo sex reassignment surgery. In this sense, therefore, they do not identify with those who are usually called crossdressers. The only word in English that get close to the meaning of *travesti* is informal and rather aggressive, "she-male". The informality and aggressiveness of the English word somehow correspond to the Brazilian Portuguese similar, for the *travestis* are a highly segregated group of people, usually living in the outskirts of cities and often earning their lives by prostitution. The strict differentiation between *travestis* and transsexuals has been the subject of controversy, since it may echo discriminations and prejudices deeply rooted in Brazilian society. (N.T.)

2 Here prostitution and other forms of paid sex include activities that can be undertaken informally or professionally, involving sexual exchanges for money or other goods. They may be assumed by the interlocutors as a profession, recognizing themselves as sex workers, or lived as secondary activities to supplement income, and may even be related to affective relationships with men, in a non-monogamous way, in which the encounters are permeated by affective, sexual and material exchanges.

3 Research funded by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP).

Both regions have an urban complexity that directs the anthropological gaze to different city scales. Shifting between rural, indigenous and riverine universes, they allow for the elaboration of theoretical-methodological perspectives favorable to the understanding of this urban fabric that is at once distant and close to the models of metropolitan urbanity. This proposal is inspired in part by Henri Léfèbvre's (2006) notion of urban fabric, defined as a "a kind of [...] net of uneven mesh, allowing more or less extended sectors to escape: hamlets or villages, entire regions" (Léfèbvre, 1996: 3; pp. 71-72).<sup>4</sup> Such a net can be thought as an ecosystem, a coherent unity surrounding one or many cities. It is not just a morphological unity, but a way of life that expands into rural zones and builds its own system of values.

The reflection presented here results from research studies undertaken by several researchers at different academic stages.<sup>5</sup> The present interest in the female-trans universe began in 2008 with an inquiry carried out in the northern coastal region of Paraíba, aimed at understanding the configuration of urban dynamics in small and medium-sized cities. Further investigations were subsequently effectuated in cities belonging to the region of Brejo Paraibano, namely Guarabira, Sapé and Mari. These latter studies focused specifically on cisgender women who work as prostitutes or in activities linked to paid sex.<sup>6</sup>

Both sets of research showed that *travestis* and women working as prostitutes in Paraíba's countryside have a way of life that is lived on the road, either literally and metaphorically – an interstitial space within the borders of metropolitan areas. In territorial terms, such spaces are located around small and medium-scale cities, reasonably close to the capitals. Their strategic situation allows for a great circulation of people, vehicles, information and relationship networks. What makes this circulation possible is the presence of highways, such as the BR 101, on which there is a constant flow of truck drivers, workers and other travelers (Nascimento, 2014a; Nascimento 2014b; Garcia & Nascimento, 2014).

The research conducted in Paraíba between 2008 and 2012 was intensive, involving fieldwork carried out either by small groups or individually, with recorded interviews and photographic documentation. As the basis of our theoretical reflections, the ethnographic perspective is conceived as living knowledge, built from experience and capable of acquiring a certain kind of totality.

An ethnographic theory has the objective of elaborating a model for understanding any social subject (language, magic, politics) that, even though produced in and for a particular context, is capable of functioning as a matrix of intelligibility for other contexts (...). An ethnographic theory works somewhat like the savage mind: it employs the very concrete elements collected in the fieldwork and by other means in order to articulate them into somewhat more abstract propositions capable of rendering intelligibility to events and to the world. (Goldman, 2003, p.460)

Resembling an intricate piece of jewelry (Magnani, 2002), constructed from unique fragments of different sources and materials, ethnography develops through its own making, alternating the point of view of the observer and the perspective of the observed. According to Peirano, "the (good) ethnography of

4 Original quotation: Léfèbvre, 2006: 11. For this translation we used the Blackwell Publishers' volume: Léfèbvre, H. *Writings on cities*. Selected, translated and introduced by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996

5 The first research project, which took place between 2008 and 2011, "Variations of the feminine: dialogues between gender, city and transsexualities" (supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development: CNPq), included the participation of then undergraduate students from the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), Lívia Freire, Verônica Guerra, Luzicleide Bernardo and Thiago Oliveira, all of them currently masters and doctoral students in Anthropology at different universities. It also benefitted from the valuable participation of Paulo Rossi, photographer and master in Sociology at the University of São Paulo (USP). Supported by FAPESP (São Paulo Research Foundation), today the research is entitled "Cities-to-become: ethnographic experiments between borders, people, places," and includes the participation of Flavia da Cunha Melo, professor of Anthropology at the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM, Benjamin Constant campus) with a PhD in Anthropology from the University of São Paulo (USP); José Miguel Olivar, researcher at the Pagu Center for Gender Studies at the University of Campinas (UNICAMP); and Thiago Oliveira and Letizia Patriarca, masters in Social Anthropology at USP. There are also five undergraduate students from USP: Alexandre Martin, Lucas Vecchi, Maria Iachinski, Natalia Corazza and Sabrina Damasceno.

6 Research coordinated by Professor in Sociology Loreley Garcia, from the Federal University of Paraíba. It was supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

anthropological inspiration is not only a methodology and/or a research practice, *but the lived theory itself*<sup>7</sup> (Peirano, 2008). The theory, then, is the inseparable double of ethnography, or rather, ethnography is theory and creates the conditions for a singular way of seeing, hearing and interpreting.

Based on this previous experience in Paraíba, my objective now is to develop a comparison with another region in the Brazilian North, which, despite presenting its own dynamics and characteristics, constitutes an urban complex (Olivar, 2014) of small and medium-sized cities in which the trans female universe is strongly present, constituted by flows and circulations between cities, but also along rivers, traversing the borders of Brazil, Peru and Colombia.

### **Trans-cities**

Brazilian academic production on *travestis* and transsexualism in anthropology and in the human sciences in general is recent and began to develop in the late 1980s. Much of the research is focused on capitals and metropolitan regions, as though this lifestyle or identity manifestation were something ‘typically urban.’ My hypothesis, however, is that this urban lifestyle is not necessarily located in large metropolises. Or better, it is as if there were an urban model that crossed the metropolitan borders and allowed a circulation between secondary and capital cities, countryside and town, rivers and seas.

Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, with the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, several research studies were developed on homosexuality, and the *travesti* issue gained scientific legitimacy.<sup>7</sup> It is this moment of which Hélio Silva (1993, 1996, 2007) writes. He began his anthropological research precisely to provide academic support to the policy for combating AIDS in Rio de Janeiro. Silva’s investigations open up a dialogical perspective and present a rich ethnographic description of the *travestis* working as prostitutes in the Lapa neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro. He was concerned to understand the relation between the *travestis* and wider society and sought to unveil their social identity, showing that metropolitan life provided visibility for the *travestis*, who no longer needed to hide themselves in the streets of big cities.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1990s surveys carried out mostly in large-scale cities – Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Paris, Porto Alegre – appeared that confirmed Hélio Silva’s thesis that *travestis* are the ‘asphalt offspring’ of the large metropolises. It becomes, then, clear that research on *travestis* takes as a given fact, *a priori*, the relations between *travestis*, prostitution and metropolises, as if these were elements specific to large urban agglomerations. It is important to note that these works contain a rich discussion on the process of the *travesti* identity and its affective and family relationships (Oliveira, 1997, Pirani, 1997, Jayme 2001 Kulick 2008, Florentino 1998). In a way, the investigations of this period share a concern to humanize the *travestis*, showing that they have an occupation, a family, marital relations, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Since the 2000s, research on *travestis* and transsexuals has significantly increased in different areas of the human sciences in Brazil, exploring the subject on various questions involving the processes of bodily, identity and sexuality constructions; generational differences; transnationalism and migration; forms of

7 However, as early as 1959, Roger Bastide wrote a pioneering article, “The Man Disguised as a Woman” in the book *Sociology of Brazilian Folklore*, in which he describes the rituals of transvestism and gender inversion during carnival. In 1983, Neuza de Oliveira conducted research in Salvador and presented a psychoanalytic view based on the idea that *travestis* are sexually ‘inverted.’ Her work was published in 1994. Still in the 1980s, Luiz Mott showed that gender transformations in Brazil have existed since the colonial period and presented reports on the “first Brazilian *travesti*,” a slave from the Congo called ‘Victoria’ (Mott, 1988).

8 During this period, a number of *travestis* gained visibility in the media, such as Thelma Lipp, Rogeria, Roberta Close, Patrícia Bisso and Laura de Vison. Several films dealing with this subject appeared, such as *Tootsie*, *Victor/Victoria*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert*, among others. This visibility in the media and in the cultural field also permitted the emergence of drag queens in nightclubs and rave parties (Palomino, 1999).]

9 In this same period a biography was published – *A Princesa: Depoimentos de um travesti brasileiro a um líder das Brigadas Vermelhas* (Princess: Testimonies of a Brazilian transvestite to a leader of the Red Brigades) that served as plot for the 1999 film of the same name, directed by Henrique Goldman, an Italian and German production. The protagonist of this story is Fernanda, whom by coincidence is from Paraíba, originally from Remígio, the same hometown of Fernanda Benvenuto, currently an important *travesti* activist in Paraíba.

violence, etc. (Benedetti, 2005; Carrara & Vianna, 2006; Pelúcio, 2005; Bento, 2006; Teixeira, 2011; Duque, 2011; Siqueira, 2009; Lima, 2009; Leite Jr., 2011). Although there is still a greater emphasis on research carried out in big cities, new works have begun to appear focusing on capitals in the Northeast of the country, such as Fortaleza (Vale, 2005) and Recife (Maia, 2006; Patrício, 2008), as well as small and medium-sized cities, such as Campina Grande / PB (Patrício, 2008), São Carlos / SP (Pelúcio, 2005) and Vale das Passagens (Cardozo, 2009), in southern Brazil, among others.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that during the 2000s the social movements fighting for the transgender cause began to grow in strength. In 2000, ANTRA (National Association of *Travestis*, Transsexuals and Transgenders) was formed in Porto Alegre. In 2008, the 1<sup>st</sup> LGBT National Conference took place, with the subsequent elaboration of the National LGBT Plan for the Promotion of Citizenship and Human Rights. In 2002, prompted by ANTRA and by the strong performance of the *Movimento do Espírito Lilás* (Movement of the Lilac Spirit), Paraíba saw the foundation of ASTRAPA (Association of *Travestis* and Transsexuals in Paraíba). Tabatinga, in the Alto Solimões region, also saw the constitution of an LGBT association in the mid-2000s, the vast majority of whose associates are transsexual women and *travestis*.

This brief cartography is simply intended to demonstrate that academic research on transsexuality has generally focused on capitals and metropolitan areas. It is worth questioning whether the invisibility of transsexuals and *travestis* in the research conducted in small and medium-sized Brazilian cities is related to a concrete invisibility in these localities, or whether this should be attributed rather to the researcher's way of looking, accustomed to seeking 'dissident' models of sexuality in metropolitan places, associating other universes, such as the rural one, with an image of moralizing and traditionalist places.

Adopting a new perspective, without abandoning the importance of the centrality of big cities in the circulation of the transgender universe, I present my reflections based on research in Paraíba, where the ideas are a little more shaped, and a number of hypotheses still in the process of elaboration, based on recent investigations in Alto Solimões, which deserve further study. I shall examine these two locations, therefore, in order to unpack the meanings of the urban for my research interlocutors and how cities are felt and lived during their transits and stops. I begin with the Amazonian context.

The purpose of bringing a northern region of Brazil into the study is to follow the general guidelines of USP's Laboratory of Urban Anthropology (LabNAU), especially the Urban Ethnology Study Group (GEU). The GEU began its research in 2009 with the intention of observing the indigenous presence in Amazonian cities. The initial research area covered the urban settlements of the Sateré-Mawé people in Manaus. The subsequent study observed that they moved between different settlements, the forest and several cities like Manaus, Parintins, Maués, Itaituba and Aveiro (Magnani, 2012). This circulation showed that the Sateré-Mawé were not limited to living in urban spaces, marked by precarious living conditions, but moved between different scenarios without confining themselves to spatial limits such as the geopolitical borders.

In 2014, a group of researchers from the Laboratory of Urban Anthropology (LabNAU) visited the twin cities of Tabatinga (Brazil) and Leticia (Colombia) – an Amazonian frontier-region bordering the Solimões/ Amazon river – at the invitation of the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History (ICANH).

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<sup>10</sup> Other studies can be mentioned. Daniela Murta Amaral (2007) analyzes the effects of psychiatry and the pathologization of transsexuality in health policies in Rio de Janeiro; in Paraná, Elias (2008) investigates the processes of transgenitalization from a psychoanalytic perspective; Jorge Leite Jr. (2011) pursues a historical-conceptual analysis of how the categories *travesti* and 'transsexual' have changed in scientific discourse; in Campinas (São Paulo), Thiago Duque (2011) presents research on 'transvestibility' in adolescence and discusses the categories of shame and stigma; Monica Siqueira (2009) elaborates an ethnography of memory and sociability among 'old time *travestis*' in Rio de Janeiro; Aline Soares Lima (2009) carries out a study in the area of visual communication on *travestis*' self-representations in the virtual environment; Fernanda Cardozo (2009) examines morals, socialities and conflicts among *travestis* in a medium-sized city in southern Brazil. In recent years, a new field of research has emerged that deserves to be investigated, namely that of transsexual men (female to male: FTM), questioning many of the theories on transsexuality.

Under the coordination of Margarita Chaves Chamorro, an ICANH researcher, we undertook a number of brief ethnographic trips to cities and towns in the surrounding areas (Islândia and Benjamin Constant in Brazil, Santa Rosa in Peru and Puerto Nariño in Colombia) as well as Letícia and Tabatinga themselves.

At the beginning of 2015, a LabNAU team under the coordination of José Guilherme Magnani carried out another research trip to the city of Tabatinga where they were able to map the urban dynamics relating to leisure, religiosity, circulation and transport, commerce and work, modes of dwelling and housing.<sup>11</sup>

Dialoging with these two experiences, in 2016 I began my own investigations on the triple border and carried out fieldwork in February. Later, Thiago Oliveira<sup>12</sup> spent another period immersed in the field in July. This enabled us to present the ethnographic reflections that follow below, before proceeding to a comparison between them and the ethnography produced in Paraíba.

### **Lives on the border: Alto Solimões**

Disembarking from a canoe, boat or launch in the port of Tabatinga and walking toward Amizade Av., Santos Dumont Street, our attention is drawn to dozens of small beauty salons that are grouped in two blocks, interspersed with small restaurants, a headquarters of the Church Assembly of God, and two large shoe stores. In practically all the salons, the presence of gay boys stands out – trans *niños* and *chicas*, especially Peruvians. Some are in charge of the salons, others work temporarily, others just stop by to chat. The centrality of this street – between the port and the main avenue – leads to a high circulation of pedestrians and motorcycles. Nonetheless we could refer to it as a Peruvian gay-trans ‘turf’<sup>13</sup> in Tabatinga.

Tabatinga is an Amazonian town located in the extreme southwest of the state of Amazonas, and forms part of the mesoregion of Alto Solimões, comprising nine municipalities along the Solimões River (Amaturá, Atalaia do Norte, Benjamin Constant, Santo Antônio do Içá, São Paulo de Olivença, Tabatinga, Tonantins, Fonte Boa and Jutai). Some 1,200 km (745 mi.) in distance from the state capital of Manaus, Tabatinga borders the towns of Letícia (Colombia), Islândia and Santa Rosa (Peru), and all of their inhabitants circulate among them freely.

The area as a whole forms an urban network difficult for the outsider to apprehend and understand. Within the mesoregion, Tabatinga is the city with the largest population, about 62,300 inhabitants, followed by Benjamin Constant, with 40,417 and São Paulo de Olivença, with 37,300 inhabitants. The city’s economy is based on small and medium-sized trades, with an intense Peruvian presence, mainly focused on foodstuffs and clothing, in addition to the income generated through the work of public servants.<sup>14</sup> There is a strong presence of Peruvians living on the Brazilian side, coming from regions like Iquitos and Caballococha. According to Jakob (2011), about 30% of Peruvian migration to Brazil is to the Brazilian Amazon, mainly to the cities of Tabatinga, Benjamin Constant and São Paulo de Olivença.

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11 This expedition was part of a research project run in partnership with the Center for City Studies in the Brazilian Amazon (NEPECAB) of the Federal University of Amazonas. The following LabNAU researchers participated in the team: Dr. José Guilherme Cantor Magnani (coordinator), Ana Letícia Fiori, José Agnelo A. D. de Andrade and Tiemi Kayamori Lobato da Costa. Blanca Yagüe also took part in the research.

12 Graduate student in Social Anthropology by the University of São Paulo under my supervision.

13 My use of ‘turf’ is taken from the categories proposed by José Guilherme Magnani (2002/2005) to think of a delimited space in which people know each other, have ties of friendship and perform the same function. In this case, the space concerned can probably more accurately be located somewhere between a ‘turf’ and a ‘patch.’

14 Most public servants are members of the armed forces, mainly male, besides a few other civil servants (professors and technicians) who work at the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), Amazonas State University (UEA) and the Federal Institute of Amazon (IFAM).

Continuing on from the urban zone of Tabatinga,<sup>15</sup> running along the Amizade Avenue in the opposite direction to the river Solimões, is the city of Letícia, located 683 miles away from Bogota, access to which is only possible by air. Though known as ‘twin cities,’ they present different economic, political and cultural characteristics. Letícia has a political centrality in the Amazon region as the capital of the Department of Amazonas in Colombia and is central to a project of constructing Colombian nationality. It has better urban infrastructure, comprises a regional center for the sale of imported products, and receives tourists attracted by a range of different activities geared towards ecotourism and ethnic tourism.<sup>16</sup> Tabatinga, by contrast, is composed of areas for exclusive use by the armed forces and has several neighborhoods with unpaved streets, precarious water and electricity supplies, and no sewage treatment network. On the triple border, we also find Santa Rosa, located on the Peruvian side, a small settlement on an island on the Solimões River that becomes flooded during the rainy season. Santa Rosa belongs to the district of Yavarí, with a population of approximately 1,000 people. In this region of the border, the presence of the Ticuna indigenous people, as well as other ethnic groups, is clearly evident.

The metaphor of the mosaic may not be the most appropriate to express the social diversity making up the city of Tabatinga. It is inadequate because the mosaic composes, out of a diverse jumble of pieces, a coherent whole whose parts are harmonically juxtaposed. The image of a network whose wires are shuffled and whose constant movement stresses one or other knot, compressing one or other gap, may perhaps more adequately express how the social relations and the use and disuse of resources (human, state, natural) – continuously sought, claimed or denied in this hybrid / complex / contradictory context – become formed. It would be equally arbitrary to limit such a scenario to the geopolitical borders of the cities, Brazilian or otherwise. (Cunha, 2016: 10)<sup>17</sup>

On our field trips, we were able to meet Peruvians living in Brazil for some time, who had already circulated in some nearby cities or other regions, and who worked in Tabatinga as hairdressers, in addition to performing sex for monetary exchanges in their free time, or vice-versa. We also approached Colombians who live in Letícia and Brazilians who had already circulated through different cities in other regions of Brazil. Between Peruvian, Colombian and Brazilian interlocutors,<sup>18</sup> there is a polysemy of lifestyles, forms of corporal construction and subjectivities, which depend on nationality or origin. There is, however, a strong relationship between processes of feminization and beauty that can be observed in all of them. As far as the spatial shifts go, though, they depend on other markers of difference, such as generation and nationality. We can see that Colombians – *chicas trans* – are less mobile and come from the city of Letícia itself, maintaining daily relations with the Brazilian side, despite the existence of tensions, especially during gay parades and beauty contests organized by the Peruvians living in Brazil, such as Frontier Miss Gay.

Unlike Brazilian *travestis* in both Tabatinga and the Northeast, their Peruvian peers seem to have a less categorical identity classification and also do not undergo such intensive bodily modifications through hormone therapies and plastic surgeries. Some have female names but identify as *niños*, others as *trans*.

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<sup>15</sup> Until 1981, the city of Tabatinga was part of the municipality of Benjamin Constant. It originated in the town of San Francisco Xavier de Tabatinga, founded in 1766 to install a military detachment to guard the borders between Portugal and Spain. Until the end of the XIX century its territory belonged to the city of São Paulo de Olivença / AM and in 1898 it became part of the municipality of Benjamin Constant. In 1867, less than six miles away from Tabatinga, Letícia emerged, the result of a navigation agreement between Brazil and Peru. At that time Letícia was no more than a small customs house, whose purpose was to regulate the Amazon River rubber trade, carried on between Iquitos in Peru and Manaus in Brazil. In 1927, as a result from a controversial agreement between Peru and Colombia, Letícia was ceded to the latter and Peru gained the territory of the southern zone of the Putumayo River. Peruvian popular dissatisfaction led to a war between the two governments, which ended in 1934, through intervention by the United Nations (Aponte Motta, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> The municipality of Letícia has a population of approximately 70,400 inhabitants, of which 26,700 are in the urban area.

<sup>17</sup> Text originally written in Portuguese. Author's translation.

<sup>18</sup> All the interlocutors have female social names, even those who do not identify themselves as transsexuals or *travestis*.

Gilda, for example, a 45-year-old native of Iquitos, presents herself as a “*niño* who crossdresses” and has lived in Brazil for at least 30 years. Before working as a hairdresser, she also worked as a prostitute. First she went to Benjamin Constant before moving to Tabatinga. She says she likes ‘whorpy’ and on Sundays and days off from the salon she crossdresses: she uses high heels, wears wigs, miniskirts and goes out “like a whore.” Even though she likes Brazil, she says she wants to leave Tabatinga because she is ‘old’ and all her friends are already living in other parts of the country or the world. At the same time she speaks with sadness of having been abandoned by her family when she was young, and of having few friends in Tabatinga, since there are few of her age who remain in the city. She rents a small room in the same street where she works, where there are other rooms rented by other Peruvians, both *niños* and trans. Marcela, 28, also Peruvian, has been in Tabatinga for 11 years but has already circulated in several countries and regions of Brazil. “With my body I have already traveled to Italy, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala.” She also says that she wants to leave the city or set up her own salon with her friend Gilda, “that bitch,” she jokes.

According to Flávia Cunha, José Miguel Olivar and Patrícia Rosa (2015), the popular imaginary concerning Peruvians on the borders reproduces inequalities and prejudices. “The view of Peruvians as poor, underdeveloped and illegal does not seem to represent piety, identity or solidarity, but rather to be closer to repulsion, rejection and repression, which reasserts the notion of a dispute over the supposed scarcity of public resources that characterizes the region in question according to many social and political agents” (Cunha, Olivar & Rosa, 2015: 20, author’s translation). It is no wonder that the location where sexual transactions with the lowest monetary value take place in Tabatinga is the market area, near the port and the beauty salons that we visited.

The region where less expensive sexual transactions take place in Tabatinga is the market, conceived as an urban space that articulates Peruvianness, illegality, poverty and indigeneity. The cheapest brothels in Tabatinga are located in this market area, they are described and produced as Peruvians (the managers, music, women and regular customers are all of this nationality) and as relatively more dangerous, meaning that, performatively and discursively, the women who work there occupy the position of *Peruvians* (Cunha, Olivar & Rosa, 2015: 10).

This region of the market, classified as Peruvian territory, is also frequented by Brazilian *travestis* like Gisela. Only 20 years old, she has already lived in several other places, such as Campinas, Ribeirão Preto (cities in São Paulo), Mato Grosso (a Brazilian state) and Manaus (capital of Amazonas state). She alternates temporary jobs in salons with ‘cathousing.’ Like many young Brazilian *travestis*, she intends to ‘add breast’ as soon as she makes more money “working the night.” Currently, she is in Manaus “to make money.” Through the little that we could follow, the lifestyle of Gisela involves a constant mobility enabled by material and affective networks not consolidated in any single place.

The triple border can be analyzed as an urban complex (Olivar, 2014), not defined by each administrative unit separately, but instead by the relations that these small cities establish between themselves and by the ways in which people and collectivities circulate within and classify them. From the perspective of *travestis* and transsexuals, urban spaces are traced by the corporeal, affective and economic demands that locate them in the landscape of neighborhoods in the border towns of Upper Solimões, especially where large numbers of people circulate, such as riverbanks and avenues. In these neighborhoods, there is a concentration of beauty salons, where they receive clients, can readily observe who comes and goes, exchange and receive information and build affective relationships – which may be mediated by material relationships too. They sell products, hair and also their own bodies, which, in the afternoon, move from the salons to the squares and bars and the famous Scandalus nightclub as they search of sex and money.

These cities located on and belonging to the borders can be thought of, therefore, as strategic places where circulation and mobility are present in the constitution of a certain trans urbanity, which takes place precisely in the impermanence and movement between cities on the urban margins.

Inspired by Michel Agier, we can think of invisible, unofficial cities found both in metropolises and in rural or quasi-rural regions. This allows us to begin to observe cities as a hologram built by the cities dwellers. New possibilities can be anticipated, therefore, for thinking beyond geopolitical limits and expanding the range of research contexts in the area of urban anthropology.

### **Lives on the road: Paraíba**

Every night, young *travestis* from Areal and Planalto, districts of Mamanguape city, on the northern coast of Paraíba, head to the BR 101 highway and from there hitchhike to the truck checkpoint. Located on the border between the states of Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte, the checkpoint is where they work as prostitutes, mainly serving truck drivers. In the morning, they return to their small houses or rented rooms.

Mamanguape, one of the oldest cities in the state of Paraíba, is bisected by the BR 101 federal highway, place of passage between two capitals, João Pessoa and Natal. Built in the 1970s, there is an intense movement of people and vehicles on the road, separating the city into two poles. On the left-hand side (direction João Pessoa - Natal) are the neighborhoods of Cidade Nova, Planalto and Areal, places of recent occupation, with few paved streets, inhabited by sugarcane mill workers, agrarian reform settlers and poor populations. On the righthand side is the economic and political center of Mamanguape, occupied by traditional families, banks, public offices, markets, shops, universities, etc. All along the left side of the road there are motels, bars, gas stations, restaurants and so on where women and *travestis* offer prostitution services to both workers and truck drivers.

The roadside of the BR 101 highway, which at first sight might be seen as no more than a temporary place of passage for travelers, features a variety of economic activities – various garages, gas stations, motels, bars, restaurants, cashew nut hawkers, prostitutes, and so on. It is also a place for children and youth from the districts of Areal and Planalto to socialize, using the roadside to play football and fly kites.

Mamanguape is an obligatory route point for those traveling to Rio Tinto, just 3 miles away, and to Baía da Traição, where there are beautiful tourist beaches and a considerable portion of the Potiguara indigenous population lives. Rio Tinto, with approximately 22,000 inhabitants, was built in the early twentieth century to receive the facilities and workers village of Companhia de Tecidos Rio Tinto (belonging to the Lundgren family, the same owners as Companhia de Tecidos Paulista, located in Paulista,<sup>19</sup> Pernambuco). The factory has been closed for over 20 years and most of the city's residents are retired workers. Recent years have seen the emergence and strengthening of the Potiguara indigenous peoples, and their success in achieving demarcation of their lands, some of which are located within the urban perimeter.<sup>20</sup>

19 Companhia de Tecidos Rio Tinto / Companhia de Tecidos Paulista: Two huge textile manufacturing plants (N.T.).

20 The indigenous population has begun to emerge as actors in an urban setting, leading to conflicts, albeit subtle, with the city's residents who consider themselves 'non-Indians' and bringing to light the ambiguities of Rio Tinto's history and memory. On one hand, the city went into economic decline due to the closure of the aforementioned company. On the other, this opened up possibilities for the ethnic emergence of indigenous people who until then had suffered discrimination and violence from city dwellers, the mills owners – who still occupy vast areas within the indigenous reservations – and the Lundgren family. A large part of the indigenous peoples are located in the municipalities of Rio Tinto, Marcação and Baía da Traição, with 8,012 residents (Census 2010, IBGE), distributed in 32 indigenous villages with a population of approximately 19,000 people (data from FUNAI, 2012).

According to data provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in its most recent census, 2010, the municipality of Mamanguape presents one of the state's worst set of indexes in relation to schooling, life expectancy and income. The average life expectancy is 58 years and the illiteracy rate of the population over 15 years is 46%. In relation to income, 41.3% of the population over 10 years old do not have any income and 43% live on up to one minimum wage. This means that out of a population of 42,000 people, 34% live without any income and 35% live on up to one minimum wage.

Mamanguape has a considerable importance in the history of the formation of Paraíba state, and since 1979 has been classified as Historical and Artistic Patrimony of the State of Paraíba (IPHAEP).<sup>21</sup> Today, though, occupation of the city is chaotic and its historical monuments deteriorated. A large portion of the low-income population works temporarily in sugarcane processing factories (producing alcohol and sugar), located in the vicinity of the urban area.

The families of Marta and Raiany, young *travestis* and our interlocutors in this research, are part of this context of poverty. During our fieldwork between 2008 and 2009, they were aged 19 and 17, respectively. They contributed to the domestic budget through their work "on the road." When we met, Marta was living with Raiany's family: her husband, her father, her mother, her sister, and two nephews. Raiany's mother had worked for many years as a sugarcane harvester and no longer worked because of her age and health problems. The father, a blacksmith, did autonomous and intermittent work, and often found himself intoxicated, which would lead to rows and physical aggression.

Marta and Raiany worked at night and slept most of the day. On weekends, Marta would visit her parents, tillers at the Uruba site in the rural area of Mataraca, a municipality near Mamanguape.<sup>22</sup> During our fieldwork (which we used to do preferably in the afternoon, when they were home), we were able to follow Raiany's transformation process, a cyclical movement of comings and goings in prostitution, terminations and reconciliations with her boyfriend, and breaks and renewals with her friend Marta. Raiany started in prostitution at the age of twelve. By the time we met her, she had begun ingesting hormones and we were able to observe how her body grew more feminine as time went on and she obtained more money from prostitution work. Little by little, she started to buy new clothes, cosmetics, jewelry, accessories, hair care, etc.

The care and transformation of the body, as well as the dealings and tricks of the business and the relationships with clients, are all things learned among friends, who exchange information, knowledge and strategies. Body construction, in the researched contexts, accompanies territorial displacements. To modify their bodies, receive silicone implants, undergo plastic surgeries that increase or shrink buttocks, noses, lips, waists and cheekbones, buy wigs or use *mega hair* techniques, buy heeled shoes in the right sizes and sexy clothes, make use of healthier hormone therapies, and so on, they need to travel to the major cities and, in order to do that, they need to make money in the sex markets.

Throughout the research we met *travestis* from different parts of Brazil, some of whom had even spent a season in Europe, in countries such as Italy and Spain. The main state capitals in the interlocutors' circuit were Recife and Natal, in the Northeast, and São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in the Southeast. Among the

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21 Mamanguape was the second municipality founded in the province in 1635, located in the lowland area of the river of the same name. From there, and following the course of the river, occupation moved inland until reaching the 'Agreste' (an intermediate zone between the semi-arid region and the Atlantic Rainforest) and the 'Brejo' (wetlands). The first village in Paraíba was Felipéia de Nossa Senhora das Neves, founded in 1585, initial mark of the municipality of João Pessoa. The area of the municipality extended itself to the extreme south of the state, to the border with Pernambuco (Andrade, 2005). Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, it had economic centrality due to the presence of sugar mills. It then gradually lost its position due to the growth of cotton and livestock production in the Brejo region, located in the wetlands of Serra da Borborema (the Borborema Plateau). The economy of the latter region became based on the production of cachaça and *rapadura* (blocks of raw sugar), besides subsistence farming goods and tobacco. The connection between the 'brejo' zones and the 'sertão' (the semi-arid deep interior) was, in turn, through Campina Grande, which was at the intersection of the routes and quickly progressed.

22 Paraíba's Northern Coast comprises eleven municipalities: Mamanguape, Rio Tinto, Baía da Traição, Marcação, Itapororoca, Jacaraú, Pedro Régis, Curral de Cima, Capim, Cuité de Mamanguape and Mataraca. All of them belonged to Mamanguape until the mid-nineteenth century.

younger *travestis*, especially those who have not yet been able to travel to other cities, there is a desire to leave their place of origin and go to a city that gives them greater financial returns and greater social value. There is a certain world view that accompanies a *folk-urban continuum* (Redfield, 1949), which runs from the rural to the metropolitan environment, the latter represented especially by Europe. However, it is notable that this migration often does not either finish or halt in the middle of the road, but suffers some mishaps, and there is always the possibility of returning to their town of origin, which they call ‘home.’ In this way, even the ‘European’<sup>23</sup> *travestis*, who mainly go to Italy and Spain, return to their small towns.

Accompanying the circuit of sex markets, esthetic-corporal production becomes more visible, and exalted, in beauty contests like Miss Gay, Miss Trans and Top Drag, among others.<sup>24</sup> The contests bestow legitimacy and visibility to the frontier bodies, which are present in the urban landscape in an ephemeral way and forever changing from one place to another. In Paraíba, we noticed that contests, especially Top Drag contests, offer space to young persons who are experimenting feminization processes: they are starting to wear high heels, low-cut tight sexy clothes, use wigs and makeup, and dub their favorite singers: Madonna, Beyoncé, Shakira. Being on stage allows them to begin to fortify their female souls, backed by the cheering crowds. Some of them, as they begin to stand out, also begin to work “on the track,” – that is, they also start out in prostitution and are gradually able to earn money and transform their bodies, an arduous and costly task. In this sense, a close relationship exists between the production of beauty, body transformation, sexual economies and spatial displacements. Body and space are embedded in a permanent game of desire, consumption and mobility. And so, between body and space, subjectivities and affectivities are produced.

A year after we met her in Mamanguape, Marta moved to Recife at the invitation of an older *travesti*, a sort of godmother who receives young *travestis* from this region to work in prostitution on the outskirts of Pernambuco’s capital. After fifteen days in the capital, when she was “working the sidewalk” – a situation very different from that experienced at BR 101’s checkpoints – she was murdered. Her case did not even generate a police report and adding to the list of so many other unpunished crimes against *travestis* and transsexuals that occur daily in Brazil. Rumors are that she was trying to help another *travesti* who was being beaten on the street and that her corpse was found some distance from the city. From an anthropological perspective, Marta’s vulnerability in this episode resided in the inability of a young *travesti* from Paraíba’s interior to deal with the territorialities, conflicts and power relations in the spaces of prostitution. She had not yet mastered the local logic, permeated by a complex network of relationships and groups, in a city of metropolitan dimensions, with more than 1,500,000 inhabitants.

Even after the murder of Marta, Raiany kept maturing the idea of leaving Mamanguape. Finally she went to risk her luck in Rio de Janeiro. From then on, we lost contact with her. The tragic episode with her friend did not stop her from dreaming of a more glamorous life in a capital city and leaving the small Mamanguape.

### **On the margins and on the edges: desire-cities**

The complex configuration of urban spaces in the contemporary world, the discussions on global cities and world cities (Sassen, 1991), the post-urban (Mongin, 2009), transits and transnational networks (Piscitelli, 2013), flows and mobilities (Hannerz, 1997; Agier, 2011), circuits and paths (Magnani, 2012) and invisible cities (Latour, 2007) incite us to elaborate new ethnographic perspectives in the field of urban

<sup>23</sup> ‘European’ is the label given to those who have already travelled to Europe by others.

<sup>24</sup> The contests take place in different Brazilian cities, in varied scales and proportions. The most important of them is Miss Gay Brazil, annually held in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais state.

anthropology in Brazil. In general terms, this research area has mainly focused on large-scale cities, exploring the diversity of populations and their growth, migratory processes, spaces of segregation, forms of violence, and so forth. Little attention has been given so far, though, to processes that cross interurban boundaries and mobilize distinct scales that allow mobility between large, medium and small cities, between the forest and the capital, between the coast and the inland. Here it is a question of mobilities, not migrations, a flux in which there is not a single place of arrival, nor one point of origin – movements of people who prostitute themselves, cisgender and transgender women and *travestis*, agents who participate in sexual economies, travelers who find their own permanence in the movement and the journey. They move between cities and model themselves in the fabric of temporary experiences in places that offer them the possibilities for social and economic ascension and that, at the same time, are more likely to accept their ways of being, past and present, usually considered abject. This research is pursued not just in cities located on political-administrative maps, but in territorialities that are made and remade by urban experiences materialized both inside and outside official cities, which take shape in their mobility and their heterogeneity (Delgado, 1999).

In this sense, the proposal is to reflect on the idea of borders not only as demarcations between what is inside and outside urban limits, but especially what is between them – people and collectivities that constitute themselves in their liminal existence, on the edges of the urban and the non-urban. “Re-bordering states means the re-bordering of cities, which also means the re-bordering of society. It is apparent that urban anthropology and the anthropology of borders should continually re-border themselves to keep apace” (Wilson, 2014, p. 118).

Border studies, to a large degree, refer to the idea of territory and territoriality and are focused on discussions of nation states, nationalisms and governance (Wilson, 2014). Territories, governed by states, are seen as agents of integration and differentiation, union and belonging. They refer, therefore, to an inside and an outside (Balibar, 2009; Zaiotti, 2011) that constitute national sovereignty. These political demarcations are questioned, for example, by the case of binational cities, located between two or more countries. In them, the border itself constitutes a condition for their existence (Buursink, 2001) and questions the authority of national sovereignty. The case of Tabatinga and Letícia, on the Brazil/Colombia border, offers an interesting scenario to reflect on the ambiguities of urban spaces that throw into question the political-administrative delimitations.

The triple Brazil-Colombia-Peru border has its social and territorial nucleus in the intimate relationship of three very different urban groups. On the right bank, upstream of the Solimões-Amazonas river, are Tabatinga (BR) and Leticia (COL), ‘twin cities’ (Brasil, 2010), cities of *conurbación* (Aponte, 2011) between which there is no significant geographical separation today, nor any significant blocks or controls to mobility (Olivar, 2014, p. 89).

In this way, our collective research proposal is to explore different notions of the border. First, we propose to think of the border as a region and not just as a line that demarcates one side and the other of a certain territory (Hannerz, 1997). Second, we aim to understand it as a way of life,<sup>25</sup> which allows the construction of people and bodies living on the road, on the track,<sup>26</sup> at the market, between cities and worlds. Third, we consider it to be a theoretical-methodological proposal interconnecting two areas: urban studies and transsexuality theories.

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<sup>25</sup> José Guilherme Magnani defines this lifestyle as “a set of codes induced by and required for the use of urban equipment, spaces and institutions, responsible for the performance of appropriate forms of sociability” (1998), p. 58; author’s translation). This notion also covers the set of knowledge used for certain resources, goods and services offered by the city.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Track’ (*pista*) is a native category used by both *travestis* and women to designate the place where they carry out prostitution: streets, sidewalks, roads, gas stations, etc.

Committed to the idea of sharing as the condition for a certain anthropological project, this research aims to contribute to the effort of rethinking borders within our discipline. It is in line, therefore, with the reflections raised by Márcio Goldman and Tania Lima (1999), which discuss the abyss that currently separates indigenous ethnology and the so-called complex societies. According to them, societies are neither simple nor complex. For Goldman and Lima, this opposition causes an ‘us’/‘them’ split within anthropology itself, reaffirms substantialist conceptions, and creates asymmetries. Complexity lies in the way in which anthropology constructs analyses that encompass plural rather than one-sided dimensions.

The question is whether the complexity of the societies thus designated is anything more than the consequence of the way ethnography is done (including fieldwork). By themselves, societies are neither simple nor complex, but our analyses can build uni- or multidimensional realities. (Goldman and Lima, 1999, p. 78)

In Brazil, the first studies in the area of urban anthropology took place in the 1970s and 80s. They sought to counteract research in the area of indigenous ethnology, aiming in part to legitimize a field of research – the metropolises – that could offer an understanding of the complexity of contemporary life. In a way, the dichotomy of ‘complex’ versus ‘simple’ societies reinforced a certain hierarchy of sub-areas of knowledge within anthropology, which revealed relationships of force and, as Goldman and Lima show, impeded a multidimensional view of the studied realities.

In this sense, despite the influences of community studies and research on the impacts of urbanization in small localities,<sup>27</sup> urban anthropology in Brazil was consolidated through research on metropolises such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasília. The large-scale city model was considered as either a backdrop to understanding political, ethnic-racial, sexual, cultural and other problems, or as a space to think about the centrality of the urban in the configuration of social interactions and socialities. Due to the strong influence of the Chicago School, studies of minorities and deviations gained prominence in Brazilian urban anthropology, including sexual practices and dissident sexualities. Later, from the 1980s onwards, this theme became a specific area of study, straying from urban anthropology (Simões and Carrara, 2007).

As pointed out earlier, a large part of the researchers’ efforts to investigate the subject of transexuality has been focused on metropolitan areas and capitals. However, contemporary experiences such as prostitution networks including transgender people, transregional flows, beauty contests, and political movements, all open up a space for us to shift the urban to a place of bordering.

The idea of circulation used here is related to the notion of network, which helps us understand cultural processes on a global scale (Hannerz, 1986), taking into account individual agency, relations between territory and culture, and extended series of social relations. For Hannerz, each individual experience results from a more or less dense network experience that can cause forms of encapsulation, segregation or integration, and translates into distinct perspectives of connection. Thus, an “ethnography of the network,” according to the same author, opens up the possibility of understanding how people draw transnational or, in our case, transregional connections into their global existence and how they are involved in them.

Here the notion of network is not directly associated with the idea of a generalized urbanization of the world, which, as Marc Augé (2010) argues, reaffirms inequalities through the ideology of globalization. According to the author, the circulation of goods, people and messages in the contemporary world, on a global scale, reveals paradoxes such as the existence of a ‘world-city’ resulting from globalization, and ‘city-worlds,’ where gentrification, poverty and exclusion proliferate. Augé uses the concept of ‘overmodern mobility’ to think about population movements, instant communication, and the circulation of products,

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27 Candido, 1964; Harris, 1956; Hermann, 1948; Nogueira, 1962; Pierson, 1951; Wagley, 1957; Wagley, 1976; Willems and Mussolini, 1952; and Willems, 1947.

images and information. This mobility results from the paradox of contemporaneity, the exaltation of individualism and deterritorialization, where “we can hypothetically do everything without changing places; and nevertheless we move around” (Augé, 2010, p. 16).

Somewhere between the ‘world-city’ and the ‘city-world’ there are ways of making the city in its interstices – a city-to-become, a desire-city, to take up the suggestion of Deleuze and Guattari (1997): an unfinished, projected, desired process that is made and refashioned by the agents and their networks of relationships and interactions. “Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1997, p.11).

In these two research experiences in the North and Northeast of Brazil, the cities sought out by transvestites, transsexual women, trans *chicas* and *niños* are constructed on images about the cities in which they now live and those in which they wish to live in the future. These images are shaped in the concreteness of their bodies, which, through material and symbolic exchanges, can move to other territories where these same bodies may become more visible and publicly recognized – mobile urban territories that offer the possibility of consuming clothes, shoes, cosmetics and accessories, accessing health services that can facilitate their esthetic-corporal transformations, and making friendship networks.

Olivier Mongin, as a way of thinking about the urban condition in the contemporary world, emphasizing his own poetic and political experience, recuperates the idea of the refuge-city, an echo from the past, the idea of a city that receives exiles and the condemned without attaching any importance to the individual’s origin or nationality. “The city is a space where you can enter and leave, a space where you can find refuge, a space of rights that is defined not only by the inside, the identity, the belonging, but by the relationship maintained between an inside and an outside. Hospitality is inseparable from migratory flows, flows of refugees and exiles who by means of the city claim their ‘right to have rights’ (Hannah Arendt)” (Mongin, 2009, p. 105). The author thus associates the city with the nomad and dialogues with Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of the interaction between territorialization and deterritorialization – which appears in their proposal of a ‘city-form,’ a horizontal process of connections, as antagonistic to the ‘State-form.’ Conceived in this way, the city can be seen as the correlate of the road, since it promotes circuits and circulations that are deterritorialized and reterritorialized in their own deterritorialization.

Are these cities, which favor in and out flows, in never ending spirals, the refuges for *travestis* and trans *chicas*? Are these their desire-cities? Or are their desires, which move fast, already co-opted by the logics of the city-worlds?

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# Artefacts urbanistiques en périphérie de Rio de Janeiro: la technologie du lotissement

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## Résumé

L'agencement spatial des périphéries urbaines, au travers du « lotissement » (*loteamento*), n'a pas suscité beaucoup d'intérêt de la part des anthropologues. Prenant appui sur les documents d'urbanisme impliqués dans les opérations de lotissement, cet article prétend faire la « généalogie » (Foucault) de cette forme d'habitat à Rio de Janeiro en analysant les différentes rationalités techniques et politiques qui la traversent. En particulier, il défend que le lotissement doit beaucoup à la « raison graphique » (Goody), au genre d'opérations que l'utilisation « d'artefacts graphiques » (Hull) rend possible. Il soutient également que la technologie du lotissement est née en réponse à des problèmes spécifiques: à l'époque coloniale, il s'agissait de réglementer la création de voirie pour préserver l'espace public de la rue, alors qu'à la fin du dix-huitième siècle, l'enjeu était plutôt de réformer le réseau des voies de circulation. La codification des opérations de lotissement telles que nous les connaissons aujourd'hui ne survint qu'au début du siècle précédent en accord avec les nouvelles préoccupations de l'époque concernant les nécessités collectives de la population urbaine. Loin des stéréotypes sur la « ville informelle » (*cidade ilegal*), la périphérie se révèle un véritable laboratoire de l'aménagement urbain (*planejamento urbano*).

**Mots-clés:** Périphérie, Lotissement, Aménagement Urbain, Documents, Gouvernementalité.

# Artefatos urbanísticos na periferia do Rio de Janeiro: a tecnologia do loteamento

## Resumo

O ordenamento espacial das periferias, através do loteamento, não despertou tanto interesse entre os antropólogos. Com base em pesquisa sobre documentos, principalmente planos urbanísticos, e editais de leis, pretendemos fazer uma “genealogia” (Foucault) do loteamento, analisando as várias racionalidades, técnicas e políticas, que contribuíram para esta forma de morar. Argumentamos que o loteamento deve muito à “razão gráfica” (Goody), ao tipo de operações que o uso de “artefatos gráficos” (Hull) possibilita. Defendemos também que esta tecnologia responde a problemas específicos: no período colonial, regulamentava-se a abertura de ruas para defender os espaços públicos, enquanto, no final do século dezoito, o problema já era de reformar a malha viária. A codificação do loteamento tal como conhecemos só ocorreu no início do século vinte, em decorrência de novas problemáticas acerca das necessidades coletivas da população urbana. Longe de constituir uma cidade ilegal, a periferia aparece assim como um laboratório do planejamento urbano.

**Palavras-chaves:** Periferia, Loteamento, Planejamento Urbano, Documentos, Governamentalidade.

# Artefacts urbanistiques en périphérie de Rio de Janeiro: la technologie du lotissement

## **Abstract**

The spatial ordering of Rio de Janeiro's poor suburbs, through subdivision (*loteamento*), did not raise such interest among anthropologists. Based on documents, mostly urban plans, and legislation, we intend to make a "genealogy" (Foucault) of the subdivision, giving attention to technical and political rationalities. We argue that the subdivision owes much to the "graphic reason" (Goody), to the kind of operations that the use of "graphic artifacts" allows. Moreover, this technology responds to specific problems: during colonial times, government regulated street opening in order to defend public spaces. At the end of the eighteenth century, the problem was how to reform the road network. Current subdivision regulations come from the early twentieth century, when new issues about collective needs aroused. Far from being an illegal city, poor suburbs appear as a laboratory for urban planning.

**Keywords:** Urban Periphery, Subdivision, Urban Planning, Documents, Governmentality.

# Artefacts urbanistiques en périphérie de Rio de Janeiro: la technologie du lotissement

Thomas Cortado

## Analytique de la périphérie: le lotissement comme objet<sup>1</sup>

Dans son célèbre article « Vieilles nouveautés dans les modes d'urbanisation brésiliens », Carlos Nelson Ferreira s'en prenait aux approches qui réduisaient « la localisation des personnes dans l'espace urbain et dans leurs formes d'habitat aux déterminations englobantes et un tantinet abstraites de la domination de l'État et du Capital » (Santos 1980: 18). Loin de vouloir invalider la vision marxiste, l'architecte et anthropologue carioca soulignait d'abord « la complexité des articulations » en vigueur dans le processus d'urbanisation. En particulier dans la « périphérie urbaine » (*periferia*)<sup>2</sup>, cette frange pauvre et éloignée de l'espace métropolitain, dépourvue d'infrastructures, où prédominent « l'autoconstruction » (*autoconstrução*) et la petite propriété<sup>3</sup>, « l'ensemble des actions que l'on désigne par HABITER dans une ville » mobilise un large éventail d'acteurs, tels que les propriétaires ruraux, les compagnies immobilières, les services municipaux, les notaires (*cartórios*), les correcteurs immobiliers, les réseaux familiaux et de connaissances, les politiciens et leurs clientèles, etc. De leur action commune, mais pas forcément coordonnée, surgissaient des quartiers socialement hétérogènes, plus ou moins formalisés, que la plupart des spécialistes situaient sur un continuum allant de la périphérie la plus « proche » du centre, la mieux équipée en services de consommation collective, à la périphérie la plus « distante », dénuée d'à peu près tout (Santos 1977; Abreu 2013). « Le fait d'habiter en Périphérie », analysait Santos, « obéit à une série d'articulations entre divers acteurs et leurs processus qui viabilisèrent la production, la commercialisation, l'accès et la consommation du logement dans n'importe laquelle des instances représentatives (économique, juridique, financière, politique, socioculturelle, technologique, etc.), à travers la solution des LOTISSEMENTS » (Santos 1980: 28). C'était vers le lotissement, autrement dit vers l'opération (ou le résultat de l'opération) qui consiste à simultanément créer une nouvelle voirie et à diviser une unité foncière en propriétés<sup>4</sup>, que convergeait l'ensemble des acteurs: le propriétaire rural mettait à disposition un terrain autrefois réservé à un usage agricole (ou alors était la victime d'usurpateurs, les *grileiros*), la compagnie se

1 Le présent article est un prolongement de ma thèse de doctorat qui porte sur l'urbanisation du Jardim Maravilha, lotissement situé en périphérie de Rio de Janeiro (Cortado 2018). Je remercie la Coordination pour le Perfectionnement du Personnel de Niveau Supérieur (CAPES) pour son soutien financier ainsi que le séminaire des élèves du Programme de Troisième Cycle en Anthropologie Sociale (PPGAS) où j'ai pu présenter une première version de ce texte. Je tiens aussi à remercier Lucie Elgoyhen pour la révision et correction de cet article et les coordonnateurs de ce numéro, en particulier Jussara Freire, pour leurs précieuses suggestions.

2 Dans la suite de cet article, nous réserverons l'usage de l'italique aux catégories de la langue brésilienne et du vocabulaire indigène, en plus des titres d'ouvrage ou des mots étrangers. On emploiera les guillemets dans la traduction de ces mêmes catégories ainsi que pour les citations et concepts empruntés à la littérature.

3 Ce triptyque « périphérie-autoconstruction-lotissement » a dominé les travaux des années soixante-dix et quatre-vingt sur le thème de la périphérie (Valladares & Figueiredo 1981: 35). La périphérie se trouvait alors au centre d'importantes discussions théoriques, d'inspiration marxiste, bien représentées dans le fameux ouvrage collectif édité par Ermínia Maricato, *La production capitaliste de la maison (et de la ville) dans le Brésil industriel* (1979). Cette tradition de recherche a connu un certain déclin depuis la fin des années quatre-vingt, si l'on excepte les travaux de Rolnik sur la législation urbaine (2005) et ceux de Bonduki sur la politique du logement (1999), le mot même de périphérie devenant un vague synonyme de marginalité sociale et culturelle.

4 Il est d'usage dans le droit brésilien, depuis les années soixante au moins, de distinguer entre le « démembrement » (*desmembramento*), l'opération qui consiste à seulement diviser un terrain en parcelles, et le lotissement proprement dit, lorsque la division foncière, parce qu'elle concerne une vaste région, oblige à la création d'une voirie. Démembrement et lotissement font partie de ce que le droit administratif appelle le « parcellement du sol » (*parcelamento do solo*).

chargeait des travaux de lotissement (ne respectant pas toujours la législation), la municipalité approuvait le projet (ou n'avait même pas vent de l'opération), le notaire authentifiait (ou non) les transactions, les correcteurs immobiliers prenaient en charge la vente des parcelles (*lotes*), etc., jusqu'à l'habitant, qui recrutait ses amis et ses proches pour l'aider non seulement à construire sa maison, mais aussi à urbaniser le lotissement<sup>5</sup>.

Hybrides, les « lotissements défectueux » (*loteamentos irregulares*)<sup>6</sup> de la périphérie ne sont ni le fait du gouvernement, à l'image des « cités » (*conjuntos habitacionais*) dont l'existence à Rio de Janeiro remonte aux années trente, ni le produit d'une croissance dite « organique », comme ce serait le cas des favelas ; ils occupent en fait une région ambiguë dans les systèmes de classifications scientifiques et indigènes de l'espace urbain, quelque part entre les catégories de « ville informelle » et de « ville formelle », ce qui certainement explique leur moindre visibilité dans l'espace public. De ce fait, cet habitat intéresse peu les chercheurs, ce que Santos regrettait déjà au début des années quatre-vingt, quoiqu'il n'y eût jamais autant de travaux sur les lotissements, en particulier sur les lotissements *cariocas*, qu'à cette époque. Ainsi, dans les « lotissements défectueux » de la périphérie, l'autoconstruction cohabite avec l'agencement géométrique de l'espace: il suffit d'observer une vue aérienne de n'importe quel quartier de la Zone Ouest (Figure 1), souvent considérée comme « la périphérie de Rio de Janeiro », pour avoir une idée nette de longues rues rectilignes, qui se croisent en angle droit ; de ces pâtés de maison avec leurs constructions bien rangées de chaque côté ; de ces îlots (*quadras*) disposés à intervalles réguliers, de tailles souvent comparables sans être pour autant uniformes. Avec un regard attentif, on devinera que tout l'espace n'a pas été loti en une seule fois, qu'il y eut plusieurs opérations de lotissement, obéissant à des règles d'urbanisme différentes. Il y a comme une « apparence d'ordre » dans ces lieux, qui les distingue de n'importe quelle occupation dite « spontanée », comme il en va pour les favelas – l'Institut Brésilien de Géographie et Statistique (IBGE), l'équivalent brésilien de l'Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE), définit les « agglomérations sous-normales » (*aglomerados subnormais*), synonyme de favelas, comme des ensembles de maisons « disposées, en général, de façon dense et désordonnée », qui ont été urbanisés « en dehors des standards en vigueur », d'où « des voies de circulation étroites et d'alignement irrégulier, des parcelles de tailles et de formes inégales »<sup>7</sup>.

5 Encore aujourd'hui, les habitants de ces lotissements non-urbanisés recourent fréquemment à l'entraide pour construire les équipements collectifs auxquels ils n'ont toujours pas accès. Dans le lotissement du Jardim Maravilha par exemple, le plus vaste *loteamento irregular* de Rio de Janeiro, les habitants eux-mêmes creusent sur les bas-côtés des fossés par où s'écoulent les eaux usées (les funestes *valas negras*, les « fossés noirs »), souvent à la sueur de leur front, parfois en louant les services d'une tractopelle. Il leur arrive aussi d'acheter ensemble les tuyaux nécessaires à la construction des canalisations d'eau ou les poteaux qui leur permettront de raccorder leur logement au réseau électrique. Les habitants appellent *mutirão* cette forme d'entraide qui implique une participation à la fois conjointe, égalitaire et non-rémunérée à une activité d'utilité collective. Sur les différentes modalités d'urbanisation dans le cas spécifique du Jardim Maravilha, je me permets de renvoyer à ma thèse de doctorat (Cortado 2018).

6 On a préféré l'expression de « lotissement défectueux » à celle, plus littérale, de « lotissement irrégulier » pour traduire *loteamento irregular*: nous souhaiterions suggérer ainsi un parallèle, sur lequel nous ne pourrions malheureusement nous attarder, entre la situation des lotissements périphériques de Rio aujourd'hui et celle des lotissements parisiens ou lyonnais dans les années vingt et trente, à l'époque de la « crise des lotissements » (Fourcault 2000). « Lotissement défectueux » était alors l'expression consacrée dans la presse et la littérature urbanistique pour se référer à ces lotissements de « mal lotis », aux constructions éparpillées, envahies par la boue et la végétation.

7 D'après la définition officielle adoptée lors du dernier recensement (2010).

**Figure 1:** Vue aérienne d'une partie de la région de Campo Grande, dans la Zone Ouest de Rio. La zone entourée d'orange correspond au lotissement Vila Califórnia (Figure 2).



Sources: Instituto Pereira Passos (IPP), Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro (PCRJ).

Il y a une longue tradition de réflexion dans les sciences sociales sur l'agencement géométrique des espaces, l'adoption de plans orthogonaux aussi appelés *grid* par les anglophones (Rose-Redwood: 2008). Des philosophes et sociologues comme Michel de Certeau et Henri Lefebvre ont proposé, dans les années soixante-dix, une théorie critique de ces agencements géométriques: pour le premier, ces agencements exprimaient une « pulsion scopique et gnostique », la fantaisie de dominer le monde visuellement et intellectuellement (De Certeau 1990: 39-42) ; pour le second, l'espace produit par le capitalisme se caractérisait par la « primauté du visuel (du géométrico-vidéo-spatial) », la géométrie étant utile aux planificateurs pour dominer visuellement l'espace, concevoir des « plans » justement et ainsi l'adapter aux besoins du mode de production dominant (Lefebvre 1999: 326-331). Tous les deux postulaient donc un lien étroit entre géométrie, visualisation et domination, politique et intellectuelle. Les analyses de Timothy Mitchell sur l'urbanisme colonial égyptien reposent plus ou moins sur ce même postulat puisque l'agencement géométrique de l'habitat est défini par cet auteur comme une « méthode d'encadrement » (*enframing*), destinée à confiner, discipliner et surveiller, sur la base d'une « apparence d'ordre » (*appearance of order*): en géométrisant l'espace, on impose un ordre aux apparences qui est tout autant une apparence d'ordre (Mitchell 1991: 60). De même, pour James Scott, le plan orthogonal faisait partie de ces instruments utilisés pour rendre la ville « lisible », pour « disposer la population de façon à simplifier les fonctions classiques de l'État comme la levée des impôts, la conscription et la prévention des rébellions » (Scott 1998: 2).

Ces interprétations critiques des agencements géométriques ont le mérite de renvoyer l'aménagement de l'espace urbain aux « déterminations politiques englobantes ». Cependant, on peut encore se demander s'il ne conviendrait pas de considérer la critique de Santos dans le cadre de ce travail: ne serions-nous pas en train de réduire la forme de l'espace à des causes « un tantinet abstraites », en voulant expliquer l'agencement géométrique de l'espace par un besoin de l'État de rendre la société « lisible » ? Comment fait-on concrètement pour « lire » une société et, au-delà de la métaphore, on peut se demander qui lit quoi ? Il faut ici rendre justice aux documents d'urbanisme, en particulier aux cartes, schémas et plans, car c'est par ces « artefacts graphiques » (Hull 2012) que les agents publics et privés visualisent et organisent

quotidiennement « la production de l'espace » urbain. Par-delà les « artefacts » les plus grandiloquents tels que les « schémas directeurs », qui monopolisent souvent l'attention des spécialistes, il y a tout un continent de « pratiques documentaires prosaïques au travers desquelles la ville est construite, régulée et habitée » (idem: 4). Alors qu'il enquêtait sur l'administration urbaine d'Islamabad, Hull se rendit compte de ce que « l'aménagement et la régulation de l'espace étaient effectués au travers de millions de documents plus modestes, tels que les dossiers, les plans de maisons et les formulaires » (idem: 58). Il a alors critiqué le mythe du panoptique ou de « l'Œil de Dieu » qui imprègne la réflexion sur les rapports entre l'État et l'espace: « toutes les techniques administratives ne convergent pas vers un ensemble unifié de représentations. Elles génèrent des agrégations d'artefacts aux perspectives variées et limitées qui souvent sont difficilement commensurables » (idem: 181). Cette « formulation perspectiviste » (*perspectivist formulation*) ne signifie en rien une dissolution des questions politiques dans des questions techniques, mais au contraire une extension de ces questions politiques aux questions techniques, sous la forme d'une « microphysique du pouvoir », « d'une attention au complexe formé par les relais et interdépendances qui permettent aux programmes de gouvernements d'agir et d'intervenir sur les lieux, personnes et populations qui sont leur problème » (Miller & Rose 1990: 8).

Il se trouve que les lotissements de Rio de Janeiro dérivent d'un « artefact graphique » (Hull 2012) appelé « Projet Approuvé de Lotissement » (PAL): il s'agit essentiellement de plans (Figure 2) sur lesquels figurent, numérotés et mesurés, rues, îlots et parcelles, de même que les signatures du propriétaire et de l'autorité municipale responsable pour l'approbation du projet. Avant d'exister physiquement dans l'espace urbain, les lotissements possèdent donc toute une existence documentaire dans une temporalité durant laquelle se construisent les relations entre les acteurs impliqués dans les opérations de lotissement: d'après la législation encore en vigueur aujourd'hui, le propriétaire du terrain à lotir doit soumettre aux autorités municipales un projet de lotissement, que celles-ci approuvent ou non ; les parcelles sont ensuite démarquées conformément au plan qui a été approuvé, lequel sert aussi à identifier chaque propriété lors de l'enregistrement des transactions chez le notaire. En d'autres termes, le PAL s'impose comme une « technologie » indispensable pour coordonner les différents acteurs du lotissement. Sur la base de recherches que nous avons menées sur les documents et le code de l'urbanisme à Rio de Janeiro nous prétendons faire ici la « généalogie » (Foucault 2004) de cette technologie, en identifiant les rationalités techniques et politiques qui ont présidé à son invention. Il ne s'agit donc pas, à l'instar des interprétations diffusionnistes du plan orthogonal (Rose-Redwood 2008), de découvrir l'origine historique du lotissement, ni même de révéler une quelconque formule idéologique à l'œuvre derrière cette pratique. Ce qui nous intéresse en premier lieu, c'est le rôle du lotissement dans la « problématisation » de l'espace urbain, le rôle du lotissement en tant qu'outil d'action sur l'action des individus engagés dans la production de l'espace urbain – la dite périphérie se révèle justement l'un des principaux enjeux de cette problématisation. Ainsi, notre contribution s'inscrit tout autant dans le cadre des *governmentality studies* que de l'ethnographie des documents: nous soutenons en effet que la « raison graphique » (Goody 1979) à l'œuvre dans les documents d'urbanisme a joué un rôle éminent dans la conception et la résolution des problèmes liés au gouvernement de l'espace urbain. Il se trouve en outre que les deux aspects essentiels du lotissement, la création de voirie et la division du sol en parcelles, n'ont pas toujours reçu la même attention des pouvoirs publics: si dès le début de la colonisation le gouvernement a subordonné la création de voirie (*arruamento*) à des normes précises, la première réglementation (municipale) des opérations de division foncière en milieu urbain date des années trente. On commencera donc par décrire ces techniques visant à contrôler d'abord la création de voirie, en insistant sur le rôle des plans, des registres et des permis. Ensuite, on abordera la législation moderne sur l'alignement (*alinhamento*), cette pratique administrative qui consiste à démarquer la frontière entre le domaine, public, de la rue et celui, privé, des propriétés, car c'est de cette législation qu'est né



## Permission de voirie et défense des espaces publics

Au temps de la colonisation, deux institutions spécifiques, l'*almotaçaria* et l'*arruação* (ou « acte de voirie »), exerçaient un certain contrôle sur les constructions en milieu urbain. Héritage de la colonisation islamique, l'*almotacel* était un fonctionnaire élu par la Chambre Municipale qui surveillait, entre autres attributions, les constructions des particuliers, ordonnant la démolition de celles qui encombraient les voies de passage et de celles qui contrevenaient au droit de servitude, lequel fixait les obligations des voisins les uns par rapport aux autres en matière d'édification. L'*almotaçaria* fonctionnait comme une institution médiatrice des conflits entre l'*oikos* et l'*urbes*, mais cette médiation ne survenait qu'*a posteriori*, après sollicitation de l'*almotacel* par les riverains eux-mêmes (Pereira 2001). Ce n'était déjà pas le cas des actes de voirie. À partir du quinzième siècle, l'administration portugaise se mit à réprimer vigoureusement l'usurpation des espaces publics, ces édifices qui non seulement barraient la circulation, mais s'accaparaient illégalement une certaine fraction de la voie publique. Obstacle au transit des marchandises, l'étroitesse des voies s'affichait comme l'autre mal à combattre – les premières grandes opérations d'élargissement de voies publiques au Portugal datent de la fin du quinzième siècle. Qui plus est, en accord avec les maximes esthétiques de l'époque, le pouvoir royal se montrait toujours plus préoccupé par l'apparence des rues<sup>8</sup>. En conséquence, le gouvernement prit plusieurs mesures pour contenir les avancées des constructions sur l'espace public et assurer ainsi la continuité des façades entre les édifices d'une même rue. Une en particulier joua un rôle fondateur dans l'urbanistique moderne: l'instauration par la Chambre de Lisbonne, en janvier 1504, d'une autorisation administrative préalable pour tous travaux de construction ou reconstruction d'immeuble. La Chambre déterminait ainsi que personne « n'ose abattre un mur, qu'il faille faire faire les fondations, sans l'avoir d'abord fait savoir à la chambre aux échevins pour qu'ils fassent voir et mesurer vers où iront les dites fondations », et cela pour que, au moment de la reconstruction, « les murs ne puissent pas davantage occuper les rues et les passages ni ne leur prendre sinon ce qu'ils possédaient avant » (Pinto 2012: 160). Pour la première fois, le gouvernement conditionnait les opérations de construction en général à l'obtention d'une permission administrative, laquelle requérait inspection et mesure de la frontière entre la rue et l'immeuble. Ce procédé, baptisé de *cordeamento* ou « mise en corde » à Lisbonne puisqu'il nécessitait l'usage d'une corde, fut implanté à Rio dès les tout débuts de la colonisation, mais il y prit le nom de *arruação* ou *arruamento*, mot qui désigne l'acte (et le résultat de l'acte) de créer une voirie, mais aussi de distribuer physiquement des bâtiments des deux côtés de la rue.

L'ancienneté de cette pratique semble attestée par un acte de démarcation effectué le 4 janvier 1596, lequel indique que le propriétaire dénommé Fernão Baldes serait venu accompagné d'un greffier (*escrivão*) et du « voyer » (*arruador*) Francisco Gomes pour mesurer ses terrains et « laisser à la rue ce qui lui revient » (Anais da Biblioteca Nacional 1962: 251). Le voyer fixa une largeur minimale de 35 paumes (environ 7,7 m) pour la nouvelle voie. Quelques années après, dans la Correction du 16 avril 1624, le juge João de Souza de Cardena « veilla à ce que personne ne fasse de maison en pierre et de torchis, sans que l'on fasse la voirie (*arruar*) par le Conseil, avec l'assistance d'au moins deux Échevins et d'un juge, ou à la place d'un Échevin, du Procureur, avec le Greffier du Conseil, et le Voyer pour qu'ils voient s'ils tordent ou enlèvent quelque chose à la Rue, sous peine de perdre tout son ouvrage et de démolition des maisons dans les termes dans lesquels elles se trouveront (...); il déclara encore que les rues se fassent droites, sans qu'elles ne prennent fin en aucun mur ayant la largeur de trente paumes » (Arquivo do Distrito Federal 1894: 399). Aussi, « faisait-on la voirie » (*arruava*) en des rues déjà ouvertes, pour empêcher que les reconstructions et les nouvelles constructions n'avancassent sur la voie ou ne la rendissent tordue, mais aussi en des zones vierges qui, appelées à accueillir de nouveaux immeubles, avaient besoin d'une voirie pour assurer la circulation

<sup>8</sup> Jusqu'au dix-neuvième siècle, il n'était pas dans l'usage de reculer les immeubles résidentiels: on construisait directement sur l'alignement, de sorte que celui-ci se confonde avec la succession des façades

future des résidents – ce qui fait sens vu que les limites de la rue coïncidaient avec celles des bâtiments. Dans les deux cas, la « permission de voirie » (*auto de arruação*) permit un contrôle a priori sur les travaux de construction. À partir du dix-huitième siècle, il incombait au greffier de consigner ces permissions de voirie dans des livres officiels. Il convient de rappeler qu'il n'existait encore aucune norme pour la largeur des parcelles à l'époque, d'où le fait qu'elle pouvait facilement varier de 3 à 13 m en fonction du nombre de bâtiments à construire (idem: 171-177).

La permission de voirie exprime, de la part de l'administration royale et coloniale, un intérêt précoce pour les problèmes de circulation: la rue ne se réduisait pas à une « voie bordée d'immeubles », elle fonctionnait déjà comme « un canal aligné, autant verticalement, grâce aux façades droites sans corps saillants, qu'horizontalement, aucune maison n'ayant un avantage sur l'autre » (Pinto 2013: 161). La permission de voirie soumettait donc le contrôle de l'espace urbain à une nouvelle rationalité: il ne s'agissait plus seulement de réprimer des abus (obstruction de la voie commune, usurpation du domaine public), mais de les prévenir ; il ne s'agissait plus seulement de punir les infracteurs, mais d'orienter les travaux de construction en général, de sorte que les rues de la ville puissent former des canaux adaptés à la circulation des personnes et des marchandises. Loin d'être l'apanage du monde lusitain, ce passage de la répression à la prévention dans le contrôle des constructions survint simultanément dans d'autres pays européens, comme en France où la liberté de circuler et la commodité des habitants servirent aussi d'argument (Harouel 1977). On notera également que cette époque, les seizième et dix-septième siècles, coïncide historiquement avec le surgissement d'une toute nouvelle technologie politique en Occident: la « police », laquelle visait à « manipuler, maintenir, distribuer et rétablir les rapports de force dans un espace qui implique des croissances compétitives » (Foucault 2004: 319).

## Artefacts graphiques et réforme urbaine

De la nécessité de protéger le trafic, on en est venu aux dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles à celle de rectifier les rues, de faire en sorte que la ligne de démarcation entre la rue et l'espace privé fût droite. En plus d'améliorer la circulation, qui ne cessait de croître avec l'expansion des villes, une rue bien droite convenait au goût classique pour les formes géométriques et permettait l'uniformisation des façades: dans le langage de l'époque, la rectification des rues contribuait tout autant à « l'embellissement » des villes qu'à l'augmentation de « l'utilité publique » (Harouel 1977: 146). À Lisbonne, la municipalité se mit à exiger des propriétaires qu'ils avançassent leurs façades, pour donner à l'alignement une forme droite (Pinto 2016: 162). Si la rectification des rues s'avérait une tâche dispendieuse pour les coffres publics, car elle obligeait le pouvoir à indemniser les propriétaires à hauteur du terrain perdu, le tremblement de terre de 1755 engendra dans la capitale portugaise les conditions favorables pour une ample réforme du droit de voirie. D'abord, la reconstruction de Lisbonne fut placée sous la dépendance d'un *Plan pour réguler l'alignement des rues et la réédification des maisons dans le centre-ville de Lisbonne*, conçu en 1758 par l'équipe du « grand-ingénieur » (*engenheiro-mor*) Manuel da Maia, approuvé par le ministre Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, future Marquis de Pombal. Le plan venait accompagné d'un dessin représentant les travaux prévus par le plan et exécuté par les ingénieurs militaires Eugénio dos Santos e Carvalho et Carlos Mardel. Ce dessin révélait l'adoption d'une trame rigoureusement orthogonale, opposée aux ruelles étroites et sinueuses de l'ancienne ville. Le plan établissait également une hiérarchie entre les rues principales, qui atteignaient les 60 paumes de largeur (13,20 m), et les rues secondaires, qui faisaient 40 paumes (8,8 m). Il obligeait aussi les propriétaires affectés à terminer les travaux de reconstruction en cinq ans et « en conformité avec le Plan qui n'a pas seulement défini les alignements et les dimensions des parcelles, mais aussi la propre structure constructive des édifices, la hauteur sous plafond et le dessin des façades, en accord avec les projections

exécutées par la Maison du Dessin (*Casa do Risco*) » (idem: 204). Avec ce plan de reconstruction, la construction dans le centre-ville de Lisbonne s'est retrouvée sujette, de façon systématique, à un ensemble de normes précises et, nouveauté, « d'artefacts graphiques », car il n'était pas permis de construire différemment des plans officiellement approuvés et signés par le Marquis de Pombal lui-même.

Cette réorganisation autoritaire et généralisée de la construction ne fut possible que dans « l'état d'exception » permis par la catastrophe naturelle. Toutefois, avec la venue de la Cour Portugaise au Brésil en 1808 et l'élévation de Rio de Janeiro au rang de nouvelle capitale de l'Empire Portugais, les principes issus de l'urbanisme lisboète firent leur apparition sur le nouveau continent, ce qui se traduisit d'abord par la création d'une Intendance Générale de la Police en avril 1808, laquelle avait pour mission de civiliser et urbaniser la capitale – en plus de surveiller les mœurs, l'Intendance assurait l'entretien et l'amélioration des rues et réglementait les constructions, prohibant par exemple l'installation des jalousies, aussi appelées moucharabieh en raison de leur origine arabe (Gagliardo 2014). Cette nouvelle approche « policière » de la ville vint à la rencontre des inquiétudes croissantes de l'élite urbaine concernant la salubrité des environnements urbains pour mieux transformer la façon dont le pouvoir problématisait la création de voirie. En effet, depuis le début du dix-huitième siècle, une nouvelle représentation de la rue était en train d'émerger, celle d'un canal qui permettait la circulation non seulement des personnes et des marchandises, mais aussi de fluides tels que l'air et l'eau, essentiels à la propagation des maladies (Corbin 1982). La topographie irrégulière de la ville, en « fixant l'air », concourrait à la diffusion des « gaz méphitiques », altérant donc la santé des habitants. En 1820, dans ses *Prolégomènes aux maladies chirurgicales du pays*, le chirurgien de la Chambre impériale Domingos Peixoto disait des rues de Rio de Janeiro que, « d'un extrême à l'autre, elles montrent dans leur continuité de nombreux points d'élévation et de dépression, à quoi contribue le fait de ne point être correctement chaussées: par conséquent, toute la ville est marécageuse, les eaux des pluies qu'elle reçoit, ne parvenant pas à fuir vers la mer, faute d'écoulement, et d'aqueducs suffisants, s'éternisent donc et sont évaporées par la chaleur du soleil. [...] Les rues, en général, sont étroites, et cette condition fait que le mouvement des vents est peu favorable et que l'on sent, au maximum, la chaleur du sol » (Peixoto 2008: 99). Autrement dit, les vieilles rues du centre, étroites, irrégulières et sinueuses, présentaient le double défaut de faciliter la stagnation des eaux et d'empêcher la rénovation de l'air par le vent, favorisant ainsi la propagation des miasmes. De telles opinions issues des milieux médicaux autorisés avaient une profonde influence sur la perception de la ville par les élites à un moment où le pouvoir des médecins au sein de l'administration publique ne faisait que croître (Machado 1978).

Il n'y a donc rien de surprenant à ce que le Code des Postures (*Código de Posturas*) municipales de 1838, la première compilation de lois municipales de Rio de Janeiro, contienne toute une série de dispositions relatives à la voirie. Dès le premier paragraphe de la seconde section<sup>9</sup>, dédiée à l'exercice de la « police » (la première traitait de la santé), le Code prévoyait que « la Chambre [*Municipale*] dresse les plans suivant lesquels seront formés les rues, places et édifices dans la ville et son terme. Ces plans seront disponibles à la maison de la Chambre, et l'on en donnera des copies exactes aux contrôleurs et voyers des districts au sein desquels l'on ne peut édifier sans autorisation, permission de voirie et alignement ». Le paragraphe suivant stipulait que « au voyer il convient d'aligner et de profiler l'édifice, de réguler sa devanture, conformément au plan adopté par la Chambre », vu que « personne ne pourra faire des travaux sur la devanture des immeubles sans autorisation de la Chambre » – pour les standards architecturaux de l'époque, la démarcation de la frontière entre les espaces publics et privés (alignement) se confondait avec la régulation des façades (profilage). En outre, aux nouvelles rues à délimiter s'imposait une largeur minimale de 60 paumes (13,20 m), identique aux « rues principales » de la Lisbonne pombaline. Enfin, le cinquième

9 Toutes les citations sont issues de PDF 1894.

paragraphe obligeait les propriétaires, lorsqu'ils refaisaient la devanture de leurs immeubles, à les reculer ou bien à les avancer pour qu'ils « rentrent dans l'alignement », suivant qu'ils excédaient le nouvel alignement ou se trouvaient en retrait par rapport à lui. Au travers de ces arrêtés, Rio de Janeiro se dotait donc d'une technologie administrative basée sur la production d'artefacts graphiques pour mieux contrôler la construction.

Quoique l'administration municipale n'ait gardé aucune trace de ces plans, qui n'ont probablement jamais vu le jour, au vu des tentatives ultérieures pour imposer de nouveau ces plans d'alignement, la tendance à la multiplication des artefacts graphiques ne cessa de se confirmer tout au long du dix-neuvième siècle. En 1856, la Chambre interdit toute édification ou réédification « sans que ne soit d'abord produit et soumis à l'approbation de la Chambre Municipale le dessin de la façade de l'édifice » (article premier de l'arrêté du 6 mai 1856), incluant ainsi dans le système des autorisations préalables la présence d'un nouvel artefact graphique, le dessin de la façade. À l'inverse de ce qui prévalait à Lisbonne au temps de Pombal, ce n'est pas l'administration qui fournissait au constructeur le dessin de la façade mais le constructeur lui-même qui devait lui soumettre le plan. À un contrôle de nature prescriptif s'opposait un autre de nature « proscriptif » : il ne s'agissait plus de contraindre le propriétaire à construire de la façon dont le voulait l'administration, mais plutôt de l'empêcher de construire de la façon dont elle ne voulait pas. Les instructions approuvées à la session de la Chambre du 11 novembre 1869 imposèrent ensuite la signature du propriétaire et du constructeur sur le dessin ; au permis de construire s'ajoutaient le terme de voirie et l'approbation, motivée par écrit, de ce dessin par l'ingénieur de district. En obligeant propriétaire et constructeur à signer les plans des façades, ces instructions mettaient en évidence le rôle éminent des artefacts graphiques dans le contrôle des différentes « agences » (*agencies*) engagées dans la construction. Progressivement, le contrôle des constructions se distinguait de celui exercé sur la voirie, ce que vint confirmer l'arrêté du 5 mai 1886, qui étendit l'autorisation préalable à « n'importe quelle construction à l'intérieur des terrains, même si le terrain présente une édification quelconque sur le devant » et à « n'importe quelles réformes ou travaux à l'intérieur des immeubles, à partir du moment où ces travaux atteignent plus de la moitié de l'aire occupée par l'immeuble ». Cette différenciation fait parfaitement sens au vu des deux grands changements de l'époque en matière d'architecture : en premier lieu, l'introduction progressive du recul, de façon à laisser un espace, souvent utilisé comme « jardin », entre la rue et la maison (Reis Filho 2000 : 48) ; en second lieu, l'extension du contrôle médical à l'intimité des maisons, d'où la condamnation, par exemple, des alcôves (Costa 1979).

L'arrêté du 15 septembre 1892, que l'on peut légitimement considéré comme le premier Code de la Construction de Rio de Janeiro, fixa définitivement cette dissociation entre voirie et édification. Les premiers articles de la loi énonçaient ainsi un certain nombre de règles pour encadrer les permis de construire, multipliant les contraintes en matière d'artefacts graphiques : la concession du permis requérait cette fois un dessin du terrain, un plan complet des travaux, ce qui voulait dire un plan pour chaque étage et un autre pour les façades principales ; les sections longitudinales et transversales des nouveaux immeubles ; la projection des éventuelles dépendances (article second). Le troisième article considérait exclusivement les qualités graphiques des dessins, qui devaient être délivrés en duplicata, respecter une certaine échelle, être cotés et montrer la signature du propriétaire et du constructeur. L'édifice tout entier, et pas seulement la façade, se retrouvait sujet à permission, ce qui exigeait donc un certain effort de planification des travaux de la part des propriétaires et des constructeurs. Plus encore, la loi établit une nouvelle technologie pour réguler la création de voirie. D'après l'article sept, « il ne sera pas permis la division de terrains en places et rues, sans que ne soient préalablement présentés les dessins et profils longitudinal et transversal, cotés, à la municipalité, requise la permission nécessaire, laquelle, quoique gratuite, sera récusée si les rues et

places présentent des angles dans leurs alignements ou ne sont pas dans les conditions de cet article et du précédent, ou s'opposent au plan général de la ville, organisée par la municipalité. La division des terrains cherchera toujours à s'approcher de la forme de rectangles peu allongés ».

Cet arrêté, promulgué par le Président du Conseil Municipal, le docteur Cândido Barata Ribeiro, contenait d'importantes innovations. En premier lieu, l'article sept sanctionnait la transition d'une modalité prescriptive vers une modalité « proscriptive » de contrôle: alors que dans les arrêtés du début du siècle, les nouvelles voies publiques devaient se conformer aux plans adoptés par la municipalité, dans le règlement de Barata Ribeiro il incombait aux propriétaires de soumettre leurs propres plans de voirie à la mairie, qui les approuvait ou non. Parmi les règles qui conditionnaient l'approbation du plan, il fallait que celui-ci soit en accord avec « le plan général de la ville, organisé par la municipalité », ce qui établissait donc une connexion entre deux artefacts graphiques, quoique le second fût encore en préparation. En second lieu, l'arrêté de 1892 exigeait la production de nouveaux dessins (profils longitudinal et transversal) de façon à contrôler non seulement la largeur (fixée directement à 13,20 m, sans référence aux unités de mesure coloniales) et la forme des rues (droites, de préférence), mais aussi leur régularité, sachant que les hygiénistes accusaient les variations dans le nivellement des rues de favoriser la stagnation des eaux (d'après le quatrième paragraphe de l'article six, il revenait au propriétaire de niveler la voirie et d'installer un caniveau de chaque côté des rues). Enfin, l'arrêté réglementait, pour la première fois, les divisions foncières, vu que les parcelles devaient posséder une forme rectangulaire peu allongée. Qui plus est, le paragraphe premier de l'article sept stipulait « qu'aucun lot de terrain avec une largeur inférieure à sept mètres sur le devant ne pourra recevoir une quelconque construction ». Cette intromission de la législation dans les opérations de division foncière s'étendit davantage encore avec le Décret n. 43 du 2 août 1893, dédié spécifiquement « à la création de voirie et au prolongement de celles déjà existantes »: en plus d'arrondir à 14 m la largeur des rues, le décret prévoyait qu'un vingtième des terrains supérieurs à 30.000 m<sup>2</sup> revînt à la mairie pour l'aménagement d'une place. Le décret préconisait également que les rues, toujours droites, se croisassent en angle droit, situées à égale distance les unes des autres, et jamais à moins de 100 m, ce qui revenait à imposer un plan rigoureusement orthogonal à la ville, du moins dans les zones encore dépourvues de voies publiques, et une taille minimale aux pâtés de maisons, qui ne pouvaient couvrir une aire inférieure à 10.000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Ces changements dans le contrôle de la division foncière reflètent ceux qui eurent lieu sur le marché immobilier de Rio de Janeiro à la même époque. Il faut se rappeler que, « jusqu'au milieu des années 1880, le processus de division du sol dans les banlieues (*subúrbios*) était principalement commandé par le petit propriétaire terrien, lequel divisait sa « ferme » (*chácara*) en parcelles, les vendant ensuite aux enchères » (Abreu 2013: 226). Dès la fin du dix-huitième siècle, des propriétaires fractionnaient leurs fermes en périphérie de la ville, dans le quartier de Botafogo par exemple, pour répondre à la demande des familles aristocrates, qui souhaitaient fuir un centre-ville surpeuplé. Cette expansion vers la périphérie reçut un coup d'accélérateur dans le dernier tiers du dix-neuvième siècle avec l'inauguration des premières voies ferrées (1858) et des premières lignes de tramway à traction animale (1868). Surtout, de nouveaux acteurs participèrent aux opérations de division foncière, tels que les banques et les compagnies immobilières, nationales ou étrangères, des acteurs détenteurs de capitaux en quête d'investissements lucratifs: avec eux, ces opérations se déroulèrent « de façon tout à fait nouvelle: ils n'ouvraient plus une ou deux rues ; ils créaient des quartiers entiers qu'ils vendaient en parcelles à terme » (idem: 26). Le cas le plus emblématique fut le surgissement du quartier Vila Isabel au début des années 1870: après avoir acquis de la famille royale les terres de la Ferme des Macaques, le Baron de Drummond fonda une société, la Compagnie Architectonique de Vila Isabel (1872), pour urbaniser la région ; il créa en même temps la Compagnie de Voies Ferrées Vila Isabel, pour relier le quartier au reste de la ville (Andreatta 2006: 144). De cette façon,

les nouveaux acteurs du marché immobilier conféraient une valeur supplémentaire à la terre: « cela rend l'entreprise parfaitement viable, car la Compagnie Architectonique peut acheter les terres à bas prix, du fait d'un usage agricole stagnant, et les revendre à un autre bien supérieur, car il incorpore une nouvelle valeur d'usage créée: l'accès au centre de la ville » (Ribeiro 1997: 221). Ces nouveaux « lotissements » - le mot n'était pas encore entré dans l'usage, mais on parlait déjà de « vente en lots » (*venda em lotes*) ou de « lots de terre » (*lotes de terreno*) pour se référer aux parcelles – s'adressaient à une clientèle de classe moyenne, dont le pouvoir d'achat ne se comparait en rien à celui des aristocrates qui emménagèrent dans le sud de Rio de Janeiro au début du siècle.

Il y avait du côté des élites cariocas intéressées par les problèmes urbains une vraie préoccupation quant à l'essor de la ville. Cela apparut notamment dans les rapports de la Commission d'Améliorations (*Comissão de Melhoramentos*) installée par le Ministre de l'Empire João Alfredo Correia de Oliveira le 27 mai 1874, à laquelle participa l'ingénieur et futur maire de Rio Francisco Pereira Passos. On pouvait ainsi lire dans le second rapport de cette commission, chargée d'élaborer un plan pour l'aménagement de la capitale, que la ville de Rio de Janeiro « s'est étendue à mesure qu'augmentait sa population, prolongeant les anciennes rues jusqu'où elles pouvaient aller et *en formant de nouvelles sans aucune subordination à un plan préalablement étudié*. Dans la majorité des cas, les alignements ont suivi la sinuosité des vallées, accompagnant le bas des collines. Dans d'autres, et ceux-là sont les plus récents, *la seule loi qui préside à la direction des alignements est celle du caprice et de la convenance des propriétaires* des terrains où l'on crée de la voirie. Nous ne citerons pas d'exemples: ils sont là disséminés parmi les divers quartiers de la ville, où presque *toutes les semaines, on vend aux enchères des terrains à construire dans de nouvelles rues alignées et conçues par n'importe quel arpenteur (agrimensor), sans aucune sujétion aux principes qui devraient s'imposer dans ces cas* » (CMCRJ 1876: 7 [souligné par l'auteur de cet article]). Les rapporteurs regrettaient que « dans ces nouveaux quartiers, la seule règle observée soit celle de donner aux rue la largeur minimale de 60 paumes marquée par la chambre municipale, sans avoir de respect pour tant d'autres conditions » (idem: 13). Il y avait donc un « problème de lotissement », exigeant déjà l'intervention de la puissance publique, bien avant que la catégorie n'existe.

Pour les auteurs du rapport, la solution aux problèmes de voirie passait par l'adoption d'un « plan général », d'un instrument administratif qui régulerait la construction et la création de voirie à partir d'une vue d'ensemble de la ville et de ses perspectives de croissance. C'est que les problèmes de circulation, d'hygiène et d'infrastructure ne pouvaient se résoudre à l'échelle de chaque rue prise isolément vu qu'aucune n'existe indépendamment des autres: l'encombrement en un point donné de la ville affecte de proche en proche l'ensemble des voies. C'est pourquoi le « plan général » prétendait « discipliner les futurs actes de voirie, les nouvelles rues et avenues projetées [*par le plan*] servant d'artères principales, au milieu desquelles les propriétaires de terrains pourront créer d'autres rues secondaires, les soumettant à l'approbation de la municipalité » (idem: 33 [souligné par moi]). Autrement dit, le plan définissait les principaux axes, à l'image de cette vaste avenue de 40 m de largeur et de 4,8 km de longueur conçue pour relier le Campo de Santana en plein centre-ville de Rio à la jeune Vila Isabel, et laissait à l'initiative privée le soin créer la voirie secondaire en accord avec les besoins du marché immobilier – en connectant le centre-ville à sa frontière d'expansion, l'avenue en question, qui ne vit jamais le jour, dénotait déjà une aperception systématique de l'espace urbain, tout du moins de sa trame viaire.

Les deux rapports vinrent accompagnés d'un plan, « en deux feuilles de dessin à l'échelle 1:100, distinguant à l'encre noire les constructions existantes et à l'encre carmin celles que nous projetons » (Figure 3), que la commission elle-même s'était donné pour toute première tâche de confectionner (CMCRJ 1875: 4). En plusieurs endroits, le second rapport demande au lecteur de « jeter un coup d'œil au plan de la ville » pour avoir ainsi une idée du « complexe de toutes les améliorations ». Parfois, le mot même de « plan », comme souvent, renvoie tout autant à la liste des travaux prévus qu'à la carte utilisée

pour les situer. C'est que les « plans » sont plus que des « projections »: du fait de leur « consistance optique » (Latour & Callon 2015: 25), de leur façon d'organiser visuellement l'information disponible, ils possèdent une efficacité spécifique. En particulier, un plan permet d'embrasser immédiatement une vaste superficie de l'espace physique et d'apercevoir les rapports qui le composent – c'est sur le plan que le « complexe des travaux » se manifeste en tant que « complexe »<sup>10</sup>. Sur un plan, on se rend très vite compte du résultat attendu des opérations d'ouverture, d'élargissement, de prolongement ou de rectification des voies publiques, en même temps que l'on dispose d'un instrument pour mieux les contrôler. Le contraste entre le tracé du résultat projeté et celui de la trame existante, augmenté par le choix de couleurs opposées, indique les régions directement affectées par les travaux. Fondamentalement, le plan fonctionne comme le support d'une rationalité qui se représente l'espace comme un milieu d'interactions – on comprend mieux l'éminente participation des ingénieurs, entraînés à réaliser des croquis pour agir sur l'espace, dans l'institutionnalisation de l'aménagement urbain (Azevedo 2013).

**Figure 3:** Fragment du plan de Rio annexé aux rapports de la Commission d'Améliorations.

À droite, le centre-ville de Rio qui donne accès à la Baie de Guanabara, à gauche, le jeune lotissement de Vila Isabel: on remarquera la large avenue de couleur rouge, parfaitement rectiligne, projetée pour relier les deux régions.



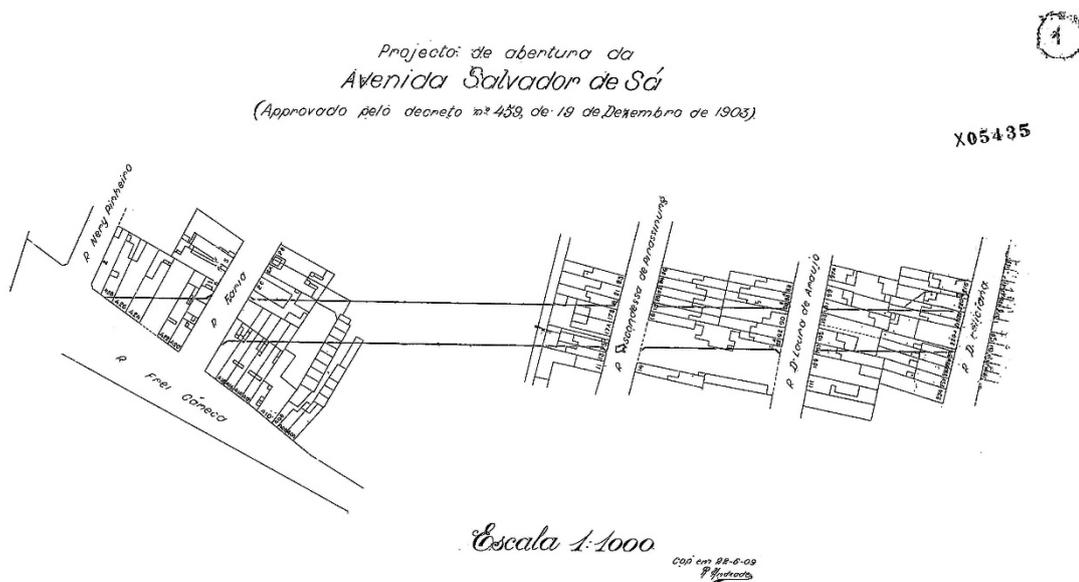
Source: Biblioteca Nacional (BN), 1875.

C'est donc sur la base d'artefacts graphiques que, trente années après, Pereira Passos ordonna la fameuse réforme urbaine (1902-1906) qui lui valut son surnom de « Haussmann tropical ». D'ailleurs, la réforme de l'infrastructure documentaire sur laquelle prenait appui l'administration municipale précéda la politique des grands travaux: alors qu'il n'était même pas encore maire de Rio, Pereira Passos réorganisa les services qui s'occupaient de ce que nous appellerions aujourd'hui l'urbanisme, nommant exclusivement des ingénieurs. Il mit au centre de sa nouvelle administration la Commission de la Carte Cadastrale, faisant d'elle une annexe de la Direction Générale des Travaux Publics et de la Voirie - sous la gestion de Barata Ribeiro (1892-1893) débuta le relevé de la carte cadastrale, à la suite du recrutement de Manoel Pereira Reis, professeur d'astronomie à l'École Polytechnique de Rio de Janeiro (Reis 1977: 8). La commission, sous la direction de l'ingénieur Américo de Sousa Rangel, avait d'ailleurs élaboré plusieurs « plans d'amélioration » (*planos de melhoramentos*) – le Décret du 20 décembre 1897 avait déterminé que, « pour toutes les concessions et contrats à célébrer avec la mairie, qui toucheront à la voirie, ne seront acceptés que les tracés projetés sur des plans qui procèdent de la Carte Cadastrale », conférant déjà à la Commission un rôle important dans la gestion de l'urbanisation. Pereira Passos s'empressa d'utiliser les travaux de la Commission

<sup>10</sup> Au sujet de l'écriture, Goody a montré comment elle met en évidence des rapports entre catégories qui difficilement apparaissent dans le discours oral, grâce à la « latéralité » du dispositif graphique (Goody 1979: 212).

(idem: 17): l'importance que celle-ci a revêtu sous sa mandature nous rappelle que les plans ne font pas que projeter, ils suggèrent des interventions dans l'espace – les défauts d'une trame viaire ne sont jamais aussi apparents que sur un plan en vue aérienne. Enfin, Pereira Passos introduisit « l'uniformisation des projets d'alignement, aussi appelés projets d'améliorations, en feuille de toile impériale transparente, de 30 x 50 cm. Les projets étaient visés par les ingénieurs, par l'Ingénieur Chef et Directeur des Travaux Publics, et ensuite approuvés par le maire » (idem: 18). À partir de cette normalisation des projets d'alignement commença la série de documents connue aujourd'hui sous le sigle de PAA ou « Projet Approuvé d'Alignement ». Le premier PAA représente ainsi l'Avenue Salvador de Sá dans le centre de Rio, œuvre de la mairie elle-même (Figure 4). En tout, la gestion Pereira Passos approuva près de 196 projets d'alignement, toujours en rapport avec des travaux commandités par la municipalité elle-même, telle que la construction des avenues Mem de Sá et Beira-Mar. Sous les administrations suivantes, les mêmes plans servirent à encadrer l'initiative privée: les opérations de lotissement, dans la mesure où elles créaient de la voirie, apparaissant alors en tant que « projets de voirie » (*projeto de arruamento*), lesquels faisaient partie de la série des PAA (Figure 5).

**Figure 4:** PAA 1. Projet d'ouverture de l'Avenue Salvador de Sá dans le centre de Rio de Janeiro, approuvé en 1913.



Source: SMU, PCRJ.



La réforme de l'infrastructure documentaire permit l'organisation de toute une « économie politique du papier » (Hull, 2012) autour de l'alignement. Premièrement, avec l'uniformisation des PAA, la fixation des alignements, qui autrefois découlait du profilage des édifices, se mit à procéder d'un objet graphique: une figure géométrique (ligne rouge) sur un dessin (noir). Autrement dit, la rectification de la maille urbaine commençait par le tracé d'une ligne droite sur un dessin. Deuxièmement, les plans d'alignement dérivèrent invariablement d'un autre artefact graphique: la carte cadastrale. Cet « allongement des réseaux sociotechniques » (Latour 1987) fit de la mairie un véritable « centre de calcul » urbanistique, un pôle pour agir à distance sur la trame viaire de la ville (idem: 222): comme la carte cadastrale offre une vue synoptique de l'espace urbain, l'alignement devenait fonction de cette vue synoptique, rendant ainsi possible une plus grande cohérence dans les opérations d'urbanisme, par rapport à des plans isolés. Troisièmement, la numérotation et l'archivage des PAA rendit possible l'établissement de « connections horizontales » (idem: 244) entre les PAA (un PAA peut faire référence à un autre PAA) ou entre les PAA et d'autres documents tels que les « termes de cession », qui fixent les devoirs des lotisseurs en matière d'urbanisme et garantissent le transfert des rues et des places au domaine public. Quatrièmement, le jeu des visas (de la Commission de la Carte Cadastre) et des signatures (du chef de la Direction Générale des Travaux Publics et de la Voirie et du maire) scella une coordination spécifique entre les bureaucraties municipales.

### **Lotissement et planification des besoins collectifs**

Si, dès les débuts de la colonisation portugaise, le pouvoir s'est efforcé de contrôler la création de voirie, on ne peut pas en dire autant de la division du sol urbain – le mot même de « lotissement » n'apparaît dans aucun texte de loi avant le début des années trente (Sampaio & Lira 2010: 674). Il existait bel et bien une réglementation des transactions immobilières: la Loi des Terres de 1850 imposa l'achat comme la principale modalité d'accès à la propriété foncière, l'enregistrement de chaque transaction à l'écrit, dans des livres paroissiaux au début, par des actes notariés ensuite. Cependant, la formation des parcelles urbaines ne dépendait d'aucune norme particulière, laissant aux agents économiques une liberté totale en la matière. D'où l'absence de régularité dans les découpages fonciers: les pâtés de maison prenaient souvent l'apparence de trapèzes dont les dimensions variaient de 40 à 60 m en longueur et de 50 à 100 m en hauteur ; les parcelles faisaient de 3 à 12 m de largeur pour 20 à 50 m de profondeur. La forme étroite et allongée de ces parcelles obéissait alors à une logique économique, l'occupation des alignements par les façades renchérissant les constructions à mesure qu'augmentait la largeur des parcelles. Et ce non seulement dans le centre de Rio mais aussi sur les nouveaux fronts de l'expansion urbaine. Le plan d'un petit lotissement situé dans le quartier d'Engenho de Dentro, inauguré au début des années 1880, fait apparaître des parcelles de moins de 11 m de largeur pour plus de 60 de profondeur (Figure 6). Le gouvernement fit alors très peu pour réglementer les divisions du sol urbain, quoique Barata Ribeiro introduisit la limite basse de 7 m de largeur pour pouvoir construire sur une parcelle. Ce fût seulement dans les années vingt et trente du siècle suivant que la puissance publique légiféra sur la division du sol urbain.

**Figure 6:** Plan et catalogue des parcelles mises en vente par Silva Guimarães en 1880, dans le quartier d'Engenho de Dentro, Zone Nord de Rio de Janeiro.



Source: BN.

La lenteur de la puissance publique a de quoi surprendre quand on la compare à l'intensité du phénomène. Entre 1870 et 1920, le nombre de voies publiques à Rio passa de 503 à 3.534 (Ribeiro 1997: 166, 178) ; entre 1890 et 1906, la croissance démographique des deux quartiers périphériques de Inhaúma et Irajá, où se concentraient les nouveaux lotissements, représentait plus de la moitié de celle enregistrée dans toute la ville (idem: 180). Rien que dans le quartier de Irajá, la population augmenta de 263% entre 1906 et 1920, sans parler du nombre de voies publiques, qui passa de 81 à 741 (idem: 178 ; Abreu 2013: 82), indiquant ainsi une occupation préférentiellement horizontale de ces nouveaux espaces. La conception bourgeoise, qui difficilement tolère une quelconque intromission de la puissance publique dans les affaires de propriété, explique peut-être cette absence de contrôle sur la formation des parcelles, d'autant que les grands artisans de l'aménagement, les ingénieurs, appartenaient à cette couche sociale. Pour autant, une telle conception n'a pas empêché l'administration municipale d'exiger, à la toute fin du dix-neuvième siècle, le transfert

vers la municipalité d'une partie des terres à lotir, en vue d'aménager une place publique. C'est qu'une place répondait à l'époque à des problèmes précis: la ventilation, afin de prévenir la propagation des maladies, et « l'embellissement » (*embelezamento*) de la ville, désormais soumise au goût des élites. Pour cette raison, moins que d'un crédo libéral dont l'histoire a prouvé l'impressionnante plasticité idéologique, l'absence de contrôle sur la division du sol nous semble plutôt signifier l'inexistence d'une problématique touchant spécifiquement au fractionnement des propriétés. Dans le cas de Rio de Janeiro, l'on doit à un éminent fonctionnaire du Département d'Ingénierie de la Direction des Travaux Publics et de la Voirie, par ailleurs pionnier de l'urbanisme au Brésil, cette problématisation de la division du sol: Armando Augusto Godoy.

Formé en ingénierie à l'École Polytechnique de Rio de Janeiro en 1904, Godoy connut une longue carrière au sein de la mairie de Rio, où il dirigea plusieurs commissions importantes pour l'urbanisme carioca, telle celle responsable de l'élaboration du Code de la Construction de 1924 (Silva 2003). C'est également lui qui invita l'architecte français Alfred Agache au début des années vingt pour concevoir le premier schéma directeur de la capitale. De façon générale, Godoy s'est efforcé de diffuser au Brésil les « idées nouvelles » de l'urbanisme: en 1927, il participa à la fondation de l'Association Brésilienne de l'Urbanisme ; il présida la première Commission du Plan de la Ville en 1931 ; il travailla comme consultant sur la construction de Goiânia entre 1933 et 1936. Godoy avait de l'urbanisme la vision d'une science « holiste ». En épitaphe à son recueil d'articles, *L'Urbs et ses problèmes*, Godoy définissait l'urbanisme comme « l'ordre et l'harmonie entre tous les éléments de la ville, les souterrains, les superficies et les élévations ; la bonne utilisation des terrains, la diminution des inégalités sociales, la solution rationnelle au problème du logement ; des parcs, des jardins, des squares, des temples, des écoles, des fabriques, des hôpitaux, des bibliothèques, des musées et des moyens de transport bien distribués et localisés » (Godoy 1943: 4). L'urbanisme selon Godoy se voulait donc une science, positive et normative, des interdépendances qui organisent l'espace matériel de la ville. Quelques années auparavant, Godoy avait proposé une définition un peu différente de cette discipline, « comme étant la création de l'esprit humain au moyen de laquelle on vise l'important résultat suivant: l'utilisation rationnelle, esthétique, hygiénique et économique des terrains de la ville » (Godoy 1935: 711-712). Pour cela, l'urbanisme exigeait « le concours et les lumières de l'ingénieur, de l'architecte, du sociologue, de l'économiste, du paysagiste, du sculpteur et de l'hygiéniste » (idem: 716). Godoy concevait ainsi l'urbanisme comme une extension de la rationalité planificatrice à la totalité de l'espace urbain: non seulement aux rues, infrastructures et constructions résidentielles, mais aussi aux rapports existants entre elles ; pour « assainir » et « embellir » la ville, mais encore pour l'adapter aux besoins économiques et sociaux de la population. L'urbanisme participait alors du grand mouvement réformateur qui s'empara de la société brésilienne dans les années vingt, et qui se caractérisait par la généralisation de la rationalité planificatrice aux diverses dimensions de la vie collective (éducation, travail, logement, etc.), que Micheal Conniff baptisa mouvement de « planification sociale » (Conniff 2006: 159).

Du point de vue holiste défendu par Godoy, la division du sol s'avère un sujet central. En premier lieu, l'expansion horizontale de la ville porte atteinte à l'économie et à la salubrité: « je pense que le plus grand mal dont souffre cette métropole se trouve dans l'expansion excessive, irrégulière, antiéconomique et antihygiénique dont elle fut la victime (...). Antiéconomique parce que les prolongements que Rio reçut n'obéissent pas au critère permettant de réaliser une occupation rationnelle des terrains, de façon à ne pas surcharger exagérément les coffres municipaux avec de multiples services publics. Antihygiénique pour avoir éludé le problème des égouts » (Godoy 1932: 21). Le problème hygiénique, en vérité, découlait du problème économique. L'occupation clairsemée de la ville contribuait à ce que « le revenu provenant aussi bien de l'impôt local et des taxes sur la chaussée que d'autres taxes ne suffise au maintien, en de bonnes conditions, des services publics les plus indispensables » (idem: 1935: 715): d'un côté, la multiplication des bâtiments de petite taille, consécutive à la baisse de la densité, diminuait la recette fiscale par mètre

carré de la municipalité ; de l'autre, l'expansion horizontale augmentait le coût des services, tels que l'entretien des rues, et donc l'installation d'infrastructures comme le tout-à-l'égout – d'où l'observation suivante de Godoy selon laquelle « l'un des aspects les plus importants que l'urbaniste doit regarder en face est l'économique » (idem: 173). Il était donc nécessaire de freiner l'expansion horizontale de la ville. En second lieu, la forme des parcelles influait aussi sur l'économie et l'hygiène de la ville. « Elle [la parcelle] est, de fait, l'élément fondamental et indivisible dont tout le reste dépend. Si ses dimensions ne sont pas convenablement établies et mises en rapport, en ayant en vue le destin qui leur est réservé, les résultats ne s'accordent pas avec les fins voulues » (idem 1943: 99). Des parcelles « très étroites et profondes » dégradent l'hygiène de la maison: « un des grands défauts des grandes villes, malheureusement de quelques nouvelles au Brésil, ce sont les parcelles étroites, où difficilement se résout sans grand sacrifice de terre le triple problème de l'ensoleillement, de la ventilation et de l'éclairage » (A Noite 1923: 3). Qui plus est, en obligeant les propriétaires à construire sur l'alignement, la forme des parcelles incommodait du point de vue esthétique, hygiénique et moral ; à l'inverse, « les immeubles convenablement éloignés de l'alignement, deviennent plus distincts, s'améliorent en général du point de vue architectural, acquièrent une autre grandeur et constituent, de fait, une résidence plus tranquille pour se trouver moins exposé aux bruits, à l'air vicié et l'agitation des rues » (idem 1943: 147). Quant aux irrégularités dans le tracé des parcelles, elles compliquaient l'installation des infrastructures urbaines, en raison des interdépendances entre parcelles dans l'accès aux équipements collectifs: « les maisons sont liées les unes aux autres par les rues, par les canalisations d'eau et d'égout, par le réseau d'éclairage et de téléphone, entretenant des influences réciproques » (idem 1935: 718). Par conséquent, « la mauvaise division des terrains complique l'installation des services d'eau, d'égout, d'éclairage dans les sous-sols en même temps qu'elle complique les travaux sur la chaussée et l'arborisation » (idem 1943: 60). C'est pourquoi « sans une bonne fragmentation des terrains, une bonne orientation des rues et une distribution convenable de tous les éléments urbains, il n'est pas possible de résoudre, en accord avec toutes les exigences, le problème du logement » (idem 1935: 718).

Il existait néanmoins une solution aux problèmes de la division du sol: la cité-jardin, laquelle, d'après Godoy, représentait « la plus parfaite et la plus complète création urbaniste de l'époque » (idem 1943: 137). Conçu par le socialiste anglais Howard Ebenezer, le modèle de la ville-jardin prétendait résoudre la question du logement en conjuguant les avantages de la ville et de la campagne. Ce modèle consistait en une planification rigoureuse, presque malthusienne, de communautés autonomes capables tout autant d'intégrer les différentes fonctions de la vie urbaine (résidentielle, commerciale, industrielle, etc.) que de permettre à leurs habitants de jouir de la nature, réduisant ainsi les effets délétères de l'industrie sur la santé et le moral de la population. Il se concrétisa pour la première fois en 1903, avec la fondation de la ville de Letchworth au Royaume-Uni, sous la direction des architectes Raymond Unwin et Barry Parker. Quelques années plus tard, les mêmes architectes projetèrent le Jardin Amérique (*Jardim América*) à São Paulo: en plus de bénéficier de toutes les infrastructures urbaines (électricité, eau, égout, gaz, etc.), ce lotissement se caractérisait par des parcelles bien plus vastes que la moyenne, de 900 m au minimum, par le recul des bâtiments par rapport à la rue et aux propriétés voisines et par la présence de jardins, de larges avenues et rues arborisées (Pereira 2001: 42). La cité-jardin était donc déjà une réalité dans le Brésil des années vingt – ou, tout du moins, le *garden suburb*, vu que le Jardin Amérique perdit rapidement commerces et écoles pour devenir un quartier exclusivement résidentiel, contredisant ainsi l'inspiration originale d'Ebenezer. Godoy souhaitait étendre ce modèle à tous les lotissements, y compris à ceux destinés à une clientèle populaire, défendant que « dans les dites villes destinées aux familles prolétaires, la mortalité est plus petite que dans les autres centres de population, la criminalité et les grèves ayant presque disparu » (Godoy 1943: 152) – il faisait alors référence à la ville de Suresnes en France. Parmi les conséquences pratiques immédiates,

il n'était plus possible de démarquer des parcelles qui se révélaient avoir moins de 6m de largeur, car le modèle de la cité-jardin présupposait l'isolement de la maison au milieu de la parcelle, c'est-à-dire son éloignement des limites du terrain, suivant une ancienne revendication des hygiénistes.

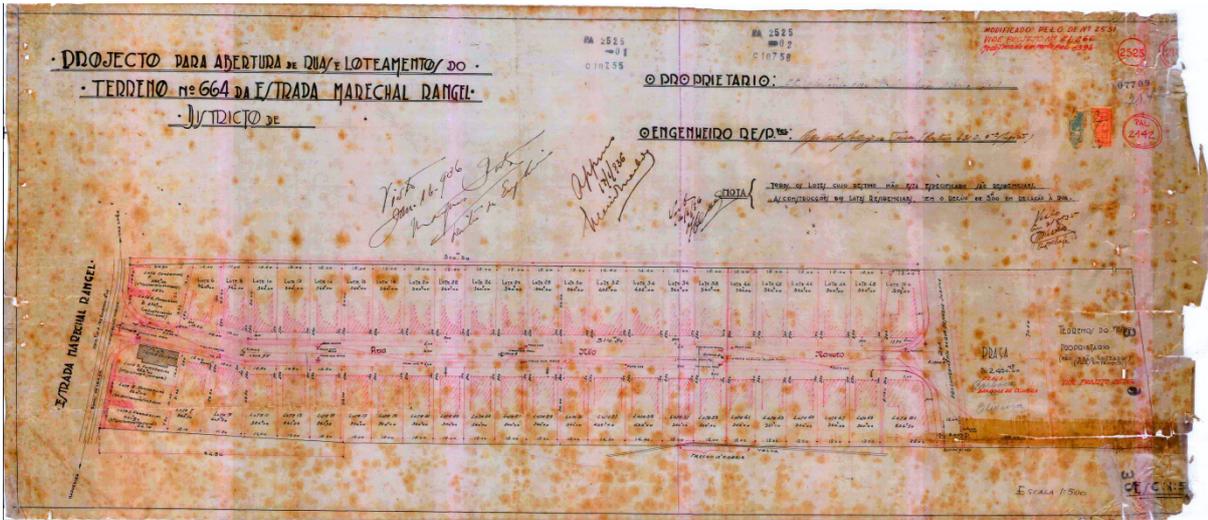
Deux grands textes de loi, rédigés sous l'autorité de Godoy, signalèrent le début d'une réglementation portant sur la division foncière à Rio. Le premier fut le Décret n. 2.087 du 19 janvier 1925, le fameux Code de la Construction élaboré par la commission que dirigeait Godoy. Ce décret contenait d'importantes innovations, telles que la première définition juridique de la parcelle: « portion de terrain situé à côté d'une voie publique, décrite et assurée par un titre de propriété ». Toutefois, la plus grande innovation du décret en ce qui concerne la division du sol résidait dans l'article quatorze, car, en vertu du premier paragraphe, la municipalité ne délivrait de permis de construire qu'après « avoir soumis à l'approbation de la Mairie le plan de division de l'îlot respectif en parcelles ». De plus, le décret interdisait la division du sol « sans que le plan de cette division ne soit soumis à l'approbation de la Mairie » (second paragraphe) ; quant aux projets de voirie, ils devaient « contenir un plan de division en parcelles des terrains respectifs » (troisième paragraphe). Architectes et ingénieurs responsables de leur conception devaient signer ces projets, du fait du paragraphe dix-sept. En d'autres termes, le décret instaurait, pour la division du sol, un permis semblable à celui qui existait déjà pour les constructions et reconstructions. Le second texte, le plus important dans la mesure où plusieurs dispositions du premier n'entrèrent jamais en vigueur, fut le Décret-Loi n. 3.549 du 15 juin 1931, aussi connu sous le nom de « Code Godoy »: il s'agit du tout premier texte de loi à prendre en compte tous les aspects du lotissement, depuis la création de voirie jusqu'à la division du sol. Ce décret-loi commençait en réaffirmant l'obligation de faire préalablement approuver les « projets » de « division des terrains en parcelles ou rues », mais en ajoutant de nombreuses conditions à l'approbation, ayant trait à la confection d'artefacts graphiques. En premier lieu, il fallait désormais indiquer sur le dessin les connections avec les voies publiques, les canalisations d'eau et le réseau des égouts, la « situation schématique et les superficies maximales des futurs édifices sur les parcelles respectives » et les profils longitudinal et transversal de chaque rue (premier paragraphe) – encore une fois, on notera la ressemblance avec les procédés adoptés pour les permis de construire. En plus du dessin, le projet devait venir accompagné d'une déclaration détaillant l'ensemble des travaux à réaliser et d'un cahier des charges stipulant les servitudes pesant sur chaque parcelle. En second lieu, le décret imposait de nouvelles contraintes à la création de voirie: 26% de la superficie totale du lotissement devaient être réservés aux places et aux voies publiques (second paragraphe), la superficie moyenne des îlots allant de 10.000 à 12.000 m<sup>2</sup> (ou bien, mais les deux règles s'équivalaient, les rues devaient être disposées « en moyenne, tous les 200 m dans un sens et tous les 60 m dans l'autre ») ; les rues résidentielles ne pouvaient posséder une largeur inférieure à 9 m, alors que pour les voies dominantes (avenues) la limite s'élevait à 18 m. En troisième lieu et pour la première fois, la loi fixait des dimensions minimales pour les parcelles: 9 m de largeur pour une superficie totale de 360 m<sup>2</sup> (c'est-à-dire une profondeur moyenne de 30 m). En quatrième lieu, « les terrains qui, de par leur situation, ne permettaient pas dans de bonnes conditions économiques » l'installation d'infrastructures urbaines, ne pouvaient « qu'être fragmentés en vastes parcelles, avec au minimum 50 m de largeur pour 100 m de profondeur », de façon à dissuader le lotissement de propriétés difficiles à viabiliser. En dernier lieu, la vente et la location de terrains dépendaient de l'approbation des projets et de l'exécution des travaux de voirie et de canalisation d'eau et d'égout (cinquième paragraphe).

Ce règlement avait donc pour objectif d'obliger les lotisseurs à construire de véritables cités-jardins, des lotissements pleinement urbanisés, destinés à la construction de maisons isolées – la loi interdisait toute édification à moins de 3 m de l'alignement. Plusieurs dispositions dérivèrent aussi du Plan Agache, dont Godoy fut l'ardent propagandiste: l'inclusion d'une déclaration de travaux (*programa de obras*) et d'un cahier des charges par exemple, ainsi que l'interdiction de mettre les parcelles en vente avant que le

lotissement n'ait été approuvé par la mairie et complètement urbanisé (PDF 1930: LIV-LV) – clause que l'auteur du Plan justifiait en référence à la loi française du 19 juillet 1924, conçue pour réprimer les abus de la part des lotisseurs peu scrupuleux. La règle des 26 % (idem.: XVIII), la limite de 10.000 ou 12.000 m<sup>2</sup> pour les pâtés de maison (idem: LII) et de 12 x 30 m pour les parcelles (idem: XIX) figuraient aussi dans le Plan: Agache expliquait que, parmi les 26% de superficie destinés à un usage public, 16% revenaient aux voies de circulation et 10% aux places. Quant au minimum de 10 ou 12.000 m<sup>2</sup>, il provenait d'une étude réalisée par le Ministère de l'Hygiène anglais, qui adoptait un maximum de 30 immeubles par îlots (idem): sachant que la superficie moyenne des parcelles est de 360 m<sup>2</sup>, un tel maximum donnait un îlot de 10.800 m<sup>2</sup>, quelque chose entre 10.000 et 12.000 m<sup>2</sup>. Cette mathématisation ou géométrisation des relations spatiales, qui se retrouve aussi dans les normes de construction, interpelle: ne serait-elle pas le dernier prolongement de la « raison graphique », d'une représentation de l'espace fondée sur la médiation graphique (Goody 1979) ? Quoiqu'il en soit, plus que des mathématiques, ces relations mettent en évidence la problématisation conjointe de la parcelle, de la rue et de l'édifice, problématisation orientée par des considérations hygiéniques, esthétiques et économiques. Quant à la norme de 12 x 30 m pour les parcelles résidentielles, Godoy justifia dans un autre article qu'une devanture de 12 m correspondait à celle des cités ouvrières aux Etats-Unis, sachant que la norme commune là-bas était de 18 m (Godoy 1932: 22).

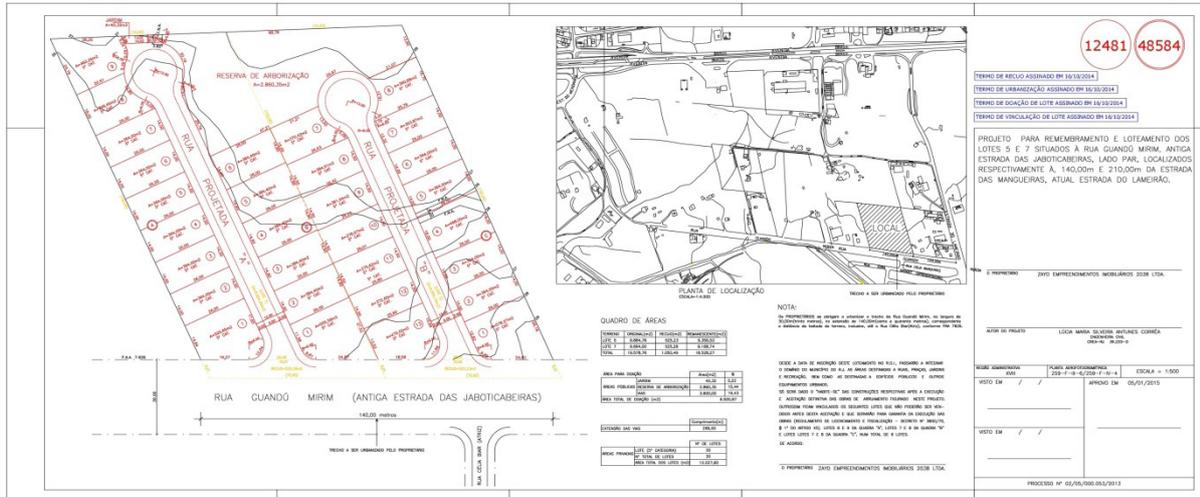
L'administration municipale standardisa les projets de lotissement au cours des années trente. Jusque-là, comme les pouvoirs publics prêtaient surtout attention à la création de voirie, les projets de lotissement dépendaient de la législation sur l'alignement, d'où la confection de plan d'alignement au moment de leur approbation (Figure 5). Parfois, ces plans indiquaient les divisions des îlots en parcelles et/ou la numérotation de ces mêmes îlots et des parcelles, ce qui rapprochait le plan d'un catalogue de parcelles. Il aura fallu attendre le Code Godoy pour que surgissent les premiers PAL tels que nous les connaissons aujourd'hui: des plans sur lesquels figurent, en rouge, les rues, îlots et parcelles projetés, toujours numérotés et mesurés, et en noir le cadastre de la ville (Figure 7 et 8). Pour individualiser les PAL, l'administration opta pour un système de numéros cerclés deux fois de rouge, au coin supérieur droit des feuilles, quand elle ne cerclait le numéro des PAA qu'une seule fois. Tout comme les PAA, la SMU se charge d'archiver les PAL. Du point de vue graphique, les PAL se révèlent avant tout une sophistication de la technologie déjà présente dans les projets de lotissement: comme ils impliquent la création de voirie, l'administration les considère également comme des plans d'alignement et leur attribue un numéro cerclé une fois de rouge. Autrement dit, les projets approuvés de lotissement sont en même temps PAL et PAA, comme on peut le voir sur les figures 2, 7 et 8. D'un autre côté, les projets de démembrement (cf. note 2) reçoivent seulement un numéro de PAL. La distinction entre démembrement et lotissement trouve donc une traduction graphique simple dans le jeu des numérotations. Il faut également relever cette connexion importante dans le cadre de l'infrastructure documentaire de l'administration municipale: l'obligation, établie dans le Code de la Construction de 1937 (Décret n.6.000 du premier juillet 1937), de joindre à la demande de permis de construire sur une certaine parcelle une copie de projet approuvé de lotissement (article 116).

**Figure 7:** PAA 2.142 (PAA 2.525). Projet de lotissement dans le quartier de Madureira, Zone Nord de Rio de Janeiro, approuvé en 1936.



Source: SMU, PCRJ.

**Figure 8 –** PAL 48.584 (PAA 12.481). Projet de lotissement dans le quartier de Santíssimo, Zone Ouest de Rio, approuvé en 2014.



Source: SMU, PCRJ.

Enfin, nous signalerons que les PAL jouent un rôle très important en tant qu' « artefacts commerciaux », au-delà de leur fonction « d'artefacts urbanistiques ». En effet, le Code Godoy reçut de nombreuses critiques des compagnies immobilières dans les années trente (Godoy 1932), qui contestaient jusqu'à la légalité du décret vu que, en matière de droit foncier, la prérogative est de la Fédération et non de la municipalité (à l'inverse, en matière d'urbanisme, la prérogative est de la municipalité, d'où l'imbroglie juridique). Le Décret-Loi n. 58 du 10 décembre 1937, qui « disposait sur le lotissement et la vente de terrain pour paiement en prestations », issue du gouvernement central, vint résoudre cette ambiguïté juridique. Le décret visait principalement à garantir la sécurité juridique des personnes qui achetaient leurs parcelles à terme, une modalité alors en pleine expansion: la partie du Code Civil qui règlementait les transactions commerciales

n'assurait pas la pleine propriété de la terre à qui payait à terme, du moins pas tant que n'avait été émis le registre définitif de l'achat, une fois réglées toutes les mensualités. Le décret prétendait aussi lutter contre l'usurpation (*grilagem*), c'est-à-dire contre la vente de terrains par des gens qui n'en étaient pas les vrais propriétaires, compromettant l'accès des acheteurs à la pleine propriété. C'est pourquoi il exigeait des lotisseurs qu'ils déposassent chez le notaire, avant même de commercialiser ou de faire la publicité des parcelles, un mémorial incluant « la relation chronologique des titres de propriété depuis 30 ans », « un exemplaire du carnet ou du contrat-type d'engagement de vente des parcelles », un « certificat négatif d'impôt » et enfin un projet de lotissement avec le dessin de l'immeuble, celui-ci servant à situer les terrains mis en vente. Quoiqu'il s'agisse de deux sphères distinctes, un même artefact, le projet de lotissement, fonctionnait en même temps comme outil de régulation urbanistique et comme instrument de régulation commerciale et foncière. Cette jonction nous semble renvoyer au rôle de la « raison graphique » dans l'organisation des rapports de propriété: avant même que n'existent les PAL, les lotisseurs recourraient aux catalogues de terrains pour vendre leurs parcelles.

### **Conclusion: la périphérie et l'archéologie de l'aménagement urbain**

En se promenant dans les lointains quartiers de la Zone Ouest carioca, souvent appelés « villas » ou « jardins », on pourra contempler des rues qui, au lieu d'un nom, possède un numéro ; de maisons qui, au lieu du numéro de la rue, utilisent pour adresse les numéros de la parcelle et de l'îlot où elles se situent ; des avenues droites et allongées qui parfois se perdent au milieu de nulle part, recouvertes par la végétation. Cette expérience particulière de l'espace provient de la technologie du lotissement, surtout dans ses aspects graphiques: si les rues, îlots et parcelles possèdent un numéro, c'est parce qu'elles appartiennent tout autant à un dessin, appelé « projet » ou « plan », avant même d'entrer dans l'espace physique ; si les avenues sont droites et ne s'embarrassent d'aucun obstacle humain ou naturel, c'est parce qu'elles sont d'abord des lignes droites sur un dessin. À la base des lotissements périphériques, il y a donc une « raison graphique », une façon d'ordonner le réel (dans ce cas, l'espace physique de la ville) à partir de figures disposées sur une superficie visible et facilement manipulable. Toutefois, cette technologie graphique ne débouche sur aucune vision « unifiée et simplifiée » de la ville comme le suggèrent parfois les théoriciens du plan orthogonal ; plutôt que de rendre la société « lisible », les artefacts graphiques résolvent des problèmes pratiques de gouvernement. En particulier, la technologie du lotissement, telle que nous la connaissons, est née de la préoccupation croissante pour la prévision, la planification des besoins collectifs: pour garantir de bonnes conditions hygiéniques, esthétiques et morales aux habitants (pauvres) des nouveaux quartiers ; pour que le marché immobilier fonctionne correctement, sans porter préjudice aux acheteurs, il fallait intervenir jusque dans la forme des parcelles, de façon à accorder tous les éléments, humains et matériels, entre eux. Les normes techniques, telles que la standardisation des parcelles, ne sont jamais anodines, elles contiennent de précieuses informations sur la façon dont le gouvernement problématise la dimension physique de l'espace urbain.

La méthode généalogique que nous avons adoptée ici nous a montré que la périphérie n'est pas extérieure à la ville, « formelle » ou non, bien au contraire: à mesure que la ville s'étendait, de nouveaux problèmes politiques surgissaient, de nouvelles technologies juridico-administratives également, qui se sont appliquées d'abord à la frontière urbaine. Si dans le centre de la ville, la « régularisation » de la trame viaire s'avérait une tâche dispendieuse, en périphérie le gouvernement pouvait imposer de nouvelles normes bien plus rigides – là en périphérie, la ville pouvait se développer en accord avec le modèle rêvé des élites occidentales. De même avec la formation des parcelles: si en centre-ville le remembrement se révélait une opération particulièrement complexe, en périphérie il était possible d'imposer le modèle de la

cit -jardin et de r soudre ainsi le probl me du logement. Parall lement, la p riph rie a pos  de nouveaux probl mes au gouvernement de la ville, ce qui a amen  une sophistication des instruments. L'ouverture simultan e de plusieurs rues,   l'initiative souvent de grandes compagnies capitalistes, ou la vente de parcelles   terme contraignirent le gouvernement   proposer de nouveaux outils, tels que les projets de lotissement. Loin d'une « ville ill gale », un v ritable laboratoire de l'am nagement urbain. N anmoins, comme dans n'importe quel laboratoire, toutes les exp riences ne sont pas forc ment couronn es de succ s. Si le gouvernement a beaucoup incit  les compagnies   lotir la p riph rie au si cle dernier, pour donner aux pauvres acc s   la propri t , ces incitations n'ont pas n cessairement produit le genre de logement esp r  par le gouvernement: les innombrables d faillances des infrastructures urbaines en p riph rie le prouvent constamment. Mais cela est d j  une autre histoire.

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